

## EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY PROGRAMME 1993-1994

Thursday 11 November	7.15p	AGM, followed by Christopher Phillpotts 'Sutton House - excavating Hackney's Tudor House' (illustrated)
Thursday 9 December	7.30pm	Liz Thompson 'Toshers on the Thames'
Thursday 20 January	7.30pm	Clifford Lawton 'Lord Rothschild and the 4% Industrial Dwellings Co.' (illustrated)
Thursday 17 February	7.30pm	Daphne Glick 'Cephas Street School Evacuated'
Thursday 17 March	7.30pm	Jean Olwen Maynard 'Church Life in Mile End'
Thursday 14 April	7.30pm	Bob Dunne 'The Coming of the Railways to East London'
Thursday 28 April	7.30pm	Caroline Benn, author of <b>Keir Hardie</b> talks about her work.
Thursday 19 May	7.30pm	East London Pubs: members share their memories and research.

All talks are held at Queen Mary and Westfield College which is on Mile End Road, E1, half way between Mile End and Stepney Green underground stationS.

The East London History Society (founded 1952) exists to further interest in the history of East London, namely the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham. Besides the **East London Record** we publish two newsletters a year and organise a programme of talks (details above); we also arrange local walks and two coach outings a year are organised. Details of membership are available from John Harris (Membership Secretary) 15 Three Crowns Road, Colchester, Essex CO4 5AD

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# EAST LONDON RECORD

No. 16

1993

## EAST LONDON RECORD

Editor: Colm Kerrigan

The East London History Society publishes the East London Record once a year. We welcome articles on any aspect of the history of the area that forms the London boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Newham. Articles, which need not be in their final form, should be sent to the editor at 13 Abbotsbury Close, Stratford, E15 2RR.

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These, and further copies of the present issue (£2.25 plus 40p post and packing) are available from the above address. Cheques should be made payable to the East London History Society.

We are grateful to Tower Hamlets Libraries and the Guildhall Library for permission to reproduce photographs and to the following people for their help in producing the magazine: Mr H.D. Behr, Mr H. Block, Mr B. Canavan, Mrs D. Kendall, Mr C. Lloyd, Mr P. Mernick, Mrs R. Taylor, Mr H. Watton and Mr D. Webb.

Cover illustration: selling matches in 1885: see John Ramsland's article on page 9.

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## BEYOND THE HIGH-BOB

Charles Chisnall

War, in 1939, came slowly to the East End. War production had been in top gear for a year, young men were called to the armed forces, but after the first scares of false air raid alarms at the outbreak in September one could be excused into thinking we had fallen into a kind of lethargy. Poland had been defeated and was in German and Soviet hands, but for the Allies only the war at sea had gone into instant fury. The Americans called this the 'phony war'.

Our much maligned Prime Minister had been cruelly deceived by Hitler, but Neville Chamberlain gave us time to re-arm. I believe history should honour him for that. When the Nazi air attacks began in earnest how grateful we were for the Hurricanes and Spitfires that would not have been available but for Chamberlain's 'time'.

The Luftwaffe was Hitler's war-winning weapon. Field Marshal Goering unleashed it at us... One Saturday afternoon I was sitting in the Troxy when alarm spread through the building as heavy explosions and gunfire were heard. The Manager cut the film, the lights went up and an announcement was made. 'I have to tell you,' said the spokesman, 'that there is an air raid going on. You may leave if you so wish, but this building is of strong construction and I think it would be safer to remain where you are until the "All Clear".'

My heart sank. I thought about my family in the High-Bob, as Poplar High Street was commonly known in the 'thirties. I thought back to Remembrance Day at Woolmore Street School. This was always on 11 November. Pupils would be gathered in the hall, hymns would be sung and when the clock had crept round to eleven everyone would fall into deep reverent silence. One could imagine the stillness and silence throughout the land as we remembered those who had paid the price of war and those who had returned injured and maimed. Mr Gibson, one of the teachers, had suffered greatly in the 'war to end all wars'. His mind, I am sure, was in the trenches and once again he was enduring the dreadful consequences of it all. With his eyes firmly shut and tears not far away I think he went through agonies in those two minutes.

Teachers had asked us to try to imagine what it was like. My thoughts were always the same. Our bombardment of the enemy lines had come to an end. Soon we would be 'going over the top'. I was unwashed, mud had crept into my boots, my bayonet was firmly fixed, and when the order came I would be

The author and his sister Gladys in the High-Bob.



required to clamber out of the trench and face the full fury of the enemy. Like many others I may be killed before I moved one step. They would be responding with artillery, machine guns and rifle fire. But move forward! There's that awful, cruel barbed wire. Miraculously I get through it. Nearing the enemy trenches I face upturned bayonets. I have to kill to enter - and there I must engage in frightful hand-to-hand fighting. I feared and dreaded the thought that I may not have sufficient courage and that I would miserably fail to do what others had done those few short years ago.

My wish, when my turn came, was to join the RAF. To me there was something romantic in being a fighter pilot. I wanted to defend my country in the air. (A serious accident later removed all hope of becoming a pilot even if my meagre educational qualifications had been acceptable). Yet, with only World War One as a pattern in which to set my thoughts of what war would be like, the terror of cowardice haunted me.

At the 'All Clear' patrons hurried from the Troxy. I ran home. Fires raged all around. There was a strange smell of war. Thank God my family were unhurt at 281 Poplar High Street, and the shop and house remained intact. An enormous fire in the railway yard in Cotton Street would later become a beacon for Hitler's Luftwaffe when they returned later that day. Naval Row was roped off because of an unexploded time bomb. As dusk fell the sirens screamed out their warning. People went to the shelters. London was battered, thrashed, beaten and outraged, and we, the people, powerless to hit back or defend ourselves. Only to withstand the death and terror. Stand firm and win! I breathed a great sigh of relief at the 'All Clear' in the morning. I had not wilted. Only a determination that, given time, we would win the war.

There had been a dread of war since the early thirties. Eminent writers had predicted that war would come by 1940. I calculated that this would make me of prime military age. We knew that if war came it would be different from 1914. Gas attacks from the air were expected, but my young imagination left me floundering in trench warfare. How could I think otherwise? These thoughts only surfaced at emotional times like Remembrance Day. The rest of our lives were spent to the full and there were more important things for Cockney kids to think about. How about a game of cricket at Blackwell Cross? We had to be careful of the police. They always chased us away.

I was at the wicket, took a hefty swipe at the ball which flew through the air, struck the cast iron urinal and disappeared through the open window of a passing Wolsely Sixteen. Kids flew in all directions. I buzzed it down Beddo, hid inside Pickford's garage with its steam engines, and only when my heart had stopped pounding did I venture out again. The police had picked up the bat from where I had dropped it and placed it and the ball next to the chalked wicket.

There used to be street fights when I was a kid. These could result in dozens of boys needing hospital treatment as a hundred or more would fight with sticks, stones and any other weapons they could lay hands on. I remember one that took several mounted police and many on foot to break up. What was it all about? Nothing! 'You hit me and I'll get my gang on you.' 'And I'll get mine.' Silly. But these things happened.

My family moved to the High-Bob when I was about four years old. I had been born in Homerton and two of my older sisters still lived in that area. A relative of one married sister used to augment his meagre income by the macabre means of dragging dead bodies from the River Lea. I seem to remember that he received half a crown for each recovery.

My older brother introduced me to Dirt Track Racing (as it was then called) at Lea Bridge Stadium. Gus Kuhn was one of the riders I remember. Every Easter my younger sister and I would go to the fair just off Lea Bridge Road. There were no toilets, and although this may be hard to swallow, I swear it is true (as all the rest of this article is true). There was a small row of houses by the riverside - next to the Prince of Wales pub (that still stands today) where ladies would stand on the verandahs offering home-going passers-by the use of a dozen or so openly spaced buckets in their living rooms. (The following may help bring a real feeling for pre-war times) 'Piddle and poop a penny!' they yelled. As distant relatives, my sister and I were not charged for the service.

Men would gather in an open space outside the pub and play a kind of coin-tossing game. This was illegal and would come to an abrupt end at the smell of a copper. Also illegal was something I witnessed by chance. A temporary wooden structure had been erected and three dogs were put inside. There was a lot of excited barking as the dogs anticipated what would shortly happen. A man came with a large box and tipped twenty or thirty rats into the enclosure. It was short, savage and bloody. As a small boy I was appalled but could not take my eyes off the killing.

I became a Speedway fan. I saw the 'Hammers' at the Custom House track and every Saturday I loved to go to Haringay to see the 'Tigers'. At that time I was a trainee upholsterer. Forty eight hours a week, five and a half working days for ten shillings. That left little pocket money so I walked from Poplar to Haringay and home again. I don't recall any fears my parents had about that. As used to be said in those days, 'He's big enough and ugly enough to look after himself.'

My childhood was magical. I had loyalty to Poplar and an affection for Clapton also. I used to go from Poplar Station to my sister's. I remember all the stops. Bromley-by-Bow, Bow, Old Ford, Victoria Park, Homerton. There I would get off, Chatsworth Road and Mandeville Street where I was born. Football for Woolmore Street School every Saturday at Vicky Park.

Then in no time at all, the Blitz.

Readers who lived through the war will remember Lord Haw-Haw. He regularly broadcast enemy propaganda from Berlin. 'Germany calling,' he would begin. Wisely, the government made no attempts to jam his propaganda. His purpose, to lower our morale with his mocking, threatening invective, had the opposite effect. He was totally ineffective and surely became an embarrassment to his Nazi masters as he rapidly became the butt of countless music hall and radio jokes.

After the destruction of my home in the High-Bob it was hurriedly arranged that my parents would take over another of the firm's shops in Old Kent Road. My mother and I set out before the actual removal to get some important details from a representative of the firm at our new address. There had been another heavy raid and both Blackwall and Rotherhithe tunnels were closed. The police advised us that it was possible to be taken over the river by tug from Blackwall Pier. This, unlike Blackwall Stairs, was a pleasant place to spend a summer's afternoon. There was a snack bar, public benches on well-kept gravel where one could sit and watch the passing river traffic. Blackwall Stairs had a small sand and gravel beach and from there we would swim in the Thames. Strictly against parental wishes, for the river water was poison. But we tried to push the oil film away, stripped naked, kept our mouths firmly shut and pretended we were at the seaside.



At a radar station, shortly before the Battle of the Bulge in 1944.

My mother and I crossed the river by tug, and almost as one might expect, the sirens howled in mid-stream. One could see the black crosses on the Nazi planes, and once more we felt exposed with the awful frustration that we could not hit back.

Shortly after we had settled at our new address a friend and I were going back to Poplar during a particularly heavy raid. We took the tram from New Cross Gate. The noise was terrifying but the tram rumbled on. We got off at Tunnel Avenue, this time really afraid. We had experienced many raids and as young men shortly to enter the armed forces we had an inbuilt belief that though others would be killed we ourselves would survive. But this raid was as heavy as any we had ever known. The defences sent up a furious barrage against the intruders and the shrapnel from our own guns was as dangerous as the bombs themselves. To our relief there was a new surface shelter on the left side of the road facing the tunnel. We were surprised to find it unoccupied. Mightily relieved, we hurried inside. At last we could afford to relax. It was dreadful outside but here we were at least safe from our own shrapnel. We lit cigarettes and puffed away secure in the brick-built shelter. A low flying aircraft passed close by. I looked up and saw it. This newly built shelter was not complete. It had no roof! We dotted our fags in case the enemy might see the glow.

We had fought a house fire in Naval Row Poplar, the fire brigade so over-stretched that they could only let the smaller outbreaks burn themselves out. This was the home of friends. Sadly the taps offered only a trickle of water, and with at least three incendiary bombs eating into the building our efforts were in vain. We could not put out the fire, but we did salvage quite a lot of furniture by removing it from the house and placing it against the park wall opposite. These things could safely be left because there was no looting. I'm sure that if anyone committed such a crime in those days they would have been lynched.

