



St John's Church on Bethnal Green, c. 1910, which stands opposite the Underground station, just out of the picture, on the extreme right. Memorials services were held here in March 1993 and in March 2003 for the victims of the Tube Disaster.

CONTENTS:

Programme and Notes	3	Martha	7
Book reviews	4	Votes for Women	10
Letters to the Editor	5	What's in a Name? Bancroft and Jelley	12
What's on and Where	5	Bethnal Green Tube Disaster	13
Research in TH Cemetery Park	6	Memories of a Nursing Sister	15

Editorial Note:

The East London History Society Newsletter is edited, typeset and produced by Rosemary Taylor with the assistance of an editorial team comprising Philip Mernick, Doreen Kendall, David Behr, and Doreen Osborne.

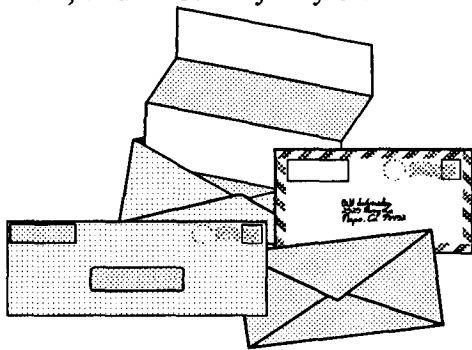
Letters and articles on East End history and reminiscences are always welcome and we make every effort to publish suitable material. Whilst hand-written articles are acceptable, items of interest that are typewritten or even better still, on disk will get priority!!

Enquiries to Doreen Kendall, 20 Puteaux House, Cranbrook Estate, Bethnal Green, London E2 0RF, Tel: 0208 981 7680, or Philip Mernick, email: phil@mernicks.com

All queries regarding membership should be addressed to Harold Mernick, 42 Campbell Road, Bow, London E3 4DT

Check out the History Society's website at www.eastlondonhistory.org.uk.

The present committee are: Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, Harold Mernick, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Ann Sansom, Doreen Osborne, Bob Dunn, and Rosemary Taylor.



Editor's Note:

The year 2003 marks a milestone in two significant events, that changed the lives of the people involved forever. The first event to be commemorated is the tragedy that occurred in March 1943, sixty years ago, at the entrance to the Bethnal Green Underground station. 173 men, women and children lost their lives, the worst civilian disaster of the Second World War.

Ten years ago Doreen Kendall painstakingly researched this tragic story, and her article with a full list of names and addresses of victims was published in the Record No. 15. This year, survivors and victims' families and friends are lobbying for a permanent memorial to be erected in Bethnal Green gardens, adjacent to the station. An abridged version of Doreen's article is included in this issue.

This years also marks the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Women's Social and Political Union, set up by Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Christabel, Sylvia and Adele, with the aim of getting women the right to vote. Sylvia Pankhurst came to the East End to set up branches of the WSPU in several areas, including Bow, Bethnal Green, Limehouse, Poplar and East Ham. Sylvia remained in Bow, living and working there for twelve years, during which time women did achieve their objective, although it was not until 1928 that all women over 21 were granted the right to vote. We look into the events, which led up to this milestone in women's history.

EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY PROGRAMME 2003

Thursday 30th January 2003

Mad Farming in East London 1800 to 1900
Speaker: Elaine Murphy

Thursday 27th February 2003

**South of Commercial Road: Aldgate to
Limehouse – Then and Now**
Speakers: Steve Kentfield and Ray Newton

Thursday 13th March 2003

The Victorian Celebration of Death
Speaker: Danny Wells

Thursday 3rd April 2003

**Two Great Ferries: The Great Steam Ferry
at Greenwich and the Great Hydraulic
Ferry at Wapping**
Speaker: Clive Chambers

Saturday 26th April 2003

**Coach Trip to Blenheim Palace and
Woodstock**

**See back cover of newsletter for details and
booking form**
Organiser: Ann Sansom (Tel 020 8524 4506)

Thursday 15th May 2003

Open Evening – Favourite Buildings

Note:

The lectures are held on Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm in the Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1. Ernest Street is between Harford Street and Whitehorse Lane, off Mile End Road (Opposite Queen Mary and Westfield College). The nearest Underground Stations are Mile End and Stepney Green. Bus No. 25.

The Programme

Suggestions and ideas for future topics and/or speakers for our Lecture Programme are always welcomed. If you can suggest someone or indeed if you would like to give a talk yourself, please do come along to the Open Evening in May, and meet David Behr, our Programme co-ordinator.

Alternatively, email our Chairman Philip Mernick at phil@mernicks.com with your comments and suggestions.

Report on the Annual General Meeting held on 31st October 2002

The AGM of the East London History Society was held prior to the lecture given by Derek Morris on Crime in 18th Century Stepney. Following a report by the Chairman Philip Mernick, and a presentation of the statement of accounts, the committee members, who had all agreed to continue with their sterling work, were re-elected to their offices. Harold Mernick, who took on the work of Membership following the sudden death of John Harris, was confirmed as Membership Secretary. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the committee for their work during the previous year.

