

East London History Society

Newsletter

Christmas 1994

Vol.1 No. 7



FIFTY YEARS AGO - THE WINTER OF '44

September '44, the allied armies were advancing across France, the flying bomb sites on the French coast were being overrun. The attacks had lasted for 88 nerve-shattering days. A senior Cabinet Minister stated "The Battle of London is now over." Almost on cue, the V2 (long range rocket) began raining down on London and the South-East.

The long range rocket was 45 ft long, weighed 14 tons and travelled faster than the speed of sound. Launched from mobile platforms in Holland which were very difficult to detect, it carried a one ton warhead. As they came down anytime of the night or day and could land anywhere, it meant that you could be caught at home, at work, in a bus queue, or shopping. Against this background of sudden death, Londoners had to carry on with their everyday lives.

As the people of the East End moved towards the fifth Christmas of the war, there was the usual shortage of everything from coal to potatoes. You could line up at the butchers and hope that they still had a chicken or turkey when you got to the head of the queue, if not, make do with a rabbit. The Ministry of Food stated that a double ration of dried eggs would be available.

A partial lifting of the blackout was announced. After five years of war the poor old East End with its bomb battered streets looked much worse in the dim street lights.

In Victoria Park, the 11th and 12th Battalions of the Home Guard had their final parade before being stood down.

Railway workers were asking for a minimum wage of £4 10s per week.

The British radio industry said that they would soon be producing TV sets, but did not think that people would be able to afford them as the price would be at least £30.

December, and the weather was very cold, with fog and snow, and for many people this would be their last Christmas, because London would continue to be a target until just a few weeks before the war ended.

JOHN HARRIS

In May 1995 it will be fifty years since the war in Europe ended (V.E. Day).

We will be producing a special edition of the newsletter and we want all our members to write in with their memories of that day, where you were, what you were doing - if you were too young, what were your parents doing.

Rosemary Taylor has promised to publish all your letters as well as any longer pieces relating to that time. We've given you plenty of warning - so sharpen those pencils and get writing, we're waiting to hear from you!

Although we have been covering the war years in our newsletters, we have not gone into detail, for instance, of every V1 and V2 incident in the East End, as we simply do not have the space. We do hold records of most incidents, including casualty lists.

At a later date we intend to publish articles on the most serious incidents. We would welcome suggestions from our members on this particular period of East End history.

This Newsletter is published for the East London History Society. Letters, articles and news items may be sent to Rosemary Taylor, Chair, ELHS, 5 Pusey House, Saracen Street, Poplar, London E14 6HG. Tel 0171 515 2960.

East London Record No. 17 (1994-5)

The current East London Record is now available, priced at £2.50 plus 40p post and packing.

The Record contains an interesting and imaginative mix of articles and reminiscences, drawn from a variety of sources. There are fifteen illustrations. Contributors to this latest edition of the Record include:

❑ **Ivy Alexander**, who writes about her childhood in Canning Town, has had some of her memories published previously by the Newham History Society and the Chigwell and Loughton History Society. Her Record article is her most detailed and reflective work to date.

❑ **Harold Finch**, a youth officer in Tower Hamlets for 27 years, traces the history of the youth service in the borough from its nineteenth century origins to the present.

❑ **Les Jolly** played schoolboy football in Hackney in the nineteen thirties and recalls some of his games in Springfield Park, Hackney Marsh, Millfields and Victoria Park.

❑ **C J Lloyd** writes about an 'alternative' medical establishment in Stepney Green 100 years ago.

❑ **E J Erith's** 'An East London Business' traces the history of his family's firm of builders' merchants, which began at a wharf in Cambridge Heath in the eighteen forties.

❑ **Bruce Watson** writes on the results of excavations at Backchurch Lane, Whitechapel, organised by the Museum of London Archaeological Service in 1993.

The Record also includes the usual reviews and lists of books and articles relating to East London. There are fifteen illustrations. On sale at East London History Society meetings, at Eastside Books, The Ragged School Museum, Sutton House and a few other outlets.

Copies may be ordered by post from 13 Abbotsbury Close, Stratford, E15 2RR. Each copy sold helps to ensure that the **East London Record** continues to be one of the few local history publications that can survive without a subsidy. So treat your friends.....

COLM KERRIGAN

HACKNEY HISTORY PRIZE

A prize of up to £150 is being offered for a written report based on original (unpublished) research into any topic connected with the history of Hackney, the area included in the present London borough of Hackney, and the former metropolitan boroughs of Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke Newington.

The entry must not exceed 3,000 words. The closing date is 31 July 1995.

Further information from Hackney Archives Dept, 43 de Beauvoir Rd, London N1 5SQ.