Opposite Benny Blackmore's pawn shop in the big High-Bob a row of flats above the shops had taken a direct hit. Word went round that an elderly man was buried under the rubble. The same friend and I started to dig him out. Totally unskilled in the task, we could hear the man below. Apparently unhurt, but very annoyed as pieces of rubble fell down on the bed in which he had been sleeping, he called us lots of naughty names. We had nearly reached him when a man from the Heavy Rescue came to direct our work. At last we dragged the old man out. He had fought in the Great War and I remember the pride I felt in these old soldiers when he reached the open air. With his pipe still set firmly in his toothless mouth he muttered, 'Bleedin' mess they made of this, aint they?'

My two older brothers were already in the army. The middle one had been taken prisoner before Dunkirk and the other would shortly be discharged through wounds. Before that happened I enlisted in the RAF. I am still immensely proud to have served in this wonderful branch of the armed forces. I feel flattered that I was accepted. But, as a born home-bird, I cannot pretend I enjoyed it. I wanted home.

My hatred of the enemy simmered. As a Christian there was always conflict between the strict demands of my faith and the necessities of what had to be done. Hatred always overcame forgiveness.

Although there had been ample evidence that it would have to happen - the masses of military hardware in the South of England, the talk, the training, the expectation - I, and my contemporaries could hardly believe we were on our way until we boarded the tank landing craft at Dover.

The invasion of Europe, the beach landings, the advance through the low countries and finally the crossing of the Rhine. I had seen the bombing of London. The German towns were something else. Then I heard my prisoner-of-war brother was home and well. I was in emotional turmoil. We occupied a Gasthof in a small Westphalian village. The German people were very afraid of us. Then one day, as though casting aside her fear of us, the enemy, a local lady came to me in the street and said with great relief, 'Der Krieg is beendet, Gott sei dank!' The final irony! We, a radar unit, with radio contact with headquarters in Mons, had to be told by a German lady that it was all over.

What now? Switch off six years of hate? Military law required us to do just that. One day be ready to kill on sight, the next to become normal men again. How does one manage that?

Fraternalising with Germans was forbidden. A totally unenforceable law.

We later heard there had been great victory celebrations in London and the whole of the country. We of A.M.E.S. (Air Ministry Experimental Station) 120 could not even find a glass of beer. We drank tea, sang songs of the day and shot a few rounds of gunfire into the air. I yearned for home and good old Poplar, where I had returned after marrying a local girl. But in retrospect I am glad I had to stay on in Germany for a few months. I could once again totally embrace my faith. That led easily to the removal of all hate from my heart.

## JUVENILE STREETSELLERS AND TRADERS

John Ramsland

In 1883 James Greenwood, who wrote extensively about poverty in London, described a girl who was in charge of a street-stall stocking old boots and shoes at a Sunday street market in Leather Lane:

At the post the individual in charge of the sorry array of patched-up boots, and superintending the sale thereof; was a female so diminutive in size that her tousled old hat... was no higher than that part of the lamp-post where the slender part joins the base. She could not have been older than ten or eleven years, but her worldly knowledge, in the boots-and-shoe line of business, at all events, was equal to that of a middle-aged matron. At the moment when my attention was attracted towards her she was endeavouring to do a stroke of trade with a navy six feet high, who had brought out his little boy to buy him a pair of second-hand shoes. (1)

Such children were thrown early into the rigours of adult commerce; there was little time available for the natural play and freedom of childhood that was available to the more affluent middle classes. They had to deal skilfully in money transactions with adults and survive in fiercely competitive situations where quickness of thought and action were essential. They had to show a sharp initiative that was beyond the years of other more fortunate children. The vision of the world that they had from their costermongers' barrows and stalls was confined narrowly to the streets, but it was a lively, constantly changing and vibrant one.

Many streets of nineteenth century East London, which was made up of the parishes of Bethnal Green, Spitalfields, Whitechapel, St. George's in the East, Wapping, Shadwell, Radcliffe, Limehouse, Bow, Bromley and Poplar, were scenes of tumultuous activity filled with the distinctive cries of a broad range of street sellers, hawkers, and traders, some of whom were constantly on the move with portable baskets, barrows, or trays while others had particular stations where they stood and sold their wares for many years in a row. Children were heavily involved in a wide variety of street trading including newspaper vending, flower selling, buying and selling old boots or second-hand clothing, selling penny novelties, selling hot or cold pies, pastry or fish, and trading in old iron. They conducted fruit and market stalls and were highly competent kerbstone merchants.

East End children began a street selling career in three ways. They may have been homeless and mixed in the street culture with children who were already sellers. Somehow they obtained the small amount of capital to start, beginning with 'fuzees, or nuts, or some inexpensive stock', (2) learning the trade as they

went along from others they met in cheap lodging-houses. They may have been the sons and daughters of costermongers employed by their parents out of necessity to make some contribution to the family business either on a part-time or full-time basis. Other children were employed by costermongers on a commission basis (their income depended on the amount they sold).

The trade in selling old clothes in the streets in London was an ancient one, going back at least to early medieval times. By the middle of the nineteenth century its headquarters was the East End, in particular Petticoat Lane 'with its tortuous alleys, enclosed spaces and open squares' (3) and Mile End Road. Used clothing had a steady trade throughout the nineteenth century as nothing was considered valueless in a city where poverty was immense. Many Jewish families were involved in the old clothing street trade with children working side-by-side with their parents. Jewish children still managed to be well educated through Jewish evening and part-time schools and through the synagogue system. The old coat, the battered hat and the worn out shoe all found a ready sale. Clothes that were too far gone were torn into pieces, made up as shoddy and sold for manure to the agriculturalists of Kent and Sussex for the culture of hops and wheat.

The best season for old clothing street selling was at the turn of the winter, and during the summer season. At this time people generally cast off their worn-out clothes and purchased 'new' old ones. Many of the garments for sale were re-lined, cuffed and collared, and sometimes dyed by the application of gall and logwood. Thus the old suit coat of a gentleman, suitably dyed black, became the Sunday-coat of the working man.

On the Mile End Road, girls sold large quantities of ribbons, artificial flowers, and gloves on street stalls and from trays. Artificial flowers were particularly popular among women as decorations to bonnets and hats in the 1870s and 1880s. Many of these flowers were painstakingly made by the young girls at home. Artificial flower making was tedious, difficult and exacting work for them:

The thumb and fingers of the workers become sore and blistered from picking up and manufacturing the small piece of material used. Sometimes the thumb-nails are cut to the quick by the constant friction of the wire used, or the silk thread which is twisted on to the stalk. White swellings are also common on the hands and fingers. The dust from the pigments used in colouring the flowers is extremely injurious to the eyes, the colour dust being frequently of a poisonous nature. It gets on to the chest and tends to produce disease of the lungs. Weakness of sight is also produced on young girls by

their having to distinguish by gas light between different colours, such as blue and green, or different shades of colour nearly alike. (4)

Such were the hazards faced to satisfy fashion and to earn a very small living.

Boys, and sometimes girls, sold large quantities of used boots and shoes on their stalls along the Mile End Road. Indeed, the supply could not keep up with the demand. The worn shoes and boots had to be repaired during the evenings to be made ready for sale during the day.

The children of Irish immigrants were heavily involved in itinerant street selling, especially of fruit and vegetables carried in cane baskets. They were generally employed by costermongers or small traders and were paid a small commission which they called 'bunse'. The employer supplied the fruit or



Ready for work in Spitalfields (*Bedford Institute*).

vegetables and the cost of its worth was decided before the boy started to sell. This amount was paid back to the employer when the basket was emptied. Whatever was left over was the 'bunse' or profit the boy made during the selling period. Much then depended on the selling skill of the boy and whether he had a regular reliable market for his commodities. Competition among street-sellers of fruit and vegetables was very fierce. Often boys would sell the contents of their baskets and make very little profit on a day's work. The boys attracted the attention of prospective customers of their commodities by developing distinctive repetitious cries: 'Penny a piece, Col-y-flowers,' 'Five bunches a penny, Rad-dish-es' and such like.

Some costers kept a boy with them as a regular assistant on a small wage who pulled the barrow and assisted in 'crying' the wares. Such a boy's voice could penetrate and echo through the streets to attract customers. Occasionally man and boy would 'cry' in unison but the boy alone did much of this work. These boys acquired a distinctive voice that was penetrating, harsh and hoarse.

Hawkers of milk and coal usually had a boy assistant. Milkmen either drove cows or had a horse-driven cart with milk-pails. For many boys this was an informal apprenticeship. In time they would often branch out on their own in the same or a similar street business.

For the destitute neglected child, street-trading was in many cases the only means by which they could support themselves and earn enough for an evening meal and a bed in a cheap lodging house, some of which specialised for a profit in the accommodation of homeless or derelict children in East London. Street-trading was for the orphaned child a way of avoiding being placed in a dreaded institution where freedom would be lost for the term of his or her natural childhood. The daily struggle to survive on the streets was preferred to the horrors of the workhouse. The orphaned child usually could afford only to start his street trade with a few nuts, onions, lucifer-matches or bootlaces. Occasionally these activities disguised pickpocketing or thieving in crowded thoroughfares and markets, but many juvenile streetsellers were remarkably honest considering their depressed social status.

Children did not, of course, monopolize street trade completely; they had plenty of adult colleagues. They did, however, sell a bewildering variety of goods on the streets themselves. Henry Mayhew provided an exhaustive list of goods sold on the streets in the 1850's by children:

money-bags, lucifer-match boxes, leather straps, belts, firewood (common, and also "patent" that is, dipped into an inflammable composition), fly-papers, a variety of fruits, especially nuts, oranges, and apples; onions, radishes, water-cresses, cut-flowers and other little articles of the same material, including elastic rings to encircle rolls of paper-music, toys of smaller kinds, cakes, steel pens and penholders with glass handles, exhibition medals and cards, gelatine cards, glass and other cheap seals, brass watch-guards, chains, and rings; small tin ware, nutmeg-graters, and other articles of a similar description, such as are easily portable; iron skewers, fuzees, shirt-buttons, boot and bobbins, pins (and more rarely needles), cotton bobbins, Christmasing (holly and other evergreens at Christmans-tide), May-flowers, coat-studs, toy-pottery, blackberries, groundsel and chickweed, and clothes' pegs. (5)

Boys also occasionally sold seasonal things such as wild birds' nests with eggs and captured wild birds such as hedge sparrows and minnows in small cages. These were obtained on brief trips out-of-towns. All objects of sale had to be made interesting and attractive by juvenile street-sellers. In doing this, they sometimes revealed a consummate and compelling skill of salesmanship. To be successful, a young street-seller had to have a carefully honed 'gift of the gab' and an instinctive knowledge of human motivation and need.

Many children in London's East End were forced to earn a living by such means from an early age during the whole of the nineteenth century and well beyond it. The small return for such transactions gave them a pittance to live on. Such children were frequently without family and had to make their own daily living unaided. Nevertheless, they were a vibrant part of the East End culture and were thoroughly socialised in the ways of the street. Despite the abject poverty and the dangers of street life, they enjoyed a freedom from restraint that was not the lot of highly disciplined and organised middle-class Victorian children.

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3. 'City Highways and what may be seen in them', Chapter 111, The Youth's Institute Magazine, 1882, p.133.
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## A CENTURY SERVING THE DEAF

Tony Clifford

In 1892, West Ham School Board was considering the best means of providing suitable accommodation for deaf and dumb children. A year later, the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act was passed, which recognised schools as providing accommodation for a given number of boys and girls, and provided grants accordingly. The certificate had to be renewed annually, and was subject to an Inspector's report. Two centres were established in hired buildings at Stratford and Victoria Docks:

(1) On Monday, 9 January 1893, a centre for the north of the borough opened at the Workmen's Hall, West Ham Lane. In August, 1893, this moved to St John's Schools, Chant Square, with Mrs Alice Webber in charge. On 2 October, 1900, it moved again to a permanent building in Water Lane.