The ELHS also launched their new publication by Derek Morris, Mile End Old Town 1740-1780, and sales were extremely brisk, which was most gratifying. No doubt Derek's highly entertaining and informative talk had more than a little to do with it!

Tower Hamlets History On-line

David Rich put years of effort into creating this database of references to the history of Tower Hamlets. Now it is available again, either via the front-page of our web site (see page 2), or directly at www.thhol.org.uk.

BOOK REVIEWS

Images of London - Bethnal Green

By Gary Haines, published by Tempus.
ISBN 0 7524 2677 X128pp 200+ illustrations
Paperback. £11.99

The author of this book, Gary Haines, is a member of the ELHS and did much of his research at Bancroft Road Library. The book follows the usual format for this brand new addition to Tempus' extensive Images of London series. Chapter headings are: Housing in Bethnal Green; The Streets; Education and Welfare; Places of Worship; Pubs; Bethnal Green and the Second World War; Industry, Shops and Markets; and The People of Bethnal Green. The illustrations are very varied and the accompanying text informative. The majority of illustrations are from photographs rather than postcards and consequently tend to be very detailed. Bethnal Green with its rapid change from rural village to severe overcrowding within a space of about a hundred years meant its characteristic housing and commercial buildings were quite different from many other parts of East London. The first chapter has several photographs showing how many "country cottages" survived surrounded by late nineteenth century tenement blocks until well into the twentieth century. Shops and pubs also tended to be relatively small. Among the images I found particularly interesting were the above mentioned "country" views, a view of Cheshire Street in 1926 (the former baths are still there but not much else), a bombed Bethnal Green Library with the book shelves still neat and tidy, and Roman Road just west of the canal. I was amazed how narrow this section was as late as 1961. I spotted a few minor typos: the Blind Beggar statue in the Cranbrook estate is by Elizabeth Frink not Frank and an illustration of the Lakeview Estate (page 31) says it was built on land devastated by bombing while page 22 shows the terrace of large Victorian Houses demolished to make way for it and they

looked pretty good to me as late as 1954, but these are very minor points. This book will be of great interest not only to those familiar with the area but also to people like myself who, brought up in Bow, rarely ventured, while young, into that distant borough.

Philip Mernick

Gary Haines will be signing copies of this new book at **WH Smith, The Stratford Centre, Saturday 29th March, 12pm – 2pm**

South of Commercial Road, a photographic record, 1934 – 1997,

compiled by Ray Newton, Steve Kentfield and Tom Newton. A History of Wapping Trust Publication. 44 pages. ISBN 1 873086 040. Price £5.95

Poplar Memories

by John Hector, Sutton Publishing, £14.99

A further addition to the volumes of reminiscences of Poplar, previously self-published, now under the banner of Sutton Publishing. The author, who is 85 and formerly of Ida Street, Poplar, began writing his memoirs ten years ago. This volume has been written in the main for those in their 80s who can remember what Poplar was like in the twenties, thirties and the Blitz. But John Hector also hopes Poplar Memories will be of interest to their children and grandchildren "who sometimes smile in disbelief at the stories we have to tell."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ken Smith, Editor, Brewery History Magazine, 102 Ayelands, New Ash Green, Longfield, Kent DA3 8JW, writes:

BREWERY HISTORY SOCIETY JOURNAL

As you may be aware, the Brewery History Society exists to encourage research into the past of the British brewing industry. We have published a number of books on the subject, including the definitive reference book on this specialist area of industrial history "A Century of British Brewers" by Norman Barber. We regularly publish a newsletter and quarterly Journal.

As the Editor of the Journal I am always on the lookout for material that will interest our members. I was sent an extract from "East London Record" number 19 containing an article on Terror at Wenlock Brewery which I feel is particularly relevant.

I would like yours and the author's permission to reproduce it in a forthcoming Society Journal.

(Ed: We were only too pleased to agree to this request. If any of our members have items on East End breweries interest to share, do contact Ken Smith on the address above).

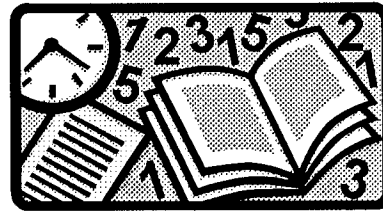
Mrs L Foster, Teddington, Middx, writes:

May I say (if rather belatedly) how sorry I was to read of the death of John Harris last year.

He did a lot of research for me in the St. Anne's Limehouse registers, which was a great help in my family history.

I enjoyed the correspondence we had, and miss his distinctive handwriting on the envelopes.

What's On and Where



Family History Fair

3rd & 4th May 2003

The Society of Genealogists Family History Fair is being held on the weekend of 3rd and 4th May 2003 at the Royal Horticultural Society's New Hall and Conference Centre, Greycoat Street. Tickets can be obtained in advance from the Society of Genealogists, email: events@sog.org.uk or check out their website www.sog.org.uk.

