

## EAST LONDON HISTORY SOCIETY

### PROGRAMME 1995-1996

Thursday 14 September	7.30pm	Plashet House, Stepney Causeway and Vallance Road - The Quaker Story in East London Edward H. Milligan
Thursday 19 October	7.45pm	The History of Blackwall Yard from 1615 to 1995 (illustrated) Ann Robey (Proceeded by A.G.M. at 7.15pm)
Thursday 16 November	7.30pm	Clement Attlee as leader of the Labour Party: keeping the party together. Peter Shore, M.P.
Monday 4 December	7.30pm	From the West Indies to the Wartime R.A.F. E. Martin Noble
Thursday 25 January	7.30pm	Morpeth Portman Place Higher Grade: From 3Rs to Universal Secondary education in a Bethnal Green School 1878 -1945 Frank Small
Thursday 14 March	7.30pm	Care beyond duty: the story of Edith Cavell. Margaret E. Crispin
Thursday 25th April	7.30pm	From Chippendale to Curtain Road - the development of the East London furniture industry (illustrated). David Dewing
Thursday 16th May	7.30pm	How we lived - memories and research on East London housing.

All talks are held at Latimer Congregational Church Hall, Ernest Street, E1. Ernest Street is between Harford Street and White Horse Lane, off Mile End Road (opposite Queen Mary and Westfield College). The nearest underground stations are Mile End and Stepney Green.

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 the Society publishes two newsletters a year and organises a programme of talks; it also arranges 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 CO 5AD.

**£2.50**

**ISSN 0 141 6286**



# EAST LONDON RECORD

No. 18

1996

## 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.

Back copies of the following issues of the *East London Record* are available:

Number 10 (1987) £1.50 plus 40p post and packing

Number 11 (1988) £1.80 plus 40p post and packing

Number 12 (1989) £1.90 plus 40p post and packing

Number 13 (1990) £1.90 plus 40p post and packing

Number 14 (1991) £2.10 plus 40p post and packing

Number 15 (1992) £2.25 plus 40p post and packing

Number 16 (1993) £2.25 plus 40p post and packing

Number 17 (1994) £2.50 plus 40p post and packing

These, and further copies of the present issue (£2.50 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, Newham Libraries and to authors for permission to reproduce photographs and to the following people for their help in producing the magazine: Mr H. D. Behr, Mr H. Bloch, Mr B. Canavan, Mrs D. Kendall, Mr C. Lloyd, Mr P. Mernick, Mr B. Snooks, Mrs R. Taylor and Mr H. Watton.

Cover illustration: Mr Joe Webster on the London to Guildford Royal Parcel Mail Service - see the article by his great grandson's wife on page 15.

# EAST LONDON RECORD

No. 18

1996

## CONTENTS

- 2 Childhood Days in Hackney and Abbey Lane  
George Berry
- 15 George Webster Ltd - Horse Contractors and Carmen  
Sue Winter
- 22 Agricultural Holdings, East and West Ham  
W. Bran Tyler
- 25 East London Schooldays  
Fred Wright
- 32 The Victory parade of 1946  
Doreen Kendall
- 35 Baynes Street, Whitechapel - Lost and Found  
Derek Morris
- 38 'Down the Ground' (Bow Cemetery)  
Bradley Snooks
- 41 Notes and News
- 43 Book Reviews: Ivy Alexander, Doreen Osborne, Ann Sansom,  
Rosemary Taylor, Diana Nicholson.

## CHILDHOOD DAYS IN HACKNEY AND ABBEY LANE

George Berry

I was born on 5th May 1921 in Well Street, Hackney, the first child of George and Ann Berry. We lived on the second floor of a three-floor plus sub area tenement building next door to the Frampton Arms Public House. In Frampton Park Road lived Nana - mother's mother - at No. 10 and opposite here was a nursery with glasshouses and where plants and flowers were sold from behind the wooden paling fence.

There were five or six tenement buildings in Well Street and one of them contained a leather work business. I liked the coloured trimmings dumped in the front garden and often grabbed a handful to take home.

Next came Percy Road, now gone. Its first building was a small shop, then the dairy, in the window of which was a large china milk tub, with floral decorations on the outside and dipping pot measures hanging round the top. Alongside the dairy was a covered yard with cows on straw in the stable. That was real fresh milk!

On the other side of Well Street were rather smarter houses right across to Victoria Park. Opposite Percy Road a short road, Kingshold, had the Northampton Arms pub on the corner and at the end was the Infants School I attended. It had a large high room with a brown velvet curtain on a rail across. We had slates to write on and teacher demonstrated how steam condensed into water on a slate. We shredded coloured material into cotton waste to clean our slates with. We had rest periods when we laid our heads on crossed arms but 'Face away from each other and not breathe on the next one's face'. I was nearly four years old then.

The 77 tram ran through that part of Well Street. Further down on the left was a fried fish shop, the Green Dragon pub and the South Picture House, at that time showing silent films - talkies came later. Here the trams turned right through Victoria Park to Mile End, but the continuation of the road we then called 'the narrow way'. Here on the left an old school was being used as a factory where I saw a metal press stamping out spoons. Just beyond was a pudding shop which sold amongst other things, hot Spotted Dick (steamed suet pudding with raisins) and Plum Duff (Yorkshire Puddings with raisins). I often had a piece of Plum Duff on the way home from shopping. The road then opened out to the Well Street market with shops and stalls.

I remember once when walking with mum and dad in 'the narrow way' we found a rocket firework and when we got home father set it off on the fire hob. It went whoosh up the chimney and the soot came tumbling down and smothered us and the room! Mother cried and father was very subdued as they cleaned up. Later on when the story was often told at parties, dad always said he thought it would be a dud!

My first brother was born in 1925 and we moved to the new Dagenham estate. We had a new house in a small banjo end of Comyns Road, south of Heathway Station. I remember it had a built-in 'copper', an iron tub with a brick surround with a fire hole under, for boiling the washing. The lamplighter came every evening on his bike carrying an eight foot pole to light the gas street lights. Every two or three days a man pushed an old type deep pram down the street, it had an 'A' shaped frame carrying about eight boxes of sweets on top with an oilcloth cover to keep the rain off. We children would eagerly look out for him.

That year started with a fine summer but this was followed by a very cold winter. I remember heavy snow falling and went to see a pit that had frozen over where some lads were sliding until a group of men came and cleared them off. They then smashed the ice all round the edge to keep people off as it was dangerous.

All this time father cycled to work near Hackney Downs and the bad weather became too much for him, so after about a year we moved to Speldhurst Road near South Hackney Church. When we had been there about a year my mother's aunt, Mrs. Rose Guthrie, who owned a grocers, sweets and general shop off the left side of Burdett Road, Mile End, (I think near Treby Street) set my parents up in a shop at 121 Abbey Lane, Stratford.

Father continued to go to work and mother ran the shop selling mainly cigarettes, sweets and soft drinks in bottles or by the glass. To dispense the soft drinks we had a Vantas machine. It was a ceramic tank base about twelve inches square and eight inches high with a ten inch diameter glass globe like a huge electric bulb on the tippable lid. Both were filled with water. Inside the tank was a plunger pump operated by a handle on the outside. Alongside was a carbon-dioxide gas cylinder with a tube to the spout on the tank. To operate, a measure of cordial - orange, lemon, blackcurrant or cola - was put in the glass which was then held under the spout. A short charge of gas with the handle on the cylinder and one revolution of the handle filled the glass with a third of a pint of fizzy drink. (Youngsters liked to see the bubbles going up into the globe as the water fed down to the tank).

After about a year mother employed Mrs. Chapman, a neighbour, to assist and from that time the shop expanded into groceries, etc. I remember along the counter were twelve jars of boiled sweets, in the window about eight boxes of sweets like liquorice sticks and tapes, sherbet dabs, farthing Trebor chews, liquorice allsorts, toffee and chocolate bars, lemonade powder, tiger nuts, peppermints and broken slab toffee, also lucky dip rocks. All these were mainly a halfpenny an ounce or each.

We sold cigarettes like Ardath, Black Cat, Craven A, Churchmans, Players or Medium and Gold Flake at 6d. for a packet of ten, 11½ for a packet of twenty. Weights or Woodbines were 5 for 2d or 10 for 4d. Packets of Nut Brown shag or Erinmore tobacco with A.G. cigarette papers to roll your own and Byrant and May or Swan Vestas matches.

The shop also stocked 'Patent Medicines' such as Aspro, Bile Beans, Carters Little Liver Pills, Beechams Pills, Iodine, Castor Oil, Olive Oil, Bandages, Sidlitz Powders, Gripe Water, Epicacuana Wine, Liquorice Linseed and Chlorodine tablets, Yellow Basilican Ointment, Senna Pods, and Phul Nana face powder. For groceries we had sugar, eggs, biscuits, bread, cakes, tea, sterilised milk, ham, flour, breakfast sausage, cheese, corned beef and tins of salmon, skimmed milk, fruit and baked beans. Sold loose were rice, split peas, barley, lentils, tapioca and macaroni. We also sold soda and Sunlight soap as well as shoe laces, razor blades, combs, hair pins, clips and slides. Many other items were available which helped to make corner shops such as ours a mecca for local housewives to indulge in a spot of gossip! Not that I ever listened. To have done so would have meant a clip round the earhole!

I was seven years old when we moved to Stratford and remember that opposite the shop was a high fence and gates to an allotment site, and mother had the keys. To the right was Three Mills School and playground, to the left was the City of London Sewer Pumping Station. Behind us was the Dexine Rubber Company. All these brought much needed custom to the shop as there were houses only on one side of the road. We had no passing traffic as beyond us the sewer pipes made a very low arch. Further along on the left was the Stratford Gas works with six nice sewer company houses opposite, then the road turned right. Here the surface was unmade and just sand to the toll house and toll gate. On the right of this road were strong railings with three large brick-lined water reservoirs behind. I think these were for the sewer works steam pumping engines; they had green weeds growing on top and a fig tree beside them for as long as I remember.

The other side of the road here was the grass covered earth bank of the Abbey Mills Channelsea River. The bank had a two foot high concrete cap



The toll gate at Abbey Mill. (From West Ham 1886-1986).

and facing on the water side. I think this capping was new, forming a path, because the year before we arrived (1928) the road was flooded and I had dreams of riding in a bath as other children told me they had done!

Beyond the toll gate the road turned sharp left with single storey building on the right. The left side corner was Hunts water mill, the wheel was behind a wall against the gate post and the mill building stretched over the race into Tongue Island. Beyond the island were lock gates on the main stream to pool the tidal water back to High Street and further; this would operate the mill but also maintained water depth to move coal barges under the aerial mono rail grab that transferred coal into the gas works. The rail went beyond the water to use coal trucks on the Stratford Market railway sidings.

Where the tail race came out from under the road opposite the mill, a boat quay was formed on the island side with a high bridgeway going across the road into the mill. A narrow bridge with heavy iron lattice work side frames went over the main stream. Next on the left was the blacksmith-farrier, then a dozen small terraced houses with the middle one a shop. On the other side was the West Ham Sewer Pumping Station. Abbey Road then went up the bridge over the low-level railway with the Abbey Gates Signal Box controlling the junction into Stratford Market sidings.

Vehicles were being charged at the toll gate until the war. I once saw Hunts Mill used about 1930 and the blacksmith was still there when we left in 1935. The West Ham Pumping Station still had the beam steam engine working in the 1960s.

The walkway on the river wall continued as a footpath between the gas works wall and the water on to the High Street, a section of the path had a rail track on heavy beams over it, supported on eighteen inch diameter iron pillars. I think this was for a crane to unload the coal barges before the overhead mono rail was installed.

On the other side of the High Street from the path was the Unlimitex Wireless and Electric shop and it was to here that I had the task of taking our exchange wireless accumulator to be charged every week. In their window I saw an example of the first television with the large valve and spinning disc with holes in it.

During those years the London Pumping Station had a lot of work done to change from the large beam steam engines to pumps driven by electricity.

Besides rubber the Dexine factory also made a hard kind of black plastic called Ebonite. I've seen this as small sheets and rods.

About a year after we came to Abbey Lane the allotments were closed down and the area became an open wasteland. On the left side was the pumping station, at the back was the Channelsea River and on the right was Three Mills School at the rear of which was a football pitch. This later became an unlicensed dog racing track. A couple of my mates and myself climbed in once. The hare was pulled round by a cord wound round a drum on the rear wheel of a propped-up old car and between each race the attendant walked the hare one and half times back round the track, then lined the cord into pulleys on the inside rails and the next race was then ready to start! There were more fights than races. We were found and thrown out, but the track only lasted about eighteen months.

Beyond the dog track was a pathway with clinker ash piled 20 foot high both sides. A group of us were playing and jumping down this ash when I remember one lad saying that a river was going to be cut through here one day and that's where the Prescott Channel by-pass cut was done a number of years later. Further back was the Distillery and Bonded Store, then the Three Mills Water Buildings.

