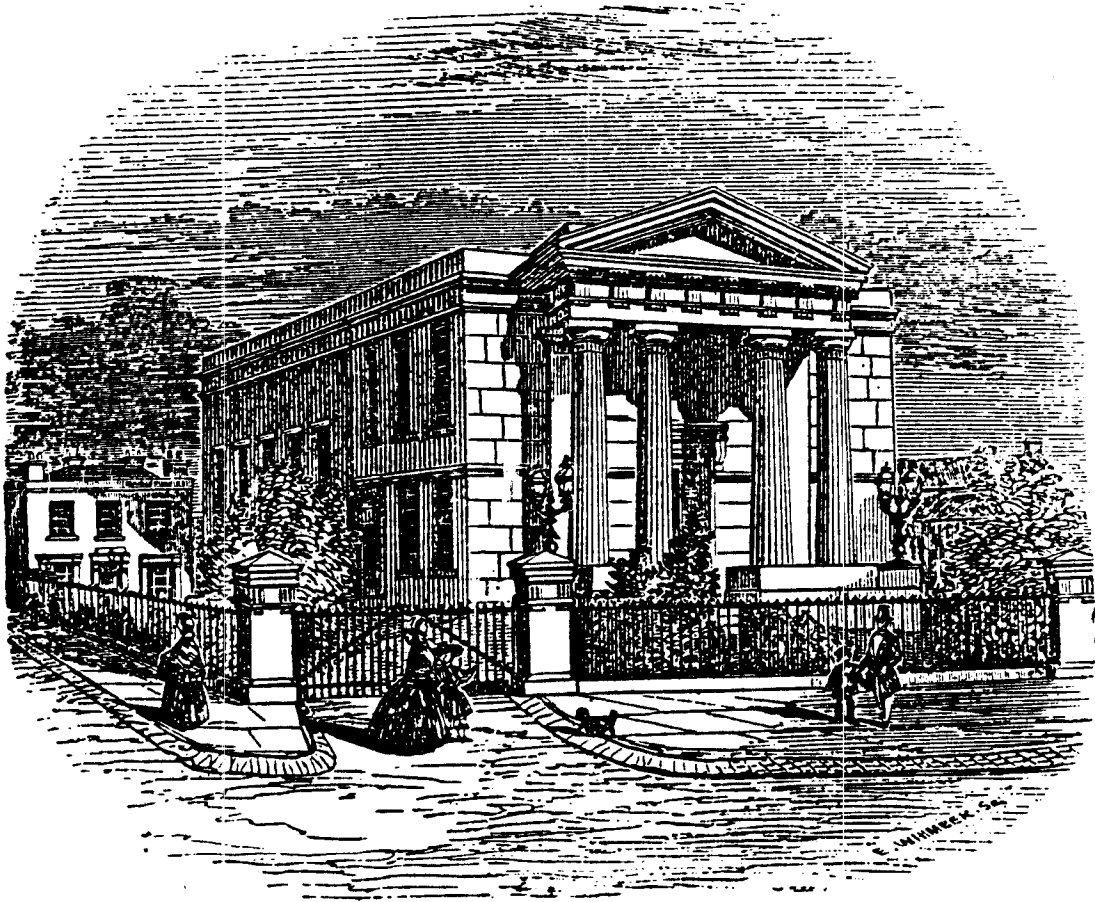


EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter

SPRING 1993

VOL 1 No. 3



THE SEAMEN'S CHAPEL.

WESLEYAN SEAMEN'S MISSION,

COMMERCIAL ROAD EAST,

LONDON,

1853

Lecture Update

Pull No More Bines - Memories of Hop picking by Gilda O'Neill

The long-awaited talk by Gilda O'Neill, which had been previously cancelled owing to inclement weather, attracted a large audience. The talk was based on her book of the same name. Gilda spoke of her own memories of going hop-picking down in Kent as a child, and her evocative descriptions found an immediate response. She spoke of the anticipation as the summer months drew near, the preparations being made by her parents, awaiting the arrival of the letter from the farm, packing up their belongings, setting out on the journey, the arrival at the farm and the incidents that occurred over the years, many so memorable that people can recall them today without any difficulty.

For thousands of Eastenders, hop-picking down in Kent was the only form of holiday they could take, to escape for a few weeks from the crowded dwellings of East London into the open countryside, although it was hard work for the women and children; the men often only came down over the weekends to see their families. Many of our members and visitors had first-hand experience of this traditional East End summer activity and a lively discussion followed the lecture. An exceptionally fine evening, and we look forward to Gilda speaking to us again, as I believe she has another book in the pipeline.

London's Early Docks 1800-1855 by Bob Aspinall.

Bob Aspinall is the Curator of the Museum in Docklands, which has an outstanding collection of items and oddities rescued from the docks as the demolition squad moved in. Their archives are also worth a visit, though this can only be done by appointment. The talk again attracted a sizeable audience and we are delighted that this lecture season has been so successful thus far. Bob gave us a fascinating guide through the London docks, detailing the background to trade and commerce on the River Thames, and the reasons why it became imperative for the docks and warehouses to be constructed. The accompanying slides were particularly interesting, and graphically supported his descriptions. Bob took us on a tour of the docks, from St Katharine's by the Tower, through the London Docks to the East and West India Docks at Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs. Again, the lively discussion that followed showed the audience's keen interest in the subject.

Healthcare of Jewish Mothers and their Infants in East London 1870-1939 by Lara Marks.

This lecture could have been better attended, but unfortunately clashed with several other activities scheduled for the same time. Lara, from Queen Mary and Westfield College has had her research accepted for publication, and we all look forward to being able to buy the book (hopefully at an affordable price). Her talk was truly fascinating as this was a subject that has been unexplored so far, which was why the Jewish population of East London had a higher survival rate as compared to other immigrant sections within the same areas. With the use of maps and statistics Lara was able to prove that Jewish Mothers and their infants enjoyed better health and subsequently a lower mortality rate as a result of their adherence to their traditional values and culture and indeed their strict religious observances. For instance, the high rate of infant deaths in summer, which was a common factor across all sections of society during that period, was not reflected within the Jewish community, simply because the Law placed great emphasis on purification and cleanliness, i.e. washing of hands, storing milk and meat products separately. Other dietary features, such as Jewish mothers feeding their children on herrings, high in vitamins A and D, which helped prevent rickets is another example. Their work ethic, the fact that the fathers did not frequent pubs, but saved hard for a better life-style and the setting up of their own health-care facilities were also strong contributory factors.

River Lea by Margaret Ashby.