Upminster Tithe Barn

Agricultural and Folk Museum/ Upminster Mill

Hornchurch and District Historical Society welcome you to visit the museum in Hall Lane Upminster on the first Saturday and Sunday of every month from April to October, from 2 pm to 5 pm, admission free. Further details email: butlers@dircon.co.uk or tel: 0 1708 447535.

The Mill will be open from 2 pm to 5.30 pm, admission free, Saturdays and Sundays, April to September, on the following dates: April 5th and 6th, 26th and 27th, May 10th and 11th, June 21st and 22nd, July 19th and 20th, August 16th and 17th, and September 20th and 21st. Check out their website www.upminsterwindmill.co.uk.

RESEARCH IN TOWER HAMLETS CEMETERY PARK



Doreen and Diane Kendall, with Doreen Osborne and a dedicated group of

volunteers are in the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park on second Sunday of every month at 2 pm, researching graves and recording memorial inscriptions. They have been doing this work with great perseverance and enthusiasm, for several years now, and have assisted scores of people with their family records, whilst adding to our knowledge of local history. At the same time, their work has aroused interest in several quarters.

In August of last year, volunteers of the Draper's Company joined in the work, and their efforts succeeded in uncovering several graves of the victims of the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster of 1943.

The Police Federation have revived their interest in the grave of the three Leman Street policemen, and plan to include them on a National Memorial. The VC Association has also been involved in researching Lieutenant John Buckley of Poplar, who was awarded the Victoria Cross in the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and hope to erect a permanent memorial in the cemetery, as he is buried in an unmarked grave.

Thanks to the efforts of Doreen and her team, Alec Hurley's grave is being repaired and restored. Doreen Osborne had written to Roy Hudd to see if Alec Hurley's memorial can be repaired, at a cost approximately five hundred pounds. The grave of the famous East End comedian, second husband of Marie Lloyd, was discovered in the undergrowth several years ago, but because of its location and poor state, it was only possible to point out its general location. It was announced recently at a Music Hall Society meeting that Roy Hudd

had raised sufficient funds for a memorial repair, and Alec Hurley's grave restoration was given the go-ahead.

Coinciding with the publication of a biography of Will Crooks, there has been increased activity around the area of his grave, which has been cleared by the Friends. Several years ago we were instrumental in searching for the grave, and when it was finally revealed under its blanket of ivy, was found to be badly vandalised. With the support of the unions and the Mayor of Tower Hamlets, ELHS had the headstone restored. As a bonus we discovered the grave of Harry Orbell, a leader of the 1889 Dock Strike, alongside. The graves are in the vicinity of the Blitz Memorial.

UPDATE:

Bow Wharf

Further to our article in the previous newsletter on Tom Ridge's fight to save a small piece of Bow's heritage, we have learnt that the bridge between the Regent's Canal and the Hertford Union Canal has now been Grade II listed by English Heritage. An excellent piece of news! The fight to save the two original cottages built by the Hertford Union Canal Company for workmen still goes on.

Museum in Docklands

The Museum in Docklands will be opening in May 2003, after years of delay, and a cash crisis, when it was feared the project would never come to fruition. The Museum of London has accepted a proposal to jointly govern the new museum, which will be based in a former warehouse at West India Quay. The museum will focus on the history of London's rivers and docks, and the people who have lived and worked in the area over the last 2,000 years.

MARTHA

By Teresa Stephens

When I first knew Martha she was a short, slim lady in her early seventies.

Born in 1880, the fourteenth child of a Welsh slaughterman and a Scottish midwife, her family lived in Brick Lane in the heart of Victorian London's East End.

She loved to talk and found in me a willing audience. The memories would come to life as she recalled dancing to a barrel-organ, sliding on the ice in Victoria Park, running errands to the greengrocers for 'haporth of potherbs' and to the 'Jug and Bottle' for a half quartern of gin.

When Martha was sent to the butchers to buy steak she was always reminded to push her finger through the raw meat to make sure that it was tender. Imagine!

On Sunday mornings Martha took the joint to the bakers, there being no oven in their house and on baking days off she went with the risen dough, and came back with the freshly baked loaves.

In 1888 while Jack the Ripper was stalking the back streets of the East End, Martha, recovering from an illness, was sent to a convalescent home in the country. It did not meet with her approval, especially porridge for breakfast, which she loathed.

As Martha's brothers and sisters grew old enough they were put to work to learn a trade. The eldest brother was a shoemaker; one of her sisters worked as a French polisher, another sister made artificial flowers. They worked at home until the Factory Act was introduced. Martha worked as an ironer in a dressmaking factory in Golden Lane, and soon made friends with the other girls. They walked to work in the mornings, meeting along the way, chatting together, boys calling

to them and 'chi'iking' (teasing.) On snowy mornings things really livened up!

