



ISAMBARD KINGDOM BRUNEL
BORN 1806, DIED 1859

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Editorial Note:

The 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.

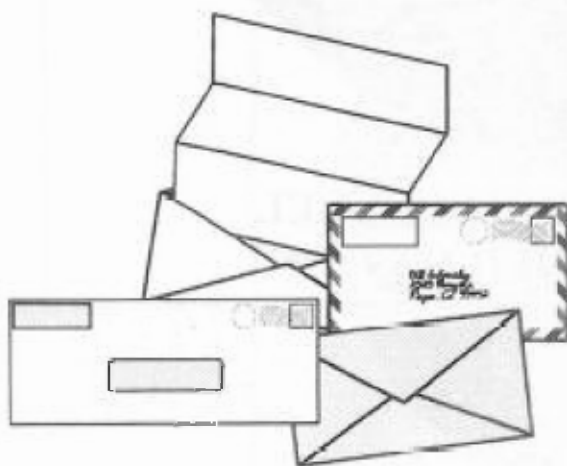
Our grateful thanks to all the contributors of this Winter 2005 edition. We have a wide variety of topics and we trust our members will enjoy reading it as much as I have, whilst compiling the newsletter. Letters and articles on East End history and reminiscences are always welcome and we make every 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.



EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY PROGRAMME 2006

April 27th 2006

A History of the Blackwall Shipyard and a voyage to India on a Blackwall Frigate

Speaker: Clive Chambers

Thursday 18th May 2006

**Open Evening:
On the subject of Food and Drink**

The Lectures

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.

Notes and News

The London Maze 2006

This year the East London History Society was privileged to be invited to participate in the London Maze, an annual event featuring many aspects of local history research. It was held on Saturday March 8th at the Guildhall Art Gallery.

Doreen & Diane Kendall & myself set up our stand in the main hall at 9.30 and were very busy all day. We displayed information on ELHS and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, sold books and signed up quite a few new members. Diane also was kept busy answering questions about burial records. We saw plenty of familiar faces and managed to look around ourselves when relieved by Doreen Osborne and Ann Quade

There were more than 50 exhibitors, ranging from local history societies, local authorities, national organisations (such as English Heritage, Society of Genealogists) and specific locations (Tower Bridge, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge etc). Other East London organisations represented included East of London Family History Society, Dagenham Heritage Services, & Hackney Archives. We were later told that 2,700 visitors had attended. I think it was a very worthwhile exercise and hope we can do it again.

Philip Mernick

Isambard Kingdom Brunel

April 9th marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, engineer and visionary, son of Marc Brunel. The occasion has particular significance for the East End, as Brunel is remembered here for his work on the Thames Tunnel, and more importantly, for his ship, the SS Great Eastern, which was built at Millwall on the Isle of

Dogs. Launched in 1858, she was the pride of Britain, and thousands flocked to see the ship. However the launch of the ship was dogged by disaster, resulting in the deaths of several workers. The strain told, and Brunel died of a stroke in 1859, aged 53, just days before the maiden voyage to New York. In the BBC poll of Great Britons in 2002, Brunel came second only to Winston Churchill!

Bonner Street Primary School, Bethnal Green

Designed in 1874 by E R Robson, official architect to the London School Board, it is a fine and well preserved example of a Victorian Board School, yet it is not listed. A new school is under construction on a neighbouring site and the council now proposes to demolish Bonner Street School to create a playground, a very sorry fate for such a fine building. There is an urgent application in the pipeline to get the building listed before it is too late.

LONDON ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRIZE 2006 Sponsored by the Standing Conference On London Archaeology in conjunction with *LONDON ARCHAEOLOGIST*

After the success of the 2004 London Archaeological Prize, SCOLA and *LONDON ARCHAEOLOGIST* have again agreed to sponsor an award for publications that appeared in 2004 and 2005. The award, of £250 plus a certificate, will be presented at a ceremony in October 2006. The publication must be in letterpress or digital form; broadcasts and the like will not be eligible. It must be related to the archaeology of Greater London. Any type of publication will be eligible - it may be a book, a journal article or the proceedings of a conference. It may be a professional, commercial or amateur publication. There is no restriction on the target audience - scholars, the general public, or children. The judges will be looking for

quality and excellence; they will want to know how well the publication succeeds in its aims.

JUDGING - Entries will be assessed by a panel of judges appointed by the Executive Committee of the Standing Conference on London Archaeology in conjunction with the Publications Committee of *London Archaeologist*.

PROCEDURE - Anyone, whether or not associated with the publication, may make a nomination. The nominator(s) should name the publication and give a brief explanation why they believe it is worthy of the prize. It would be helpful, but not essential, to use the standard nomination form. There is no need to provide copies of the publication at this stage. The judges will select a short list out of the publications nominated, and will then ask the publisher for copies of the publication; these copies will be returnable on request.