Margaret Ashby's slide-talk on the River Lea took us from the very source of the river in Hertfordshire down to Leamouth at Blackwall. We visited a large number of pubs along the way, sat on the banks among the wildflowers and caught glimpses of wildlife among the grasses and bushes, boated down a few stretches of the river, traced the history of riverside dwellers and industrial developments and altogether had a lovely day out, all whilst sitting comfortably in the hall of the Latimer Church in Stepney! My only regret was that there were no books on sale, for many members of the audience were keen to get an autographed copy.

Rosemary Taylor

Letters from Our Members

Arthur J L Hellicar, Benfleet, Essex:

The Evil Smells of Old Ford item reminded me of the stench emanating from horse drawn carts filled with animal bones, passing along Brunswick Road on their way to a soap factory in Bow, Thomas Cook's (?) I believe. Hot summer days in the early 1900's were often spoilt by the smell which persisted long after the cart had vanished.

I have a cutting from the East London Observer 20/9/1913 relating to Samuel Hellicar, carman, summoned for conveying "offensive matter along Commercial Road during prohibited hours." He was fined 5 shillings and 23 shillings costs, and his employer John Knight and Co., had to pay £5 and 23 shillings costs. Sam, who I am told was an uncle of mine, was moving 25 bags and 2 barrels of 'stinking fat and bones'. Offensive liquor oozed from the bags and the carriage way was strewn with maggots. I don't suppose Sam smelt very nice either.

David Sullivan doing research on Millwall FC might like to know that earlier this year a letter appeared in Docklands News from Richard Lindsay of 127 Firhill Rd London SE6 3LN, who is also interested in the Club. I wrote to him because 'Tiny' Joyce, their one-time goalkeeper was, I believe a relative of mine. My mother's maiden name was Joyce and there was a family connection with a Joyce who kept dining rooms on the Isle of Dogs. A coincidence too, that one of my christian names is Lindsay. I, too, would like to know a little more about 'Tiny.'

The letter from Mrs Upchurch stirred a memory or two. I used to go to the Far Famed Cake company on, if I remember rightly, every Saturday morning for broken biscuits, for a copper or two. I cannot place the time of year for going to the Pavilion Cinema, but it was a yearly event sponsored by the Council. Another venue I remember attending was the Town Hall, Newby Place, and one looked forward to this, particularly the apple, orange and marzipan fish.

Blackwall Pier was a favourite spot to visit, too. As a schoolboy I spent many hours watching the passing vessels of all shapes and sizes. A coffee stall was permanently there to provide a drink and a cheesecake, if you could afford it.

Mrs Upchurch would remember, I suppose, when

the noise of traffice passing by Poplar Hospital was muffled by straw laid along the length of the building and a large notice asked drivers to 'Kindly walk past the hospital'.

Doreen Kendall responds:

I can remember the old motor dustcarts with side apartments for rubbish bins to be emptied into. No one wrapped rubbish and the flies and smell was horrible, also when the rubbish cart moved, water would seep out of the back and lay in the road with its horrible smell till the next shower of rain. I think this would have been in the fifties.

After reading your letter I read my copy of Hector Gavins 'Sanitary Ramblings' in Bethnal Green, just to prolong the horror. Where I live today by Regents Canal, off Old Ford Road, the streets did not have one good point, they were very foul and smelly and with all this running into the canal, the smell must have been around all the time. I suppose the nearest we get to such smells today is when we go through the Blackwall tunnel past the refinery, or in the country past a farm sisal tower.

Jim Glibbery, Ilminster, Somerset :

I am writing to say how much I enjoyed reading the Autumn Newsletter, particularly the articles on "Reflections of Changing Times" and "Reminiscences of Poplar." These two articles almost made my mouth water, bringing back the same memories to me of the food we ate and the unique flavour. I wonder if today's food is really tasteless, or is it that our taste buds have changed over the years.

Anyway, congratulations to the contributors and to the Newsletter Editorial Team for bringing to me, and I am sure many other readers, such a pleasant reminder of the "Good Old Days."

Do you have a story to tell of life in the Good Old Days? We've had Ellen Rae's memories of life on the Isle of Dogs and Vi Short's childhood in Bow, both published in the Record. The newsletter has also published Ike Jacob's memories of the Tenterground, as well as the above-mentioned Poplar and Bethnal Green stories. Articles on Shoreditch and Hackney would be very welcome, as well as Newham.

Memories of Bethnal Green

Stephen Sadler, London N1:

The Article on the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster stirred a few memories. By March 1943 I was in the Royal Marines. As a civilian in BG during the early Blitz I recall one horrendous night in 1941 with my chum George Lane when we chaperoned my crippled sister May through the streets to the BG Underground Station. May wears a heavy boot and calliper on her left leg and so we could only walk slowly. On our own George and I would have thrown ourselves on the ground whenever a stick of bombs screamed from the sky but as May lacked that agility, we all cringed into any doorway for protection from blast. Down on the platform of the underground, known locally as the Iron Lung, it was grim.

After a gap of fifty one years I recall the bare lighting, the harsh look of unfinished concrete walls, bodies lying everywhere and the stink. It was a grey, morbid picture of life at a low ebb. I have read the Official Report by Mr L Dunne. It seems that the "found no truth in the rumour that the disaster had been caused by dips (pickpockets)". The report goes on to blame the noise of rockets which caused a stampede for the stairs. That report would have been challenged by the press had there not been any censorship. Consider this acknowledged fact that never got a hearing. Any person leaving their home for the air raid shelter was certain to take with them the few items of value they possessed. Watches, rings, jewellery, money. Such a well-heeled crowd, frightened and in a state of panic, would be easy victims for skilled dips. An acquaintance who knew the local community has named a family of known thieves who were often hanging about the station entrance in order to steal from those going in. My informant claims that these people were responsible for causing a rush for the stairs.

This story is thin on detail and is hearsay. So long after the event the published facts are hard to dispute. 1939 and all that did not turn thieves into honest patriots. Whilst many were busy sorting out Hitler and co the villains flourished on whatever they could nick. Two examples from the rocket blitz, summer of 1944. When my parents house in BG was wrecked at 2 am my father and brother were warned by the civil defence to stay with the house throughout the night to stop looters from turning it over. A month later, when the home of my mother in law in Shoreditch was similarly destroyed, my wife and her cousin received the same advice. In the blackout two young girls spent the night

seated on the doorstep of their wrecked home guarding their precious belongings. These stories are not unique, they just went unreported. Tales of mean theft from those who were injured or had lost loved ones and a home do not fit into the cosy pattern of so called wartime chumminess.

Reginald Harrison, Camberley, Surrey:

I was shown a copy of the Autumn Newsletter which evoked many memories.... Dock glass of good Port in the George, 7d, tuppenny and a pennorth at Webster's or Perry's.

