

Bow Bridge (from the north) by William Whiffin

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## **Editorial Note:**

The Committee members are as follows: Philip Mernick, Chairman, Doreen Kendall, Secretary, Harold Mernick, Membership, David Behr, Programme, Ann Sansom, Doreen Osborne, Howard Isenberg and Rosemary Taylor.

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

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

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

Our grateful thanks go to all the contributors of this edition of the newsletter. Letters and articles on East End history and reminiscences are always welcome and we make every effort to publish suitable material. Whilst handwritten articles are acceptable, items of interest, and any queries can be emailed to Philip Mernick.

David Behr, who is responsible for organising our Programme of Lectures, has an interesting and varied programme for the coming year. We are indebted to David for the time and effort he puts into contacting potential lecturers, and arranging the programme.

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



#### **Olympic Site Update**

Not a lot to say as most of the 2012 structures are virtually complete. Stratford High Street now has buildings going up almost all the way between the Greenway and Stratford itself. The closures I mentioned in the last issue remain that way. Bright new signs have gone up on Greenway pointing to Three Mills but if you follow them all you find is a blocked path that should have opened TWO YEARS ago.

## Our Olympic Site images can be seen on the **ELHS** web site at:

http://www.mernick.org.uk/elhs/Stadium/St adium.htma

With the Olympics on the horizon, an interesting fact has emerged recently – namely that the founder of the modern Olympics, Frenchman Pierre Fredy, Baron de Coubertin, got the idea of reviving the Games after visiting Toynbee Hall, where he gave a series of lectures during the 1880s. Toynbee Hall in Commercial Street was founded in 1884, the first university settlement in the East End, where the idea of uplifting the working classes through study, sport and leisure activities was conceived by Canon Barnet.

### **Sporting Trail**

With the Olympics in mind, Doreen and Diane are hoping to put together a walk around Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park highlighting graves or memorials with a sporting connection. To date they have come up with six, but they need a lot more to make this a viable project.

If any members have information on anyone with a sporting connection buried or connected to the cemetery, please email them at <u>amyod03-thcp@yahoo.co.uk</u> or write to Doreen Kendall at the address **alongside**.

## East London History Society Programme 2010 - 2011

#### WEDNESDAY September 15

The Women's Library Speaker: Catherine Norman

#### **Thursday October 14**

**Operation Pied Piper: the evacuation of the** schoolchildren **Speakers: Dorothy Organ and Jim Reeves** 

#### **Thursday November 11**

Yiddish Songs about London 1880-1940 Speaker: Vivi Lachs

**Thursday December 9** 

FAIR SHARES FOR ALL-rationing in Britain during and after the Second World War Speaker: David Evans

#### 2011

January TBA

February TBA

March TBA

**Thursday April 7** 

Eighteenth Century Whitechapel Speaker: Derek Morris

#### Thursday May 12

Open evening Ray Newton & John Tarby showing films about East London.

The lectures are usually held on Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm in the Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1, but please note that due to exceptional circumstances, the first lecture is on a Wednesday. 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.

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 get in touch with David Behr, our Programme co-ordinator, either at one of our lectures or, alternatively, email our Chairman Philip Mernick with your comments and suggestions. Email: phil@mernicks.com

#### **Cover picture**

Evocative photograph of Bow Bridge taken by William Whiffin, 1920s? There are still barges moored to the south of Bow Bridge but they are for the rubbish taken out of the Lea rather than flour for the mills. That bridge has also gone, to be replaced by the concrete fly-over. The van on the bridge is marked Smith Garretts, who operated the Bow Brewery (visible on far side of bridge, right hand side of picture).

Just a few hundred yards to the north east is that still-a-building wonder of our age – the 2012 London Olympics venue!

Whiffins collection of images is shared between Tower Hamlets Local History Library and the LMA.

## Correspondence

#### From: Gavin McGrath Email: geemactwo@aim.com

I am doing a book on theatres and cinemas in Tower Hamlets and I am short of some images. I just wondered if some of your members might have any pictures they would be prepared to let me use. I am looking for the following:

Aldgate Cinema, 12a Whitechapel High Street, E1

Alexandra Hall/Electric Theatre, 165 Jubilee Street, El

Bijou Cinema, 70 Bow Common Lane, E3 Bow Electric Theatre, 127-129 Bow Road, E3 Cable Picture Palace, 101 Cable Street, E1 (conversion of a Lithuanian Church) Classic, 44 Mile End Road, E1 (also known as Mile End Picture Palace) Coliseum Cinema, 396-398 Mile End Road, E1 (also known as Stepney Cinema) East London Palace, Fieldgate Street, E1 East London Picture Palace, 231-233 Cambridge Heath Road, E2 Empire Cinema, 62-66 Green Street, E2 Forrest's Electrodrome, 122 Eric Street, E1 Gaiety Cinema, 73 East India Dock Road, E14 (also known as Poplar Cinema) Gale's Electric Theatre, 326 Bethnal Green Road, E2 (also known as Bethnal Green Picture Palace) Geisha Cinema, 71-73 Parnell Road, E3 (also known as Plaza Cinema) Grand Electric Cinema, Devonport Street, E1 Grand Palace, 6-10 Robin Hood Lane, E14 Luxor Cinema, 152 Commercial Street, E1 Majestic Cinema, 1 Ben Jonson Road, E1 Palaceadium, 135 Whitehorse Road, E1 (also known as Ben Hur Cinema) Palladium, 360 Mile End Road, E1 Regal Cinema, 156 Bow Road, E3 Ritz, 55 St. Stephen's Road, E3 (as Ritz not Old Ford Picture Palace) Sebright Picture Palace, 26-28 Coate Street, E2 (also known as Regent Theatre)

Star Cinema, 163 High Street, E14 (conversion of Bethel Chapel) Victoria Picture Theatre, 184-186 Grove Road, E3 Whitehorn Cinema, Tidey Street, E14 Whitehorse Picturedrome, 108a Whitehorse Road, E1

I have not approached Tower Hamlets History On-line yet as their email address is hidden, maybe you are affiliated in some way. Thanks in advance for your time and trouble.