The Influenza Epidemic of 1918- 1919

In June 1918 the world wide influenza epidemic reached Britain. It did not make much of an impact on the government, as this country had a long history of respiratory diseases especially in the working class industrial areas. After a short break the flu returned in November. This was not the usual strain of flu virus which, if caught, you retired to bed for a few days and took a dose of aspirin. This was a very different virus, this was a killer. Many people could leave home in the morning to go to work, and would collapse in the street and had to be rushed to hospital.

The death rate was highest among the 15- 60 age group, whose stamina should have been strong enough to withstand this disease. Many of the victims were young girls who travelled daily by tram from Poplar to their jobs in the city. The symptoms were headache, cold, then death within two days.

In Bethnal Green, because of a shortage of timber the undertakers ran out of coffins. The mortuary was full and a temporary mortuary had to be set up in Hackney Road (The Malthouse). People waiting to bury relatives began to make their own coffins out of any scrap wood that could be found including orange crates and fish boxes.

In one week 100 burials took place at Bow Cemetery and many more had to be refused. Each undertaker carried out 20 funerals per day, for this reason the undertakers in Stepney and Bethnal Green districts were reluctant to make a journey to Manor Park Cemetery as this would wear out the horses. They all wanted burial plots reserved in Bow Cemetery. This led to friction between the two groups, (including a fist fight).

The government suspended a law which stated no burials should take place after mid-day Saturday. Burials now continued over the

seven days. At Manor Park the army drafted in men to dig extra graves.

In a house in Abingdon Street, Bethnal Green, a person who died on November 11th was still there 3 weeks later. At Seebright Street, a child's body had been in the house for such a long time that it was in the advanced stages of decomposition.

Many factory and office workers were encouraged to smoke, based on the theory that the fumes would kill the flu germs. All London cinemas and theatres had to be fumigated between performances, and some London Boroughs banned children from cinemas.

Hackney Fire Brigade could not answer any calls, as there were no firemen to man the engines. Out of a ward staff of 30 at Hackney Hospital, only 2 were available for duty. The entire country was grinding to a halt. 50% of the Metropolitan Police were on the sick list, telephone calls were restricted to 2 hours per day as no switchboard operators were available.

In early 1919 the epidemic began to die out. The final death roll for the UK was 237,400. For the East End Boroughs of Stepney, Poplar and Bethnal Green. the death roll was 1,127.

Where did this virus come from? The medical profession has no idea. Will it ever return? The medical profession does not know.

JOHN HARRIS

**In Search of Captain James Cook and
Dame Alice Row (of Mile End)**

The Soanes Centre at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park have been given the opportunity to erect near to the Centre a plaque and Arch (pediment) that was part of the Almshouses that were erected near the corner of Mile End Road and Grove Road, and opposite York Place.

Today these six houses would have been on the edge of Mile End Park near the Church of the Guardian Angels. In the early 1980's this Plaque was saved and stored by the GLC when the area was cleared for the new Mile End Park.

On this site in 1673 a Thomas Grimby leased for 100 years a piece of land to the Church Wardens and Overseers of Stepney Parish, for the erection of four almshouses containing eight rooms to be built for poor seamen and widows, from money left by Captain James Cook and Dame Alice Row, his widow.

In 1786-9 a Joseph Bird was managing the properties, selecting the tenants and doing repairs at his own expense. Then in 1844 a Thomas Daplin left money for coals to be purchased for Christmas each year for the widows in these Almshouses.

The trustees in 1871 allowed a Henry Cocks of No. 393 Mile End Road to make use of the eastern wall as a party wall for the sum of twenty shillings.

In 1880, the Almshouses were in a very dilapidated condition and a builders agreement allowed six Almshouses - No. 1 - 6 Barnet Market, otherwise No. 391 a b c d e & f Mile End Road to be built at an annual lease of fifteen shillings each house for 70 years. David Daplin's gift was converted into new consuls of fifty pounds. These rents allowed eight widows four shillings a week

with an extra two and six a week during the ten weeks of winter. Seven of these widows had formerly been inmates of the old Almshouses. The average age of the widows was seventy three years. Widows had to be of reduced circumstances, infirm from age, or accident and ill health. These pensions were exclusively administered for the benefit of Mile End Old Town for residents who had lived in the Parish for longer than five years, although originally given for the benefit of Stepney Parish.

Do any of our members remember these Almshouses and the Plaque?

No photographs exist in the Bancroft Local History Library. Has anyone a postcard of these almshouses?

And finally, who were Captain James Cook and Dame Alice Row?

DOREEN KENDALL

**Save the Stoke Newington Reservoirs and
Filter Beds Campaign**

Thames Water has sought planning permission for the construction of 400 houses of 3 and 4 storeys on the site of the Filter Beds.