NOMINATIONS - Nomination forms are available from Peter Pickering, and should be returned to - Peter Pickering, Secretary, Standing Conference on London Archaeology, 3 Westbury Road, London N12 7NY
Telephone 020-8445 2807
e-mail pe.pickering@virgin.net

**Closing Date for receipt of nominations:
20th May 2006.**

This extract was supplied by Dr Daphne Glick who came to a recent lecture. Mr A. Kershaw was her father. He was a school master at Dempsey Street until 1931 when he left to become headmaster of Cephas Street School. He was a founder member of The Stepney Labour party, became a Councillor in about 1922 and was later an Alderman and a JP.

She writes: You expressed an interest in an article in the Dempsey Street School magazine advising the boys on what they could do in their holidays. The date was much later than I had recollected, but I think you might find it

interesting. Kershaw is talking about a London that has to a certain extent disappeared. I wonder how many boys followed his advice. His motives were very worthy rather than fun.

I have a run of these magazines from 1925 to 1931 when my Father moved on to take over Cephas Street. The magazines are fascinating and much can be gleaned about the boys' life. One of the entries in 1924 that I particularly like, is a list of improvements they feel the school needs, namely, Electric Lighting, Locker Desks, A Wireless, A decent lantern for lectures, An Old Boys Club.

I had to type out the article as the original was handwritten and duplicated. Also the pages are fragile. I have also got several photographs of the staff. School captains etc. One day I shall have to find a home for all this; I rather think Tower Hamlets Archives.

Extract from Dempsey Street School Magazine Issue No 3 July 1925:

If, for some reason or other you are not going away to the country or seaside for the holidays, do not be down hearted.

London is a fine city to which thousands of people come from all parts of the world to visit the wonderful places it contains. Why not regard yourself as a visitor and spend your holidays seeing London. There are many places to visit and parks to play in. Have a good breakfast, put some lunch in your pocket and go out for the day. Your holidays spent in this manner will bring you back to school well and refreshed in both body and mind. Do not let the thought of being poor worry you, for here are a number of walks and visits which require no money or very little money indeed.

1. Cambridge Road Park with the Bethnal Green Museum close to it.

2. Victoria Park for the fields and the lakes. Visit the Hot House and see the Tropical Plants.

Correspondence

Letter from Chris Sumner who lectured to us (January) about the Poplar Rate Dispute

Thanks again for inviting me to speak at your meeting in January; I hope it was OK. One of your members asked me "where George Lansbury was buried" and at the time I didn't know. However I have now looked at one of the biographies of George and found that he was cremated, and as his wishes, his and his wife's ashes were scattered in the English Channel. Could you pass this on to your member please.

There is another matter where someone in your society may be able to help me. It concerns a story told to me by my mother: - Sometime in the early to mid 1930s an American group of singers, all of them black, did a tour of concerts in Britain. Their last performance before returning to America was in East London, probably Poplar. The group I believe were called "The Southern Syncopated Singers".

My mother attended the concert and found it an extremely moving experience. She had never seen so many black people together before, and the singing, gospel and spiritual, she thought was wonderful. At the end of the concert, her sister presented a bouquet of flowers to the leading female singer. The following day the group boarded a ship to return to America. The ship never completed the voyage and nobody on board was ever seen again. Would anyone have any suggestion as to how I could check into the facts of this story.

As I told you before, I would like to come to some of your meetings so please keep me informed of your programme.

(Ed. Note: We looked into this for Chris and found that the story was partially correct. The group was called The Southern Syncopated

3. Shadwell Edward VII Memorial Park. On the way visit the Natural History and Nature Study Museum in Cable Street behind the Town Hall.

4. The Tower and its famous historical associations. You must not forget to notice the Mint, the ancient Moat. Walk on to the Tower Bridge to see the busy dockyards.

5. London Bridge - for a good view of the Tower Bridge, from there visit London Bridge Station. There is a lot to learn in such a building.

6. The Thames embankment passing St Paul's on the way, a beautiful walk from Blackfriars to Westminster Bridge. Here you will find the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey, and Whitehall with its famous buildings and streets.

7. The East and West India Docks for liners and large passenger ships. All these places cost nothing and are within easy walking distance from the school. Those boys who have a few pence to spare on fares can get further out to

8. Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. A walk round the Serpentine Lake is very beautiful and refreshing.

9. St James Park and Buckingham Palace.

10. The British and South Kensington Museums.

11. Epping Forest

12. Springfield Park.

13. The Zoo and Regents Park.

14. A few additional pence will take you to Hammersmith from which there is a long and beautiful walk along the towpath of the Thames to Barnes, Richmond, Kew etc.