My parents moved into Warner Place E2 about 1910. I remember St Peter's being built. We lived with my maternal grandparents, Henry Francis and Sarah Sceats and their four children. It must have been cramped. Grandad was a real character, cabinet maker, radical, reader of Reynolds News, member of the Gladstone Club in Hackney Road. Grandmother had a Sunday stall in Bethnal Green Road, almost outside Bortons the builder's merchants, almost opposite the Red church, and a coffee shop. I was often at the stall on Sundays, watching the customers. The stall sold hair nets, pinafores, pink flannel knickers, etc. Quite a performance putting the stall fittings on a barrow, and erecting and taking down. The tarpaulin that covered the stall was very heavy, and was treated with tar once a year.

Grandad would take me to the coffee shop, where I had an enormous thick mug of tea. Then he would go to the Green Gate, or the White Hart PH. He did not care for the Cornwallis as the licensee had a 'live in friend, Mrs Selby.' In Warner Place there were three public houses and an off-licence. The Sceats were fair customers of the near-by Bakers Arms, run by Bill Turner. The licensed house at the corner of Blythe or Teesdale Street carried a sign Austin Balls, but was a very old inn and marked on old maps, and was in fact called the George, maybe named after George IV.

There was a row of Huguenot weavers' cottages in Warner Place, one of them had been occupied by the ancestors of Mrs Cavalier, who sold cow's milk. These historic buildings were replaced by council flats. One could buy milk, all warm and creamy from a cow-shed at the south end of Squirries Street. Not many folk

(Contd on page 3 column 1 end)

Coopers and Coopering

The ELHS wishes to thank Bernard Bresslaw, Potters Bar, Herts, for his kind donation to the Society. He writes:

The school chum and his bride whose photo you saw in the East London Advertiser now live not far from me in Barnet and have two grown up daughters.

Incidentally the school we both attended has been making the news itself. I was delighted and proud to note that Cooper's and Coborn (as it is now called) was the top school in the first league table of GCSE results for the year. They had a handsome photo in colour published on the front page of the Daily Telegraph.

Stop Press: Lecture on Coopers and Coopering by David Barker: 18 February at Latimer Church, Ernest Street, E3 7.30 pm.

EAST LONDON RECORD NO. 15 (1992)

Despite making its rather late appearance in December, the Record is selling well. Doreen has been doing her usual sterling work packing and posting copies to our regular mailing list, as well as replying to requests for more copies.

From the many congratulatory letters received, this latest edition of the Record is sure to be a sell-out, so get your copy soon, don't leave it until it's too late!

(Contd from Page 2 column 2)

could afford cow's milk, and Goat Brand condensed milk was on many tables. If there was a newly born infant, Nestles milk in a small tin.

I still think of the Lusitania riots in 1915, when shopkeepers with a non-English name had their shops smashed up. Mrs Wasem who had two shops in Hackney road, and one in Bethnal Green Road, and who always asked me about Mum and my baby sister, had the three shops smashed up, victims of lying propaganda by the government.

Chris Dixon, Newcastle-upon-Tyne writes:

I enjoyed reading George Renshaw's reminiscences in the autumn newsletter. Lots of familiar street names here. I am looking forward to the forthcoming book on Victoria Park, as I spent many hours there as a child, and I'm sure the book will bring back many memories.

I always feel very frustrated when I read the programme of forthcoming lectures and events in each newsletter, as there are so many that I would love to attend. I was very interested to see that there is to be a visit to the Coopers Company in February (Ed. Note. This is now a lecture fixed for Thursday 18 February), as I am an ex-pupil of Coborn School for Girls (previously situated in Bow Road), which was run by the Coopers Company, and was the sister school to the Coopers Boys School. The two schools were amalgamated in the early seventies and relocated to Upminster.

When I left Coborn at the age of 17 I got a job as a Clerical Officer with the Ministry of Defence, and nervously reported for my first ever day at work in the Old Admiralty building. I was there told that I had been posted to an office near Liverpool Street, as it was so near my home, so back I went to Liverpool Street armed with a piece of paper telling me to report to an office at 13 Devonshire Square. You can imagine my surprise when I arrived there and saw above the door the same coat of arms that I had gazed upon hundreds of times over the previous six years! It turned out that the department I was to work for leased the top two floors of the building from the Coopers Company. When I mentioned all this to my new boss he told the Clerk to the Coopers Company that I was an ex-pupil of theirs, and it was arranged that he would take me on a guided tour of the Hall and show me all the Company's regalia and historical documents.

Joyce Garwood from Leigh-on-Sea had asked us for information on the Galloway Arms, situated in Burgess Street Limehouse.

The Directory for 1911 has the Galloway Arms, Thomas Street/Burgess Street, Landlord Robert Moy. 1905-1908 the pub was in the hands of Mrs Florence Hardiman, In 1919 Mrs Emily Alice Haines and in 1923 Mrs Rose Clapp.

In 1923 the Bull and Ram at 77-79 Old Street was run by Mrs Edith FOOTER.

In Search of the Grotto

Mrs Marie Morris, Maidenhead, Berks:

My mother, who was born in the Docks area of West Ham in 1912, told me about this. On St James' Day, each year, the children of the neighbourhood would collect shells and make patterns and pictures on the pavement, and in the evening the parents would go around inspecting them and giving pennies. I have searched for a mention of this practice in quite a few books on customs and folk-lore, including one devoted to the shell (symbol of St James) and have had no luck.

Mr Arthur Hellicar offers an explanation:

'Grotto Day' was a loose term used to describe the annual RC Procession and the outside decoration of houses with a religious statue as a central theme. Flowers played a prominent part, and if available, shells would have been used.

The decoration, with the statue, was, I'm sure, referred to by RC's as a shrine, but could equally be called a grotto. I have not been able to find mention of a tie-up with the event and a so-called St James Day.

My own recollection of a grotto (we probably called it 'grotter') is of one I helped make outside our house in Brunswick Road during the 14-18 War. Any colourful material and items were used, but I doubt if flowers took part. It's a long while ago and I forget most details, but the grotto was made each day until we had collected enough money from passers-by to buy cigarettes with. The fags, Players, Wrights and Woodbines were taken to Poplar Hospital for wounded soldiers being treated there.

COMFORT BAGS

Comfort bags, or as some of the men call them "Diddy Bags" or "Housewives" are much appreciated by our Sailors.

A Sailor's going to sea outfit is never complete without a comfort bag. We suggest the style of thing suitable for the Sailors. They should contain needles and thread, darning cotton, scissors, sticking plaster, bandage cotton, pins, small bible, tracts, a friendly letter, and any other useful article that the maker thinks necessary to put in. The bag can be made of some strong washing material, about 9" long by 7" wide. (QVSR Annual Report 1902).