Listed and protected as a heritage and archeological site, it contains two of the first sand filtration beds to be constructed c 1855 to supply filtered water to the City of London in order to combat Cholera.

**Please contact David Bracken,
SRC, 71 Queen Elizabeth Walk,
London N16 for further information.
Tel: 081 800 4942**

Out and About with the ELHS

East of London Family History Society hosted a meeting at the Soanes Centre Tower Hamlets Cemetery on August 14th. What a superb afternoon this turned out to be for everyone. Their members ran a huge bookstall and non-stop teas all afternoon. Our Society's project of 16 panels entitled 'Every Stone Tells a Story' was on display and Rosemary gave a lecture on the history of the Cemetery, followed by a guided tour. About 80 people were in attendance, so two walks had to be organised around the grounds, based on the History Trail we had researched. Each walk was so successful, we over ran our time, and search parties were sent out to track us down!

Many members of the Family History Society were surprised and disappointed to learn that researching and locating graves was not a straightforward process, and that much of the work had to be done in the Greater London Record Office, locating square and grave numbers. Even then the chances of finding a grave were not certain. However, two members were successful in locating their family graves, and this has spurred others to return to continue their search.

We were again walking the Cemetery for the Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery on Sunday 18 September. There was a good attendance and our audience was intrigued by the stories we have uncovered of local people, famous, infamous and unknown. We have also had information supplied to us by people engaged in their own family research and this has added to our knowledge of this fascinating Cemetery.

The coach Outing to Grantham on Saturday 1 October took us on a long ride to our destination due to the roadworks on the M11. The weather did not help by deciding to rain all day.

Trinity Green Almshouses were under the spotlight in October when the residents opened their homes to reporters and Hermione Hobhouse, general editor of the Survey of London to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Survey of London which all began when C R Ashbee, architect and conservationist, amongst other things, made an impassioned plea to save the Almshouses from demolition. His monograph on the Trinity Hospital in Mile End published in 1896 was soon followed by the parish volumes, the very first being that of Bromley by Bow in 1900.

This event is also being marked by an exhibition at the Museum of London, and the publication of a book, London Survey'd: the work of the Survey of London 1984-1994.

One of our members, Lella Raymond, was on hand to greet the RCHM and play host to the press. She has done considerable research into the history of Trinity Green and has produced some useful reference notes.

The first of our season's lectures was on Thursday 29 September and the subject was the London Hospital and the Mercers' Company - examples of respectable landlords in the East End from the Victorian period, by Mona Paton. This was greatly enjoyed by our audience, and it was good to see some new faces. Our lectures are becoming increasingly popular with the change of venue. Mona Paton and her husband will be familiar to those who frequent the library, and her entertaining lecture was the result of years of research which she has carried out for a dissertation.

On 27 October we held our AGM which was followed by a lecture by Michael Essex-Lopresti. This was a vivid account of the development and history of the Regent's Canal. Michael Essex-Lopresti has published a well informed book on the Canal - Exploring the Regents Canal, price £7.95 + p&p from the London Canal Museum.

Michael Essex-Lopresti has spent over twenty years exploring the canal and its history and has a wealth of documentary evidence to support his talk. The well attended lecture was treated to a professional slide show, in which the use of a double projector made viewing a real delight as he merged frames with the expertise of a true professional. This was followed by a short film of his journey down the canal to Limehouse Basin. He went into great detail about the land, cost of labour, the people who worked the canal and the archeological evidence of how the work was carried out.

Our Society's Treasurer, Philip Mernick gave us a fascinating talk on Tokens and Medals of the East End. We can only say that those who missed this talk deprived themselves of a unique opportunity of seeing the history and growth of trade and industry through the eyes of a collector. Philip has put examples from his collection on slide to illustrate his point that reading the inscription on a market token can reveal a wealth of information about the trader or firm. Tokens were used as a form of currency going back hundreds of years, as payment for items such as sacks, boxes and pallets, glass bottles, or even for work done. The New Globe Public House, Mile End, would sell tokens for admission and refreshments to be taken.

The last lecture before going to press was on the History of Soke Newington, an illustrated talk by Peter Foynes. The hall was packed to capacity, and we should not have been surprised by the popularity of the subject, which was skilfully dealt with by Peter Foynes in a series of slides showing buildings and houses past and present..

DOREEN KENDALL

What's On in the Weeks Ahead

On the 14 December the Ragged School Museum and the East London History Society as holding Quiz Night, which will be followed by refreshments and perhaps a musical interlude.

As the Museum hold only a limited number of people we have had to sell tickets on a first come, first served basis at our lectures and at the Ragged School Museum. We hope to have an entertaining and enjoyable night, and if it is successful, we will consider another event in the summer, and possibly include a greater number of people.