Orchestra. It originated in Harlem, New York and was one of the first large jazz orchestras to tour Europe. In October 1921 34 people, many members of the orchestra, were drowned when the SS Rowan sank after a collision at sea while crossing from Scotland to Ireland. The Orchestra was very large (up to 150 members according to some information) and probably split into a number of smaller units for touring purposes so a sub-group could have been called Southern Syncopated Singers. The tragedy did not destroy the Orchestra as they continued touring for several more years. We were unable to confirm when they were in Poplar but that might be revealed by going through the microfilms at Bancroft Road.

From Helen O'Neil (email)

I've really enjoyed browsing through your site. My father was brought up in West Ham and although he came to Scotland during the war and settled here, he remained a Hammers supporter all his life. I'm trying to trace his family tree and have got back as far as 1874 when his oldest uncle was born. The family stayed in various places and their father, Richard Lewis worked at the docks. It was great to see the old maps on your site and I managed to see one of the streets the family lived in. In later years my father was a patient in the London Hospital for major heart surgery. So really he went back to his roots. I would love to be able to chat with someone about East London or to see if anyone knows anyone who has Lewis ancestors.

**From Mrs Sarah Ann Winfield,
Chesterfield (received 2005)**

I do look forward to my newsletter and enjoy reading it, just as I have mentioned to you before. I do not see anything about a place called Canning Town, surely someone must come from there or have heard of it. I lived in Canning Town before the 2nd War. I was born there in 1921 and I am now living in

Chesterfield (met my husband while he and I were serving in the forces, he came from Chesterfield). We were married at St Peter & St Pauls Church in Dagenham, Essex and I came to live here. So I do like to look back at my childhood days, which were spent in Alice Street, Canning Town, near to St Luke's Church. I would love to see any pictures of this street and to know of any person who knows it. I would also like the book you mentioned in the newsletter (*The East End I Knew*), any maps which show Canning Town & Alice Street. Sorry about the writing (nearly 84).

(Ed. Note: We have over the years published articles and reminiscences on Canning Town, especially by Ivy Alexander. But we do rely on our members supplying us with contributions!)

Russell Spencer, Hornchurch, Essex, wrote in asking if the Abbey of St Mary Graces had been built over. He recalled passing by the site when it was being excavated. Doreen Osborne contacted the Museum of London, who replied:

Part of the site was excavated in 1986. A number of medieval Walls remain on site, these belong to the main abbey buildings 1350-1538. Some are visible from an underpass to the south on East Smithfield, there's a bit of lawn etc in the complex there, but many are in a basement beneath the current quadrangle behind the early 19th century Smirke Building. Buried archaeology relating to the Black Death, Abbey and Victualling yard (all very important) still survives beneath the main front forecourt of the Smirke Building which was never excavated – the forecourt is listed. A publication on this site is currently being worked on and should be available in the near future. (Information supplied by Cath Maloney, Archivist London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre, Museum of London).

The history of the abbey known as Eastminster appears to have its roots in the Plague

epidemic, or Black Death of 1349, when churchyards were overwhelmed and unable to cope with burials. John Corey, a clergyman acquired a parcel of land near East Smithfield from the Priory of Holy Trinity, and used it as a burial ground for victims of the Plague. This site, later occupied by the Royal Mint, was consecrated, and a chapel was built there. King Edward III later founded a monastery on the site for monks of the Cistercian Order, under the title of the Abbey of St. Mary of Graces. The abbey was also known as Eastminster, or simply, the New Abbey. In 1539, following the Dissolution, the abbey went to Sir Arthur Darcie, who demolished the building. Later a storehouse for victuals was built on the site, used by the Royal Navy, until the Royal Mint was erected there 1807-12, by Sir Robert Smirke. The Mint moved out between 1965 and 1975 and the interior of the building was redesigned in 1985 for offices. The small lane of Graces Alley leading into Wellelose Square, commemorates existence of the abbey.



Picture supplied by Russell Spencer, taken 27/3/1987, looking north, shows the Mint façade just visible on left. The main building, the old Royal Telephone exchange. Church of English Martyrs Prescott Street in background, with spire of Christchurch just visible behind it.

From Len Barnett (email)

Although originally specialising in the research of merchant mariners (through my personal work), over the years I have expanded my knowledge of surviving records

(both administratively and operationally) relating to other types of mariners in British service. So, I am taking this opportunity of reminding past clients and other interested parties, as well as informing new contacts of my main areas of expertise. These are as follows:-

- * Civilian mariners of all varieties in British mercantile service from 1835 to 1972
- * Officers and men of the Royal Navy from 1793 onwards
- * Officers and men of the Royal Naval Reserve from 1859 onwards
- * Officers and men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve from 1903 onwards

A lot of the personnel records post First World War are not yet available for public scrutiny, but I now have a good knowledge and experience of operational records of the Second World War period. My website, has practical guides into researching all the above (excepting operational aspects that can be highly complex in their own rights).