Once a year Martha and her workmates were allowed out onto the pavement to watch the Lord Mayors Show go by. She especially remembered the day when a 'Horseless carriage' was in the parade, with a man walking in front waving a red flag. One day Martha's mother met a young man who was looking for lodgings. George was an orphan. Though barely out of his teens he was an expert horseman. At an early age he ran away from his employer because he was kept short of food but was encouraged to smoke and drink gin in order to keep his weight down. George hitched a lift to London and found a job as a Pony Express Rider, carrying the mail to and fro from Kings Cross and St Pancras Stations. At times he had to hurry, which in the busy streets could be risky and one day the inevitable happened when he found his way blocked by an unattended donkey and cart. With no time to spare, George took drastic action and jumped, his pony, stumbled and ended up at the bottom of a flight of basement steps. Sadly the pony had to be shot. George was unhurt but lost his job. As an experienced horseman, he soon found work collecting and delivering between the docks and Smithfield Market.

Martha had a boyfriend at this time but the romance was not going well. One evening she was walking home having been 'stood up' when she met George who asked her why she was not with her young man, she told him that she was 'on the shelf,' he offered to take her out and they became a courting couple.

When Martha was getting on for nineteen and George was twenty they decided to get married, so on Christmas day 1898, Martha, wearing a lilac dress and George in his best Sunday suit they walked to St Phillip's Church Bethnal Green, followed by the wedding guests. They had to wait their turn because it was the custom in those days for vicars to

waive the fee when marrying working class people on Christmas Day.

The young couple settled down to married life on the top floor of a small house not far from Martha's old home, Martha did not leave her job at first because they needed her wages to help with the cost of furniture etc. Every weekend Martha went shopping in Petticoat Lane Market buying far too much crockery according to her husband.

This was the heyday of the Music Hall and Martha and George were entertained by the artists of the day. Benefit concerts were often produced to raise money for charities including local families who had fallen on hard times.

Like many young couples George and Martha had their 'ups and downs.' And one day George, who had been driving from Croydon in bad weather, called at the pub and had 'one over the eight' he was charged with being drunk in charge of horses. Appearing at Old Street Magistrates court he was fined two pounds or three weeks in jail, needless to say he paid up and got the length of Martha's tongue as well. From that day on George was strictly teetotal, so much so that when a pal poured a gin into his lemonade he punched him on the jaw and walked out of the pub.

There came a time when George was laid off work by a dock strike, with no money coming into the house something had to be done. George came up with an idea; he rented a barrow, bought a barrel of herrings and went knocking on doors. Martha was horrified when he insisted that she go with him and do the doorstep bit while he looked after the barrow and called out their wares but she 'put her pride in her pocket' and got on with it, so in this way they survived the strike.

By this time they had two children Emma and George, when they were very small they were taken 'up west' to join the celebrations marking the relief of Mafeking

Another day George borrowed a donkey and cart from the neighbours and took his family for a drive. Eventually their hard work and thrift paid off and they were able to rent a café in West Ham With living accommodation included, Martha looked after the business while George carried on with his job.

Time passed and a second son, Sidney was born. The family home in West Ham was too small for five people so and they began to look for a home further out of London. At that time the trams went eastward as far as Chadwell Heath, which no doubt influenced their choice when they decided to rent a farm in Marks Gate. The hamlet consisted of a row of farm labourer's cottages, a farmhouse, outbuildings and a tiny school. Martha had to learn to drive a governess cart in order to do the shopping in Chadwell Heath and Romford.

Once the family had settled in George found work as a self employed carter, hauling materials for the London to Southend road which at that time was being changed into a dual carriageway.

The youngest child, a boy, was born at the farm and proved to be quite a handful, Charles was rescued from the pond almost as soon as he could walk, and generally kept everyone in the family on the go keeping him out of mischief. One bitterly cold, wet day George came home from work exhausted; sitting by the fire he dozed while Martha prepared his meal. Charlie found the 'forbidden' scissors and climbing onto a stool cut off his father's hair in patches so that his head had to be shaved completely.

While the family lived on the farm they kept chickens and a pig or two. A vegetable garden helped to subsidise the grocery bills and it was possible to put something by for a rainy day.

Looking to the future they bought a plot of land on the outskirts of Romford and slowly, as they saved money for materials and labour

a house was built. So at last they had a home of their very own.

Then George became ill with pneumonia. All the hard work, long hours and exposure to bad weather took its toll and he died aged 46.

Martha struggled to manage the farm but without the extra income from George's work she soon found that she was fighting a losing battle and decided to give up the tenancy and move into their house.

Daughter Emma was married but Martha was now the breadwinner for the rest of the family and with three sons to provide for she looked around for work. Casual farm work seemed the best choice, seasonal and low pay it may be but her options were limited so she got on with it.

When George Jnr. left school he worked alongside his mother, just fourteen and small for his age he wanted to work with horses like his father before him. Whenever they heard of a vacancy George would apply but kept being passed over because he was too short. As game as his namesake he persisted and eventually grew tall enough to get a job with a local coal merchant.