The land had about 50 yards fronting on to Abbey Lane where Gay



An aerial view of the area to the south of Groves Bridge in the 'thirties'.  
(From *Fifty Years a Borough: the Story of West Ham*).

Road is now. On the left side an eight foot wide dyke went alongside the pumping station property and back under the road in a tunnel. I'd been told it went under our shop and as there was a ten foot wide brick breast-work on our side of the river bank and a smaller concrete one on the Livingstone Road side I think a stream must have gone right across at some time. Soon after the land was opened up this was blocked off near the road. A clinker ash path went by the dyke for a distance then turned away to pass an outbuilding of the pumping station. This triangle of land some 20 yards long by eight yards was covered with a layer of sterile red sand with some bits of small bone in it - I guess it was dredging from some sewer pipes.

Gambling for money was done on this plot and men played two games, Up the Line and Pieman. For the first one a line was scratched on the sand and the men stood eight foot back at another line and in turn tossed a halfpenny to the line, the nearest then spread the money on his hand and tossed them, picking up all the 'heads'. The one who had been the next nearest then took his turn and so on. Up to six played. For Pieman the men stood in a circle about ten foot in diameter with a 'banker' in the middle. The players put their bets at their feet and each in turn spread three halfpennies on his hand and tossed them while the banker called heads or tails. When the three halfpennies all fell one way the banker either collected or paid out. The calls went round the circle in turn and when there was a result the punter generally made another bet. At weekends I've seen as many as twenty men betting with halfcrowns and two bob pieces on the ground. Thinking now, Up the Line was a game of skill and Pieman was even chance betting. Both were illegal. Money value in those days was so different from today, a semi-skilled man would get about fifty shillings a week, a halfcrown was two and a half shillings and two bob was two shillings.

In the summer after the contract work had started the gambling groups were getting very big and one Sunday afternoon some chaps turned up with a football. They kicked it round for a little while, then the ball went towards the gamblers. The would-be footballers all chased after it among the gamblers and shouted 'We're police, you are all nicked' and grabbed a number of them while the rest scattered in all directions. Those who were caught were taken away in two Black Marias. I heard in the shop later that they had come up in front of a magistrate who had been the headmaster of most of them and he told them off like they were still schoolboys. They had 'let him down'; he thought 'he had taught them better' etc. etc. They were fined half a crown or five shillings each but were told that if they came up again they would be in 'real trouble'. The gambling did more or less cease on that spot but if anyone

came kicking a football the place cleared immediately.

On the right side of the land was a fence with the school alley behind; this gave access to the 'big boys' playground, as we weren't allowed in the girls and infants playground at the front of the school.

Two or three years after we had come to Abbey Lane contract work started on the allotment site. We cleared all that was left of the plot sheds, fences, etc., then a bulldozer scraped a banking about 15 yards in from the track. I think left of this was pumping station property. On the right side W.C. French Contractors set up a concrete pile making plant. A narrow gauge railway was laid from Bisson Road to the site. The piles were one foot square, pointed at one end and about 25 feet long. There were cement mixers on the site and a large crane on a track. The method used was with many wooden box moulds; reinforcing steel was fitted in and stiff tubes set across. It was then filled with concrete and allowed to set. There were hundreds of piles stacked up and over the years thousands must have been made. The piles were driven into the ground to form the river walls by a pile driver, which was a ten foot square platform on wheels with a coal fired vertical steam boiler at the rear. The steam engine revolved the cable drum through a hand lever operated clutch. On the front a vertical split column 30 foot high was supported by heavy wooden framing and the steel cable went from the drum over a pulley at the top. The method of operation was to attach the cable to a stud inserted in the top hole in the pile and pull it up the column. A long bolt was then passed through a hole and the slot in the column to hold the pile in position. The cable was then attached to the one ton iron driver block and it was pulled up over the pile and studs to guide it passed through the slot. The machine operator, by using the clutch repeatedly, raised the block about six feet and let it drop to drive the pile in. An iron cap on top of the pile was removed when it was the correct depth and set on the next one. The pile driver moved along about a foot and the whole process started again.

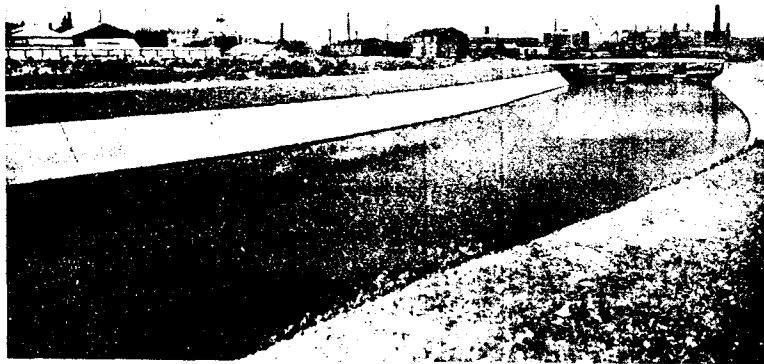
When about a hundred yards of piles were set in, the tops were broken a bit to show the reinforcing wire, shuttering was set along it and filled with concrete to form a stable wall. This was done on both sides of the river and the muck was then dug out from between, loaded into lorries and dumped on the wasteland from the Channelsea River bank nearly to Abbey Lane, a lot of it about twenty foot deep. The Channelsea originally had an earth river wall about twenty foot high with a dyke behind. This was now level ground.

The Prescott by-pass channel was made by this method but has an angled wall at the top, probably because of the unstable 'made' ground beside it.

If my figures are correct, as the Prescott Channel - Three Mills Wall and Bow Back rivers were made or remade by this method, over 20,000 piles were used.

The bridge (St. Michaels?) originally at the top of Abbey Lane was a single span stone one with a two track road. The new Groves Bridge is very much bigger because some streams were rerouted to go under it and it carries a much wider road. On the opposite corner of the lane was an old school being used as a factory.

While the Sewer Pumping Station was still under steam the coal came in barges that were moored at a quay on the down side of the sewer arch over the Channelsea River just by the storm-water outlets. Two men shovelled the coal into a three foot deep by three foot diameter iron tub. A steam crane on tracks lifted the tub and it was tipped into a narrow gauge rail truck. The crane then returned the tub to the barge and lifted the filled other one. When half a dozen rail trucks were full they were pulled round under the bridge of the river wall footpath to rail points that fed them to one of six tracks. These ran on a level bed over eight brick tunnels going across to the boiler house. The coal was tipped from the trucks down through trapdoors into the tunnels where it was barrowed into the stoke house when needed. At the outside of the tunnels was a roadway running parallel with the sewer banking with



The channel at Millmeads. (from *Fifty Years a Borough*).

gates to Abbey Lane for road delivery but I never saw this used.

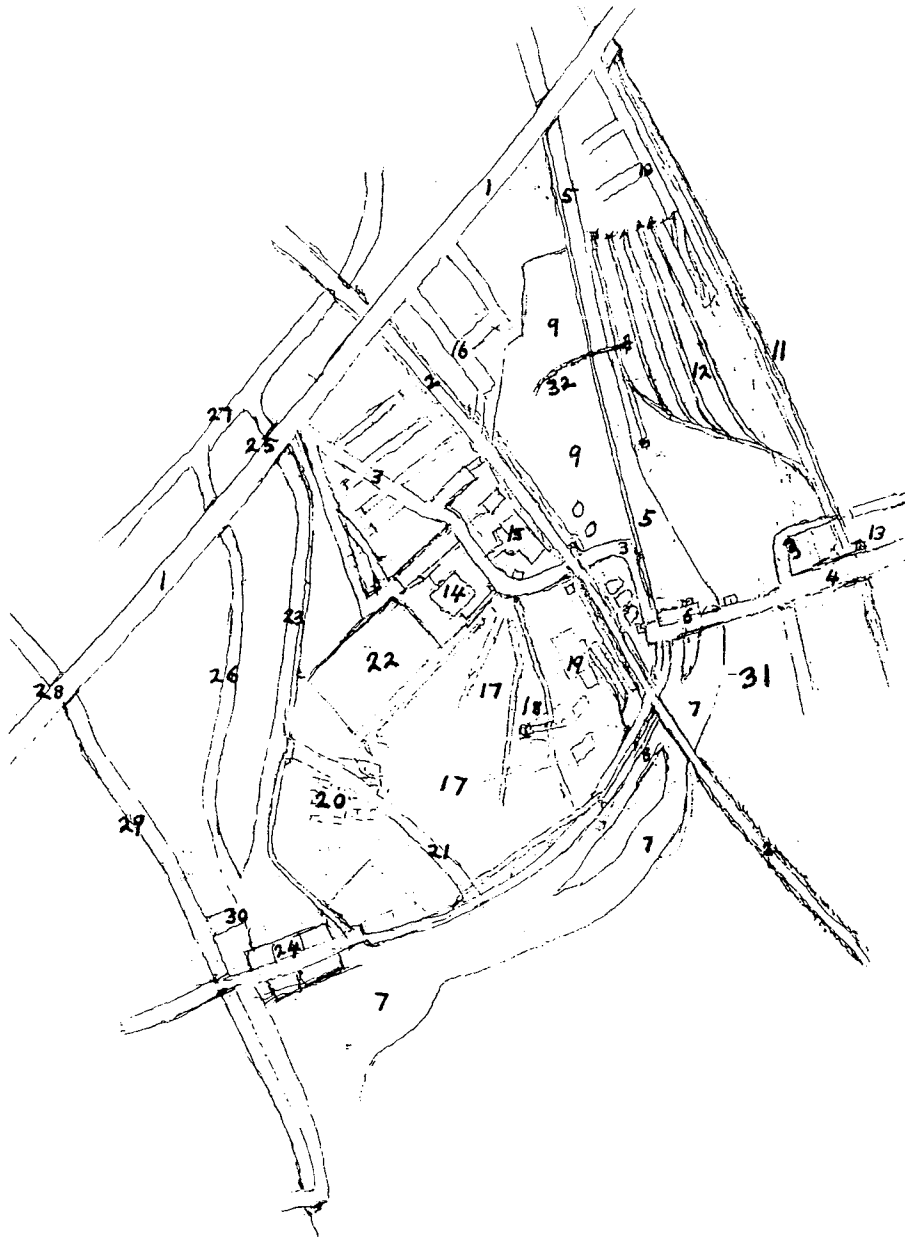
Inside the gates a fine large house was the home of the chief engineer, a Mr. Bayliss. As an eight year old I was friends with his son Colin and one time with my brother we went along the roadway, through a very dirty tunnel to the clean boiler house with five eight foot diameter boiler ends in the wall facing. Two men were shovelling coal into one of them and an elderly man at a table in the corner called us, gave us a drop of tea from his mug, said we should not be there as it was dangerous, and showed us up the stairs and out the door! I'm sorry now that I never saw the beam steam engines. (All figures are as near as I remember.)

The first thing I remember when we arrived at the shop was having a Fry's Chocolate Cream Bar, a name I knew from a shop in Well Street. I had a fairy cycle and my first contact with the other local kids was selling rides for cigarette cards. When I told mother she made me give them all back and said I was never to take things off them again. This was good advice and I always got on well with them afterwards.

With almost no street lights at all, here are some of the games we played and things we did. Marbles in the gutter: two players bowled glarmies (3/4 inch diameter multi-coloured glass balls) one after the other in turn. When one struck the other paid him one clay marble. In 'Cherry Ogs', one lad sat with his back to the wall and legs apart with a wood screw standing on its head between, the other knelt at the kerb and thumb-flicked cherry stones to try and knock it over. If he did he won the screw, the other kept the stones and after a time they changed about. (Seasonal, as was the game of Conkers.) Cricket was played with a home made bat and a lamp post as wicket. When young we had whipping tops and spinning peg tops, sometimes for knocking others out of a ring as a competition game.

'Release' was a game played with two teams of about six and the jail was between the lamp post and the fence. The captors had to catch the free man and tap him on the head three times; he could resist by holding two hands on his head. The captors went in two's so a catch meant a wrestling match. When the captive was tapped he went to jail guarded by two captors but would be released if one of his side could get through past the lamp post and touch him yelling 'Release'. This was usually done at a mad dash.

'Tippy Cat' was played with two six inch pieces of fire wood and a three foot stick; one piece was laid across the other, you then struck the up end with the stick. The piece flipped up and you swiped it hard and made



The key to the author's sketchmap is on page 13.

your run. This game never lasted long because some adult would always come out and shout about breaking windows or knocking somebody's eye out.

When it rained a dry play area was under the sewer arch, about fifty foot square with two thirds on dirt ground. The girls and youngsters played 'Mothers and Fathers' by marking out the rooms on the dirt. I recall one time when they had wooden boxes for tables and chairs. I think this must have been near firework night as we used to 'badge' stuff on the sewer banking for the bonfire.

The sewer banking was a good play area, the Dexine works backed onto it and through an open window I saw hot rolling mills - two eighteen inch diameter rollers four foot wide. The rubber round one roller started as ginger crepe; as it spread the operator trimmed the edge and fed it back in. It finished as black sheet.