And, although I have not advertised my services in relation to other types of work, clients have trusted me to conduct research into others. As a result I now have a working expertise in:-

- * Masters and mates of the Honourable East India Company c.1760 to 1834 (there are earlier records but as yet I am not au fait with them)
- * Officers and men of the Bombay Marine mid 18th century to 1863
- * Officers and men of the Royal Marines from 1793 onwards
- * Officers and men of the Coastguard Service from c.1822 to c.1922

LEN BARNETT

lenny@barnettresearch.freemove.co.uk

<http://www.barnettresearch.freemove.co.uk>

Letter from new member Steven Barber, who now lives in Tiverton, Devon

Thank you for the prompt response to my recent subscription as new member and the "starter pack" enclosures. I enjoyed reading this material, perhaps especially the piece on Julia Scurr. One major aspect of my own strong interest is the political climate/scene/response of the East End in the inter-war years, with of course all that led up to that from the previous century and beyond. My sister shares my "old codger's" tendency to recall more and more vividly the long overlaid scenes and sensations of childhood. I would therefore like to give her a year's membership, and accordingly enclose £5, which I trust covers her pensioner's membership plus the cost of a brief note from you to me, when you can spare a moment, in answer to a couple of questions coming up, (no hurry).

Q1. In what I have seen, I have found no mention of any charge for copies of past articles in E.L.R. or the Newsletter. Please clarify.

(Philip advised Mr Barber that we don't charge for copies unless a lot are required.)

Q2. Can you tell me whether there has ever been in earlier E.L. Records or Newsletters any substantial reference to the Coborn School for Girls, which you will know, I'm sure, stood in Bow Road? It was a highly respected and socially significant Grammar School serving a large catchment area. On Sept. 1, 1939, the school as an entity was evacuated to Taunton, Somerset. In a well-meant but partially vain attempt to at least keep the children of families together when parents were left behind in London, younger brothers and sisters went along as part and parcel of the same exodus. The "cultural exchange" which ensued from this ill organised, sudden imposition of a tribal horde of emotionally vulnerable London children on a West Country town, and the extended impact of their

eventual return, (often more widely dispersed, in our case returning from our original Hackney Wick to East Ham), could keep a social historian or sociologist busy for years. There are a number of matters I may be able to follow up through your past issues, but I won't rush my fences now.

(Ed. Note: Can any of our members help with recollections of Coborn's evacuation? Coopers went to Frome and our member Roy Hayes has vivid memories of his time there.)

International Women's Day – 8th March 2006 – from Rosemary Taylor:

Women's Day was celebrated here in our little town of Pilar de la Horadada, Spain, with a variety programme. As it was entirely in Spanish, I could not participate (though that may change soon), but our local group put on a dramatisation of an event that took place in New York, in 1908, and I must admit that I was unaware of it! But I thought the information might be of interest to those who so faithfully and enthusiastically attended my Suffragette Walks around Bow, as well as the fact that the garment industry was and is of such importance in the East End of London.

The garment industry was one of the first industries in which women worked. Garment factories therefore became one of the key places where women began to demand their economic rights. On 8th March 1908, needle workers in New York City went on strike demanding fair working conditions and fair pay. 'Bread and Roses.' This event inspired Clara Zetkin to organise an International Women's Day. In 1911, a week after the first official International Women's Day, a fire in a garment factory in New York City, started deliberately as a revenge attack by the manager, killed 140 young women garment workers, most of them recent immigrants. This massacre was remembered in subsequent International Women's Day events.

MEMORIAL RESEARCH

Don't forget, Doreen and Diane Kendall, with Doreen Osborne and a dedicated group of volunteers are in the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park on the second Sunday of every month at 2 pm, meticulously researching graves and recording memorial inscriptions. They would welcome any help members can offer. This labour of love has grown into a project of enormous proportions and complexity, with an impressive database of graves researched, with illustrations attached. **Monday 29 May 2006 is Open Day** at Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park **10 am to 4 pm** when you can meet Doreen and Diane and view their work.

Unfortunately, due to the pressure of work, Doreen and Diane cannot undertake any research on behalf of individuals seeking their ancestors in the cemetery, but would welcome any information that has been uncovered through personal searches. Owing to a hiccup on the Cemetery website, they were inundated over the Spring and Summer with requests – one week alone they had over fifty, many with long lists of names! However, a request from a descendant of the man who claimed to be the Titchbourne heir sent Doreen on an exciting trail, which uncovered a remarkable story.....

A 4 times great grandson Shaun Orton asked us for help in Tower Hamlets Cemetery to find the grave of George Orton Snr who died 5th August 1865 aged 75 years and Mary Orton his wife who died 7th May 1859 in grave No 3357 Sq 64. Intrigued by the mystery of the Titchbourne Inheritance we tried to find out more. We still do not know the answer.