Our Congratulations to Eve Hostetler and the Island History Trust for scooping the 1994 Raymond Williams Award for community publishing, organised by the Arts Council. The Award was for their latest book 'Memories of Childhood on the Isle of Dogs.'

Many of our members may be aware that the Trust has been under considerable financial constraints, as a result of which their monthly newsletter has now become an occasional one. However, the award is doubly useful in that it not only proves the value of the work the Trust has been carrying out under the able guidance of Eve Hostetler, but it also recognises the worth of local history publications.

You can support the work of the Trust by buying their 1995 calendar which is on sale, inc postage, £6.00. Send your cheque to the Trust at Island House, Roserton Street, London E14 3PG.

**Toucans and Tapestries -
Autumn Coach Trip to Belton House**

It began badly, a rainy morning driving up the A1 to Grantham, held up in places by heavy traffic. It was a relief to arrive at last.

Having eaten some sandwiches in the coach, Betty and I set out at once to see the town. The most famous thing in it I suppose is Mrs Thatcher's birthplace, but we made a beeline for the church, whose tall spire dominated the view as we approached. Once we were right in the town, we could not see it. However signposts pointed the way along quiet back streets with unexpected little corners.

Inside the church we had a pleasant surprise, an unexpected bonus. It was all decorated for Harvest Festival and various special events were taking place. Musicians were playing, and up a little staircase there was a chained library. Some of its treasures were displayed in a glass case. Another visitor, with the permission of the librarian, had got a book out and turned its pages. It was a 16th century by Gesenius. The page he was looking at showed two alternative views of a toucan, one quite accurate, the other less so.

The librarian got out the other volume of the book, and turned to the rhinoceros. The picture here was based on Durer's famous engraving, which manages to be both lifelike and wrong. Durer had obviously never seen one himself, and put the horn in the wrong place and turned its leathery skin into a veritable suit of armour. It made me think how wonderful it must have been to live then when so many new things were being discovered. Unlike the earlier mediaeval bestiaries the creatures described are real rather than imaginary, and it shows the beginning of a scientific outlook.

We had time for a quick cup of tea and cake in the church, and then back to the coach. A short drive and we were at Belton House, the main object of our trip

Belton House was built in the late 17th century, and some rooms are still as originally built. There is some exceptionally fine plasterwork by one Edward Goudge - I wonder if he was related to the West Ham and Stepney Goudges I once researched? There are also 'School of Grinling Gibbons' carvings. Others were remodelled in the 18th century to suit changing tastes.

We moved from room to room, each one more sumptuous than the last - rich furniture, tapestries, bed hangings, porcelain, pictures, carpets, and the silverware belonging to Speaker Cust. By the time we had gone through the large house, and down to the kitchens, there was not much time left for the gardens. The old kitchen looks authentic but the 'iron' ranges are really a sham, painted plywood made for a TV programme!

In any case it was damp outside, though the rain had stopped. We rather rushed round the gardens and I went into the parish church at the far end. It is almost like a private chapel, full of family monuments. There is however a chapel in the house itself, I wondered why they needed it!

It was a lovely day in spite of the weather, but the highlight for me was the toucan.

ANN SANSOM

Stop Press Stop Press Stop Press

We have been fortunate in getting David Webb, of the Bishopsgate Institute, wellknown to East of London Family History members, and indeed to many of our members, for our first lecture in the new year. This will be on 2 February, on East End Photographic Studios (upto 1914). Please make a note in your diary, as this talk was not included in our Programme.

Researchers' Requests

Following a number of requests from our members and readers that the addresses of those requesting information and help in research be published in full, so that they may be contacted directly, we are doing so in this newsletter.

If, however, you do NOT wish to have your address published, we would be grateful if, on writing to us, you state this specifically.

David Hart, 42 All Saints Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14 7LL is in search of his East End roots:

I have been trying to find out more about my family history in East London. Although I was born in Wales, my parents had gone there from London at the beginning of the 2nd War, my father sent there to work in public health. He came from Mile End and my mother from Leyton. As a child I made occasional visits to my grandparents and I still have a strong feel for the area, as if I know it in my bones.

My father died many years ago and my mother lives now in a quite different part of the country, so the direct links are broken, but I want to find out as much and understand as much as possible of our history to hand on to my children.

I've been to the Bancroft Road Library several times, looking at the Census and so on, and I'd like to say what a friendly and helpful place that is. I was there again the other day and this time discovered the East London Record, and bought several issues of it along with other local history publications.

I don't know how possible it is to put requests for information into circulation; I do know luck plays a good part in these things, so I'm sending this letter in the hope of

perhaps making contact with anyone who recalls anything - and there could be people from branches of the family still living there.