We had pieces of corrugated iron sheet which, when pushed through the railings and pulled round to turn up one end, made fine sledges. Taken to the top of the bank, it was a nice forty foot slide down!

As a gang we sometimes had 'brick fights' (throwing stones across the sewer walkway) with a group from Livingstone and Stanley Roads but these usually stopped for a while after the Headmaster read 'the riot act' at assembly in school on Monday morning.

- 1 Stratford High Street
- 2 Northern Outfall Sewer
- 3 Abbey Lane
- 4 Abbey Road Bridge
- 5 Abbey Mill Channelsea River piped and drained 1980s to Mill lock.
- 6 Abbey Mill. Tonge Island, Hunts Mill.
- 7 Channelsea River.
- 8 Pumping Station coal quay
- 9 West Ham, Stratford Gas Works.
- 10 Stratford Wholesale Fruit Market
- 11 N. Woolwich Low Level Railway.
- 12 Market Railway Sidings
- 13 Abbey Gates Signal Box
- 14 Three Mills School
- 15 Dexine Rubber Company
- 16 Livingstone and Stanley Roads

- 17 Allotments
- 18 Gambling
- 19 City of London Sewer Pumping Station
- 20 Clinker Ash dump before 1930
- 21 Prescott Channel By-pass made 1932
- 22 Football Pitch, later dog track, closed 1931.
- 23 Three Mills Wall River, remade wider after 1930
- 24 Three Mills water mills.
- 25 Groves Bridge built much bigger after 1930
- 26 Stream filled in after 1930
- 27 Back River Waterworks River
- 28 Bow Bridge
- 29 Lea Canal
- 30 Lea Canal Weir
- 31 West Ham Sewer Pumping Station
- 32 Mono rail



Some of us had fun at times riding round hanging on the backs of lorries but I stopped doing this when our woodwork teacher lectured us on the dangers of this activity and said anyone found doing it would get a severe caning. I think he had seen a sad result of this dangerous game.

The wholesale fruit market was a short street by Stratford Market Station. It had a high railway wall one side and poor run-down open shops on the other side with a couple of very short side streets to the cut (Abbey Mill Channelsea river). These had some houses and flats. A gang of about six of us thought it was good fun to go down the market making a lot of noise, collect some fruit from the gutter and a main banana stalk each. These were about three feet long and two to three inches in diameter. When we turned at the private railway market gates we had to fight our way out against a group of kids from the side streets. This happened three times during the holidays but the last time the shopkeepers yelled at us - threatened us - and said they would call the police, so we gave that up.

I suppose I was a dedicated hooligan but with some justification, as a few years later most of my mates were fighting and some even dying for their country. I hope the heavy physical activity and struggle for survival was of some help in those times.

By 1935 I had started work, all the contract work was finished and money was short. The Dexine company who owned the property wanted to expand and my youngest brother was born so mother gave up the shop and we moved to Hornchurch where my life style changed completely. I started work in the Roneo Duplicator factory.

#### Postscript

During the war my brother and I were cycling across Hackney Marshes when an air raid started. We climbed into the rubbish dump at the end of Quarter Mile Lane to watch a bomber that had been hit come down in the direction of Leytonstone, when a string of bombs started falling over to our right. Separate clouds of smoke and debris shot into the air, then a great ball of orange fire floated up, got smaller and then disappeared as a mere wisp of smoke. I suggested to my brother that it had been a gasometer that had been hit. In the 1970s I visited Abbey Lane and saw where a bomb had struck under the corner of the sewer arch and smashed two of the sewer pipes. The support wall was damaged and the pipes repaired. Across the road one of the gasometers had gone with just the base remaining. I often wonder if this was the explosion we had seen.

## CHARLES WEBSTER LTD - HORSE CONTRACTORS AND CARMEN 1865 - 1930

Sue Winter

One of my first memories of being taken by my husband to visit his mother, before we were married, was of a large picture that hung over her fireplace. I was later to learn that this was a painting of the London to Guildford Royal Parcel Mail coach and that the driver was my mother-in-law's grandfather, Charles Joseph Webster known as Joe Webster.

My mother-in-law was very proud of this painting and of her family's connections with the Royal Parcel Mail service. Now, some years after her death, I have been doing some research into the Webster family and the prosperous business of horse contractors and carmen that they ran in the latter part of the last century and early this century operating from East London.

The first business was started by Richard Charles Webster, known as Charles Webster, in the 1860s, when he was operating as a carman from his home address of 85 Campbell Road, Bow. Richard Charles was born in 1826 in Cable Street in Whitechapel and although his father, Robert, was in the Royal Navy working his way up through the ranks of First Mate and Captain, the family were probably of quite humble origins. An intriguing family story is that 'the old sea captain' was garrotted on the London Docks.

Richard Charles and his wife Eliza started their married life at 8 Devons Road before moving to Campbell Road. Richard Charles had previously worked as a horse driver for Beigers Starch Manufacturers in Bromley but through his own efforts of hard work and ambition he bought his own horses and vehicles and started a family business that was to continue for another sixty or more years. By the time that Richard Charles started his business in the mid 1860s, his four sons were old enough to start working with their father. Their education had been rudimentary, having attended a dames school in Ratcliff Highway at a cost of 6d a week. But they had a thirst for knowledge and were all well read. Each son had his own gift and speciality to add to the ever expanding business.

Charles Francis (Charles), born in 1849, had the financial flair to buy and sell to the advantage of the business. One of Charles's foibles was that in all his deals of buying and selling he assessed their worth in gold sovereigns and never in pounds. John William (Jack), born in 1850, was a four-in-hand driver and carman. Jack died in 1880 from severe injuries caused when a one



**The yard at Campbell Road, Bow, about 1878.**

horse van ran over him on the street. Henry Robert (Harry), born in 1852, was mechanically minded and in charge of the business's vehicles; Harry was an artist and musician and adventurous enough to get himself up in a balloon with aeronaut Spencer in the 1870s. Francis George (Frank), born in 1854, was devoted to the hundreds of horses owned by the firm, on one occasion buying horses for the company from Vienna which were taken off his hands at a profit before they could even be shipped across the Channel. Brothers Charles and Frank were great four-in-hand coach drivers and both were well known for their share in its revival around the turn of the century. The last Snaresbrook to Harlow pleasure stage coach in 1909 ran at a loss to their pockets but Charles and Frank gained much satisfaction in driving it. Included in their day to day work was the driving of their horse teams from the docks hauling bales of wool that had come from Australia on wool clipper ships. The family was living at 85 Campbell Road and in the yard next to the house were employed van builders, harness makers, blacksmiths, wheelwrights and horse keepers. In the yard stood a water trough and the gilt gates that had been acquired from the opening ceremony of the Blackwall Tunnel.

Following Richard Charles's death in 1887 his three sons, Charles, Harry and Frank continued the business that their father had started. The business flourished and in early 1890 the Webster brothers became the contractors for horse and vehicles to the Post Master General for two routes, London to Guildford and London to Colchester. In 1893 the London to Colchester parcel service contract was raised from £2,306 to £2,750 per annum to enable Messrs Webster to provide a fourth horse for each stage of the journey, London to Chelmsford and Chelmsford to Colchester. The driver for the London to Guildford route was Charles's eldest son Charles Joseph (Joe), my husband's great grandfather.

In 1895 the Webster brothers registered their business as a limited company know as Charles Webster Limited. Up until then they had been trading from 85 Campbell Road in Bow; now the registered offices of this new company were at 279 Whitechapel Road, later known as 6 Whitechapel Road where were also livery stables, coach house and a dwelling house that Charles Webster used during the week. The Whitechapel building was very tall and offered a wonderful view over London from it's roof. The famous Crystal Palace could be seen in the distance. Van boys employed by Charles Webster Limited in 1898 were earning a weekly wage of 5 shillings. At this time the company owned four hundred vehicles and over six hundred horses that were stabled all over London. The one hundred and six horses used for the London to Colchester route were stabled at the Royal Mail Yard in Highbury and the ninety-nine horses used on the London to Guildford route were stabled at Victory Place in Walworth. Other horses were stabled at Bow, Whitechapel, Mile End, Great Garden Street and Chigwell. The Guildford Mail Coach would be returned to the yard at Campbell Road or Bromley for repairs. One of the original coaches with its wheels taken off was used as a summer house for Harry's children to play at 94 Campbell Road.

Harry and Frank, managing directors of the new company, continued to live in Campbell Road whilst Charles, the chairman, lived over the company's offices in Whitechapel, returning each weekend to his young family at Home Farm in Chigwell. Home Farm had been acquired by the company and was a farm where sick horses were sent to recuperate.

Charles was the first of the Webster family to move out of Bow but left behind many members of the family still living in and around Campbell Road, Devons Road and the neighbouring streets. Richard Charles's brother Robert Webster and his son Robert, 'old Bob and young Bob', were plumbers operating from Devons Road and in later years Robert junior's son was carrying on the family business in Rounton Road. In 1901 a Coronation Dinner to celebrate

the coronation of Edward VII was given for hundreds of local poor folk. Frank was the chairman of a committee formed and the Webster family all joined in to help with this event, except for the children who had a good view of the proceedings from their back garden wall! Everything was donated free by the prosperous locals even down to stoneware jugs for the beer made at Brains Potteries that were adjacent to the Bromley yard premises. A canvas roofing was made for the celebration that covered the whole of the length of Tomlins Grove and a theatrical drop scene at the Bow Road end which depicted 'Old Temple Bar'.

When further capital became necessary in 1899 a new company known as Charles Webster (1899) Limited bought out Charles Webster Limited. By now the company owned almost nine hundred horses. One of the largest stables was at Furze Street in Bromley which stabled up to three hundred horses on two floors and, similar to two other of the company's stables, many of the horses really did go upstairs to bed! It was at this site that the job master's side of the business was conducted, together with a carriage factory for the building and maintenance of light carriages. The factory was of such a height that an outside lift was installed to move the carriages up and down the several floors.

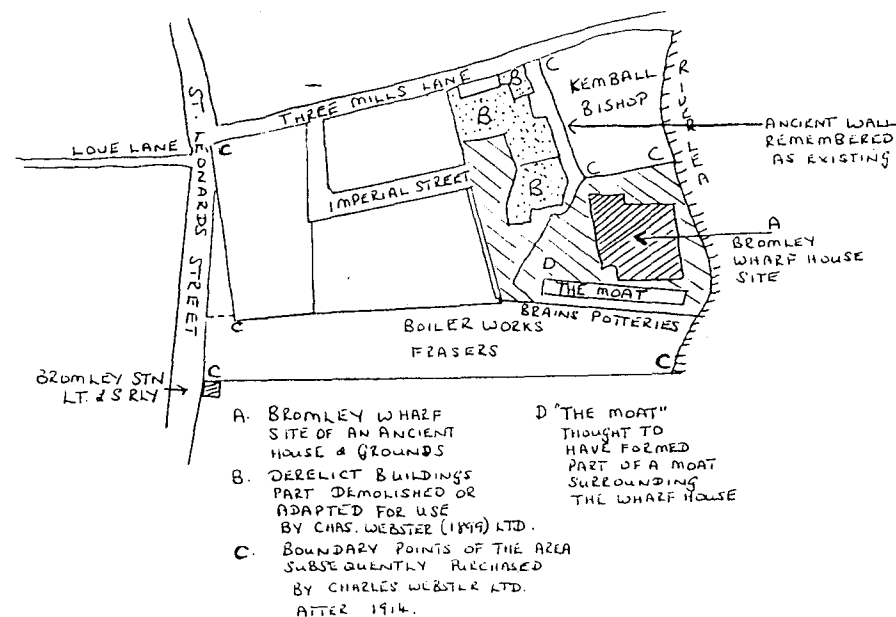
Horses from the company were used for many of the contracts that Charles Webster (1899) Limited had. Brooke Bond Tea Company used magnificent turnouts of giant chestnuts, the City of Westminster used cart horses for refuse collection, L CC Fire Brigade used iron greys and Staines Reservoir Construction used tip carts and horses. Other contracts included Anglo American Oil Company, Bearmans of Leytonstone, Bergers Paints, Bryant & May, Lever Brothers and numerous soft goods firms in the City and around St. Paul's Churchyard used travellers broughams.

A severe blow was dealt to the company in 1908 when the Post Master General terminated the contracts for the horses and vehicles on the London to Colchester and London to Guildford Parcel Mail Service. During this period all contracts were under review as motor transport was proving cheaper to run than horse and coach. Total payment under the Webster contract at this time was £25,000 a year but was the least remunerative of all the contracts for the London Mail Cart Services. Messrs Webster were not in a position to compete with motor transport, their tender for horses being higher than their rivals and the Post Master General awarded the contracts elsewhere. This immediately caused unemployment for over six hundred horses and vehicles. There then followed a strike of all the company's drivers for an increase in pay which brought the company to a standstill until they were forced to agree

to demands of an extra 2 shillings per week. The strike threatened the supply of petrol for the limited number of petrol-driven vehicles and to alleviate the situation Frank loaded as many two gallon cans of petrol into a Landaulet as it could hold and, with his son driving, they drove down Imperial Street to the gates of the Bromley yard to meet the strikers' pickets. It was with great relief that they were allowed to pass through.