(2) A Centre for the south of the Borough was opened in the Boyd Institute, Tidal Basin, on 19 July, 1893, with 9 pupils. On 10 January, 1898, it moved to new premises in Frederick Road, Custom House. The staff in 1901 consisted of Miss M.E. Oldfield (Head Teacher), and one other teacher. Miss Oldfield remained Head until October 1925, when she was succeeded by Miss Simpson. Another teacher with long service was Miss G. Lougee, who took up her post as assistant teacher in April, 1907, and retired after 25 years service in May, 1932.

[For purposes of clarification, the various sites of the schools will be referred to as 'Water Lane' and 'Frederick Road' throughout this account].

Tunmarsh Lane School for the Deaf opened on 2 May 1938, with 53 children in attendance (32 from Frederick Road and 21 from Water Lane), and two other sites were closed. It was formally opened on 9 May by the Mayor of West Ham, Alderman Mrs Bock, JP. The first Head Teacher of the new school was Miss Lucy Mullen, whose service had begun at Frederick Road in April, 1906, becoming Head Teacher there in February, 1928. She retired in December, 1948. On 23 September 1946, the official title became Tunmarsh Special School (Deaf). A new building was added in Easter, 1955. The nursery is reported as being occupied in early September of that year. In 1949, the school was renamed West Ham School for the Deaf. It became Newham School for the Deaf on 26 April, 1966. It closed in January 1993, by which time it was known as Tunmarsh School and Centre.

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The log books of the Water Lane and Frederick Road schools tell us much about the early education of the deaf, and also cast light on some of the social problems of the time. Discipline was strictly enforced, particularly at Frederick Road, where canings are frequently recorded for truancy, disobedience, insubordination and bullying. In 1897, two children were caned for lighting the gas without permission. A boy was similarly punished in 1904 for playing truant 'so that he could beg in the streets'.

Most of the children were very poor. In 1885, for example, several pupils were provided with boots from a special fund. Attendance at Frederick Road was generally reported as low, and every September is explained by so many children being away 'hopping'. Attendance in June was often low because of 'pea-picking'. Diseases such as scarlet fever and diphtheria accounted for some absences at the turn of the century. Indeed, scarlet fever is mentioned as late as 1937.

Normal school hours at Water Lane in 1916 were : morning, 9.30 to 11.45; afternoon, 1.30 to 3.30.

The dimensions of the Boyd Institute premises are given in a log entry dated 10 March, 1899. The four classrooms were 15 feet square, and fourteen feet high. The boys' playground and yard was 3584 square feet; the girls' 3504. The hall was 23 feet x 15 feet 6 inches, and 14 feet high (356 square feet).

Accommodation at Water Lane was also cramped. 19 pupils were in attendance in August, 1897, with only 18 seats available. The schoolroom was only certified to hold 21 persons, so it was then full. An Inspector commented on the 'incommodious premises and bad light' in 1900:

The new premises for which plans were approved on the 22nd June 1899 should be proceeded with as rapidly as possible.

Children from outside the parish were not admitted to Water Lane. By August, 1895, 8 children were obliged to leave:

I had to dismiss my best pupil because her parents have now removed to East Ham. This girl was the first one admitted to this class & had learned to speak & lipread well during her attendance here...She was able to ask for simple articles in shops & make herself quite understood orally...

At Frederick Road, the Head Teacher exercised the right whether or not to admit new pupils. In April, 1896, she refused to admit a child 'who is dumb not deaf'. On another occasion the Head Teacher remarks:

Last week an idiot boy who could hear but not speak was brought here. Of course I did not admit him.

From entries in the log, it is clear that the prevailing theory of deafness was that it was closely linked with brain dysfunction:

...one of the great difficulties a teacher has to contend against in teaching deaf children [is] their weak memories - weak because they have hitherto never had them called into active service. (21 August, 1893)

The Revd. Staniere, Superintendent of Board School Classes for the Deaf, visited Frederick Road on 20 November, 1893, to enquire about a boy who suffered from sleeplessness, and with whom his doctor could find nothing wrong:

Rev. Staniere said where there was no sleep there was something wrong with the brain and therefore madness must ensue.

Several children are noted in the Frederick Road log as progressing slowly because of 'weak intellect'. On 10 April 1895, one boy was dismissed from the centre because:

...his speech has improved and he had learnt how to read and write a slate. He will now be more fairly classed to compete with ordinary children and to learn from them the idioms of speech which he otherwise would not do.

Fortunately, Inspectors' reports are often copied in the logs, and tell us something about the teaching methods used at the time. In 1908, it was noted that 'the children are unfortunately very backward in language attainments'. This was attributed to their circumstances:

It is very necessary to consider whether intensive and systematic teaching of language by written methods should not be more largely employed. This change has worked to advantage at the Water Lane School.

The situation at Frederick Road had improved the following year, and it appears that systematic language teaching had been introduced, "in which writing and speech are combined".

In 1891, the Inspector had noted;

...that written language is the ultimate test of verbal expression in the case of the deaf and in cultivating this power incessant attention should be given (a) to the elaboration of well-ordered descriptive statements; (b) to the building up of questions; and (c) in the highest class to the use of the more common conjunctive forms.

There was recommendation in March, 1911, that increased time should be given to manual work throughout the classes at Water Lane:

The direct effect of this will be to give each child a keener interest in school work and indirectly the teaching language will be imported owing to the wider range of topics which the manual training will bring to the mind of the pupil".

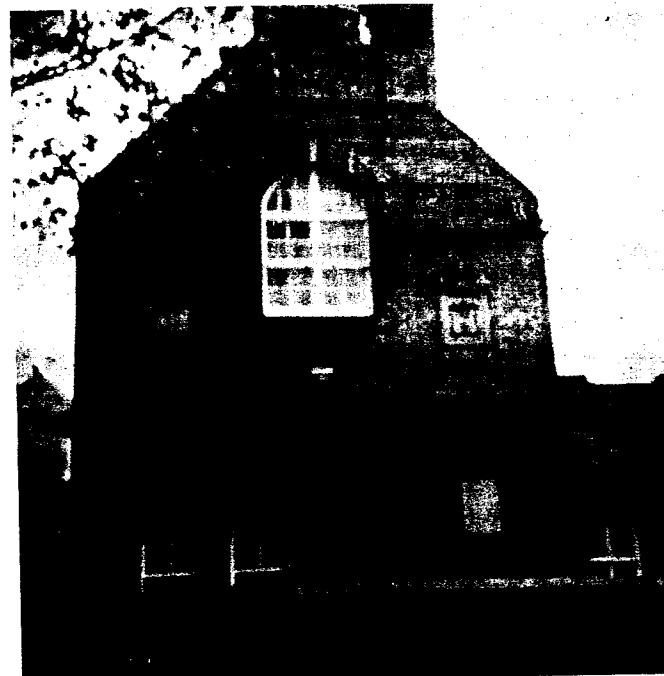
In 1922, the Authority was advised of defects in the nature of the work of the carpentry class:

The instructor finds the lack of language a serious drawback, and consequently the boys do not advance beyond the most elementary knowledge & skill in woodwork.

The defects were to be remedied by teaching the names of materials and tools.

Early reports also point to the lack of staff and equipment:

The school [Frederick Road] is in excellent discipline and is very well taught, but the work is growing to be too heavy for two teachers. A large looking glass would be very useful for the articulation class; bead frames, such as are used in infants' schools, would be useful for arithmetic.



The school viewed from Water Lane to-day.

The slates ordered in September have not arrived. We have a new properly fitting fire-guard & are daily expecting [a] washstand and a coal vase.

A recommendation was made in 1901 for changes in the teaching at lip-reading at Water Lane:

Forced movement and forced enunciation on the part of the teacher will call forth similar efforts from the child, which can only interfere with the proper production of speech at a later date.

In 1905, the Inspector blamed the Head Teacher at Water Lane - Mrs Webber - for poor progress in the school:

The writing books and needlework are dirty, arithmetic and drawing are backward, and in the drill, marching and walking require further development.

Mrs Webber was clearly devastated, and a dramatic entry in the log (December 14, 1905) records her feelings:

The end. After 13 years of long & faithful service - of honest endeavour - "An enemy hath done this".

This entry has been overwritten and cancelled by the Town Clerk as improper. In January, 1906, Miss Dora Leonard commenced as Head Teacher, the school was reorganised, and the Town Clerk notes: 'There is now every hope of good work being accomplished'.

(Miss Leonard ended her service as Head Teacher at Water Lane in May, 1934).

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Both schools were regularly visited by members and officers of the Council, as well as students and teachers from all over the world. In March, 1926, a teacher from Oslo watched classes at work at Frederick Road and 'was deeply interested in the high standard of education and hygiene in the East End of London'. Some visits of ex-pupils are also recorded. In February, 1931, Ben. Peat returned to Frederick Road to say he was now earning 30 shillings a week as a carpenter and joiner.

Teaching staff from both centres attended meetings and visited other deaf schools to enhance their professional knowledge. Water Lane closed from 20-22 July, 1925, so that all teachers could attend the International Conference on the Education of the Deaf in London. On 5 July, 1932, Miss Muirhead and Miss Hyslop from Frederick Road attended a meeting at Queens Hall to welcome Helen Keller.

At Frederick Road, the children were classified in 4 groups arranged according to their ability in writing, arithmetic, drawing, needlework and lipreading. Cookery and laundrywork for girls, and woodwork and bootmending for boys, were introduced at both school by 1908. These classes took place at other special schools in the Borough such as Grange Road.

A school library was started at Water Lane in June, 1933, with an annual grant of one pound for the purchase of books.

Physical education was not overlooked. An Inspector's report in June, 1897, recommended the introduction of drill, 'which is of the greatest service for deaf children'. In 1904, it was recommended the 'physical exercises should be placed under an expert instructor'. The children played their first game of netball in 1926 in the boys' playground at Frederick Road. Both schools were sending children to the swimming baths in the 1930s. Frederick Road girls were using Balaam Street baths in 1937. Water Lane pupils in the mid-1930s enjoyed the benefits of an 'open airschoo' in the gardens of nos. 11 and 13 during the warm weather.

A medical examination by Dr Furniss at Frederick Road in September, 1935, attributed the general gain in weight of the pupils to the introduction of daily hot dinners during the previous year. The first meal on 14 September, 1934, consisted of stewed mutton, potatoes, peas, and bread and butter pudding. (A few slight structural alterations were necessary in the girls' lavatory to accommodate a sink and gas-stove to prepare the meals). In March, 1934, hot dinners were being given to children at Water Lane from Salway Place Dining Centre. Pasteurised milk, supplied by The Wholesale Dairies, Wood Lane, was being served daily at Frederick Road in March, 1935.

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Outings and 'treats' feature highly in the curriculum at both schools. Besides an annual day-out to Southend, Clacton, or Epping Forest, there are frequent visits to museums and other places of interest in London. Some of the money for these trips was raised then (as now) by jumble sales and the generosity of parents and friends. Christmas was always a special occasion, and every year a party was arranged with school manager, parents and friends present. For many years in the 1920s, Mr Hall of Ilford was particularly kind and generous to the children at Frederick Road, where his daughter Winifred (who died in 1932) was a pupil.

A magic lantern show given at Frederick Road by Mr Pearson in January, 1893, was very much enjoyed by the children:

The magic lantern drew from their lips many words which [the children] had learnt at school. Spontaneous speech is a great encouragement to a teacher of the deaf.

A prize-giving day was held every year at both schools. In 1925, a revised prize scheme was approved by the Council. Prizes were to be awarded to pupils who made not less than 90% of punctual attendances, and whose conduct and industry had been satisfactory.