My father was Alfred James Hart, his father was Alfred Chappell Hart, his father was Alfred Hart, the last of these in the 1880's married to an Alice Copeland. My father's mother was Sarah Elizabeth (Restell) Hart, who father was Henry Charles Restell, (also spelt Restall), who was married to Mary Ann Lewis, whose father was William Lewis. They seem to have been poor people, working at labouring, portering, in the tea and work trades amongst others, home tailoring, living in the streets south of Mile End Road: Eric Street, Canal Road, St Ann's Road (as was), Shandy Street and Coutts Road (also as was).

My mother was born Doris Lilian Cole, her father was George William Cole, a bus driver, her mother Annie Edith Brown and her mother Florence Lillian Stanley, whose father back in the 1870s was Joseph Stanley. They lived from the 1930s in Leyton High Road and streets off it: Canterbury Road, Grange Park Road, Thornhill Road.

Sheila Stonham, 7 Morrab Place, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 4DG writes:

I am researching in connection with the family of Holbrow. I believe they originated in the Gloucester area and a younger son, possibly Daniel 'settled in London' around the 18th century. From the 19th century census returns I have discovered there were Holbrows in the Hackney area and later in Bow. In the Public Library I came across a book written by the Rev. Holbrow about the Gloucester family who mentioned the London connection.

I would appreciate any information in connection with this family.

Michael Simmons, 64 Melbury Gardens, London SW20 ODJ, is looking for the Salvation Army connection:

My specific interest relates to the early years of the Salvation Army in the East End. My grandfather, Charles Jeffries, born in Shadwell in 1864, was a 'skeleton army' leader before being converted by the SA, which he served for the rest of his life.

Have you any articles, or do you have members/experts on this area (from say 1860 - 1900)? this would include any information on street fights, court cases, etc, which they caused.

R W Sexton, 109 Dalebrook Road, Winshill, Burton on Trent, Staffs, DE15 OAE is looking for help in tracing his family tree:

My grandmother, Mary Ann Emmerson married a George Edward Gunton at the church of All Hallows. East India Docks on March 28th 1886. It is possible that she had 2 children before she was married whilst she was a domestic servant. George Gunton was not the father.

An uncle, Robert Charles Gunton, was born at 21 Culloden Street on June 7th 1894. My mother, Dorothy Louisa Gunton, was born in 1897 at 449 East India Dock Road. There were 2 other natural brothers, George and Herbert, but no dates or address are known.

What I am really asking is, have you by any chance in your Society archives, the 1891 Census returns covering the above addresses?

Any information you have would be very much appreciated, with any reasonable costs incurred met by return

Editor's Note:

The Bancroft Local History is the obvious place to start your research, but Burton on Trent is a long way from Mile End! Can any of our members help Mr Sexton in his research?

Christmas Boxes 1760

Mile End Old Town in the mid-eighteenth century was the home for a wide range of fairly wealthy merchants, mariners, brewers and farmers, and some of their homes can still be seen in Stepney Green and in the houses newly restored by the Spitalfields Trust in Ireland Row on the Mile End Road.

One of the most important citizens was Stephen Martin Leake, Herald at Arms, whose family had a small estate from 1719 until at least 1780 by Lady Leake's Grove, now known as Adelina Grove.

Stephen kept detailed accounts for most of his life and in 1760 recorded the cost of Christmas boxes as follows:

The St Thomas's Men	1-0 Sh
Beadle	2-0
Milkman	1-0
Lampman	1-0
Postman	1-0
Turncock	1-0
Watchman	1-0
Marshal of Militia	1-0
Newswoman	1-0
Greenwich Pensioner	2-6
Bayliff of the Hundred	5-0
Baker	2-6
Butcher	2-6
Poulterer	2-6
Cheesemonger	1-0

The 'turncock' worked for the Water Works company, whose reservoir was just north of what is now New Globe Tavern and Regents Canal.

There are two problems I would like help with. First, who were the 'St Thomas's Men'?

Second, there was also a tip to the 'Melina Messenger', which I do not understand. Was it a ship or boat?

We know that the Leakes lived well for he gave his wife about sixteen pounds a month for housekeeping for a family with five children and two or three servants; this at a time when a labourer lived on ten shillings a week.

In addition Stephen Leake was constantly receiving supplies of 'mountain wine', brandy, beer, salmon, oysters, trout, beef, rhubarb and quinces from friends and neighbours.

Needless to say each delivery involved another tip!

For those who would like to know more the Leake accounts are on microfilm in the Bancroft Library.