#### **Rosemary Taylor replies:**

The Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, Bancroft Road, has an extensive collection of photographs of the 'lost' cinemas of Tower Hamlets. I have used many of the images they hold in the books Chris Lloyd (Librarian) and myself collaborated on. We also have an article on East End cinemas in this newsletter!)

#### The following is a selection of enquiries Philip Mernick dealt with by email:

#### **Fiona Reeves:**

Hi, I first found your website last week when I was looking up photos of Victoria Park in the East End. It's a great site. My ancestors on my dad's side of the family all come from the East End (mostly Poplar, but also Limehouse and Bethnal Green) and I've been reading as much about it as I can (including 5 books in a row!). I found that one of my ancestors, Henry John Harrison and his family, were running the Sabbarton Arms pub at 99 Upper North Street in Poplar at the beginning of the 20th century any tips on how I could research more about this would be fantastic (I'm not in a position to visit London for research until my kids are much older!).

I've just finished designing a print / poster honouring the East End and wondered if you would be at all interested in checking it over for accuracy (or omissions!). I'd also happily give you a discount voucher code to publish on your website if you thought your readers would be interested in it.

http://flamingimp.com/product.php?id\_produc t=125

#### **Philip:**

Dear Fiona, I would be happy to mention your poster in our next Newsletter (end August) and also to check it out for you (I need a larger image than obtainable from your web site). If your ancestor was the licensee of The Sabberton Arms then the dates are easy to trace from the annual Post Office Directories. However if they were managing it for somebody else their name won't appear. In 1902 (which I have on CD) the directory gives Thomas Sidney Smith as licensee, when do you think Henry Harrison was there?

#### **Fiona:**

I have him on the 1901 census as the manager - I've attached the census record and highlighted the relevant section in a red box. There's Henry John Harrison, aged 42, public house manager. His wife Amelia Harrison (formerly Durrant) pub manageress. Their daughter Maud Elizabeth Harrison (who I'm directly descended from, she's my great-greatgrandmother - she married Francis David Tye and Tye is my maiden name), their son Henry Charles Harrison; then three "servants" who were the cook, barman, and potman.

Apart from finding a few photos of the building online (taken within the last 10 years since it's become a normal residence instead of a pub) that's basically all the information I have (except that I have a source showing Henry as still being a pub manager in 1910 on his daughter's marriage certificate presumably at the same place though not guaranteed of course). But I know of course that I should be able to find out a lot more since it was a pub rather than just a residence. I didn't know whether it was affiliated to a brewery or anything - but from you saying that Thomas Sidney Smith was licensee it was clearly owned by someone else and they were just living there running the pub (which

presumably means that their wages weren't brilliant - it would have been the owner making all the money!). My father-in-law suggested I could see if CAMRA knew anything about the pub. Anything more you can tell me or any pointers in the right direction would be wonderful!

#### **Philip:**

I checked a series of directories yesterday. Unfortunately the name Harrison does not appear anywhere between1897 and 1911. The licensee changed several times over that period, so it may not have been a very profitable pub.

CAMRA records (they published three editions of a book on East End pubs) that The Sabbarton Arms was a Watney pub in the 1980s and served no real ale.

#### **Neville Taggart:**

Greetings, my name is Neville Taggart, and I live in Townsville, Queensland, Australia. I am presently researching the life & family of my GGG/ mother, Sarah Williams/ Barlow/ Brookfield of Bromley and Bromley by Bow.

Sarah & husband Joseph Brookfield, then daughter Eliza Barlow/Clayden/ Scotcher ran the "Mulberry Tree" Public House for most of the second half of the 1800's.Though they must have been a well known family in the area at that time, I am having a great deal of difficulty obtaining information about them or the "Mulberry Tree".

I have confirmed their time at the pub at the Dead Pubs web site, & 1871, 1881, 1891 census's, and there is mention of it in Gary Haines book," Bow & Bromley-by-Bow", but unfortunately no further info. or photograph. Can you suggest where I could try next as I seem to have come up against the old Brick Wall!

#### **Philip:**

Post Office Directories give Sarah Brookfield at the Mulberry Tree 1869 to 1886 and Eliza Scotcher 1887 to 1892. You could try Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives.

#### **Andrew Bundy:**

I have recently started to research my family tree. and have found a letter addressed to my father at an address I cannot locate and wondered if you could help me, the address is: 14 Rippoth Road, Old Ford, Bow E3

I have tried looking at the maps on your website but have still been unable to locate this road on those. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

#### **Philip:**

The maps have been cropped a little too tight I am afraid, Rippoth Road being in the extreme north east of Poplar. It was obliterated by the construction of an industrial estate, 1970s?. You can see its location on the attached map indicated by the drawn on black arrow. Its remote location within the canal system must have left its inhabitants feeling rather isolated. The area is now known as Fish Island (modern invention for marketing purposes). If you put "Wyke Road E3" into Multimap, Rippoth Road was between Wyke Road and the (Hertford Union) Canal and you will see how it could have vanished under the industrial estate. Please let me know if I can be of more assistance.

#### Andrew:

Thank you ever so much that was just what I was looking for, as everyone that used to live there has now passed away we had very little to go on but for the envelope containing my fathers national service discharge papers which where posted to Rippoth Road.

We are very early into the family tree but so far Hackney Shoreditch and Bethnal Green so to be the focus of a lot of activity.

#### **BEECH HOUSE, CHINGFORD**

Growing up in the Walthamstow area with the surname of Beech, the family were intrigued by a large house at 171 Chingford Mount Road called Beech House. Frank Whitby, a great grandson of James Beech, who owned a sheet metal factory in Walthamstow started to research Mrs Elizabeth Mary Beech, the proprietor of the Prince Albert Public House at 1 Old Church Road, Chingford. Kellys Business Directory show she ran the successful business from 1917 to 1925 and died there in 1933 leaving £108,00 in her will for a holiday home for poor single women of the district. Her homer at 171 Chingford Mount Road and the house at 173 were joined to become Beech House. Later a new building was constructed a short distance away.

A large group of unnamed women attended her funeral, which was held at Bow cemetery (Tower Hamlets Cemetery), although it is not known why she was buried there instead of at Chingford Cemetery. A large part of her trade came from mourners returning from burials at Chingford Cemetery to the Prince Albert situated half a mile away.