George worked hard and learned all he could about the coal trade. After a while he began to think of going into business on his own account and the day came when he broached the subject with his mother. Romford was growing fast so the demand was there. Their house and yard were ideal premises so all they needed were the tools of the trade. George had heard of a suitable horse and cart for sale, could Martha find the money? This she could and a letter was sent to Hudson of London, Coal Factors, who agreed to supply the coal by rail to Romford goods yard. Sacks, scales and weights were ordered, a telephone installed and the family were in business!

It did not take long to work up enough custom to pay their way and they were soon earning

enough to support themselves. However there was more trouble in store when George became ill. Eventually he was diagnosed as suffering from tuberculosis. He was soon confined to bed while Martha struggled valiantly to run the business, do most of the yard-work, and take care of two schoolboys, as well as nurse an invalid.

George was only twenty-four years old when he died. Many years later Martha admitted to me that if it were not for Charlie and Sid she would have given up, but there they were and once more she forced herself to carry on. More of the hard work fell to the two boys. Occasionally they employed casual labour, especially in the wintertime, which was their busy season.

Not only was the work hard, they were often struggling to cope in very difficult conditions due to the fact that many of the roads were not surfaced which meant leaving the horse and cart on the road and manhandling heavy sacks of coal through deep mud to the point of delivery. Eventually the roads were built, which was a relief to all concerned.

So life went on, both the boys married. Sid became a greengrocer. Charlie took over the family business and Martha survived all of life's ups and downs. She never re-married, one of her favourite sayings was 'I had a good husband and I wouldn't have another if he was hung in diamonds'. She was a very old lady when she died just a few days short of her 92nd birthday.

Martha was buried in the family grave in Ilford, together at last with her husband and son. Among the mourners present, stood her grandson, George the third.

(The above article is courtesy of Tower Hamlets Local History Library archives, and it is believed that the author was related to Martha).

Votes for Women 1903-2003

“The supreme achievement of Mrs Pankhurst,” claimed Ethel Smyth, her one-time close friend, “ was creating in women a new sense of power and responsibility, together with a determination to work out their destiny on other lines than those laid down for them since time immemorial by men.”¹

That Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst has had a major impact on history was confirmed when she topped the polls among readers of the *Observer* and *Daily Mirror* as THE woman of the twentieth century. Much has been written about her, and a lot of it has been negative. But there can be no doubt that she and her daughters Christabel, Sylvia and Adele were instrumental in changing the course of history.

It all began in Manchester, when Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst joined the newly formed Independent Labour Party in 1893. Emmeline was elected to the National Executive of the ILP in 1897, but Richard’s death the following year left her a widow struggling to bring up her four children, with little time for politics. However, when a few years later a Hall dedicated to the memory of her husband was opened, but from which women, including herself were barred, Emmeline declared that she had wasted her time in the ILP. On 10th October 1903 she invited a few socialist women to her home to found an independent women’s movement. Their motto: “Deeds, not words.”

It all began peacefully enough, but two years later, Christabel and Annie Kenney publicly confronted the Liberal Party candidate, Winston Churchill, as to whether the government was ready to give women the vote. Their arrest and imprisonment was widely reported, and Emmeline was quick to see the advantages in these new militant tactics. The *Daily Mirror* started referring to

the group as suffragettes, as opposed to the peaceful suffragists, led by Mrs Millicent Fawcett.

Thus began a series of speeches, marches and demonstrations, which grew increasingly violent. The government countered with harsher measures against the women, who were sentenced to terms of imprisonment for any breach of the peace. Hunger strikes by the imprisoned women led to force-feeding, and horrified sympathisers could only watch helplessly at the brutal treatment meted out to those who so passionately believed in the cause of women’s franchise.

Sylvia Pankhurst carried the fight into the East End of London, sent there by her mother to carry the message to working class women. She remained in Bow for twelve years, during which time she held rallies, marches, protests which led to several terms of imprisonment, hunger strikes and force-feeding, all the while clinging to the single-minded determination that eventually the government would be persuaded that the only way forward for civilization was to give women the right to determine their own future, to have a say in how the country was run.



May Day Procession of the East London Federation of the Suffragettes passing down Old Ford Road en route to Victoria Park, 1914.

¹ Quoted in *Emmeline Pankhurst: A Biography* by June Purvis, published July 2002 by Routledge.

During the First World War, Emmeline Pankhurst ordered a suspension of all suffragette activities, as a mark of patriotism, however Sylvia, whose socialist views had brought her into conflict with her mother and sister, declared herself a pacifist and refused. Her East London Federation of the Suffragettes continued their campaign, and it was their perseverance which many believed eventually led to the passing of the bill granting women over the age of thirty the vote, if they were householders, the wives of householders, occupiers of property with an annual rent of £5 or more, or graduates of British universities.

Although Christabel stood as a candidate for parliament in December 1918, and lost, Sylvia steadfastly refused to join in mainstream politics. Interestingly, though, Emmeline Pankhurst put herself forward for election as a Conservative Party member for the East End seat of Whitechapel and St George's Stepney. She even took a small flat near Cable Street, but she fell ill and died on 14th June 1928. The bill that would give women over the age of 21 equal voting rights with men became law less than a month later, on 2nd July 1928.