More school holidays were given for special occasions than is the case today. For example, Frederick Road was closed on 2 March, 1900, to celebrate the relief of Ladysmith. On 1 February, 1911, the teachers and pupils watched the launch of the 'Thunderer', and in June of the same year the children were taken in two brakes to Chislehurst, presumably to explore the caves. The elder children from Water Lane visited Wembley Exhibition on 1 July, 1924. On 26 February, 1930, the school closed because of a visit by Queen Mary to the Central Mission, Plaistow. Water Lane closed on 8 July, 1930, because of Prime Minister James Ramsay Macdonald's visit to West Ham to receive the Freedom of the Borough. In May, 1935, each child was presented with a commemorative silver sixpence, and a plate or egg-cup, on the occasion of George V's Silver Jubilee.

In connection with Education Week, on 29 June, 1922, the lowest class at Frederick Road was filmed whilst receiving an articulation lesson. In June, 1936, a film was taken at Water Lane of some of the children listening to a story, told by their teacher, by means of a recently installed Multitone machine with 6 headphones. This film was shown during West Ham's jubilee celebrations.

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Both schools were affected by events on the home front during World War 1. Attendance at Frederick Road was lowered in 14 May, 1915, by anti-German riots in the neighbourhood. In September, Miss Lougee was late for work 'owing to shock caused by Zeppelin raids'. On 13 June, 1917, the children were detained at school because an air raid was in progress. (Each child was given a copy of a book entitled *Air raids and alarms*). An air raid warning during the dinner hour on 2 October, 1917, resulted in the children being taken to the infants school until 2 o'clock. At Water Lane, the children were taken into the cellar during the two air raids mentioned above. Air raid drill became a regular occurrence until the end of the War.

*This article is dedicated to all the teachers who have done their utmost for the pupils in their care during the school's long history.*

## MEMORIES OF MALMESBURY ROAD SCHOOLS 1919-1925

Vi Short

St Patrick's Day, March 17th, 1919, dawned fair. I woke up full of joy and high hopes. I was going to start school, having persuaded my parents to put my name down for that day, my fifth birthday, at Malmesbury Road school. But little did I know that 'the bright day brings forth the adder'.

My elder sister had been there for four years; in our games she was teacher and I was her class of one. Day by day she repeated some of her lessons to me. The one that stuck in my mind was about the marvellous of the snap dragon flower: on that day I decided that when I grew up I would teach about flowers and how they make their seed.

I went from our little house, 29 Lacey Street, Bow, leaving behind all that I loved: my parents, my two sisters Lily and Iris, my aunt, my grandad, and the cat. I trotted along with shining morning face most willingly to school in my long leather gaiters clutching my auntie's hand. When we got to the top of the road I checked that Bryant and May's factory had St Patrick's flag flying as it always had on my birthday. All was well, or was it?

When we got to school it all seemed very strange and noisy and bare, but I went into the babies' class quite happily. My teacher was a little lady with grey hair and pince-nez spectacles - Miss Drayson.

The rest of the morning is a complete blank in my memory until I was collected to go home for dinner (there were no school meals in those days). By that time I had decided that nothing would ever get me back into that place.

When I was dragged back bellowing in the afternoon I'm sure poor Miss Drayson did not think I'd come from God trailing Wordsworth's clouds of glory, and I'm even more sure that I did not think that Malmesbury Road school was heaven lying about me, despite its high reputation.

My Mum and Dad's philosophy was that once you had set your hand to the plough you continued, even on floods of tears. In any case I could not escape the School Board man who would be round. The bellowing was controlled but I sobbed quietly through weeks and weeks. I was tall and sturdy for my

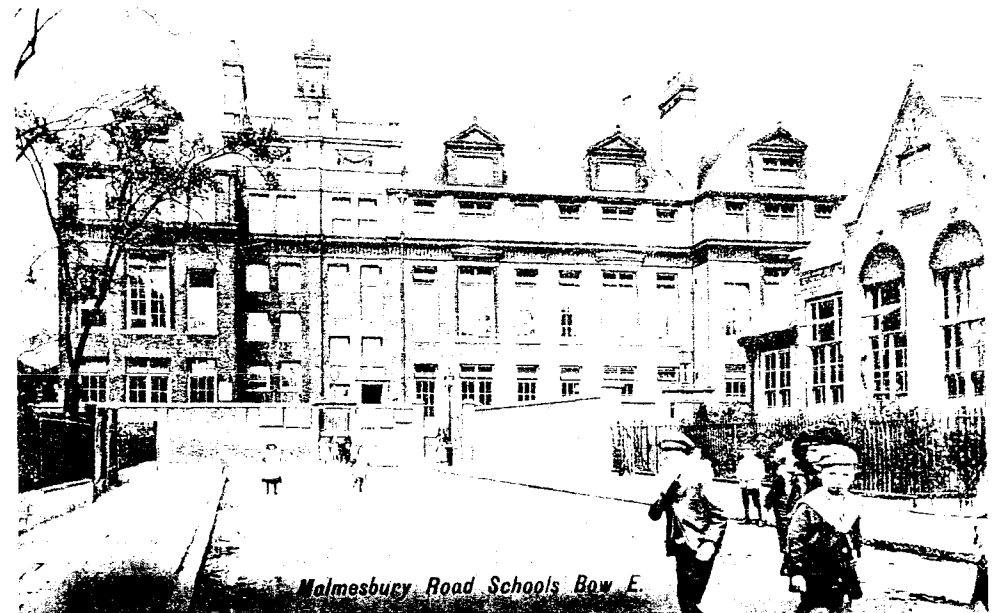
years but I lost pounds in weight. Home was my heaven. There was always lots of activity, both mental and physical, This was partly the trouble. I did the work set for us, quite quickly, then had to sit and wait till all the others had finished. I got to thinking about home and that was fatal: panic set in. Every day I was worried that I would never see home again. It didn't help when we were taught the hymn, 'Now thank we all our God...who from our mothers' arms hath blessed us on our way'. I got to wondering where they were going to take us.

Every morning I made the Family line up and perform the same ritual, crossing their hands and feet saying 'Surficial' that they would come and fetch me home. That is what I heard boy scouts shouting after the air raids 'All clear surficial'. I must have been an absolute pest. At playtime I grabbed the same poor little boy. He had gold curls and a withered arm, Bertie Seal. With my arm round his neck we wandered round the playground. I asked him continuously if it was nearly going home time, he never lost his patience, repeating over and over, 'It won't be long now.'

Mum made me a school bag of American cloth about six inches square, and every morning a little packet of cold buttered toast was put inside for elevenses with my slate rag and a penny for the 'Starving Europeans'. Pictures were pinned up of the children, as shocking as any in concentration camps in the Second World War. They were horrifying to youngsters. It is absolutely true that the smell of cold toast clutches at something inside me and a conditioned reflex enables me to smell American cloth at the same time.

The first primroses that I see each Spring have a bitter-sweet feeling for me. My father was sent a whole lot of artificial primroses in tiny bunches by John Knight to introduce a new brand of soap during this time. They were beautifully made. We had never seen real ones and I was enchanted by these little yellow flowers. It would have been better to have started school at Easter with 59 others all as equally bewildered at the noise, the numbers and the restrictions. I am not blaming Miss Drayson. The whole ethos was different then. Now, a nuisance like I was would be talked to quietly with a kindly hand to reassure her, instead of 'Do stop crying or I shall have to whip you.'

I think my great niece Charlotte must have been 'tarred with the same brush'. When her mother collected her from school after a few sad weeks her tear-stained face was looking like wistful April sunshine. 'Look Mum', she said, 'I got a smiley face badge today.' I had no chance to win a badge as such, but a bit of praise was the lode-stone that guided me out of my misery. About



Malmesbury Road Schools.

the only visual aid we had was a black and white chart with one enormous letter on each page. Miss Drayson revealed 'N'. 'What does that stand for children?' Dead silence. Ah ha, I thought, something to eat. My hand shot up for the first of many times. 'NUTS'. She had expected 'n-n-n'. She praised me so warmly the healing began.

Boxes of chalk were given out. We did arithmetic and spelling with white chalk (numeracy and literacy hadn't been invented in those days). I loved it best when we did drawing with coloured chalks, I always tunnelled into the box to find the purple. It was so beautiful. Those greasy millboards were difficult to clean, and it was customary to hawk it around to your nearest neighbours soliciting a bit of spit. There was a merry little boy called Eric Bodley, who had a thick chesty cough. I soon discovered not to accept his offering.

We sat two to a wooden desk. My partner was called Moses Stone. There were many Jews in the school. His friends called him Mossy. It was not till years later that I realised that, 'I had been a violet by a mossy stone.' My best friends were always Jewish.

We sat most of the day, so it was a great relief when 'nit nurse' came round to examine our hair, to have a little walk to where she stood, comb in hand, beside a bowl of lysol. If she found signs of ringworm the school doctor was called to verify it and the fortunate victim had ultra-violet light treatment on the scalp. They lost all their hair and subsequently wore a woolly tam-o-shanter. Then joy when it was removed. There were beautiful curls. I persuaded many of them to let me put their tams on, but I never got ringworm or curling hair.

When teachers were absent for short periods there was no supply staff so the teacherless class was divided into two. Half went to the class above and half to the class below. The cuckoos in the nest stood round the room against cold glazed brown bricks with hands behind backs, and talk if you dare! There we stood from 9 to 10.30. After play the visitors sat down and the residents took their turn standing. The punishment for talking was to stand on the seat, hands on heads. If you stood too far back the seat tipped up.

There was an orphanage in Tredegar Square, where the boys wore thick dark grey suits with lamp-shade collars and the girls had navy blue dresses and white pinafores. It made me very sad that they had no families. One boy had an epileptic fit in the middle of a lesson. The three teachers holding him still told us to put our heads down on the desk and go to sleep, and there we sat till the end of the morning. I don't know if the others were as frightened as I was: he was struggling, groaning and foaming at the mouth. I couldn't stop shivering. I, like the orphans, stood out in class because I was so tall for my age. The big boys called after me 'DU-uncce' but my big sister Lily used to say to them, 'She may be big, but she's not old.' It was brave of her, because some of the big boys were very rough and spiteful. The big girls and the infants shared a playground. The boys had their own with a high wooden gate which was always locked. The asphalt playground was square with an enormous metal covered area in one corner called the sheds. The lavatories were on the far side of it, next to the caretaker's house. Mr and Mrs Garwood, the caretaker and his wife, were a sour couple who always imagined you were doing something you'd been told not to.

We went out to play in all weathers. The lavatories had no doors and there were no wash basins. Drinking arrangements were equally primitive - one lead bowl projecting from the wall with a metal cup dangling on a chain. One for infants and girls' school combined! Mum said we weren't to use it, but there was no milk at playtime and I often longed for a drink after an energetic game. Epidemics of measles, chickenpox, scarlet fever and diphtheria occurred

every summer, with varying severity. Tuberculosis was always present. When the days warmed up Dad sprayed the walls of our bedrooms with lysol. It did nothing for the wallpaper but we didn't catch anything worse than measles. Even that was sometimes fatal in those days. There were no antidotes, such as antibiotics or therapeutic drugs.

Lunch-time was one and a half hours originally, which was not long for little ones to walk home and back, a mile each way. Many had longer walks than us. Later it was increased to two hours, which we thought was heaven. I can never remember having library books at Malmesbury Road school. The teachers were dedicated and worked hard to drive in facts, but there was little to stimulate reasoning or imagination. We three were lucky, as the grown ups at home bought for us the Children's Newspaper, The Children's Encyclopedia and My Magazine. We had many books from the classics to Angela Brazil and Tiger Tim, and we are grateful indeed to them for we knew it meant many sacrifices.

There were no paints and in drill a few bean bags, balls and coloured bands were all we had. We danced round as leaves, shunted like trains, hopped like rabbits and fell silent like snowflakes. This snowflake one day forgot to bring its plimsolls, so was still wearing long leather gaiters and heavy shoes. I always did everything with great energy, and had a fat tummy. As it came into contact with the ground, I let out a great yelp as the air was forced out of my lungs. 'What child made that noise?' said Miss Drayson. I lay there like a mouse savouring my secret. She repeated the question in a louder voice - still like Brer Rabbit, 'I lay low and said nuffin'. 'I know who it was', she said, and she said it to save her face - I hoped - and I was lucky.

