

1. PROGRAMME 1981/2

The Programme for the forthcoming season is now available. Our old friend, Bernard Barrell, an ex-police officer himself, has been able to go through the Scotland Yard files covering two Victorian murders in East London. He will be talking on some of the interesting features of the case on the 23rd September. The Annual Lecture will be on the 24th November at Bancroft Road Library, and Dr. Elizabeth Vallance, of Queen Mary College, will be talking on "Women in Politics". Her team has made a special study of this subject and because of its appeal to East Enders, we are hoping for a good attendance. With a mind to our maritime past, Mr. Pearsall of the National Maritime Museum will be talking to us on the 15th December about Blackwall frigates, a talk which will be illustrated by slides, and in view of the recent publicity regarding St. Matthias Church, Mr. French will be talking on the East India Company on the 29th January. Seamus Duggan of THAPP will be giving an interesting insight into "Fairgrounds" on the 17th February and Professor Leslie of O.M.C. will talk to us on the 24th March about the relationship of Queen Mary College and the local community. After the annual Hackney lecture in April at the Rose Lipman Library, there will be a talk on "Thames Paddle Steamers & Pleasure Steamers" on the 20th May. The season will conclude with a walk around Bow and Old Ford in which we hope members of the Inner London Archaeological Unit will participate. A Programme well worthy of your support!

2. STEPNEY INDUSTRIES (From a lecture given some 25 years ago by Mr. Guy Parsloe, of the Institute of Historical Research, University of London).

Apart from the maritime industries of Stepney, which I have mentioned, there were others such as silk weaving. This was not introduced by the Huguenots, but had previously been a considerable occupation. It was a domestic industry, carried on in the main by people who lived three or four families in a house and worked for a master man. The trade was elaborately organised, but while the earnings of the weavers varied greatly, on the average they did not make as good a living as other skilled artisans of the times. It was also an industry dangerously dependent upon the state of the trade. The slightest falling off in demand for the product meant an immediate cessation of work for the people engaged in it. There were periods of intense trade depression; for example, in 1763-1800 with the result that there were terrible times for the weavers in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green. In fact, at all times starvation was pretty near to the workers in this domestic industry, and their whole life was in all respects below the standard of their day. But for all that, the weavers had both a historical and a scientific society, and they had a vigorous life of their own.

Then there was sugar refining. According to Stow this began in 1544 and could be reckoned, therefore, as one of the ancient industries of the old Manor. This particular trade centred round Goodman's Fields, south-west of Whitechapel Church, and the trade prospered up to the 18th century, employing much German, Dutch and Irish labour. But the industry died off in the 19th century. Brewing too was a local industry. The Liberty of St. Katherine's was famous for its brewers in the time of Stow, and the Red Lion Brewery there went back to the 16th century. One of the oldest breweries in London was that of Trumans - founded by Thomas Bucknall in 1669 in Spitalfields. Porter was a famous product of Stepney, and was said to have been first brewed by Ralph Harwood in a brewery at the east side of the High Street, Shoreditch, while the Anchor Brewery of Messrs Charrington went back to the year 1743.

There were many other industries too numerous to mention here, but one could note a few such as bell founding, represented today by

the famous bell foundry in Whitechapel. There was sailcloth making in various parts of the Tower Hamlets, works for the manufacture of red and white lead - much more dangerous than today - found in Whitechapel in 1747. Traces of these and other industries were to be found among the names in the parish registers. In the 18th century the Jews found skilled work in diamond cutting, pencil making and glass engraving. At the beginning of the 19th century famous firms in Stepney were Jukes Coulson's iron works at Millwall, the rope works of Shakespeare and Easton in Ratcliff, and Bowles' celebrated manufacture of window glass; in Mile End there was made Minish's hartshorn, and Cokes's patent sponges for ships; at Stratford, bow, were carried on calico printing, and scarlet dyeing for the East India Company, both even then decayed. The last century, of course, had brought more modern industries, such as boot and shoe manufacture, clothing of all kinds, and matches.

3. IN LONDON DURING THE GREAT WAR (Michael MacDonagh, 1935)

"I had the experience today (August 30 1914) of seeing for the first time wounded soldiers straight from the field of battle. The first batch of casualties in the retreat from Mons - about 300 men and some officers, arrived at Waterloo Station. There were no bad cases. Some had arms and legs in splints, others had bandaged heads faces and necks. Most of the men were in khaki uniforms - their tunics torn, soiled and without buttons. A few were in dirty civilian dress, the cast-off clothes, I was told, of Belgian peasants with whom they had hidden in the retreat from Mons and by them disguised. They all looked dazed. The officers were taken in motor-ambulances to the Military Hospital at Millbank. Owing to the lack of organisation, there were no such ambulances for the men. Responding to the call of the War Office, Lyons (the Caterers) sent a convoy of their delivery vans to Waterloo, and in these the men laid on mattresses and wrapped in blankets by medical students, who also acted as stretcher-bearers, were brought to the London Hospital. The few chance spectators of the scene gave the soldiers cigarettes and cheered them sympathetically as the vans drove off. For civilians it was the first shock of war - the first experience of what war means."

"May 22 1918. Today I lunched at the National Kitchen and Eating House opened at Poplar by the Food Ministry. Its purpose is to show how, by proper cooking, meals can be appetisingly served at low charges and, at the same time, commodities which are scarce made to go a long way. More than that, poor housewives can obtain cooked meals more nourishing and at less cost than they could themselves provide at home. My meal, consisting of vegetable soup, fish pie and baked rice, was quite satisfying and cost only sixpence. What a contrast to the Mansion House Dinner last night (of fish, eggs and fruit....the wine was champagne) though that was necessarily limited in courses and wines. Thus frequently does the newspaper reporter touch life at both extremes. The word "restaurant" is ignored!) expenses are reduced by a new system of service. You buy tickets for the meal on entering and in exchange for them, obtain the food at a long counter and bring it with knife, fork and spoon to the table yourself. There are no waiters and only a few women to clear away the soiled plates and cups. The place, I was told, is run at a profit. An eating-house of the same kind is to be opened in New Bridge Street, Blackfriars." (Per David Behr)

AUTUMN COACH OUTING :

There will be a Coach Outing to PENSURST PLACE on Saturday, 3rd October 1981. This is a famous 14th century mansion with a notable great hall, associated with Sir Philip Sidney. There will be a lunch break at LUNBRIDGE WELLS noted for its 17th century church and its health-giving springs. Tea can be obtained at Penshurst Place. The coach will leave Mile End Station at 9.30 a.m. at 18 Haverdene, Chingford £4. Children £4. This includes entrance to Penshurst Place.