Looking Back

A compendium of articles written for
Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

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85 Forest Drive West
Leytonstone
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E11 1JZ

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Claremont Road and the M11 Link Road

by Maureen Measure

I was walking back from the swimming pool on a Monday morning in the summer of 1994 when I noticed that Claremont Road had been brightly painted and decorated. I turned into Claremont Road from Cathall Road and was astonished by the colourful decoration of the houses, the amusing street sculptures and the clever use of abandoned cars. I returned later and took a series of photographs, and am very glad that I did.

Claremont Road was in the way of the M11 Link Road. Some form of road through the area has been proposed since World War II, and now the Department of Transport wanted to build a six lane dual carriageway through Leyton and Leytonstone. This resulted in the vibrant and popular 'No M11 Link Road' campaign. I had been involved since 1992 as part of Open University Social Sciences studies, and completed an Open University project in 1994. There were many protests along the route of the Link Road, especially when houses were demolished and their inhabitants forcibly removed. Claremont Road was only one of the streets at risk.

The Department of Transport acquired properties under Compulsory Purchase Orders and once empty they were either demolished or made uninhabitable by the destruction of kitchens, bathrooms and staircases. However, in Claremont Road and elsewhere, people moved into the properties before this happened. The road became well known for the decorations, the street parties, the café, the 'art house', music, theatre and there was even a ghost house. It was something to show to visitors. Because of the street sculptures, no vehicle could be driven along Claremont Road. Opposite the terrace of Victorian houses was the Central Line. It was quiet and a safe place for children to play.

Things could not last, and despite many hopes, petitions and protests, on Monday November 28th, 1994, the riot squad eventually arrived to evacuate Claremont Road. The atmosphere was electric, all morning we had been awaiting the police and several times we were told they were on their way. I was relieved to see a cat and her four kittens safely taken away from the café. At about 11.00 there was a ripple and then a roar of laughter. It was the postman.

Back into Claremont Road. I was half way along the terrace and saw that the police, in full riot gear, were entering from both ends. The noise of the demonstrators was deafening, with whistles, shouts and music. I stood quietly, silent amidst this cacophony, but took photographs. I did not notice that the Central Line had been suspended. The police started carrying people out; four of them took each of my limbs as I politely told them of the wrongs of the situation. I was dumped, fairly gently, in Grove Green Road, with my camera unharmed.

It was Wednesday before Claremont Road was cleared of protestors, as many people had barricaded themselves in the houses, under the houses and on the roofs. But eventually, when the last person had been evicted, the bulldozers came in and Claremont Road was no more.

Houses and flats were demolished; the DOT's figure is 263, with 550 people displaced. The No M11 Link Road Campaign estimated that 500 dwelling units were demolished, 1,000 people lost their homes.

It was not tunnelled following the 1983 Public Inquiry because of the cost - which rose from £200 million in June 1993 to £360 million in June 1999 (DOT figures).

Past perfect ?

by Sue Lakeman

The diaries of the rich and famous, particularly politicians, are sprinkled with mention of nationally, or internationally, significant people and events. Not so the reminiscences of the rest of us - the other ranks. Our memories are of the friends and family, the local characters and localities with which we grew up. As children, the occasional coronation, bomb or celebrity are memorable but set against a fabric that is unremarkable – just everyday life.

Nevertheless, that everyday life is always played out in a context dependent upon the major social, economic and political happenings and thought of the day. Perhaps only with hindsight can we understand the history in which our memories are rooted. My parents summoned me and friends aged about six to watch on television the moment the crown was placed on the head of Queen Elizabeth II, labelling it explicitly as an historic moment. I did the same with whichever of my children was still up when the results of the 1997 general election became clear. My Mum and Dad did not, however, point out that television ownership was relatively uncommon; that that was why all the neighbours were there, and that industrial and technological development might result in almost universal TV ownership within about fifteen years (although they did speculate that there might be coloured television in the future !).

I was born in 1947 in a maternity home or hospital, now gone, in Forest Gate. Mothers stayed in hospital longer then, but there was tremendous pressure on maternity services as a result of the post war baby boom, so I and my mother were moved within a day or so to Whipps Cross Hospital for the remainder of her stay.

My family lived in a small, rented house in Ashville Road in Leytonstone where I spent the next nineteen or so years until I left for university. In the nineteen fifties, therefore, my home territory comprised one end of Ashville Road (the Dyers Hall / Grove Green Road end) complemented by occasional trips to the High Road; weekly shopping ‘round the corner’ (the parade of shops near the Heathcote Pub in Grove Green Road), and, of course, the daily trip ‘over the steps’ (i.e. the pedestrian bridge over the railway) to Mayville Road school. This short section of Ashville Road – about forty dwellings – contained an off licence, a corner shop (both long gone now we all shop at supermarkets), and two public / religious buildings – Ashville Hall (now a mosque) and a Gospel Hall where I attended Sunday School. Remarkably for such an urban street, it also contained a stable, tucked away behind the houses on the odd side. I never visited it but think it housed a couple of horses used to pull carts – rag ‘n bones, or a greengrocery cart that came occasionally.

A further memory of my childhood in the fifties is that living in that short stretch were three youngish/middle aged adults with some degree of hearing impairment. Coincidentally, all three lived in what had been their parental family home. Horrie Barber ran the Off Licence he had taken over from his mother. He wore a hearing

aid and took care to be accompanied by his wife at important appointments – for example the renewal of his licence – in case he had trouble hearing the proceedings. Mrs Lily Barwell lived with her brothers and spoke loudly and sometimes indistinctly, presumably as a result of her hearing problems. Miss Dolly Lomas lived with a married sister and her family, one member of which was at school with me. She was totally deaf and her disability killed her; she was run over, in Ashville Road, by an unheard Royal Mail van.

So how do my memories relate to the wider picture ? They reflect, of course, changes in shopping habits, family mobility and cultural diversity. But what about those three hearing impaired adults? In my forty-five year adult life since, I can recall only one person among colleagues, friends or neighbours with a major hearing impairment. Was the Ashville Road of the fifties unusual and the incidence merely an anomaly? Sadly, probably not. The individuals concerned were probably born between 1915 and 1930 in an area which, while not one of extreme deprivation, was relatively disadvantaged. The health of working class people at that time, particularly of women and children (not covered by the 1911 National Health Insurance scheme for wage-earners), was poor. Most significantly, again particularly for children's health, nutritional standards were low. An influential report of 1936 (Food, Health and Income, Sir John Boyd Orr) found that the 20% of children who lived below the poverty line had a diet which was seriously deficient. Poverty, poor diet, lack of medical care, immunization and modern drugs – all would have contributed to a range of childhood afflictions and developmental delays which, in some cases, could blight the individual for life.

By the time I knew Horrie, Lily and Dolly, health was getting better (infant mortality fell from 105 deaths per 1000 live births in 1910, to 60/1000 in 1930 and 56/1000 in 1940. In 2009, it was 4.6 per 1000). The 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act set up welfare clinics with the aim of seeing 60% of children in England by 1936; sulphonamide drugs were developed after 1935. The National Health Service was set up in 1947 to provide care free at the point of delivery and has extended screening and immunization. Who knows - perhaps had they been born thirty years later, they would not have suffered from whatever caused their hearing problems. I don't know when / if my hearing was screened as a

baby, but my three children (now 27, 30, 33) certainly had hearing tests before their first birthdays. Things have moved on even since then; babies' hearing is now checked very soon after birth in order to give them the best possible chance.

We can and should remember and rejoice in the improvements the last half century has brought us. We should too, though, remember how those improvements were achieved. We should also give a thought to those who missed out then, and, in the week when a Save the Children report indicates that 1.6m children in the UK are living in severe poverty, those who still miss out, in the UK and many other parts of the world.

World Without Colour

by Lionel King

Grey, in its many hues, was predominant in my life until I left home for University. There were heavy, grey blankets on my bed. I wore grey flannel trousers for school and Sunday best, grey shirts and invariably grey socks. So did my school friends. But this perfectly matched the environment in which we lived, Leyton, in London's East End. Here grey reigned, unchallenged. Grey slate roofs, grey skies overhead for eight months of the year and houses built almost uniformly in grey brick, there was an almost complete absence of colour. But a war-damaged, largely working class district could hardly be colourful. The early years after World War II were a grey period in Britain's history, 'The Age of Austerity'. The country was slowly emerging from the destruction, sacrifice and waste of the conflict. It was to be more than a decade before people were to enjoy a return to a tolerable standard of living. Rationing of food, clothing, coal - in fact the basic essentials of life - had to continue for many years. 'The Affluent Society' was a long way off.

Leyton and neighbouring boroughs, West Ham, Walthamstow and Hackney, were covered by grey fog, usually for a couple of hours in the morning, from November when the cold began to set in, until the showers of April. The fog was largely a man-made mixture with three basic constituents - smoke from domestic and industrial chimneys, a one hundred foot layer of intensely cold air over London and lead-laden fumes from the increasing number of motor vehicles. These combined with the natural mists which rose over the Thames estuary and the Lea marshes. The air we breathed was soon overwhelmed by this lethal addition.

When my younger brother and I were at Farmer Road Junior School, my mother accompanied us when there was fog about. You could hear the distorted echoes of the laughter and cries of the children who lived opposite us, with their mothers, only a few feet away, totally invisible in the gloom. Then after a slow trudge in the eerie streets, the outline of the gaunt, grey three-deck school would loom up ahead out of the murk, like a brooding, unwelcoming monster. Spells of fog in the winter of 1948-49, lasted up to three days, playing havoc with the trolley bus services which served our area. Traffic moved at walking pace. The worst ever 'smog,' as the menace came to be known, persisted for a week in November 1952. Life in London seized up, an objective even the Nazis failed to achieve for a single day in the prolonged blitz on the capital in 1940-41 or with V1s/V2s in 1944-45. At last the authorities were goaded into tackling the problem.

During this 'Great Smog' of 1952, visibility was so bad that even at mid-day, your hand could scarcely be seen at six inches from your eyes. The street lights, which remained on all day, provided no more than a faint, distant glow, useless to both pedestrians and the almost non-existent traffic. Schools closed. Industry went on short time as workers, mainly those who had to commute some distance, stayed away. Even cyclists were taking a grave risk on the roads. Anxious to keep warm, people remained indoors unless it was absolutely necessary to venture out, banking up their fires with their diminishing coal ration, which served to thicken the smog. Even with all windows closed, the grey green cloud penetrated everywhere in the house. Thoughts turned to the luxury of fresh air, if and when the fearful ordeal ended. After two or three days, a fearful stench developed as the atmosphere became steadily more impregnated with fumes, comprising sulphur, carbon dioxide and the deadly variant, carbon monoxide, which could seep out of the fire-place whenever a chimney became clogged with soot.

With traffic finally at a stand-still, business and commerce severely disrupted, the air became breathable only through a handkerchief clasped over the mouth and nostrils. Children and adults alike were plunged into fits of coughing. Afterwards your sides ached, your lungs felt raw and your throat dry. There was a permanent bitter taste in the mouth. People resorted to chewing gum, others munched throat pastilles. Many people experienced a burning pain in the sinuses. After using it for wiping or spitting, one's handkerchief quickly became a soggy mess of black and yellow sputum. Disposable tissues did not enter into general usage until a decade later. An oily film formed on tap water, making it unpleasant to drink in beverages. And when the smog

vanished, thanks to a sudden downpour of rain, there were its consequences to deal with. Indoors, all surfaces were coated with that oily grey film which was difficult to wipe off. The streets bore a thicker coat of pale grey. Tuberculosis was still fairly common among school children. In every classroom there were pupils with a sickly, colourless complexion and pale, lack-lustre eyes. Then there were their permanently runny noses. One became used to grown-ups coughing and spluttering, in the house, on buses, in the street. Women who were heavy smokers were immediately identifiable by a tell-tale grey streak in their hair, above the forehead. Men and women's hair turned grey early middle age, often earlier, particularly among those who worked in factories. Cosmetics were resorted to only on special family occasions when it was usually ineptly applied. Fashion hardly registered in life. With clothes rationing still in force, working class women could only dream of new, bright clothes. Everyone, men, women and children, was obliged to wear what was available - invariably the same shabby garments they had worn for years.

Although business and commerce hit hard, the human cost was catastrophic. Many thousands died in Greater London, hundreds in Leyton where Whipps Cross Hospital was overwhelmed. Here mortuary refridgerators were soon full. It is recorded that shrouded bodies were stacked, liberally covered in ice brought in from Stratford fish market, in separate piles for males and females. Official figures of the death toll began to emerge only after a delay of 50 years. They were much higher than those originally made public. It is likely the final figures will never be known because many thousands died of the effects of the smog, long after it ended. Though many of the dead were elderly bronchitics, people of all ages who suffered from breathing disorders were easy prey. With ambulances unable to answer calls, victims were trundled into hospital with great difficulty, on stretchers, in push chairs and even on wheel barrows, to be laid on make-shift beds on the corridor floors. There many died waiting for one of the diminishing stock of oxygen cylinders.

All these hazards of living conspired to determine the pattern of existence, attitudes and thought processes of everyone about you. Few had aspirations beyond their immediate needs. Parents rarely motivated their offspring with hope or ambition. There were exceptions, of course, but apart from those children whose fathers had managed to improve their lot marginally thanks to a well-paid job, a small business or much less likely, a semi-professional background, the young were destined to live out the same grey existence as their parents. Women could rarely find fulfilling employment. Educational opportunities for girls were even more limited than for boys. Young women were expected to marry, become house-wives and mothers, and thereby subjected, without all the household appliances available today, to a colourless life of drudgery. It was widely believed, even in circles where people might be expected to know otherwise, that the education of women was a purposeless exercise.

The air was further polluted throughout the year by many tons of solid discharge from chimneys, domestic and industrial. Behind Coronation Gardens, only half a mile away, was the municipal refuse disposal works. Its tall, grimy chimney belched forth for an hour or more every weekday afternoon. The sky was darkened by low hanging clouds of fearsome black smoke carrying millions of minute solid particles. Even on the best of days, summer or winter, housewives found washing on the line flecked with grey smuts, borne on the wind. Then there were the smells of production processes, the gas works, the soap factory, the Caribonum carbon paper works and the sickly all-pervading Laurie's Preserves jam factory. Many of these problems were eliminated in the late 1950s after Parliament passed the Clean Air Act. By then I was returning home to Leyton, only for brief stays.

Noise pollution was another nuisance. Throughout the year, factories sounded their steam horns, hooters and whistles to mark the beginning and closing of shifts. There was the clatter of factory machinery, particularly in summer when doors and windows were left open. Some firms relayed radio music broadcasts to their workers by loudspeaker. It was possible sometimes to pick up in our garden the same music arriving from three sources. The biggest offender was a saw mill which regularly emitted a jarring whine. Perhaps once a week there would be a rumble of an explosion at Woolwich arsenal, six miles away, where weaponry was being tested. On the plus side, passing traffic even on the main road where lived was relatively light in those days while the frequent trolley buses were almost soundless.

But there was noise to contend with by night. Just under a mile away was the busy British Railways marshaling yard, Temple Mills. Sleep was constantly interrupted as

loudspeakers blared orders to the drivers of the shunting engines who replied with a polite peep on their whistle. Then would come the metallic cacophony of the trucks striking each other's buffers as the goods trains were assembled.

In the home, the electric light failed to supply the necessary illumination to make reading easy. Convinced that electric light consumed an inordinate amount of power and thereby pushed up household bills, everyone, including my own parents, used single 50 or 60 watt bulbs, which were totally inadequate. These hung usually without shade or reflector from the ceiling. Everywhere indoors seemed to be dim Looking back I wonder how my eyesight was not seriously impaired for I spent many hours a week poring over books, swatting for exams and writing essays.

Few houses enjoyed the benefits of electrical gadgets. There was usually a single power point in the living room, reserved for the radio. Not until the early 1950s did TV ownership grow substantially. Cooking was done by gas stove, heating of sorts was almost universally by coal fire and limited to one room. Much of the benefit was lost up the chimney. Some supplemented the meagre supply of warmth in the uninsulated homes with paraffin oil heaters. These gave off fumes which further polluted the air in the house. Central heating was a long way off, though a few larger dwellings had a primitive, inefficient central heating system. A few homes had a gas fire. More modern houses had an electric socket in every room and could use portable electric heaters.

Low light levels in the home, looking back, probably accounted for the intensity of the splitting headaches most people endured. Sometimes these could be dreadfully oppressive. Aspirin pills were consumed by the thousand. People were subject to irritability and moodiness which soured family relationships and often led to pointless feuding between neighbours, or between house owners who shared with relatives, or with lodgers to whom they let out their upstairs rooms. The polluted air was also partly responsible for this, oxygen levels being significantly lower than what was required to make the body and mind function properly.

Public transport, particularly in winter or late at night, was very often an ordeal. I was not alone in experiencing migraine-type headaches during and after journeys of any length, on the ubiquitous electric trolley buses which served Leyton and adjacent boroughs. Perhaps the high voltage electric current which drove these vehicles emitted waves which affected the brain. I never experienced this misery on petrol buses. To avoid the additional nuisance of smoking, which was permitted then on the upper deck of buses, I always travelled downstairs whenever possible. Smoking was universal, on buses, the tube, in cinemas, cafes, pubs but worst of all, in the family living room, lounge and bedrooms. It was commonly believed, even by medical people at the time, that smoking was beneficial to health. Smokers accepted without question the outrageous claims made by cigarette company adverts. "It's one of the few pleasures I enjoy in life," they would assert proudly, as blowing grey smoke into the air and brushing grey ash from their sleeves and lapels. To take up this anti-social habit was considered to be testimony to attaining adulthood. 'If that's true,' I used to think to myself, 'I don't want to become an adult.'

The natural world showed itself only fitfully. Many home owners cultivated flowers, shrubs, even trees in their backyards. These could not be seen from the road, though you caught tantalising glimpses through garden gates. Some keen gardeners made an effort with their front gardens. These were usually masked by dull, uniform privet hedges. Every house had curtains at the front windows, usually full length, drawn back to both sides, with lace covering the lower half of the windowpanes. Whatever colour these curtains may once have been had long since faded. There were few dry cleaners in those days, so curtains remained in place for years, steadily gathering dust. Their function was to provide a modicum of privacy. No one wanted neighbours or passers-by to see the condition of their front room, for most families the 'best room,' their fraying carpets and worn out furniture, none of which could be replaced, times being as hard as they were.

Two front gardens higher up Grange Park Road, on the corner of Church Road, were graced by a profusion of flowering almond blossom for a few days every spring. For a welcome display of flowers and shrubs, people strolled along the High Road to Coronation Gardens, where the Council maintained beds of geraniums, tulips, dahlias and roses. Other welcome splashes of colour were provided by green grocers' displays and the occasional florist's shop. Many years later, the Council resumed their pre-war policy of planting trees by the

roadside. By the 1970s these had matured and provided a great improvement in many otherwise nondescript streets. A little light relief was the vegetation which grew spontaneously upon the many bomb sites. There was a large area at the High Road end of Grange Park Road, once occupied by shops and houses, known to everyone as the 'bomb damage'. This offered every year a profusion of flowering weeds and attractive, cultivated flowers and shrubs surviving in spaces which had prior to the bombing been well-tended gardens. Dozens of children used to play here in the holidays and week-ends in what was in effect a prototype adventure playground. Older lads later on played football and cricket on a leveled area. It was not until the late 1950s that this site was built over in a development called Thornhill Gardens.

Though the term was not to come into use for many years, it was 'quality of life ' which was lacking locally. If peoples' lives were drab and monotonous, this was reflected in their mindlessness. Working-class prejudices abounded. Superstition lingered on. Victorian social attitudes prevailed regarding subjects such as unmarried mothers, divorce, mental ill-health, eccentric behaviour, lifestyle etc. One seldom met an adult who seemed well-informed, progressive or enlightened about anything. Expressing a point of view, or an opinion, was an exercise for repeating second-hand views, commonly-held notions or received misinformation. On rare occasions adults, when ceased grumbling about their health, work or family squabbles, began recalling their younger days, war experiences, service abroad. Just as their young audience was becoming enthralled, a husband or wife, aunt or uncle would intervene; "Oh shut up ! No one wants to hear all that again !"

Among a local population of negative, grumpy, cynical people, seemingly incapable of positive or more than superficial thought, no one held strong beliefs in anything. Some people boasted of their 'principles'. These arose from habit rather than conviction. Double standards were common. Church attendance had already declined sharply a generation before and continued to fall, though parents still packed off children to Sunday school at the Congregational Chapel in Grange Park Road, more for their own convenience. Few people were concerned with politics either. The East End of London automatically voted overwhelmingly Labour. Though there was general mistrust of local councillors and grumbling over council decisions, dissent, arising from political differences, was never heard. I had to wait until entering the Sixth Form at Grammar School before I heard serious discussion of politics or current affairs.

Every home had a daily newspaper delivered, perhaps two on Sunday, besides a local weekly. Since the newspapers were what are now called tabloids, and were read mainly for entertainment and sports news, there was little chance they would learn much about what was really going on in the world or exchange information with others. Discussions or slight differences in opinion could end in a row. There was a well-stocked public library just down the road, where all the newspapers were available, plus many informative books. Many simple facts could have been obtained or verified there if people could be bothered to look by.

BBC Radio, then the sole broadcaster, provided entertainment in the home. Much air time was given to plays and serialisations of classic novels which were very popular with listeners. Apart from a dedicated 'Children Hour' from 5 - 6 p.m. six days a week, there was little other special provision for the young. No doubt most of them enjoyed the same fare as their elders. Children talked excitedly about episodes of murder mystery serials and thrillers which appealed to their imagination. Classical music was given a fair rein and that olde-worlde 'light music' which enjoyed over-generous provision. The public had a near insatiable appetite for weekly comedy shows featuring their favourite comedians. Radio had contributed to the demise of the old music halls or variety theatre. Many performers had transferred easily to radio and instead of audiences in the hundreds were now enjoyed by millions of listeners. Vaudeville and variety shows such as Monday Night At Eight, Variety Bandbox and Musical Hall provided a perfect vehicle for them. Some comedians had their own weekly programs, as did a handful of popular singers of the day. Broadcasts by dance bands with their menu of popular songs and dance music also featured strongly in program scheduling.

Apart from the informative news bulletins which retained the unreserved confidence of listeners, there were very few current affairs or discussion programs, almost no attempt at in-depth investigation or enquiries into specific subjects. There were few experimental programs and few innovations. In fact it was declared BBC policy to

avoid controversy at all cost. This don't-rock-the-boat approach meant that much radio output was bland and routine, as colourless and grey as the existence of its captive audience. It was not until the mid 1950s that the BBC struck out in new directions with 'Riders of the Range,' 'Journey into Space' and 'The Goon Show.'

My parents, to be fair, tried very hard to brighten our existence an widen our horizons with trips to the West End, the museums in Kensington, Hyde Park, the Zoo, Madame Tussauds, the Tower of London. There were picnics in Epping Forest and by the Roding at Abridge. One excursion took us to Broxbourne where we played alongside the Lea and others to Hampton Court and Richmond-on-Thames, where we hired a dinghy and rowed across the river. There was a holiday with my grandparents in Sussex with wonderful walking adventures along the South Downs, where the countryside spread out below, the fields looking like a huge chessboard, divided neatly into squares of innumerable shades of green. I used to loathe seaside trips to East London's Blackpool, Southend. The sea, really the Thames estuary, was never azure as depicted in books or posters, but muddy and strewn with floating debris. It was always unrelenting in its greyness, reflecting the misty, grey skies above. The sand was by no stretch of poetic imagination golden, but a disappointing grey, streaked with oil. A holiday at Worthing, where the sun shone almost all day, proved that the seaside could be like the exciting, happy, colourful places I read about. These occasional, pleasurable experiences introduced us to the wider, more interesting, exciting world beyond our district. Our imagination was awakened. Perhaps aspirations to get on and get out were sparked off. For the moment though, there would be no escape.

For a temporary but instant release from the dull, monotonous realities of life, people went to the pictures. There were a dozen cinemas in the district, the majority belonging to the main four circuits, ABC, Gaumont-British, Rank etc which offered the same program in the four corners of the borough. The latest releases were shown from Monday to Saturday in continuous session and a one-off program usually of an old film, on Sundays. This was the most popular form of entertainment outside the home. Everyone went to the pictures at least once a week, a fair number of individuals, twice or more. There were also special Saturday morning cinema clubs. Queues formed every night outside the Ritz, Savoy, Rialto or Rex. Aggregate attendances were enormous. Cinema was very big business. Some films of those days are now considered cinema classics though most were instantly forgettable. The more discerning cinema going-public could recognise the good from the mediocre but it was to be many years before serious study of cinema and cinematography developed. By the mid 1950s cinema had a minority following, its audience lost to TV.

Few people I knew ever analysed the films they had seen or thought about them afterwards. Many went to see particular genre, westerns, thrillers, Hollywood musicals, gangster movies, war, love stories. Comments were limited to 'not bad,' 'exciting,' 'boring' 'some catchy tunes,' 'it was far-fetched' or 'it was touching….I cried all the way through,' 'it was thrilling,' 'very funny,' 'couldn't understand why people laughed,' 'enjoyable - if you like that sort of thing' in short, not at all profound observations. Many people of course were attracted by the stars. 'I always enjoy his/her pictures,' 'he/she has never made a bad film,' 'I was enjoying it until x came into it - he/she spoiled it.'

It was many years before the work of individual directors was recognised. Alfred Hitchcock was the only director I had ever heard of until much later. No comments were ever made about the theme of films. 'It's about the war,' 'it's religious,' 'this woman married to a rich man isn't happy - there's a murder,' again not very informative. I am convinced that if people had been encouraged to develop their critical faculties, even for the simple purpose of discussing the films they had seen, they could well have become more discerning in many other aspects of their life. Unfortunately the ethos in education in those days was instruction and acceptance without question of what children were told by their teachers and elders. Heaven forbid that the young should have enquiring minds, arrive at their own opinions or devise their own criteria, in short make up their own minds. Conformity was imperative. Anything other than that would lead to a breakdown of society, perhaps Heaven forbid, revolution !

Of course people went to the cinema for escapism. And there was plenty to escape from. This was fully understood by the film studios, British and American,

who had a generation earlier realised what the public wanted. They responded by giving them exactly that.

My 'escape' was reading. The elderly gentleman who lived next door, Mr Fitton, had lived in Australia for over half his 85 years. We had interesting chats over the fence, about his experiences. He presented me, when I was about eight or nine, with a set of huge books, profusely illustrated, many of the photographs being in full colour, called 'The World of Today'. 'Today' meant the early 1900s when the volumes were published. I poured over the picture of foreign lands where things and people seemed so different. The coloured maps fascinated me. I became almost overnight obsessively interested in geography and the possibility of foreign travel. Geography became my best subject and continued to be so until my interests turned to foreign languages on entering the Sixth Form.

So half-way through Grammar School I had already decided I had to get away from Leyton. But how? Run away? I began to look at my options. My immediate wants, food, shelter and clothing were assured by remaining at home. Many boys and girls were aware from an early age that they were trapped and became resigned to it. At least they could free themselves from their parents by leaving school at the minimum aged permitted by law, finding a job, getting married and finding a flat or rooms, or so they thought. Early marriage was the norm. If a girl was not engaged by nineteen or twenty, she became really concerned. Most young men aged eighteen to twenty were eligible for two years National Service. This played havoc with teenage romances. Engagements were often broken off during a long period when the boyfriend or fiancé was posted abroad. Some bright girls opted for a partner who had already completely his obligations.

Unfortunately there were many marriages between relatively immature young women aged between eighteen and twenty and young men four to five years older. The age gap, coupled with the fact that many ex-National Service returned home disturbed, sometimes even traumatised, by their experiences led to many broken marriages. Newly-married couples were usually hard up and were obliged, ironically, to take rooms in their parent's homes, at least for the early years of marriage, or find cheap accommodation nearby. Was that an escape? For me that seemed like an act of final resignation, an admission that the grey, colourless existence would keep you prisoner for ever.

One well-known writer, born in the East End, remarked that in his day, the only way out for a boy, keen to climb under the net, was to become a boxer. For a girl, the equivalent was to become a shop assistant in a West End store or a chorus girl. There were numerous well-known local examples of youngsters who broke free in this way. Neither option was open to me ! Though it took a while for me to realise, escape could be achieved through education and infinite patience. A few boys and girls lucky enough to attend Grammar schools were discovering this avenue. Suddenly, doing well at school and passing exams seemed to make sense. If I could find a job eventually which paid enough to allow me to live and work in more amenable circumstances, all my dreams of a new, exciting and rewarding life would be fulfilled. Leyton and the East End represented failure. Just about everywhere else beckoned as the world of success. And as I was to learn later, a number of my contemporaries, including the attractive little girl who lived opposite me, who won a scholarship to attend a stage school, found ways to break away. Had educational opportunity been available to many more youngsters, and the grossly unfair 11+ exam abolished, doubtless many more would have done so.

Not that I had already mapped out the career path I wanted to take. No one in my family or among family friends had entered a profession. None of them had ever aspired to anything more than a steady job, usually in a factory. Advice on careers had not been available to them at school. When I entered the sixth-form, fully supported in my decision by my parents, many school friends had already decided, on shrewd parental advice or by persuasion, to study the sciences and look further ahead to medicine, dentistry, industrial laboratory research etc. Others left school after the O Levels to enter accountancy, banking and insurance, while another group who had been keen members of the School Cadet Corps, joined the army as boy soldiers. Local government service also recruited many of these early leavers, though as I recall, most of them had achieved only minimal success in the GCE. For a time I toyed with the idea of seeking entry into journalism but then decided to further my language studies for which I had shown some flair. I was advised for the first time that I should make University my goal. I would still be in

my early 20s on graduation. By then the two-year National Service obligation might well have been abolished. There was still plenty of time to make up my mind.

Money was tight at home but my family lived frugally and after my younger brother left school in 1953 to work as a clerk in the City, an opening which was considered a great opportunity for a boy who had not attended grammar school, things became easier. I also began to make a contribution to the family purse. It was easy to find temporary employment during school and later on, university holidays. There was an acute labour shortage. I toiled in a rag reclamation factory, as a clerk in a brewery, in a scrap metal yard, worked on postal deliveries at Christmas, laboured in a dairy, canvassed house-to-house for the electoral register and had a long spell as hospital porter. The work was often tedious, but I felt my experience of life was broadening considerably. Most people, I soon learned, had nothing but an intensely grey life before them. I felt some sense of guilt. that I had an opportunity to make something more of myself and they sadly, had not.

The Sixth Form at the Grammar School was a liberating experience. Teachers and students enjoyed a rewarding, informal relationship. Discipline was relaxed and we were treated more as adults. We were free to work at our own pace at our chosen subjects. Though set books were obligatory reading for exam purposes, we were encouraged to read more widely than the curriculum required. This entailed an enormous amount of study out of school hours, in our own time. No one considered it a chore. The detailed analysis we were required to undertake of novels, plays, poetry, structure of language, translation etc. very soon began to change our tastes. At last our critical faculties were being developed and sharpened. Once again I felt sadness at the thought that so few youngsters in my district were given the same chance to enjoy the opportunity.