We had a Punch and Judy show as a treat one day and were each given two boiled sweets. Why are they so much more special when teacher gives them to you? I ate the red one and took the purple one home for my little sister. We loved her so much. She had a bad tummy ache when I left for school that morning. The purple got a bit sticky so I had a lick or two on the way home. The house was silent. They told me she was very ill and the doctor had sent her to the London Hospital. I was sad but thought that there was no point in wasting a sweet so I ate it. I sensed that the grown ups were anxious, feeling lost and frightened. I slipped out of the house. In my wanderings I met up with one of the big boys in Lily's class and he took me to play with him, shooting passing van drivers with cylinders of potato from little pop guns, made of metal and costing 2d each. I returned home at 8 o'clock. My parents

were very worried and angry with me. I felt wicked and I've never again tried to shoot van drivers with potato bullets from that day to this.

Lily was ink monitor which meant that on Friday afternoons she took a tray of china inkwells to an under-ground washhouse to rinse them ready for the next week. She always came home with blue hands on those days. One Friday she was crying over the inkwells. Miss Unwood, who was her teacher and was very caring, must have sensed that something was amiss and went down to find her. As they talked she said that her little sister also had appendicitis and soon got well. This operation had only been performed during the last 30 years and Iris at three was the youngest patient on whom they had performed it. The abscess was on the point of rupturing so she was in the hospital for weeks. Children these days are treated with much more consideration and more compassion. There was no opportunity for mothers to stay with young patients. In fact after my parents' first visit she was so heartbroken when they left her that the Sister said it would be better for her if they did not visit. Every night Mum, Dad, or Auntie made the journey which was a 3d bus ride, just to look at her asleep in her cot, through a glass door. She fretted so much that



Lil and Vi dressed for school on a rainy day. The 'seaside' in the background was provided by the photographer, Mr Harrison, who had a shop on Roman Road.

the back of her head was rubbed bald on the pillow. Her gold curls soon grew again. The joy on the day they fetched her home was unbelievable. She had to learn to walk again, and from then on I decided to guard her as a pearl of great price.

We had parties at Christmas at school and one year we did a play. The Family were always more than willing to help - Dad and uncle Jack made a fine sleigh for Father Christmas. The play was all about Christmas Eve. I was the children's nurse and my part consisted of one sentence. 'It is 8 o'clock children, you really must go to bed as Father Christmas will be here soon'. It was the dress rehearsal. At the psychological moment I saw Dad appear at the hall door with the sleigh bells and all. The play must go on, so I entered and started my piece as though I hadn't seen him, 'It is...' But I got no further. Miss Drayson had seen him and she said 'Is it?' 'Yes it is my Dad', I said. She was as excited as we were. The sleigh really was a beauty.

As the time for us to leave approached Miss Drayson said, 'Why don't you bring your little sister to school on Friday afternoons for the next few weeks?' She couldn't face another 'Short' repeating the performance. We always took our toys along and played for the last half hour while the teachers made up the registers for the week. Iris came readily, there was no fuss. She was a cat that walked alone, happy, self possessed and well balanced.

On my last day making our farewells we discussed that our teachers were human beings with feelings, not remote deities who made rules that you disregarded at your peril. They were splendid for their time. I looked forward to the future with high hopes but again my eagerness was to be shortlived.

In the Junior Mixed my new teacher wore a black sateen apron round her ample waist. Her hair was snow white and beautiful but as far as I was concerned that was her only virtue. In hindsight she was a deplorable type of pedagogue with a characteristic that embryo teachers of my generation were warned about. She had little pets, who could do not wrong, and bad lots who could do nothing to please her. She had approved of Lily and I was a great disappointment. My sister had long brown curls, she was pretty and quiet and wore her clothes with feminine elegance: white socks and shoes and pretty dresses. My straight short hair, navy socks and button boots, skirts and jumpers which I had begged Mum to let me wear she disliked and me inside them. I tried my hardest to please her - Miss Mustow, but again and again she was childishly antagonistic, would never explain anything if I asked her a question and never missed an opportunity of belittling my efforts. She once

gave us a poem to learn for homework and I really did know it. When she asked for volunteers my hand shot up. I started;

It was an old lady, and a boy that was half past three  
And the way they played together was beautiful to see.  
She couldn't go romping and jumping and the boy no more  
could he,  
For he was a thin little fellow, with a twisted knee

She stopped me for playing with the bottom welt of my jumper. Behind my back, that's where my hands had to be. I stopped fiddling but I was so nervous of her displeasure I started again. She stopped me again and again, by which time I couldn't remember where I was and it made inroads into the bottom of my jumper.

'Sit down, you silly little girl, you don't know it at all'. Mum wondered what had happened to my jumper.

After a few weeks I was sent for by the Headmistress of the infants school to collect my prize. Mum said, 'You'd better put your best dress on.' As I walked across to the door when they came for me Miss Mustow said 'I cannot understand why naughty girls are given prizes by the infants school, when good girls like Iris Richards are passed over.' It made me very sad - I didn't tell them at home, but my frustration grew. I lost all respect for her and came bottom of the class in the examinations. It gives me food for thought, the responsibility that a teacher has. I dreaded the thought that I might be left down in her class, but fortunately the Head put us all up into the scholarship stream, all be it there were still three years to go before what was called the Junior County Scholarship for children in the London County Council area.

Mrs Bryant had the class and joy was restored; she was a most inspiring teacher. Apart from basic lessons she introduced so much general knowledge which was absorbed avidly. She sat on her table with her feet on the front desk. This would be frowned on in my college of education, but we loved every minute of it as she talked to us as equals. On Friday afternoons it became very informal. She sang songs to us in Welsh, recited the Lord's Prayer in German and read delightful stories, 'The King of the Golden River', 'The Water Babies', and Aesop's fables were but a few. Then she would shout questions at us about anything under the sun. The atmosphere became electric, with competition to be the first to answer. School became my abiding passion.

Life was opening up in a wonderful way. About this time there was a chrysanthemum show at the Peoples Palace in the Mile End Road. Queen

Victoria had opened it in 1887 for the recreation of East Enders. My aunt bought me a hyacinth bulb. There were lots of things for sale in the Winter garden. This bulb started another abiding passion - growing things. I put it in a glass jar full of water. It was such a whopper it rested on the rim. A lovely cone shaped green shoot developed. The bulb shrank so I cut a hole in a piece of card for the bulb to rest on. I shared it with the Family as it grew into the most beautiful pale pink spike of bells. That wasn't enough. I wanted to take it to show Mrs Bryant. The grown ups said 'You can't carry that all the way to school' I did. It meant starting out half an hour earlier. They all admired it on Mrs Bryant's desk. She kept sniffing at the lovely scent. As I walked home well pleased the bulb had spent it's last effort and sank to the bottom of the jar. A smaller hole was cut in another bit of card, but I had a bit of a job getting the sheath of beautiful white roots through it.

By now it was 1923 and our pennies bought stamps for wounded service men. The stamps bore a picture of Jack Cornwall, a lad of 15 who was a member of a gun crew in the battle of Jutland. He was the 'sighter' wearing ear phones. He passed the firing orders from the officers to the gun crew. All but two of the men were killed. He was mortally wounded but stayed at his post to the end of the battle firing the gun. He died two days later in hospital. His widowed mother later received his posthumous V.C. Years later my friend at the Grammar school told me that her father had been his headmaster at Walton Rd School, Manor Park. Later it was renamed Cornwall School. Another topical fact is that we now had married woman as teachers. So many men had been killed. There were many war widows who had qualified before they were married. We had one in the Junior Mixed; her husband had gone down on the 'Good Hope'. We all respected her very much. It gave her a kind of glamour in our eyes.

One day in the playground I looked up - I couldn't believe my eyes. High up in the sky someone was writing in gold. I had a fertile imagination and a religion that was more akin to superstition. This is it, I thought the end of the world and God is writing to warn us. Terrified, I stood gazing, my heart pounding, waiting for I don't know what. Then I made it out. The words were PLAYERS PLEASE upside down and back to front. I couldn't see the tiny aeroplane. This was the very first effort at sky writing advertisements, but they were shortlived.

There was a great deal of unemployment and poverty in these years after the First World War. In Bow many children were in rags and inadequately fed. Next door to us was an ex-service man who was lucky enough to have



got his job back as a miller's roundsman. His wife, her mother and sister and eight children all lived in one small house. We met one of the girls at dinner time going to buy dinner for all the children with 6d. She was gloating over the luxury of having so much money to spend on bread, cheese, and pickles. Each must have had very little, and two of them were lads of thirteen and fourteen.

There were no school outings at this time because of the necessity for economy. We did an entertainment for the mums. A small choir of 8 up on the balcony sang

The fire brigade are a famous host ever ready ever steady pumping away,  
At danger and need they are at their post, ever ready ever steady pumping away,  
House on fire, house on fire, clear the street hark the beat of the horses feet  
Of the fire brigade, fire brigade ever ready, ever steady, pumping away.

The headmistress lived, thought and dressed in the past, wearing always black Edwardian clothes. Whenever we approached her in school we had to salute. We had never seen a horse drawn fire engine, but there were many more horses on the roads than there were cars. The latter were so scarce we used the roads as skating rinks in the evenings.

We bought our sweets at Woodham's, a tiny shop in Coborn Road. Its old name was Beerbinder Lane because of the convolvulus that spangled the hedges. Woodhams was never empty when school was out. There was a fair choice of sweets for those days, hence the patient look of little Mrs Woodham as we 'hummed and harred' over what to spend our precious pennies on. There were milk gums, raspberry drops, licorice pipes with red hundreds and thousands or glowing tobacco chocolate cigarettes, snow balls, gob stoppers, slabs of everlasting toffee and sherbet.

In 1923 Lily had gone to the Grammar School and Iris was enjoying her time in the infants. One day after school she told me that a big boy had hit her on the head with a roll of cardboard. I chased him and he ran under the shed. He turned to see how near I was. At that moment a boy swinging on the girders overhead swung back his hob nail boots catching the fugitive in the face and sent him sprawling on his back. At this heaven sent intervention we fled. I was grateful as he was much bigger than me.

As the afternoons grew shorter towards Christmas, the yellow gas lights were turned on by our teachers standing on the nearest desk under each one, and applying a flaming taper. We made paper chains, lanterns and Christmas



**Class 3, Malmesbury Road Infants School, about 1917. Vi's older sister Lil is on the right hand end of the front row (seated).**

cards. As the evenings lengthened after Christmas life became more sociable. We stayed to play the different games as they came in their seasons, touch, skipping, marbles, hopscotch, please we've come to learn the trade, grandmothers footsteps, peg tops, whipping tops, and hoops, wooden and metal. I begged them to buy me an iron hoop with a hook to guide it. They made a lovely noise on the York stone pavements, but Mum said, 'No they're boys' toys.' Sometimes I got my own way, but, wisely, not always. There was no 'tele' to dash home for, and parents had no fear of their children being molested in East London.

Another excitement was Empire Day. May 24th was always sunny. A piano was wheeled out into the play-ground and the whole school assembled in uniforms if we were Guides, Scouts, Brownies, or Cubs, our white dresses and skirts lavishly decorated with red, white and blue ribbon. One year we had an Empire tableau. Iris was in it but I can't remember which colony she represented. The colour part established, the Union Jack fluttering in the breeze, the piano and drums blazing away with stirring tunes, we marched, with very straight backs, round the playground in single file to salute the flag. Back in our places we sang with fervent patriotism

Land of hope and glory Mother of the free  
How shall we extol thee who are born of thee  
Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set  
God who made thee mighty make thee mightier yet  
God who made thee mighty make thee mightier yet.

Then we had a half holiday. The Empire's gone, but still I'm glad I'm British.

In July 1923 I went up to the Big Girls. It makes me feel very old when I remember my school life started only two years after the assassination of the Russian Royal Family and one year after the Armistice of the First World War. By 1923 things were only just settling down; they never got back to what the grown ups remembered as normal.