By 1913 such a decline had occurred in the Webster business that a notice of liquidation was served. Possibly the later troubles could have been overcome if the brothers had been less horse minded and more able to make the transition of the business to the motor car era. Out of the ruins of Charles Webster (1899) Limited, Charles Webster, together with his friend and next door neighbour Sir James Roll at Cambridge Park in Wanstead, financed a new company called Charles Webster Limited. Sadly, this was a parting of the ways for the brothers and the business that had been founded some fifty years previously by their father. Harry and Frank, whose prime interests had been in horses and vehicle maintenance, had no part in Charles's new venture.

**Imperial Wharf premises, Bromley-by-Bow (traced from plan included in L.C.C. Survey of 1900).**



The new company of Charles Webster Limited was now chiefly centred on the Imperial Wharf premises in Bromley by Bow, which became the new head office. This property had previously been bought from the Imperial Chemical Company (now ICI) and the site covered many acres with extensive derelict buildings that were reconstructed into stabling, workshops and a large fodder plant to supply the needs of the hundreds of horses stabled throughout London. When fire burnt out the forage plant, temporary engines and chaff cutters had to be brought in from Home Farm in Chigwell so that production could start again in one of the derelict buildings. Also in operation was an extensive wharf on the Bow Canal which was used by Charles's private haulage business. Charles Livings was the lighterman in charge of the company's barges and of the iron barge 'London' which was engaged in bringing maize, oats and foreign hay to the chaff cutting plant at Bromley. Shortly after the purchase of this new company the offices at 6 Whitechapel Road were sold for around £33,000 to Buck and Hickman Limited, tool manufacturers. Prior to this, horse auctions sales had been held in the yard of 6 Whitechapel Road.



Charles Francis Webster.

I am told by the surviving grandchildren of Charles Webster that he made two fortunes and lost both! Certainly he made his money in the selling of horses to the Government during the First World War. By the outbreak of the 1914 war the War Office representatives in Bromley were selecting the horses that they required from the company of Charles Webster Limited. About two hundred horses were requisitioned. In Charles's usual astute manner he countered this by purchasing an entire shipment of horses from South America and these he temporarily stabled in a disused London General Omnibus Company stable near Bow Bridge.

Sir James Roll's involvement with the company was purely financial but that, and being a one time neighbour of Charles Webster, was the beginning of a life-long friendship. As chairman of Pearl Assurance, Sir James Roll duly became Lord Mayor of London and Charles Webster attended many City functions with his friend, which could have only helped his own business interests in the City. They were both keen four-in-hand coach enthusiasts, freemasons and members of the Pickwick Coaching Club and the National Sporting Club. One of Charles's contacts from the Sporting Club was Winston Churchill, whom he drove electioneering four-in-hand when contesting the Epping Division.

Charles, together with his sons ran the company; sons and daughters alike were major shareholders in their father's new company. After the termination of the Post Office contracts, Joe, the eldest son, now no longer driving the London to Guildford Parcel Mail Service, was put in charge of Challis, a business that was bought by his father, Charles. Challis, a meat carrying and distributing company operating from Smithfield Market, was managed by Joe and his sons, one of which was my husband's grandfather, David George Webster. This meant that four generations of Websters had been involved in the family's numerous businesses.

Charles Webster Limited passed out of existence in 1930 when the company was finally wound up and following the death in 1925 of Charles Webster. But even today, those few still alive that remember, remember with pride their family's connections with horse transport in and around London.

## AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS, EAST AND WEST HAM 1941-43

W. Bran Tyler

When Britain went to war in September 1939 the country was faced with the need to increase food production as there was no certainty that food and fertilisers could be imported at prewar levels. Under Defence (General) Regulation 49 the government was empowered to set up County War Agricultural Executive Committees. These Committees directed a plough-up campaign so that previous grassland areas could be prepared for cultivation. In June 1940 the government was so concerned about food production that they instituted a nation wide farm survey to ascertain what land could be converted from grass to arable land. The national survey was designed to assess the ability of farms and farmers to play their part in increasing the food supply during the war. To this end land which had never previously been arable was to be brought into cultivation.

The individual farm record of the survey is made up of four returns : a return of 4 June 1941 showing details of small fruit and vegetables; this was completed by the farmer; a return of 4 June, by the farmer, of agricultural land; a return, also made by the farmer, of labour employed, rent, length of tenancy and motive power; finally a farm survey of the land by outside inspection. The survey was begun in 1941 and completed in 1943.

At that time the present Newham consisted of the County Boroughs of East and West Ham. The records confirm the urban nature of the area. They show that there were six holdings in West Ham and two for East Ham. The holdings were:

### WEST HAM

Mrs E A Brett 161 Seyes Rd E 16, owned by East Ham Council.

District Estate Manager c/o London Midland and Southern Railway.

C Newman 11 Vincent St Canning Town, known as Newman Fields, owned by Beckton Gas Works.

Mrs R E Cannon 112 Western Rd E 13.

Ursuline Convent Upton Forest Gate.

J W Higg and Son 43 Woodfield Rd, Leigh on Sea

### EAST HAM

G Beddall Manor Way Farm, Beckton E6, owned by the Port of London Authority.

Mr J Burns 2 Plevna St New Beckton E6, known as Cypress Place, owned by East Ham Council.

Farms were classified as either A, B, or C. The classification of the 1940 survey originally related to the physical condition of the farm but was later widened to include farm management: *A* meant well managed, *B* was fair management and *C* badly managed. Not all the establishments in the surveys were categorised.

Mrs Brett was classified C on the grounds of 'lack of experience in farming'.

C Newman was classified as B. He had 'other interests' and the land was adjoining the gas works and 'slag and chemicals spoil grazing, man keeps pigs only' and was not used for agricultural purposes.

Mr Beddall was classified C due to old age, lack of capital and management purposes.

Mr Burns of Cypress place was classified A

Of the non categorised holdings J W Higgs of 'Three Pines' Great Wheatleys Rayleigh had land at 471 Romford Rd of only 3 1/4 acres; Ursuline Convent of 3 acres; R E Cannon 3 acres; the railway 10 acres.

Higgs grew: 3/4 acre of strawberries

1/4 acre of raspberries

1/4 acre of gooseberries

1/4 acre of potatoes

1 3/4 acre of orchards

he also kept 51 chickens and owned a horse.

The convent had 3 acres of grazing land.

R E Cannon grew; less than 1/4 acre of potatoes and swedes and had 1/2 acre of clover for grazing, 1 1/2 acres of grass for hay, 1 acre of grazing land. He kept 85 chickens and a goat.

The railway had 10 acres of grazing land.

Mrs Brett farmed 27 acres of which 23 acres of marsh land was grazing land and 4 growing mangolds. She had 24 cows, 54 pigs and 40 chickens. She employed two men and was also a cafe proprietor.

Newman's Field consisted of 2 acres of grazing land. He had 154 pigs, 40 chickens, 6 geese, 4 turkeys and a goat. He employed 2 male casual workers.

G Beddell of Manor Way Farm was the largest holding. There were 50 acres of which 1 1/2 was for turnips and swedes, 2 1/2 mangolds, 1 kale, 16 for vegetables, 16 for hay. He kept 19 cows, 152 pigs, 6 turkeys, 14 geese, 12 ducks and 65 chickens. There was a 28 horse power Fordson and a horse and assisted by one girl and two men in the family. This was then a sizeable market garden.

Mr Burns was also a dealer and had 4 acres for hay and 3 1/2 acres for grazing.

The returns give information on rents and lengths of tenancies.

HOLDINGS	RENT	TENANCY
Ursuline	No information	no information
R E Cannon	£1.3.0 (1.15p)	2 1/2 years
Mrs Brett	£32.	32 years
Railway	£15	20 years
Newman's Field	£12.16 (£12.80p)	20 years
Manor Way Farm	£118.50p	37 years
J W Higgs	No information	1 year
Cypress Place	£13.38p	24 years.

NOTE

Public Record Office, references MAF/32/859/8 (West Ham) and MAF/32/837/3 (East Ham.)

## EAST LONDON SCHOOLDAYS

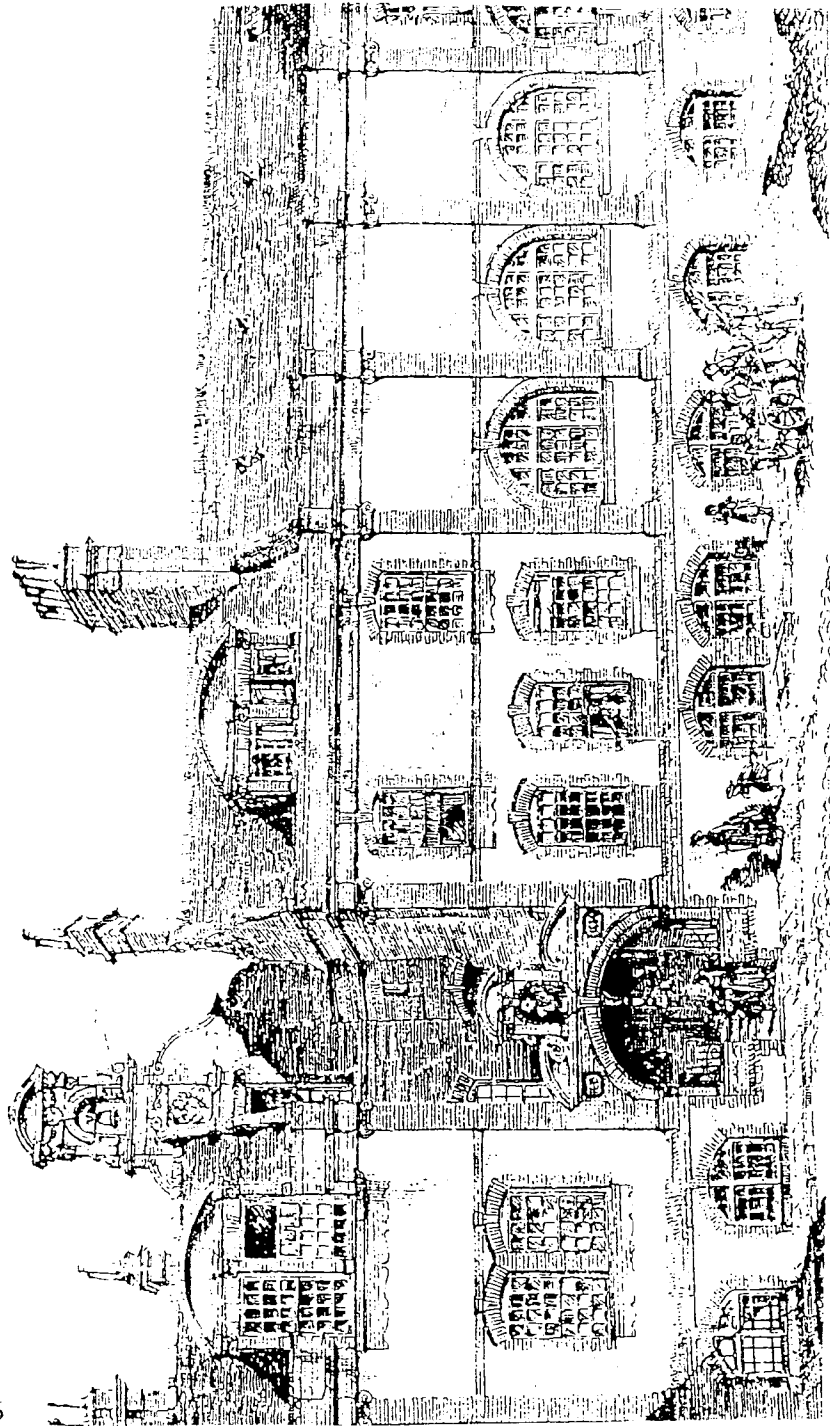
Fred Wright

I was born in June 1913 and the accounts of my family's schooldays in East London schools are taken from *A Book of Wrights and Buckleys* (privately published 1994 - there is a copy in the Tower Hamlets Local History Library in Bancroft Road).