I was certainly becoming choosy. I dropped the habit of regular cinema attendance. Routine films now seemed boring, unsatisfying and often juvenile. The theatre largely took its place among my interests through school trips, theatre visits and taking part in amateur and school dramatics. The controversial Theatre Workshop pioneered by Joan Littlewood and Gerald Raffles in the nearby Theatre Royal, Stratford, was an attraction. I came to loathe the shallow popular music of Tin Pan Alley broadcast on radio. Most of it was mindless, repetitive and of course, wholly commercialised. I had long treasured memories of the broadcasts of jazz and swing music during the war. This was much more rhythmic, tuneful and extravert. The emphasis seemed to be on instrumental musicianship, rather than the star vocalist, male or female. But even jazz singers sounded different and left a lasting impression. I began to break loose, visiting jazz clubs in the West End, jazz concerts at the Albert Hall, Conway Hall and Walthamstow Town Hall. Then there was my growing jazz record collection entirely on shellac 78 rpm discs. I used to meet with kindred spirits who had similar tastes. We listened to records on my Collaro portable, in each other's homes. There was much discussion on the merits of musicians and styles which sometimes was even more interesting than the music. We gained a great deal of satisfaction from being free spirits with individual tastes. We saw ourselves as rebels - of sorts.

Through University I was introduced to a wider world. It is said travel broadens the mind. It also widens one's experience. One by one I visited France, Germany and then spent two years studying and working in Spain and Portugal, countries whose languages, literature, history and art were the subjects of my degree studies. The sunlight of Mediterranean regions has a particular magic for visitors from northern European countries. The natural colours of plants, buildings, churches, the sea, beaches and sky reveal themselves. These new panoramas give the beholder an indescribable feeling of liberation. The astonishing collection of art in El Prado, Madrid, the Alhambra of Granada, the architectural wealth of Seville and Toledo when first seen suggest that you had previously been living on other planet. The imagination takes off, the mind works overtime, simply through the process of absorbing the world of colour. Negative attitudes disappear. The environment no longer depresses or oppresses. You become surprised at what you are doing and what you can achieve. You begin to forget that the world could ever be without colour. Grey does not belong here. Grey attitudes, grey thoughts, grey people, the grey life might never have existed.

But there are aspects of life which cannot be associated with any other colour but grey. 'Grey areas' denote zones of uncertainty, where compromise has to be made between conflicting opinions, in matters which cannot be

classified as right or wrong, so a measure of doubt is accepted by both sides. 'I beg to differ' is a declaration of willingness to accept that other opinions exist. I often think that I might have been a better person if I had been imbued, from an early age, with an extra dash of tolerance and understanding, rather than being dictated to about what was good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable. 'Grey matter' describes the brain, the ability to think, to reason, to create. No one would ever think of it being anything other than a noble shade of grey !

Grey also means for many people subtlety, an antidote for stark contrast. In cinema the 'film noir' is characterised by the use of monochrome. These films are invariably thrillers or mysteries, pessimistic in tone, set in a seedy neighbourhood, many of the characters living squalid lives on the edge of society. Monochrome, and the clever use of lighting, enhances the atmosphere of realism, through shadows and skillful use of all the imaginable shades of grey. Colour is of course first choice for musicals, outdoor adventure films, westerns, period costume dramas and epics. No director of a 'film noir' would use Technicolor to tell his story. A bright variety of colours would be distracting and totally irrelevant.

The colourless nature of our environment accounts for the introverted, anonymous lives, or rather pathetic half-lives, some people led. We recognised some nondescript individuals who lived for years at particular addresses in our own and adjoining streets, but that was the extent of socialising with them. Some of them were not known by name, never spoke, smiled or acknowledged even their next door neighbours. In public they were always expressionless. For them there was no community. Just who lived at some addresses was a mystery, for no one could recall seeing anyone ever go in or out. None of these people stood out for any eccentricity, notable feature of dress, appearance or behaviour. They were simply there, just existing. My mother's gossip circle was usually well-informed about the trivia of day-to-day life locally and made it their business to exchange details of other people's business. Even they knew nothing about this significant number of people who lived in their midst. "That man's only half alive," "I'm sure she's in a trance all the time," "That couple live in a different world from us," or "Some people choose to live like that," were some of their comments.

I soon found that the average inhabitant of France, Spain and elsewhere on the continent was more likely to reveal his or her personality, after a very short time, compared with English people. Whereas at home you might spend an age getting to know something of the real Mrs Smith, Mr Robinson, Miss Jones or an individual who lived down the street, you soon found there was no such problem abroad. Sometimes there was an element of shyness at first, as you find between strangers everywhere. Of course there were people you did not warm to, others you soon endeavoured to avoid as much as possible, but there were very few who did not attempt to develop a point of contact. Introverted, catatonic types with a communication problem simply did not exist, or at least I met very few. They are all despite their circumstances, and despite the sometimes grossly inferior educational opportunities compared with those generally available in Britain, endeavouring to live and enjoy life. They leave the house often in their leisure time, to walk about the tree-lined squares, streets, along the riverside, take refreshment in the open air at tables in their plazas and patios, converse and laugh, wear their brightest clothes, delight in the vitality of their children. Mere existence would not satisfy them as it seems to do with many English people.

These factors combine to account for the facility with which I found learning to speak French, Spanish and Portuguese. Easy communication is 95% of the battle ! Abroad even poorly educated folk, from the most humble ranks of society, seemed to have at their disposal a greater vocabulary than their English counterparts. It has been said that an Englishman never knows how extensive the resources of English are until he starts searching for the answers to clues in crosswords. Language at least is in wider use in other cultures and not hidden away in dictionaries as it is here at home. Another observer has suggested that the average Englishman gets through life with a basic vocabulary of perhaps 1,000 words, when there are probably over 150,000 in his language, the richest in the world. The uneducated individual, particularly in a deprived East London suburb in my day, did not communicate because sadly, he did not have the necessary word power. As one thinks by using words, the East Ender was also at a disadvantage because he

did not have the words to express his thoughts, even to himself.

But above all things there is the cumulative effect of sun, light, air, environment - perhaps most important of all - the variety of colour, the quality of life which determine human behaviour. If there is no quality of life, available for free, there can be no fuller life, nor complete human beings.

Recollections of Leyton, Christmas Past

by Dave Street

In about 1907 my maternal Grandfather obtained employment at the Temple Mills wagon yards and moved his family from Lambeth to Claude Road Leyton. They were still there when, in August 1915, a German airship dropped a high explosive device in Claude Road. The bomb destroyed one house, damaged several others and smashed windows in nearby streets. Soon after the family moved to Sedgwick Road, where my aunt continued to live in the same house for the next seventy eight years. My Mother moved to Walthamstow in 1944 but our family continued to keep Christmas with my Aunt at Sedgwick Road.

All of this happened in the halcyon days before television invaded Christmas and families gathered together, ate, drank, entertained themselves and talked to one another. Public transport operated until midday on Christmas Morning and we would catch a "Trolley Bus" from Hoe Street and get off at the bus stop in Leyton High Road close by Bennett's funeral parlour, after which it was a short walk to Sedgwick Road, with its "oil-shop" (a general hardware store which sold paraffin oil) on one corner and some kind of run down garage or motor dealers on the other. At night my parents would walk back to Walthamstow with me, asleep, in my father's arms.

My Grandfather worked at Temple Mills for thirty eight years but had retired to rural Essex, and only ventured back to Sedgwick Road at Christmas. Many food stuffs were still rationed and he would arrive, on Christmas Eve, carrying a battered old suit case containing a few clothes and a plucked chicken. Two conies (rabbits) their heads wrapped in newspaper and with the fur still on were tied to the handle. The chicken was roasted on Christmas Day and the rabbits were for Boxing Day and a rabbit pie later in the week. Liquid refreshment was a bottle of port for the women, a few bottles of Brown Ale or Stout for the men and ginger beer for the kids. As I grew older I was allowed to join Dad and Grand Dad in another Christmas tradition - a Christmas Morning drink down at the Lion & Key or, occasionally, the Three Blackbirds.

Women were left at home to cook the Christmas Dinner while men walked to the pub. Children would be left out side with a bottle of ginger beer and a packet of crisps, resplendent with a little blue waxed paper wrapper containing the salt ! Present day Health and Safety regulations ban the blue salt wrapper and leaving children outside a public house probably constitutes child abuse or, at the very least, neglect. In the early 1950's it was accepted as a normal part of growing up.

By 1961 most of my family were dispersed elsewhere and the "tradition" of the Christmas Morning trip to the pub had all but died out. Aged just 16 and nursing a hangover from a Christmas Eve celebration at "The Bell" Walthamstow I walked into the public bar of the Lion & Key, for the first time, on my own.

There, a gauze of cigarette smoke hung in a haze over a few, solitary, men (women still stayed home). No one asked me for proof of age or identity and the bar man did not question my order of a pint of "Black and Tan" (Guinness and Bitter mixed and the Bitter has to go in first - in those days bar men did not have to be told that). I seem to remember that the price was about one shilling and ten pence, old money; less than twenty pence in current coinage. This was the first of many youthful visits I made inside the Lion & Key and later the Three Black Birds. Thereafter, whenever I visited my Aunt I would go to one or the other for a pint, or three, before catching a bus back to Walthamstow.

Eventually, I left Walthamstow and have not been back to Leyton for many years. I am told the Lion & Key has now been demolished to make way for yet more flats; while the Three Black Birds stands empty and neglected*. I cannot help but think that this is not progress. Perhaps if I can win the Euro Millions Lottery, on Friday, I will buy the Three Blackbirds, reopen it as an old style London pub and reintroduce the tradition of the Xmas Morning drink - strictly men only of course !!

* The Three Blackbirds became the Numa venue for wedding receptions and similar events.

Wood Street, Leytonstone

by Dave Clifton

I stumbled across your 'Bottom Draw' website tonight as I was browsing the web and could not believe that a photo of Wood Street Leytonstone would appear. In the past when I've searched it's always Wood Street Walthamstow that turns up.

For the first sixteen years of my life from 1950 I lived in Wood Street. The first years in upstairs rooms at no.5 with my mother and father, then when my grandfather died we moved to no 11 with my nan. The house clearly appears in the VE day photo (above). It's the house by the lamppost. There were three houses together and they were the oldest in the street. I can't be certain who, if any of my family are in the picture, as my Uncle Bob Bishop was at the time a Japanese POW. They had no idea at that time he was later to return safe after four years of uncertainty, so they may not have felt like celebrating until VJ day

My mum was born there and my nan & grandad Bishop raised their eleven children in that house. Regretfully in late 1965 the notice came to move and the house was demolished. In our new maisonette we had all luxuries of modern living, but after over 50 years in Wood Street for my nan and mum it was not a happy time.

My Uncle Bert was manager of Evans Grocers and Hardware stores in the High Road. I can just remember when it had counters and his office / standing / desk was at the back of the shop. The lady on the biscuit counter had all the large tins with glass tops along the front. That's about all I can remember as I sometimes used to get a taster. It later went self service and then closed. Now there's a petrol garage on the site. It was also the place of Alfred Hitchcock's birth and early home.

Stolls the bakers shop, where my aunt worked, baked very good crusty rolls, miniature Hovis loaves and slices of bread pudding. Always worth a call in to the shop on my way home from Mayville School. Also along that stretch of the High Road were the takeaways. On the corner of Mayville Road, fish and chips, peas-pudding and Sav[aloy]s from the butchers in the High Road, and the pie and mash shop just off the High Road in West Street.

Wood Street was a cul-de-sac and we were always playing in the street. The ladder bar on the lamppost was bent with the amount of swinging by the kids and the bottom was our cricket wicket. 'What's the Time Mr Wolf' was played across from one side of the street to

the other. The house across the end of the street (the front faced the High Road) had large gates at the back which backed onto Wood Street and made a good football goal area. I think this was the back of the old police station that served until the new one was built near the fire station. The bus stop in the High Road is still in the same place. I can remember the 661 trolleybus to the Bakers Arms and 10 to Abridge.

The stage in the VE day picture is at the top of the road, it's along the side of the corner shop building which was a sweet and tobacconists shop. There they took the empty fizzy drink bottles back. 1d or 3d for the return. The owners sold penny drinks, These were made in old sauce bottles with a sherbet tablet. I think the choice was red, green or yellow. On the opposite side at the top was a greengrocer. He owned a barrow which he pushed to Stratford wholesale veg market and back. My dad borrowed occasionally. No cars then to move stuff.

Wood Street only had a few houses and was a close community. There was a small builders yard, then at no. 3 were the Jacksons, no. 5 (after we left the Stimpsons' son). 7 the Dobeys, 9 was Stowes, 11 was the Bishops / Cliftons, 13 Thornes, 15 Huxsmith (not sure). On the other side was James luxury car hire yard. (They had their office next to Middletons the newsagents which was on the corner of Cathall Road and the High Road and ran two Humber limos) no. 6 Shepperds, 8 Stimpsons, 10 Jacksons, 12 Dodds,

Denmark Street - our recycling centre. For a while on the corner of Denmark Street was a TV repair shop, not that us kids was bothered about the repairs, but he did sell us the magnets from around the old TV tubes. These were broken up and very powerful. Further down the road was the rag and bone man's yard. They would take old woollens, cottons and newspapers all good for a few pence pocket money.

Nothing that new then, living near the Harrow Green we had recycling, takaway food shops, hire cars, library, postoffice and the best crusty bread for miles, not to mention Leo's cafe with his own-made Italian ice cream, although this was a bit further up the High Road.

A few memories jogged here.

Leyton and Leytonstone Filmgoing Memories from the 1950s and 1960s

by David Evans

The Cinema in Leyton and Leytonstone, 2010, compiled by David Boote brought back many recollections of my picturegoing in Leyton and Leytonstone throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.

I was born in 1946 and lived in Leyton – Tennyson Road – until 1971, so the period in question saw the continued flourishing and subsequent demise of cinema in the Borough but my earliest memory goes back to 1950 when my parents took me, aged four, to the Rialto for Disney's Treasure Island. All I can recall of this is hiding under the seat when the actor playing the role of Ben Gunn appeared on the screen. However, my parents persevered and circa 1952 visits to the pictures, usually accompanied by just my mother, became a weekly event. She favoured the Ritz over the Gaumont – still called the Savoy by many at the time – the Century – often called the King's after its previous name – and the Essoldo or, as we all still called it, the Picture House. We never really visited the Plaza together but this venue will be covered later.

Although aged just six or seven, but armed with a vivid imagination, going into the Ritz was like entering a very special world with its thick carpets, photographs of stars on the walls and an auditorium which seemed the epitome of luxury with silk screen curtains which were covered, I think, in a design incorporating flowers and butterflies. On each side of the theatre there were metal grills and in between these niches containing statues of what looked like nymphs of some sort. Here I have memories of Lullaby of Broadway, Gone With The Wind (1952 reissue), Quo Vadis, Lili – in which I thought the puppets were real people - and excitingly in 3-D, The Charge at Feather River, with my mother gasping as Indian lances rained down on the audience, Kiss Me Kate and Hondo. My introduction to another innovation – Cinemascope – was a western called The Command which disappointed me as it had no 3-D effect but others in the process, especially The High and the Mighty with its scenes of a stricken airliner 20,000 feet above the Pacific held my attention and it was at this time that I

pestered my parents to let me go, alone, to the Ritz to see Doris Day in Lucky Me, advertised as Lucky You! It's Doris Day in the First Cinemascope Musical! With song lyrics such as men who pick up rusty pins, marry girls with double chins you can see that 1954 audiences weren't that lucky! From then on I often went to the pictures alone, or with my school friend Peter Such - and we are still very good friends – something really unimaginable, for such young children, these days.

The interesting thing about the Gaumont (photo above) was the raised sloping walkway on either side of the auditorium. Here, patrons could watch the picture until seats became vacant. This seems strange these days but as performances were continuous, at the time, you slotted in where you could, even in the middle of a film. You would then see the other half, later in the programme, and leave at that this is where we came in moment. How I remember my parents sometimes disagreeing about which moment that was! One vivid memory of the Gaumont is when I came home from there having left my school cap behind. My Mother put on her coat, jumped on the trolleybus – 685 or 687 – to

the cinema and persuaded the manager to put up the house lights while she searched around and found it! By the mid-1960s audiences were really falling off and I remember being almost the only person in the Gaumont for an afternoon showing of What's New Pussycat?

The Century (photo above) had to deal with the widescreen craze too and it was here, in a packed theatre, that we saw White Christmas which was Paramount Pictures' first production in VistaVision. My father was a huge Bing Crosby fan and we probably sat through that this is where we came in moment so that he could enjoy some of his singing again. The following year, 1955, RKO released Underwater! as its first production in Superscope and off we went to see that more than likely as it had been ballyhooed as the first picture to be premiered under water in California!! The Century was also the cinema where I saw my first X Certificate picture, The Brides of Dracula, 1960. I went with another lad who lived in Tennyson Road and as we were both tall for our age – fourteen – we got in (sixteen was the age limit) without any bother. In addition, we sat in the circle, something I had never done before.

The Essoldo/Picture House, just beyond Coronation Gardens, was considered, by most, to be Leyton's fleapit cinema. From what I remember, the circle was always closed off – probably condemned? – and the staff sprayed the auditorium with disinfectant at regular intervals. However, they were in the forefront of the Cinemascope age and presented much of the 20th Century-Fox output in that medium. One memory is of my mother telling a screaming girl to shut up when Johnny Ray was on screen in There's No Business Like Show Business and another is of sitting through a very boring epic, The Egyptian. I also saw what I thought was a very exciting adventure yarn, Son of Sinbad, there more than once during the school holidays, but it was another of Leyton's cinemas, the Plaza which made great efforts to bring in the youngsters at such times of the year.

Plus Six Cartoons was the BIG attraction at the Plaza during the school holiday period, especially the long six-week summer break. This meant that you sat through these plus two pictures, all for what was probably a shilling. Although a little more upmarket than the Essoldo/Picture House - its circle was not condemned but disinfectant was still sprayed about by the staff – the seats were somewhat rickety and I remember some even collapsing during a performance. Something I saw there more than once(!) was Blackbeard the Pirate, a swashbuckler starring Robert Newton, in an over-the-top performance as Blackbeard, and Linda Darnell as the put-upon heroine. Another gem was something called Where There's a Will about a Cockney family inheriting a run-down farm in the West Country. You had to sit through that if you wanted to see Bugs Bunny and company.

Apart from occasional visits to the Rialto, usually combined with shopping at Bearman's department store and approached through an arcade attached to it, I only remember going to one other Leytonstone cinema, the Rex, with my father, to see Singing' in the Rain. In all fairness, with so much choice in Leyton, there was no need to make the journey.

One other aspect of 1950s/early 1960s cinemagoing was the newsreel. In an age before television took hold, this was the way most came into contact with moving pictures of events in the news. At the Ritz it was Associated British-Pathe with its crowing cockerel and at the Essoldo / Picture House and Plaza, I think, it was Gaumont-British with a camera lens turned on the audience. However, the most exciting, for me, was always at the Gaumont where a stirring fanfare introduced British Movietone and Geoffrey Sumner Reporting to the audience. Disasters, ship launchings, beauty pageants and sporting events were just some of the subjects covered each week and before entering the cinema these could be checked as there was always a poster in the foyer featuring the main themes of the current newsreel – something which, like Leyton and Leytonstone cinema of the 1950s/1960s, has gone for ever.

Eton Manor

by George Harmon

I am an old Eton Manor boy. I was very active from about 1952 to 1959 and retained my membership until the club closed after moving to Australia.

On my arrival in Australia I was able to meet some fellow Manorites here. Only this week I was reading the club rules which I still retain. I have a photo of some lads taken about 1910 who I believe were also members. The photo is framed and hangs proudly on my study wall. It stands as a reminder of how they lived and were clothed in dad's handmedowns. I will take a copy and forward to you and the members.

Being a member of the Manor was a privilege and high moral and ethical standards were upheld. Bullying in any form was not permitted. If such was to occur the perpetrator could be challenged and the victim if smaller or younger would be given a champion who would then challenge the bully to a contest. Often the contest would take place in the boxing ring with a referee overseeing the following dished out proceedings. At the end of the event the ex bully and his victim would then shake hands and the matter ended with honour satisfied. I never heard of any repeat offences.

Such a background has remained with me as being the expected standard of a Manorite. Being a member of Eton Manor not only covered sporting events but there were also cultural activities. Perhaps one cultural event could include the shooting gallery, I believe in the basement of Riseholme Street, Hackney. There was assistance with employment and I believe some sponsorship to places like Australia. A reference from Eton Manor for a lad seeking employment was a highly valued document.

As a member of the athletics club I and two mates had the opportunity to go to Australia and train at Portsea, Victoria, at the Percy Cerutty facility. We were all apprentices at the time and thus declined the opportunity and the possibility of a short but possibly brilliant athletics career.

My wife on reading the Club rules stated there should be more of it today, Rule 28 being: Members must at all times in and around Club buildings, conduct themselves in a gentlemanly manner.

Reading the copy of Understone, and the reference to Arthur Villiers and Eton Manor, reminds me of the curious fact that he appeared to have a full set of false teeth made of gold. I am sure that such vital information would be of great interest to any reader.

Another detail regarding Arthur Villiers and Eton Manor at the Wilderness that he was often commissioning new or alteration building works. He would ask of members what we thought about some possible project and then lo and behold it would happen. He always used the same builder named Dean from Leyton.

Major Villiers, as he was known, also had a collection of bicycles including at least one penny farthing. We were allowed to ride them and I remember riding along a concrete road outside of the Wilderness. On applying the hand brake which clamped onto the large front wheel, if too hard, the result was that you were instantly propelled forward and downward onto the road surface. After the first mishap you learned to straddle the handlebars prior to your possible forward projection.

Another associate of Eton Manor was an Eton educated man, Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1884-1968. He was a very distinguished British civil servant. We knew of him as Sir Edward Cadogan, I am sure it was the same person. Groups of members were allowed to visit and stay at his property somewhere near Oxford, quite an event for lads from the East end of London.

Baron Ashby from Leytonstone

by David Boote

Eric Ashby was born at 12 Fairlop Road, Leytonstone (middle house in the photo above) on 24th August 1904. He was to became a biologist and leading university administrator, and an early thinker about protection of the environment.

Eric Ashby's father Herbert Charles Ashby was an office worker born in Leytonstone. He only lived at 12 Fairlop Road for a short time, between about 1902 and 1906. By 1911 the family were living in Shortlands near Bromley, Kent, and the father was accountant to a champagne dealer. Eric's grandfather had been a shipping clerk. Eric Ashby was educated at the City of London School between 1916 and 1923 and his first choices of subject were English and Latin rather than science. Later in life he was to write and give lectures in a marvellously clear and attractive style, and to be a great communicator in dealing with other academics and in writing books, articles and published letters. At school he became a Sergeant-Major in the Officers' Training Corps, and he learnt to play the violin well. His best sport was swimming. He became interested in mathematics and science. He was unsuccessful in applying for scholarships at Oxford and Cambridge but got a place at Imperial College, London (then called the Royal College of Science) to study chemistry. There he switched to botany and geology and gained a first class honours degree.

Ashby joined the teaching staff of Imperial College and later moved to Bristol University, developing statistical analysis techniques for plant growth. In 1931 he married a colleague from Imperial College, Helen Farries, and two sons were born in Bristol. In 1938 he was appointed Professor of Botany at the University of Sydney, spending the Second World War in Australia and becoming a leading government adviser on using science to assist the war effort.

He spent 1945 in the Soviet Union as a member of the Australian diplomatic service, and afterwards published 'Scientist in Russia'. He wrote of the difficulties the outside world experienced in forming a balanced view of the Soviet Union. He described a three day train journey which was uncomfortable even in the compartment he shared with a senior officer in the NKVD security police and with other Russians. Over one stretch he joined those clinging to the outside of the train, for the opportunity of taking covert photographs. He also took a long journey in a car that kept getting stranded for no good reason, with an Eastern European actress who had invited herself along. He had iron self control, which defeated the security police then, and gave him a strong presence at the innumerable meetings he attended for the rest of his active life.

Ashby found, in contrast to the totally unhelpful government officials, Soviet scientists welcoming and open, and given a privileged position in society. "The 'tone' of the typical laboratory is a mixture of earnestness and leisureliness. People are always dropping in, shaking hands all round, and settling down to quiet conversation. There is no strict keeping of hours, no clocking on and off, no regimentation. About lunch-time tea is made in a beaker and the workers eat some black bread and cheese or a sandwich." Ashby acknowledged the Soviet government's wish to conceal from its citizens the capitalist world's higher standard of living, but sympathised with its wish to save them from the capitalist world's lower standard of cultural taste.

In 1947 he was appointed Harrison Professor of Botany at Manchester University, where he was able to carry out some research of his own, as well as bringing students to doctorate level. He introduced a course on ecology.

In 1950 Ashby was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Belfast. Aged 46 he was very young to be given such a senior position. He was abandoning scientific research, only three years after returning to it, and devoting himself to administration, committees and politics with a small 'p'. The government of Northern Ireland paid for new buildings and supported Ashby's appointments of talented young academics. Presumably this was one way to strengthen the Protestant enclave against the threat of an Ireland united under a Catholic government in Dublin. Ashby was knighted in 1956 .

In 1958 Clare College appointed its first 'Master' from outside Cambridge University : Eric Ashby. It was a signal that the University wished to change. Clare College was looking for undergraduates beyond the prestigious public schools on which it had relied in the past.

It created a post-graduate offshoot, 'Clare Hall', which with Wolfson and Darwin Colleges provided a collegiate framework for University academics who had not been appointed Fellows of the historic Colleges. Clare Hall was to be a centre for advanced study with overseas visiting professors, research fellows and graduate students, of both sexes, and providing accommodation for visitors' families. Ashby went to the United States to secure funding from the Andrew Mellon Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

From 1954 Ashby was involved in the development of universities in Africa. He was happy to see them free of British colonial rule, and positive about the capabilities of African people.

Ashby, elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1963, was Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University between 1967 and 1969, a post which did not give the holder more control than he could exert through chairing committees. Around the world at this time university students challenged authority, and at Cambridge a 'sit-in' was staged at the central offices. Ashby did not favour tight control from above, commenting of his own sphere that "good scientists are individualists : they work best at what interests them".

Peter Hennessy wrote of him in 1973 "as a man of immense vigour" spending a holiday every other year in an Austrian Alpine hut to climb the mountains (Change, Vol. 5, No. 1, The New Learners (Feb. 1973) pp. 22-25). In that year he was created Baron Ashby of Brandon, Suffolk, where he had a home at Norman Cott, Manor Road.

Ashby retired as Master of Clare College in 1975. In 1978 he gave lectures in the US with the title 'The search for an environmental ethic' reflecting his longstanding interest. He looked at the way in which high levels of smoke pollution were permitted for

generations in Britain and then swiftly reduced by the Clean Air Act of 1956. He saw this as a tipping of the balance between costs and benefits. The “spread of gas for cooking, the invention of smokeless fuels that could be burned in open grates, and the introduction of central heating” made it easier to ban coal fires. In his 1978 lectures Ashby took a wide view of mankind’s situation in the world : “Two reconciliations remain to be made. One is to come to terms with a growing scarcity of resources: to moderate man's demands upon the earth's resources of energy and raw materials, and to determine how affluent societies will become reconciled to a more equitable distribution of resources. The other reconciliation that remains to be made is the reconciliation of man with members of his own species who live by different ideologies. … For the rest of man's history on earth, so far as one can foretell, he will have to live with problems of population, of resources, of pollution.”

Frank Rhodes, President of Cornell University wrote : “There was, behind Eric's courtly bearing and rather formal manner, one of the most generous and sensitive human beings I have ever known. He was upright in every sense of the word and represented everything that is best in scholarship and academic life.” This description is by J Heslop-Harrison : “Tall of stature, high of brow, verging on the austere in aspect with his uncompromising steelframed glasses, Eric could be an intimidating figure on first encounter, projecting an aura of intellectual strength sufficient to induce a degree of tongue-tiedness. Yet many sensed something of a reciprocal response on his part: a certain shyness that had to be overcome before the warm personality broke through. Although his public persona seemed to radiate great self-assurance, the appearance was hard won. His supreme skill as a committee man and chairman depended on quite laborious preliminary preparation, and the fluency, clarity and style of his public speaking which so enthralled his audiences was achieved similarly by hard background work.”

Ashby played chamber music as a hobby, occasionally with his two sons, until the physical effects of ageing prevented him from doing so. It was one of many talents possessed by this remarkable man.

(This article draws much of its information from an article in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography and from a Royal Society memoir by J Heslop-Harrison.)

A Leyton family history

by Mike Robbins

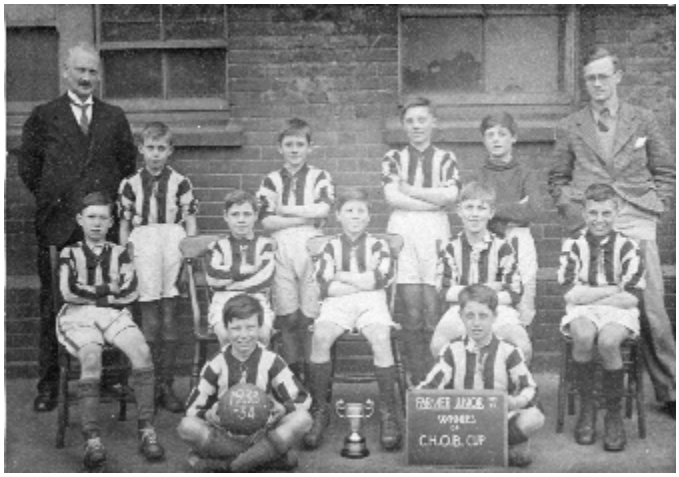
My paternal grandfather was born Percy Charles Robbins on the 1st of April 1887 in Barking, Essex. My grandmother Annie Elizabeth Mary Amos was born on 26th November 1885 in Islington.

I am uncertain how they met but they were married on the 25th of December 1910 at Leyton parish church. (A 1911 photo of the couple is above.) As my grandfather was one of seven siblings and my grandmother one of nine it needed a big church to hold them all. What is noticeable on the marriage certificate is that my grandfather's name had become Charles Percy which was how I always knew him, and my grandmother's surname had become Ames, as had the rest of the family.

The address for both of them was given as 'Laburnam Terrace', Thornhill Road, which was apparently the normal practice. Later their address was known as 11 Thornhill Road, Leyton. They had three children : Charles Frosbrick born 1913 in Kilburn, Doris Hilda born in Leyton 1916 and still living, and my father Robert Thomas 1923 also born in Leyton.

My grand-dad's parents at the time of the Great War were living at 11 Park Road, Leyton. I have an envelope with that address which was sent to my great grandmother Emma Robbins, along with a bronze plaque, and a scroll to commemorate the death of her son Robert in 1916. My grandmother's parents lived at 50 Tyndall Road, Leyton. (A photo of them taken at that address is at the top of the next column.)

Apart from the Farmer Road School football team photograph of my Dad (below) there appear to be no existing photos of my father's family between 1920 and the war. Perhaps they weren't a priority for a working class family in those days.



My grandfather had a stall in Walthamstow High Street and one on a Sunday in Brick Lane. He was mainly an ironmonger's, selling all kinds of tools, but also sold second-hand goods and antiques. In 1939 he was granted a coveted pitch in Caledonian Road market, but the outbreak of war meant he never actually traded there.