The following is an extract from MOTHER KNEW BEST by Dolly Scannell (Pan Books 1975):

Sometimes we would have grotto season. Someone would build the first grotto and then on every street corner a grotto would arise....

The grottos were a work of love and squirrel-like searching for stones, flowers, leaves, broken ornaments, texts and pictures from magazines. I once saw a little blue egg on a grotto yet the only birds I ever saw, all the time I lived in Poplar were sparrows. Perhaps in my ignorance I thought all birds were sparrows. Winnie and Amy would place their grotto near a public house - clever winnie, for they might catch a reeling man whose thriftiness was befuddled by an extra pint. Winnie was found out because a man gave her a lot of money for one kiss.

(Editor's Note: See also our article by George Renshaw who mentions Grottos in Bethnal Green in the 1920s).

150th Anniversary - QVSR

This year the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest in East India Dock Road celebrates its 150th anniversary.

Founded in 1843 by a few earnest Christians, at St George's Cable Street the Mission soon expanded. In 1849 a building situated in Commercial Road, known at the Eastern Institution owned by the Mercers Company, was bought for use as a chapel and meeting room for sailors (Front cover).

As the work amongst seamen in the London Docks gradually increased, it was felt that the mission needed to expand the services offered, beyond the reading rooms and the daily meetings with refreshments, and the idea that safe lodgings for sailors, vulnerable to both theft and temptation, soon took hold. A pub, the Magnet, in Jeremiah Street was taken over, and money raised for the purchase of the adjoining property. On 13 November 1902 the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest was formally opened by Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll. This building is still in existence, but has been considerably added to and expanded over the years. In the early 1950's the present building fronting East India Dock Road was built.

The Docks have closed and the ships are a rare sight along this stretch of the river, but seamen from all over the world still find a welcome at the QVSR.

REFLECTIONS OF CHANGING TIMES

GEORGE RENSHAW'S MEMORIES OF BETHNAL GREEN IN THE 1920'S

PART 2: Patriots, Politics, Poke-noses and the Art of Survival.

As an infant I went to Columbia Road School and then to Daniel Street School. We started the day with Religious Education which, I think was a good thing. It can give one an insight as to what is right or wrong and a respect for the laws of the country.

The East End of my day was very patriotic and proud, we were always taught that our country came first and even today I think this is right. On Empire Day at school we would say prayers for all the people of the British Empire and then we would march around the Union Jack, some of us in our Scout and Boys Brigade uniforms. We would sing songs like Land of Hope and Glory, Jerusalem, Rule Britannia and end up with God Save the King.

We were very proud to be British in those days and in most people's houses you would see pictures of the Monarchy. When King George V and Queen Mary had their jubilee in 1935 a number of us from our school were lucky enough to go, we had a grand stand view outside the Palace and saw everything. We were there for six hours, and how proud we all were when the Royal coaches passed by with their Majesties.

During my time at school a friend of mine Davy Carman worked at the Dairy in Columbia Road cleaning dirty milk bottles. This was done by hand with a bottle brush and hot water. The dairies in those days would supply their own fresh milk and deliver it early morning. Davy's father was a wood turner and worked making table and chair legs at a business in Gibraltar Walk. We would then take the legs to a shop in Columbia Road where the owner Syd Longcroft would carve them. When he had finished them we would take them to the Furniture makers where they would be assembled and polished ready for retailing. The furniture company of Davenport's made excellent furniture with no comparison to the machine made furniture of today. Their craftsmen were second to none.

Another friend of mine Billy Houghton would go with me to Spitalfields Market in Bishopsgate where we would collect the wooden boxes that had contained the fruits and vegetable and drag them back home on a piece of rope. We would then chop them up and bundle them into firewood, then take them around the streets and sell

them for a halfpenny a bundle. Children living in our area had to be enterprising in order to survive. My dad had been wounded three times during the 1914 great war and he had also been gassed as well and through the 1920/30 depression times were very hard, nevertheless when work was available he would turn his hand to anything and everything as did most other people. The conditions one worked under in those days was unbelievable, remember there were three million unemployed in a population of fifty-eight million.

Most work was carried out by hand, as machinery had yet to takeover the mass production of goods. My father worked at a factory which recycled horse hair which was then used in furniture and upholstery and bedding. It was torn up by a machine, the dust was suffocating, then it was bailed and sent for re-use. This process was called carding.

My mum would go out in the early hours to do office cleaning and then do more cleaning at Wasems Bakery in the Hackney Road, an old established firm of many years. Looking back, my mother was always on the go and never seemed to stop, I often wonder how this generation of today would cope.

Near our house was an old oil shop run by a very nice person name Jack Lee. You could get soft soap or a bar of Sunlight or Lifebuoy soap about the size of a house brick. My mother would cut this up for the washing, there were no fancy washing powders in those days, nor for that matter any washing machines. There was Hudsons powder and Oxydale, also Rickets Blue to whiten the wash. Washing day was on a Monday and what hard work it was. The scrubbing board with a brush was all that were used after which the clothes were put through the mangle, this was hard work and we used to help by taking turns in turning the handle. If it was raining the washing had to hang in the kitchen to dry, there were no modern drying machines or spinners. The ironing was one on the kitchen table with a flat iron that was heated on the gas stove.

Friday night was bath night. My mother would light the copper after filling it with about six gallons of water. The tin bath which hung on the wall in the garden would be fetched in and placed in front of the fire in the kitchen. After filling it from the copper my mum and dad would have their bath, the water would be skimmed off and more hot water from the pots on the kitchen range would be added so that the rest of us could take our baths. When we were finished the bath would be emptied with a bucket until it could be carried out in the garden to be emptied out, cleaned and hung back on the wall until the next Friday night.

Our hair was washed separately with soft soap purchased from the Oil shop. You received a large spoon-

The Art of Survival contd....

ful in a basin for a penny. It produced a wonderful lather and mum would wash our hair, after which it would be fine tooth combed. The ritual of tooth combing was very common in the East End, it ensured that your hair was free of nits and clean. Periodically at school there would be a nit check and those who were infected were sent to the Cleansing Station. Word always got around as to who they were and until they had been successfully treated they were given the cold shoulder.

At election time there was always a considerable amount of activity, unlike today where television is the main media of canvassing. The local MPs would orate from the street corners in the traditional soap box manner. There was Percy Harris who would visit Daniel Street School. He was Liberal and his opponent was Mr Nathan who was Labour. All the children would go around singing: Vote, vote vote for Mr Harris, Chuck old Nathan out the door, If it wasn't for the King, We would do the blighter in. So we won't vote for Nathan anymore.

In November the new Lord Mayor was elected. This was followed by the Lord Mayor's Show. We would go to Houndsditch with my mother and stand under the striking clock, it was decorated in a God and Magog fashion, but in later years it was either removed or sold.