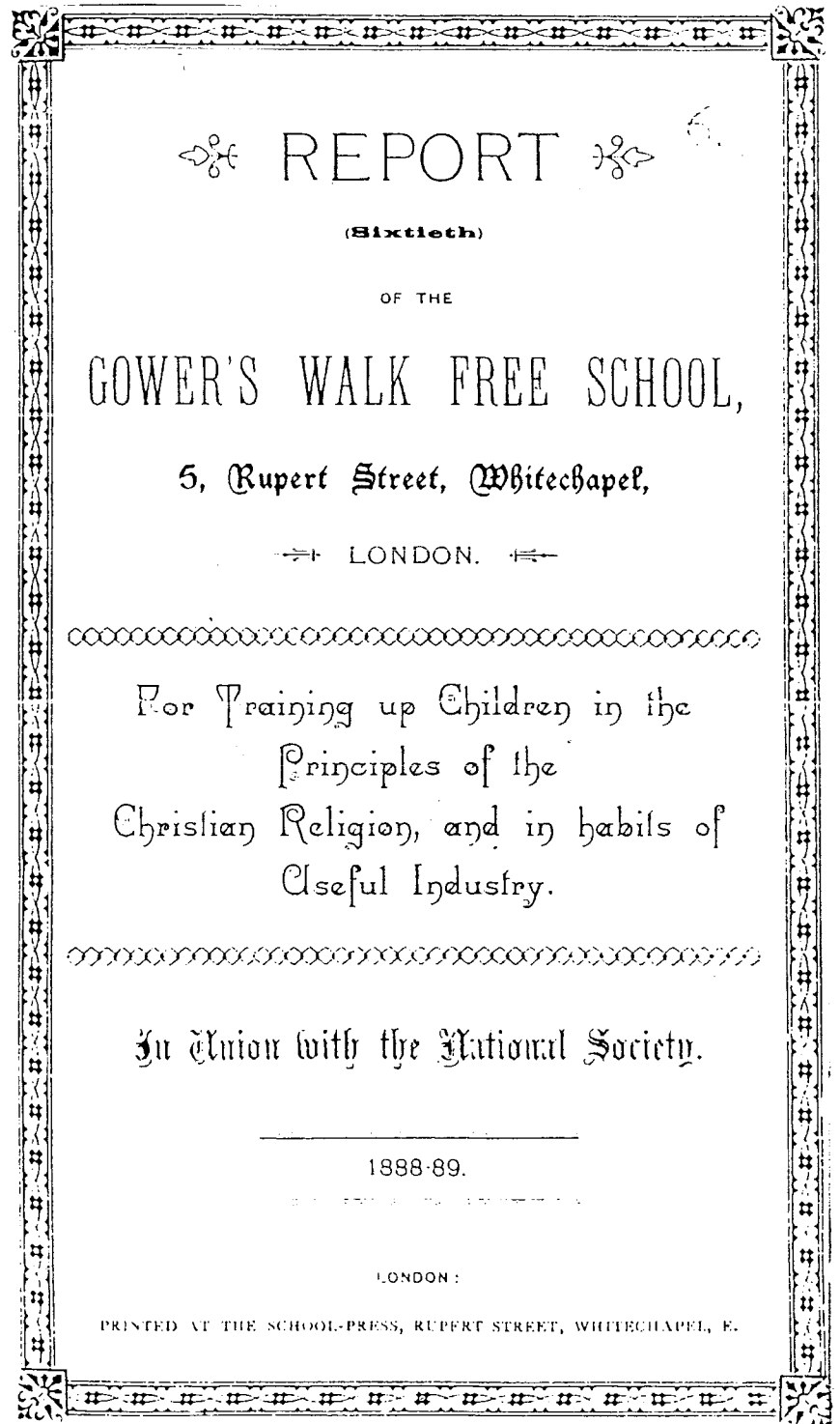
James, our father, attended a kind of school that was different in many ways and was undoubtedly the most fortunate as far as useful instruction went. How his enrolment at Gower's Walk was managed is not known but his attendance there from roughly 1892 to 1897 and the skills he learned there certainly stood him in good stead in after life.

The Gower's Walk Free School was founded in 1806 by William Davis in the street of that name situated off the Aldgate end of Commercial Road with the Proof House of the Gunmakers Company at its head. It was established and endowed by Davis for boys of poor parents with the aim... 'For training up children in the principles of the Christian religion and the habits of useful industry'. At first they were taught to read and write and to do simple arithmetic but so well was the school received that in the next year it was decided to include girls and teach some practical skills whereby the pupils could earn a living when they left the school. So printing was introduced for the boys and sewing and book binding for the girls. I have a copy of an annual report of the school dated 1888 and that gives the information that the average number of scholars was 91 boys and 61 girls. Of the boys ... 'twenty one have entered the printing trade'.

The report itself is shown as being printed by the school. The teaching staff consisted of two people with a supervisor in overall charge. The boys were taught by Mr. Kirke who received an annual salary of £108 and the girls by Miss Crowe whose salary was £70 per annum. The school at the time of the report was situated in Rupert Street and a matter mentioned helps to date the move and the reason for it. The London Tilbury and Southend Railway had built a large warehouse in Gower's Walk alongside the school and shut out their light and a court case was in progress to claim compensation for this deprivation. So sometime before 1888 the school moved from Gower's Walk to Rupert Street. In any case so successful was the school and so industrious were the pupils that work by hand had to give way to machinery and bigger premises were required. As a consequence a larger school was built in Lambert Street, which ran parallel with Rupert Street. (It is worth noting that, while being a charity itself, the school was in the secure financial position of being



Gower's Walk Free School in 1885 (from *The Builder*).



able to make two donations in that year -£5 to The Destitute Childrens Dinner Society and £20 to the London Hospital).

This new school included a workshop and more staff were required to instruct the pupils and to conduct an expanding business. Eventually the commercial aspect dominated at the expense of education and after several changes the establishment became highly commercial, trading under the name of The Metropolis Press. That our father benefitted by his time there is without doubt as, apart from the war years, he was seldom out of a job and finally conducted his own business but he could not have been apprenticed since, soon after leaving the school, he took the trip to Australia.

As for his sons, only Jimmy, the eldest, followed him into the printing industry. His schooling started while the family were resident in Kitchener Road, Walthamstow. He was put in the infants class at Chapel End School in Beresford Road as was brother George later. On a recent visit to Kitchener Road I found the school building to be still there but no longer used as a school. It was built in 1900 and has a certain architectural merit in as much as it has been designated as a listed building and up to the time of my visit no decision seems to have been made as to what use to put it to. When the family returned to Canning Town both Jimmy and George carried out their schooling at Gainsborough Road School, West Ham. This was a fairly new school built by the West Ham Council and opened in 1912 for 1500 pupils, accommodated in two blocks comprising a Senior School and a Junior School - in school parlance - 'Big Boys' and 'Girls and Infants'.

There was also a craft centre and shower baths. This last feature was indeed a revolutionary innovation for, up to then, no thought had been given to the personal hygiene of pupils. Ailments and infection caused by bad housing conditions and inattention to children's cleanliness were dealt with by infrequent examination by the school nursing service. The family had cause to remember these showers inasmuch as Jimmy slipped over in them and suffered a gashed leg below the knee and carried an ugly scar for the rest of his life. Both boys did well there and both reached the exalted position of being elected schools captains.

The school had fairly adequate playgrounds but it also had the advantage of being built on an extensive open space. This was The Memorial Grounds. In my recollection it was a large open area that seemed to belong to no one and on which anybody could play all sorts of games and pastimes. I recall the belief that prize fights were once held there. Its history is worth recording. The land originally belonged to a family called Bull. In April 1897 Arnold Hills, who was President of The Thames Iron Works, bought it for £19,000.

He had it laid out for various sports clubs for his workers and as a memorial of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Among the facilities was a cycle track for serious cycle racing - amateur and professional. His football team, which later evolved into the famous 'Irons' - the West Ham United Football Club, played on the Memorial Ground until they moved to The Boleyn ground in Upton Park in 1904.

In 1912 The Thames Iron Works closed and the whole estate was sold through Hills' attorney to a Mr. Frank Pearce, a solicitor, for the sum of £12,000. In May 1914 Pearce sold most of the land to West Ham Council for £10,000. The Council gave it the title of 'The Memorial Recreation Grounds'. Some allotment holders on the grounds were dispossessed but were offered alternative sites. In March 1915 Pearce sold the remainder of the estate to the L.M.S. railway for £8,000. During the First World War the site was occupied by the War Department and the Recreation Ground was not finally opened until 29 May, 1924 when the ceremony was performed by The Mayor, Alderman Jack Jones, who was one of our two local M.P.'s. The land that belonged to the railway was eventually sold to West Ham Council in 1927 and flats were built on it. These are now being refurbished, some by the Council and others, that have been sold off to private developers, by them.

My own schooldays began when we were back in Morgan Street at No. 60. I can recall, as if it was yesterday, being taken by Mother along to Beckton Road Elementary School (built around 1885) which, strangely enough, was in Richard Street, and being taken into the infants Sections of Miss Hooper - all female teachers whether married, single or spinsters were called 'Miss'. She was a rather large lady in a chocolate brown dress with a black apron. With the added persuasion of a ride on the rocking horse and some kind words from the head Mistress, Miss Dean, I was launched on my school career.

As time went by I was passed up to the 'Big Boys' and proceeded to climb upward through the various classes (they were then called Standards) until I got to the top Standard 7 by the age of eleven. Myself and other brighter than average boys were formed into Standard X7 and again upward into another fresh class which was Standard 8. In all my classes I was always at the top or thereabouts - let me hasten to add - that was not because I was anything like an infant prodigy but being rather better than average, I made progress. The school was an Elementary School and that about sums it up. The basics were taught and I easily digested them - the Three R's, some Geography, Painting and Drawing, P.T. - that sort of stuff. I remember in the last year of my attendance they introduced some new stuff called algebra, which, however much it was explained, remained a mystery to us. I don't



think the teacher knew much about x equalling y either. When I was ten and a bit I took an examination. I suppose it would be the equivalent of the later 'Eleven plus'. This was called The Higher Elementary Exam. There was no preliminary preparation in those days for this sort of thing. I was the only kid from our school chosen to enter. My name was put down and all I had to do was turn up. The exam was held at another school and I can still remember how frightened I was of facing this ordeal. I did not do well and didn't pass.

Mum and Dad asked me if I wanted to have another shot at the next year's exam which, if passed, would have got me into West Ham Technical College, but I gave them the equivalent of 'No way' though in retrospect I wish they had insisted that I did have another shot. However from their point of view success in this endeavour would mean that they had to keep me at school with books and fares and school uniform to provide during the time when I could have been out to work earning and making some contribution to the family exchequer.

No schoolboy believes the adult who tells him, 'School days are the best days of your life' and most go on disbelieving years after they've left school but I really enjoyed school and never missed a day if I could help it. When we moved to Radcliff in 1925 I should have left Beckton Road and enrolled at nearby Broad Street School but I didn't fancy doing that. I suppose I thought I was doing alright at Beckton Road and viewed the possibility of starting afresh at a strange school with some trepidation.

So it was arranged that I continue at Beckton Road, which meant travelling by tram daily from Stepney to Canning Town (fare one penny each way, child's ticket) and to maintain this privilege I had to continue to wear short trousers until past fourteen so as to present the required juvenile appearance. Before I finally left school I had followed my elder brother's example and been elected school captain but it was pointed out that I would be leaving before my term of office was completed and so had to forego that honour.

I suppose attendance at Sunday School comes under the heading of education of a kind and our attendance at those places on that day can be reckoned as a schoolboy. Our father was not a religious man, that is, in respect of adhering to a recognised religious creed or attendance at a church of any particular denomination. On the contrary he was more of an atheist than an agnostic and was very much opposed to organised religion inasmuch as he believed it contributed more to perpetuating the evils besetting mankind than the eradication of them. An illustration of his dislike was demonstrated by the fact that none of his sons were baptised. Yet he was not irreligious. He

had his own code of conduct and believed in the words of Thomas Mann 'The World is my church, all men are my brothers and to do good is my religion'.

He was among the pioneers of the Socialist movement and sent his sons to a Socialist Sunday School. This was held in a large room upstairs in premises also used by the local branch of the dock workers union. This was the South West Ham Socialist Sunday School in Swanscombe Street and its object was simply to instill into the young the precepts of Socialism. There was no attempt made to turn out little revolutionaries, no propaganda against the capitalist class, no diatribes against the oppressors of the working classes. Looking back I would say that what we were being taught was basically Christianity without the mumbo-jumbo. We sang hymns that were about the brotherhood of man and the possible achievement of the perfect society. The nearest we got to revolution was the singing of 'The Red Flag' and 'The International'. For 'God Save the King' we sang our hymn 'God Save the People'.

We learned no Ten Commandments beginning 'Thou shalt not'. We had our own Ten Commandments, all of which I can't remember, just three:

Make everyday holy by good and useful deeds and kindly actions.

Love learning which is the food of the mind, be as grateful to your teachers as to your parents.

Help to bring about the day when all nations dwell together in peace and prosperity.

Our teacher was a Mr. Arkle, a small man with a large snowy white beard. He looked rather like Santa Claus in civilian clothes. Each Sunday we would be addressed by notable figures in the movement, Trade Union officials, Labour Councillors and on at least one occasion by an M.P.

We had the usual inducements to sustain regular attendance. In the summer there would be an outing to the country. I remember a favourite venue was Riggs Retreat in Theydon Bois where we sat down to tea and saw who could drink the most cups of tea or eat the most buns. There was a fair ground there and before leaving home Mother would give us a few coppers to spend and the instruction 'now listen, don't spend it all on the roundabout and buy yourself a glass of milk'. On May Day we were taken up to Hyde Park to attend the huge Labour Party Rally. This journey was made by horse brake, a sort of large waggonette for carrying passengers, and we marvelled at the sights 'up West' as we trotted through the City and West End streets.