Doreen and Diane researched the Beech memorial in Tower Hamlets Cemetery because of an inscription that states that William Henderson Stewart, a Ship's Mate (Mrs Beech's father) was lost in a cyclone in the China Sea in 1870, when Elizabeth was 15 years old, which related to their research for maritime connections.

On 28 October 2009 Frank Whitby visited the Cemetery Park and located the Beech family grave, which is in Square 46, behind a large obelisk memorial. It is in dense undergrowth. The cross is 7 feet high and elaborately decorated. The inscription at the footstone reads: The Family Grave of J & E Beech.

Frank sent us a detailed account of his research. But to date he has been unable to link his ancestry to Elizabeth Beech.

Why go to the West End?



At one time every local shopping centre had its own department store. Nowadays few remain, mostly as parts of the Allders or Debenhams groups. The East End had Boardmans (Stratford) & Bearmans (Leytonstone), names so similar that I usually had difficulty remembering which was which, also Wickhams on Whitechapel Road. The first two have vanished (replaced by offices and McDonalds respectively) but the last still has a physical existence although waiting for the recession to ease before the developers move in.

The title above comes from a brochure I have that was issued by Bearmans in 1939. Frank Bearman had worked in the drapery departments of a number of London stores before setting up his own business. In 1898 Leytonstone was little more than a village on the edge of Epping Forest and had few shops. The site of the old vicarage was available for a block of shops and he bought two "units". His General and Fancy Drapers gradually expanded and by 1913 Bearmans had acquired the entire original block, and expanded beyond it. It became the largest department store in the district. The brochure claims that the glass used in the windows, if placed side by side, would stretch for more than one-eighth of a

mile. The store never had an upper storey although a lower ground floor was later constructed. The use of roof lights meant the ground floor never needed artificial lighting and they tried to avoid internal partitions.

The following is a list of their 50 departments!

## LIST OF DEPARTMENTS AVAIL-ABLE TO SHOPPERS AT BEARMANS

Everything for the comfort of the home, garden and personal appearance ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS ART NEEDLEWORK BABY LINEN BLOUSES AND JUMPERS BEAUTY CULTURE BEDDING AND BEDSTEADS BOYS' OUTFITTING CARPETS CHINA AND GLASS CORSETS HOSIERY JEWELRY LACES LACES LINOLEUMS LADIES' UNDIES LINENS LIBRARY MEN'S OUTFITTING MILLINERY CHINA AND GLASS CORSETS COSTUMES COTTON FABRICS AND LININGS DOWN QUILTS FANCY LINENS FOREIGN FANCY ELEDITIE NECKWEAR OVERALLS PATTERNS RIBBONS SHOES SILK FABRICS STATIONERY SOFT FURNISHINGS TEA ROOM TOILET FURNITURE FURS GLOVES GOWNS GRAMOPHONES AND RADIO HABERDASHERY TOYS TRIMMINGS TRUNKS AND SUIT CASES HAIRDRESSING UMBRELLAS WOOL FABRICS WORKSHOPS HANDBAGS HARDWARE 50 Departments to supply your everyday needs and special requirements.

I remember going past it on the bus to The Green Man for our regular walks in The Forest and I believe it was taken over by the Co-op in the 1960s. When did it close? Can anyone help?

BEARMANS

LEYTONSTONE - - - E.11

LTD.

#### **Philip Mernick**

## Life before Television

Changes in our culture and way of life are so subtle, that very few can predict how life will be in a decade or so. The advent of television, computers and central heating, just to name three for instance, have turned family life on its head.

What brings me to that conclusion, you ask? Well, let's take the last two – because of central heating, families no longer huddle in one room round an open fire (the only fire, I might add) because they can now drift off to their own room and enjoy private 'entertainment' on their laptop, and certainly won't want any intrusion from other members of the family.

Gone are the days when we shared one room, usually the kitchen, and chatted over cups of tea, or listened to 'Appointment with Fear' or 'Dick Barton – Special Agent' on the wireless. Years ago, few housekeeping budgets could stretch to lighting fires in more than one room, so that was the way it had to be!

That's not to say that East end families were doomed to claustrophobic evenings of boredom of course, because local entertainment was in abundance, and generally well used. For most men, an occasional pint in their 'Local' featured high on the list, but for many others, a visit to their local cinema was also high on the agenda, and there were many cinemas to choose form!

Many were just walking distance from home, and with each cinema showing a different programme on a weekly basis, there was plenty of choice.

Just within walking distance from where I lived was The Hippodrome, on the corner of Stainsby Road. This was a grand theatre, easily on par with any in the West End, showing not only films, but live shows too! But just further along on the corner of Peking Street stood the Gaiety Cinema, showing mostly 'U' films, with Gene Autry, Roy Rogers or Tom Mix shooting the 'bad guys'.

Cross over East India Dock Road into China Town, we find another little cinema, the name of which escapes me, because we always called it the 'Flea-pit', but once again, always showing 'U' films so that unaccompanied kids had no trouble gaining admission.

For those who could afford the bus fare, a short ride towards Aldgate brought you to The Troxy, possibly the only building out of those I've mentioned still in existence, albeit, no longer a cinema.

Proceed in the opposite direction towards Blackwall Tunnel, and we arrive at another little cinema on the right hand side which I believe was called the 'New Imperial'; once again showing mostly 'U' films for the benefit of the many local urchins who queued up on a Saturday morning for the children's 'Penny Pictures.'

But for those with the bus fare, the choice was far from exhausted. Catch the 677 trolley Bus up Burdett Road, and you could indulge yourself in the luxury of the 'Mile End Odeon' a building with a huge auditorium, chandelier, and bifurcated staircase to the Circle. Yet again, for those with the leg power, a walk along Whitechapel Road towards Aldgate brought you to the Pavilion on the right hand side, and on the opposite corner, a Jewish Cinema.

With so much to choose from, it's little wonder that many treated themselves to a night out at least once or twice a week, and one might overhear snatches of conversations on the bus such as: "I've seen Gone With the Wind seven times!"