Was George Orton the biggest Con Man of his day? A book published in 2002 by Constable and Robertson author Robyn Annear called *The man who lost himself*, price £12.99 ISBN 1- 84119- 799- 8. A paper back of 480 pages well presented in good print and set out in a readable sequence of events could help you make up your mind.

The Titchbourne Mystery

In Westminster Hall on the 7th November 1871 the trial of perjury against Arthur Orton opened. He claimed to be Sir Roger Titchbourne, the long lost heir to the Titchbourne inheritance.

This court case was to be one of the longest and costliest on record in British judicial history lasting 291 days. It cost the Titchbourne estate £90,000 in legal fees and, while on remand Arthur Orton appeared at over sixty public meetings including the Pavilion Theatre Wapping and the White Lion Tavern Shadwell to raise money for his defence. Newspapers here and in Australia carried daily reports of the proceedings. Songs were sung along with plays in the Music Halls. Over sixty people wrote articles for and against whether Arthur Orton was a local man of Wapping.

The Orton family traded as butcher and provision merchants to the shipping trade, importing Shetland cattle and ponies for Smithfield Market, holding the animals at a disused brewery in Great Hermitage Street of stables and stock yard. They also won a contract to supply the New York liners with meat when the shipping line moved from London Docks to St Katherine Docks.

George Orton Snr and his wife Mary lived at 69 High Street Wapping. Their youngest child of twelve children, George Orton was born on 20th March 1834, and grew up amongst the wharfs and quays of Wapping. Called Arthur, at the age of fourteen was apprenticed to Captain George Brook master of the "Ocean" in 1848 which set sail for Antwerp then the South Seas to return late in November 1851. His next ship the "Middleton" under the command of Captain William Storre sailed in November 1852 for Van Diemen's Land. Having served his apprenticeship he was free to find his fortune in Australia. In the next thirteen years calling himself Thomas Casto he lead an eventful life in the Australian Bush

then set up a butchers shop in Wagga Wagga for four years. Then he claimed to be the Titchbourne claimant, the lost heir to the inheritance and title.

The trial became the soap opera of its day, with people queuing for hours to attend and arguments for and against the claimant in pubs and work places were lively debates. Arthur Orton lost the case, his sentence was 14 years spent in Newgate, Millbank, Dartmouth and Portsea prisons. His sentence was reduced by 3 years for good behaviour. His supporters still believed in his claims. Once out of prison he signed a contract for one year at a hundred guineas to tour with Sangers Travelling Circus, from there he went on the Music Halls, finally opening a tobacconist shop in Islington which went bankrupt. He ended his days on Parish Relief, dying on the 1st of April 1898 aged 64 years. The newspapers carried his obituaries as George Orton. He was buried in an unmarked grave at Paddington Cemetery, although his coffin plaque was inscribed Sir Roger Charles Doughty Titchborne.

Doreen Kendall



George Clarke, who appeared on three Royal Variety Performances at The London Palladium Theatre.

A Forgotten Star of Variety Theatre ? George Henry Broome (stagename: George Clarke)

George Clarke, comedian, was born in Bromley, Middlesex, in 1886. He was a son of George Thomas Broome (b.1860 West Ham) and Selina Hewett (b. Bethnal Green 1861) and their parents and siblings were East End residents for a number of years. He began his career in the old Albert Theatre with his father, appearing as patter comedians and dancers, in 1894, billed as 'George Clarke and his Half'. Later known as 'Clarke and Clements', it is understood the father-son relationship lasted until 1910, when Clarke senior retired to become a publican, and George junior, turning solo, became well known as a 'Dude Comedian'. In 1911, Lambeth, he married Isabelle Donaldson Markey (b. India 1890), daughter of John Markey, bandmaster of the 16th (Queen's Own) Lancers, India and South Africa, and his wife Henrietta. The Markey family were living in Croydon in the 1901 census whilst father John was with his regiment in the South Africa War.

"The Performer" wrote of George Clarke in 1946: He was a past master in the art of giving free rein to the most priceless verbal inanities, was always impeccably attired on the stage, and with his monocle, typified the 'silly ass' character so vastly enjoyed by the man in the street. Clarke also had the art of creating laughter by exploiting the nit-wit, and never resorted to blue material. His most outstanding sketch was undoubtedly 'His First Car' in which he drove an Austin Seven about the stage with an almost uncanny skill, yet conveyed the impression that the plunging of the vehicle was the result of gross mishandling on the part of the character that even P. G. Wodehouse would have been proud to create.

After success in variety, not only in this country but also in South Africa, Australasia and the USA he played in his first revue, "Step

this Way," followed between 1913 and 1923 by a series of shows under the management of Harry Dee. He appeared in three Royal Variety Performances at the London Palladium, in 1930, 1932 and 1934. In later years he appeared in musical comedy, mainly touring versions of West End successes. He died in December 1946. The Theatre Museum, London, provides that his Obituary appeared in "The Times", December 22, 1946, page 7; The New York Times, December 22, 1946, page 41; Variety (USA), January 1, 1947.