It was during the war that my parents met in a chip shop in Leyton High Road. My father was in the Home Guard, because a perforated ear drum meant he could not 'join up' although he made many attempts to. My

mother, Joan Hannah Read, who was from Oxford, was in the W.A.A.F. and was stationed at Buckhurst Hill as part of a barrage balloon unit, Flight 67 MU, on the site of what is now the Roding Valley nature reserve. (In the photo above the author's mother Joan is 3rd from the left 2nd row from the top). Her crew were on duty in Leyton at the time they met in 1943. They were married in Oxford in St Paul's church, Walton Street, in November 1944 (photo below).

Because my mother was on active service they had a one night honeymoon before she returned to Taunton in Somerset where she was now stationed. She was then moved up to Blackpool, Lancashire, which meant long train journeys for my father, who was working in the stock exchange in London, whenever she got a weekend pass.

My grandparents' home in Thornhill Road was bombed in 1943 and along with several others was completely destroyed. Luckily the family were down in the air raid shelter at the time, so no one was hurt, but they had lost their home and virtually all their belongings.

My grandmother literally camped out on the steps of Leyton Council until it found the family a 3 bedroomed house at 3 Goldsmith Road Leyton. It was here that my parents came to live. My aunt and uncle had already left home, my uncle Charles (photo above) serving in the Royal Navy until long after V.E. Day.

My grandmother's parents moved into a 'prefab' in Sidmouth Road.

After the war my mother was demobbed from the W.A.A.F. and came to live with my father in Goldsmith Road. Because she came from Oxford and married my father during the war she didn't really know many people but my aunt found her a job in the shirt factory next to the Lion and Key in Leyton High Road. It had at one time been a 'picture house' and I have an early postcard looking towards the junction of Church Road with the High Road at the Lion and Key. This clearly shows the picture house advertised as 'The Live Picture Palace' (a different photo showing this cinema is below). My mother once told me, with some regret,

how just after she started working there in 1945, when clearing out an old cupboard they came across bundles of old posters from the Picture House. These were all promptly thrown into the nearest dustbin and thereby lost forever. A very sad tale.

I was born in 1946 and my grandfather now had a shop in the 'Blue Row'* in Leyton High Road, which just left him with a Sunday morning pitch in Brick Lane. I can vaguely remember the cart being kept in our back yard to which a horse, which was stabled at Bibby Moseley's on the corner of Wilmot and Goldsmith Roads, was harnessed every Sunday prior to being loaded at the shop. I was still very young when my grandfather decided to hire a lorry instead and both the cart and the horse were replaced.

We kept chickens in the back garden in a big shed up to 1958, when my father turned it into a garage. A regular source of our Christmas dinners, my grandmother would do the plucking in the kitchen after my grandfather had killed a juicy one in the garden.

My father Robert Thomas Robbins was with Leyton Football Club at the Hare and Hounds from 1949 to 1953. He was Captain of the 'A' team (photo at the tope of the next column) and is mentioned in some of their programmes. He became Honorary Treasurer for one season after he stopped playing in 1953. His photo is in the handbook for '51-'52 season along with a brief playing record.

My grandfather died in 1958 and my grandmother (photo below outside 25 Rosedene Terrace), died aged 96, in 1980. By this time the section of Goldsmith Road south of Church Road had been renamed Rosedene Terrace and my parents' house became number 25 Rosedene Terrace. My mother passed away in 2001, and my father died there in March 2004.

I have included photographs of 25 Rosedene Terrace as it was when I sold it. My father had bought the house for £110 in 1954. I had the garage dismantled but you can still see the base. The cart stood outside the bottom windows facing the double gates. You can also see what is left of the old concrete air raid shelter . One interesting feature is an original tall wooden spike which bisects the eves just above the bedroom window; there is also an exact same arrangement at the front of the house. When in the seventies the last of the new houses opposite were built copies of these spikes were incorporated on the last two erected. A nice touch and a nod to the past.

* 'Blue Row 'is now a line of low-built shops on the left-hand side of Leyton High Road going south to Stratford just past the site of the Lion & Key. It was once picturesque wooden buildings.

As a footnote I would like to describe one incident which was mentioned at my grandmother's funeral in 1980 during some reminiscences between my father, his brother and his sister.

They were coming home from 'the Lane' (Brick Lane) one Sunday evening - must have been in the 1920s - my grandfather driving the cart and the three kids squashed onto the front seat beside him as usual. The horse was very familiar with the route, which was just as well as it also knew which pubs to stop at on the way. Grandad liked a drink and the kids waited outside on the cart whilst he refreshed himself inside. This particular Sunday grandad had had one or two more than usual and was nodding gently as the horse wended its way through Bethnal Green. The kids could feel the horse slowly raising its speed unbeknown to the nodding driver still holding the reins. By the time they were approaching the crossroads at Cambridge Heath Road the horse and cart were travelling at a steady pace and it was now that the kids noticed a policeman standing in the middle of the road, still some way off, facing them with his hand outstretched. Obviously the constable wanted them to slow down or stop but grandad was dozing away whilst still clutching the reins and was oblivious to the scene unfolding before him. The horse had absolutely no intention of slowing down, whilst the kids hung on for dear life. To give the policeman his due he stood his ground until the last moment when it became obvious the horse was not slowing for anyone and the kids watched as the policeman flung himself on to the pavement as the horse and cart thundered by. At that point grandad roused himself and started trying to rein in the excited horse but it took some time and the policeman was far distant before they were back to a gentle trot. The kids were in hysterics and fifty years later still found it highly amusing.

So a sad day finished in laughter and good memories, as it should.

The photo below shows the author on the right with his mother Joan and on the left Joan's sister Doris with her son David - now the Vice-Chairman of Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society, and author of Dubbined Boots and Shin Pads, A History of Leyton Football Club.

Frederick Amos in the First World War

The author's father Robert carries the Union Jack in Paris in 1946

The author's mother in W.A.A.F. uniform.

A highly simplified family tree :

Emma Robbins

Charles Percy Robbins = Annie Elizabeth Mary Amos

Charles Frosbrick Robbins — Doris Hilda Robbins — Robert Thomas Robbins = Joan Hannah Read

David Chapman

Mike Robbins

The Leyton Typist with Nerves of Steel

by David Boote

In 1944 Marguerite Diana Knight, 'Peggy', was living at 88 James Lane, Leyton (photo above), and working as a shorthand typist for ASEA Electric in Fulbourne Road, Walthamstow (photo below). She was asked to attend a 'Students' Assessment Board' at Wanborough Manor near Guildford on 11th April. So secret was the role for which the candidates had been identified that they were not told what it was ! They were however warned that they had only a 50% chance of surviving. Even the existence of the recruiting organisation, the Special Operations Executive ('SOE'), was concealed from most people, and that remained the case for some years after the War had ended.

The ASEA factory had some importance in the War. It was a centre for 'fire watching', where people kept a lookout for enemy bombers and later V1 'flying bombs'. This allowed factories like ASEA and those nearby to maintain production until danger was imminent. As a manufacturer of electricity power transformers ASEA's own output contributed to the war effort. It had strong air raid shelters (photo below). The management was probably well connected.

ASEA's employee Peggy Knight had been born in Paris in 1920. There was a chance she might be able to pass for being a French citizen. Her father, Captain Alfred Rex Knight, had served in the British Army, and her mother Charlotte Beatrice Mary Ditkowski was Polish. This made it likely that her loyalties were firmly with Britain and its allies. Peggy had served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) until she had a serious bout of pneumonia.

Peggy was judged suitable at the 'Students' Assessment Board'. She was to be a secret agent, but a message courier rather than a spy. Even so, her presence in occupied territory put her life in danger if she was caught. As a civilian she would not be regarded as

subject to the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war. Every SOE team had a radio for transmitting messages to Britain. If she fell into German hands Peggy would be accused of espionage and liable to execution.

Peggy was sent for training at Thame Park in Oxfordshire and at Saltmarsh, Hampshire. The SOE ran a network of about 80 large country houses providing intensive courses. Both sexes learnt parachute jumping at Ringway airport near Manchester. There was a stationary fuselage from which trainees could practice dropping. Bad weather meant that Peggy only had one practice jump from a plane, instead of the usual six.

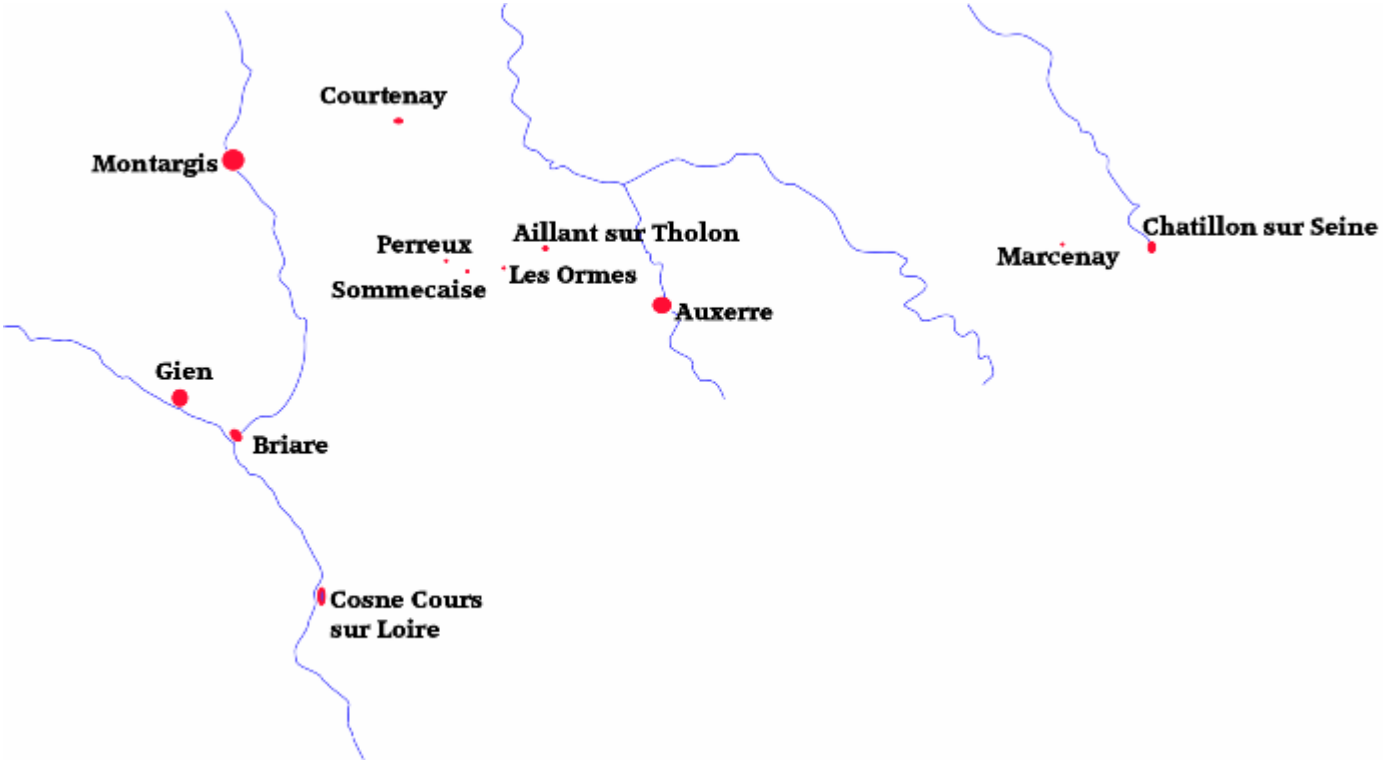
Bomber aircraft were in great demand and the RAF resented having to use a few for SOE operations. Peggy was the first SOE to be dropped from an American aircraft. The planes kept below the height monitored by enemy radar, below 600 feet, except for a climb above France to navigate by rivers caught in moonlight and other landmarks. Agent drops were only made within one week of a full moon. A local Resistance unit would set out lights showing where the SOE agents should land.

On 6th May 1944 Peggy Knight was parachuted down near Marcenay, south of Paris in the Burgundy region. The Resistance marked out a different place from the one intended. Peggy and other agents were trained in Britain to leave the landing place as soon as possible.

Instead the Resistance reception group interrogated her for an hour and demanded that she hand over her supplies of cigarettes, chewing gum and other little luxuries. This was a bad start, and indicated that some members of the 'Donkeyman' Resistance network she had joined were particularly distrustful of the British SOE. 'Donkeyman's' founder and leader, Henri Frager, had himself been to London and met the approval of the SOE. To reconstruct French Resistance networks after their partial discovery by the German authorities, Frager built up a 'circuit' based on Auxerre in Burgundy, but with a territory extending to Normandy and Nancy.

Peggy Knight was given the alias in France of 'Nicole' and the operational name 'Kennelmaid'. Dropped with her was the radio operator Noel. "We stayed there two days, indoors, hoping to see nobody, instead of which the whole village came in to see us, to wish us the best of luck". Something was 'going on', but it is not clear what.

Peggy formed a low opinion of many of the 'Donkeyman' circuit members she encountered. Alain de Laroussilhe, known as 'Michel', made it widely known that she was a British agent, and gave his subordinates little work other than to collect money, tobacco and food tickets. The circuit was riven by distrust and lack of co-operation. Charles de Gaulle was a thorn in the side of the British and American governments but he established his claim to be the leader of Free France and united much of the



Resistance. Communists and other left-wingers offered an alternative but not one the UK and the US governments wanted to encourage. An army officer agent in the SOE has suggested the high prevalence of political disputes amongst the French Resistance was "the resurgence of French national spirit" as the Allies gained an upper hand over Nazi Germany[1].

The French Resistance and the UK and US governments were agreed that the priority was to give support to the planned landing of troops on the continent. They did not want what would now be called terrorist attacks on German forces and French collaborators. Despite the awkward reception Peggy received from the Resistance, the time was favourable for co-operation. Peggy's shortened training reflected the urgency of strengthening the Resistance's capability of undermining a German defence of the forthcoming Allied invasion.

After a few days Peggy and Noel moved to Aillant-sur-Tholon but the radio communications equipment did not go with them. Then Noel went to Paris with the circuit leader Frager.

Frager and his deputy Roger Bardet killed Michel and Richard Armand Lansdell as traitors, though Lansdell had been flown from England only one week earlier than Peggy.

During her training in Britain Peggy had been noted as too fiercely patriotic. She took an opportunity to speak to Roger Bardet alone, and told him she disliked the way he criticised Britain when members of the group were together. Peggy's straightforward and unqualified loyalty to Britain impressed Bardet and his conversation became more acceptable.

Operation of Peggy's part of the 'Donkeyman' circuit improved somewhat, with Noel able to use his radio transmitter near Sommecaise, and it carried out a successful operation to damage a railway line with explosives.

The Germans were conscripting French men into forced labour. To avoid this many went into hiding as the 'maquis'. Peggy like other young women became particularly useful as a courier, travelling long distances by bicycle and foot to pass messages round the Resistance. Would it not have been better for local French women to run these errands ? They could give genuine information when passing through checkpoints. The implication is that the SOE preferred its own messengers, an attitude that must have increased tensions.

Peggy had been dropped into France a month before the D-Day landings. A major concern of the Allied leaders at this time was to mislead Hitler as to where the invasion would take place. (Maureen Patricia 'Paddy' O'Sullivan had been insubordinate during SOE training from July to December 1943. In March 1944 she was suddenly offered the opportunity of being parachuted into France, without attending the usual course on security precautions, an omission of which she was to complain on her return to Britain. There are suspicions that some SOE agents were expected to be captured by the Germans, and to 'reveal', unwittingly, that the Allied landings were to be in the Pas-de-Calais rather than Normandy. Paddy O'Sullivan's sudden invitation to become an agent without being properly taught how to evade arrest suggests she may have been a tool in such a scheme. The fractured nature of the 'Donkeyman' circuit may have been seen in London as an opportunity to plant more seeds of deception, by some means that we still do not know.)

Sommecaise and Perreux are on a wooded ridge west of the Yonne valley and Auxerre. With the Allied invasion of Normandy under way, Peggy's Resistance group tried to lure their German opponents in Burgundy into a trap. Noel used the radio transmitter for 3 hours at the same position. Nobody came. They settled for the night in a forest camp. At 5am Peggy started a spell of sentry duty with a colleague, Captain Thomson. They heard a shot. Captain Thomson was fired at when he went to investigate. Another colleague found the Resisters were surrounded by hundreds of Germans. As they went deeper into the woods Peggy and another colleague heard more firing, and decided they had best lie hidden. The sounds of continued searching by German forces persuaded them to stay where they were, without food or drink, from 8.30 am to 7 pm.

Henri Frager, leader of the 'Donkeyman' circuit, was arrested on 8th August[2] and killed at Buchenwald

1 Major Hillier quoted by Marcus Binney in *The Women Who Lived For Danger, The Women Agents of SOE in the Second World War*

2 Wikipedia

concentration camp on 12th October 1944[3]. The fight for France was at a crucial stage. Teams consisting of a member of each of the UK, US and French forces were parachuted in uniform behind the German lines. One of these groups of three was dropped on 15th August to join 'Donkeyman', but in error 33 kilometres away. Whilst they furtively made their way towards the 'Donkeyman' network it took open control of Sommecaise and Les Ormes.

On 22nd August American troops reached Courtenay. Peggy and a female member of the Resistance cycled into the German stronghold of Montargis to pass information on dispositions to the Americans. On another occasion she cycled about 40 km from Gien to Briare and Cosne. (We now know that the Allies were decoding messages sent by radio between the German forces using the 'Enigma' machine. This was so vital to the Allies, and unsuspected by the Germans, that information obtained in that way had to be restricted to the highest commanders. It could not be passed to troops on the ground.)

The Allies pushed forward. As the Germans fell back the Resistance played its part, such as taking control of a large quantity of petrol at Moneteau. For a while the situation was very confused. There was no 'front line' and Peggy continued to cycle round gathering information.

On 12th September Roger Bardet allowed Peggy to leave for Paris. 4 days later she was flown to London. She had survived an experience for which her only preparation, in terms of danger, had been German air raids on London.

(Peggy Knight has been described as a 'shorthand typist' when she was summoned by the SOE. Sound recording machines were not then widely available, and managerial staff would have composed letters and documents 'out loud', known as 'dictating'. Peggy would have written in a special abbreviated script that allowed her to keep pace with what was said to her, and still be able to read her own notes later. That was a skill, and she would have been helping senior managers carry out their work. By the nature of her job she would been listening to confidential information and opinions, and it was important to the ASEA company that she did not talk about this to others, particularly other employees. To that extent Peggy had proved herself able to keep secrets before she was recruited to the SOE.)

The SOE sent 50 women agents into France. Of these 15 were caught by the German authorities and of those only 3 survived[4]. This was better than the 50% survival rate predicted for all SOE agents, but still a terrible loss. It is not immediately obvious why Britain sent women to operate radio receiver-transmitters, and pass messages in person between Resistance groups. Could not French people with a genuine identity perform such tasks ? Did Britain place such little trust in the politically divided Resistance that it could not believe Resistance members' reports on their own activities ?

Roger Bardet was tried and convicted as a double agent working for the Germans. He was released from prison in 1955. Perhaps he betrayed Fraget to the German security forces because Fraget was working too closely with the British SOE.

The women agents were young, and SOE may have hoped they would get better co-operation from male Resistance members.

Peggy Knight was one of a hundred British service men and women decorated with the Croix de Guerre by the French Ambassador in London in 1947. She received the British honour of the MBE. She truly deserved her awards. Having been flown at risk of enemy attack over the Channel and about 230 miles across occupied France, she threw herself from the plane into the night, and landed safely despite her single practice jump, only to suffer a hostile reception. In the months that followed, her life depended upon a handful of men who believed there were traitors within their group betraying their movements to the enemy. If Peggy was arrested by the security forces her captors would try to force her to tell them everything she knew, with death a very real threat if she did not. Even when the Allied troops arrived Peggy was asked to cycle through the confused German lines and report back. Those trips would have been physically exhausting and intensely nerve-wracking.

Someone who had lived through such a frightening episode would nowadays be expected to suffer from

3 Wikipedia and other websites like http://en.factolex.com/Henri_Jacques_Paul_Frager:executive_personnel

4 Marcus Binney in *The Women Who Lived For Danger, The Women Agents of SOE in the Second World War*

‘post traumatic stress syndrome’, to be unable to settle back into their previous way of life, to be isolated from their family and friends. Not Peggy Knight. In December 1944 she married Sub-Lieutenant Eric Smith of the Royal Navy. A son Peter was born in September 1945 and a son David a year later when the family were living in a house they had bought at Waltham Cross, 61 Eastfield Road (photo above).

An article about Peggy, Marguerite Diana Frances Smith, appeared in the Sunday Express of 19th January 1947. Her husband Eric Smith was working for the River Lea police as an inspector. Peggy complained of shortages such as soap to wash a toddler's clothes. She was an ordinary housewife and mother and shared the same frustration at shortages of food and basic household items which continued long after the War had ended.

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The main source for this article was The Women Who Lived For Danger, The Women Agents of SOE in the Second World War by Marcus Binney (2002), which was drawn to my attention by Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society member Alex Wilkinson. Since first written, The Heroines of SOE F Section, Britain’s Secret Women in France by Beryl E Escott has been published (2010).
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Not many people know this … Dennis Cockram and the Great Escape

by David Boote

One of the better known episodes in the Second World War is the 'Great Escape'. A young man from Leyton lost his life in it but this account will begin with someone from a more privileged background.

Roger Bushell was born in South Africa, was educated at Wellington public school and Cambridge University, and became a barrister, a champion skier, and in his spare time a pilot with the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. When the War started he had the task of setting up a new fighter squadron and defending retreating soldiers at Dunkirk from German dive bombers. A dogfight on his second sortie ended in a crash landing near Boulogne and capture by the German forces.

On 27th May 1942 three Czechs were flown from London and parachuted down into Prague. Two days later they killed Reinhard Heydrich, who had been in charge of Germany's security services and concentration camps. 860 people in Prague, 395 in Brno and over 172 in Lidice village were executed in reprisal. The Germans discovered escaped Prisoners of War Roger Bushell and a Czech RAF officer hiding in a Prague flat. After recapture Bushell was interrogated at length by the Gestapo, who thought he had assisted the Heydrich assassination in some way. Bushell's transfer in June 1942 to Stalag Luft III at Zagan, set up in March of that year, was a miraculous rescue effected by that camp's correspondence censor, a German air force officer unsympathetic to the Nazis. (Could it have been just coincidence that coded messages were being hidden in apparently innocuous letters between prisoners and their wives and other relations[1] ?)

German prisoner of war camps were staffed by the same service as the interned. The Luftwaffe was responsible for the Royal Air Force, Canadian Air Force and so on. The Luftwaffe did not have the historic traditions of the German army. It was modern and it was important because its planes dropped the bombs that were key to Hitler's defeat of Poland and intimidation of other states. The Luftwaffe was the most Nazi of the armed services. Yet its camps for British and Dominion PoWs were run with integrity.

The Geneva Convention[2] stipulated that prisoners of war must be :

- Shown respect at all times
- Allowed to notify their next of kin and the International Red Cross of their capture.
- Allowed to correspond with relatives and to receive relief parcels.
- Given adequate food and clothing
- Provided with shelter equivalent to those of their captor's troops
- Given medical care
- Paid for any work they do
- Sent home if seriously ill or wounded provided they agree not to resume active military duties afterwards.
- Quickly released and sent home when the war is over.

Prisoners of war must not be:

- Forced to give any information except their name, rank and number
- Deprived of money or valuables without a receipt and guarantee they will be returned at the time of release
- Given individual privileges other than on grounds of health, sex, age or military rank
- Held in close confinement e.g. solitary confinement unless they have broken any laws. They can however have their freedom restricted for security reasons.
- Be forced to do military or dangerous or unhealthy work.

Spies were not regarded as falling within the terms of the Geneva Convention.

1 Anton Gill 'The Great Escape' p 83

2 http://www.historyonthenet.com/WW2/geneva_convention.htm

The Soviet Union did not sign the Geneva Convention or observe all its terms. British PoWs noticed that, grim though their diet was, Russians held prisoner were from their appearance worse fed and treated[3] .

The senior RAF officer at Stalag Luft 3 put Bushell in charge of an escape committee. Instead of previous unco-ordinated tunnelling by various groups, from the end of 1942 Bushell got the PoWs to work towards one mass escape. Long and highly detailed preparations were made. Each man had to have a cover story with clothes and identity papers to match. Surprising degrees of assistance were given by many of the camp guards by bribery and then blackmail, but perhaps also willingness. Some lent their identity cards for hours[4] . Other guards were more diligent in their duties. Escape preparations had to be carried out with the greatest caution and occasionally were discovered.

In 1943 132 French prisoners of war escaped together, and 47 Polish PoWs in another breakout, both using tunnels[5]. There were sustained threats and advice from the German authorities distant and close to the British PoWs against further attempts. The police, uniformed and plain clothes detectives, were placed under the control of the Reich state security organisation, whose head, Himmler, wanted to get a tighter grip. He had notices in English displayed that PoWs would be shot dead if they were found outside their camp. Nevertheless Bushell and the other inmates of Stalag Luft III carried on digging three tunnels.

The PoWs wanted to know about the country into which they planned to escape. But the intelligence-gathering operation of the camp escape committee under the leadership of Bushell (and receiving secret instructions from London) was wider and more systematic than was necessary to effect an escape to a neutral country. Bushell wanted to know as much as his contacts could find out, such as the state of the German war effort. London smuggled radio receivers to PoW camps hidden in Red Cross parcels. Those at Zagan assembled a transmitter, but it was not used.

RAF pilot Dennis Herbert Cockram was taken to Stalag Luft III at Zagan on 2nd November 1942[6]. He was born in Hackney on 13th August 1921. He and his family moved to 144 Essex Road, Leyton around 1935[7].

Two of his close friends were killed in an early air-raid on London. Out of an intake of 120 RAF cadets the intensity of Cockram's desire to fight back got him one of four commissions offered. He spoke German fluently, apparently by studying but perhaps helped by his mother's father having emigrated to London from Germany and his mother's mother having been born in London of German parents[8]. Cockram was good at getting information from the camp guards. He is described as 'short-tempered and energetic'[9]. It is tempting to think of him as the inspiration for 'Harry Palmer', the disrespectful Cockney character in Len Deighton's spy novels, but there is nothing to link Cockram with espionage other than the intelligence-gathering activities of the Stalag Luft III Escape Committee.

Cockram was captured as Germany ceased to have things its own way in the war. It suffered reverses in Russia and north Africa.

3 Gill p 104
4 'Escape to Danger' by Flight Lieutenant Paul Brickhill and Conrad Norton
5 Gill p 152

6 copy of the PoW notice card opposite Gill p 79, where his name has been entered as 'Cochran'
7 electoral registers
8 information posted on www.ancestry.co.uk
9 Gill p 148

600 PoWs helped achieve the Great Escape. 500 volunteered to go. 200 won places by ballot and another 20 were named by Bushell.

Dennis Cockram heard that his mother had died suddenly aged 43 in July 1943. He wanted to return to look after his younger brother and sister and his father. He secured a place in the mass escape which was eventually made on 24th March 1944. By this time Germany had lost the epic battle for control of Leningrad, was defeated by Soviet Russian forces at the battle of Kursk in July 1943, and was struggling against an Allied invasion of Italy.

In February 1944 Himmler made arrangements for PoWs who escaped and were recaptured to be killed in the Mauthausen concentration camp[10] – except for British and Americans. Nazi racial ideology placed the highest emphasis on extermination of Jewish people, was deeply hostile to Slavs, but could not demonise Anglo-Saxons. Also, at this late stage in the war Himmler was negotiating with the American secret service in Switzerland[11].

Various delays on the night prevented anything like the number of escapes that Bushell had planned. He got away himself, as did Dennis Cockram, who caught the 1am train from the station at Zagan to Breslau. Three PoWs near the exit of the escape tunnel were noticed by a perimeter guard at about 4.30am. Only 76 PoWs got away before this discovery of the tunnel.

Thick snow on the ground, a night temperature as low as minus 18 degrees Celsius, and then deep slush, prevented much progress by foot. Bushell was one of the first of those to be caught who had left Zagan by train. Like other escapees small errors in his false papers betrayed him. Dennis Cockram was captured on 30th March 1944 whilst travelling alone, just 7 kilometres from the Swiss frontier. He was taken to a prison at Ettlingen.

Some escapees from Stalag Luft 3 at Zagan were wearing imitation German uniforms, and were liable to be categorised as saboteurs and executed. They all had false papers which was a serious offence. Hitler's reaction to the Great Escape was to declare that all the Zagan escapees should be summarily shot on recapture. Himmler and Goring got him to agree that only 50 would be killed. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Heydrich's successor, passed on Hitler's order in these words : "… the Kriminalpoliziei are to hand over for interrogation to the Gestapo more than half the recaptured officers. After interrogation the officers are to be taken in the direction of their original camp and shot en route. The shootings will be explained by the fact that the recaptured officers were shot while trying to escape, or because they offered resistance, so that nothing can be proved later. … Prominent personalities will be excepted. Their names will be reported to me and my decision awaited." British and American nationals were to be spared if possible, an exception that may have been founded in Nazi racial preferences, or hope of lenient treatment if Germany was defeated. The escapees knew that those who were not British were much more at risk of torture and execution.

One of the key figures in dealing with recaptured Zagan escapees was Artur Nebe. A network of enemies of Hitler was centred on the Army General Staff and the security forces' counter-intelligence department[12]. Nebe was later executed for alleged connection with von Stauffenberg's July 1944 attempt to kill Hitler, but he had headed one of four units killing Jews and journalists, teachers and intellectuals in those parts of Russia invaded by Germany. 70,000 were killed by Nebe's unit.

On 30th March 1944 the Gestapo and plain clothes police carried out the first killings of recaptured PoWs. That was the fate for Bushell, the escape committee intelligence officer Arnost Valenta and most of the others including Cockram. A member of the Gestapo at Karlsruhe tricked Cockram into entering woodland to urinate. A police officer then shot Cockram in the back and head. The policeman later took Cockram's cremated ashes to Zagan PoW camp.

Most of those selected to live returned to the Zagan camp. Three escapees were successful and returned to Britain. Three were saved from execution when Allied troops captured Colditz prison. Five on the execution list were in fact imprisoned in a set of special confinements at Sachsenhausen concentration camp. One escapee, related to Winston Churchill, was released in Switzerland to pass on peace terms offered by Hitler.

10 Gill p 160
11 Gill p 161
12 Gill p 197

Dennis Cockram's family received a telegram informing them that Dennis was "Shot trying to escape. Details to follow".

After Germany surrendered a team of RAF investigators sought out the individuals responsible for the shooting of the 50 Zagan escapees. Three officers and four NCOs worked for three years, and in the early stages there was a larger team than that. 72 Germans were identified as being involved. The police officer who shot Cockram was hanged for the killing in 1948, as was the Gestapo member who tricked him, the driver of the car, and the head of the district Gestapo.

A memorial to local servicemen who lost their lives in the Second World War was placed in St Catherine's Church, Hainault Road, and moved to the Cornerstone Church in Barclay Road in 2003. The first name is Dennis Cockram, listed as Cochrane.

John Drinkwater

by David Boote

John Drinkwater survives in the name of a housing development (photo above), and is remembered by some in the name of the John Drinkwater Tower which preceded the housing development. Why his name should have been commemorated in Leytonstone will be known by very few now. He was born on 1 June 1882 at Dorset Villa, 105 Fairlop Road, Leytonstone[1] , a house in which his father had lived since 1879[2]. It still stands (photo below).