But for me at least, there was one theatre visit that topped them all. That was a visit to the 'Queen's Theatre' in Poplar High Street. The Queen's opened every night except Sundays, and must be one of the last unheralded 'Olde Time Music Halls.'

Every night offered a live show, with most of the well known music hall stars treading the boards at some time or the other.

Perhaps I am a bit biased about the Queen's, because my grandfather Ted Langworth was the Commissionaire there, which I have to admit, was an advantage for me in gaining admission. Grandfather Ted held that grand office for many years, until the theatre's final closure in the late fifties. He frequently reminisced over the old time stars he'd rubbed shoulders with, and was proud of the sketch an artist had drawn of him whilst he worked there. Unfortunately, the artist remains a mystery, because his initials are unreadable.

Those were happy times, when the East End was throbbing with life, and the indigenous community shared their entertainment. It's hard to believe now, that every often the 'Toffs' of the West End, sometimes made excursions to the East End to indulge themselves in our entertainment, occasionally, instead of the other way round.

#### **Bill Langworth**

## The Quack

Nowadays most East End quacks are to be found in Victoria Park but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the term meant an unqualified medical practitioner. The General Medical Council was only created in 1858 as a result of the Medical Act of that year. Its aim is to protect, promote and maintain the health and safety of the community by ensuring proper standards in the practice of medicine. Before that anybody could claim to be a doctor and offer cures for diseases. A very useful source of information on such "doctors" can be found in the pages of *The Medical Adviser and Guide to Good Health*, published between 1823 and 1825 and editited by Dr Alexander Burnett. It appeared weekly and every issue had a section entitled "Annals of Quackery" exposing the activities of quack doctors around the country. While going through this publication in The Welcome Library, I came across an interesting reference <sup>1</sup> to a local example "Dr Norton". They start by describing what he claims and then give their denunciation.

## NORTON'S HAND-BILL ADVICE GRATIS

From Four to Seven o'clock in the Evening Dr NORTON LATE OF THE ROYAL NAVY No. 6 LONDON TERRACE Opposite Great Cambridge-street HACKNEY ROAD, LONDON

"A Medical practioner, of regular education, who earnestly recommends his hithertoo unparalled mode of practice. He has cured and relieved some thousands of persons within the last few years, numbers of whom were thought incurable or dismissed from hospitals. - The doctor may be consulted when this bill is called for, in Scorbutic Disorders, from the slightest acrimony to the most malignant corruption and disolution of the blood and humours, which will be subdued with great certainty .: he has cured many in whom the desease had degenerated into a universal and confirmed leprosy -----. These cases and all slighter, such as heats and colds (arising from drinking cold water when very hot. ), he generally cures with little difficulty, and no confinement; also all cases of the Rheumatism, Scald Heads, Ulcerated Legs etc. by his new mode of treatment"

Then follows a flaming account of his Nervous Elixir, pectoral blasam, pills, washes etc. with virtues that none have ever equalled since Adam was a boy. Then a long list of all of the deseases Dr Norton may be consulted on.

The mode which this fellow takes to gull the public is this: he goes his rounds of the outskirts of London, particularly Hackney,

Mile-end, and the Commercial-road and Limehouse; here he attacks every house, booted and spurred  $^2$ , with a bundle of bills in his hand, and his assistant at his rear, with a book ready to take down every poor wretch who is foolish enough to give the name. He rings the bell or he knocks at the door of the intended devoted and having bowed and looked quandum sufficit (a medical term meaning sufficient quantity) he hands in one of his bills, assuring the person who takes it, that he is a surgeon of the navy, and that he has served twenty years in that service, that he can cure all complaints mentioned in the aforesaid bill and that having come to reside in the neighbourhood, he will be most happy to attend them, etc. etc. etc.

The rascal was a cook in the royal navy, a most ignorant, stupid, and impudent brute, more fit to drive bullocks than to administer medicine; and we are sure had he been bred to that appropriate calling, he would now be punished by Martin's<sup>3</sup> act.

He is the worst of all the quacks.

#### Notes:

1. Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> August 1824

2. Doctors rode in carriages or on horseback so if Norton wore boots & spurs people would assume he had a horse nearby and hence was "the genuine article"

3. In 1822 Irish M.P. Richard Martin had piloted a Bill through the House of Commons to give protection to domestic animals. This lead to the founding in 1824, by Reverend Arthur Broome (Vicar of the Parish of Bromley-by-Bow), of what became the RSPCA.

#### **Philip Mernick**

(I will see if I can find out more about this "gentleman")

## Notes and News

An interesting item in the East London Advertiser brought back a memory of a forlorn statue of a woman seated on a plinth, on a council estate in Stepney. She was referred to locally as 'Ol' Flo'. One day, whilst returning to photograph the area, she was no longer there, and I did wonder at the time where she had gone to. Well, the mystery has been solved, for me at least - She is sitting in the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Wakefield. Tower Hamlets Council loaned the statue, a bronze by Henry Moore, 'Draped Seated Woman' to the Park 13 years ago, after the estate was demolished. The statue has an estimated value of around £4 million, a tidy sum of money which would be very useful to Tower Hamlets. should it be sold, instead of merely gifted away.

Tate & Lyle, the sugar refinery founded in 1878 in Silvertown, has been sold to American Sugar Refining. Famous for its sugar and Lyle's golden syrup, the company has offered employment to generations of east Londoners, who have also grown up with the familiar sweet slightly sickly odour of the refinery at work. We can only hope the Americans continue to maintain this sweet tradition.

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

#### Cahill Blood, Mike Cahill, Catu-ualos Publishing, 2010. ISBN 978-0-9564457-0-4, Hardbound, 272 pages, £15

Mike Cahill inherited two swords and a medal from an aunt and this lead him to research his family history, the subject of the book. It covers three generations of Cahills between the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the mid 20<sup>th</sup>. Thomas Cahill, born around 1796 in County Kildare, Ireland, joined the British army in 1817 and died of cholera in India in 1830. His wife and family accompanied him in India and after his death Thomas's son Patrick joined the regiment (49<sup>th</sup> foot) as a boy soldier even though he may have been only 13 years of age.