DEREK MORRIS

Derek also writes:

I am still working away at Mile End Old Town 1740 to 1780 and continue to get enquiries about my database, which has over 4000 land tax payers. I have now tied the land tax records into the manorial records and the many deeds at the Bancroft library so that any property can now be found within 100 yards or so.

I have also 'rediscovered' the Mile End estate of the Bethlem and Brideswell Hospitals and hope to have an article published.

Limehouse Mystery Solved

Our President Mr Alfred French has solved for us the mystery of the cup and saucer marked 'A present from Limehouse'. He writes:

I see no mystery in the little piece of china marked 'A present from Limehouse'. Over the turn of the century, a firm in Germany manufactured small china trinkets (ash trays, jewel boxes, vases etc) and they were exported in quantity to England. Small entrepreneurs bought these cheaply and they were made available to fairs, retreats, seaside places etc and the name of the place was inscribed, usually by transfer, to give them a local appeal. I had a china jewel box with 'A present from Millwall' on it in gold lettering. It was beginning to fade and was smashed when the house was bombed. I remember seeing one with 'Greetings from Poplar' in one of the local museums.

These were usually bought by children for a few pence to take home to Mum and Dad. It is interesting to note that in the twenties a number of children had a holiday in East London! They stayed with their aunts and uncles or grandparents. For children living in the provinces the change was a holiday. Of course now they go to more exotic places.

I was fascinated by the item 'Around and About with the ELHS'. If you would like me to contribute some notes to this feature in a later newsletter, I will do so. Incidentally, Miriam Moses was very interested in the Society and I tried to get her to give us a talk but she was too busy. She was generally well liked particularly for the work she did for the Jewish community.

Editor's Note:

We were pleased to have the Limehouse mystery resolved so quickly, and I am now keeping my eyes peeled for these trinkets in antique markets. I would love to get a Poplar one!

I do hope we hear more about Miriam Moses so that we can build up a dossier on her in time for the centenary celebrations next year.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we would love to hear from you, and promise to publish your stories. I also try to put in as many letters as I can. However, if you do want to see your contributions in print, please put in as much contemporary detail as possible. Anecdotal offerings are fine, but 'the good old days, when everything was so much better than it is today, when we had the Empire and were proud to be British and what a shame its all gone to rack and ruin' train of thought is not likely to be printed. Having said that, don't forget, our next publication is a VE Day Special. We're waiting to hear from you.

Stanley Tongue Memorial Lecture

The tenth annual Stanley Tongue memorial lecture (commemorating Hackney's first borough archivist) will be given by Keith Sugden on Wednesday 3rd May 1995 at Sutton House (2-4 Homerton High Street, E9). The subject will be *Archaeology in Hackney*, the subject of Keith's forthcoming book. The lecture will begin at approximately 8 pm, following the Friends of Hackney Archives AGM which begins at 7.30 pm. All members of the ELHS are very welcome to attend the lecture. Grumbolds cafe-bar at Sutton House will be open for meals.

PROGRAMME UPDATE

Thursday 2 February 1995

7.30 pm

East London Photographic Studios from the early days to 1914 - An illustrated talk by David Webb

Thursday 23 February 1995

7.30 pm

East London Sailors - A talk by Alfred French (President ELHS)

Thursday 30 March

7.30 pm

Asylums and Academies, the after-life of Hackney's Grand House - An illustrated talk by Isobel Watson

Thursday 27 April

7.30 pm

The Largest School in the World: the Jewish Free School in Spitalfields 1817-1939 - A talk by Gerry Black

Thursday 25 May

7.30 pm

Shops and Street Markets in East London - Members' Open Evening

It would be helpful if you could let Rosemary Taylor (071 515 2960) know if you wish to do a presentation on the Open Evening. We can then allot some time for each speaker, to ensure that there is a space for everyone. Please bring your slides, photographs and ephemera to share your research with the other members.

Billy Scotchmer's Memories of Bow

I have lived away from Bow for many years now but because of its attraction to me I make a point of a twice monthly visit to nostalgically sample the haunts of my youth.

Last Sunday, like many before it, I alighted from the No. 8 bus at the end of its journey outside Bow church where the old Empire Cinema stood. In the old days these buses terminated at Clay Hall garage, at the bottom of Blondin Street in Old Ford Road. Crossing Bow Road by Gladstone's statue, I turned left down Fairfield Road passing the Town Hall which is now an imposing edifice of granite and brick, and came to my old school still as it was in my young days. I wonder what became of class 3B of 1935. Mr Ward was the headmaster and my teacher was Mr Barnett. I later moved from this school to more advanced learning, but its memory always stays with me. The cricket matches in nearby Grove Hall Park, boys skating in the playground and the occasional couple of cuts with the cane for my misdemeanours. I can still conjure up the smell of the polished wood floor in the assembly hall where we took morning prayers.