1 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography; Leyton Official Guide 1964

In the year John Drinkwater was born his family moved to 12 Clapton Square[3] . His residence in Leytonstone was therefore very brief and before his earliest memories.

John Drinkwater's father Albert had been educated at Magdalen College School and Merton College, Oxford (to which he had won a 'Post Master' scholarship). He made his home at Leytonstone when appointed head of Mrs Prisca Coburn's Foundation School at Fairfield, Bow[4] but he gave up school teaching for the stage around 1887[5].

In 1891 the family were living at 1 Ladbroke Crescent[6], but John's mother became seriously ill. John went to live with her father in Winchester Road, Oxford. He did not see his mother again because she died soon afterwards[7]. John was educated at Oxford High School from 1891 to 1897[8].

John Drinkwater showed neither interest in nor ability at schoolwork and was poor at sports, though enthusiastic

2 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography; VHM Pamphlet L54 "Leyton Borough Council / Public Libraries / Presentation by Mrs John Drinkwater to the Borough of Manuscripts of the Works of John Drinkwater, 1952; 1881 census (in which Albert E Drinkwater was described as a schoolmaster, MA Oxford); John Drinkwater's birth was registered July to September 1882 West Ham vol 4a page 163, and he was christened 8 August 1882 at St John's, Leytonstone, his parents recorded as Albert Edwin Drinkwater and Annie Beck Drinkwater (born Brown)

3 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography

4 Hackney Archives hold records at D/B/BRY/1/1/49 1874

5 In 1885 he published a book of poems and verse plays. He was the author of the play 'A Golden Sorrow' and the one act plays 'What do you think of that my Cat ?' and 'Lords of Creation' http://www.mullocksauctions.co.uk/lot-30696-literature_%E2%80%93_albert_drinkwater_two_original_type scripts_of.html

6 census, which shows his father as an actor born in Warwick; John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography

7 Did she die at Evesham July to September 1892, recorded at page 159 of volume 6c ?

8 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography; DNB

for cricket. He was a physical boy, walking long distances, with a strong interest in taking eggs from bird-nests[9]. He once cycled with his father 79 miles from Folkestone to Notting Hill. Darkness fell long before they got home. The two rode away fast from a London policeman who wanted to question them about their inadequate makeshift lamp. John's father learnt how to shop for clothes and food on a very tight budget, and made an orange liqueur in large quantities. He was skilful at carpentry and an excellent furniture-maker. John writes approvingly of his father's agnosticism, indifference to convention, and financial honesty.

In September 1894 John's father Albert put on a production of George Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man for touring round Britain. Also in the production was Lilian Revell to whom Albert Drinkwater got married. Audiences were small, and Shaw waived his entitlement to royalties[10].

John's grandfather Brown, who had been kind to him, died in 1895 when John was 14 years old[11].

John Drinkwater's performance at school was much too weak for him to hope for a university scholarship and his father had no money. In February 1897 he left school a the age of 15 to become a junior clerk at the Northern Assurance Company (now part of Aviva) at 15 Victoria Street, Nottingham. The job was suggested for him by a friend of his father but he passed an entrance examination taken in London[12]. John saw little of his father between leaving school and becoming fully grown up[13]. After nearly 4 years in the insurance and life assurance business at Nottingham, John Drinkwater became the protégé of the new secretary of the company's Birmingham office, at 81 Colmore Row. A colleague knew Barry Jackson who was putting on plays, and Drinkwater, having got a taste for seeing and appearing in plays at Nottingham, was given a part. He was 22 years old, Jackson 24.

9 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography

10 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography

11 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography

12 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography; http://johndrinkwater.org/index.html

13 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography; http://johndrinkwater.org/index.html

Drinkwater published his first volume of poetry at the age of 21, in 1903, though he had to pay to get published until 1908. Kathleen Walpole[14], who in 1901 had been a music teacher at Birkdale, Lancashire[15] was in 1903 the dedicatee of Drinkwater's first book of poems in which there was a love poem to her[16]. In 1906 they married.

In 1909 John Drinkwater (photograph from that year above) became Secretary to the newly-formed Pilgrim Players, and acted in productions under the stage name John Darnley. The following year, 1910, he left his insurance company employment, in which he had reached a well-paid and senior post, and concentrated on working with the Pilgrim Players. They put on Cophetua, a one act play in verse written and produced by Drinkwater. In 1911 John and his wife Kathleen were living at 38 Drayton Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham[17]. In 1912 Drinkwater became general manager of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, the professional company successor to the Pilgrim Players. Drinkwater's 'studies' of Swinburne and William Morris were published in 1912 and 1913[18].

14 http://johndrinkwater.org/index.html

15 census

16 http://www.maggs.com/i/maggs/catalogues/1336-Literature.pdf

17 census

18 VHM copy of an article in the Yale University Gazette of January 1974 by John A Vickers

In the period immediately before the First World War, he was one of the group of poets associated with the Gloucestershire village of Dymock, along with Rupert Brooke, Robert Frost and others[19], sometimes called the 'Georgian poets'. Towards the end of the First World War Drinkwater rented a cottage at Far Oakridge near Stroud, the previous tenant having been Max Beerbohm[20].

In six years Drinkwater played about forty parts and directed sixty productions at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, including plays by Conrad, Euripides, Goldsmith, Gribodeyev, Ibsen, Ben Jonson, Masefield, Moliere, Shakespeare, Shaw, Strindberg, Synge and Yeats[21]. His ambition was to write. His wife Kathleen was also appearing in many productions there[22].

The second volume of Drinkwater's autobiography ends at 1913. He has reached the age of 30 and has spent 3 years out of the insurance business. He gives pen-pictures of quite a few literary figures and must have been extremely energetic in making and keeping acquaintances. He corresponded with famous people between about 1910 and 1930, and kept the letters he received, but later had to sell them to raise money. They were purchased by Americans and were divided between a number of libraries[23].

At the end of the First World War Drinkwater left Birmingham to take his own play, Abraham Lincoln, to London, where it had 300 performances at the Lyric Hammersmith Theatre, and then to New York. Drinkwater was awarded an MA degree by Birmingham University in 1919[24].

John's father Albert eventually stopped acting "and became successively Secretary to the Stage Society, Manager for Lillah McCarthy and Granville-Barker at the Little and Kingsway theatres, and Barry Jackson's representative in London"[25]. He was treasurer and teacher of diction to the Trinity College of Music. He lived to the age of 71 (1923[26]) and died taking a lesson[27].

In 1920 John Drinkwater moved to London. He was now relatively rich and able to make visits to the United States. At some point, perhaps 1921, Drinkwater had an affair with violinist Daisy Kennedy[28]. She made recordings between 1916 and 1919, and possibly as late as 1925. She was broadcast playing on the radio around 1921 including the first broadcast of a public concert. She also played at a Promenade performance and at the Royal Albert Hall[29]. John and Kathleen Drinkwater were divorced in January 1924 and John married Daisy Kennedy in December 1924[30]. In 1929 their daughter Penelope was born.

Bird In Hand, a comedy play, was staged at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in 1927, with Laurence Olivier and Peggy Ashcroft in the leading parts, under Drinkwater's direction. It is now regarded as about the only piece of Drinkwater's creative writing after the First World War that is worth reading[31]. Eric Salmon in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography summarises Drinkwater's later career : "All in all, it must in honesty be said that his reputation died before he did."

Drinkwater retained an admiration for William Morris who "had a keener sense of the life in all this than any one I know. You'll find it in News from Nowhere. He can give you the sunlight on one of these stone walls, or the bleakness of winter willows in the floods, or the scent of a hayfield, as though they were part of the spirit of man. For him they were that." Drinkwater praised Morris's rejection of machinery, wish that people should take

19 http://johndrinkwater.org/index.html
20 VHM copy of an article in the Yale University Gazette of January 1974 by John A Vickers
21 John Drinkwater : Discovery, The Second Book of an Auto-biography 1897 – 1913
22 http://theatricalia.com/person/198/cathleen-orford/past?page=2

23 VHM copy of an article in the Yale University Gazette of January 1974 by John A Vickers; his stepdaughter Tanya, whose father Benno Moiseiwitsch was Daisy Kennedy's first husband, donated papers to the University of Birmingham.

24 VHM copy of an article in the Yale University Gazette of January 1974 by John A Vickers

25 this would be for the Birmingham Repertory Company, of which John was a founder member; presumably he had arranged this extra source of income for his father
26 His death must be the one registered at Paddington June to March 1923 on page 52 of volume 1a.
27 John Drinkwater : Inheritance, The First Book of an Autobiography

28 according to http://johndrinkwater.org/index.html as a response to an affair between Benno Moiseiwitsch and Drinkwater's wife Kathleen; Eric Salmon in the DNB says the marriage between John and Kathleen was dissolved in 1920
29 http://www.damians78s.co.uk/html/daisy_kennedy.html
30 registered Kensington October to December 1924

31 DNB; VHM copy of an article in the Yale University Gazette of January 1974 by John A Vickers

pleasure in their work, and that they should have more spare time with better means of spending it. "Morris and his kind haven't succeeded in building their earthly paradise, but there's no telling how much nearer to an earthly hell we should have been without them."[32]

Here is just a snatch of Drinkwater's own poetry :

"And yet I was afraid,

Suddenly,

In the dark, like a child, of nothing.

Of vastness, of eternity, of the queer pains of

Thought"[33]

Drinkwater made a few visits to Leyton and Leytonstone, speaking in 1928 to the Literary Society of the Leyton County High School for Girls, and in 1929 to a public meeting in the Town Hall on the re-opening of the Central Public Library[34]. It was probably the chief librarian Edward Sydney, appointed in 1928, who arranged for Drinkwater to speak.

Drinkwater adapted Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge for the stage and Angela Lansbury's mother Moyna MacGill appeared as Elizabeth-Jane Newsom when Angela Lansbury was one year old. Drinkwater attended a performance in Weymouth with Hardy.[35]

He adapted for the cinema screen a novel Sally Bishop by E Temple Thurston, released in 1932. He was one of a number who developed the script for a cinema film about the composer Schubert called Blossom Time which was released in 1934. Also in 1934 was released the cinema film The King of Paris about a playwright who starts a woman on her acting career but cannot keep her in a personal relationship. This was based on a play in French La Voie Lactée (The Milky Way). Drinkwater worked on an adaptation for the cinema screen of the opera Pagliacci (libretto by Leoncavallo) which was then developed by a number of others including Bertolt Brecht before release in 1936. His dramatisation of George Elliott's Mill on the Floss was released as a cinema film in 1937[36].

John Drinkwater made recordings in the Columbia Records International Educational Society lecture series. They include a lecture on 'The Speaking of Verse', and Drinkwater reading his own poems[37].

In 1937 he completed a 63-minute film about King George VI, The King's People, in which he was author, producer and narrator, with appearances by Viscountess Astor MP, Rt Hon Sir Austen Chamberlain, George Bernard Shaw, and Drinkwater's daughter Penny. George VI had become King on the abdication of Edward VIII. Drinkwater commented : "I have two objects in mind. One is to show the staying power of the British people – their staying power through all manner of ordeals. The other is to show the sense of tolerance which is really the redeeming foundation of the whole British character – the sense of tolerance which has enabled this great Empire to pass from a somewhat narrow spirit of Imperialism to a far more generous spirit of Commonwealth."

John Drinkwater died on 25 March 1937 at his home, North Hall, Mortimer Crescent, Maida Vale[38] of a heart attack.

On 23rd October 1937 his widow Daisy Drinkwater unveiled a bronze tablet to, and photograph of, Drinkwater in the 'Study' of the Leytonstone Branch Library. Later in 1937 she presented the Borough of Leyton with Drinkwater's desk and inkstand[39]. Mrs Drinkwater later gave the Borough the manuscript of his poem Verity published in Summer Harvest of 1933.

32 John Drinkwater in "Robinson of England" published 1937 with a dedication to Ramsay Macdonald MP and a note of thanks by his wife Daisy Kennedy Drinkwater to the proof readers (which suggests that Drinkwater had died before the book was published)
33 from 'To One I Love' in *Selected Poems* published in 1922
34 VHM Pamphlet L54 "Leyton Borough Council / Public Libraries / Presentation by Mrs John Drinkwater to the Borough of Manuscripts of the Works of John Drinkwater, 1952. (The library was altered in 1929 so that the public could browse books on the 'open access' shelves rather than request them by filling out a slip.)

35 Angela Lansbury: A Life on Stage and Screen by Rob Edelman and Audrey E. Kupferberg

36 www.IMDB.com
37 Catalogue of Columbia Records, Up to and including Supplement no. 252 (Columbia Graphophone Company, London September 1933), pp. 371, 374

38 ancestry.com family tree; the death was registered at Hampstead January to March 1937 vol 1a page 913
39 cutting at VHM L54 from *Daily Telegraph* 28 February 1952

In 1952 Mrs Drinkwater gave Leyton the manuscripts of two more poems by her late husband and of his books on Oliver Cromwell, Williiam Morris and Swinburne. The Borough already had over 90 items relating to Drinkwater, many of them first editions.

Bird In Hand, a play he published in 1927, was performed on New York's Broadway in 1929 and 1930 with about 500 performances, was broadcast on TV in 1938 and again in 1952 as one of BBC TV's Sunday Night Theatre productions. In 1955 a film of one of his novels was made in Denmark : Tre finder en kro[40].

John Drinkwater saw himself as amongst the trailblazers of the Pilgrim Players and Birmingham Repertory Theatre, but he did not display in his writing a modernist's wish to break with the past, to challenge fundamental conventions. That identity, as an independent thinker reflecting his own times, but not an iconoclast, must have been the main reason some well-known people showed him so much respect. He was able to get published and broadcast after not fighting in the First World War and after being divorced. His intense national pride probably seemed preferable to the internationalism of the Bloomsbury set.

A century later John Drinkwater's life story has some fascinating aspects. Disappointingly it seems unlikely that we will find much in his writing about the effect his mother's early death had on him in later years, about the dilemmas of extra-marital affairs, about the relationship of English literature with the new media of radio, cinema and audio recordings, or the reconciliation of cultural élitism with democracy. The two volumes of his unfinished autobiography do not say enough about his relationship with his father the graduate school-teacher turned actor, or his own determination to choose a career in literature and drama despite his father's lack of success in making that attempt, or the ways in which he won intellectual respect despite leaving school at an early age. However, he wrote extensively for publication and public performance, and letters and other documents are in archives for further research. There may be material to re-examine.

40 IMDB

Potter & Moore – a Leyton firm

by Graham Pitt

John Potter and William Moore, physic gardeners, founded a distillery in Mitcham in 1749 for the production of lavender oil and lavender water. The Mitcham soil had some special quality for the growth of the lavender plant which produced outstanding oil. The business carried on until 1888 when it was purchased by W.J. Bush & Co. This family firm ran Potter & Moore as an adjunct to its own perfumery department in Ash Grove, Mare Street, Hackney (an Arriva bus garage is now on the site).

In 1901 my father, Arthur Pitt then aged 21, joined Bush as a research chemist from the pathological lab of Claybury Asylum. He proved to have a sensitive nose and so became a perfumer. In 1914 he became manager of the perfumery department and the business did so well that in 1928 it was decided to put its activities into a newly incorporated company, Potter & Moore Ltd., of which my father became Chairman and a joint Managing Director.

The expanding business needed more space so all activities other than manufacturing and assembling were transferred in 1929 to Thyssen Street, Dalston. The two sites were 1½ miles apart and this proved an inefficient arrangement. In 1937 all was brought under one roof in a new building in Seymour Road, Leyton.

It was opened by the popular singer Gracie Fields on 24 July (photo below).

No doubt a lot of the Hackney and Dalston workforce followed the company to Leyton but by 1941 most of the employees were local so Potter & Moore gave a boost to employment in the area . Some of the workforce lived in Warner Estate houses, the houses in Seymour Road are Warner's.

The new building (Lavender House) was designed by my father. In the SE corner was a two-storey L-shaped office block, flat roofed, the rest of the building was single-storey in order to facilitate the movement of goods. This factory part had a daylight roof.

Raw materials and accessories were delivered at a loading bay in the NE corner straight into the stores, samples being taken to the laboratory on the E side for quality checking. (The lab also researched new products and improvements to existing ones). It had a staff of two chemists, one of whom doubled as a production engineer, and a 'lab boy'. It functioned very much under the eye of my father who, albeit Chairman, retained his interest and expertise in perfumery matters.

In due course the raw ingredients went into the manufacturing department (also on the E side) from where the manufactured products were delivered in bulk to the workroom in the centre of the building to be bottled or canned, assembled and packaged. The finished products then went into the finished goods store

in the SW corner, prior to despatch to customers from another loading bay in that corner. (In the NW corner was a canteen, cloakrooms and lavatories).

In the Hackney days bottling was done by 'jug and bottle' and there was still a niche market for delicate stoppered bottles so there was some hand-filling at Seymour Road in the SE corner of the workroom by an elderly skilled forewoman who had been with the company for years.

In the mid 1930s my father had visited the Boots factory in Nottingham where he had been impressed by mass-production packaging on conveyor belts, so five belts with narrow fixed workplaces on each side were installed in the Potter & Moore workroom.

By way of example, the filling machine for lavender water was sited at the end of the belt, convenient for the stores and manufacturing. An operative filled the bottle by suction and placed it on the end of the moving belt. Another operative would place a wad in a cap, another would place the cap on the bottle using a special device to tighten it. Labels would have been put on gummed boards and an operative would place one on the bottle (hopefully straight!). Then the bottle would be placed in an individual printed cardboard carton delivered to the belt flat but opened up to take the bottle. The finished goods were then boxed in sixes or dozens, placed on a pallet at the end of the belt and eventually taken to the finished goods store. Some of these operations took more time than others e.g. labelling, so more than one worker would be doing these.

It was more efficient to keep a belt going on the same task day after day but, if there was sufficient finished stock, it would be changed to another product. One might expect the operatives to be bored to tears but on the whole there was a merry buzz of chatter along the belt. Occasionally a new line would need packaging and they had to get used to the ways of the new product. The managers too had to assess the number of operatives assigned to each operation in order to ensure a steady flow of work down the belt when production started. When the flow began there was dead silence and tension in the air. When the chatter started up again, one knew that they were settling down and all was well.

During the War several perfumery firms had to share premises in order to free their own factories for aircraft production. Fortunately, Seymour Road was chosen to act as the host and by 1942 the building was being used by seven perfumery firms of which Grossmith and Cyclax are probably the best known today. During the War there were restrictions on the manufacture of cosmetics, materials were in short supply and temporary packaging had to be introduced. This was much plainer and easy to copy by counterfeiters, there are horrific stories of unhygienic counterfeit cosmetics being sold on the 'black market' in wartime. Luckily I cannot recall Potter & Moore ever suffering from this deception.

On 11th October 1940 a bomb had crashed alongside the North wall of the factory damaging the stores. It blasted a crater 60 feet wide and 15 feet deep. The factory was brought back into production but four days later a parachute mine fell in the same crater. Its explosion caused havoc but, had it not fallen in the crater, the damage would have been far worse. My father had a letter published in The Times about this fortunate coincidence. It was not until the following February that the factory became more or less weather tight but even after the end of the War more trauma was to come as a result of these missiles. In 1949 the factory floor started to subside. It transpired that it had been built on made-up ground which had been disturbed by the shock waves from the bomb and mine. The infill had, I think, also blocked up a natural stream which ran through the site and was now making itself felt. Repair consisted of driving piles down to the firm ground underneath, constructing a lattice-work of stout girders across their tops and then laying a concrete floor on the lattice. Maintaining production while doing all this caused considerable difficulty but it was done. I think the repairs qualified as War Damage and were paid for as such. I imagine that these piles are still in place under the flats built on the site. It may have been the bomb and the mine which led my father to have copies made of all the

Potter & Moore formulae for its products. These were of course cherished trade secrets and their being lost or destroyed would have been a manufacturing disaster. He kept all these copies in the relative safety of his home out at Chigwell and they only came to light in 2001 when the family passed them to the present owners of the company.

I was out in the East Indies Fleet at the end of 1944 when my father offered me a job as Assistant Secretary on my return. In the best East End tradition he had spoken for me to the Bushes (as for my older brother before me). So I joined Potter & Moore in 1947.

In the crowded wartime conditions efficiency had slipped a little and my father wanted me to ginger the place up a bit. I set to. I improved the costing and, with help, increased production. Some methods were improved and by my taking an interest, increase in output was encouraged. I also much improved the liaison between sales and production, hitherto lacking. I even introduced some more comfortable chairs with backs for the operatives on the belts, which went down well !

1949 was the bi-centenary of the company. It was marked by a celebratory dinner for customers, suppliers and bigwigs at the Park Lane Hotel, London and a staff dinner at the Assembly Hall, Walthamstow. Those employees who had served for at least 21 years were presented there with commemorative silver sweet dishes. That the Bush / Potter & Moore companies were good to work for is shown by the figures – 21 employees had served for 21 to 30 years, 6 for 31 to 40 years, 3 for 47 to 50 years (including my father), 1 for 52 years and another for an astonishing 61 years !

When I joined, Potter & Moore was known chiefly for its powder cream (my father is said to have invented this but it was probably a joint effort with the other research chemists) and Mitcham Lavender Water – its bottles had a label depicting an 18th Century girl selling lavender from a pony. It also manufactured blush cream, smelling salts (filled in a ventilated cabinet), eau de cologne, brilliantine, aftershave, talcum powder, bath salt tablets, bath crystals, toilet soap, shaving sticks and perfumes.

After the War, exports were very important to the Country and we had an efficient export department. There were also one or more manufacturing subsidiaries abroad to which oils were shipped (Australia being one). Bush marketed a perfume which, to meet the requirements of some Muslims, was manufactured without alcohol. This was called 'Bint el Sudan' (Daughter of Sudan) and its heavy aroma made it a best seller west from the Sudan across Africa and east towards the Arab Middle East, apart from the Sudan itself. By 1950 Potter & Moore were bottling and finishing for Bush 500 gross (72,000) a week which sometimes put a strain even on our capability. It has been claimed by some to be the world's best selling perfume.

During and soon after the War anything would sell but then things crept back to normal and competition increased. Quality had to be watched but at least

supplies of raw materials and accessories improved. In 1961 Potter & Moore along with Bush was acquired by Albright & Wilson who in 1966 formed Bush Boake Allen from the merger of W.J. Bush, A. Boake Roberts and Stafford Allen. They had a large site in Blackhorse Lane. They in turn sold it to E.C. de Witt & Co. in 1968 who, in 1984, invested £100,000 to increase the manufacturing capacity at Seymour Road.

The factory closed in the mid 1980s and Viking Place apartments are now built on the site.

Potter & Moore had further changes of ownership over the years but since 2003 has been part of Creightons plc and based in Peterborough, where it has been for some years. Potter & Moore toiletries can be found in top hotel bathrooms and they recently launched an upmarket range of toiletries and perfumes, including a lavender fragrance.

I am most grateful to my son, Nigel Pitt, for the additional research he carried out and the documents he found in the Waltham Forest Archive which I have assisted me in compiling this account.

Edward Sydney
Librarian of the Borough of Leyton 1928-57

by David Boote

There was a time in the twentieth century when local government was seen by some as a route to a better future. The predecessor boroughs of Leyton, Walthamstow and Chingford could display self-esteem and ambition. In 1928 Leyton appointed a Borough Librarian with a vision that was to bring him to the top of his professional body, and give the Borough Council the opportunity to show leadership on the issue of library extension.

Local authorities were given the power to provide a public library from 1850. Leyton opened its first in 1893. By the 1920s there were those who wanted a public library to reach out, not just by being accessible to the blind and sick, but in helping create a more egalitarian and inclusive society, through proactive education and expansion of the library's functions and services, to a broad social spectrum of users. This would be exceeding a local authority's responsibilities until section 132 of Local Government Act 1948 came into force. However, an enquiry chaired by Sir Francis Kenyon in 1927 found 111 library authorities in Britain were already providing lectures. The report declared that the 'library service ... exists for the training of the good citizen' and 'the public library should be at the intellectual centre of the area it serves'. A manual on library extension was published in the same year (by L R McColvin). So it was the topical issue when Edward Sydney took charge of Leyton's library service in 1928.

Apart from service in the First World War (he was severely wounded in the Battle of the Somme), and a spell in Leeds, Edward Sydney had stayed in Bolton, Lancashire where he had been born in 1892. He had worked for Bolton Public Libraries from 1907.

The Leyton Public Library Committee had from 1924 organised a cultural festival named an Eisteddfod after the Welsh precedent with ancient origins. Edward Sydney was given another great opportunity in his new post. The library for Leytonstone was in Park House by Leytonstone High Road Station, a building centuries old and designed as a home for a wealthy businessman and his family. The Council agreed to pay for a new, purpose-built replacement in Church Lane within the main Leytonstone shopping centre. The entrance was grandly Classical but the interior was designed by James Ambrose Dartnall in a style of its own, more angular than Art Deco, a touch Ancient Egyptian. (Dartnall died in 1985 and is remembered as having lived locally.) The new building opened in 1934 for 'a library service and meeting place for local cultural and educational activities'. It included meeting rooms and a hall with a stage, piano and audio-visual equipment. To emphasise modernity the library was above showrooms for electrical appliances. A recent article (by Dave Muddiman) considers Leytonstone 'perhaps the earliest example of a cultural centre operating on a large scale'.

(Members of Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society may be interested to note that Sydney was invited to talk in 1930 to the Leyton Antiquarian Society on 'The Library and the Student of Local History'.)

In 1938 the librarian at Chingford, Eric Leyland, wanted to encourage use of the public library by the upper middle class who saw it as an institution for the poor, and by the 'lower class' who wanted 'light material'. Leyland thought a public library should have meeting rooms, reading rooms, lounges, lecture rooms with projection facilities, local information, and a local museum collection. Chingford was to get its Assembly Hall and Library in 1959.

Between 1935 and 1948 Leytonstone Library was the venue for 322 play-readings, 282 discussions, 151 Classical gramophone recitals, 35 lectures, 45 exhibitions and 31 film shows, a total of 157,426 attendances. Drama was a strong point. In 1949 the

Junior Play-Reading Group included a young Derek Jacobi in a prominent role.

Sydney told his professional body, the Library Association, at its first conference after the Second World War, of his wish for 'a type of society which will politically, economically and socially eventually provide training for every citizen to make his fullest possible contribution to the common welfare'.

In 1947 Leyton took the lead among the London boroughs pressing for more powers for local authorities in the entertainment field, and these were granted in the Local Government Act of 1948.

In 1950 Leyton had a population of 106,000 of whom 20,000 were regular library users.

From the end of the Second World War to his retirement in 1957 Edward Sydney was a leading figure in the librarian profession. He was very active in the Library Association, of which he became President in 1956. In June 1946 he toured the US and Canada. He carried out assignments for the British Council and Unesco between 1947 and 1956. He met Prime Minister of India Pundit Nehru, and Kwame Nkrumah, Prime Minister of the Gold Coast (as it then was).

Extension activities did spread, but in 1960 no more than 10% of authorities had a comprehensive programme, and 40% had none.

Another leading advocate of library extension was Harold Joliffe, who was a friend of Sydney. He was appointed head librarian at Swindon in 1946. Joliffe found attendances declined in the 1960s because home had become more attractive, particularly with television.

In 1957 Sydney was living at 168 Hainault Road with his wife and one of his two daughters. He died in 1968. It is possible to dismiss library extension as a dead end, and to be pessimistic about cultural life, but amateur dramatics are still enthusiastically supported, Classical music performed locally, extensive art and performance festivals organised and implemented by volunteers, and healthily sceptical discussion of our local civic life takes place in halls and through the internet.

Choosing words carefully :

thoughts stimulated by the Silver Jubilee Edition of the "Leyton School Magazine" of May 1935

by David Boote

Miss Gail Ellisdon has given Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society a copy of Issue No. 6 Volume II of the Leyton School Magazine, published in May 1935, together with a cutting from the Express & Independent local newspaper of 14th February 1958 reporting the death of Dr Maurice Gompertz, former Headmaster of Leyton County High School for Boys, and the menu for the 11th Annual Dinner of the School Old Boys Association in November 1937. Miss Ellisdon says her father Stanley attended Dr Gompertz's school during the First World War and for many years was secretary of the Old Boys Association, his home being in Dyer's Hall Road.

Leyton County High School for Boys

Leyton County High School for Boys developed out of the Leyton Pupil-Teacher Centre at Goodall Road School of which Maurice Gompertz BA was first principal in 1900. In 1905 the Centre had moved to Connaught Road, Leytonstone, and in 1915 it was merged with the Technical Institute in Adelaide Road behind Leyton Town Hall. Maurice Gompertz divided his time between the two sites for a period.

In November 1929 the High School for Boys moved to a new building in Essex Road, Leyton, from the collection of buildings in Connaught Road known as the "Tin Tabernacle", and Maurice Gompertz retired. Whilst the head of the school he had obtained a PhD from London University and served on Leyton Council and the Essex Education Committee. His own subjects were English and mathematics. His home for most of this time was in Boscombe Avenue. He moved away from London on retirement, dying aged 89 in Eastbourne, but he attended many Old Boys reunion dinners.

Frank Muir

The May 1935 issue of the Leyton School Magazine is 56 pages long and the standard of writing is high throughout. The editor's assistant was Frank Muir, then in Year IV, who became a leading presenter and scriptwriter of television and radio comedy programmes ("Call My Bluff", "My Word" and many others). Muir was one of those comedians whose early career included the Windmill striptease theatre but from 1948 it centred on the BBC. Helping to edit the magazine was good training. The tone was mainly humorous and the content avoided serious subject matter. Muir himself wrote a piece called "Q.E.D" which is a little reminiscent of P G Wodehouse and Evelyn Waugh ("the spot of bother in which his great-Aunt's pekinese played a leading part was settled with great enterprise").

Frank Muir was born on 5th February 5 1920 in his grandmother's pub and hotel in Ramsgate, the Derby Arms. Muir had made the most of the beaches of Thanet, and got to the same school as Edward Heath, Chatham House. Despite this, Muir wrote generously in his autobiography of Leyton and his school there : "Leyton County High turned out to be an extraordinarily good school. In rank it was not even a grammar school – our nearest local grammar school was Sir George Monoux School (pronounced locally as 'Sir George Monarchs') in nearby Walthamstow – but a county high, a grade of secondary school which provided an almost free education; I think my parents had to find £11 a term (harder to find then than it sounds now). The syllabus was amazingly extensive . . ." Muir lists as famous old boys actor Derek Jacobi, the classical pianist John Lill, film and television villain Arnold Diamond, and John Hewer who played the TV advert character Captain Birds Eye.

Muir's true affections are I think reflected in the title he gave his autobiography, "A Kentish Lad", and it was the history of Ramsgate he researched for the book. When he was 14 years old his father died of pneumonia and, because his mother could no longer afford to pay the school fees, he had to leave to work in the carbon paper factory which had employed his father, the Caribonum Co Ltd with works off Church Road, Leyton (see the 1916 photograph at page 99 of "Leyton and Leytonstone" compiled by Keith Romig and Peter Lawrence in the Archive Photographs Series).