However hard-fought and won the right to equal opportunities may have been, there are still places in the world today, where female emancipation is still unknown and repression is the norm.

Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst have been honoured with a statue and plaque near parliament, but Sylvia was thought too radical for such a tribute. However, there are plans for a bronze statue of Sylvia to be unveiled outside the Palace of Westminster in June 2003. But the woman who fought for the franchise, for socialism and for peace would not really have approved.

The Stone Bomb

As a footnote, if ever you chance to be in the vicinity of Woodford Green, take some time out to view the Anti-War Memorial, situated

just off the High Road, opposite the Horse and Well pub. Placed there by Sylvia Pankhurst in 1935 on land she owned when she lived in Red Cottage, as a protest against air bombing, the monument is in the form of a truncated pyramid on which a stone bomb, about 18 inches long with weathered fins, is mounted as if falling vertically from the air.

The monument has been vandalised more than once, though thanks to the efforts of local resident Sylvia Ayling, it was given Grade II listing, and remains nestling in the undergrowth, surrounded by iron railings.

It was formally inaugurated in June 1936, and an announcement for the ceremony read, in part: "In these days of ever-threatening war, the necessity of effective and ceaseless opposition cannot be over-emphasised." The announcement went on to state that this would be the first monument of its kind, as: "There are thousands of memorials in every town and village to the dead, but not one as a reminder of the danger of future wars. The people who care for peace in all countries must unite to force their governments to outlaw the air bomb."

Rosemary Taylor

(With grateful thanks to Sylvia Ayling and Doreen Kendall for keeping me informed with their constant supply of news and cuttings).



What's in a Name ?

Bancroft Library, Bancroft Road.

Alderman Francis Bancroft was the grandson of Archbishop Bancroft. For many years he was one of the Lord Mayor's officials and had "incurred hatred and ill will of the people of London of all denominations by summoning and extracting money, from rich and poor alike."

At his funeral at St Helen's (Bishopsgate), 1727, "people attending with great difficulty saved his corpse from being jostled off the shoulders of the bearers by the enraged populace who, seizing the ropes, rang the bells for joy at his unlamented death." In his will² he directed that his body be "embalmed within 6 days of death and his entrails be put in a leaden box and included in the coffin, or placed in the vault next to it." He wished to be buried in the vault under his tomb at St Helen's "within ten days of death, between the hours of 9:00 pm and 10:00 pm."

He requested that 2 sermons be preached on a Sunday morning, annually, for ever, in commemoration of his charities – one in April (at St Helen's) and the other at St Michael's Cornhill. He bequeathed a "silver bason" to St Helen's, to be used at Communion or in some other church service.

His charities: Almshouses for 24 old Freemen of the Drapers' Company, "Bancroft Almshouses", to include a chapel, plus a schoolroom for 100 poor boys, "Bancroft School", with 2 houses for the masters. Money was left to provide some cash and coal for the old people, clothing for the boys, salaries for the masters and also to fund a dinner for the administering committee for the charity, to include the 2 masters.

His monument is in St Helen's and is inscribed, "Founder of the Bancroft School and of the charity administered by the Drapers' Co." He formerly lay embalmed in a large tomb in what was the "Nuns' Choir" area of the church, but, in the 19th century, he was re-interred beneath the floor of the church, in accordance with his original instructions.

² See pages 433-435 of The Annals of St Helen's Bishopsgate.

Bancroft School, Woodford Green: The early school was opened in 1739, in Mile End Road, and in 1886 was moved to a five acre site in Woodford Green. The new buildings, designed by Sir Arthur Bloomfield and financed by the Drapers Co. today has 700 pupils, boys and girls aged between 11 – 19 years, many of whom are supported by bursaries granted by the Drapers Co.

(Extracts from "The Annals of St Helen's Bishopsgate" by Rev. J E Cox, 1876 and "Guide to St Helen's" 1998)

Researched by Doreen Osborne, with additional material from Doreen Kendall.

Doctor Jelley, the Threepenny Doctor of Hackney

Following an enquiry about Doctor Jelley, and the subsequent interest in the man, here is a thumbnail sketch of the curious doctor.

Henry Percy Jelley was born in 1866 in Totnes, Devon. He married and had two sons, but became a widower c. 1909. He passed his final medical exams in Glasgow and qualified as a medical practitioner in 1910, and moved to Hackney, where he set up his practice. In 1911, at the aged of 45 he married 17 year old Florence Glenham, after a whirlwind romance, and expanded his work, setting up several surgeries, but was very quickly in trouble with the law for his unorthodox methods of treating his patients.

In 1916 he was charged with the murder of Caroline Marsh, who died following an abortion, and was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment, but released after 2 years, during the Spanish Flu epidemic. Although struck off, he continued to treat patients from his grocery store in Hackney Road, but was constantly in conflict with the law, his neighbours and his patients. He also opened a tailoring establishment, having learnt the trade in Brixton prison. He grew increasingly irascible, eccentric, and abusive, though many remember his charity and kindness. He died not long after the end Second World War, c. 1946.