In the biography of George Robey, an English comedian possibly rated in England second only to Charlie Chaplin, Arthur Askey, a contemporary comedian, is quoted: "George was in a revue once with a very fine comedian, a good 'business' comedian, George Clark, who used to get a lot of laughs. In fact he got too many for George, so George had him 'eased out' and put in a different position. But at the end of the run, just to show there was no malice, no ill feeling, he gave him a lovely present, a gold watch or something with 'Happy Memories of the show' and all this inscribed on it. In those days comics were different. I mean comics work together now, but in the old days you were very much on your own and it was a tough fight - tougher than it is today, so probably that was the underlying factor." ("George Rabey:" Wellington Public Library, NZ)

George Clarke appeared on three Variety Performances. The first was on 22nd May, 1930, at The London Palladium in the presence of HM King George V & HM Queen Mary. George performed in a sketch called "*The New Car.*"

"... There was the straight forward humour of Mr. George Clarke, dependent largely on situation and on the skill with which he gave to a small car a grotesque life of its own." The Times, 23/5/1930. (Other performers included Will Hay.) The second was on 30th May, 1932, again at The Palladium in the presence of their Majesties. He performed with another

artiste, Miss Madge Aubrey, in a scene from "*By George.*" "... Mr George Clarke reverted to tricks by inducing in a small motorcar the sensitiveness of a colt not yet broken to traffic. For an amusing 10 minutes he tried in vain to coax it past an automatic traffic control, and then - scarcely less amusing - turned to explore the humours of a service flat in which the labour-saving machinery was so near perfect that it was always trying to eliminate the occupants." The Times, 31/1/1932. (other acts included Flanagan and Allen; Jack Buchanan; Will Fyffe.)

George's third & final appearance was on 8th May, 1934. The London Palladium and King George V & Queen Mary again in attendance. This time he appeared in a sketch "*The Millers Daughter*" with Alec Dane, Bert Platt and Nora Dwyer. "... Mr George Clarke displayed his engaging vapidty in a burlesque of a romantic drama." The Times, 9/5/1934. (Other acts included Sir Cedric Hardwicke; Elsie and Doris Waters; George Robey; Jimmy Wilde; Miss Sophie Tucker.) See following programme.

(This material provided to the Maidenhead Library by Mr Ray Donn, Treasurer/webmaster, The Entertainment Artistes Benevolent Society, London. E-Mail: ray@donn.co.uk and www.eabf.org.uk and www.donn.co.uk Extracts from "The Times" newspaper Entertainment columns following the shows were located by Mr Ron Coleman, New Southgate, London.

The 1934 ROYAL VARIETY

PERFORMANCE 8 May London Palladium
In the presence of their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary. Presented by George Black. Musical Director - Richard Cren

THE PROGRAMME

Kafka, Stanley and Mae Quartette - Aerial Gymnasts
The Three Bonos - New Style Clowns
Frank Boston - Comedy Juggler

J. Sherman Fisher's Palladium Girls
The Three Sailors – Comedy and Dance
Arthur Lucan and Kitty McShane – A Domestic Comedy Episode
Elsie and Doris Waters – Radio Entertainers
Cedric Hardwicke, Osmund Willson and Cicely Oates in *The Carrier Pigeon*
George Robey – “Prime Minister of Mirth”
The BBC Dance Orchestra directed by **Henry Hall**
Jack Holland and June Hart – Ballroom Dancers with the Lawrence Tiller Girls
Murray and Mooney – Comedians
George Clarke, Bert Platt, Alec Dane, and Norah Dwyer in *The Miller's Daughter*
Billy Bennett – “Almost a Gentleman”
Jack Hylton and his Band

Extract from “*Curtain Up*,” by Lord Delfont – an authorized history; published by Robson Books.

During 1911-12 he toured Australia, New Zealand, etc. At the Oxford, June 1913, played the Hon. G. P. Washington in “**Step This Way!**”; during 1914 toured in “**Hello Everybody!**”; at the London Hippodrome, January 1917, appeared in “**Zig-Zag**” and played there the following year in “**Box o' Tricks**”; at the Empire, November 1917, appeared in “**Here and There**”; during 1918 appeared at the Folies Bergeres, Paris, in “**Zig-Zag**”; during 1919 toured in “**On the Wing**”;