Entertainment on a school sea cruise reminds us of the limited possibilities at the time : treasure-hunts, whist drives and community singing. It is this deficiency which Frank Muir helped greatly to remedy in his later television career, as did some other notable former pupils of Leyton County High School for Boys. Jonathan Ross maintains the link between our area and light-hearted TV and radio programmes.

Muir died in January 1998, soon after the release of his autobiography. The University of Sussex Library holds an archive of scripts by Frank Muir and his partner in comedy Denis Norden which fills 10 cubic feet.

National pride

The word "Empire" appears nowhere in the magazine but old boys are announced as having become Professor of Physics at Colombo and Professor of Social Science at Capetown. The location of these cities is not stated, readers presumably being expected to know they were in Ceylon (now known as Sri Lanka) and South Africa, and therefore within the British Empire. There is little overt patriotism but the first page has drawings of King George and Queen Mary, under which are the words "Congratulations to their Majesties on the occasion of their Silver Jubilee". A poem praises the liner ship Queen Mary as the "Object of Britain's love and pride", "Our power made manifest, Skill, craft, brains, brawn – our best -" Frank Muir and the editor, S H G Head, appear to be the joint authors of a piece describing attendance at a Jubilee celebration but nothing of the celebration parade itself. This seems to be because it had not yet taken place, but alternatively it was an early event. The boys are described or imagined as taking a "heavy trench periscope" to see over the heads of the crowd. This item of equipment is the only reference to the Great War of 1914 to 1918.

The account of a school trip to Denmark is a striking instance of Nordic nations being given favourable treatment, whereas one of the short crime fiction contributions gives the villains French nationality. However, a school visit by cruise ship to Malaga in Spain is neutral in tone, devoid of judgement favourable or unfavourable. The Old Boys reunion dinner menu is in French with no translation, though I suspect this is more snobbery than admiration of French cuisine. There is an account of a trip by plane to Paris, decades before air travel became affordable for those of middle income. Walking in the Black Forest is enthusiastically described but the German railway ticket inspector was unhelpful.

Competitive sport takes up much space in the magazine but there is no suggestion that drama and intellectual activities are inferior. The school had a Literary and Dramatic Society.

There is an intriguing reference to an "old boy" George E Sweet who was exhibiting paintings done in Spain. George Sweet RWA [Associate of The Royal Watercolour Society ?] 1909 – 1997 was a realistic figurative painter. He switched from studying medicine to art at the Slade School. He became fluent in French, Spanish and Catalan and also an authority on raptor birds who contributed to the standard work 'Birds of the Western Palearctic'.

I have been tempted to think of 1935 as being before war with Nazi Germany loomed, but almost the last words are of someone "hit on the left nostril by a sharpened stick of shaving soap clearly marked "Heil Hitler"". The expression is comic, anticipating the humour of Spike Milligan and the Goon Show, but it is recognition of the aggression shown to Britain by Nazi Germany. A poem wishes for "a fair world of all-pervading peace".

The fiction written for the magazine refers to acts of great violence - without describing them – and shows a passion for the macabre. I think this just reflects the adolescence of the contributors rather than the ethos of the school.

Employment prospects

The Headmaster Mr L Couch (nephew of the literary authority Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, according to Frank Muir) wrote in the magazine : "Little difficulty exists nowadays in finding suitable situations; the difficulty more often occurs in finding properly qualified boys

(holding the School Certificate at least) for the many openings that present themselves."

There is some reflection of the economic importance to Leyton of the railway works, in the regret that active involvement in the model railway club has dropped, and in the annual school visits to the railway works at Swindon (which were perhaps more encouraging of visitors than the much nearer Stratford, or preferred for the journey).

Local pride

One of the junior prefects in 1935 was L Abbott and I wonder if this was the Lou Abbott who became secretary of the Leyton Society and lived in Norman House, Hoe Street. If correct, as a former secretary of Waltham Forest Civic Society I was one of his successors.

The Leyton Antiquarian Society

by David Boote

In 2005 the Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society was formed. Walthamstow Historical Society dates back to 1915 but until 1987 it was called the Walthamstow Antiquarian Society. I struggle to understand the difference between the words Historical and Antiquarian, but early histories were narratives, and early antiquaries collected manuscripts and objects. The website of the Society of Antiquaries of London declares that their "interests are inclusive of all aspects of the material past" (my emphasis). Friedrich Nietzsche defined three forms of history of which one was antiquarian history, aimed at creating a feeling of connection to one's history. A history society is quite likely to take an interest in many aspects of the past and not just the locality, but a local history society now, just as a local antiquarian society before the Second World War, will concentrate on the past of its area. Anyway, Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society has a predecessor which is the subject of this article. I am interested in what kind of group the Leyton Antiquarian Society was, and why it ceased to exist.

The Inaugural Meeting of the Leyton Antiquarian Society was held on 5th November 1926 in Leyton Town Hall (which subsequently became the Leyton Municipal Offices and has now been purchased by a private consortium). The meeting was attended by 20 people, of whom 2 were women. The members of the provisional Committee had the names Brant, Brown, Collier, Fowler, Freeman, Phillistion, Locks, Smith, Tallack and Wintersgill. The Vicar of St Mary's, Leyton, James Glass, signed the minutes of this Inaugural Meeting as correct, an early example of the strong link between Leyton Antiquarian Society and the Church of England.

Later that month R J Tallack was unanimously elected Chairman for the year 1926-7. He had been the leading figure in the Leyton Ratepayers' Association until 1920. Until the 18th century Leytonstone had no separate existence, being merely a group of houses and inns within the single parish of Leyton (which was bounded by the River Lea, Epping Forest and what is now the Lea Bridge Road). The Borough of Leyton created in 1926 and its predecessors the Leyton Local Board and Leyton Urban District Council continued to include Leytonstone; a pressure group like the Ratepayers' Association took the name Leyton as covering the whole of the local authority's area. The process by which Leyton became covered with residential streets really began with the purchase of Leyton Grange House and its grounds by the British Land Company in 1860. By then national politics were polarised between the Liberal and Conservative parties. Those parties developed strong local campaigning organisations as the right to vote was extended beyond the wealthy, but there was a feeling, amongst some people at least, that members of local authorities should not be partisan in the same way. Ratepayers' Associations by their very name emphasised the self-interest in keeping the rates low of those able to pay local taxes. After the First World War they came into conflict with representatives of the Labour Party who sought election to local authorities and wished to use local government to benefit the relatively poor.

In one sign of its different character Walthamstow Antiquarian Society suggested that the coat of arms for the Borough of Walthamstow include the motto of revolutionary socialist William Morris 'Fellowship is Life' - though I do not think the Walthamstow Antiquarian Society's members were revolutionaries.

For Vice Presidents the Leyton Antiquarian Society's interim committee chose the Bishop of Barking, the Vicar of St Mary's the Rev J Glass, A Alimonda who was a leading light in the Leyton Literary Club, Z Moon FRHistS. who was Leyton's Borough Librarian, G F Bosworth FRGS one of the founders of Walthamstow Antiquarian Society, and P Thompson FLS the Curator of the 'Essex Museum', Romford Road, Stratford which became the Passmore Edwards Museum (and was closed relatively recently). The Vice-Presidents for 1928 were the Bishop of Barking, Sir J B Slade, A Alimonda, J Atkinson, G F Bosworth, J G Locks, Z Moon, P Thompson, G E Roebuck (Librarian of Walthamstow and

another of the three founders of Walthamstow Antiquarian Society) and R J Tallack.

To get an audience for Leyton Antiquarian Society's first full meeting in December 1926 the committee agreed that "suitable Handbills be prepared, printed and judiciously circulated amongst Members, sympathisers and possible friends of the Society". Mr J Brant spoke at the meeting, in Leyton Town Hall, about the Parish Church of St Mary's, Mr A T Wintersgill about the Walthamstow Slip and Mr R J Tallack on the Forest Villages of Leyton and Leytonstone.

A T Wintersgill was the first Secretary and lived at 27 Worsley Road E11. He gave a talk at least twice, in 1925 before the Antiquarian Society was formed, and in 1932, about the Thomas Lodge who lived in Leyton for 30 years.

The Antiquarian Society's first Treasurer was E W Brown of 18 Adelaide Road E10. The initial annual subscription for adults was 2 shillings and 6 pence, and 1 shilling for students attending secondary, technical, 'central' and Council schools.

The initial programme of talks had as subjects : historic old Leyton houses, Leyton 100 years ago (by S J Barns, an official of the Essex Field Club), the Leyton Charities, Leyton Parish Church (St Mary's) and Leytonstone Parish Church (presumably St John's). Of 6 places to visit, 5 were local churches and the other the Essex Museum, Romford Road. One early day out organised by the Society, in September 1927, was to Livingstone College at Knotts Green and Forest House within the grounds of Whipps Cross Hospital, both later demolished.

The subject matter of the Walthamstow Antiquarian Society's publications and talks centred on the medieval manors of its area more than the parish church. Nonconformists, Catholics and religious sceptics would have been less likely to feel outsiders than in the Leyton Antiquarian Society. The latter's 1928 Programme was less centred on Anglican parish churches, which were to be the subject of 2 of the 4 visits and 3 talks out of 10 (all of which looked back to Leyton's rural past). The 1929 Programme had no talk about a parish church. 5 of the 6 subjects were medieval in flavour and the other about prehistory. In 1930 only 1 of 6 talks was about an Anglican parish church but 3 of the 4 visits.

The objects of the Leyton Antiquarian Society were :

"I. To investigate local history and antiquities – particularly in connection with Leyton and Leytonstone – and

"II. To disseminate information on these matters among local residents by (a) the reading of papers, (b) the receiving of communications, (c) the exhibiting of antiquities, (d) discussing subjects of antiquarian interest and making excursions, and (e) the publishing of monographs on local and antiquarian subjects."

In August 1927 the Chairman, Mr Tallack, proposed "That, with a view to assisting in the publication of the Leyton Antiquarian Society's first Memoir, this meeting of members resolves to forego any privileges which are provided in the rules whereby the Society's publications are free to members – this resolution to be operative for a period of 12 months". For the second year of membership the annual minimum subscription was increased from 2/6d to 5 shillings. Initial ideas for publications were Leyton Celebrities such as Roe, Strype, Lodge; the 3 Leyton manors (Grange, Ruckholt and Mark); the 'Walthamstow Slip'; the tithe and rate maps and their Terriers; and the vestry books of minutes and of burials etc.

The Society was informed it would be unable to use the Council Chamber at Leyton Town Hall for its meetings after 31st March 1928. The Society was for a time allowed to use a Committee Room instead.

In April 1927 Charles Hall Crouch wrote a talk read by Mrs Crouch which covered Spencer Turner and his tree nursery and Turner's Oak, John Hewett the master of a private school later called Emblem's Academy, the Leightonstone Air (a song), and the Cotton Family of Leytonstone.

By the middle of 1927 minutes of meetings complained of small attendances, and on "the issue of our 1st Memoir (publication) – on Leyton Church by Mr Brant – which had been announced for July, it was unanimously resolved that its publication be deferred owing to our Financial position." In contrast, the stimulus to form Walthamstow Antiquarian Society was the need to fund a history of Walthamstow written by G F Bosworth, and its first publication, a monograph on the manor of Walthamstow Toni, was printed for distribution at that Society's inaugural meeting. The Walthamstow Society has never looked back and continues to the present an

admirable publishing programme using modern computer equipment.

The Leyton Antiquarian Society's 3rd Annual Report, for the year ending November 30th, 1929, starts "The reversion to the original subscription of 2/6 has failed to bring our numbers up to what they were in 1927, although a small increase as resulted." The balance in hand at the end of the year was £17 4s. 2d. So the effort to produce a publication had resulted in an unpopular increase in the membership subscription. A possible reason for trying to fund publications from the membership subscription, rather than just offering them for sale, may have been the need to recover the costs of setting up the print, but such concerns do not seem to have worried others unduly at that time.

On the opening of an Exhibition held at Leyton Town Hall by the Antiquarian Society in November 1927, the Mayor, Alderman Sir James Slade JP CC, said "The Leyton Antiquarian Society, which was run on similar lines to the Literary Society, a body that had been in existence for many years, had elected him, Leyton's first Mayor, as its first President" … "finding himself intensely interested in the Society's work, it had occurred to him and others that if they could obtain a collection depicting the history of Leyton, it might prove of interest to the large number of residents in the Borough. Slade added a pleasant joke : "He had received a paper from a Lancashire Borough, Rochdale, which had inscribed on it 'The town that believes in itself.' They had not yet reached such a high civic position as Rochdale." (A photo of Sir James on the Borough of Leyton's Charter Day is at page 6 of 'Waltham Forest 1910 – 1940' published by Walthamstow Historical Society.)

Plans for a Leyton Museum were mentioned from February 1927. R J Tallack wrote in 1929 to Leyton Antiquarian Society urging support for his petition that the former vicarage built for John Strype, at the junction of Church Road with Leyton High Road, be made a museum. (The building was demolished after the Second World War in which it suffered bomb damage.) In March 1931 A T Wintersgill wrote a letter to a local newspaper on calling for a room in the Technical Institute attached to Leyton Town Hall to be made into a museum when the Institute premises were absorbed into the Council offices. In 1934 when a new Leytonstone Library was opened on the corner of Church Lane and the High Road, Charles Hall Crouch suggested that the original building used, Park House on the High Road by the Midland Railway line, was in reasonable condition and should be made a museum. Neither suggestion was taken up (and Park House was demolished).

In July 1927 about 70 members of Leyton Antiquarian Society and friends attended an evening garden party at Miss Lister's, Sycamore House, 871 High Road, Leytonstone, with an address by Sir James Slade - President of Leyton Antiquarian Society and Mayor of Leyton – with music, games such as bowls, and refreshments. These garden parties hosted by the Lister sisters were to be an annual event. In 1931 Alderman A E Béchervaise JP gave a speech with this negative assessment of the Borough of which he was then Mayor "Unfortunately, Leyton, unlike a place like Canterbury, had lost most of its ancient buildings owing to the march of housing progress, and for that reason he felt the Society had not much nowadays to show visitors." Referring to the project then being advocated by the Leyton Labour Party for a new road from Wanstead to Ruckholt Road (which would be completed 60 odd years later as the A12 / M11 Link Road) "He sometimes felt conflicting feelings between the modern arterial road and the glories of a cathedral, such as Wells, which was his favourite. Both were necessary, and the former would make it easy for many thousands to be able to visit and enjoy the wonderful architecture of the latter." Sycamore House was replaced after the Second World War by the Welsh Church and so was one of a long list of fine buildings demolished after Béchervaise's denial of their existence, including the Strype Vicarage, Livingstone College, Forest House and Park House that are also mentioned in this article.

By October 1928 Frederick Temple, having already been appointed Assistant Secretary, was acting as the Society's Secretary, a position he was to keep for the rest of the Society's life. He lived at 218 Colchester Road E10.

R J Tallack was often unable to attend meetings of the Leyton Antiquarian Society even though he was chairman - 'official duties' were the usual reason given. He moved away to Devonshire. In 1931 the Society experienced a lot of difficulty finding a new chairman. A number of men refused including the Vicar of St Mary's, by then the Rev Robert Bren. Bren was extraordinarily

enthusiastic about Freemasonry, having a doorknocker with Masonic imagery fitted to the vicarage and the chancel floor of St Mary's laid out with Masonic symbols. The church today retains a number of other Masonic images, though the chancel floor has been carpeted over. A whole broadsheet page of a local newspaper gave a detailed account of the Masonic ceremony held to mark the rebuilding of the chancel with Freemasons' donations, naming many though not all the participants. The ability to participate in elections and democratic government had only recently been given to women, but they were excluded from the main Masonic meetings.

Whilst women seem to have taken only a limited part in Leyton Antiquarian Society (as well as Miss E Lister, a Miss Baker later joined the committee but her offer to donate documents to the Society was not accepted), the second President of Walthamstow Antiquarian Society was Frances Evelyn, Countess of Warwick, and its member Miss Constance Demain Saunders started the process of creating the Vestry House Museum.

The second exhibition of antiquities of Leyton was mounted at Leyton Town Hall by the Leyton Antiquarian Society jointly with the Leyton Public Library Committee. The Society named 9 'guide-lecturers' who would show school parties round the exhibition at the Town Hall held on 26th and 27th March 1931 : R J Tallack, T M Grose Lloyd, Fleetwood-Phillistion, J H Bate, F W Collier, A Browning, H A Smith, E Sydney who was the Borough Librarian, and F Temple.

In May 1931 the Society organised a walk around Woodford jointly with St Georges Ramblers, guided by Charles Hall Crouch, which looked at the parish church, Grove Hall, Essex House on Woodford Green and a dilapidated well behind the Horse and Well Inn. Crouch welcomed the Society back to Woodford Parish Church in 1936 and with his wife provided the members with tea at their home in Churchfields. In the autumn of 1931 a meeting heard a paper by Crouch, read out by his wife, about the floor monuments in St Mary's parish church.

In March 1932 the Leyton and Walthamstow Antiquarian Societies held a joint meeting at the Central Library, Walthamstow, under the presidency of Gilbert Houghton. Frederick Temple gave a talk about Sir Thomas Lake (Secretary of State to James I), his family and their connections with the parish and manors of Walthamstow. Temple was thanked by the Walthamstow Society's Chairman Dr P H Reaney - who was to research and write in the 1970s the section of the Victoria County History on Walthamstow, and was the authority on Essex place names.

The Secretary's report to the AGM on 14th December 1932 began : "The Society has just about held its own during 1932. There have been no new developments." Outdoor meetings (ie visits) "proved highly satisfactory". "No attempt has been made during the year towards the issuing of a monograph." "The Society has been without a permanent Chairman during the Year."

The desirability of Society publications was raised at the December 1932 AGM by J B Bennett. In March 1933 a sub-committee was chosen to look into this, and its members were Wintersgill, Collier, Barns, Eastman, Temple and Bennett. 2 members of the main committee voted against the establishment of the sub-committee. The sub-committee "after lengthy discussion, although agreeing on the desirability of publication, failed to arrive at an agreement as to a plan or plans by means of which publication might be effected". "During the year the local newspapers have failed to give the same amount of publicity to the activities of the Society as hitherto." This was ominous. Good summaries of talks given had been appearing in the local paper at one time, which meant that the knowledge was being published to a much wider audience, without any cost to the Society.

The Statement of Accounts for 1933 showed 42 memberships at 2/6, 1 member at 5/- and 1 life member. Mr Fleetwood Phillistion had been hosting committee meetings, and also addressing envelopes to members but his failing eyesight meant he could no longer do the latter. The Secretary's report for 1934 stated that "Your Committee has been unable to see its way clear to arrange for the issuing of any printed matter."

A committee meeting in October 1934 had to discuss Leyton Town Hall no longer being available for meetings of it and other societies. The Society took to meeting at the new Leytonstone Library in Church Lane.

The Vicar of St Mary's, the Rev Bren, established an annual service to commemorate his predecessor John Strype. From 1933 or earlier this service was attended by Leyton Antiquarian Society, on whose behalf its President Alderman F M Read gave a reading. Mr A T Wintersgill, the Chairman of the Society, delivered an address "John Strype, his Life and Times", covering his 67 years as vicar of Leyton and his work as a historian of

the English Protestant Reformation. The service was attended by the Leyton Antiquarian Society in 1935 with the Mayor, Alderman Turner JP. A wreath was laid on Strype's grave as had become customary. Temple gave an excellent talk about Strype. At the 1936 annual commemoration service the talk on John Strype was given by Sir James Slade, JP and Essex County Councillor. In 1937 Temple again gave the talk about Strype.

By 1934 Frederick Temple was writing articles for the Rev Robert Bren's expanded version of 'A History of the Parish of Leyton, Essex' which had been published by John Kennedy in 1894. (Bren's expanded version is now in a special bookcase in the Local Studies Room at Vestry House Museum.)

Mrs Annie R Hatley, who was to be Walthamstow Antiquarian Society's Chairman after the Second World War, gave a talk to the Leyton Society in March 1933. She returned in March 1939 to give a lantern lecture on 'From Stage Coach to Aeroplane'. At the end of 1934 or the start of 1935 Temple gave a talk on a sensational Leyton election in 1879 in which voting papers were lost or stolen, resulting in the resignation of the Clerk to the Local Board, Mr Wragg. The subject matter of these talks indicates a consciousness of the modern urbanised life of Leyton. The Society's activities cannot therefore be entirely dismissed as mere escapism into the rural, deferential, religiously uniform era before 1760, or into an idealised world without human failings. In 1939 Alderman W C Russell, a Vice President of Leyton Antiquarian Society, gave a talk to the Society on Leyton's history from 1919 to 1938 – as Weston extended Kennedy's history, so Russell wished to extend it further.

The committee report for 1935 complains of low attendances at meetings, but the Secretary reported to the December 1938 Annual General Meeting that attendance at indoor meetings had been "very gratifying". The Statement of Accounts to 29th November 1938 showed 52 subscriptions at 2/6 and 2 at 5 shillings. By December 1940 the membership of Leyton Antiquarian Society had reached 72. Alderman Béchervaise was named as President. At this point Leyton Antiquarian Society had quite a small membership but it was not in decline. The last Society minutes are of a monthly meeting on 8th February 1939 - after which is silence.

In April 1949 the Borough Surveyor, Mr J W Russell AMInstCE, publicly regretted that the Leyton Antiquarian Society had been moribund when he joined it 25 years previously and within a few years its life was terminated. "The reason the Antiquarian Society failed was because so many of its members were collectors, that is they picked up information, but only very reluctantly, if at all, imparted any." The records of the Society's meetings, and sometimes detailed summaries in local newspapers of the talks given, show that Mr Russell's memory or knowledge was defective.

His remarks did seem to provoke a letter from someone using the pseudonym 'Nomad' (I suspect it was Mr Bennett), who claimed the Antiquarian Society was "more 'antique' than 'antiquarian' and failed to hold the active interest of the younger generation. Only a few members were collectors though not all can be castigated as selfish. . . . it held regular and well-supported meetings. The senile section was ever reluctant to risk the cost of publication for which ample material was available . . . The Society has not terminated; it is still hibernating from the war period and through the transitionary period arising from the interaction of uncounted imponderable forces." Sadly, this was to prove untrue. The Walthamstow Antiquarian Society was revived in 1947-8 but the Leyton Society remained dormant.

The last elected executive committee was for 1939. By June 1957 the Chairman Mr J Golding, the Deputy Chairman Mr H Batchelor and other members Miss Baker and Mr M F Starling had died. The remaining members were Frederick Temple as Honorary Secretary and Treasurer together with Mr J B Bennett who became acting Chairman, Mr E J Raynor, Miss Hopkinson and Miss Morgan, with life member Mr C P Eastman co-opted. They agreed to wind up the Society and to use the funds in hand to fund publications. 'An Account of the House known as Knotts Green' and 'An account of the house and estate known as Forest House, and for a time as Goring House, in Leyton and Walthamstow, Essex', both by Frederick Temple, were published by the Society and copies can be seen in the Local Studies Room at Vestry House Museum.

Frederick Temple lived until 1972. He was born on 5th August 1881 in Bow, the youngest of eight children of shoemaker James Temple and his wife Jane. The family continued to live in and around the Bow and Old Ford

area. Frederick Temple taught as a schoolmaster in East London from 1903 to 1926. In 1905 he married Alice Louisa, also a school teacher. On moving to Leyton he joined the then newly formed Leyton Antiquarian Society. Temple must have spent much of his later life compiling the voluminous and painstaking notes on the history of Leyton and Leytonstone which at some point were given to Leyton Borough's library service, where the Reference Librarian Miss Mary Savell categorised them. These notes were transferred to Vestry House Museum after the formation of the Borough of Waltham Forest in 1965. Temple had an article about Wallwood published in Part H, Vol. 1, Third series, of the Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society. He had a number of articles published in local newspapers. But the bulk of his researches, which are awesome in extent - 516 index entries - remain as handwritten notes.

The life of the Leyton Antiquarian Society shows the dangers of an elderly committee, too restricted a social base, too close a relationship with the original Parish Church, the local Council and political establishment, and an unwillingness to adapt to changing circumstances. But the Leyton Antiquarian Society did encourage youth membership by reduced subscription rates, it did reduce the Anglican Church dominance of its programme, it did change. I do not know of any Freemasons on its committee (or even as members), or of any hostility to the active participation of women.

Many people in Leyton and Leytonstone had good jobs such as clerical, railway responsibility, and police. That kind of resident should have provided more members for the Antiquarian Society than it managed.

After the Antiquarian Society stopped functioning the welfare state was established. Since its dissolution some housing areas have been comprehensively redeveloped (twice over !), and there has been substantial immigration from the Caribbean and south Asia and significant numbers of people coming from other parts of the world. These events are now firmly part of our area's history, ready for research, re-examination and debate. Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society should recognise this, though earlier periods still offer the romance of lost glories.

Kate Middleton's Leyton ancestors

by David Boote

Kate Middleton married Prince William on 29th April 2011, and they became the Duchess and Duke of Cambridge (and parents on 22nd July 2013). One of the Duchess's great grandparents was born in Leyton and grew up there. Frederick George Glassborow was born at 7 Grange Park Road, Leyton, on 17th December 1889. His father, Frederick John Glassborow was a ship owner's clerk, a typical occupation of the inhabitants of the very fast-growing London suburb of Leyton. 7 Grange Park Road, where the family lived until 1894, was later redeveloped, twice. We do not know the family's next address. In 1900 it moved to 70 Vicarage Road (photo immediately below) but for no more than a couple of years.

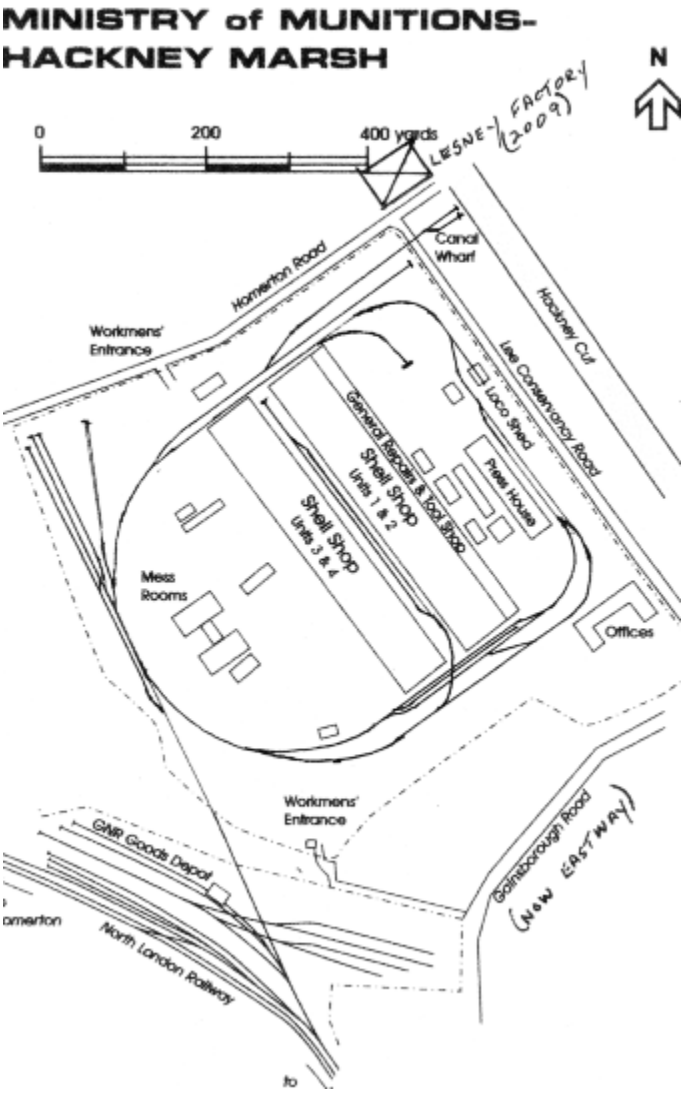
Between 1903 and 1908 the family lived at 57 Manor Road, Leyton (lower photo in previous column).

In 1908 or 1909 the Glassborow family moved to 13 Essex Road, Leyton (below). Kate Middleton's great grandfather Frederick George Glassborow was living there in 1911, working as a bank clerk, with an older sister and a younger brother. He was 21 years old and could have moved away from his parents at any time after that. He does appear in the electoral register for 1921 as living at 13 Essex Road, but not before or afterwards.

Frederick George Glassborow became a bank manager and went on to work in Marseille, where he and his wife had a daughter, Valerie, born in 1924. Valerie became the mother of Kate Middleton's father.

What Fields Conceal

by Ray Plassard



Happening upon a recently published book on industrial railways in London, I was interested to find reference to a local industrial complex with an extensive internal rail system of which I was totally unaware and of which, as far as I can see, no trace remains. It was, strictly speaking, just outside our area but I am sure people from Leyton and Leytonstone would have worked there.

In the First World War, there was what came to be known as the "shell shortage scandal" which seriously compromised the ability of our Army to fight and the government caused factories to be set up to deal with this problem. One of these, Ministry of Munitions Projectile Factory No 73, was set up in Hackney Wick / Homerton in what is now known as Mabley Green bordered by Homerton Road and Lee Conservancy Road opposite the site of the Lesney factory. The internal rail system was connected to the North London Railway near the site of Victoria Park Station and was extensive enough to require three standard and up to twenty 2 0 gauge steam locomotives.

There was also connection to a wharf on the Hackney Cut canal as shown on the plan opposite.

I quote from the book:

"This factory was built and operated by Dick, Kerr & Co Ltd for the manufacture of 6 in shells: construction commenced 15/10/1915 on 37 acres of land and was completed 26/2/1916. The Ministry took over direct control on 1/8/1917 and eventual rundown of production began 22/11/1918, factory closed by about 1920."

I would be interested to hear if anyone has more information on this factory or had relatives who worked there.

I am indebted to the author, Robin Waywell, for permission to quote from his book and use the plan and photograph.

"Industrial Railways and Locomotives of the County of London" Published 2008 by the Industrial Railway Society

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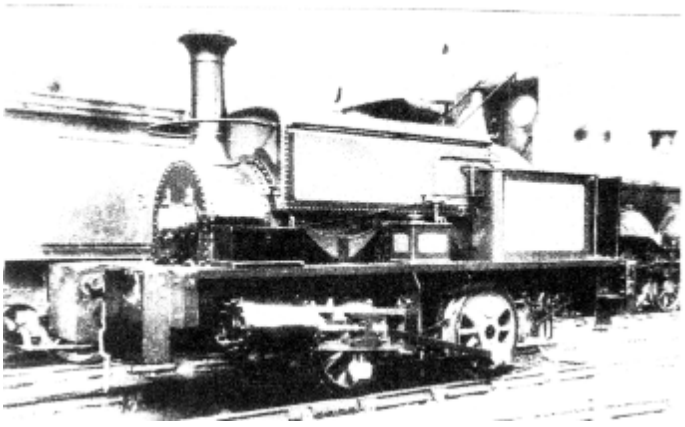


One of the standard gauge locomotives used on the site

Edwardian Leytonstone

by Raymond Draper

The parish magazines of St John's Church, Leytonstone, give us a fascinating glimpse of Edwardian Leytonstone.