Our uniform consisted of a hat, like a little navy blue pudding basin with a button on top and resplendent golden M on the front. Our motto was 'Aim at the high' and the teachers certainly did just that. The girls were on the top floor. The boys were beneath and the infants on the ground floor. We went up and down 6 flights of fourteen stairs eight times a day. Often as we ascended I heard the older staff murmuring, 'O these stairs.' The three floors were all identical in plan despite the different requirements of each school. Teaching in those days was mostly 'chalk and talk'. My memory of the interior is of bare walls, enormous radiators, miles of iron pipes, wooden splintery floor and glass partitions which were anything but sound proof. Pictures were stuck on some of the glass, but I can't remember any hanging pictures except black and white, King George V and Queen Mary in Coronation Robes, the Princes in the Tower and the Monarch of the Glen. It was the atmosphere and ethos of the living school that excelled, due completely to the headmistress and teachers.

As a famous headmistress once said, buildings, apparatus, syllabuses are of secondary importance, what matters is at whose feet they sit. Miss Belsham, the headmistress, was a lady in the true sense of the word. She was kind and elegant, but alas was ailing in some way, and often came to school late. She was dedicated to the children in her care and made every effort to give us a sense of values. We were quick to appreciate this. She had the reins firmly in her hands. Her deputy taught music: she was older and must have been a wonderful support. She was kind with a strong sense of fair play and a beautifully modulated speaking voice. I always admired her immaculate striped silk blouses with a tiny frill of white lace round the high neck and a large cameo brooch on the front. She was Miss Gissing. The older teachers had experience and provided continuity, the younger staff were dedicated

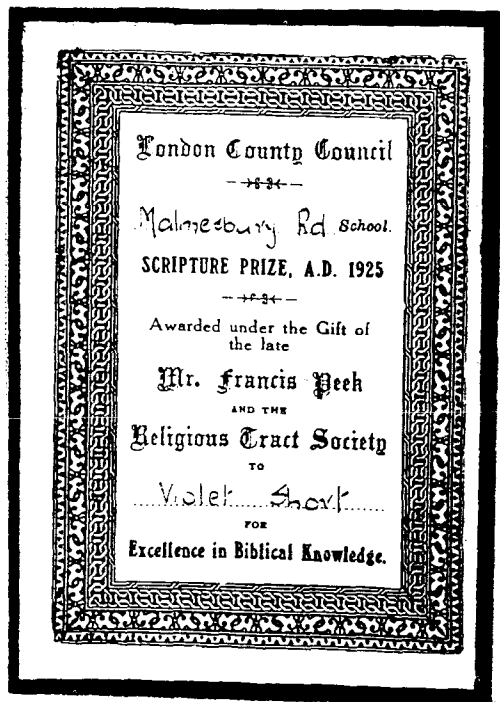
and had new ideas. It was a first class blend. They had no modern aids but human effort and a dynamic desire to educate less privileged children. We found these lessons inspiring. Teachers these days have to waste time testing, assessing and recording their results. Examination syllabuses seem to be getting more and more superficial.

A member of staff seemed not to be so popular. We called her Moggy Hunt. Sarcasm is a cowardly weapon for an adult to use against a child. She had a cruel tongue. Iris landed in her class for a year. One evening the Family went to the old Borough Theatre in Stratford to see 'Charlie's Aunt'. Next day in the English lesson my sister was day-dreaming looking out of the window. Suddenly she heard her name, 'Iris Short, what is Shakespeare's most famous comedy?' Her mind went blank. Then suddenly inspiration. 'Charlie's Aunt'. She was sent round to every class to tell them her 'brilliant answer'.

On St. George's Day we had a special assembly for St George and Shakespeare. Miss Belsham, who lived in the country, brought in a huge ball of cowslips. They were magical with their honey scent. Various people recited Shakespeare's sonnets and we sang songs from his plays. Music was a strong subject in the school. Our voices were tested individually and the choir often sang to the school. One song was 'Rolling down to Rio in great streamers white and gold'. All international travel was of course by sea, there were no air liners in those days.

Mr Popkins was a peripatetic violin teacher. We took our sixpences to each lesson. While he tuned our fiddles we put them on the end of the piano. Then with our cases on the floor in front of us, we stood in two rows scraping away together. He achieved good results. Later one very hot summer's day 5,000 L.C.C. school children met at Crystal Palace to play together. Mum said it sounded like rain, I wondered the strings stayed in time in such heat. We joined with one of the boys and his parents. In an adjacent Hall was a war exhibition. Peter and I were keen to see it. Mr. Page his father, waited outside. He had gone all through the war and said he had seen enough.

We did no art which was a great disappointment to me, but there was a compensation. We were going to learn swimming. Off we went in a crocodile to Roman Road Baths. Nowadays a school bus would be available. The first lesson was terrifying: we sat on the edge with our feet at the 'pipe' heads down, arms stretched out in front; then we were pushed in from behind. I never found who did it. The surge of cold water made us gasp and swallow pints. One day I forgot my swimming costume and the attendant lent me one. Mum would not



have approved. It was like a pair of thick navy blue washed out combs down to my knees and elbows, with half the buttons off the front. I dared not be too energetic.

At the beginning of 1925 practically the whole class sat for the 'prelim' as we called it. It selected those who were to enter for the Junior County Scholarship. The Hadow Report in the early twenties had 'set up a ladder from the gutter to the University' and this was the first rung. Five were selected. One Saturday morning we had to be at school by nine. We did an arithmetic paper first. One sum I remember quite well because it was so intriguing. We were given a diagram of a black and white tile. The pattern was built up of squares and triangles and the measurements were in centimetres. We had to find the area of black and white in inches. All we were told that 2 and a half cm = 1 inch (approx). We hadn't been told how to find the area of a triangle and had never heard of centimetres. After a short break we had to write a composition. There was a small choice. I wrote a letter to an Eskimo boy comparing his life with mine. A pass mark secured a place in a Grammar School chosen out of about six in the locality. There was a means test to qualify towards uniform.

The Wembley Exhibition was in 1925. We all went on London General Buses, hired for the occasion. It was a great day out, but we were a bit disappointed that there was no time for the funfair.

One morning we lined up in the hall, our class at the back. Miss Belsham came in to read the scholarship results. Being near the end of the alphabet I was usually last on lists, so I got a shock when my name was read first. The other girl who passed was Jean Thompson. We were called to the front. I felt most peculiar, like Humpty Dumpty, all head with no body: my feet were fastened to my neck. We were bidden to climb on the table and the school clapped. Iris dashed home to tell Mum, who was at the door waiting. She was pleased and said I could choose supper. That Friday night we all sat down to a festive meal of fried pork sausages and onions and potatoes in their jackets. Iris herself won a scholarship two years later.

We had been given concentrated work in English and Arithmetic the previous year. Credit was due to Miss Fulmer who always had the scholarship class and my aunt who helped me in the evenings. She had earned a scholarship to a training college but my grandfather, over protective of his only daughter, thought it would be too much for her. In due course I went for a medical at County Hall.

Lily was at Coburn School so the headmistress admitted me there a term early. The runners up went to what were called Central Schools, where technical subjects and practical skills were taught in addition to continuing a general education. Those who were left stayed on at Malmesbury Road School. In the top class they seemed to spend a lot of time making rugs.

I was sad to leave but I have two books to treasure to remind me of those happy days: 'The Wonder Book of Wonders' and 'The New Testament'.

## THE VOLUNTEER MILITIA COMPANIES

Clifford Gully

In 1803 with the ever present threat of an invasion of England by Napoleon's Grande Armee, the British government ordered the creation of local militia companies all over the country. In 1794, Hackney formed its very own company of militia that already had a tradition of military service dating back to the American Wars of Independence. Furthermore, other corps of volunteers were raised at the time in Tower Hamlets that included the Bethnal Green Battalion, the Bethnal Green Light Infantry and the Mile End Volunteers. There is little doubt that the government, during this period, took Napoleon's invasion plans very seriously indeed. This was particularly so as the Emperor had already established an 'Army of England' at Boulogne that comprised between 160,000 and 170,000 men under the direction of his various marshals that included Ney and Soult. Moreover, one clear example of the seriousness of the threat to England by Napoleon's armies was the erection of fortifications built all over the south coast of England that was especially vulnerable to invasion from Europe. These fortifications were known as martello towers. To combat this build-up of the enemy's invasion forces, militia companies, as mentioned earlier, were created all over England. In Hackney, for example, the volunteers comprised three companies of seventy-two men, each with a captain, lieutenant, ensign, four sergeants, four corporals accompanied by a major, adjutant and a sergeant-major. Each enrollee in such companies was given a bounty of 10.00 by the Government under an act of parliament of 1794. The overall commander was a Mr Dobrée who was the volunteer captain.

Mr Dobrée was a Hackney man who was probably from the wealthy land owning and merchant class who resided in the parish. These volunteer companies were generally financially independent from other corps that were organised and they were maintained by such notables as Mr Dobrée who was able to equip himself and his men and obtain free uniforms from the government. The Hackney volunteers' uniform for example, and as represented by Thomas Rowlandson in an etching of 1799, consisted of a blue coat with red facings braided with gold, black shoes and accompanying gaiters, black hats, plumes and red and white cockades. By October 1803 the volunteer militia companies numbered approximately 40,000 men in London and all of them would have been similarly attired as the Hackney men.

The impetus for this inception of the volunteers in Hackney was the Hackney Association which was an illustration of the many 'loyal associations' that were formed to counter the popularism of the revolution in France. To assist the

HACKNEY VOLUNTEER

Nº 19

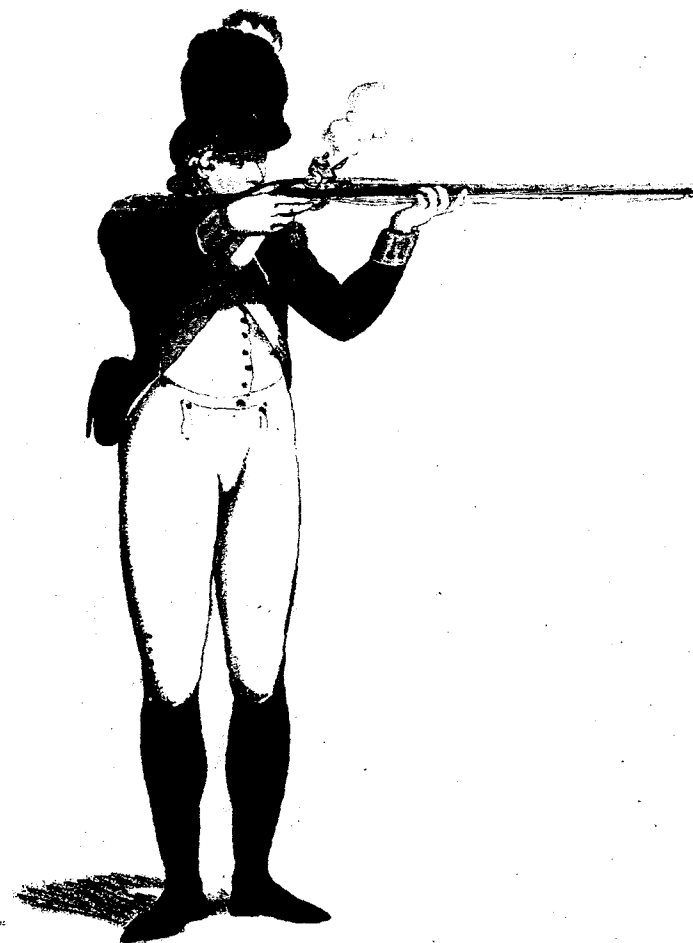


PLATE (Front Rank)  
At the word FIRE the middle finger pulls the Trigger & the Firelock is immediately drop down in the priming position the same as N<sup>o</sup> 32

London 1799 & 1800 at Alderman's Printing Office

country from a practical point of view, many associations loyal to the King and constitution created their own corps of volunteer militia companies to compensate for the dual evils of invasion by the French and internal social turmoil within the country. Indeed, at a general meeting of subscribers to the Hackney Association, held at the Mermaid Tavern on June 19, 1802, thanks were recorded to: 'Captain Williams and Captain Dobrée, and the others and privates of the corps of loyal Hackney volunteers, which in a period of great national danger and difficulty, was the first to stand forward in defence of the religion, laws and liberties of this country.' (Dobrée Papers)

It is interesting to note from this extract the ardour for King and Country it conveys; this is particularly so as the officers and privates were all volunteers and were not forced into compulsory military service as they were from March 1916 during the First World War, for example. Furthermore, the Dobree Papers in Hackney Archive Department, provide a fascinating insight into the operation of this Association whose primary aim was to preserve peace, liberty and prosperity during the Napoleonic Wars. The complete papers, reports, minutes, declarations and resolutions are kept in the repository and they are an invaluable social archive for the period from 1772-1820 and were purchased in August 1978 by the borough from Peter Murray Hill (Rare Books) Ltd. An illustration of the usefulness of these papers can be demonstrated. This is the muster role that itemises horses, drivers, carts and wagons and coaches loaned to the local Tower Hamlets militia, principally by the landowners of Hackney and Shoreditch who were members of the Association, for 20 August 1805. These men and materials were made available to them in the event of an invasion by the French.