Patrick fought in the Chinese, Indian Mutiny and the Crimean campaigns, rose through the ranks to become a major, and died in 1881.

His son Joseph was born in Ireland in 1850 and spent his childhood with the 49<sup>th</sup> Foot but did not go into the army. He became a policeman, first with The Metropolitan Police and then with the East & West India Docks Police, which is where the East London connection arises. He became head of the PLA police force, retiring in 1912. He was a long time resident of Poplar, serving as All Saints Vestryman from 1881 and Mayor of Poplar 1905-6.

The book gives lots of background into army life in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the history of the docks and dockland Poplar. A very interesting read.

#### Philip

Ship to Shore – Histories of Tower Hamlets through the lives of its people commemorated in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. ISBN 978-0-9564779-0-3 A5 booklet. Price £3.50.

This booklet has been produced by The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park and features research by Doreen and Diane Kendall, and Bradley Snooks.

Long-awaited, and the result of years of research both on the ground and in the libraries, this publication is of particular interest to me, as I worked for several years at the Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest on East India Dock Road, the refuge of seafarers. Having located the grave of the Reverend David Roe, who was instrumental in the founding of the Mission, we came across several memorials to those who were directly or indirectly connected to the sea, and to the Rive Thames. Doreen and Diane are to be congratulated for having brought this project to fruition.

The booklet is profusely illustrated throughout with photographs, many in colour, of the memorials, as well as other relevant information, such as portraits of the persons, their ships, views of the river etc, all of which serve to bring their stories dramatically to life.

This is a little gem, and I cannot recommend it highly enough. If you have an interest in the history of the East End, in seafaring, in researching family history, in exploring old cemeteries, or are just of a curious nature – this book will make valuable addition to your bookshelf of East End History.

#### How to get hold of your copy:

Email:thcemeterypark@yahoo.co.uk for information, or write to The Secretary, The Friends of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, The Soanes Centre, Southern Grove, London E3 4PX.

**Rosemary** Taylor

# Bishopsgate Institute and its Collections

We owe the foundation of Bishopsgate Institute to a Victorian priest, William Rogers (1813-1896) who confessed late in life that 'he did not much like the disguise of a clergyman." A critic was also of the opinion that he 'may be an atheist but he is a gentleman.' This gentleman, on the day of the opening of the Institute in November 1894, was first required to attend a ceremony to celebrate his 75th birthday at the Mansion House, where he was greeted by the Liberal Prime Minister Lord Rosebery. In the company of the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, Peers, Bishops, MPs and City dignitaries, Rosebery remarked on the absence of honours or promotions which had come the rector's way and added: 'It has been your task in a very signal degree to liberalise religion among large masses to whom religion might otherwise have been little more than a word and you have in the course of this achievement made friends among the highest and the lowest in a number ... perhaps unequalled in the life of a parochial clergyman in London.'

The Rector of St Botolph's was a progressive educationalist, impatient to see schooling extended to the working classes. Exasperated by delays, he exclaimed in 1866: 'Hang economy, hang theology, let us begin.' He espoused the opening of museums and galleries on Sundays and was an indefatigable fundraiser for parish schools. He supported the erection of public baths, wash-houses, drinking fountains and playgrounds. The provision of cheap meals, industrial exhibitions, picture galleries, and free libraries had his heartiest support. As an undergraduate he had insisted that nothing would induce him to become a London clergyman, yet he went on to study theology at Durham and became a curate in Fulham in 1843. He was appointed a chaplain to the Queen and prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral. His crowning glory, as Lord Rosebery remarked. was the Institute. After the birthday celebrations, the Prime Minister

led most of the assembled company to Bishopsgate to declare it open.

The Institute's commemorative brochure declared: 'The Institute, just completed, materially adds to the beauty and importance of the neighbourhood. From the convenience of its situation it cannot fail to prove of very great use, not only to the parishioners, but to the public generally. The Library contains already upwards of 20,000 volumes, and its collection of the Commercial Directories of the World includes a department which those concerned in business will appreciate. The Hall also supplies a want which has long been felt over a very considerable area of the City. The Institute adds a fresh and original link to the chain of public libraries that is now rapidly being extended throughout the country, it several departments being open to all who care to make use of them."

The building cost £70,000 — around £4m at today's prices — financed using funds from charitable endowments made to the parish of St Botolph's. Bishopsgate over 500 years, under a scheme agreed by the Charity Commissioners in 1891. The Institute building was designed by Charles Harrison Townsend, a fledgling architect who won the commission in an anonymous competition, and would later design the Whitechapel Gallery and the Horniman Museum. He was meticulous in his specifications and the Institute's design incorporated a number of modern features including an early form of air conditioning. Fresh air was passed through radiators to heat the building and foul air was carried away by exhaust flues fitted with gas jets. The Library's reading room had space for 250 and was strictly segregated with separate entrances for men and women. It was open from 10am to 9.30pm every day except Sundays, Good Friday and Christmas Day. In September 1897, Charles William Frederick Goss began work as the Institute librarian on a salary of £250 per annum, staying in the post for 44 vears until he retired in 1941. He was to achieve a degree of public notoriety when he

introduced a controversial closed access system which forced the public to consult a catalogue and ask to have a book fetched by staff members if they wanted to borrow it rather than browsing the shelves themselves. Goss was inspired to follow this path as a result of the rising number of book thefts and as he felt it would make users think more carefully about what to borrow. He also considered the system far more suitable for protecting the decorum of young ladies who would have to clamber up the Library ladders in their skirts to consult books on the top shelves.

The development of the Library's special collections owes much to Goss who was a keen local historian and book collector. He was chiefly responsible for gathering its collection of books and pamphlets relating to the social, cultural, architectural and topographical history of London, particularly the East End, from the early nineteenth century. Goss' successors have continued his zeal and the collection now consists of more than 45,000 books, pamphlets and journal extracts; 2,000 photos; 275 prints and watercolours; around 500 maps, dating back to the 17th century; miscellaneous deeds and around 400 journals, magazines and many of which are no longer published.