November also brought Guy Fawkes night, and days before all the children would be collecting wood and old boxes and unwanted furniture. Shops ran fireworks clubs, enabling children to put a couple of pennies away each week. The wood etc would be piled up in the middle of the street and on November 5th after tea the fire was lit under the supervision of parents. As the fire burnt low people would bring out more old furniture to boost it up. Every street had its own fire and the Fire Brigade were kept very busy. They would come round in the night to make sure all were extinguished and made safe. The following morning the children would help to clean up the mess, but where the fire had been there was a large round hold where the tarmac had been burnt away. Bonfire night was always talked about for days after.

On November 11th it was Armistice Day which was reverently observed. Many families had lost sons or husbands in the War and this was the time for remembrance. At 11 o'clock the maroons would sound and everything stopped for the two minutes silence and God help anyone who didn't, even the buses stopped with people getting out and standing in silence. Women cried and men stood with hats in hand and heads bowed in respect for the fallen. There would then be a march past at the local war memorial for soldiers, scouts and girl guides.

In the East End of London every street had its poke nose and Bethnal Green was not without its share. These people were usually women who would sit at their window watching all that was going on around, they knew everybody's business and everything, nothing was safe or sacred. They were a mine of information, a one person intelligence unit capable at any time of recounting the latest piece of news which they knew almost before it happened. My second cousin Billy Scotchmer who was an authority on poke noses once said to me: "If these people could have been called up to serve in military intelligence during the war it would have been over in half the time." Word of mouth was how news spread in those days, sometimes getting exaggerated as it passed from person to person. If anything was going on all the kids would push their way to the front to have a butchers (look). This once led to a most frightening moment for me. It was after dinner on a Sunday.

I had been working in the butchers which opened on Sunday morning and there were a lot of coaches about and lots of police, so two of my friend and myself did a nose along Bethnal Green Road to see what was going on. There were crowds of foreign looking people around the bandstand near Brick Lane who were about to march through the Wheeler Street arch into Commercial Street. We followed them to Gardeners Corner where we managed to get across the road. We pushed up to the front just as this horde of people started screaming at the police and surging forward. This put the fear of God into us. Luckily a policeman saw our plight and probably saved us from being crushed. He dragged us across the road and got us through the crowd before it attacked the police. Police horses were falling to the ground as the mob threw what looked like marbles under their hooves. We found out later that the mob had been brought in to stop the Blackshirts from marching into Whitechapel. We never saw the Blackshirts but I did feel sorry for the police. I never told my parents where I'd been so when we heard people talking about it we could not say we had been in the thick of it.

In the 1930's there were some very big fires in East London. A Man named Leopold Harris was a fire raiser working an insurance fiddle. He was finally caught and got ten years in prison. Factories would burst into flames and were gutted out.

The worst fire, other than wartime that I saw was on the corner of Mare Street. It was Pollikoffs the clothing factory. The whole building caved in and it was chaos. Children and adults watched the fire from the tops of buses that had come to a standstill, and

The Art of Survival contd...

many firemen were injured. They built the Regal Cinema on the site afterwards.

Television was unheard of and very few people had a wireless, now called radio. I remember our first wireless which consisted of a long horn shape coming out of a box with two knobs on it. There was a wire for an aerial, a large dry battery and an accumulator. I can hear my dad and our upstairs lodger now trying to find a station. There would be screaming and oscillating till suddenly a distant voice would be heard. They would both had their heads in the top of the horn and everyone had to keep dead silent. It seems so funny now but then it was something out of this world.

The accumulator for the wireless needed charging up every two weeks. We would take it to a house in Wellington Road and leave it to be done, while a spare accumulator would be loaned to us in lieu. When the big dry battery ran down we were without the wireless until enough money could be spared to buy a new one.

In the early thirties Relay Radio came in, it was similar to the cable television of today but much less sophisticated. It was eightpence a week and came with two stations. On Sundays you could get Radio Luxembourg and at 7 pm there was the half hour serial Foo Manchu. All the kids used to rush home to hear this.

The final part of George Renshaw's fascinating reminiscences on life in Bethnal Green between the wars, on games and leisure activities, will appear in the next newsletter.

Chisenhale School in Bow is celebrating its centenary year in 1993. They are anxious to hear from past students, and anyone who lived in the Roman Road area, who has memories they would like to share with the present-day pupils of the school.

For further details please contact:
Maggie Hewitt : 071 739 9001

IN THE BEGINNING

HISTORY GROUP'S LIVELY START

Will Study East London
(Hackney Gazette 6 Oct 1952)

An East London History Group sprung into being last week, but thus far, it has no official name, no elected officers, no constitution, and no rules. Even the geographical area of activity has not been determined, but indications are that its work may range from Aldgate to Stratford and from Hackney to Shadwell. Like many other useful developments in the modern life of East London, the new History Group was born at Toynbee Hall.

Professor Bindoff of Queen Mary College, Mr B Lewis of the Mile End Library of the Stepney council, and Mr W J Evans, Sub Warden of Toynbee Hall, were the sponsors of the movement which led to the formation of the Group, and the veteran Dr J J Mallon, CH, JP., Warden of Toynbee Hall gave it his blessing. Dr Mallon recalled that there used to be an East London branch of the Historical Association with a large and notable membership. 'When I came down here, being professionally interested in the past, I discovered that there was a great deal of the past lying around. There were people who had done something about it, and also a number of people interested who might be persuaded to do something about it if brought together and encouraged,' said Professor Bindoff. He knew that a survey of the historical materials of East London would be greatly welcomed by national authorities. After brief statements by Mr Lewis and Mr Evans, the meeting was thrown open. East London's history, and representatives of the Library services in Stepney, Poplar, Bethnal Green and West Ham. The official life of Hackney seemed to be without a representative at the meeting, but the Rev. Ernest W Dawe, BD, minister of Dalston Congregational Church, was present. Shoreditch appeared to be unrepresented.

(The above item was sent in by our President Mr Alfred French, after a discussion as to the exact date of the Society's formation. We can now confirm that the society is now celebrating it's Fortieth Anniversary)

On the Trail of A Grey Lady

Following a request from a researcher in New Zealand, Doreen Kendall went on the trail of the above named woman who was thought to have worked in East London at the turn of the century. For her tenacity and sheer determination in solving the puzzle from all the tantalizing clues she uncovered along the way, Doreen surely deserves a medal!

Tracing Mary Ursula Bethell's life in East London was like putting together the pieces of a scattered jig saw puzzle. First a visit to Bishopsgate Institute where David Webb found three books with reference to Mary Ursula Bethell (1874-1945) who wrote twelve poems about the seasons in her New Zealand Garden. (Penguin book of New Zealand verse Pub:1991). A write up in *The Feminist Companion to Literature in England* Pub: B T Balford Ltd 1990. Two pages on her life in the *Bloomsbury Guide to Western Literature* Pub: Bloomsbury Press 1992.