For several years he appeared in Harry Day's Revues, “**Hello Everybody**”, “**Spangles**” 1921; “**Radios**” 1923; “**Records**” 1925; at the Palladium, February 1926, played in “**Palladium Pleasures**”; in 1927-28 toured as Harry Bassett in “**Lido Lady**”; in 1928 toured in “**Vogues and Vanities**”; during 1929 appeared in principal variety theatres in England and New York in “**The New Car**”; Gaiety, January 1930, played Bertie Bundy in “**Darling I Love You**”; Jan 1931 Chepstow Potts in “**Blue Roses**” and subsequently in “**By George!**”; appeared at the Victoria Palace, February 1933, in “**By George!**”;

during 1933-34 toured in “**Here We Go Round**”; in November 1934, went to South Africa and toured in the same pieces; in August 1935, toured as George Cann in “**Let's Join George**” and returned to South Africa in 1935 to tour in this; during 1936-37 toured in England in the same piece and in “**George Ahoy**”, again touring South Africa, 1937; during 1938 toured in England as Ally in “**Going Greek**”; has also appeared in films in “**His First Car**”, “**Here's George**” etc. Appeared at Royal Command Performances at the Palladium 1930, 1932 and 1934; toured 1939 as George Lockwood in “**It's That Man Again**” and 1940 as George Sterling in “**Happy Birthday**”; toured 1943 as Jimmy Smith in “**No No Nanette**”; in 1944 as Alfred Butler in “**Ring Tins**” (“**Battling Butler**”) and 1945 again toured in “**No No Nanette**”; from 1942-44 appeared each Christmas as Buttons in “**Cinderella**” at Edinburgh, Newcastle and Liverpool, respectively.

George Clarke appeared on the Broadway stage from 1903 until 1931, in some 12 shows, including “**Romeo and Juliet**”, “**The Taming of The Shrew**”, and “**Uncle Tom's Cabin**.” He went to Hollywood, 1915-1932, as an actor, producer and cameraman, appearing in over 16 black and white, silent and sound movies. A small number of these were shown in England under different titles, and he also made a small number of film appearances in England, featuring some of his more successful variety acts.

He died of shock in Maidenhead Hospital, December 1946, following an operation for stomach cancer. His wife Isabelle retired to Ringwood, near Bourne-mouth, where she died in 1964. George and Isabelle Clarke only had one child, **George John Clarke**, who was awarded the Military Cross for bravery in Italy in 1944. There are several marriages under this name in the GRO Register indexes to 1950, following his demob. from the Army in 1945, but all efforts to locate him have so far been unsuccessful. I am sure members and readers will not have realized that a performer

of the stature of George Clarke was an East Ender, and was possible so little-known because it appears he never had a radio career in the 1930's, unlike so many other household names of comedians and variety stars of those days. (Further ongoing research undertaken into the parents and development of the families of Selina Hewett and George Thomas Broome/Clarke.)

Les Hewett

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(This is a studio photo, 1905-08, with the outstanding English/US movie star, Dame Gladys Cooper, but it is suggested they never appeared together on stage as this picture suggests.)

THE THIRD SYMPOSIUM ON SHIPBUILDING AND SHIPS ON THE THAMES

Like many members of the Society I had a grandfather and uncles who were dockers and although I regularly visit the Museum in Docklands it was the Third Symposium that opened my eyes to the great interest that there still is in the Thames, its ships and the men who built them.

Supported by the Society for Nautical Research and the Greenwich Maritime Institute the Symposium attracted over 100 participants to Greenwich in February. The symposium is only held every four years and this probably explains the high quality of the presentations and the wide range of topics covered.

Participants were provided with a set of abstracts and for those interested in any of the papers the person to contact is Dr Roger Owen, 8 The Drive, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0EP, email jr_owen100@hotmail.com, tel 020 8777 7103. He will be able to tell you if and when and how the full Symposium will be published.

Papers covered the following topics:

- The Thames Merchant Yards in Napoleonic Wars
- William Pitcher and the Northfleet Dockyard, 1830-60
- Thames Shipyards and the American Civil War, 1861-1865
- The Merchant Banker, the Broker and the Company Chairman: The Thames Iron New Issue
- Who was the "London Engineer"?
- Civilian Training Ships on the Thames since 1783
- Yarrow's Shipbuilding Yard on the Isle of Dogs
- Early Steamship Service on the Thames
- Fitting-out of Early Steamships at the City Canal on the Isle of Dogs

John Penn and Son, Maritime Engineers of Greenwich. It is impossible to summarise all these papers so I mention just two topics that I was personally unaware of.

Kevin Foster came over from the USA, where he is Chief of the Maritime Heritage Program of the National Park Service, to present his paper on how the ship brokers and mariners of the Thames played a significant, but largely unrecognised, role in the American Civil War. The northern United States instituted a blockade on the southern, slave owning states, and this created a major market for the Thames side entrepreneurs. They searched all over Britain and Europe for ships fast enough to break the blockade, for after all we were "neutral" during this war. Fortunes were made and lost. The Thames shipyards, such as those of Charles Lungley, C. J. Mare, Rennie and Hepworth, were well known for high-quality, innovative technology, built dozens of fast new side wheel and propeller steamers expressly to run the blockade. The Sun Ironworks and the shipyard of John and William Dudgeon in Millwall alone produced 15 independent twin-screw blockade-runners, making them the second most productive blockade-runner builders.