With Nelson's victory at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805 the threat of invasion by Napoleon was permanently removed. This meant that the need for volunteer militia companies was no longer required and in Hackney the Association began to decline. Therefore, such spectacular occasions as the military reviews of the late 1790s in Hyde Park with officers and privates resplendent in their own accoutrements and uniforms and performing military drills before the King and the public were to end. The last remnants of volunteer militia companies were finally disbanded during the final throes of the Napoleonic War on July 6th, 1814.

*I wish to thank the staff of the London Borough of Hackney, Hackney Archives Department, in particular Jean Wait for her assistance in the research for this article. The main sources for this article were The Dobrée Papers in Hackney Archives Department (D/F/DOB 1-39) and T. Rowlandson, Loyal Volunteers of London (London, 1799)*

## NOTES AND NEWS

Recent items of interest in the **Island History Newsletter**, published monthly by the Island History Trust (£6 a year's subscription from Island House, Roserton Street, E14 3PG) include 'Working Women' (November and December, 1992), 'Kith and Kin in West Ferry Road' (March 1993) and 'Cellars, Snobs and Work in the Dry Dock' (July 1993). The Trust has recently launched the 'Island Box', with financial support from the LDDC, aimed at helping schools use the Island's rich history in line with National Curriculum requirements. Tower Hamlets Education Authority has now published a folder on local history - on Tudor East London - the first in a projected series, and have also published Maggie Hewitt and Annie Harris' **Talking Time! A Guide to Oral History for Schools**.

Items of particular interest in recent issues of **Cockney Ancestor** include 'Childhood Memories of West Ham' (Winter 1992) 'The Princess Alice Disaster' (Summer 1993) and, in the same issue, 'Jottings Of My Life - William Woolidge', written in 1911 by a man who had worked at the Thames Iron Works and had also been a Sunday school teacher.

While the promotion of the study of local history in East London schools is commendable, plans to make the area 'marketable' as a tourist attraction may have to be greeted with some caution. Two issues occurred to me in connection with the publicity that accompanied the launching of Thames Tourist Trust (TTT) in July. 'Gore Tours cash in on grim East End' ran **The Times** headline, referring to TTT chairman Trevor Soames' emphasis on gangland murders and Jack the Ripper horrors as selling points in promoting East London tourism. There is more to the East End's history than that, as readers of this magazine will know and as **The Times**, to its credit, pointed out. The TTT are aware of it as well, so why do they go for the 'blood and gore'? And do we really want the kind of tourism it attracts?

The second issue relates to accuracy. 'Trawling through the archives', **The Daily Telegraph** informed us, TTT's Gary Vincent found East End associations with Dickens, Captain Cook, Thomas Jefferson's mother, Judge Jeffreys, Ghandi, Lenin and William Perkin. A glance at, for example, **Our Mutual Friend**, would reveal that Dickens must have known the East End and William Fishman's **East End Jewish Radicals** can confirm that Lenin attended at least one East End workers' club. Wapping Historical Trust has been responsible for Madge Darby's **Judge Jeffreys and the Ivy Case**, Stepney Historical Trust has published Julia Hunt's **From Whitby to Wapping: the story of the Early Years of Captain James Cook** and Newham Libraries have had a very successful exhibition on Ghandhi's stay in East London. The **East London Record** has carried articles on Thomas Jefferson's mother (No 11, 1988) and William Perkin's discoveries (No 12, 1989). TTT can do its own research, of course, but the work of the individuals and groups named above should be acknowledged, as well as others like Centerprise, THAP Books, the Ragged School Museum and the Island History Trust, who have laboured for years to draw attention to the real historical treasures of the East End.

Feeling thus about the promotion of 'blood and gore' it is particularly irritating to stand accused of promoting it ourselves. In a recent issue of **The London Journal** (Vol. 17, No 2, 1992) Keith Sugden refers to the account of Dick Turpin's adventures in the 1990 issue of the **Record** as being told in a manner fit only for 'bloodthirsty' children. This is not so. In the text Turpin's robberies

are described as 'brutal', the details of his crimes are not dwelt upon in great detail and to record that 'Turpin went out in style to the scaffold, bearing himself bravely' it is not to admire his bravado, as Keith Sugden seems to think, but to recount what is believed to have been the case.

Yousef Choudhury's *The Roots and Tales of the Bangladesh Settlers* (Sylheti Social History Group, 267 Malmesbury Road, Birmingham, B10 0VE, £9.50) has some material on the origin and growth of Bangladeshi's in East London, but a full scale study of our local Bangladeshi settlement would justify a book in itself. Of interest to students of an earlier wave of East End immigrants is a reprint of Chaim Brenner's *Out of the Depths*, a novel of ghetto life in the early part of the century (Westview, £8.95). Also reprinted is Joseph Cohen's *Journey to the Trenches*, a biography of Isaac Rosenberg (Robson, £9.99)

John Curwen, Samuel Gurney, Stewart Headlam, Joseph Merceron, John Rocque, Noel Pemberton Billing and Frederick Rogers are among those who have been included in the recently published *D.N.B. Missing Persons*. Pemberton Billing featured largely in David Behr's 'The Mile End "air election" of 1916' (*Record* No. 4, 1981) and Frederick Rogers was the subject of Harold Finch's article in last year's *Record*.

Derek Morris' article 'Stepney and Trinity House', which first appeared in *Record* 13 (1990) has been reprinted in *Flash*, the Trinity House quarterly magazine (September 1992). Mr Morris's research on Mile End Old Town continues. He has now assembled a data base with over 4,500 names from Mile End Old Town land tax registers for the period 1740-80, giving start and end dates for land tax payments. By relating the order in which tax collectors went round the parish with information from deeds and leases he has been able to locate people's properties in the area to within a few hundred yards.

The March 1993 issue of *Mitteilungsblatt*, the magazine of the Anglo-German Family History Society, contains details of workhouse records at the Greater London Record Office, including those for Poplar, Shoreditch and Stepney.

Finally, John Harris, who has been co-ordinating the Society's research into the anti-aircraft defences of East London during the last war, has sent us this follow-up to Doreen Kendall's article on the Bethnal Green Tube Disaster in last year's *Record*: 'In April 1942 it was decided that Home Guard A.A. batteries would relieve Army A.A. batteries from night defence of vulnerable points. This decision was taken at cabinet level because these rocket-firing projectors were still on the secret list (code name Z). Z batteries were recruited by direct enrolment and not from men already in the Home Guard. This age limit was 60. The upper age limit was made possible because the loading and firing involved less manual labour than the heavy work of loading and firing the 3.7 A.A. gun. And we must bear in mind that the Z battery crews had completed a nine hour day on the factory floor before reporting for duty on site. The Z batteries were twin-barrelled rocket projectors later followed by four barrelled versions. The rockets were known as unrotating projectiles (U.P. for short). When launched they reached a speed of 1,000 m.p.h. over a distance of 1,000 feet in 1.5 seconds. The U.P. was 6 ft. 4ins. long and weighed 54 pounds. This included a warhead of 22 pounds. A complete battery could fire 128 rockets at any given point in the sky. They were not widely deployed because they could only fire one salvo. By the time they had been reloaded the aircraft was out of range. They were also very inaccurate. The idea was to "pepper", the target with a shotgun blast rather than fire one shell from a gun.'

## BOOK REVIEWS

T.S. Ridge. *Dr. Barnardo and the Copperfield Road Ragged Schools*. Ragged School Museum Trust, 1993. £3.00

Tom Ridge's very readable booklet revises and expands upon his article in the *East London Record* No 9 (1986). He briefly introduces us to Dr. Thomas Barnardo's early philanthropic work in the East End and then he takes us on an historical journey of the activities associated with nos. 46, 48 and 50, Copperfield Road, Bow. A wealth of information on the history of education is given in the four pages of notes that follow.

As the founder of the Ragged School Museum Trust in 1993, the author spent many hours researching tenaciously for historical evidence in the Local History Library, Bancroft Road, and in the other libraries in order to secure sufficient grant aid for the conversion of the premises into an education resource centre and museum - the Ragged School Museum.

The significance of the Copperfield Road Ragged Schools which opened there in 1877 and closed in 1908, was that, out of 148 ragged schools in London affiliated to Lord Shaftesbury's Ragged School Union, it became the largest. In 1879 there were 370 day children, and 2500 Sunday School children on the books. Dr. Barnardo was providing a school for a class of children who were not wanted in the Board Schools. What was the great attraction? Whereas the Board Schools did not provide free education until 1890 all the Ragged Schools did. The Copperfield Road Ragged Schools charged some pupils who were able to pay for meals and many had free meals, whereas the elementary Board Schools could only provide free meals after 1906.

Perhaps there could have been more details in the booklet about the opposition Dr. Barnardo faced. We learn only very briefly about George Reynolds, Frederick Charrington, the Charity Organisation Society, the London School Board and the London County Council's dealings with this pioneer.

The curious acquisition of the title of Doctor after studying for four months at the Royal College of Surgeons in Edinburgh (p.3) needs explanation beyond merely referring to the revelation in an arbitration court case on his Charity.

I would like to have known if the census returns for Limehouse Fields, where many pupils came from, were from Jewish, Irish, or other ethnic backgrounds. The Doctor was half Jewish, half Irish himself. Of course, we know from p.24 that the admissions to the schools were non-discriminatory.

The descriptions of the architectural features and building alterations to the 116 year-old structure are neatly inter-woven into the fabric of this story in an interesting way and we appreciate the appropriateness of its original name when the rag merchants used the buildings after the educationalist left. Now, full circle; and this booklet celebrates the first ten years of the Museum Trust.

The subject index, maps and photographs which are included greatly assist the reader. The booklet is a fine educational tool.

C.J. Lloyd

Rosemary Taylor. In **Letters of Gold**. Stepney Books, 1993. £4.95 from Rosemary Taylor, 5 Pusey House, Saracen Street, E14 6HG.

In **Letters of Gold** the forgotten history of the East End Suffragettes is brought to life and the bravery and courage of the Suffragettes is shown. So very often it is forgotten the battle and hardships women, especially in the East End, endured for their right to vote.

The book consists of 45 pages and each page has at least one very well reproduced photograph, many of which have never been published before. It is full of short stories rather than a continuous narrative and takes the reader on a guided tour of Bow starting from Bow Church, along Bromley High Street, Bow Road, Roman Road, St Stephen's Road, Old Ford Road and ending at Victoria Park. The book highlights an era in local women's history but it is not just for those interested in Women's Studies. It is a well researched and an excellently produced book and is a must for anyone who has connections or memories of the area, especially in the Edwardian period.