Further along Fairfield Road going toward Tredegar Road you passed the old Tram Shed still used as a bus garage, where as boys we would perilously climb up the sloping road hanging on to the outside of the railings, which are still there today.

There were two railway arches and then that wonderful building with its two towers, the Bryant & Mays Match Factory. I wonder how many remember the steam driven tractors that travelled to the River Lee from its back gate in Old Ford Road. All day long they would chug back and forth carrying the logs which were cut to make the matchsticks.

At the top of Fairfield Road turning left over the railway bridge is Tredegar Road. I remember the Out and Out Mission which

stood next door to Diablos the newsagents and the young cripple boy who was connected to it. He would push a barrow around the streets of Bow selling his packets of Mazawattee Tea.

I lived in Tredegar Road as a child. My friends and I would whip our tops along the road outside Kenans Works near Armagh Road and around the back of Morville Street where Gawthorne Street ran into Lacy Street (alas no more there), we would play our games of tippy cat, tin can copper, release etc by the old green water pump.

There is no St Stephens church now, where in the 1930s I was a Cub and later a Boy Scout. There was the kindly old vicar Mr Lancaster who always turned a blind eye when we played out games of cops and robbers or cowboys and indians among the trees and bushes of his churchyard. My mother always attended the Sunday service there and Mothers Meeting on Tuesday, she was a friend of Miss Archer, the organist.

While doing one of my walks I stopped to watch a modern day funeral. A large Mercedes Hearse with a coffin on board pulled up outside a house with two limosines following, very quickly it was draped in flowers and wreaths, the bereaved relatives escorted into the waiting cars and within minutes had sped off to the cemetery. How different from my young days when the deceased was laid out in the parlour for up to a week with a continuous procession of visitors going to view. On the day of the funeral the whole street was in mourning, blinds were drawn and black bands worn. The hearse pulled by four black geldings immaculately groomed would arrive followed by the horse drawn coaches for the bereaved to travel in. The coffin lid would then be screwed down after last respects had been paid, and the coffin loaded onto the hearse with much dignity. The relatives draped in their black clothes, which were worn for a long period after the funeral, would be

escorted out to their seats in the coaches and the procession moved off, led by the Undertaker resplendent in his top hat and frock coat, carrying his baton of office. The whole neighbourhood turned out, heads were bowed and hats removed, all traffic halted and the hearse and coaches would go on their slow peaceful journey to the cemetery.

If you walk down Addington Road from Bow Road you come to what was known in my day as Tom Thumbs Arch. It was a small white tiled alleyway under the main railway line from Liverpool Street to the East Coast and you came out the other side at the top of Mostyn Road. It is still there today and unchanged apart from the approaches to it. On our skates we would speed up and down the slopes which today seem an impossible feat, owing to its narrowness. I will always remember the old Indian in his turban, everybody called him Johnny, who would stand there on numerous weekdays selling silk ties and scarfs from his old and battered suitcase. I never saw him make a sale, how he lived I don't know.

I hope to do many more walks around my childhood haunts, for the one or two hours of nostalgic memories I get are worth months of the present day fast living.

W G Scotchmer writes:

Many thanks for the publication of my last article. I have enclosed another herewith which if suitable you may use (we have!) I also enclose a school certificate belonging to my father over 100 years ago. He was a true East Ender born and bred in Bethnal Green and Bow, you may use it how you wish but if not suitable for publication you may present it to Harold Mernick for his collection.

Your newsletter is second to none and always rekindles my nostalgia of those wonderful times in the past.

Editor's Note:

What can we say? We are very pleased with the response to the newsletter and do try to take all your criticisms on board to improve it as best we can.

Harold Mernick was delighted to be presented with William Scotchmer's school certificate, to add to his collection, which, by the way we plundered to use in our exhibition on The Education of Girls in East London.

Hope to hear more from you, Billy. Thank you once again.

John Cottingham and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion

I had a postcard from Elizabeth Horne who lives in Jersey, CI, who has been researching her family connections in the East End. She wanted to know if any of our members were interested in or had knowledge of the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel at Mile End.

John Cottingham was minister at the chapel at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. His first wife Elizabeth Sprogge was buried in the chapel in 1795 and John Cottingham died in Mile End New Town and was also buried in the chapel, which was in Hanbury Street.

By a strange coincidence, the day after I received the postcard I was shown some old magazines a friend had just bought, and as I picked up the top one it fell open to a page with a headline: What is Lady Huntingdon's Connexion? A paragraph detailed the origins of this religious denomination which was set up in 1770 by Selina, Countess of Huntingdon and a great friend of the Wesleys, who was, we are told, a great founder of chapels in the 18th century. The denomination was described as 'Calvinist Methodist of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion.'