The Bethnal Green Tube Disaster

At the beginning of the Blitz the government had tried to prevent the use of the London Underground stations as air raid shelters, as it was feared that people terrified by raids would go down the tube stations and refuse to come up – a hypothetical state of mind known as deep shelter mentality. Londoners response was to buy a ticket just before a raid was due to start and stay down. No one could turn them out during an air raid. The practice became more widespread, as there was no way of preventing it.

The Government changed their policy. Tube stations in daily use were organised as shelters in the evenings, and incomplete or disused stations were opened up and often furnished with bunks and toilets. Bethnal Green Station was under construction from Liverpool Street to Loughton and because of the worsening war condition work stopped on 24th May 1940. The local council then opened it as a shelter in the following October, with bunks for 5,000 people and extra space for another 5,000 if needed. At the height of the Blitz it was usually full. Numbers then declined to hundreds, to those who just felt safe with other people, or had been bombed out, or had no other place to go.

The shelter had only one entrance with an emergency exit half a mile away in another borough. There were no hand rails, no crush barrier, no white lines, and it was lit only by a single 25 watt bulb. From the entrance there were nineteen steps down to a landing, measuring 15 ft by 12 ft. A right hand turn followed by seven more steps, led into the ticket hall.

In Victoria Park, Hackney, a Z rocket battery had recently been installed. This fired 3 inch solid fuelled rockets similar to the 3.7 inch AA shell, in salvos of over 100 rockets a time, which accelerated to 1,000 mph in one and a half seconds. The noise was described as

‘rather like an express train roaring through your living room’ and was considered a great morale booster.

Early in 1943 the RAF commenced bombing Berlin. The Germans threatened reprisals, and people started to use the shelters again. On 28th February, 500 people used Bethnal Green Tube Shelter; on 1st and 2nd March the numbers were 587 and 850 respectively. The RAF raids on Berlin were particularly heavy on those nights.

On the fateful night of 3rd March, between 500 and 600 were in the shelter within ten minutes of the alert. By 8:17 pm 1,000 people had poured down the staircase, amongst them people from two cinemas and three buses. Ten minutes later a salvo of rockets from the newly opened gun battery in Victoria Park half a mile away opened up, with a terrifying screech which had never been heard before. Rumour went round that bombs were falling, and approximately 120-200 people around the entrance surged forward down the stairs.

Two witnesses saw a woman holding a child stumble and within ninety seconds of the woman tripping 173 people were dead, 62 of them children. At 8:40 pm a message reached the Chief Warden, who contacted control, and by 9:00 pm, 31 ambulances, 6 light rescue, and 2 heavy rescue vehicles had begun to arrive. Officers were placed at the entrance to keep order, and the Civil Defence started their harrowing task, assisted by Dr Sullivan, the Home Guard and servicemen. At 9:15 pm an All Clear was sounded, and their task was finished by midnight.

When the casualties were later examined, the sole cause of death was found to have been suffocation, with only one broken bone. The survivors suffered bruising, shock and minor cuts. They had mostly been at the bottom of the stairway, kept alive by pockets of air.

On Thursday, 4th March and Inquiry into the tragedy was opened at the Town Hall.

Presiding was Sir Ernest Gowers (London Regional Commissioner), Alderman C W Key MP and the Council. They decided that the burial of the victims of the accident would be private, and not in a common grave. Then on Thursday evening an official statement from the Ministry of Home Security was issued for the following morning papers (5th March) as follows:

On Wednesday evening a serious accident took place near the entrance to a London Tube Shelter, caused the death of a number of people by suffocation. According to accounts so far received, shortly after the Air Raid Alert sounded substantial numbers of people were making their way as usual towards the shelter entrance.

There were nearly 2,000 people in the shelter including several hundred who had arrived after the alert, when a middle aged woman burdened with a baby and a bundle tripped near the foot of a flight of 19 steps, which lead down from the street. The flight of steps terminates on a landing. Her fall tripped an elderly man behind her and he fell similarly. Their bodies again tripped up those behind them, and within a few seconds a large number of people were lying on the lower steps and the landing, completely blocking the stairway.

Those coming in from the street could not see exactly what had taken place, and continued to press down the steps, so that within a minute there were hundreds of people crushed together and laying on top of one another, and the lower steps.

By the time it was possible to extricate the bodies, it was found that a total of 173 had died. A further 60 were in need of hospital treatment. Statements from a large number of eyewitnesses, members of the police and civil defence services, made it clear that there was no panic before the accident on the stairs, no bombs fell anywhere in the district during the evening. Preliminary reports received by the

Home Secretary and the Minister of Home and Security indicate that police, wardens, soldiers, WVS and civilians worked hard and well to rescue the victims. Mr Morrison has instituted the fullest enquiries to establish in greater detail what took place, and to see whether any structural or administration weakness has been brought to light.