The December 1907 edition, for example, lists twenty-eight local companies including an artificial teeth supplier, auctioneer and estate, butchers (3), chemical cleaners and dyers, chemist, clothing stores (2), cook and confectioner, dairies (3), decorators (2), electrician, fancy draper and milliner, general stores (2), greengrocer, grocery and provision merchant, hairdresser and chiropodist, hosier, music warehouse, newsagent stationer and tobacconist, nurseryman and florist, printer, undertaker and wine merchant.

Three of these companies listed their telephone numbers. One company (whose name is preserved in the entrance to My Hobbies on Leytonstone High Road – "R. W. & I. Puddicombe") used four photographs to advertise different departments. One photograph of St. John's Church, Bearman's awning, a horse drawn tram and a policeman, adorns the front cover, electricity, gas and water services are all referred to. There is a glimpse of manufacturing industry in East London, the works of Lush and Cook Ltd at Victoria Park. There are close links to the City of London via the Great Eastern railway station. One of the hairdressers advertised "12 years city and west end experience". There were close links to the countryside also, two of the diaries gave details of the special cows kept on their farms!

The picture that emerges is of a confident, prosperous and technologically advanced community, with energy and enthusiasm. In 1907 a fine new parade of shops had been built in Church Lane, that has survived as Station Parade. Details of this may be found in Kelly's Trade Directory for 1908.

The picture of church life that emerges reflects the same energy and confidence. There was at St. John's a very wide range of groups and activities for children, young people and adults. The church staff included three clergy, two readers, a verger and a nurse. Nurse Baker's ministry was wide ranging and much appreciated. St. John's was also involved in a wide range of leisure and cultural activities including concerts, a cycling club, a swimming club, a ramblers club, a camera club and a tennis club. There was also an Entertainment Committee. In 1907 the circulation of St. John's Parish Magazine increased from 200 copies to 800 copies a month!

Only seven years later in 1914 this prosperous and confident community, along with so many others in western Europe and beyond would be stunned by the trauma of the First World War. Only in the Advent message of the Vicar, in December 1907, was there any hint that this prosperity might not last for ever.

If you would like an introduction to the Edwardian Age why not try The Edwardians by Roy Hattersley, now published in paperback by Abacus – ISBN 0 349 11662 8. Or you could watch the amazing films, recently rediscovered, of Mitchell and Kenyon. These are available on DVD (BFIVD692) published by the British Film Institute.

From Stratford to Leytonstone - by compressed air

by Neil Houghton

Leytonstone is not an area one would tend to associate with cutting-edge technology, nor indeed as a centre of industry. Yet for a brief period it was both. Established by Act of Parliament in 1869 the North Metropolitan Tramways Company operated the most extensive network of horse trams in London with a network of some 35 miles. Although tramcars were stabled at various depots across London, most were maintained at an extensive works in Union Road. This placed the company as one of the most significant of local employers. Interestingly though, early attempts at tramcar manufacture here failed : the cars were rejected as being of inferior workmanship and were replaced by ones bought in from another manufacturer.

Horses had hauled the trams from the earliest days of the company. Trams running on rails gave a smoother ride than a traditional horse-bus and, usefully, required less effort from the horses. However, horses were a nuisance. They had to be fed, required specialists such as blacksmiths to keep them in running order, and tended to give out after a fairly short working life. Occasionally they did this whilst hauling a tram, and then you had to go out, shoot it, and arrange to cart the carcass away. That played havoc with the timetables. An experiment using mules to pull the trams was abandoned despite there being some small cost saving – the mules had all the disadvantages of horses with the addition of an apparent bloody-mindedness when it came to starting (and occasionally, stopping).

(below) Horse-drawn trams with Leyton Station in the background

(above) Horse-drawn tram outside the Plough and Harrow pub

Not surprisingly the company were always on the look out for improved methods of traction. As yet, nothing had proved as reliable (or as cheap) as horses and indeed they remained on parts of the system until as late as 1913. One aspect of technological change which the company did not anticipate was the necessity of improving the track for anything heavier than a horse tram. This was expensive, awkward and time-consuming work for which the company had not budgeted.

Then, in 1877 the Northmet received an enquiry from the Greenwich engineering firm of Merryweather & Sons asking permission to try one of its steam company's metals.

Merryweathers did not invent the steam tram (one had run in Leeds in 1864), but the firm had built a locomotive for a gentleman named John Grantham in 1872. Unfortunately Mr Grantham had died in 1874, but the locomotive had undergone very promising trials on a section of the Victoria to Vauxhall Bridge tramway. In addition the firm (which was best known for building fire engines) had provided steam trams to Paris in 1875, shortly followed by Barcelona and Wellington, New Zealand.

The first regular steam-hauled tramcars in Britain were introduced in Birmingham in May 1876. They faced considerable opposition and had to satisfy a huge raft of Board of Trade directives (such as not exceeding 8mph, no moving parts were to be visible and they were required to stop immediately whenever asked to by anyone riding a horse).

Whilst the North Metropolitan welcomed the idea of a trial, it took considerable efforts to get the necessary Board of Trade approval.

This having been gained, the steam locomotive was delivered by horse and cart to the main workshops in Leytonstone and assembled there. Powered by a small vertical boiler, it was a curious almost cube-shaped machine fitted with 'skirts' hiding the wheels as a safety precaution. Because Merryweather had no rolling stock of their own, a horse tram car was coupled to the locomotive (or 'steam dummy' as it became known) for the trials. The route selected lay between Stratford Broadway and the 'Plough and Harrow' on Leytonstone High Road. The North Metropolitan were quite clearly not going to risk testing the new technology on their busy routes in central London.

The experiment began badly when the driver appointed by Merryweather failed to turn up. Instead, the fireman, who had already raised steam, was pressed into service. His place was taken by a 'volunteer' from amongst the horse-tram drivers. Not surprisingly, being unfamiliar with boilers he filled the boiler with too much water and put too much coal on the fire. Consequently as the locomotive lurched off on its trial run, it ejected spectacular plumes of sooty smoke and clouds of hot, oily water. Additionally, in all the excitement someone had forgotten to release one of the handbrakes on the tramcar, and the whole cavalcade screeched to a halt after a quarter of a mile. Thereafter progress seems to have been somewhat smoother. Fortunately, by the time of the Board of Trade inspection things had settled down. An official photograph shows the Directors together with the Inspector seated on the top deck of the tramcar. In service, the top deck could not be used since it was more or less level with the top of the engine's chimney and was usually bathed in exhaust steam.

After the agreed trial period of one month, the engine was returned to the makers, allegedly it seems because of complaints from passengers and local business about the smoke. Of more possible concern to the North Metropolitan however, were the reported difficulties of managing the boiler in the congested traffic of Victorian London. The drivers commented that the brakes could do with some work too. It was clear that widespread application would require extensive works to strengthen the track. Most importantly, the cost of operating a steam tram seemed unlikely to lead to any long term savings.The engine was therefore sent to the famous Wantage Tramway in Berkshire, and although Merryweathers went on to produce a number of steam tram locomotives which were adopted in cities such as Bristol, London never again featured them.

In 1879 the tramway received a further enquiry from one Colonel Beaumont. Would the tramway company be interested in trying out one of his tramway engines on its routes ? It was to be driven by a "cunningly simple" engine of his own devising which operated on compressed air. At least this could not pollute the air, and, the prospectus read, the Colonel's engine could easily cope with twice the load of a normal horse tram. And you didn't need to feed it with hay. Beaumont had a good engineering pedigree : in his army days he had made significant improvements to the design of rifle barrels, and did much of the engineering work for an ambitious though ultimately unsuccessful attempt to build a Channel Tunnel.

The company replied that the Colonel could send his engine for a trial period. By a curious co-incidence this was followed by an almost identical proposal from a M. Mekarski, a resident of France. The company answered that it felt that Colonel Beaumont must be given priority.

By October 1880 that gentleman said that his engine was ready and would cost the tramway 6d per mile. Since horse traction was costing about 81/2 d per mile this was information was received well by the Directors. The Colonel was told that his machine could be given a month's trial on the route between the Green Man and Stratford Broadway. This route along Leytonstone High Road was ideal for testing purposes. It was long enough to provide a reasonable run, the gradient rising to Stratford provided a useful test of stamina for prototype locomotives and, of course, it was easily accessible from the main engineering depot. By February 1881 a horizontal steam engine powering a compressor had been installed at Swan Lane Depot Stratford, which fed into an iron pipe underground which enabled the engine to be recharged at a point in the middle of Stratford Broadway.

It was August before the machine was eventually delivered, and then it caused great excitement because at 11 ½ tons it was clearly too heavy for the track. Worse, rather like an unreliable toy train, it had a tendency to come off at the corners. The whole thing had however become somewhat academic since in fact, the Board of Trade permit permitting the trials had expired and until another one could be obtained no passengers could be carried. The Colonel went back to the drawing board, and in October produced a second vehicle with about half the weight of the previous one. A service was instituted, again hauling a horse tram car, between the Green Man and Stratford. At the end of each return trip it was re-charged with compressed air.

The engine itself was extremely successful, hauling test loads of up to four tons noiselessly and efficiently. Unfortunately, the compressor and steam engine (which had been obtained second-hand from a brewery) were prone to unreliability, and as it stood the process was uneconomic. Had Beaumont built more than one car (his steam plant at Stratford had the capacity to recharge four at a time) the results might have been more convincing. To be widely adopted the company would have had to install compressors and steam engines across the network, and that would be neither practical nor economic. Further problems were caused by the time taken to re-charge the compressed air compartments, 15 minutes as opposed to the 5 minute turnaround required for horses. It was also clear that Beaumont had under-estimated the running costs of the new technology. The stated operating cost of 6d per mile could be achieved he stated, but only if he was given a long-term option on running the service. He made a formal offer to operate the Leytonstone-Stratford tramway for five years, providing both engines and cars, at a cost of 7d per mile. The Board politely declined, and Beaumont periodically repeated his offer. It was not until July 1883 that Beaumont received an unequivocal rejection of his plans. Equally significantly, it was the possible application of a new technology – electric traction – which had really begun to interest the directors.

A Michael Radcliffe Ward approached the Met with a proposal to equip a horse car with batteries in order to make it self-propelled. Working at the company's Union Road Depot Ward fitted up a car with accumulators – increasing its weight from 1 ½ to nearly 5 tons. A low-key demonstration was arranged for 4th March 1882 when Ward gave free rides up and down the approach road to the depot. Whilst the car was judged to be extremely noisy, the experiment was judged a success and Ward went on to claim that adoption of electric power would result in a cost reduction of the order of 50 %. The company's Engineer was given permission to accommodate trials for any other type of electric unit which he felt stood a realistic chance of success.

Soon after Ward's experiment the Faure Accumulator Company approached the company in June 1882 with a plan for electric traction, but nothing came of this. Just a month later the Board summarily rejected an application from Marples & Co to undertake trials of a steam tram on the Leytonstone section of track. The locomotive was to be one built to Wilkinson's Patent – which had already proved itself to be more efficient and reliable than earlier designs. Interestingly, the application was rejected with the explanation that the Met was now actively pursuing the option of electric traction. Not quite so actively that they didn't consider further enquiries from Beaumont regarding further compressed air trials, but ultimately this came to nothing.

Further experiments followed in 1883, this time with battery cars built by Greenwood & Batley of Leeds for a

Mr Lironi. At first all went well, however the gradient to Stratford took its toll and over-taxed the accumulator batteries which required more and more frequent charging. With this went an increased burden on the gearing transferring power to the driving axles which became more and more noisy. The next stage became somewhat alarming – as the over-worked batteries finally began to literally collapse in on themselves, noxious sulphuric acid fumes billowed through the cars. Not surprisingly most passengers felt this was the point at which to make other arrangements and got off. Several wrote letters remarking to the company that having done so they discovered that walking both got them to their destination more quickly and without the accompanying headache. After this the company decided to discontinue experiements using battery traction until the technology had improved.

Consequently there was a two year gap before an approach was made by Mr C P Elieson who had devised an improved type of electric motor: his intention was to install this in a separate locomotive which would then haul a horse-drawn tramcar much as the steam locomotives had done. The Company informed Elieson that once he had a completed machine they would welcome a further approach.

Thus in 1885 the Electric Locomotion Power Co Ltd applied to the North Metropolitan for permission to run its newly developed electric tramcar-hauling engine between Aldgate and Manor Park, via Stratford Broadway.

The Electric Locomotion Company had been established by Lironi as a trading arm of his invention. It would charge a rate of only 5d a mile for this service. The company put off any decision, claiming that permission from the Board of Trade would be required. However, the following year the Electric Locomotive Power Co. applied again – this time to run a service on a planned route along Barking Road. Permission was refused, although it was agreed that a trial could be made on the route between Stratford Broadway and the Princess Alice pub at Forest Gate. It then appeared that the Electric Locomotive Power Co Ltd hadn't actually built any engines. Having made good this deficiency by October 1886, the trials between Stratford and Forest Gate were successful. The engine was operated by batteries which were situated beneath the floor and seats of the car, passengers being most impressed by the smooth ride, and the drivers by the rapid acceleration and ease of speed control. Several runs were made between Stratford and the Green Man at Leytonstone; however, these were less successful since the range of the engine was governed by the life of its batteries.

The Electric Locomotive Power Company merged into the Elieson Electric Co Ltd, which supplied a further four battery locomotives to the Stratford depot. The original plan had been to supply six with two being available for spares, but this was scaled back by Elieson, who together with the North Met were hopeful they were on the verge of a new dawn in public transport. However, when faced with heavy loads or very wet conditions there was so little power in reserve that progress was very slow. As with other battery locomotives, once the accumulator plates became only a little worn, speed was reduced to less than half that achieved by horses. At times the entire contraption seized up and passengers were required to help derail a failed tram to allow others to pass. It is clear from the surviving engineer's record and day books and some incomplete traffic rosters that two of these engines were re-built at the Union Road works and tested on the route between the Thatched House and the Green Man with some signs of improvement. The Elieson Company made repeated offers to take over traction on the North Met network, but the Company was having none of it. Until the cars had proven long-term success it was simply not prepared to enter into any permanent agreement.

The last experimental operation over the Stratford-Leytonstone route came in 1889 when the General Electric Power and Traction Co Ltd was permitted to trial yet another battery-operated tramcar. These cars were self-contained, the accumulators being in compartments beneath the platforms at each end (thus making it impossible for the passenger saloon to be invaded by any leaking vapours). Six cars were built at the Leytonstone works and ran brief trials along the route before being deployed on the intended section between Canning Town and Plaistow.

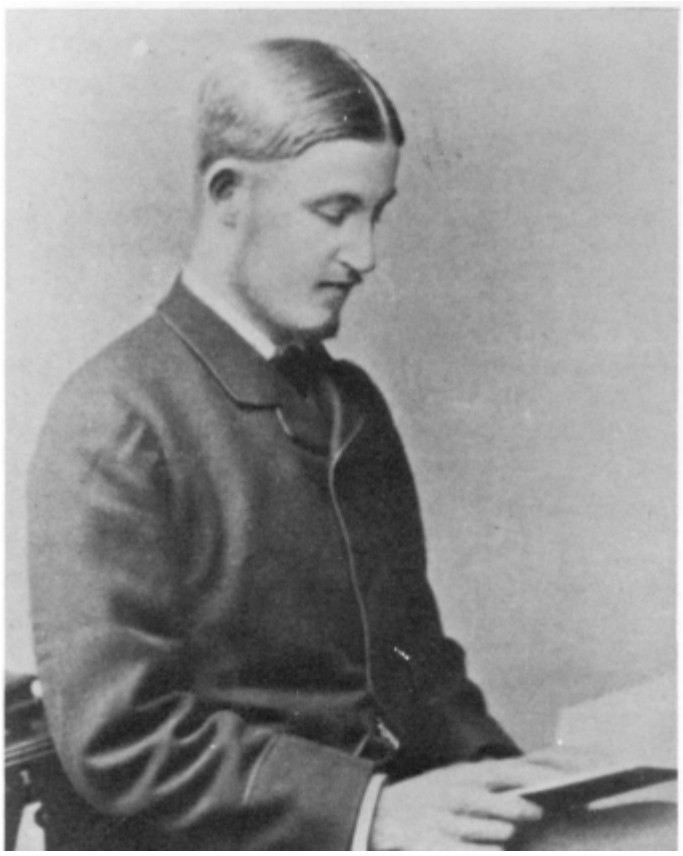
By the time these cars were trialed the North Met was beginning to have to face up to the possibility that it could lose much of its network to the local authorities (most of the routes had been built on the terms of short leases after which they would revert to local councils). There was an increased reluctance both to build more routes and to pioneer new forms of traction. Thus it

came about that the eventual adoption of over-head traction wires on London's tramways followed American design – even importing motors and bogies from there.

Nonetheless, the experiments along Leytonstone High Road were important in that they illustrate the continuing efforts to find and develop commercially an effective alternative to horsepower.

A young redhead has a quiet time in Leyton

by David Boote



London has been a place for free spirits, drawing in exceptional personalities from other parts of the British Isles and further away, but it is not the suburban life of Leyton which has attracted them. The playwright and left-wing intellectual pundit George Bernard Shaw did however live in Leyton for a short period. Though he was born into a Protestant family in Dublin , then firmly under London's control, he was not a Victorian Leyton kind of person. "I was brought up in an atmosphere in which two of the main constituents were Italian opera and complete freedom of thought; and my attitude to conventional British life ever since has been that of a missionary striving to understand the superstitions of the natives in order to make himself intelligible to them."

Shaw, who was born on 26th July 1856, said he had three fathers : his legal father who for many years was an alcoholic, his mother's close male friend G J Vandeleur Lee, and his mother's brother Walter Gurly, a ship's doctor. Shaw's independence of mind was encouraged by his uncle Walter. "He [Gurly] had been educated at Kilkenny College, in his time the Eton of Ireland. When he was the smallest boy there, and the only one who could squeeze himself out under the locked college gates, he was sent by the elder boys at night into the town to make assignations for them with ladies of the street, his reward being whisky enough to make him insensibly drunk. (He was, by the way, astonished and horrified by the homosexualities of English public schools, and maintained that schools should always be, like Kilkenny College, within reach of women.) From Trinity College in Dublin, his university, he had had to retire to recuperate after excessive dissipation."

"He was a most exhilarating person, because he had, like my mother, though without her dignity, a youthfulness that no dissipation could exhaust, and was robust and fullblooded. His profanity and obscenity in conversation were of Rabelaisian exuberance; and as to the maxima reverentia due to my tender years, he had rather less of it, if possible, than Falstaff had for Prince Hal. To the half dozen childish rhymes taught me by my mother he added a stock of unprintable limericks that constituted almost an education in geography. He was

always in high spirits, and full of a humour that, though barbarous in its blasphemous indecency, was Scriptural and Shakespearean in the elaboration and fantasy of its literary expression. Being full of the Bible, he quoted the sayings of Jesus as models of facetious repartee. He considered Anthony Trollope's novels the only ones worth reading (in those days they were regarded as daring exposures of the Church!) ; and his favourite opera was Auber's Fra Diavolo. Possibly if he had been cultivated artistically in his childhood, he would have been a man of refined pleasures, and might have done something in literature. As it was, he was a scoffer and a rake, because no better pleasures had ever been either revealed or denied to him. In spite of his excesses, which were not continuous, being the intermittent debauches of a seafarer on shore, he was an upstanding healthy man until he married an English widow in America and settled as a general practitioner in Leyton, Essex, then a country district on the borders of Epping Forest. His wife tried to make him behave himself according to English lights: to go to church; to consult the feelings and prejudices of his patients; to refrain from the amusement of scandalizing their respectability; or at least to stint himself in the item of uproarious blasphemy. It was quite useless: her protests only added to the zest of his profanities. Nevertheless, he held his own in Leyton county society because he was very amusing, and was perceptibly a gentleman who drove his own horse and had bought his select practice."

George Bernard Shaw left Ireland with his mother and Vandeleur Lee. By 1881 he was living on his own in central London where he contracted smallpox. To rebuild his strength Shaw went to stay with his uncle Walter, who was living at Holly Lodge, Grange Park Road (on the corner of Church Road; photos on this page) with wife and servant. At this stage of his life Shaw wanted to be a novelist and had just started writing 'Love Among the Artists', of which he had high hopes.

Shaw's first known love affair was with Alice Lockett who he met at his uncle Walter's house in Leyton (not necessarily whilst he was ill, but quite possibly).

"Except for a day or two in 1881, when I earned a few pounds by counting the votes at an election in Leyton, I was an Unemployable, an ablebodied pauper in fact if not in law, until the year 1885, when for the first time I earned enough money directly by my pen to pay my way."

Shaw's description of Leyton is (like other aspects of his reminiscences) misleading. "Soon, however, east London spread and swallowed up Leyton. The country houses of his patients were demolished and replaced by rows of little brick boxes inhabited by clerks in tall hats supporting families on fifteen shillings a week. . . ." Walter Gurly's house fitted a doctor's high status but was part of the 1860s development which filled the grounds of the Grange mansion and included some small terraced houses where an ornamental lake had been. The pace of building new residential streets was far too rapid for it to escape anyone's notice. The area

promised many new patients but most would have been frightened of a doctor's bills.

Before Shaw came to Leyton in June 1881 he had become a vegetarian, but his uncle insisted on him eating meat. He was only able to go back to a meatless diet after he left Leyton at the end of September or early October.

Uncle Walter Gurly lived at Holly Lodge until 1891 when he moved to 200 High Road, Leyton (which initially was known as 4 Fairmont Villas, Leyton Road; photo below). This was then a new building near the railway station for Liverpool Street, but to modern eyes at least not as attractive as Holly Lodge. He died at 200 High Road on 30th August 1899, at the age of 64, of diabetes and 'manic convulsions'.

Leyton and Leytonstone Stations

by Alan Simpson

Leyton station in Great Eastern Railway days in about 1905. This view shows the 1888-built entrance on the High Road. A tram passes by on its way to Stratford and the docks.

Did you know that when you travel on the Central Line between Leyton and Leytonstone you are riding on one of the oldest parts of today's London Underground network? This year, 2013, sees the 150th anniversary of the first underground journey, between Paddington and Farringdon on the Metropolitan Railway. The line between Leyton and Leytonstone opened earlier, in 1856. How did this come about?

On 22 August 1856, the Eastern Counties Railway (ECR) opened a branch line from Stratford to Woodford and Loughton with stations at Low Leyton and Leytonstone. The Great Eastern Railway (GER) took over the line in 1862, and dropped the 'Low' from Leyton in 1867. Leytonstone station as originally built had platforms staggered on each side of a level crossing between Church Lane and Fairlop Road.

With the subsequent growth in residential traffic, the GER rebuilt and made improvements to both stations. At Leyton, in 1888, almost the entire station was reconstructed, including a new main entrance on the High Road bridge replacing the original one on the down platform which became an exit only, while another exit and entrance was added at the 'country' end in Union (now Langthorne) Road. Rebuilding at Leytonstone in 1891-2 saw the end of the staggered platforms and included a new public pedestrian subway under the tracks.

Between 1882 and 1902, season ticket issues at Leyton and Leytonstone increased by 303 per cent, including a notable 171 per cent growth in first class seasons. However, by 1911, the GER was issuing cheap workmen's tickets from the two stations on the grounds that the areas served were similar in character to that around Maryland Point on the GER main line, where workmen's tickets had always been available.

In 1923 the GER was absorbed into the London and North Eastern Railway (LNER), and in 1933 the London Passenger Transport Board (LPTB) took over responsibility for buses, trams and Underground services in the capital. The LPTB produced a report later that year outlining the problems in northeast London with proposals to electrify the LNER suburban lines from Liverpool Street to Shenfield and extend the Central Line in a new tube tunnel from Liverpool Street to Leyton where tube trains would continue at surface level to Loughton and beyond. A new tube tunnel would also be built from Leytonstone to Newbury Park to link with the LNER line between there and Woodford, which would also become part of the Central Line.

These plans became known as the 1935-40 New Works Programme and contracts for the tunnelling were placed in October 1936. Progress was rapid and by the beginning of 1938 it was anticipated that the Central Line would reach Stratford within two years. However, the Second World War intervened and, although by early May 1940 track-laying in the new tunnels was advanced, all work was suspended on 24 May. With the commencement of air attacks on Britain, the tunnels were put to other temporary uses and some of the track was lifted to be reused elsewhere. Much of the section between Leytonstone and Newbury Park was converted into an aircraft components factory, but at Leytonstone the western end was used as a public air raid shelter, with access from Gainsborough Road bridge. The westbound tunnel between Leyton and Stratford was also used as an air raid shelter, with access from Westdown Road and the High Road.

The New Works Programme included the complete rebuilding of Leytonstone station, but for much of the war the station was left in a half-rebuilt state, a mixture of old

and new. Not until hostilities ceased could the work be completed. At Leyton, a new facade was constructed for the High Road entrance. Electric tube trains finally reached Leyton and Leytonstone stations on 5 May 1947. The tube trains terminated in the main up and down platforms at Leytonstone, while steam shuttle services onwards to Loughton, Epping and Ongar improvised as best they could from the one solitary outer platform. The next advance came on 14 December 1947 when Central Line services were extended from Leytonstone to Woodford and through the new tunnels to Newbury Park. Good trains continued to run on the line at night when tube trains were not running, but these were eventually withdrawn. Leytonstone goods yard closed on 2 September 1955, and Leyton goods yard on 6 May 1968. The original junction at Leyton (Loughton Branch Junction) was removed on 2 October 1972 so isolating the tube line from the main British Rail network.

Running frequent electric trains to Leytonstone meant that the level crossing between Church Lane and Fairlop Road had to be removed. To enable road traffic to continue to pass from one side of the line to the other, a new road in a cutting with a bridge under the railway was built linking Church Lane with Grove Green Road. With the coming of the new A12 (M11 Link Road) in the late 1990s, this cutting was filled in and turned into a car park; the walls at the top of the cutting can still be seen, however, as can the bridge which is now at ground level. The construction of the A12 also required the demolition of the stable building in the former goods yard at Leytonstone, and of the original station building at Leyton and the secondary entrance there on Langthorne Road.

I still have an interest in the history of Leytonstone station, and would like to hear from anyone who has information that he or she would like to share; in particular I am keen to see photographs of the station and trains there before the Central Line services began. I can be contacted at alan.d.simpson@talk2l.com or on 020 8539 6804.

Leytonstone station on 15 July 1942. Then owned by the London & North Eastern Railway, this wartime view shows the station as a mixture of old and new. The electric conductor rails are in place for the anticipated Central Line tube trains, but they wouldn't appear for a further five years.

Cooper's Lane, Leyton

by David Boote

Introduction

We know how the rich lived in earlier times but it is harder to get an idea of life for people who did not have much money. We do have administration records for the 'Poor Law', the social welfare system of previous centuries. Criminal court records are another source of information. This article uses the censuses that have been taken every ten years for the whole of Britain. Details were recorded for each person, including those too poor to pay taxes such as the 'rates' that funded local government.

This article takes a look at the people living on Cooper's Lane before Leyton was transformed from countryside to town. In 1841 Cooper's Lane was a dead-end, leading nowhere, with clusters of dwellings. Not until the 1860s[1] were the fields of Leyton developed as streets of terraced housing. To the north, on the High Road (not called that until later), there was a brewery[2], opposite a line of buildings called 'Frog Row'. This was just past James Lane (to use its later name) which led to Forest House and Epping Forest. To the south, on the east side, were the Rose & Crown and Three Blackbirds pubs. Next to the Three Blackbirds was a school, Ozler's Charity School until 1846 when it became a National School[3].

The street is now, after the junction with Farmer Road, a short, straight Victorian terrace, probably of the 1890s (see the photos at the end of this article), looking onto the sheds and back gardens of Brewster Road.

[1] Development did start in the 1850s but not to any significant extent.

[2] By 1823 and to at least 1848 : Behind the Bar The Licensed Trade in Waltham Forest published on the web by Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop

[3] The National School was on James Lane from its opening in 1819 until it merged with Ozler's.

The census sheets show that the residents of the earlier, less planned, homes in Cooper's Lane had tough physical jobs or were unemployed.

Laundresses

One striking feature of the census returns for Cooper's Lane is the number of women working as laundresses. That occupation also appears for some residents of nearby Skelton's Lane and Beaumont Road.

Before piped water supplies and mechanical aids, washing clothes was of course very hard work and must have coarsened hand-skin terribly[4]. The laundresses in Cooper's Lane were in middle or old age, perhaps not so worried about their personal appearance but less suited for strenuous work. People of any wealth had their own servants to carry out the task, so customers for a laundry service were unlikely to have been able to pay much for it.

Shown as laundresses in 1841 were Sarah Lockhart (aged 50), Elizabeth Murray (aged 60) and Elizabeth Ralling (aged 70).

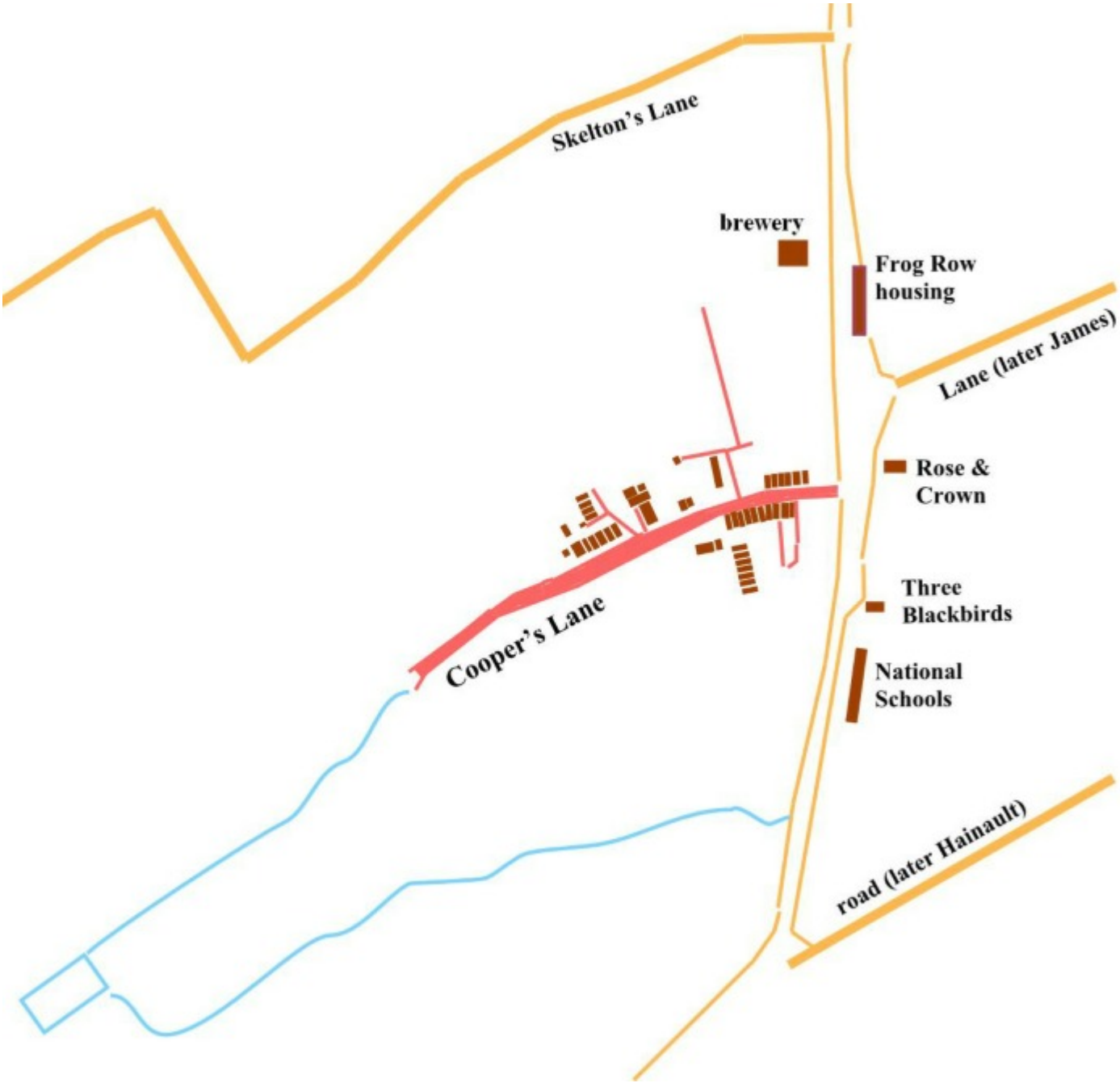
The laundresses shown in later censuses were :

in 1851 Frances Allen (aged 36), Rachel Balch (46), Elizabeth Bonney (56), Ann Bugg (57), Elizabeth Graham (40), Elizabeth Murray (now shown as 63) and her daughter Hannah Williams (29), Ann Smith (27), Elizabeth Smith (64) and Frances White (57);

in 1861 Rachel Balch (56), Ann Bugg (67), Sarah Hall (31), Ann Harding (59), Catherine Hurry (49), Mary Smithen (42), Mary Turner (38) and Rachel Wood (49);

and in 1871 Emma Bull (24), Louisa Dancer (57), Harriet Fincham (31), Catherine Hurry (60) and her

[4] Kenneth Grahame published Wind in the Willows in 1908 {Wikipedia}. Toad escapes from jail dressed as a 'washerwoman', a type of person expected to be of low social status, middle age and heavily built.



daughter also called Catherine Hurry (23), Mary Murray (47), Catherine Parsingham (54), Mary Sanders (29) and Rachel Wood (57).