Although collections on London history exist at other national repositories, the material at Bishopsgate differs with its emphasis on the everyday history of the people of London and certain areas of the collections which exemplify this adherence to documenting the 'bottom up' history of the capital. Primary amongst these is the Library's extensive collection of London guidebooks dating from the seventeenth century to the present day. These travel aids, often considered ephemeral and insignificant at the time, actually provide a wonderful illustration of how London presented itself to the outside world, highlighting the publisher's idea of the best and worst places that could be encountered on a visit to the capital. The Library over 800

guidebooks, starting from 1755 and including multiple editions of The Golden Guide, Baedeker, Langham Hotel Guide and Blue Guide among many others, to the most current Rough Guide, Lonely Planet and Time Out guides. In addition, it holds many restaurant guides which track the city's changing culinary tastes.

The history of everyday London is also well documented in the Library's press cuttings collection and its run of London Trade Directories. The press cuttings collection. gathered by generations of librarians at the Institute and maintained by current staff, starts in 1740 and focuses on the immediate geographical area of the Institute around Bishopsgate and Spitalfields. Files of cuttings and advertisements can be found on all the major streets, restaurants, businesses, public houses and local landmarks, such as Spitalfields Market and Liverpool Street Station. Major themes are also covered, such as the historic Huguenot and Jewish communities, the silk weaving industry and the redevelopment of the local area. As many events and businesses were never recorded in books or pamphlets, these press cuttings can often help fill frustrating gaps in research. Trade directories are excellent resources for tracing individual businesses or researching the changing use of buildings and character of streets. The Library's collection starts in 1740, and we have a trade directory (by Pigot, Robson, Kelly or the Post Office) for nearly every year on open access on the Library's shelves.

The collection also includes around 2,000 photographs of London and a similar amount of illustrations, alongside a huge selection of maps. Of particular interest is the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Glass Slide Collection, containing 5,000 images of London which now digitised and available to browse on the Library's online catalogue. It includes numerous images of London's most famous landmarks. The collection is also particularly strong on church architecture with

images of all of the City's churches, including internal and external images, photographs of chapels, tombs and specific architectural features. As a record of London's social and cultural life, the collection is also fascinating. including images of street scenes, markets, events (such as coronations, fairs and processions), recreational activities and crowds gathered at famous landmarks. Additionally, there are also aerial and night views of London, street signs, statues, windows and doorways, pubs, shops and the slightly unusual! Particular favourites amongst staff at Bishopsgate Library include a selection of slides illustrating waste disposal in the early I 900s, several documenting the Vintner's Company swan upping ceremony on the Thames in July 1920 and rather frightening image of the giant grasshopper weathervane on the Royal Exchange in Lombard Street.

Labour history is also a strong element of the Library's collections, in particular the collection of Victorian labour activist and trade unionist, George Howell (1833-19 10). This includes his own library of around 6,000 books and pamphlets on early labour and trade union history. archives of the Reform League and the early Trades Union Congress and, most famously, the minute book of the First International Workingmen's Association (1866-1869) whose history Howell hoped to write. After requests for a transcript of the latter item from the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow in the early 1920s, the Governors of the Institute were so terrified that this seditious tome might fall into the wrong hands that it kept it locked in the vault of the Midland Bank in Bishopsgate. It stayed there 1941 when Ivan Maisky, the Russian ambassador in London. made a personal appeal to Winston Churchill, who pulled strings to get it released. Maisky was allowed to send his wife and two secretaries to transcribe the entire volume. These days its revolutionary potential is considered less threatening and a digitised version is shortly to be made available online on the Library's website.

The collection also includes unique reports of over 30 trade unions, such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Steam Engine Makers~ Society, and around 80 political and social pressure groups from the 1840s to the early 1900s, many of which include details of members, their families and subscriptions paid.

The politician Charles Bradlaugh became a public figure in the late Victorian period for two highly publicised campaigns. He was prevented from taking his seat in the House of Commons when elected Liberal MP for Northampton in 1880 because, as an atheist, he refused to swear an oath of allegiance on the Bible. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment for publishing, with socialist and campaigner Annie Besant, a pamphlet on birth control which the courts deemed obscene. The conviction was quashed on a technicality. It was not until 1888 that he was allowed to take his seat in the House but his powers of oratory, honed as a successful advocate, and his support of republicanism, atheism and birth control had won him a following as the people's champion. His personal and political correspondence spanning most of the second half of the century, with photographs and records of the causes with which he was associated, are in the collection. Even his glasses, wallet and fishing tackle are stored with the archive.

Manuscripts, books and pamphlets by George Jacob Holyoake also adorn the Library's shelves. Holyoake was promoter of secularism — which cost him six months in gaol for blasphemy in 1843 - and pioneer of the early co-operative movement. He was also associated with Italian nationalism and the formed a militia, the British Legion, prepared to fight alongside Garibaldi in Italy. The Holyoake collection includes the muster rolls, certificates and other details of men who joined this Legion in the 1860s.

The Library also holds the extensive archive of the London Co-operative Society (LCS)

detailing its activities from 1920 until the early 1990s. Amongst the 3,500 volumes in the collection are member's share registers, nomination books (including member's names, addresses and family details) and records of the Simplex Savings Bank. The collection also details early co-operative societies who merged into the LCS in the twentieth century and records cover Stratford, Edmonton, West London, Grays. Radlett, High Wycombe and other areas from the mid-I 850s onwards. There are also staff records and over 17,000 photographs detailing the work of the LCS throughout its history. The LCS archive also holds material on the career of John Stonehouse, the Labour MP who faked his own death in 1974 and was later exposed as a communist spy for the Czech secret service. He was a director and president of the London Co-op in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Institute's motto is Senesco non Segnesco - I grow old, I do not grow lazy. Indeed it is remarkably active, showing signs of rejuvenation as the first phase of a £7.1m refit is completed. The work on the grade two listed building attracted a £1.5 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

The Great Hall, which has hosted concerts and recitals by Sir Edward Elgar, Dame Myra Hess, John Williams, Nigel Kennedy and Sir Paul McCartney, is being refurbished. The Hall's original features will be restored and upgraded, opening up the original glass lantern in the ceiling; adding specialist acoustic treatment; new lighting and amplification; and air conditioning and redecoration. It is used by the London Symphony Chorus and the London Philharmonic Choir as a rehearsal centre, and is also home to much of the Institute's cultural programme of concerts, historical talks and study days.