The Yarrow yard at Poplar was arguably the world's most innovative and revolutionary shipyard. In the period from 1866 to 1908 more than a dozen 'first in the world' vessel types or new inventions came from the yard. Of interest to me were the river boats they built for exploration in Africa. The ships had to be broken down to loads that could be covered on a man's back, and then re-assembled on the banks of the Nile and Lake Victoria.

HENLEYS OF WAPPING: A LONDON SHIPOWNING FAMILY, 1770-1830

In the 1970s a clear out at a large country estate near Oxford discovered 116 large wooden boxes in a loft. Fortunately the owner decided to have a look inside the boxes before having a bonfire. Inside were the records of

the Henley family of Wapping and these now fill over 100 feet of shelving at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. It is now recognised as probably the most important archive on a family run firm before the growth in the 19th century of the large firms such as Blue Funnel Line, the Anchor Line, and the General Steam Navigation Company. They offer a much greater insight into the development of the shipping industry in a period about which so little is known.

To those wishing to follow up this story will find at the Tower Hamlets Local History Library:

Ann Currie, *Henleys of Wapping: A London Shipowning Family, 1770-1830*, 1988

Simon P. Ville, *English shipowning during the industrial revolution: Michael Henley and Son, London shipowners, 1770-1830*, 1987.

Simon Ville's book is based on his Ph. D. thesis, which is available on microfilm at Bancroft Road.

CAMDEN, CALVERT AND KING

More recent research on Wapping based merchants by Ken Cozen has resulted in his 2005 MA thesis at the Greenwich Maritime Institute on *Politics, Patronage and Profit: A Case Study of three 18th century London Merchants*. This is a study of the partnership of William Camden (173?-1796), Anthony Calvert (1735?-1809) and Thomas King (1735?-1824), who had very strong links with Wapping and operated at an international level. Ken's thesis is now available at Bancroft Road and its importance cannot be understated.

I am now researching the merchants who lived in Wapping in the period 1740 to 1800, and it is clear that there were many other men in addition to Michael Henley, Camden, Calvert and King, that were equally prosperous and efficient, but have never been identified before.

Derek Morris

BOOK SHELF

The Warning Carriers. Judy Jowett. Silver Society, 2005, ISBN 0-9549144-1-4
Card covers, 144 pages, £12.

This is a special edition of *The Journal of The Silver Society* and is based around a notebook in the archives of The Goldsmiths Company titled 1744 Warning Carriers Walks.

The book describes the system, possibly from as early as the sixteenth century, to enable information about lost or stolen valuables to be circulated rapidly amongst the Goldsmiths, Jewellers, Watch makers and Pawnbrokers of London. Anyone reporting such items to The Goldsmiths Company could have a notice printed within three hours. Warning Carriers then followed defined routes to notify potential buyers. The notebook details three circuits although it is believed that there probably were four in total.

The significance to students of East London history is that one of the routes went from the City through Spitalfields, Whitechapel, and Ratcliffe Highway to Shadwell and returned by way of Wapping and St Katherine's. There were 146 shopkeepers on this route. Their names, location, and nature of business are given, also in many cases biographical details. The location of the premises is very well shown by the use of large scale maps derived from John Rocque's map of 1746.

This reviewer was certainly surprised how many people connected with the jewellery trade were located in an area usually only associated with maritime matters. I counted 34 goldsmiths/bankers, 16 watchmakers, 2 jewellers and 94 (pawn)brokers !

This fascinating book also contains copies of many of the warning notices themselves (I saw several for lost £100 notes, an enormous sum

at the time) and illustrations of contemporary items made from silver and gold.

Philip Mernick

Foul Deeds and Suspicious Deaths in London's East End, by Geoffrey Howse, published by Wharncliffe Books, paperback \$10.99. ISBN 1903425719

Please check Eastside Bookshop in Brick Lane, or Newham Bookshop, Plaistow for copies of the latest books.



Would you like to find out more about the secret past life of your house?

Angel TV are making a 10-part series for the History Channel called 'Hidden House History' and are looking for London houses with interesting stories to tell from all periods of time. Archive expert Dr. Nick Barratt will trawl the archives in search of evidence while architectural historian Dr. Jonathan Foyle will explore how the building has changed over time.

Maybe your house has been a witness to some extraordinary events, or perhaps you know of a house which was inspired by a utopian dream, has unusual or original architectural features, is a converted workhouse or factory or was bombed during the war and want to know more about the people who lived there?

Please let us know by emailing details of your house to admin@angeltv.co.uk or write to us at: 'HIDDEN HOUSE HISTORY', Angel TV, Lion House, 26 Paddenswick Road, London W6 0UB.

I.K. Brunel East London Projects



Thames Tunnel 1842 - 2006



Great Eastern 1857 to 1888