Diane Kendall

**Isle of Dogs Old and New**. Ilford Old and New Series, 1993. £2.50

This pocket book is an addition to Brian Piggot's **Ilford Old and New** Volumes 1-5 and **East of London Old and New** Volumes 1-5. The present book follows the now familiar format of black and white A5, with two photographs per page, one old and a modern view of the same position taken by Brian Piggot during 1993. The descriptive notes were compiled by Eve Hostettler of the Island History Trust. There are 31 pairs of photographs largely from the Trust's very extensive archive. There are only a few derived from post cards, ordinarily the prime source of views from early this century, and many from the 1920s and 1930s, a much less familiar time for local street scenes. The combination of war damage and recent redevelopment means that few parts of London have changed as much as the Isle of Dogs, and the reviewer found this mixture of industrial, and street scenes the most interesting of the series so far. Volume 1 implies more. I hope so!

Phillip Mernick

Jean Hewitt. **100 - Not Out!** The Story of Bridge House (formerly the Out and Out Mission) 1893-1993 (£4.75 & 70p p + p from 35 Bracken House, Watts Grove, E3 3RG)

Jean Hewitt's book is both readable and enjoyable. It is, however, a relatively short book and the imagination works overtime in trying to fill out the details of what is not included. Who, for instance, was the preacher from a well to do background so dismissive of the East End? What was the cause of the rift between Barrie Dickson and the congregation in the early 70s? Was it about life-style, theology or what? How did the Lake family resolve the very real tensions involved in living in the suburbs and worshipping in Old Ford?

It is this latter question which leads me to ask a question which Jean is not afraid to ask in the book. How does the Church create an indigenous and authentic local congregation in an area where, as an institution, we have often denied the virtues of working class people? John Vincent, a Methodist Minister working in down-town Sheffield, describes the church as a social escalator; 'Get on poor, get off rich'. There are examples in the book of those who do just that and who then retain leadership roles in an area they have left. Also, as she points out, there are those who (like the writer) move in sometimes, with the best will in the world, de-skilling local people. 'I didn't used to own a diary until I was converted' was once said to me by a working class christian. How

to retain the more working class gifts of spontaneity, solidarity and straight-forwardness over and against thrift and individual enterprise is an ongoing question for congregations which struggle with issues relating to their size. It's good to see that on the spontaneity front Bridge House scores high; their worship sounds to be fun.

Connected with this is the matter of evangelism. The way in which the Church shares its faith is crucial. I know that I would differ from Bridge House and Jean on this issue... There is a danger in believing that we bring something from outside which we share here rather than genuinely discovering the God who is to be found in the clubs, pubs, homes, shops etc. of the East End. A theological matter well worth the sharing. There's no doubt, however, that the contribution of Bridge House to the life of Old Ford has been of worth over the years and Jean Hewitt is to be complimented for bringing its story to us.

Ron Smith

**An East London Album**. Peter Marcan Publications 1992. East End Reprint Series No.5.

'An East London Album: a collection of nineteenth and twentieth century picture material from diverse sources relating to the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham' - this latest offering from Peter Marcan has been arranged in sections under various headings e.g. Markets, Lodging Houses, Shelters etc., Public Buildings, Schools & Colleges and so on.

Local History buffs with a predilection for the illustrated will appreciate this addition to this series of publications. Fascinating line drawings and sketches culled from the archives whet the reader's appetite and provide a tantalising glimpse into the world of the nineteenth century illustrator, while the inclusion of Bob Barltrop's work for the **Recorder** brings the tradition up to date. Peter Marcan is to be commended for his painstaking and patient efforts in bringing to light archive material that would otherwise be inaccessible to all but the most industrious researcher.

Rosemary Taylor

Ralph Hayes. **Hotel and Pub Checks of Greater London**, Vol. 2. Available from the author at 50 Thorpe Gardens, Alton, Hampshire GU34 2BQ. £13 & p + p.

This book completes the listing of the checks (tokens) issued by public houses and music halls in the greater London area. These tokens were issued, mostly in the second half of the 19th century, to serve a number of purposes including pre-payment of drinks at meetings, deposit on returnable containers and provision of refreshment at places of entertainment. The tokens are listed by the modern borough where the pub is/was located. Volume 1 (1991) covered Barking to Merton and Volume 2 covers Newham to Westminster. Full details of the tokens are given (illustration in text) together with date and location of the public house in most cases. This has required a lot of research in trade directories as the information given on the token is often limited, for example a 2d token reading E. Tappenden, Ivy House Tavern, Poplar. This publican is only listed, in the Kelly's directory of 1874, at the Ivy House Tavern, Brunswick Street, Blackwall. A total of 747 tokens are listed in the two volumes plus an additional 47 issued by London breweries. For those particularly interested in East London the lists include 60 from Hackney (Volume 1), 18 from Newham, 69 from Tower Hamlets, 2 from Redbridge (none are known from Waltham Forest).

Phillip Mernick

Peter Lawrence. **A Pictorial Review of Old Leytonstone** - An "Old Woodford and District Times" Publication, 1992. £1.80

This booklet, seventh in the Pictorial Review series covering the East London/Forest area, is a further addition to the collections of old photographs in convenient book form which have proliferated in recent years.

It will appeal to many East Londoners who have or have had family connections with Leytonstone. Soon after the first World War there was a population spread from East London boroughs to the then 'more affluent' areas of Forest Gate, Manor Park, Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone. I remember as a boy taking the tram from Stratford to visit two of my aunts who had moved to Leytonstone from Poplar. That was in the late 1920s, to which period some of the photographs relate. East Londoners occasionally enjoyed their "beanos" or outings to Epping Forest with occasional stops at 'The Green Man', 'The Thatched House', 'The Old Red Lion', all in the Leytonstone High Road. The selection of photographs in this booklet are varied and serve mainly to illustrate the development around the High Road which to most of us is Leytonstone.

The author and publisher is Chairman of the Woodford Historical Society, who has highlighted an area of considerable change and hopes that many will be able to share in a permanent record of these well-known locations as seen through the photographer's lens so long ago.

The book is obtainable from Peter Lawrence, 273 St. Barnabas Road, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 7DW.

A.H. French

Robert Williams. **Columbia Market**. Published by the author at 23 Airlie Gardens, Ilford, Essex IG1 4LB. £2 & p + p.

The author of this private publication is a specialist collector of market checks (tokens). These checks were issued by wholesale market traders as part of the deposit required for returnable containers (sacks, crates etc). Checks from the major London markets such as Billingsgate, Covent Garden, Borough and Spitalfields are numerous, but those from Columbia Market are very scarce (because the market was unsuccessful). This publication gives a brief history of the market, with a number of illustrations, the names of the traders who operated from Columbia Market and a listing of the known tokens (13 from 11 different issuers). The author's purpose, in this publication, aimed primarily at collectors of tokens (paranumismatica), is to encourage the discovery and publication of more specimens.

Phillip Mernick



Ann Bevan (late Taylor) in 1914, aged about one. This is one of the many fascinating photographs from the Island History Trust's production, *Memories of Childhood on the Isle of Dogs 1870 to 1970*. The photographs cover street life, individual portraits, family, group and school pictures as well as industrial and recreational activity on the Island. The accompanying text, skilfully edited by Eve Hostettler, consists of recollections of Islanders, among them Arthur French, a founder member of the East London History Society in 1952. At £7.50 it is the bargain of the year.



## SOME RECENT ITEMS RELATING TO EAST LONDON

### Books and booklets (excluding those reviewed)

- Beckman, Morris      **The 43 Group: the untold story of their fight against Fascism.** Centerprise Publications, 1992.
- Benn, Caroline      **Keir Hardie.** Hutchinson, 1992.
- Edwards, Brian      **London Docklands: Urban Design in the Age of Deregulation.** Butterworth, 1992.
- Emery, David      **Bobby Moore: A Tribute.** Headline, 1993.
- Kidner, R.W.      **The London Tramcar 1861-1952.** Oakwood Press, 1992.
- Lindsay, Paul      **The Synagogues of London.** Valentine Mitchell, 1993.
- Mander, David      **St. John at Hackney: the Story of a Church.** The Church, 1993.
- Matthews, Vane      **Welcome Aboard: the Story of the Seamen's Hospital Society and the Dreadnought.** Baron Birch, 1993.
- Murray, Ernest G.      **Tales of a Thames Lighterman.** Baron Birch, 1992.
- O'Day, Rosemary and David Englander      **Mr Charles Booth's Inquiry...Reconsidered.** Hambledon Press, 1993.
- Shapiro, Aumie and Michael (eds.).      **Jewish Londoners.** Springboard Education Trust, 1993.
- Shipley, Stan      **Bombadier Billy Wells.** Bewick Press, 1993.
- Simco, Terence J.(ed.)      **The Queen Victoria Seamen's Rest. Q.V.S.R. Mission,** 1993.
- Williams, Stephanie      **Docklands.** Phaidon, 1993.
- Articles**
- Alderman, Geoffrey,      'M.H. Davis: the rise and fall of a communal upstart' in **Jewish Historical Studies** 31, 1988-90
- Black, Gerry '      'The Struggle to establish the London Jewish Hospital' in **Jewish Historical Studies**, 32, 1990-92.
- Brown, Ian      'Community Links: hope and opportunity in the East End' in **London Society Journal**, 425, 1993.
- Foster, Janet      'Living with the Docklands Redevelopment: the Community View from the Isle of Dogs' in **London Journal** 17, 2, 1992.
- Hall, Ray & Philip E. Ogden      'The Social Structure of New Migrants to London

Docklands: Recent Evidence from Wapping' in **London Journal**, 17, 2, 1992

- Herbert, Michael      'One "Planning Disaster" after Another: London Docklands 1970-1992' in **London Journal**, 17, 2, 1992.
- Kushner, Tony      'A History of Jewish Archives in the United Kingdom' in **Archives** 20, 87, 1992.
- Kushner, Tony      'Jew and Non-Jew in the East End of London: towards an anthropology of "everyday" relations' in Geoffrey Alderman and Colin Holmes (eds.) **Outsiders and Outcasts: essays in honour of William J. Fishman.** Duckworth, 1993.
- Landon, T.L.G:      'The Landons: the first two hundred years - arrival, Spitalfields and onwards' in **Proceedings of the Huguenot Society**, 25, 4, 1992.
- Loewe, Raphael, and Malcolm Brown      'A "Minature Sanctuary" at Clapton House, 1781' in **Jewish Historical Studies**, 31, 1988-90.
- Naggat, Betty      'Old-clothes men: 18th and 19th centuries' in **Jewish Historical Studies**, 31, 1988-90.
- Porter, Stephen      'All Saints', Poplar: The Making of a Parish 1650-1817' in **London Journal**, 17, 2, 1992.
- Sainsbury, Frank      'Ham House Estate, Upton, West Ham and its People' in Kenneth Neale (ed.) **Essex Heritage.** Leopard's Head Press, 1992.
- Smith, Elaine      'Class, ethnicity and politics in the Jewish East End' in **Jewish Historical Studies**, 32, 1990-1992.
- Watson, Isobel      "'The Glorious Refuge": Refoming discharged prisoners in Shoreditch and Dalston' in **Hackney Terrier**, 31, 1993.

**Accessions received by Tower Hamlets Archives since September 1992:**

Accruing series of files relating to demolished buildings in Stepney Neighbourhood: early 1900s - to date. (TH/8510)

Admission registers and other records of George Green's School: late 19thc - 20thc. (TH/8514)

Records of Jones, Son and Day (auctioneers, Commercial Road) and the East London Licensed Victualliers and Beersellers Protection Association: 20thc. (TH/8516)

Journal of Fines kept by the Weights and Measures Office, Calvert Avenue, Bethnal Green: 1890 - 1965. (TH/8555)

Records of Latimer Congregational Church, Ernest Street: c.1724 - 1992. (TH/8561; unavailable at present due to damaged condition)

Ledgers of Limehouse Savings Bank: 1824 - 1896 (TH/8564)

Plans and Drawings of Victoria Park: 1989. (TH/8565)