The library has also benefited from a dedicated area for researchers to view collections. better access to the collections for staff, with a new, environmentally-controlled, archive store in the basement; and a flexible learning space on the lower ground floor for schools and community groups. The lottery fund has also created three additional posts for staff to develop a variety of heritage programmes.

The Library is open to all and no membership or reader's ticket is required. Much of the book collection is on public display but rare volumes and archives are kept in store and produced on request, so it is worth making contact beforehand.

Bishopsgate Library, 230 Bishopsgate, EC2M 4QH Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 10.00am-5.30pm. Wednesday, 10.00am-8pm

Enquiries: Tel: 020 7392 9270, Email: library@bishopsgate.org.uk Website: www.bishopsgate.org.uk/library. Items from the Library's collection can also be found at: Exploring 20th Century London (www.20thcenturylondon.org) PhotoLondon (www.photolondon.org.uk)

Further descriptions of the Library's archives collections can be found at: AIM25 (www.aim25.ac.uk) Archives Hub (www.archiveshub.ac.uk)

#### **MEMORIAL RESEARCH**

Members of the East London History Society are in the Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, known locally as Bow Cemetery on the second Sunday of every month, recording memorials off gravestones. Every memorial yields clues to the family interred such as relationships and careers. With modern technology it is possible to call up at the L.M.A. all leading newspapers till 1900. The thrill of discovering another fascinating nugget of information and uncovering yet another facet of history hidden within the walls of the cemetery keeps our members working away. You are most welcome to join in this work, though be warned – it can become addictive!

Doreen Kendall



Despite the raft of stories flooding out of the fortunes being made by studios in the West End of London, It was only too noticeable how many of these went bankrupt after the initial enthusiasm began to dissipate. Thus we find Jacob Pacifico, a Gibraltarian by way of Stepney, and primarily an interpreter and languages teacher, trying his luck in the Whitechapel Road as early as 1857. The studio failed, but Pacifico tried again in Cannon Street Road five years later - and failed again. Eventually he found the importation of fine Havana cigars to be a more profitable occupation, before emigrating to the United States at the end of the century.

Pacifico hit the headlines in a different way in 1865 in a sensational court case over his treatment of his wife's sister as a lunatic, imprisoning her in her Dalston home, and refusing to allow her to be treated by the local doctors.

#### **EAST END PHOTOGRAPHERS 9.**

Suss brothers and Jewish photographers.

In an earlier article in this series two years ago I profiled the work of the Perkoff family, and this follow-up features the work of their contemporaries, the Brothers Suss, set in the wider context of the Jewish photographic studios of the Victorian and Edwardian East End. Most of the early Jewish studios followed the practice of the time in combining photography with their particular trade. Isaac Saqui was a music teacher who seems to have had more success with his studio in Palatine Place, off Commercial Road East which lasted for 3 years in the early 1860s. Saqui was certainly versatile - the first floor studio had previously been a furniture store room, and when photography palled, Saqui turned the premises into an off-licence! Elles Comer was a hairdresser, who set up a studio above the shop, in Langley Place, also off Commercial Road East, in the mid 1860s, but found it unprofitable within barely a year. For most, the reality never lived up to the dream.

Mayhew's illustration, in "London labour and the London poor" shows a typical "studio" of the East End - a courtyard behind the shop, complete with water-butt and broom, with a sheet draped across the roof, and another sheet behind the "posing chair". Apart from the photographer, who may well have known as little about the process as the customer, the only other person in the picture beside the client is the all-purpose assistant who doubled up as a doorsman/tout - it was his job to bounce the customers in (shown here by a possible punter examining the display at the end of the alley), and if necessary, bounce them out again, especially if there was a dispute over the price.



There were a few "freelances", photographers without a permanent studio, who presumably hired themselves out to firms in the area, no doubt particularly with the printing out. One such was Dinah Defries, who turned to photography after her husband's premature death, and was active in the Whitechapel area during the 1860s. She then went to work at the Jews' Hospital in Norwood as a nurse. Max Fischel, a refugee from Prussia, was another who worked for a variety of photographic studios in the Whitechapel area throughout the 1860s

There was something of a lull in the Jewish studio scene after the end of the 1860s, which did not get its second wind until the new wave of immigrants began to arrive in the 1880s.

While the greater majority tended to end up in the clothing industry, or on the docks, there was a skilled minority who realised the potential of photography even in such a deprived area as the East End. Isaac Abrahams, also known as Butcher (1831 -1900), while not himself an immigrant, was one of the first of the "new wave", with two studios in the West India Dock Road in the 1880s and 90s. He was followed by Matthias Michaelis, another Prussian refugee whose Commercial Road East studio was eventually bought by Perkoff. Charles Moser, an ironmonger, ran a studio in Cannon Street Road at the end of the 1 870s, while Emmanuel Shiange from Poland tried unsuccessfully to combine photography with hairdressing in Campbell Road in the 1880s. Hyman Terry had no better success with a studio in Charlotte Street, Whitechapel at the same time.



Oscar Baumgart, 118 Commercial Road

The big names in Jewish photography had mostly opened for business by the end of the 19th century. Many were family partnerships. The Baumgart brothers, Oscar & Otto, opened their studio in Little Alie Street in 1897. It was Oscar (1867-1960) who proved to be the mainstay of the business, subsequently opening two further studios in Commercial

Road East; and remaining in business until 1930. Otto's flirtation with photography was comparatively brief - after only 18 months, he got a job as a waiter in a West End hotel, subsequently emigrating to Germany, where he divorced his wife, and ending up in New York shortly before the war. The Polsky brothers, Benjamin & Hyman, were Russian refugees who opened a joint studio in the Whitechapel Road in 1902; and rather more briefly, in Croydon at the end of the war. Leman Street, in the heart of Whitechapel, proved a popular location for studios over many years, starting with Jacob Katzman in the early 1890s, moving on to Woolf Kresovsky (1855 - 1930), and his son Benjamin, together with a supporting cast including the Bursteins, Aaron & Charles, Moms Simeonoff, an American who flitted through Leman Street at the turn of the century, and Isaac Abe, who staved briefly as a photographic apprentice, and announced that he was from Jerusalem. Herman Raivid (1874 - 1950) ran two studios in the East End, in Turner Street and Whitechapel Road, as well as a third in the City. Abraham Altman's Richard Street studio was abruptly terminated by his premature death in 1902; Louis Boresoff (Borissow) had a brief run in Feildgate Street in the late 1890s, before finding success in the USA, where he ran a studio in New York's Lower Manhattan for some decades.