Family names include Sinclair and Benjamin. Mrs Horne would welcome any help in research we can offer her.

Doreen's Bookshelf

Exploring the Regent's Canal by Michael Essex-Lopresti, Price £7.95, postage approx £1. 100 pages, A5 well illustrated with photos taken by the author and line drawings. From London Canal Museum, 12-13 New Wharf Road, Kings Cross, London, N1 9RT.

A charming A5 paper back of 14 pages, self published by the author, **Memories around Wanstead** is a must for any of our members who live around that area. Obtainable from the author Frank Copenale, 30 Dangan Road, Wanstead, London E11 2RF. Price £1 + 50p postage.

History of hospitals fascinate me and the **'Metropolitan', the Grey Lady of Hackney** by Molly St. P. Swords is no exception. A5, 48 pages at a cost of £4 postage approx £1, obtainable from the East of London Family History Society Bookstall, or on sale at Sutton House Bookshop.

The Survey of London, Volumes XLIII and XLIV: Poplar, Blackwall and the Isle of Dogs is now on sale, price £130 plus £7.50 p&p, from the Athlone Press, 1 Park Drive, London, NW11 7SG.

London Survey'd - The Work of the Survey of London 1894 - 1994 by Hermione Hobhouse, 96 pages £7.95, as above.

If you have read a good local history book, do tell us about it, and we will publicise it in the newsletter.

It often happens that little gems of local history appear in limited print runs, often self-published, which means the author lacks the necessary funds for marketing and publicity. They can contain a wealth of knowledge about a particular area or community, which can add vital information to one's own research, and often provides that missing piece of the jigsaw.

Don't keep it to yourself - Pass it On!

CALLING ALL HISTORY BUFFS

The Place - Tower Hamlets College, Poplar High Street, Poplar, E14

The Time - Tuesdays 7 - 9 pm

Starting from 17 January 1995

Exploring East End Heritage - 10 week series

Poplar Neighbourhood Community Education have introduced a new series of local history study sessions beginning with the Spring Term of 1995.

The sessions will be held at the Tower Hamlets College in Poplar High Street and will be led by Rosemary Taylor.

As this is a new venture, there will not be a rigid programme or structure, but we will begin with the history of Poplar and Blackwall, an area with a rich and varied past waiting to be explored.

It is envisaged that people will come along with their own memories of life in East London, with photographs to show, and opportunities for oral history and reminiscences.

There will also be opportunities to visit local place of interest, such as the churches and churchyards in the vicinity, and a walk around Blackwall, to view the spot from where the Virginia Settlers embarked. This means that one or perhaps two of the sessions will be held on a Saturday afternoon.

As part of Poplar Neighbourhood Community Education, usual adult education charges and conditions apply.

The Annual General Meeting of the East London History Society was held on Thursday 27 October 1994. All the committee members were re-elected unanimously. We welcomed two new members to the committee, Doreen Osborne and Bradley Snooks and we look forward to a lively and interesting year ahead.

SPRING COACH TRIP

SATURDAY 29 APRIL 1995

BRAINTREE AND BOCKING, ESSEX



*We shall be visiting Braintree and Bocking on Saturday April 29th,
(which is not a Bank Holiday weekend next year).*

Our first visit will be to the Braintree District Museum, housed in an old Victorian school. Its exhibition 'Threads of Time' tells the story of the district and its contribution to modern life. It includes silk and man-made textiles, metal windows, the 17th century naturalist, John Ray, and Great Bardfield's artistic community. We will have a guided tour. Adjoining the museum, in the old Town Hall, is an art gallery.

After a break for lunch (own arrangements) we shall visit the Working Silk Museum, nearby. Huguenots from Spitalfields brought the silk industry to Braintree in the early 19th century. Handlooms were installed in the New Mills building 150 years ago, and some of the same looms, now restored, are in use there today to weave silk for special orders. For instance, silk is being produced at present to replace curtains and wall coverings destroyed in the fire at Hampton Court.

Bocking nearby, has a fine church and some attractive old houses. We shall go on there after the Silk Museum. Tea will be arranged at Braintree or Bocking.

The coach fare is £5.75. The two visits will cost £4.30 total. This will be collected on the coach.

Please send bookings, with the coach fare to Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, Chingford, E4 7PF Tel 081 524 4506.

The pick-up will be at Mile End opposite the station at 9.30 am.

COACH TRIP 29 April 1995

I/we would like.....tickets for the coach trip. Enclosed a cheque/P.O for £..... (Payable to the East London History Society)

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL. NO. _____ National Trust Member? Yes/No

Please send to ANN SANSOM 18 HAWKDENE CHINGFORD E4 7PF