Christmas time we would have a party or what we called a 'bun fight' and be entertained by a Magic Lantern show. To us that was marvellous, especially when the slides were made to activate.

## THE VICTORY PARADE OF 1946

Doreen Kendall's *account of the Victory parade of Saturday 8 June 1946 is based on part of Dennis C. Bateman's After the Battle, number 53.*

The final indication that the Second World War was over to the British people was the Victory Parade held on June 8th 1946, organised by the new Labour Cabinet of Clement Attlee. Colour and pageantry through the long years of the war had been missing and East Enders were delighted to hear that the Mechanized Column of the Victory Parade (or Peace Parade) from Regent's Park would proceed eastward to Hackney Rd, Cambridge Heath Rd, and Whitechapel on a twelve mile route to The Mall, to take the Royal Salute by King George VI before the Royal Family and Heads of State.

Sixteen police motor cyclists headed the Mechanical Column followed by the famous names of the War Command in scout cars: Royal Navy Admirals Cunningham, Somerville, Noble, Mountbatten, Army Commanders Alexander, Auchinleck, Allenbrooke, Slim, Royal Air Force Tedder, Douglas, Dowding, Portal. One commander did not ride in a scout car: 'Monty' Montgomery led the Army Commanders in the comfort of a Daimler staff car.

The Royal Navy led the Armed Forces and Civilian Services of the Mechanized Column of 450 vehicles and 80 motor cycles. All vehicles were clearly labelled for the benefit of spectators.

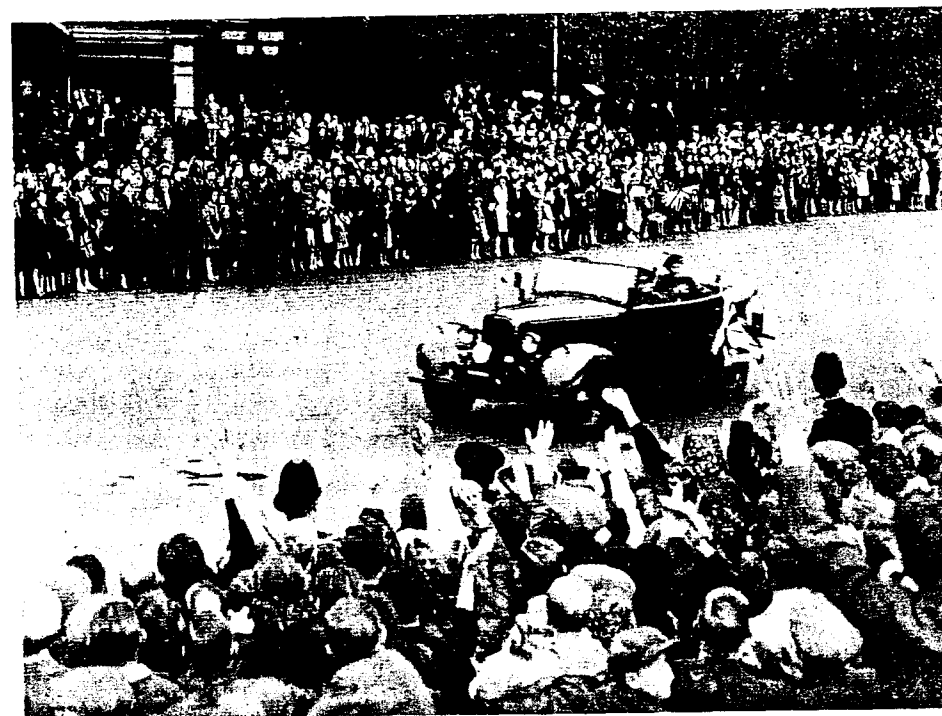
The Marching Column of 2,260 Officers and 18,984 other ranks, including men from the Dominions, Colonies and our Allies, marched a shorter route of four miles in the West end. As the RAF Contingent passed the saluting base, a lone Hurricane flew over, a symbol of all the hundreds who fought in the Battle of Britain. This was followed by the Fly Past of 306 aircraft in thirty-five squadrons, these having assembled over Fairlop in Essex.

The evening River Celebrations consisted of a huge firework and Aquatic Display. Open to the public and dressed over all were His Majesty's ships, the cruisers 'Diadem' and 'Bellona', destroyers 'Myngs', 'Zambezi', 'Zest' and 'Zealous', the sloop 'Stork', two submarines, 'Token' and 'Thermopylae' and two Sunderland flying boats.

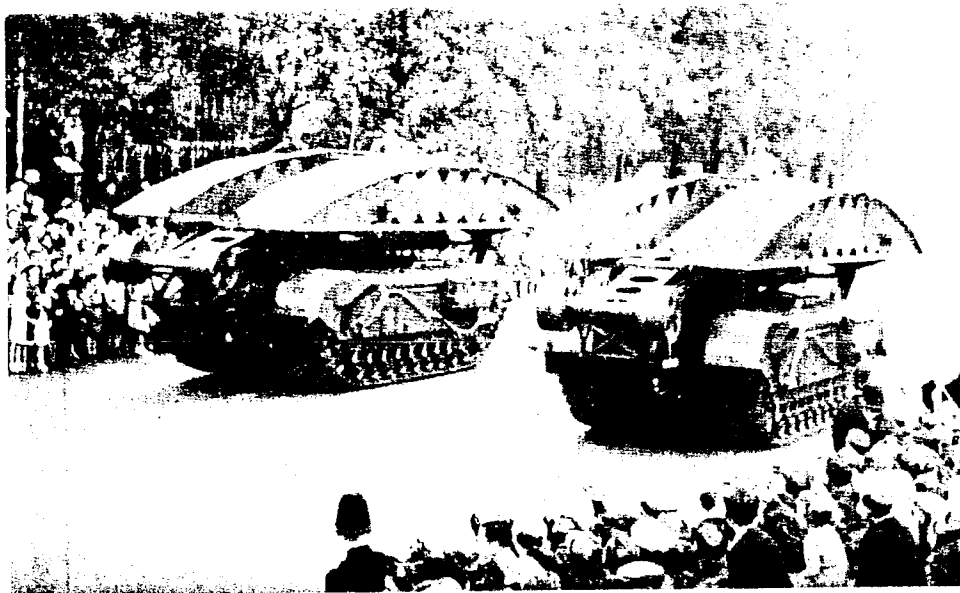
Decorations were in short supply, so large flags decorated The Mall and Whitehall only. As austerity and rationing was still in force, flood lighting was restricted to public buildings and the ships on the Thames from ten till

midnight for eight evenings.

On Friday June 7th the BBC television station at Alexandra Palace, which had closed at the outbreak of war was re-opened. A twenty minute film in black and white used two cameras along The Mall to film part of the event.



Montgomery Peace Parade along Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green.



**Tank Bridge Carriers in the Peace Parade in Cambridge Heath Road.**

We would like to thank William Turner for permission to print these two unique photographs. William's hobby all his life has been photography. He served in the Royal Engineers Survey Photographic Map Making Section. On leave he stood photographing the Victory Parade by the Salmon and Ball Public House on Cambridge Heath Road and Bethnal Green Road corner. William, in army uniform, was spotted by a Military Policeman, who warned him that he could be placed on a charge as his hat was not on, being folded under his shoulder lapel!

## **BAYNES STREET, WHITECHAPEL - LOST AND FOUND**

Derek Morris

'The Baynes Street Mystery' first appeared in the second edition of the East London History Group's *Bulletin* published in January 1967 and it has taken over twenty five years to provide a solution.

Messrs Mears and Stainbank from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, during the course of renovating their Fieldgate Street frontage, had uncovered an ancient stone sign reading 'This is Baynes Street' and naturally sought information on its whereabouts.

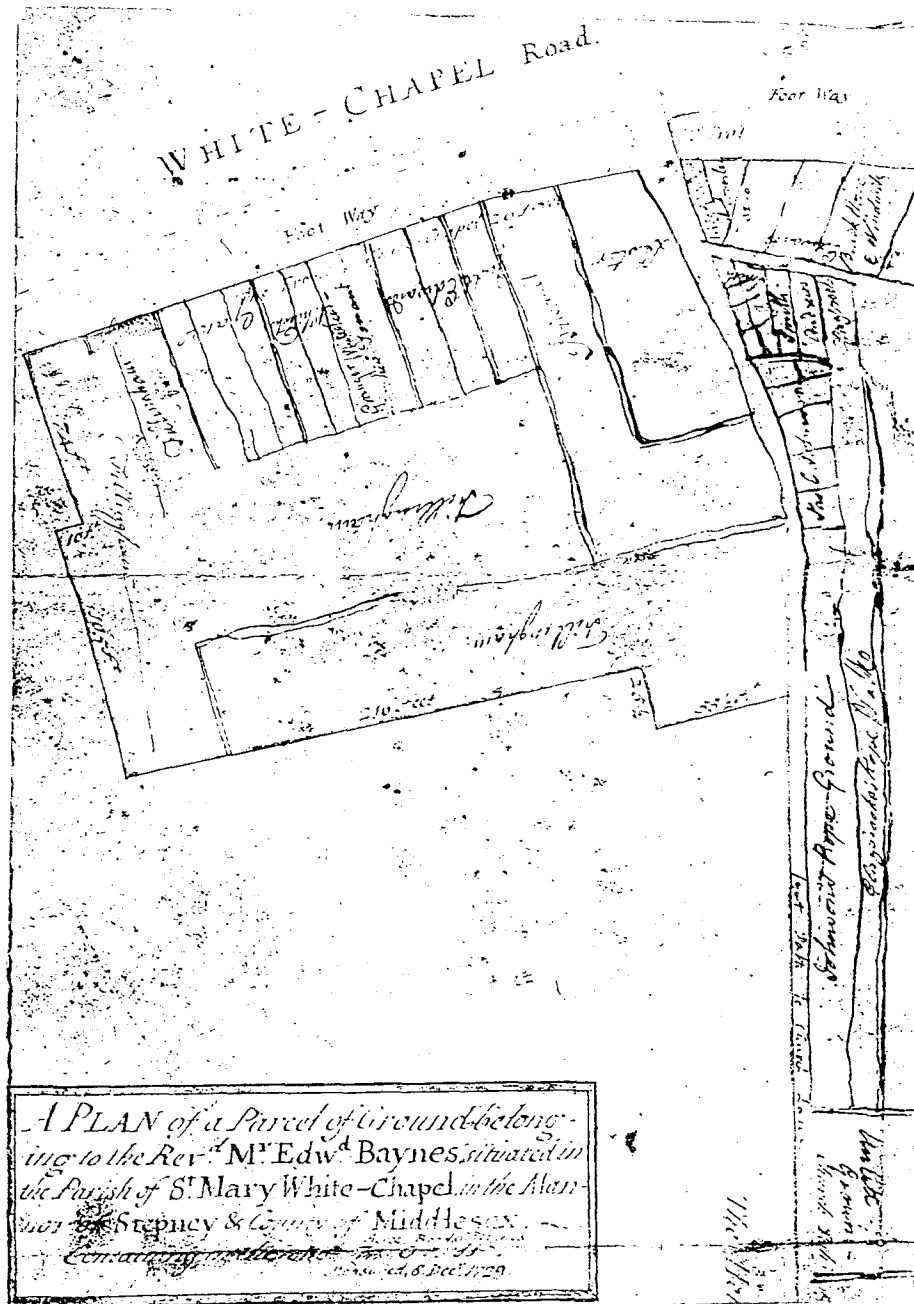
The ELHG took up the challenge but could not find any references to Baynes Street on either Rocque's map of 1746 or Horwood's map of 1799.

Subsequently in the ELHG's *Bulletin* No. 5 (December 1967) the discovery was announced in the Bancroft Road library of a rough plan entitled 'A Plan of a Parcel of Ground belonging to the Revd Mr. Edward Baynes, situated in the parish of St. Mary, Whitechapel...' (Map No. 233). However, this plan, while showing a ropinground, does not show Baynes Street and the final solution of the problem had to wait until I completed a detailed search of the Stepney Manorial Records between 1740 and 1780 (ref M/93/30 to 41) at the Greater London Record Office.

It is now clear that the Baynes family held quite sizable plots of land with the associated messuages and tenements in Whitechapel and they have so far been traced from a Court Baron held on 9th January 1729 to 1771. They were absentee landlords and the origin of their land holdings has yet to be traced. The Manorial Records do tell us that the Revd Edward Baynes was fairly mobile because he was recorded as living as far apart as County Mayo (1743), Chislehurst and Dieppe (1769). In 1769 the estate passed 'To the use of Arthur Baynes, Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, London, a Surgeon Major to the Garrison of Gibraltar'.