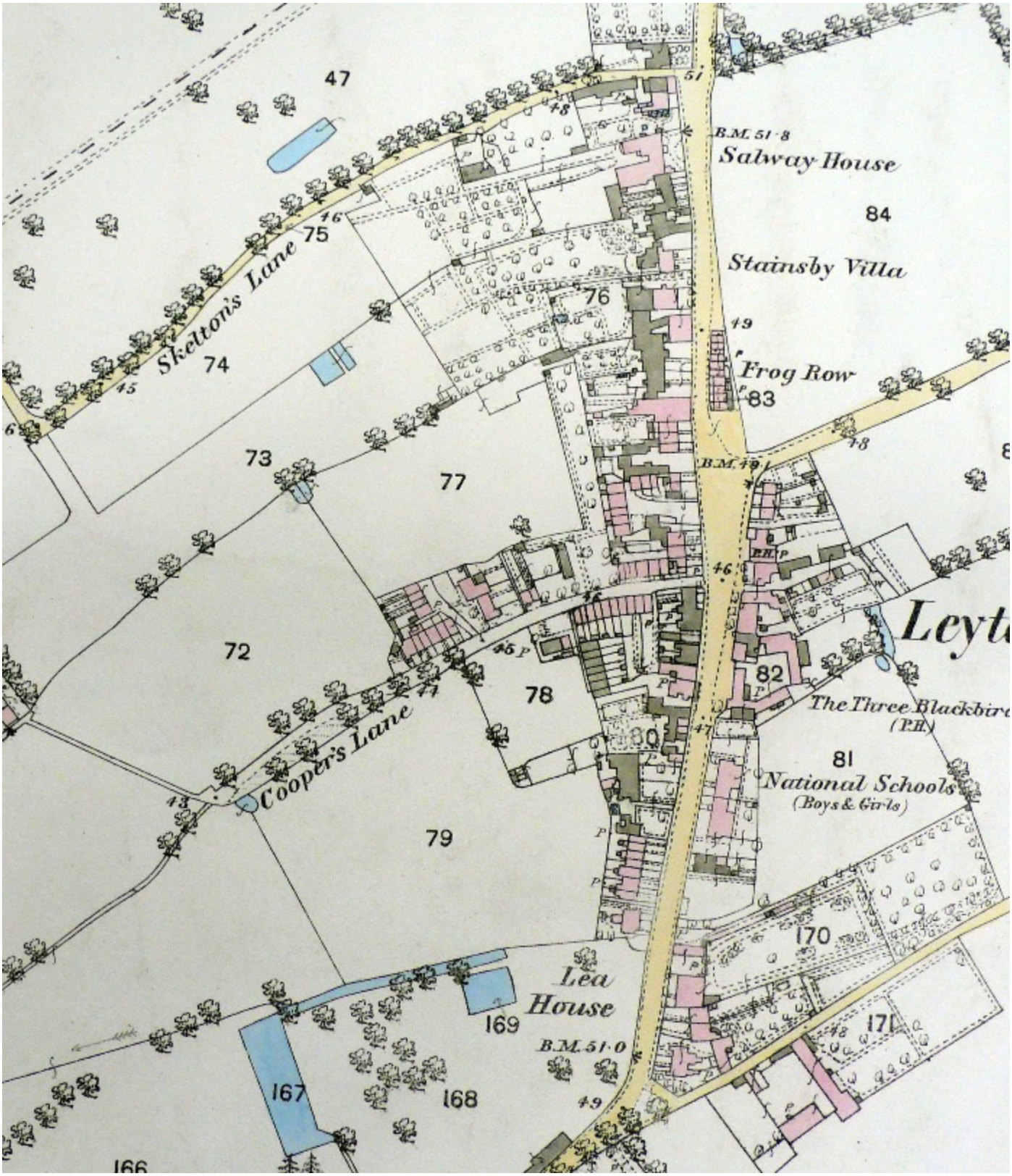
There were 208 men, women and children staying in Cooper's Lane in 1841 (108 male, 100 female), 195 in Cooper's Lane in 1851, and the same number in 1861.

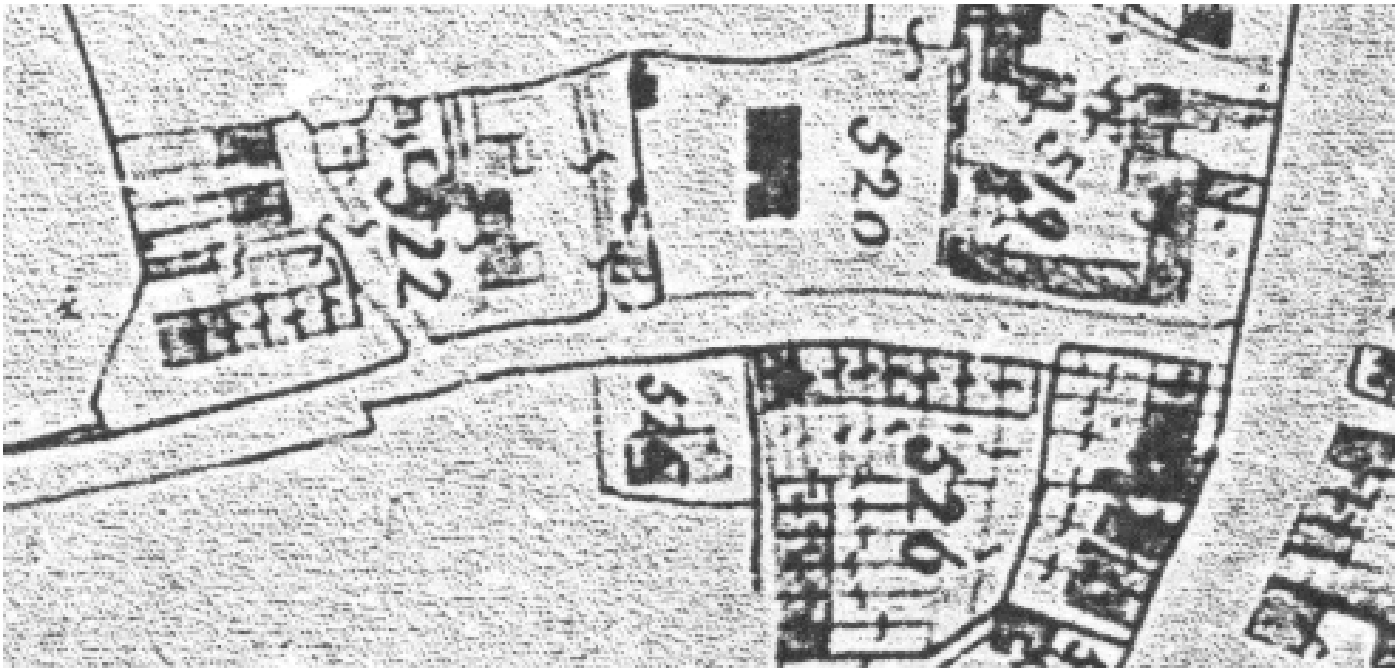
Victorians expected people normally to be living in households, for each of which there would be a male 'head', responsible for the others and providing the main or only source of income. If there was no adult male member of a household the census takers marked the oldest woman as head of the household.

In 1851 there were 48 heads of household in Cooper's Lane, 9 of them women, of whom 4 were shown as laundresses, one a needlewoman, 2 as receiving parish relief, and for 2 of them no occupation or source of income is shown (of whom one was living with her laundress daughter). The head of household laundresses were :

Frances Allen, 36 years old shown neither as married nor widowed but with a 3 year old daughter and a baby son of one year;

Rachael Balch, 46 years old, living with her 86 year old mother Sarah Balch who is shown as the head of the household, and a 44 year old servant Abagail Carter;


47
Skelton's Lane
75
74
76
Salway House
84
Stainsby Villa
49
Frog Row
83
73
77
72
78
Cooper's Lane
82
The Three Blackbird
(P.H.)
80
81
National Schools
(Boys & Girls)
79
170
Lea
House
169
171
167
168
166
B.M. 51·8
B.M. 49·1
B.M. 51·0
P.H.



Elizabeth Murray, 63 years of age, widowed, living with her 29 year old married daughter (the son in law not resident at the time of the census and perhaps separated), 3 grandchildren 3 years and under, and two nieces of 15 and 12; next door to Elizabeth Murray was her son William living with his wife and 8 year old daughter;

Ann Smith, 27 years old, not shown as married or widowed, living with her daughters of 8 and 3 years and her son of 6 years (born at Greenwich, Stratford and Leyton), and a male lodger 22 years old; and

Elizabeth Smith, 64 years of age, widowed, living with her 15 year old daughter Eliza.

The other laundresses were :

Elizabeth Bonney (aged 56), living with her gardener husband James, her 25 year old daughter Elizabeth who was a dressmaker, and her 15 year old daughter Frances for whom no occupation is shown;

Ann Bugg (aged 57), living with her husband who was receiving 'parish relief';

Elizabeth Graham (aged 40), living with her 'carman' (horse-drawn delivery vehicle driver) husband and their 5 year-old daughter;

and Frances White (aged 57), living with her gardener husband.

The laundresses had to get hot water. There was no stream of any size east of this section of the High Road. The 1840 Tithe Map seems to show one flowing away from the western end of Cooper's Lane, but a more significant one coming away from the High Road nearer the junction with Hainault Road (then 'Moyer's'), the two combining to feed an ornamental lake where Primrose Road is now, as part of the landscaped grounds for the Grange house. An early name for Cooper's Lane is 'Well Street' suggesting that the street once had a well. The brewery nearby would have used a lot of water and must surely have had a well. If the laundresses did not get their hot water from the brewery they might have bought it from a pub or house with a 'copper' for heating water, or perhaps they filled buckets with cold water and heated it themselves.

Jobs the men had

Of the 38 male heads of household in 1851, 16 were general labourers, 7 were gardeners, 4 were farm labourers, 2 were 'carmen' (who would have driven a goods cart), one a carrier (a horse and cart driver conveying people), one a coachman, 2 were carpenters, one was a bricklayer labourer, and there was a policeman, a shoemaker, a servant, and one man of about 62 years of age was receiving parish relief.

In 1861 there were 41 heads of household in Cooper's Lane, 7 of them women, one of them described as 'proprietor of house' which is of uncertain meaning because she was the sole member of the household. 3 were described as laundresses as if this occupation was their source of income, one as a laundress receiving

parish relief (the equivalent of social security payments), one as a former laundress receiving parish relief. The remaining woman was described simply as receiving parish relief.

Of the male heads of household in 1861, 12 were agricultural and farm labourers, a garden labourer, a garden servant, 7 bricklayer labourers, 2 carpenters, a house painter, a 'carman', a corn chandler's carter, a groom, a railway labourer, 2 engineer's labourers, an ironfounder's labourer, a general labourer, and a shoemaker.

Where the adults had been born

It is also possible to use the 1851 and 1861 censuses to see how many of the adults in Cooper's Lane had come from outside Leyton.

Of those living in Cooper's Lane in 1851 and born by 1830, and therefore more than about 21 years of age (104 in total), 34 were born in the parish of Leyton, 7 in Walthamstow, 1 in Snaresbrook, 3 in Wanstead, 1 in Chigwell, 1 in Waltham Abbey, 1 in Stratford, 1 in Forest Gate, 1 in West Ham, 1 in East Ham, 1 in Romford, and 14 elsewhere in Essex; 1 in Bishopsgate, 2 in the City of London, 1 in Hackney, 2 in an unspecified part of London, and 4 were born elsewhere in Middlesex; 1 in Woolwich, 1 in Lewisham, 2 elsewhere in Kent; 5 in Hertfordshire, 6 in Cambridgeshire, 2 in Lincolnshire, 2 in Suffolk, 6 in Norfolk, 1 in Northamptonshire, 1 in Sussex, and 1 in Wiltshire.

How settled were people in Cooper's Lane ?

Of those adults and children present in 1851, 50 had been there in 1841 but would not be in 1861. 22 were there in 1851 and would be there still in 1861. 3 were present in 1841, 1851 and 1861. 5 can be identified as there in 1831, 1841 and 1851 but not 1861. 8 were in Cooper's Lane in 1851, 1861 and 1871. 6 were there in 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871.

Even of those not caught by the ten yearly census as in the street more than the one time in 1851, Frances Allen and her daughter Charlotte were in 1861 to be found in Carlisle Road, Leyton, Charlotte at 13 now able to help her mother earn money as a laundress. Samuel Allen, gardener, and his wife Jane were in Cooper's Lane in 1851, in 1861 at 1 Park Buildings, Chislehurst, Kent (now in the London Borough of Bromley), and in 1871 in Capworth Street, Leyton, with Samuel still working as a gardener. Their son Samuel Joseph lived with them in Chislehurst but in 1871 was in Hoxton as a lodger. He had been born at Westerham, Kent about 1850.

Edward Baker was a farm labourer lodging with Isaac Hurry in Cooper's Lane in 1851. In 1861, having reached the age of about 70, he was in the West Ham Union Workhouse, a building that survives next to Langthorne Park, Leytonstone. Michael Connelly, despite his Irish-sounding name, was born in Norfolk, was in Cooper's Lane with his family in 1851; in 1871 he and his daughter Eleanor were in Holloway Down, an area in which Irish people had grown potatoes earlier in the 19th century. William Offord, a labourer and one of a number of related people who had, from their birthplace of Southminster, Essex, reached Cooper's Lane by 1851, was in 1861 keeping a general shop on Union Road, Markhouse Common, Walthamstow (a street that has disappeared since) with his wife Mary Ann and young children William and Emily.

How old parents were when their children were born ?

The census returns should be an excellent source of information on this subject, but the number of families in Cooper's Lane over this period is limited, and not enough to feel confident that the figures give a fair impression. The census does not show previous marriages. For the purposes of this article children have been assumed to be living with their natural parents unless there is clear evidence that they were not. The census returns do not give information for children who have died.

The method here was to look within the returns for Cooper's Lane at children born between 1841 and 1871, and at the ages of their parents when they were born. The average age of the father for each birth, whether their first-born or later children, was 32, and the equivalent age for the mother was 30. The census information does not specifically show which children were the their parents' first, and as children grew older they were increasingly likely to live apart from their parents, perhaps becoming young live-in servants.

There was a surprisingly high proportion of couples in which the wife was older than her husband. See Appendix 1.

A few closing comments

This article looks at the population of Cooper's Lane between 1831 and 1871. Houses were not numbered in that period. It is therefore not possible to see how the occupants of any particular property changed over the years.

Too much faith should not be placed on the accuracy of statistics in this article. They can be no better than the information on the census returns. For Cooper's Lane in 1851 and 1861 at least these were either completed by men who were not very literate, struggling over the spelling of first names like Eleanor, or, less likely in my opinion, anxious to write down how the residents, whatever their ability to read and write, thought their names were spelled. The forms look carelessly written. It is a frequent occurrence throughout England that the age given for a person at one census is inconsistent with that given for the same person at a later census, by a year or two or more. Family historians have learnt to be sceptical about the accuracy of much information. Those answering questions must often have feared that what they said would affect any claim they might make for poor relief. Some people do not appear in a census when other information suggests they should. They may have been away from home, but there are more gaps than might be expected for a time when it must have been difficult for poor people to travel.

Recent photographs of Cooper's Lane from each direction

Appendix 1 :

Table showing the difference in ages between husband and wife, for couples recorded in the censuses of 1841, 1851, 1861 or 1871 as living in Cooper's Lane with children born between 1841 and 1871

years by which father is older than the mother:	number of couples
15	1
14	1
13	0
12	1
11	0
10	1
9	1
8	2
7	1
6	0
5	4
4	2
3	1
2	1
1	6
couple same age	6
years by which mother is older than the father:	number of couples
1	2
2	2
3	5
4	1
5	0
6	2
7	0
8	0
9	1

Family life at Forest House, Leytonstone

The connections that become apparent in our local history can be a wonderful surprise. A car park at Whipps Cross Hospital now occupies the site of Forest House which was demolished in 1964. Our Society has re-published Frederick Temple's monograph about Forest House. He mentions that William R Robinson occupied the House between 1838 and 1840 as a tenant of the Bosanquet family, who were by then living at Dingestow, Monmouthshire. Henry Phythian-Adams of the Warwickshire Local History Society has found amongst his mother's family papers a memoir by his great great aunt, Isabella Newcombe Robinson. Her father was the William R Robinson who became the tenant of Forest House. He had just re-married. His children moved home to Forest House and it was there they were introduced to their father's new wife. Far from being the terrible step-mother of Cinderella and other stories, she dismissed the children's hated governess, and gave young Isabella the fresh air the doctor said she needed, by allowing her to help in the garden, naming her "My dear little Maid of Honour".

The children would climb into one of the Cedar of Lebanon trees planted by the Bosanquets, who had business connections with the Middle East, and play and study. A sister would sit on top of the ice house and pretend to be a fierce giant, scaring away the other children. The girls would join the boys at cricket in a field behind the House. Two ponds were used for fishing in the summer and ice-skating and sliding in the winter. The 5th November was celebrated with a huge bonfire, many fireworks, and a straw effigy of Guy Fawkes clothed in dark blue sugar paper, with a red woollen wig knitted by Isabella and then browned in the oven. Isabella and her sister Ellen were given a cob pony 'Punch' who would accompany them on walks through the Forest.

After a time Isabella and Ellen had a new governess, Miss Baguley, who had previously worked for a Walthamstow family called Creed. She had learnt the French language and style of embroidery in Paris. Her extrovert, talkative personality was attractive to the children.

Before moving to Forest House the children had sometimes stayed at the Water House in Walthamstow, now the William Morris Gallery, with their grandfather William Tooke Robinson, who died in 1837. Isabella remembered the black and white marble floor of the entrance hall, and the broad staircase with large landings on each floor that made excellent play areas. The grandfather was elderly, born 1769, and spent most of his time alone in his own sitting room or the library overlooking the garden. He made his own salads. Occasionally the children would be allowed to visit him in his room and be given sugar plums. Isabella remembered the beautiful gardens and the piece of water with islands on it. At a distance from the house were swings and see-saws, where her playmate from a servant's family suffered a serious head injury. The kitchen gardens were kept locked and the children only allowed occasionally to take six strawberries or gooseberries.

Isabella herself was knocked unconscious when her godfather Captain Newcombe of the Royal Navy crashed his high phaeton carriage coming down a hill. She convalesced at the Water House, much of the time in the housekeeper's room and stores with a half-door entrance that fascinated the children.

Isabella's young aunts and uncles played boisterous games. They created a full size dummy figure to trick the grandmother, pretending on one occasion it was someone seeking a job as a servant, on another throwing the figure out of an upstairs window. The long-suffering grandmother was once placed on a tea tray and carried round the drawing room against her will.

Isabella's uncle, Henry Maltby, rented Forest Hall, Oak Hill, Hale End in the 1830s. The parents of Henry and his sister Jane (Isabella's mother, the first wife of William R Robinson), Thomas and Henrietta Maltby, lived 1813-23 at Clay Hill House (the site became a petrol station). William met Jane when his family occupied a house at Woodford Bridge.

Returning to Forest House and the time Isabella lived there, her step-mother became unwell and this was attributed to the ponds that were giving the children so much enjoyment. The family moved to Portman Square. Isabella's father William R Robinson was a director of the Bank of England and a 'Russia merchant'. Her Uncle Henry was living in a house overlooking an ornamental water at Regent's Park when Isabella was hurt in the carriage accident. These were people who could afford to rent expensive homes. Forest House had seemed to Isabella old-fashioned. Our district was becoming unable to compete with smart parts of central London or with regions that the railways were bringing much closer in travel time to the capital.

A Seedy Business

by David Ian Chapman

One of Leytonstone's oldest businesses was that of Richard Pazey, a corn and seed merchant. His shop at the top end (857) of Leytonstone High Road first opened, for wholesale and retail, in 1798. There is a picture of the shop, as it appeared in 1919, in the Archive Photographs Series - Leyton & Leytonstone, complied by Keith Romig and Peter Lawrence (p 99). According to the advertising they supplied corn, flour, hay, straw and seed. And offered Steam Chaff Cutting, Oat Bruising and Grinding Mills.

The Payze family were already farming in Leytonstone. An interesting description is given in W G Hammock's Leytonstone and it's History.

"From the church northwards after passing what was then a field, one came to Mr Payze's farmyard, straw-littered, with its large black gate and black thatched barn, and then, beyond a number of cottages with gardens which were always bright with flowers."

The business was probably founded by James Payze before passing to his youngest son, Richard. Richard Payze had been born in 1791 in Coggeshall, Essex, and died at Woodford in 1885. He was also landlord of the Crown public house in 1823. The business passed in turn to his son, also Richard, born in Leytonstone in 1819, died 1893, and who is buried alongside his wife, Jessie, in Wanstead Churchyard. Then passed to his grandson, Richard, born 1843, who lived at Wallwood Villa. The last member of the Payze family to run the business was Miss Edith Hall Payze, Richard's youngest sister and great grand-daughter of the founder, who took over in 1934.

An interesting sideline to life in the early nineteenth century comes from the transcript of a trial held at the Old Bailey in 1830. Richard accompanied by his daughter, Maria, had been to Drury Lane. On their return to Leytonstone they stopped at a friend's house in Bow. In the cart was a box which held a muff and a tipper, covered by a sack. Although noticing the sack had been moved it was not until they finally reached home was it discovered that the muff was missing. William Davis, a Bow Street Runner, apprehended one Daniel Green who was found to be in possession of a muff. At Green's subsequent trial he was indicted and found guilty of stealing and sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Richard Payze's shop survived the blitz only to close on the 21st June 1947, when Miss Payze retired to Broadstairs. The remaining premises being incorporated into Bearman's store.

One of her greatest treasures was a ledger with the first entry dated 1846 written in copperplate handwriting. I wonder where that ledger is today.

'Well known to fame'

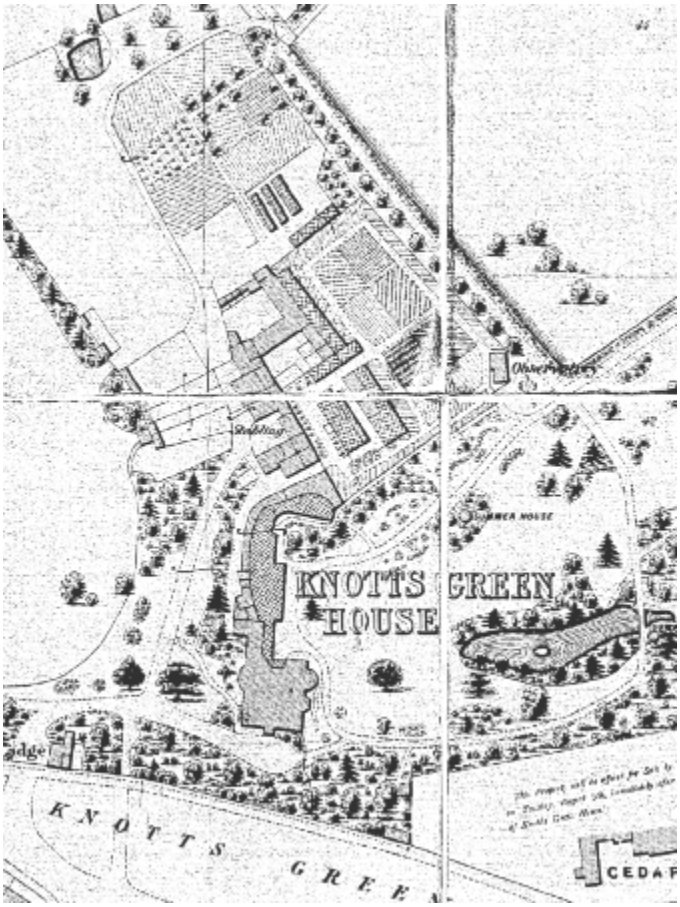
Mr. D. Donald, head gardener at Knott's Green, Leyton, The Residence of J.G. Barclay Esq.

by Bill Measure

David Donald (c.1825 – 2nd April 1908) is recorded in the Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturalists as being gardener to J Gurney Barclay of Knott's Green, Leyton, Essex, for more than 30 years. In the centenary year of David Donald's death it is opportune that following her talk to L&LHS Georgina Green kindly made available copies of some extracts from the scrapbook of Emma Gurney, press cuttings probably from the 1870s or 1880s. One cutting describes Knott's Green as "one of the largest and best kept places in the neighbourhood of London. It is quite suburban, being situated in the Lea Bridge Road, about a mile from Lea Bridge station on the Great Eastern Railway – just outside the dust and turmoil of the great city. The head gardener is Mr. D. Donald, well known to fame as an exhibitor at the metropolitan exhibitions." The article describes how the writer admired Donald's plants at an exhibition more than a dozen years previously, and that Donald's foliage plants were awarded first prize at an exhibition at Regents Park. However, Donald had little time for exhibitions after supplying the large Knott's Green House establishment with fruit, vegetables and flowers, and spring and summer bedding for the large flower garden.

At the time of the article (which is not dated) David Donald had been a servant of the Barclay family for 24 years and during that time he had modelled and remodelled the grounds and gardens at Knott's Green. We are told that, "All gardens and grounds near large cities are necessarily small, and the highest art of the landscape gardener is displayed in making them appear as large as he possibly can, and this is no easy matter where there but very few natural advantages. Here there are none, the whole district being so flat and uninteresting."

The flower garden consisted of a number of plain beds on each side of the main walk in the grounds and a series of long borders running along the outside of the



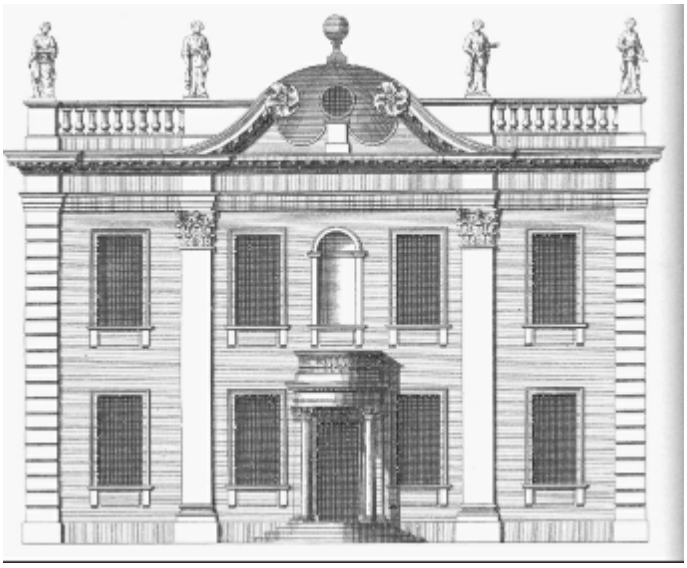
wall of the kitchen garden. (Reproduced above is part of a map prepared when the estate was put up for sale 1898-1900. East is to the top.) The conservatory is described as a very large building; this had replaced the previous conservatory, which was too narrow and confined for exercise during bad weather. The new building provided a pleasant promenade. There was a 'warmer house' with foliage plants and a house devoted to ferns. A kitchen garden contained 'forcing houses', vineries, peach houses, pineries and cucumber houses and lettuces. A cool house, facing north, was used for retarding plants. The peach house was a lean-to with trees trained to horizontal wires and bearing a heavy crop of fruit. The vineries are also described as bearing a heavy crop of fruit.

We are told that Mr. Barclay allowed the committee of the ‘Leyton, Woodford etc. flower and fruit show’ to hold their exhibition in his grounds,

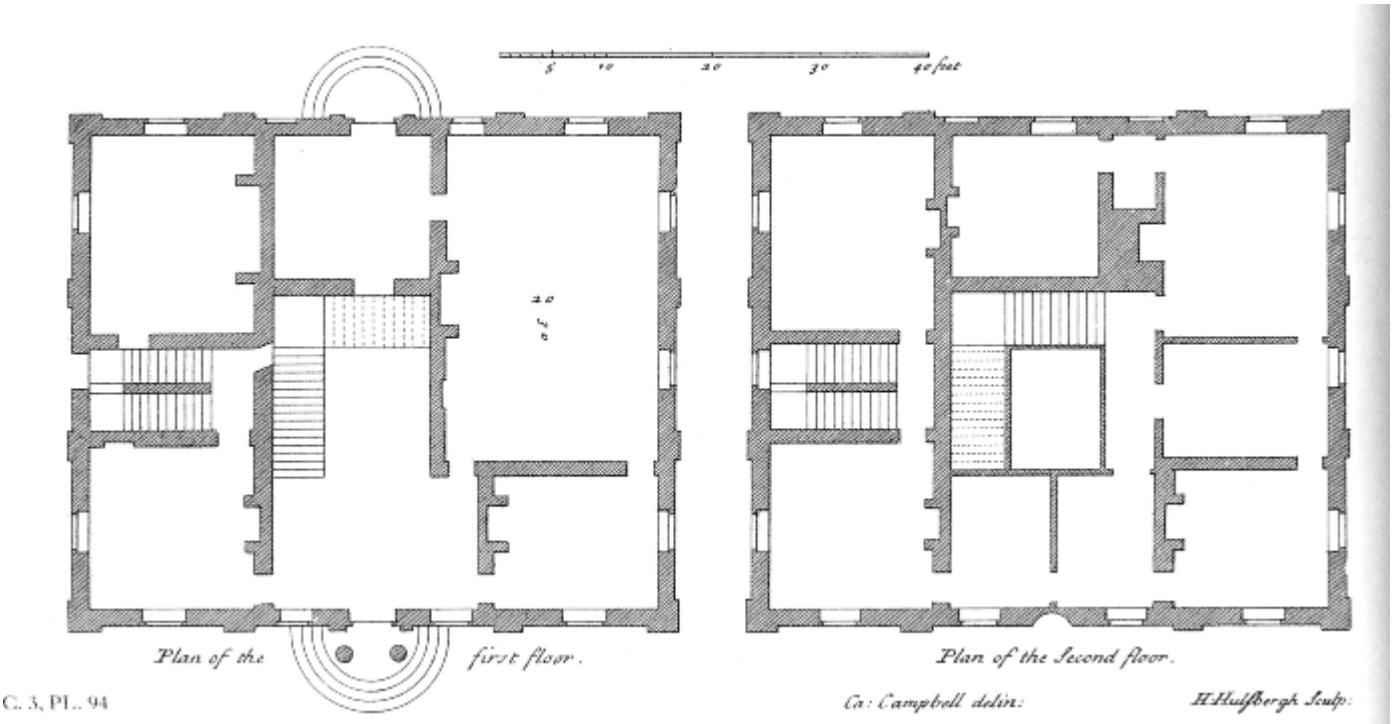
Today it is difficult to envisage the Knott’s Green described in the article but it is one of the fascinations of local history that a chance encounter with a newspaper cutting can give us a glimpse into a forgotten world.