Louis & Joseph Suss arrived in the East End as refugees from Austria in the mid-1890s. Louis (1871-1939), two years the elder opened their first studio in Brick Lane in 1898. It was a success, and four years later, they formalised their partnership as "L& J Suss", moving to their best known address, 25 Whitechapel Road, in 1904. In honour of their long-lost homeland, it was named the "Vienna Art Studio". Their success encouraged them to open further studios outside the East End; in 1909 they acquired Jarchy's studio in Tower Bridge Road, and in 1903 were briefly the owners of a studio in Brixton Lane, in



L & J Suss, 25 Whitechapel Rd

Lambeth. Both had to be sold off abruptly when losses began to mount; surprisingly, a take over of Joseph Martin's old studio on Commercial Road East proved to be a white elephant, and was quickly jettisoned. But the Whitechapel Road flagship studio proved enduringly popular, sailing through the war unscratched. However, a threat to the brothers' empire began to loom in the post-war period, in the shape of a brand new studio opened in 1927 at 150 Whitechapel Road by Boris (No. not THAT Boris!) - Boris Sochaczewska. known as Boris Bennett. By the time Boris had opened his second studio at 14 Whitechapel Road, in 1933, there was no further argument over the title of top Jewish photographer in the East End - this belonged fairly and squarely to Boris

In retrospect, it is comparatively easy to see how Boris overtook the Suss brothers. It was the Jazz Age; the prevailing style was the achingly cool (the word was first coined in the

1920s) Art Deco; the talkies were just round the corner. Boris Studio could give a newly married couple a touch of the "Hollywoodisation", which the contemporary newspapers professed to find so vulgar. But who could not be seduced by the idea of pretending to be Rudolph Valentino and Theda Bara, or perhaps Clark Gable & Carole Lombard. Boris could - and did. Suss couldn't - and wouldn't. It was said of Suss photographs that nobody is ever shown smiling - it is of course, not true, but the overall image remains - ancient studio backcloths, rigid and hackneyed poses. By the 1930s, Suss studio was looking decidedly old fashioned.

The partnership was dissolved on the retirement of Louis Suss in 1932, but Joseph continued the studio throughout the nightmare of the war years, when it was often necessary to close down at short notice owing to the intensity of the local bombing raids, and on into the late 1940s. He finally closed the studio

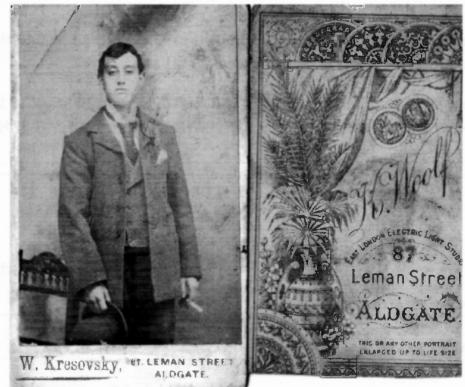
in 1950, by which time he was in his late 70s. He subsequently went to live with his surviving family in Scotland.

Boris' reign as uncrowned king of Jewish photographers was, ironically, brief. The continuing move out of the East End by the local Jewish population after the war meant no role for a photographer of Boris's talents by the 1960s. Boris diversified by opening shops selling photographic apparatus and equipment but the Golden Age of Jewish East End photography was over.

An excellent collection of photographs from Suss Studios can be seen at the Jewish Museum, which now incorporates the holdings of the Museum of the Jewish East End, formerly in Finchley. The collection includes the usual wedding and bar-mitzvah ceremonies, as well as a number of individual portraits of local celebrities. The Museum also has a good selection of the work of Baumgart Brothers, but sadly, nothing by Kresovsky - so if you have a photograph by this or, indeed, any other Jewish photographic studio which you think might be of interest, do get in touch.

I should like to thank the Jewish Museum for their help in the preparation of this article. The Museum is at Raymond Burton House, 129-131 Albert Street, London, NW1, a short walk from Camden Town tube station. Tel 020 7284 7384, E-mail: admin@jewishmuseum.org.uk. The photographic collection can be viewed by prior appointment.

David Webb



Woolf Kresovsky and K Woolf. Same address, same person?



# AUTUMN COACH TRIP

25TH SEPTEMBER 2010

## WHITCHURCH SILK MILL

WHITCHURCH SILK MILL was built on the River Test in Hampshire in 1800, during the reign of King George III. Silk has been woven here since the 1820/1830s. The mill produces high quality silks to order for theatrical costume, interior designers and historic houses.

The entrance fee will be £4.50 or £4 for Senior Citizens and includes guided tour. Our payment will be required in advance, so please send with the coach fare.\*

Lunch can be taken in the town and afternoon tea (and cake) is available at the silk mill for £5. Payment for tea is required in advance so please send with coach fare.\* Alternatively, you can bring a picnic.

The coach fare will be  $\pounds 14$  and it would save time if you could send your payment with your reservation. To reserve seats please send me the form below.

The pick-up will be at the bus pull-in in Grove Road, round the corner from Mile End Station, at the slightly earlier time of 9.00 am.

Please fill in the booking slip below and send to me, Ann Sansom, 18 Hawkdene, London E4 7PF. Tel. 020 8524 4506 for enquiries. (Photocopy it if you don't wish to spoil your newsletter.)

| 25 <sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2010  |
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| Ticket/s for the forthcoming coach trip.   |
|  |
| China polarez a nos Marchill<br>China polarez a nos Marchill<br>China polarez a nos Marchill |
| I enclose a cheque for £   |
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