At the Inquest a verdict of accidental death was recorded by the Coroner, who after hearing many moving descriptions by witnesses stated: "There is nothing to suggest any stampede, and panic, or anything of that kind."

The woman who first tripped was found alive, her baby dead. Mr Dick Corbett the boxer, home from training in Bristol for his next fight was one of the victims. PC Thomas was recommended by the Coroner for an award, but he never received it. The official report was held in camera by Mr Lawrence Dunne, a Bow Street Magistrate, and was not published until January 1945, for security reasons.

It was discovered that less than half of the 173 killed were regular users of the shelter. 51 were registered for bunks, and another 30 odd were known users. The rest just went to the shelter that night. Mr Dunne found no truth in the rumour that the disaster had been caused by dips (pickpockets). It was impossible to have been started by the Jews (as rumoured), and there was only a small Jewish community living in the area. Mr Dunne could find no evidence that it was a Fascist plot. The new rockets were blamed for starting off the panic.

Mr Dunne concluded that the disaster was caused by a number of people their self control at a particularly unfortunate time and place, and no forethought in structural design or practicable police supervision can be of any real safe-guard against the effects of a loss of self control by a crowd.

In April 1944 Mrs Annie Baker of Braintree Street, Bethnal Green sued the Bethnal Green

Council for negligence, after her husband and daughter were killed. The council admitted their responsibility, but denied negligence. Mr Justice Singleton said: "They were responsible for making provision for the safety of people using the shelter." In awarding Mrs Baker £1,200 for her husband and £250 for her daughter, plus costs, he added: "the dangerous condition of the steps made the entrance a death trap." After this the Ministry of Pensions awarded widows and children a pension of fifty shillings a week.

The Bethnal Green Tube Disaster was the largest civilian accident recorded during the war, and caused a third of all wartime deaths in Bethnal Green. There is no memorial plaque to the victims at the scene of the accident.* The total number of the dead were, 27 men, 84 women and 62 children. According to medical evidence, all died within 90 seconds.

The Central Line from Bethnal Green to Stratford opened to the public on 4th December 1946.

Doreen Kendall

*In March 1993, fifty years after the tragedy, a memorial plaque was unveiled over the entrance to the Underground station.



MEMORIES:

(Doreen sent in this little piece of reminiscence, together with a brief chronology of the hospital)

My name is Comfort Neequaye. I did my General Nurse Training in Aberystwyth, mid Wales. On finishing in Wales I moved down to East London in Hackney Road, where I did my Children Nurse Training at Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospital. I was there for two years, when the new laboratory was built for research into children's illness. I do remember very well when Queen Elizabeth II, the present Queen came to open it, I had then finished my course and was working as a staff nurse at the out patient department. After their treatment in Hackney Road, patients would either go to Banstead or Tadworth in Surrey for convalescence, before going home.

1867: North Eastern Hospital for Children opened with twelve beds. Founded by sisters Ellen Phillips and Mary Elizabeth Phillips.

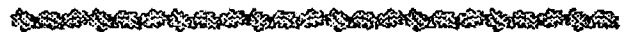
1908: Renamed Queen's Hospital for Children, by permission of Queen Alexandra.

1942: Amalgamated with Princess Elizabeth of York Hospital for Children at Shadwell. Became Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children, with 300 beds.

1972: Queen Elizabeth opened the Haywood Research Building on 25th July.

1992: Queen Mother made a visit on 9th July during the 150th anniversary celebrations of the original founding of the hospital.

1999: Hospital closed. New wards opened in Royal London Hospital. Old hospital is now being turned into flats.





SPRING COACH TRIP

SATURDAY 26TH APRIL 2003

BLENHEIM PALACE & WOODSTOCK

Blenheim is perhaps the grandest non-royal residence in the country. It was given to the 1st Duke of Marlborough after his great victory at Blenheim, but the Duke and Duchess spent an extra £50,000 themselves – millions in today's money. The best artists and craftsmen decorated it, including Sir James Thornhill, Grinling Gibbons and Rysbrack. Vanbrugh was the architect and Capability Brown landscaped the park. You can also see the room where Winston Churchill was born.

We shall be stopping first at the large village or small town of Woodstock which is just outside the gates. There are plenty of pubs and cafes for lunch, or bring a picnic. It is an attractive place, largely built of Cotswold stone.

Entry fees for Blenheim are £8 or £7 for concessions. I shall be collecting this money on the coach. The coach fare will be £7.50. Please send this to me in advance, filling in the form below. We shall be having a guided tour of the Palace.

The pick-up will be at Mile End, at the bus pull-in in Grove Road, just across the road and turn left from Mile End Station, at 9.30 am on Saturday 26th April.

Bookings to Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF.
Tel. 020 8524 4506. Mobile no. 078 1569 5428.

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SPRING COACH TRIP
BLENHEIM PALACE AND WOODSTOCK
Saturday 26TH APRIL 2003

I/We would like _____ Tickets/s for the coach trip.

NAME/S _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL. NO. _____ I enclose a cheque/PO for £ _____

(Cheques made payable to the East London History Society.)