In 1770 Arthur and Edward Baynes used the estate to secure a loan from Antony Foreman of £1400 and by this time their address was the Tower of London (M/93/38 page 244)! Foreman was one of the most prominent 'proprietors' in Mile End Old Town from 1780.

In 1743 the Manorial records describe an estate on the south side of



'White Chapple Street' consisting of 26 tenements as well as the 'Artichoke' Alehouse and the 'Cork and Windmill' Alehouse.

From the land tax registers in the Guildhall (MS 6012) I have discovered that: -

1. The taxes were collected in a clockwise direction starting and finishing at St. Dunstan's church.

2. At the western end of the parish the sequence of streets was: -

Greenfield Street, east side

Greenfield Street, west side

Baines Street, east side 1768

Plummers Buildings (presumably Plummers Row)

Baines Street, west side 1774

Then a jump across the Mile End Road to Dog Row.

3. Baines Street first appears in the land tax records in 1768 and there were six tenements on the eastern side and five on the western side in 1775. The street runs east-west so I am not yet sure which side was built first.

4. In the A-Z of Regency London, a short street can be seen called Charles Street connecting Greenfield Street with Plummers Row and it has six houses on each side.

5. I deduce that Baines Street became Charles Street but do not know when as I have not looked beyond 1780 in the land tax registers.

Chris Lloyd from the Tower Hamlets Local History Library told me that in 1792 this street is Castle Street and is Holloway Street in 1845.

So one problem is solved, but who can tell us more about the Baynes family?

## 'DOWN THE GROUND' (BOW CEMETERY)

Bradley Snooks

Old East Enders referred to going down to the Cemetery to visit their loved ones as 'Down the ground'. The City of London and Tower Hamlet's Cemetery, known locally as Bow Cemetery, was laid out and opened in 1841, the first burial being that of Walter Grey of Alfred Street, Bow.

I started going over the Cemetery when I was a boy, while bunking off school (still a popular pastime with local kids). Bow Cemetery holds something special for me, as my grandad is buried there. My grandad died in 1961, and only through my interest in the cemetery did I find out his war record. He was torpedoed twice - 'H.M.S. Phoebe' and - 'H.M.S. Edinburgh' (the ship that went down with the Russian gold). I also found my aunt was buried with him in 1965, and that my cousin 'Charlie boy' had fallen through a window and died aged 8.

Such a hobby uncovers sad stories, but on the plus side, as you research into the history of the graves, many of the facts you uncover are fascinating. My favourite involves the large gothic grave of Joseph Westwood who was buried in 1883. He lived at Tredegar House, Bow Road, and was a partner in Westwood, Ballie & Campell of Cubitt Town. The Company were well known as ship and bridge builders and built the Sukkar Bridge, at the time the largest cantilever bridge in the world (until the Forth Bridge was built). It was built in Cubitt Town, then shipped to Pakistan.

Half a million people are buried in the 33 acres of the Cemetery and the greatest person I have come across is one of the first graves I discovered - Will Crooks, a true servant of the people. A cooper by trade, he became a Guardian of the poor, Borough Councillor, Labour's first mayor of Poplar, a London County Councillor a Member to Parliament for East Woolwich, and a Privy Councillor. They say he was loved, liked and admired by everyone that knew him. He died in 1921 aged 69 years. It is said his health had deteriorated after helping with the rescue of some of the 18 children killed in the bombing of the Upper North Street School in 1917. The greatest love of his life was little children, but these deaths proved too much for this kind man, and his funeral was certainly one of the biggest the East End of London has ever seen.

Since starting my detective work in the Cemetery some of my friends in the East London History Society have become hooked as well - the more the



Conductor Buckley

merrier. One of the stories we can't wait to uncover is that of the Brothers of Charterhouse. The Brothers of Charterhouse were gentlemen who had fallen on hard times. There are 32 graves each having the distinctive stone cross of Charterhouse and six men buried in each grave. We even have a 'Count' -

Count C. A. deLiancond. This project is being undertaken by Doreen Kendall.

Another interesting grave is that of The Leman Street policemen. PC244 H Division - Richard James Barber died March 2 1885 aged 28 years. He fell to his death through a skylight 30 feet above ground while chasing a suspect in Royal Mint Street. PC 144 H Division - William James Pasker, aged 43 years, was on holiday in Margate in 1890 when he heard a man in difficulty calling for help in heavy seas. He immediately dived in and swam out to help, but unfortunately both men drowned. PC 240 H Division - Ernest Thompson, aged 32 years, went to a disturbance in Alder Street, Commercial Road in November 1890. Thompson was stabbed in the neck and died. The killer was Barnet Abrahams, a cigar maker who was sentenced to 20 years penal servitude. It is said that during Thompson's career he often reproached himself for not giving chase to a man running away from an incident. It seems in all probability that the fugitive was none other than Jack the Ripper.

One of our latest finds is that of Lieutenant John Buckley, who died in July 1876 aged 63 years, at 213 East India Road, Poplar. He was awarded the Victoria Cross in the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Can anyone help with any further information on Lieutenant Buckley?

Bow Cemetery was closed as a cemetery in 1965. In 1972 the G.L.C. cleared hundreds of graves while trying to turn the cemetery into a Public park and were only stopped by fierce local opposition. In 1993 it became a local nature reserve and the Soanes Centre was built for environmental studies near the main entrance. The Cemetery Park is now left to grow wild in the spring and summer months, so that the birds may nest and wild life may flourish. However, little is done for the actual upkeep and maintenance of the graves and there is no regard to the history of those buried within the Cemetery. The council have now removed the Superintendent of the Cemetery from his post and the lack of security, maintenance and increase in vandals is leading to a lot of damage. Time is running out to record and photograph the memorials. Help is needed - information on anybody buried there, recording memorial inscriptions or any photographs you may have. If you need help tracing the graves of your loved ones, I would be glad to help. Don't forget, keep your stories coming, we at E.L.H.S. are hoping to produce a book on the people buried in the cemetery. Please send any information to me at 67 Pulteney Close, Armagh Road, Bow E3 5LP

Registers for the Cemetery are kept at the Greater London Record Office, 40 Northampton Road, London EC1R 0HB.

## NOTES AND NEWS

There was a good response to the articles in last year's Record (1994-5), helped by a good coverage in the Hackney Gazette, Newham Recorder, East London Advertiser and East End Life. One of the players in the Daubeney Road team had been looking at his own copy of the photograph reproduced in Les Jolly's article only the day before he saw the article. (Is this an amazing coincidence, or does he look at his schoolboy football photographs every day?) A few errors crept into Ivy Alexander's article, the worst of which was that the date in the caption to the photograph on page 3 should have read '1987' and not '1967'. I apologise to Ivy Alexander, whose review of Canning Town appears in our Book Reviews in this issue. The picture of Clara Grant (an exhibition on her works runs at the Ragged School Museum, Copperfield Road, until 7 January 1996) prompted Mr H. A. Salton to send the picture of his class in Devons Road School, Knapp Road, in 1938 (see our Newsletter, Summer 1995, page 1). He can put the following names to faces: Jimmy Knight, Joyce London, Yvonne Purdy, William Thomas, Rene?, Innis?, Peter Gilson, Rene Marsh, Authur Bird, Lily Cable, Joan Coxhall. Can anyone recognise any others?

I had the pleasure of being on the last guided tour around the House Mill in Bromley-by-Bow before it was closed for restoration work. It was planned to resume the tours in April 1996 and I recommend them to anyone interested in local history or industrial archaeology. A possible long term outcome of the project may be the establishment of some kind of museum of industry. A history of the House Mill is available for £2 from The River Lea Tidal Mill Trust, Miller's House, Three Mills Lane, Bromley-by Bow, E3 3DX, from where information on the Trust can also be obtained.

Because the removal of the duty on lighters made them so much cheaper, it is no longer economical to produce matches in Britain. Bryant and May, once of Fairfield Road, Bow, has closed



Interrupted by the photographer at Devon's Road School, 1938.

down its works in Garston, Liverpool. As the last shift clocked off at the end of 1994 a machine operator told the Daily Telegraph 'It was a lovely firm to work for'.

I don't care who Jack the Ripper was, but those who do may wish to read Melvin Harris' *The True Face of Jack the Ripper* (Michael O'Mara, £14.99) or they could go on one of the Jack the Ripper Guided Walks, or join the 'Cloak and Dagger Club' who have sent us a pilot issue of their Newsletter. All the contributions are from men. I recall there were some feminists' protests when there were attempts to have a 'Ripper Centenary' in 1988: perhaps the Cloak and Dagger Club's Newsletter might be a platform for their views in the future.

Stratford City Challenge Community History has produced *The Way We Were* (£1.95) which contains brief accounts of living in Stratford this century, as well as several photographs of local interest and *On the Broadway* (£2.50), which is a 24 page history, with illustrations, of St. John's Church, Stratford Broadway. A Civil Defence map of Stratford is reproduced, giving details of the kind of bombs dropped on the area between 1939 and 1945. Tom Ridge's *Chronology of Street Parties* (Ragged School Museum, £1.50) is for those with an interest in the celebrations that marked the end of the same war. Doreen Kendall has recommended Jennifer Golden's *Hackney at War* (Alan Sutton, £7.99) which includes details of the many streets damaged, information on where damage can still be seen to-day, a good text and illustrations, many of them from Hackney Archives and previously unpublished. She has also drawn attention to G.L.R. O.'s *We think You Ought to Go* (£5.00) which looks at the mammoth task of evacuating children from L.C.C. schools during the war; she regrets that individual children will be impossible to trace because of the complexity of the categories listed.

David Leboff's *London Underground Stations* (Ian Allen, £7.99) includes recent alterations to stations like Shadwell and Liverpool Street. Everything you ever wanted to know about buildings in Poplar, Black wall and the Isle of Dogs must be contained in Vols. XLIII and XLIV of *The Survey of London* (Athlone Press, £130 for the two - but there is a copy in Bancroft Road Library). *Bangladeshi Children in Tower Hamlets: a Guide for Teachers* ( Tower Hamlets Humanities Education Centre, £4.99) has an introductory section that traces the historical links between Bangladesh and Tower Hamlets.

When I saw the Dore illustration on the cover of Richard Pelham's *It's Better Not to Go Back* (The Hen Eagle Press, £4.99) I thought I had been sent a book on the artist's depiction of Victorian London. No, it's a fictional work on a new party that ousted an old party in a borough that we all know and love, and what happened next...

Many items of local interest have appeared in recent issues of *The Cockney Ancestor*, including 'Notes on "The Nichol"' (Spring 1995). The Wanstead Historical Society Journal contains among other items, Peter Gould's second article on how Wanstead changed from being a village to a suburb. Brian Page, the editor, has also been involved in the production of *Thomas Hood at Wanstead 1832-1835* (£2) which contains reprints of two articles by Denis F. Keeling, and an extract from a 1907 biography of the poet by Walter Jerrold and several interesting black and white illustrations. Both publications are available from 30 Dangan Road, Wanstead, E11 2RF. Vol. 20 No 1 (1995) of the *London Journal* is a special issue devoted to the aristocratic town house in London.

Finally, to save you bus fares .... Greater London Record Office's *A general Guide to Holdings* (up to the end of 1993), parts I and II, are now at Tower Hamlets Local History Library, Bancroft Road.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Howard Bloch and Nick Harris. *Canning Town in Old Photographs*. Alan Sutton Ltd, 1994. £7.99

I was a little surprised to see a book had been produced on Canning Town. Winchester, where I now live, I could understand, but Canning Town, my birthplace, must, I thought be of interest only to a small and declining number of people. So it may be, but to those people the book is a gem, or rather an Aladdin's cave. It contains a collection of over 200 photographs, hitherto kept safely in archives and, but for this compilation, they would have remained so, hidden from those people most intimately concerned.

This book will no doubt be of interest to two groups of people, the present inhabitants with an interest in their local history, and secondly, former residents and their families now scattered throughout the world. I belong to the latter group and my comments on the book will reflect this. For me, the pre-war photographs and Chapters One and Two, 'The Barking Road and Old Canning Town' and 'South of the Barking Road', are of particular interest.

Canning Town began to emerge in the first half of the nineteenth century on the eastern banks of the River Lea. It was a product of the English expansion overseas, first by trade and later by Empire. This needed ships and docks in the first instance and this explains Canning Town's origins and the need for houses for its workers and industries to service them. One of the earliest industries was the Mare & Co. Shipbuilding works, which developed on both banks of the River Lea. It later became the Thames Ironworks, and Chapter Five shows a fine collection of photos of this industry in its heyday. It closed in 1912, causing a great deal of unemployment and hardship from which Canning Town did not seem ever to fully recover. It became part of the 'folklore' of Canning Town and I had no idea it had once been a thriving industry, employing skilled craftsmen and civil engineers as well as labourers, and yet it had been 'on my doorstep'. One of its products, the HMS 'Warrior', now lies splendidly in Portsmouth Harbour. The beauty and high quality of its workmanship is in sharp contrast to the houses in which the workers who built it lived. 'Old Canning Town', as it came to be known, grew up around the Shipyard, as did Tidal Basin, south of the Barking Road.