The archives of Oxford House and St Margaret's House Settlements are deposited at Bancroft Road History Library E.1. They are not listed. A reference to setting up of a Women's University Settlement Committee by Cheltenham and Oxford Lady undergraduates group in Oxford House minutes 1887. Then references in St Margaret's House minutes of exchange visits to Greyladies and Lady Margaret Hall, led me to visit the London Record Office and the Minute Library, Knatchbull Rd S.E.5 where Lady Margaret Hall's twelve boxes of registers unlisted are deposited (1897-1952.) A Miss Gunn is listed as a helper in a reports of 1908-9-10. Plus a donation from a Mrs C.H.Bethell 1921.

The Woodlands History Library, Blackheath found a newspaper reference to Greyladies Settlement 1893. Part of St Paul's church and mission hall, Lorriane St S.E.17. Then the London Directories solved the other clues. The New Zealand Soldier's Association was in 1917-18-19-20 at No 17,18,23, Russell Square W.C.1. The Weavers Studios 1914-15-16 at No 6 Denmark St with M Endes and Elizabeth Green as Handweavers and Anne Martin as dressmaker.

I have printed out dates of East End settlements that I found while researching this letter. Maybe members would like to extend this list so we could have a reference of all settlements, missions etc in the East End and their fate. Three more interesting charities noted were: No 21

Old Ford Road had belonged to the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews 1815-1840. Then it became the Female Guardian Society from 1840-1900 to reform prostitutes. Its grand title was Guardian Society for providing Temporary Asylum with suitable employment for Females who have deviated from the paths of virtue and who have been awakened by conscience to a sense of their guilt and danger and to forsake their evil course. These woman were employed in washing and needlework.

Lady Aberdeen was President of the Greyladies settlement and her husband was President in 1894 of the society of Watercress and Flowergirls Mission and Guild founded 1867 in Foresters Hall Clerkenwell. Its branches included Orphanage Home for little Waif Girls, a Baby Villa, a Children's Cottage Hospital, a Convalescent and Holiday Home and the Flower Village at Great Clacton.

HIDDEN LIVES

The following information on Settlements was compiled by Doreen Kendall with additional material on some of the settlements in Poplar, Bow and the Isle of Dogs from Rosemary Taylor's notes on "Women in East London."

Obviously, the list is not a comprehensive one, and we would be pleased to hear of any more Settlements in East London, which we would be happy to make known to our members. This could be the basis for an article in a future East London Record, perhaps, or even form a booklet on settlements and other charitable institutions in East London, for there are more that do not fit into the category of a settlement, yet provided valuable support and help to the most vulnerable sections of East End society. The work of Mary Hughes, for example, at the "Dew Drop Inn" on Valance Road, is one such place; Helen MacKay at the Settlement on East India Dock Road is another unsung heroine of Poplar, and the hardworking deaconesses at Brunswick Hall, Limehouse, and the Sailor's Bible Woman in Stepney in the late 19th century are still unknown to many of us.

LADIES OF CHARITY

The following is a list of some of the dates when East End Settlements opened:

1884

Oxford House E2 and Toynbee Hall E1 Settlements opened by Oxford Undergraduates. Both institutions have continued their work and have expanded and adapted their activities to meet the needs of present-day East London.

1884

Durning Hall in Elsa Street, Limehouse was opened by Jemima Durning. The family (Durning-Lawrence) founded Aston Charities Trust. The settlement expanded and in 1895 a new Durning Hall was built. It was bombed in 1940, and closed in 1946.

Durning Hall moved to Forest Gate in 1950. In 1957 a second Durning Hall was opened in Earlham Grove West Ham endowed by Theodora Durning Lawrence. Durning Hall is still in existence and continues its work.

1886

The University House Settlement opened No 16-17 Victoria Park Square.E.2

1887

Women's University Settlement Committee set up
1889 Mayfield House Women's Settlement opened on 9th October. A substantial house with fifteen rooms in a square built around the Museum Green. Opened by Cheltenham Ladies College Guild with support from the Ladies Branch of Oxford House shortened to LBOH. This title was used long after the parting of Oxford and Cheltenham groups.

1892

St Margaret House 7yr lease taken by LBOH at No.4 Victoria Park Square.E.2. Accommodation for 8/9 Ladies. Three living rooms and offices. Then in 1895 St Margaret's moved into 24 Victoria Park Square because it would house five more residents. The Mayfield House settlement moved to Shoreditch and became St Hilda's East Settlement at No 3 Old Nichol St E2. In 1896 St Margaret's House moved again into University House adjacent to University Club for Working men. After three years the LBOH decided

not to renew the lease and bought the address we know today as No 21 Old Ford Road for Three Thousand Six Hundred Pounds. A chapel was designed by Paul Waterman and remained unscathed through out the bombing of two world wars.

1892

The Canning Town Women's Settlement opened at 461 Barking Road known in 1900 as Fairbairn Hall. Attached was the Keir Hardy Hall, where Keir Hardie set up the first Labour Party office in West Ham. In 1909 the settlement moved to Cumberland Road. The first warden was Rebecca Cheetham, later very active in local politics, becoming a Guardian and Councillor. In 1967 Aston Charities bought the Canning Town Women's Settlement, and it reopened as Lawrence Hall in 1969.

1893

'Greyladies' St Pauls, Blackheath founded. Fifteen Ladies in residence and fifty seven affiliated members. Their dress of grey and black was worn during working hours. The settlement today is a housing trust.

1894

Malvern College Oxford Mission later known as Dockland Settlement opened in Tidal Basin and Mayflower Family Centre.

1896

St Helens House Stratford opened to support Oxfords Trinity College Mission.

1897

St Frideswide's Settlement opened in Lodore Street. Christ Church Oxford supported the building of St Frideswide's Church, but Mission House was built by Catherine Mary Phillimore. In 1898 she also built the Jerusalem Coffee House in Lodore Street, which housed the Society for the Befriending of Servant Girls.

The church had a wooden door carved by Alice Hargreaves (nee Liddell, daughter of the Dean of Christ Church, and close friend of the Revd. Charles Dodgson, who as Lewis Carroll, wrote Alice in Wonderland for her). The Mission and the church were destroyed in the World War II bombings and the door was rescued and is now in St Frideswide's church, Oxford. The ruins of the church and part of the Mission House are still identifiable, as is the Coffee House, which has been turned into apartments.

East End Settlements contd...