I was born in Old Canning Town and was ten years old when the picture on P.16 of Bidder Street was taken. The group of children would have been my school-mates. The shop in Bidder Street on P.50 was our local grocer's, run by Aggie Kiddie. One could buy a penn'orth of jam there, in a mug. She once gave it free to a friend of mine whose mother had temporarily 'run away from home'. The pub on the corner, when I knew it, was closed and let as tenements. Its floating population never became part of the community, especially the unfortunate Mrs. Moore, who had so many children we lost count. A prostitute was reported to live in an upstairs room. The opening and closing of her curtains apparently had some significance.

The New Imperial Cinema, P.85, was visible from my bedroom window. I was unaware of its history and this book enlightened me. During the blitz scores of us slept in its basement, in tiers up the wall. We could also see the Bridge House Tavern, P.13, which replaced an earlier one. This was close to Canning Town Bridge, P.12, which formed the boundary between the former LCC and West Ham. We still referred to this as the 'Iron Bridge', long since replaced.

Canning Town Station, P.57, Chapter Four, 'At Work', reminded me of the annual school outing, when the whole school, 'Canning Town Junior Mixed', in Bidder Street, went by train to 'Lousy Loughton'. As the train pulled out to the left of the picture, mothers along Stephenson Street would wave to their children as they left for a day in the country.

I do not recall the circular urinal just outside, between the station and Howard's timber yard,

P.63. With the build up of traffic at that point, men must have risked life and limb to enjoy its privacy. I do recall Howard's woodyard, or rather the tall fence which surrounded it, which, as a child, was all I could see. This picture provided a new perspective. The woodyard went up in flames on the night of Sept. 9th 1940. The area was evacuated, the residents being taken to Hoy Street for collection, narrowly escaping the disaster that befell those waiting in neighbouring Agate Street, P.122.

I can still remember the construction of Silvertown Way, 'The Road to the Empire', an Empire which gave rise to enormous wealth and great country houses not reflected though in Canning Town's houses of wealth. The picture on P.27 shows the consequent demolition of most of the slum houses in Victoria Dock Road, and rekindles memories I didn't know existed, such as the sound, smell and dust of demolished dwellings. I should like to have seen some photos of the Lascars in that area. They seemed not to live in 'proper' houses, but in rooms in closed-up shops or derelict buildings; no front doors, numbers or knockers; unhappy looking, perhaps unwelcomed.

Chapter Six, 'Leisure', includes photos from a collection by local photographer, George Taylor. This chapter also shows the Public Hall, P.81, our 'Civic Centre' which played a central part in our lives. The library next door provided a service far superior to that offered by many Local Authorities today. I am glad the buildings, at least, have survived.

Most readers, like me, will look at Chapter Three, 'Schooldays', hoping to catch a glimpse of themselves or members of their family and many will not be disappointed. The photos are very clear and sharp, even the one from 1906, of the Russell Road Higher Elementary School, P.42. Pretoria Road School, P.47, was our local Senior Boys School, and this picture epitomizes the bleak prospect for most of the children in the area - an education with 'no frills', sufficient only to produce a well-disciplined work-force, to supply the needs of local industry. Most of the boys in the picture would, a few years later, have been conscripted into the armed forces, as were my two brothers who attended that school. One wonders how many returned. The picture on P.45, of the Keir Hardie Primary School contrasts well with the one on P.122 of Beckton Road School. It shows there was then optimism and generosity of thought about the possibility of educating all children.

Chapter seven, 'Social Action', which includes pictures of post-war development, shows houses which certainly seem more attractive than those they replaced. The Keir Hardy Estate, planned to include traditional 'garden city' accommodation, seems far superior to houses I remember in that area, close to Victoria Dock Road. And then what happened? P.102/3 shows tower blocks, including the notorious Ronan Point. Did the planners forget the dream of 'homes fit for heroes'?

I could go on. The book evokes so many memories, as it will for anybody connected with Canning Town - different memories perhaps from mine. It is hard to criticise a book which is not just a publication but part of one's life, but I remember, for instance, Gandhi coming to Old Canning Town, and floods when I was a small child in the 20's. I would like to have seen a few maps, and certainly an up-to-date map superimposed on a pre-war map would have looked impressive. However, these are small details. The book is thoroughly worthwhile and Howard Bloch and Nick Harris deserve great credit for having put this book together. We are indebted also to those people who had the foresight to establish the Local Studies Library, without which these photos and other local history material would not be available. The overall picture of Canning Town is one of a bleak and desolate environment, with attempts post-war to create something better. Much of the pre-war Canning Town has gone, with few regrets, but has the quality of life really improved in Canning Town today? Perhaps we need another set of photographs and some statistics. There must be plenty of scope for such a Local Studies Library, an essential ingredient, surely, in our otherwise materialist society today.

Ivy Alexander

Jane Cox. *London's East End Life and Traditions*. Weiderfield and Nicholson, 1994. £15.99

This book's broad sweep gives an overall flavour of the area, from ancient times to the present day. It is an introduction to the East End's complex history and is peppered with anecdotes and impressions of the life and times of the ever-shifting population.

Jane Cox describes many of the notable characters, outlines the variety of industries and charts the rise and fall of the commerce with which the East End's name will always be associated.

Doreen Osborne

John Gorman. *Knocking Down Ginger*. Caliban Books, 25 Nassington Road, Hampstead, NW3 2TX £16.50 (£13.20 to East London History Society members, price includes postage)

This is a lively autobiography, which I can thoroughly recommend as a good read.

John Gorman was born and brought up in a street near Stratford Station, the sort of poor but respectable street where the women all kept their front doorsteps scrubbed and their nets clean as far as possible in the soot-laden air. His father, a carpenter, was called up as a reservist when the war broke out in 1939. However he survived Dunkirk, sending them a seaside postcard from Margate to tell of his safe return, and they survived the blitz, sleeping every night in their damp Anderson shelter.

In 1946 he left school and started work at a silk screen printers. Two years later he was called up and joined the RAF. on his way to camp he met another young man in the train, bound for the same place. He was a Jewish tailor's son from Whitechapel called Lionel Begleiter. They stayed together and became firm friends. When they were demobbed they set up a printing business, which after early struggles eventually grew and prospered. Lionel had a gift for song writing and friends in show business, which he began to get involved in. His break came when Tommy Steele sang one of his songs. John Gorman thinks it was a mistake by someone who called him 'Mr. Bart' which led him to adopt the name you will know him by - Lionel Bart.

John Gorman, hating the injustice of the pre-war capitalist system, joined the Communist Party. He devoted all his spare time to Party work, helping to organise a rent strike against poor housing and rent increases. However, he became disillusioned after Soviet tanks invaded Hungary, and resigned.

Ann Sansom



Howard Bloch (compiler), *Newham Dockland*, The Chalford Publishing Company Limited, St Mary's Mill, Chalford, Gloucester, GL6 8NX. 1995. £8.99.

The area covered by this collection of archive photographs is one that many of us have heard about, but few have visited, including myself. It was my privilege in July of this year to accompany the daughter of Pastor Kamal Chundhi (see page 40) as we went in search of her childhood haunts. The bleakness and desolation along Silvertown Way is something I will never forget, and I found the pictures in this book all the more poignant.

Newham Dockland owes its existence to the construction in the mid to late 19th century of the Victoria and Albert Docks, built to accommodate the rapid growth in the shipping industry. With the addition of the Beckton Gasworks, the rubber works of Silvertown, and a plethora of factories and industrial establishment, it soon became one of Britain's major industrial centres. The book inevitably has a large selection of dock and dock workers in all manner of activities, as well as a sizable number of views depicting various industrial establishments in all their harsh bleakness, despite the obligatory photographs of the workforce posed in obedient rows. Views of the river have a haunting quality, strangely devoid of human life.

Hundreds of terraced houses were built to accommodate the burgeoning population drawn to the area in search of work, much of which was casual and poorly paid. Work was often carried out in dangerous and unhealthy conditions, and accidents were frequent. The docks relied on the skills of thousands of people, and attracted workers from all over the world. By the 1930's Canning Town and Custom House had the largest black population in London. It would appear, however, that they were camera-shy, for the book does not reflect this. The local economy was heavily dependent on the docks and the many associated industries and while the docks thrived, the area was a bustling hive of activity and industry. The decline in the fortunes of the docks, the last to close along the Thames, was rapidly reflected in the decline of conditions, as industries, too, fell victim to advancing technology.

I have no doubt that this was a book crying out to be published and Howard Bloch is to be congratulated on a magnificent effort. This will surely prove to be a bestseller, not only to those who have long since departed the area, and will dwell nostalgically upon the memories it evokes, but is a must for all collectors of local history publications.

Rosemary Taylor.

Jane Quinn. *Back Streets to Country Lanes*. James Campbell (10, Oldfields, Victoria Rd. Brentwood Essex). 1994. £8.99

A contribution to the annals of local history; thought much has been written on this subject before, each has something to offer and the autobiographies of 'unknown' writers always attract my attention.

I was slightly disappointed that there were not more East End linguistic embellishments to give added flavour to the infamous 'Rathy' market where the author and her father spent so much time and I must beg to differ when Jane refers to the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street as being the Stock Exchange when even non Londoners know that this title is proudly held by the Bank of England.

Diana Nicholson.

#### SOME RECENT ITEMS RELATION TO EAST LONDON

##### Books and Booklets

- Chris Clunn, *Eels, Pie and Mash* (Museum of London).
- J. Spencer Curwen, *Old Plaistow* (Reprint, J. Curwen & Sons).
- David Drakard, *Limehouse Ware Revealed* (English Ceramic Circle).
- Robert J. Harley, *East Ham and West Ham Tramways* (Middleton Press)
- Tony Hogg and Terry McDonald, *Who's Who: West Ham United* (Independent UK Sports, Publications).
- Bill Hunter, *They Knew Why They Fought* (Index Book Centre).
- David Jones, *The Broadway: Super Cinema and Variety Theatre, Stratford, London* (Mercia Cinema Society).
- Ann Kersten, *Trade Unionism among the Tailors of London and Leeds, 1870-1939* (Frank Cass).
- Kay Mann, *London: The German Connections* (K.T. Publishing).
- Lara V. Marks, *Model Mothers: Jewish Mothers and Maternity Provision in East London 1870-1939* (Oxford University Press).
- John Northcutt and Ray Shoesmith, *West Ham United: an illustrated History* (Breedon Books)
- Rees Price, *From Family History to Community History*. (Cambridge University Press) - chapter on Jewish East End.
- Stuart A. Raymond, *Londoners' Occupations: A Genealogical Guide* (Federation of Family History Societies).
- Keith Romig and Peter Lawrence, *Leyton and Leytonstone* (Chalford).
- Ella Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1918* (Oxford University Press).
- Dorcas Sanders and Nick Harris, *Forest Gate* (Chalford).
- Ian Slater, *Jacob's Ladder* (The author).
- Henry F. Srebrnik, *London Jews and British Communism 1939-1945* (Valentine Mitchel).
- Rosemary Taylor and C. J. Lloyd, *Stepney Bethnal Green and Poplar in Old Photographs* (Alan Sutton).

Arnold Wesker, *As Much as I dare: an autobiography* (Century)

Philip Ziegler, *London at War 1939-1945* (Sinclair Stevenson).

#### Articles

Cecil Bloom, 'The Politics of Immigration, 1881-1905' in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, 33 (1992-4).

Christina de Domingo, 'The Provenance of some building stores in St. Mary Spital by geological methods' in *London Archaeologist*, Autumn, 1994.

Alex Jacob, 'No ordinary tradesmen; the Green Family in 19th century Whitechapel' in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, 33 (1992-4)

Raymond Kalman, 'The Jewish Friendly Societies of London 1793-1993' in *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society*, 33, 1992-4.

David Mander, 'Nathan Goes House Hunting: the first Rothschild and Hackney' in *Hackney Terrier*, 38 (Spring 1995).

Derek Morris, 'The Mile End Estate of the Bridewell and Bethlem Hospitals' in *London Topographical Society Newsletter*, 39, (Nov.1994).

Elaine R. Smith, 'Class, Ethnicity and Politics in the Jewish East End, 1918-1939' in the *Jewish Historical Journal*, 32 (1994).

#### Some recent additions to Tower Hamlets Archives:

Records of Phyllis Gerson relating to her work with the Stepney Jewish Girls (Bnai Brith) Club and Settlement and the Alice Model Nursery 1937-70 (TH/8629)

Records of Bethnal Green Congregational Church 1865-1985 (TH/8635)

Records of St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Westferry Road, and the East End Committee c.1865-1980 (TH/8642)

Minutes and other records of the Association of Island Communities 1982-1988 (TH/8643)

Correspondence of the Soutter family of Lower Shadwell, shipowners c.1830-1840's (TH/8648)

*I am grateful to David Behr, C.J. Lloyd, Harry Watton, Jane Kimber and David Webb for help in compiling these lists.*