1897

St Mildreds Settlement opened at West Ferry Road on the Isle of Dogs. St Mildred's House was opened as a centre where "Ladies can reside for religious, social and educational work amongst the women and girls of this somewhat isolated district." Another settlement that fell victim to enemy action in the 2nd World War, they continued their work after the war, first in the ruins of their building and then in the present St Mildred's House in Castalia Square, Isle of Dogs. Miss Wintour was wellknown for her work there for many years.

1897

Lady Margaret Hall opened at 129 Kennington High Street S.E.11. This settlement was not far from Westminster Bridge Road, remained on this site till 1980 when area was redeveloped. Moved to 460 Wandsworth Road S.W.8

1899

Ladies Settlement, a Presbyterian Settlement was opened at Esk House, 58 East India Dock Road. Henry Robson purchased the house, and Mrs Ellis Hewitt was the first Superintendent. A report published in 1899 states: 'It is thought that young ladies going abroad as Missionaries may be glad to get some previous experience.... and that others may be willing to take quarters there for six or twelve months, devoting themselves to visiting, nursing and evangelistic work in the district.'

In 1910 Miss Helen Mackay took over as Warden at Esk House where she continued for nineteen years. Miss Mackay became very involved in local community work in Poplar, where she remained for over twenty-five years. A great friend of George Lansbury, Nellie Cressall and Julia Scurr, she became a Guardian, Care Committee worker, School Manager (Upper North Street School) and in 1924 was made a Justice of the Peace. A quiet self-effacing woman, she is still remembered by elderly residents of Poplar for organising the Country Holiday Fund over many years. She also organised the Young Suffragettes, as part of Sylvia Pankhurst's activities in the East End, assisting in May Day Processions and Pageants, for which she received grateful acknowledgement.

In his farewell address given on 7 September 1935 the

Mayor of Poplar D M Adams MP, described Helen Mackay as the Fairy Godmother of the Borough. Miss Clara Grant presented her with a bouquet of carnations on the occasion. The Settlement was used for Presbyterian church services after the church in Plimsoll Street was bombed in 1940. It closed in the 1960's (exact date to be verified.)

1900

Clara Grant was appointed Head Teacher of the Devon's Road School in 1900. Her desire to help the families of the children in her care led to her setting up in 1907 the Fern Street Settlement in Bromley-by-Bow. Her inspiration was Canon Barnett of Toynbee Hall fame, and funding came from Joseph Fels the American millionaire and philanthropist, and Mr and Mrs Richard Green of Blackwall.

This settlement differed from the University Settlements in that Clara Grant started out on her own, in a small rented house, which she shared with lodgers - homeless families she took in over the years. The accommodation increased to three houses, as the need grew, but Clara Grant lived and worked among her poor neighbours, as one of them, until her death in 1945. Collecting clothes, toys and anything useful, she and her workers made up farthing bundles, and she became known as the "Bundle Woman of Bow". Children paid a farthing each, but only those small enough to walk under a wooden arch were allowed to buy a parcel. The Fern Street Settlement is still in existence and the wooden arch, though no longer in use, is on display.

1912

Doris and Muriel Lester started their work in Bow at No. 60 Bruce Road. In 1914 they bought an old chapel at the corner of Eagling Road and set up the first Kingsley Hall. In 1928 the present Kingsley Hall in Powis Road was opened. Again, this settlement differed from the University Settlements, for it was funded by the two sisters, who dedicated their lives to their work amongst the poor families of Bow. A second branch of Kingsley Hall was opened in Dagenham, during the 1930's and is still in existence. In 1931 Mahatma Gandhi stayed at Kingsley Hall during his visit to England, and a plaque commemorating this occasion is on the wall of the building in Powis Road.

BOOKS ETC.

FATHER MATHEW And the Irish Temperance Movement 1838 - 1849 by Colm Kerrigan. Cork University Press 1992.

Price £25.00

Colm Kerrigan is better known to all of us as the editor of the East London Record. He has been working on this book for some considerable time, and it must give him great satisfaction to see the fruits of his labour in print at long last.

This book is more than a chronicle of Father Mathew's crusade against drink. It is also a critical analysis of the key issues that were central to his work, which resulted in the Mathewite temperance movement. It examines the influence the movement had on drink consumption and on crime, the manner in which superstitious beliefs both helped and hindered it and the attitude of the Catholic clergy. The book also attempts to assess the long term significance of the Irish Temperance Movement.

Advance Information

IN LETTERS OF GOLD, The Story of Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Federation of the Suffragettes in Bow by Rosemary Taylor (Stepney Books 1993)

Price £4.95

In *Letters of Gold* describes the origins of Women's Suffrage in the East End of London. It is illustrated with fifty photographs of places in Bow and the women associated with Sylvia Pankhurst and the campaign to win votes for women.

In 1912 the first East London branch of the Women's social and Political Union was set up in an old baker's shop in Bow Road. In describing her feelings at the start of her East End Campaign, Sylvia Pankhurst wrote:

"I regarded the rousing of the East End as of utmost importance...The creation of a women's movement in that great abyss of poverty would be a call and a rallying cry to the rise of similar movements in all parts of the country".

The women of the East End who heard Sylvia's rallying

Matched and Despatched

Marriage and Obituary Notices - 1882(Lynn Advertiser, Norfolk). Volume 6. Published December 1992. Janice Simons.

Price (including p&p) £5.00. Enq. 17 Kingscup, Pandora Meadows, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 3HF

Janice has produced this volume as part of her highly successful series. Our members must by now be familiar with her story of successful publication through sheer hard graft, but then, she knew she had a winning formula and sales of volumes 1-5 have proved this beyond any doubt.

This volume is a collection of all marriage and death notices from the Lynn Advertiser and West Norfolk Herald for 1882 and contains events in many locations outside the county. The book is indexed by surnames as well as by place names, making it doubly valuable. A must for family historians and one-name researchers.

cry were those in the sweated trades, such as the bootmakers, brushmakers, matchmakers, as well as "ropemakers, waste-rubber cleaners, biscuit-packers, women who plucked chickens too often "high" for canning, and those who made wooden seeds to put in raspberry jam."

Through the pages of her book the author takes us on a walk through Bow identifying the historical sites of the activities of the East London Suffragettes. To those familiar with the area, it promises a trip down memory lane, with a few surprises. Some of the photographs will bring more than a touch of nostalgia for the fresh young faces of the girls in Victoria Park will be recognised by many who were there at the time.

But the book is more than a recollection of times past, it forms a major contribution to the history of the East End and to Women's Studies.

-
- As part of the Celebration of International Women's
 - Day - 8th March 1993 there will be a Walk around Bow
 - in the Footsteps of the East London Suffragettes,
 - starting at Victoria Park, Lakeside cafe at 12.30pm,
 - and finishing up at Bow Road, near Gladstone's statue
 - The Walk should last about two hours. There will be a
 - charge of £1.00 per head.
-

PROGRAMME NEWS

1993

Thursday 21 January

Poplar and the Councillors who went to Jail in 1921
Gillian Rose

Thursday 18 February

Coopering & the history of The Coopers Company
This is now scheduled as an illustrated talk
David Barker

Thursday 11 March

Paper and Printing in East London
Alfred French

Thursday 22 April

Rebuilding of Docklands and the Remaking of its 'History'
Darrel Crilley

Thursday 6 May

Life and Times of Victoria Park in Pictures

Saturday 15 May

Victoria Park - The Walk
Doreen Kendall and Rosemary Taylor
Meet at 1.30 pm near the Cafe at the Grove Road/Old
Ford Road entrance.
PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE IN TIMING.

June - Visit to The Heritage Centre Spitalfields
Details to be confirmed.

Note:

**ALL LECTURES WILL NOW BE HELD IN THE
HALL OF THE LATIMER CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH, ERNEST STREET, STEPNEY.**

How to get there:

From Mile End Underground Station walk towards QM
&W college and take a left turn into Harford Street,
then right into Ernest Street.

From Stepney Green Underground Station, cross over
Mile End road, turn into White Horse Lane then left
into Ernest Street. The church is approximately half way
down Ernest Street and is prominently sign-posted.
Refreshments are available on arrival and during the
break.

NOTICE BOARD

Commemorative Plaques

JACK KID BERG

On 1st February a plaque to the East End Boxer Jack
Kid Berg is being unveiled by Rabbi Lawrence Rigel
and the Bishop of Stepney at Noble Court, Cable
Street. The ceremony at 2 pm will be followed by a
reception at the Crown and Dolphin, where Councillor
Lilley will give a talk of the life and times of the famous
boxer.

Preceding this event, on the 30th January a dance is
being held at the Dockers Club, Boulcott Street, off
Commercial Road, Stepney. Details from the Wapping
Historical Trust, or the History of Sailor Town
bookshop in Tobacco Dock.

THE BETHNAL GREEN TUBE DISASTER

A memorial plaque to the victims of this tragedy is
being unveiled by the Bethnal Green Neighbourhood in
March 1993. Details from Doreen Kendall.

The full story on this tragic event can be found in the
latest East London Record No. 15, NOW ON SALE.

Events at Oxford House

Exhibition on the History of the Suffragette Movement
in East London, including photographs of local women
and children, posters etc., will be on display at Oxford
House from 8th March to 26th March in the Cafe.

Tuesday 16th March - 6.00 pm

Talk with slides and photographic exhibition on Sylvia
Pankhurst and the East End Women who fought for
the right to vote, by Rosemary Taylor.

The Talk will be held in the Cafe of Oxford House,
which has wheelchair access. Light refreshments
available.

Any member wishing to publicise an event or bring to the
notice of our readers any recently-published books or
items they feel are newsworthy are welcome to send in
their reports.

BOOKS WANTED

UPDATE

I am pleased to say the suggestion regarding a book search was received with enthusiasm by our members. Below is a list of books currently on the list.

I have already been able to supply some of our members with books, mostly second-hand, but in the case of one of our members up North who has had considerable difficulty in purchasing local history books, we have been happy to supply him books currently on the shelves.

We were able to supply *The Dock Strike 1889* (incidentally I still have a spare copy if anyone is interested), *East End 1888*, *Streets of East London*, both by W Fishman, and *Edith and Stepney* by Stepney Books.

In this venture I have had the expertise of Raymond Port, one of our members who ran a bookshop in Stratford, which has since ceased trading. Raymond was happy to oblige and was successful in supplying one of our members with the books he required. He is willing to seek out books secondhand and out of print, so keep your requests coming.

Printed alongside is a list of books being sought by our members..

If you are looking for a particular title, Please write to Rosemary Taylor, 5 Pusey House, Saracen St, Poplar, London E14 6HG.

A Hoxton Childhood

Clapton House - The Quest goes on by EMP Williams

East End Underworld by Raphael Samuel

Hackney 50 Years Ago by G Grocott

Homerton College 1695 - 1978 by Trustees of H C

Homerton, its History and Church by Heywood

People of the Abyss by Jack London

Rothschilds Buildings by Jerry White

Stepney Churches by Gordon Barnes

Victoria Park by Charles Poulson

Books for Sale

Mr E C Basson, 35 Abbots Road, Edgware, Middx, HA8 0QT has a large collection of books on East London history which he wishes to dispose of. The list is too long to print, but a number of them are current publications. He mentions that he also has a number of hard back books as well.

Please write to Mr Basson directly for further information, or titles you are looking for, or phone him on 081 959 6780.

The ELHS Newsletter is edited, typeset and produced by Rosemary Taylor, Chair, ELHS.

Editorial team: Doreen Kendall, Rosemary Taylor, John Harris and David Behr.

We welcome short articles, news snippets and details of research for inclusion in the Newsletter, which is published twice yearly. Information and enquiries should be sent to Doreen at the address below. We try to reply to all correspondence and do our best to assist members in their research. The editors reserve the right to amend, edit or condense letters and articles accepted for publication. The addresses of correspondents are not published unless specifically requested.

Information on subscriptions and membership may be had from John Harris, 15 Three Crowns Road, Colchester, Essex.

All other correspondence to: Doreen Kendall, Secretary, East London History Society, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, London, E2 0RF.

SPRING COACH TRIP

This will be on Saturday 8th May to Rochester and Upnor Castle. We shall begin by visiting Upnor Castle an Elizabeth fortress on the Medway in the picturesque village of Upnor. It was built to prevent invaders coming up the river, but failed at the only time it was needed, when the Dutch came in the 1660s. It has a display on the history of the Medway.

Then we go to Rochester where there will be a break for lunch (own arrangements), private looking around, shopping etc.

In the afternoon we shall have a guided walk round the city, which is quite compact and mainly pedestrianised, led by local guides from the City of Rochester Society. This will include a brief visit to Rochester Cathedral, which is England's second oldest, and there will be time afterwards for those who want a more detailed look. There are many other historic buildings in the city, including a 17th century Guildhall and an old Huguenot hospital. Tea will be arranged in Rochester.

The coach fare will be £6.75. Entry to Upnor Castle is £1.45 full rate or £1.10 concessions. (English Heritage ticket holders free). The guided tour will be £1.25 each.

Please send the coach fare only when booking, entry fees will be collected on the coach. The pick-up point will be at Mile End, opposite the station at 10.00 am.

BOOKING SLIP COACH TRIP 8.5.93

I/we would like _____ ticket/s for the coach trip. coach fare of £ _____ is enclosed.

(Please make cheque payable to the Society)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone No. _____

Please send to Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF. Tele No. 081 524 4506