The elegant house of Leyton Grange

by David Boote



David Chapman has given us the story of the house, 'Leyton Grange', which David Gansel, born 1690 or 1689, designed for himself[1]. Ownership of the manor of Leyton Grange was split three ways in 1650 and the manor house is thought to have fallen down or been demolished by then. Gansel's father, also David, purchased two-thirds of the Leyton Grange manor, and for his home rebuilt Leyton House, which was at the Church Road end of Capworth Street. The younger David Gansel lived at the new Leyton Grange from its construction in 1720[2] until 1733, when he moved to East Donyland Hall near Colchester (glimpse below).

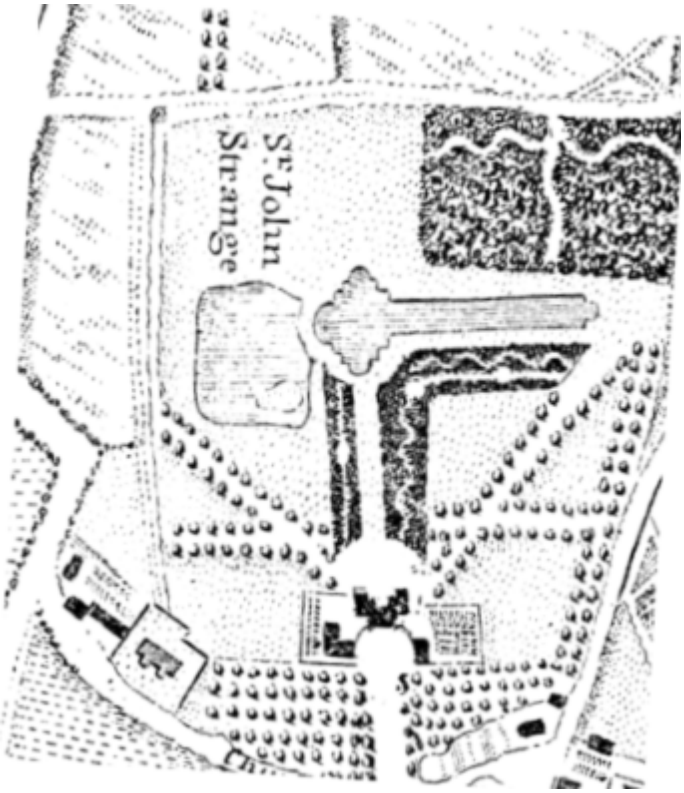


1 David Ian Chapman 'The Grange, with emphasis on the Lane Family and the Slave Trade' published by Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

2 Colen Campbell 'Vitruvius Britannicus' vol 3 p 11

This article provides a little context. As designed Leyton Grange was impressive but provided limited accommodation for a rich family : 5 rooms and an entrance hall on the ground floor, and 8 rooms on the upper floor (see the plans on the previous page).

The next occupant, lawyer Sir John Strange, extended the house with 2 wings at the rear[3] as can be seen on this map of 1741-45 by John Roque :

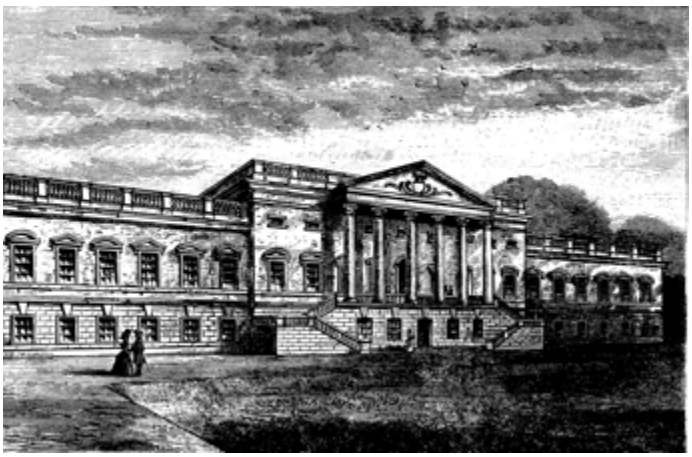


Gansel's Leyton Grange can be compared with Chiswick House which was also designed by its owner. Unlike the Grange, Chiswick House has survived and is in the care of English Heritage (my photo below).

3 David Ian Chapman 'The Grange, with emphasis on the Lane Family and the Slave Trade' published by Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

Richard Boyle, Lord Burlington was born in 1694. In 1714 and 1715 he travelled through the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, buying works of art and the services of artists. He admired Colen Campbell's book of designs 'Vitruvius Britannicus' and its espousal of a more restrained architecture than the Baroque style. (Leyton Grange is illustrated in 'Vitruvius Britannicus' and Gansel was a subscriber to that publication.) Burlington was inspired to design buildings himself, including Chiswick House which was built between 1726 and 1729.

Colen Campbell was the architect of the huge Wanstead House (drawing below), which was completed in the same year, 1720, as Leyton Grange[4] , in the adjacent parish, for Richard Child, Viscount Castlemaine.



Burlington was a Whig supporter of the government of Robert Walpole under the Hanoverian King George I until 1733, and Richard Child, previously a Tory, decided to give King George his unequivocal support. The elder David Gansel was a Huguenot, a French refugee from Louis XIV's persecution of Protestants. The Huguenots were closer to the uncompromising views of Calvin than the Church of England. Gansel the elder must have been firmly on the side of the 'Glorious Revolution' in which the Catholic King James II was deposed and William of Orange installed in his place, but he must also have favoured the Whigs' tolerance of different religious beliefs. Gansel the elder acted as Overseer of the Poor in 1703, and Constable in 1708. His duties as Churchwarden in 1710 were performed by someone else[4] which suggests he was unable to reconcile his personal beliefs with the doctrine of the Church of England. We might expect Gansel the younger to be a Whig, though we do not know.

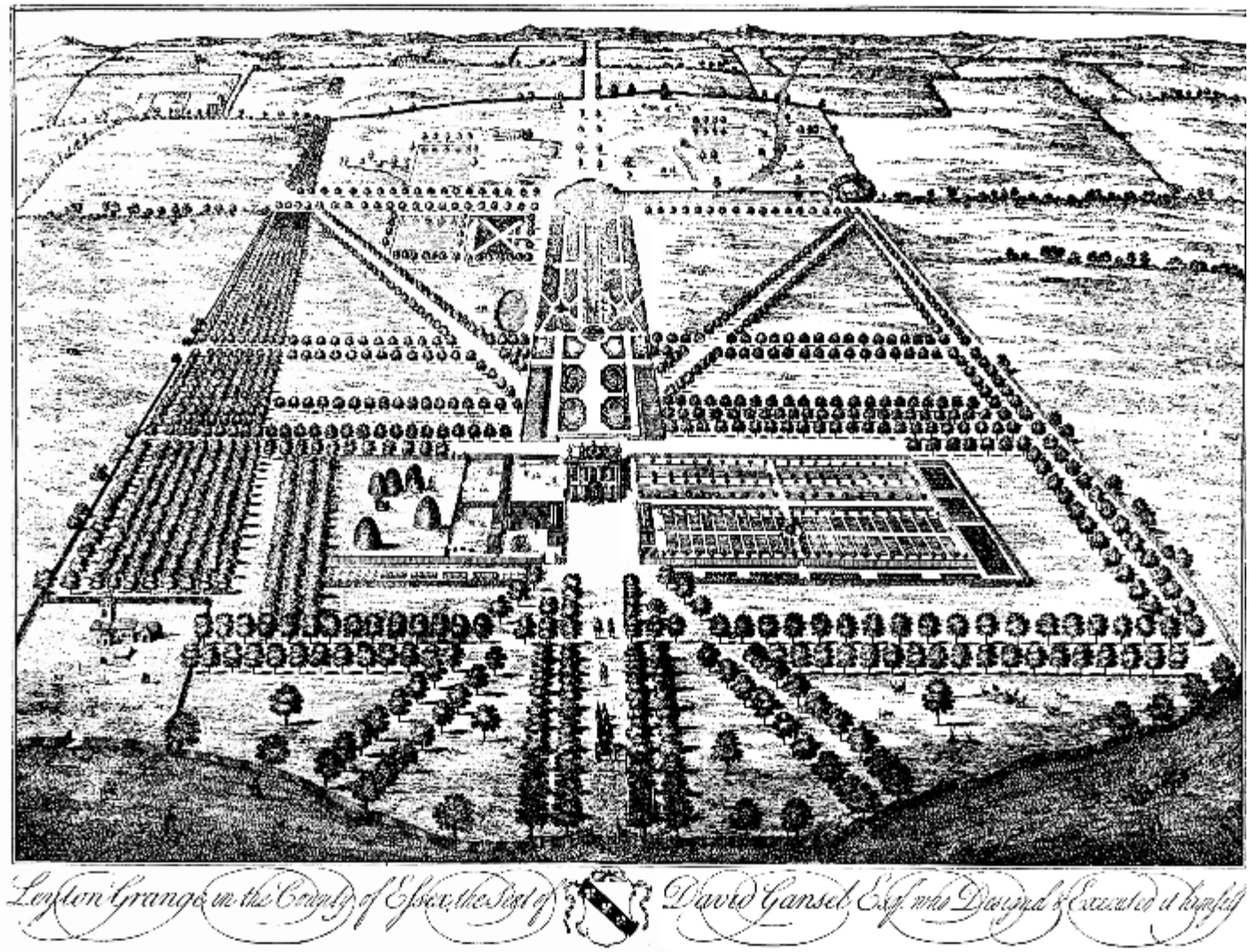
4 David Ian Chapman 'Leyton House and the Walthamstow Slip' published by Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

Burlington and William Kent, the painter, architect and garden designer who became Burlington's close friend, were Freemasons by the later 1730s. Paintings which are integral to the design of Chiswick House contain Masonic symbols. The building would have been a good setting for Masonic ritual. A narrow spiral staircase could have taken an initiate from the low-ceilinged lower floor to the impressive upper floor which had its own external entrance (photo below).

The central 'Tribune' has high half-circle windows (around the dome seen in the photo below), used later by Sir John Soane, a free-thinker with Masonic connections, to admit light but maintain privacy, as at the Bank of England (drawing below). However, I cannot detect any Masonic associations in Leyton Grange, and know of none for Gansel.

Burlington and Kent were innovators in garden design. They used statues and other features to proclaim a cultural and political manifesto. Avenues of trees stretching into the distance had been the mainstay of Baroque landscaping. At Chiswick House the vistas are terminated with a statue, column or small building (photo above).

Kent also contributed to the design of the gardens at Stowe near Buckingham for the owner, Lord Cobham, a Whig who left Walpole's government in 1733. Like those at Chiswick, the Stowe gardens have survived and are being restored, by the National Trust (photo below).



An engraving of the grounds of Leyton Grange shows a Baroque style : open-ended avenues of trees on a very formal pattern, geometrically shaped planted beds, and (towards the top of the engraving) a symmetrically shaped basin of water and a straight water canal to the right (east) of that.

This Grange estate drawing includes the parish church of St Mary's but as a tiny building (bottom left). At Stowe Lord Cobham preserved the parish church alone out of a whole village, but hid it from view with thick trees. Both instances look like deliberate snubs to established religion.

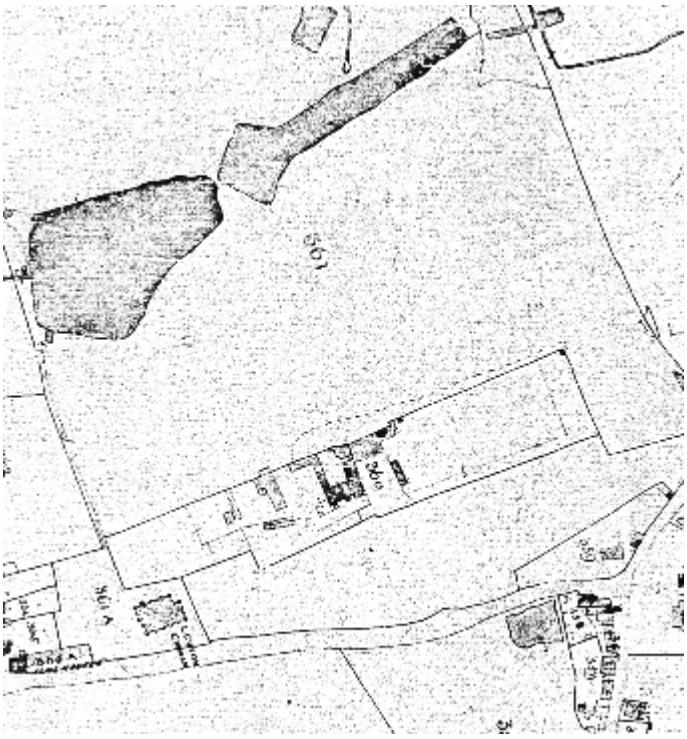
The remains of an 18th century garden path were found at 108-110 Vicarage Road in 1997.

The map made by John Roque 1741-45 when Leyton Grange was the home of Sir John Strange (see above) shows curving paths within the wooded areas, reflecting a growing preference for half-natural landscape. The straight avenues remain.

A map (below) made by Chapman and Andre in 1777, by which time the Grange was the home of Thomas Bladen, shows the avenues of trees further reduced and the ornamental lakes having slightly looser shapes.

A naturalistic shape of ornamental lakes, pools and waterways was introduced at Stowe towards the middle of the 18th century, as can be seen in the photo below, but the change in Leyton Grange's lake may just have resulted from less scrupulous maintenance.

The tithe map of 1843 (right) shows one pond behind the Grange to have roughly kept its keyhole shape but shows another pond with a naturalistic outline. 'The Polite Repository' of 1809 included an engraving of The Grange as the home of Thomas Lane[5], which makes it possible that Humphry Repton had been consulted about landscaping[5] and changes made. We do not know.



In 1861 the house was demolished and from that time streets of terraced housing started to be build over its grounds.

5 'A Gazetteer of Sites in Essex associated with Humphry Repton' edited by Fiona Cowell and Georgina Green (very kindly drawn to our attention by the latter) p 95, but the house is shown with 5 windows on each floor and a pitched roof, as well as being located in adjacent Walthamstow.

The remnants of Moyer House

by David Ian Chapman

The long since demolished Moyer House was described in 1783, by an old inhabitant, Robert James, as "the oldest house in the parish".

Originally known as "Masters", the house and estate were sold to Captain Lawrence Moyer in 1649. Captain Moyer came from a sea-faring family and was a warden of Trinity House as well as being a staunch puritan. It is probable that the family were already living in Leyton, unfortunately the earliest Rate Books only date from 1651. The reason for believing this is that he had held the position of churchwarden two years earlier. Prior to 1684 the house was enlarged by the addition of a new wing. It had been assessed for 12 hearths some years earlier in 1662 and in 1785 it was rated as having 69 windows.

The last occupant of Moyer House was Catherine Moyer, who died in 1831. For reasons unknown the house was soon demolished as the Rate Book for the following year states "House pulled down". It begs the question why?

Moyer House occupied a position in Hainault Road, opposite the "Holywell", and to the rear of the present day Baptist Church. Remarkably, a small part of the house was still extant some hundred years later.

In a paper read, on his behalf, to the Leyton Antiquarian Society in May 1931, Charles Crouch mentioned the existence of two stones that formed part of the front door to the house. These had been found lying in the yard at the back of the Lamb's Printing Works (then 598 High Road). When they were first discovered both were upright, but one had since toppled over.

Charles Crouch believed that the stones would be re-erected in the Coronation Gardens by the Borough Council. Several years later there were still no sign of them having been moved. I made enquires at the time of the renovations to the Coronation Gardens, but nothing was forthcoming. The site of the old printing works, once used by United Dairies, has been redeveloped.

Is there the faintest chance that anyone remembers seeing these stones or can recall what ever happened to them? Likewise, the fate of the pump connected to the well, which is on the site of the Holywell Monastery.

The Silk Road to Leytonstone

by David Boote

There is a connection between Leytonstone and a city in the Middle East which is one of the oldest in the world and has for centuries been an exotic mix of cultures. Halab, known to Venetian and English traders as 'Aleppo', is now in Syria, but was within the long-lived and extensive Ottoman Empire. It was on the best route across the desert to and from the River Euphrates. It had been inhabited since the 11th millennium BC. Through Halab came goods from the regions around the rivers Euphrates and Tigris along well-frequented routes from Baghdad and Basra for spices from Asia until about 1600 and for silk from Iran until about 1722, as well as from Mosul and from Damascus by a route round the base of mountains rather than the coast.

Halab also had connections with Anatolia to the north. It had a population of about 100,000 and in the Middle East only Istanbul, capital of the Ottoman Empire, and Cairo were larger. Halab was about a mile and a half across but movement through it was by foot, or for the wealthy on the back of an animal. Halab was divided into 82 quarters closed at night from each other except through watched gates, of roughly 100 or 200 households each. Dwellings faced inwards to a courtyard with no exterior windows. The density of building and sounds from adjacent open courtyards meant that people knew a great deal about their neighbours. Each quarter had its shops providing normal goods, as well as a mosque and barbershop. There were no street signs, house numbers or maps. The neighbourhoods were religiously mixed even if their name suggested otherwise.

Neighbourhoods might have a predominant character but not an exclusively homogeneous one. At least half the population lived outside the city walls. Within the walls were the governor, high officials, the garrison, tax offices, prisons, residences of the élite, higher education colleges.

Occupations, including positions of Islamic religious authority, were hereditary and Halab was dominated by the families that dealt in grain and money, owned land in town and outside, collected taxes and administered charities. The Sultan appointed for one year terms of office the head of the busy and wide-ranging Shari'a Court ('qadi'), and the city governor ('pasha') who had both civil and military authority and came from outside with his own loyal soldiers.

The foreign merchants at Halab were almost all French or English. They were separate self-regulating communities. Their governments made agreements with the Sultan defining their national merchants' privileges and appointed consuls at Halab who acted as intermediaries between merchants and the authorities.

In 1743 Samuel Bosanquet, born in 1700, purchased Forest House at Leytonstone near the junction of James Lane and Whipps Cross Road. The House survived until 1964, though Whipps Cross Hospital was built inside its grounds in 1903. An elaborate fireplace preserved inside the original entrance to the hospital, and possibly sections of the perimeter wall, are the only survivals.

Samuel Bosanquet was the second son of a David Bosanquet who had taken refuge in London from persecution of Protestants by King Louis XIV of France. Samuel could only afford to buy Forest House because his older brother David was disinherited in 1730 for marrying against the wishes of his father, who died in 1732. With suddenly improved prospects Samuel was able in 1733 to marry Mary, daughter and heiress of William Dunster, a Deputy Governor of the Levant Company, a Deputy Governor of the Royal Exchange Assurance, and a resident of Leytonstone. Samuel Bosanquet purchased the manor of Low Hall, Walthamstow in 1741, and was a churchwarden at Leyton 1742-43.

Samuel's older brother David had worked in Halab when he was a young man. Foreigners at Halab were tolerated but kept at a cultural distance. The English had their 'Khan' or 'factory', a compound with windowless walls on the outside, a courtyard at the centre, storage rooms on the ground floor and living accommodation above. This arrangement has been compared to the cells of a convent and to a university college quadrangle.

The merchants were isolated, living apart, not having family with them, and were reliant on locals for communication in Arabic. Italian Jewish merchants established businesses in Halab and took local Jewish people into their employment and protection. During the 18th c the consuls extended greatly the number of local people, mainly Christian, to whom they granted privileges, which included tax exemption. These privileged Christians and Jews came to number about 1,500.

The foreign merchants would go hunting and horse-riding outside the city walls. Otherwise alcohol and food were the chief ways to release the tensions of a restricted way of life. There was a society at Halab with initiation rites, the 'Knights of the Malhue'[1]. The foreign merchants dressed more like Turks than Europeans, and David Bosanquet II had himself painted in that costume when he was back in England.

David Bosanquet II returned to London and in 1729 became a director of the London Assurance Company, the practice of insurance having begun with ships and goods at sea and then extended to fire and life insurance. A younger brother Pierre became the family's representative in Halab. In the period 1731-36 the Bosanquet family (David, Samuel and Claude) were the fourth largest British business importing silk from Halab, accounting for 8.3% of the trade[2]. David Bosanquet II died in 1741 and was buried in Woodford where he had owned a house.

In Charles II's reign Forest House had been remodelled (or rebuilt as the diarist John Evelyn implied in his entry for 16th March 1683) by James Houblon. That Houblon was an earlier Huguenot trader with the Levant seems to have been just coincidence, because it was the Heathcote family who sold the mansion to Samuel Bosanquet. Another apparent coincidence is that there was once at Leyton parish church a wooden tablet in memory of Mr Charles Goodfellow, merchant, of Halab, 1686[3] . In 1738 the successful Levant merchant Edward Radcliffe married a woman much younger than he was and set up home in Leytonstone. He died childless and his family owned an estate at Hitchin.

Samuel's father David Bosanquet fled to London when Louis XIV's persecution of Protestants crystallised in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in1685. He immediately went into business as a merchant importing silk from the Middle East, and that must have been his occupation when he was in Lyons. England through its Levant Company had been conducting a successful trade exporting cloth woven in England to the Middle East and importing raw silk from there using the same

1 ' A History of the Levant Company' by Alfred C Wood

2 Aleppo and Devonshire Square : English traders in the Levant in the eighteenth century by Ralph Davis

3 The Environs of London by Daniel Lysons : volume 4: Counties of Herts, Essex & Kent (1796), pp. 158-82

ships, but France was becoming an increasingly formidable competitor. Bosanquet's expertise seems to have been welcomed in London. He could provide silk weavers who had fled France for London with raw material. He obtained naturalisation as a British citizen in 1697, and married a young Huguenot (French Protestant) woman the following year. His life cannot have been easy even though he achieved near-instant success. English weavers hated the Huguenots who entered their craft (and any merchants who imported woven silk cloth). David Bosanquet provided bail surety in 1698 for two Huguenots accused of smuggling in silk, and one of those was to become eminent in commerce and in the London Huguenot community.

In 1696 David Bosanquet wrote for the benefit of his successors : "The Cloth Trade is a noble Trade, many people live by it, and the merchant who sends thereof to Turkey cannot want gain thereby if he imploys care and diligence in the buying, ordering and dressing of it."[4]

The Levant Company was first granted a royal charter in 1581 and held a government-enforced monopoly in the cloth trade with the Ottoman Empire. Its main Middle East base was at Halab.

The Levant merchants were more Whig than other London Livery Companies. The original East India Company in the last quarter of the 17th century took business away from the Levant Company by importing silks from Persia and India. Although William III's war with France harmed trade with the Levant in the short term[5] the Turkey traders were the second largest group of subscribers to a rival New East India Company, and to the Bank of England which provided vital finance for William III's war with France.

Goods had to be transported by camel between Halab and its port 80 miles to the north-west, Iskenderun (Iskandarun, Iskanderoon or Alexandretta). Letters took 2 months to go between Halab and London[6]. The Levant Company's ships sailed together once a year to Iskenderun.

Samuel Bosanquet remained an active City businessman. He became deputy governor of the Levant Company. The trade between London and the Levant was in decline from 1730. The Bosanquets and their connections persisted and the trade had better times again between 1749 and 1756. There was a temporary respite for the weak English trading position in the Levant. Supply of silk from Bengal was disrupted from 1749 to 1756. The East India Company turned to China for alternative supplies but, before this brought London silk prices back down and before the full effect of the world market prices was felt in the Turkish trading cities, there was an opportunity for importers of silk from the Levant to make extraordinary profits.

In 1753 it was made much easier to become a member of the Levant Company and its management harder for a few to control. The Bosanquet family continued to participate. An account book for the last years of Samuel Bosanquet's life, 1758 to 1760, shows transactions with weavers and London mercers (dealers in high quality cloth)[7].

Samuel Bosanquet is thought to be responsible for adding a portico and parapet to Forest House and having the rear façade rebuilt [7] [8].

The Samuel Bosanquet of the next generation (1744-1806) lived in Forest House with his younger brother William (1746-1813). He retained the family interest in trade with the Ottoman Empire and wrote to his Halab representative David Hays from 1765 to 1806[7]. In 1770 Samuel Bosanquet told David Hays that the Turkey trade would be profitable by his standards if money was not tied up "when full four years is required to bring things home" which was a long time to be at the risk of war in Europe and the vicissitudes of the individuals involved[9]. Samuel Bosanquet II became Deputy Governor of the Levant Company. Strangely, an obituary in the 'Gentlemen's Magazine' stated that he had never engaged in business on his own account. He was from 1774[7] also a Director of Bank of England, and its Governor 1791-93. Samuel was for 40 years a Director of the Royal Exchange Assurance Company

4 Aleppo and Devonshire Square : English traders in the Levant in the eighteenth century by Ralph Davis

5 A fractured society: the politics of London in the first age of party 1688-1715 by Gary Stuart De Krey (1985)

6 Aleppo and Devonshire Square : English traders in the Levant in the eighteenth century by Ralph Davis

7 'The Story of the Bosanquets' by Grace Lawless Lee

8 An Account of the House and Estate known as Forest House and for a time as Goring House in Leyton and Walthamstow, Essex, by Frederick Temple, re-published by Leyton & Leytonstone Historical Society

and had banking connections. Samuel was a friend of Sir John Soane who was the architect of changes at Forest House of a kind not now known. Samuel was a Commissioner of the Port of London. He was a Director of the French Hospital in 1782, which was in Bath Street, Finsbury, near to the present junction of Old Street and City Road[10].

The Bosanquets had been staunch supporters of the Hanoverians and would have been counted as Whigs but in 1792 Samuel was Tory enough to chair a meeting of City merchants and bankers declaring its support for William Pitt's government. During the war with France Samuel Bosanquet was lobbying for Royal Navy protection of British commercial interests at Smyrna, a longstanding alternative to Halab for western European merchants. He probably talked about trade with Turkey at Forest House, but I can say no more than that.

A striking memorial was designed by Sir John Soane to commemorate Samuel Bosanquet II in the churchyard of St Mary's, Leyton, but it was demolished in 1957, as was Forest House in 1964. The Bosanquet family's principal home from 1806[8] was Dingestow Court near Monmouth[7] and the family sold Forest House in 1889[8].

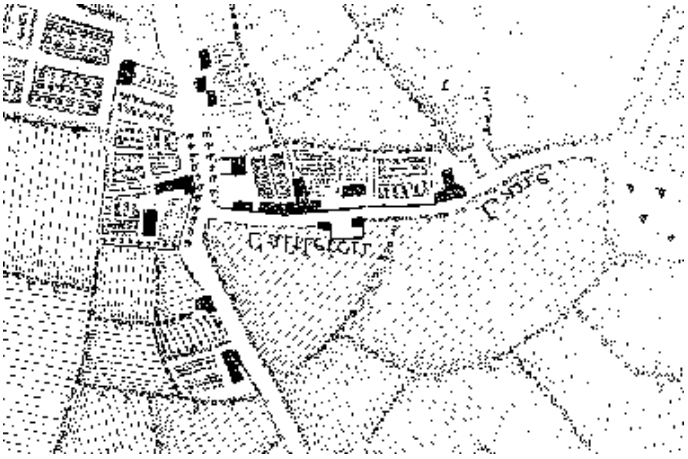
9 Aleppo and Devonshire Square : English traders in the Levant in the eighteenth century by Ralph Davis

10 http://www.frenchhospital.org.uk/hospitalhistory.htm

Yapping dogs and crackling logs, Two possible hunting lodges

by David Boote

The oldest maps of Leytonstone show a road where Davies Lane is now, and in the same form as its present one, a turning off the High Road that ends at Wanstead Flats. Few roads in our area go so far back in time. What purpose did it serve ? From the later 17th century a house faced on to the road at its High Road end, but it is possible the answer may be found in the existence of another house, on the opposite side of the High Road, which in the 19th century was given the name 'Royal Lodge'.



John Roque's map of 1746. 'Castleton Lane' later became known as Davies Lane.

an old photograph of the 'Royal Lodge' before it was destroyed in a fire.

A hunting lodge would need space for a crowd of visitors on horseback, and the building in question was set a little way back from the High Road. A good lodge would have at least one large fireplace to warm huntsmen returning wet and cold, and a kitchen range to provide hot refreshments. A convenient supply of water would provide several kinds of comforts, and be appreciated by the horses and dogs. The High Road runs along a gravel ridge from which water was later pumped to extensive plant nurseries. Hunting lodges were usually on high ground and some were 2 or 3 stories high for a better view. They often had a 'lawn', 'laund' or 'plain' onto which animals could be driven for killing before spectators. (The Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge is an example, overlooking Chingford Plain.) The 'Royal Lodge' was on relatively high ground, one side looking across the High Road down Davies Lane to open Epping Forest land, the other into the valley of the Fillebrook which contained Wallwood.

The Ordnance Survey map of the 1860s shows 'Royal Lodge'

'Emblin's Academy' in the 18th century occupied what became the 'Royal Lodge' in the 19th century.

Leyton High Road has a similar mystery, Walnut Tree House, also timber-framed, built about 1600, and still there now. The large fireplaces survive. It was in the manor of Leyton Grange which had its boundary at the Fillebrook stream. (Leytonstone was in the manor of Ruckholt on the other side of the stream.) There are no records for the construction of Walnut Tree House or its early owners, yet it was for the period an expensive and prestigious building. One explanation might be that it was a hunting lodge. In the middle of the 13th century the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne which owned the church and Grange manor of Leyton was allowed to take Wallwood out of the Epping Forest jurisdiction, to make a visible boundary, and to have hunting rights within it. In the 17th century Wallwood belonged to the King. Queen Elizabeth I, James I and Charles II all visited Ruckholt House. From there they could have reached both the Royal Lodge and Walnut Tree House, and both Wanstead Flats and Wallwood, in one day's sport. All this is supposition, but it does offer a possible solution to two mysteries.

Should we celebrate the solstice on Capworth Street ?

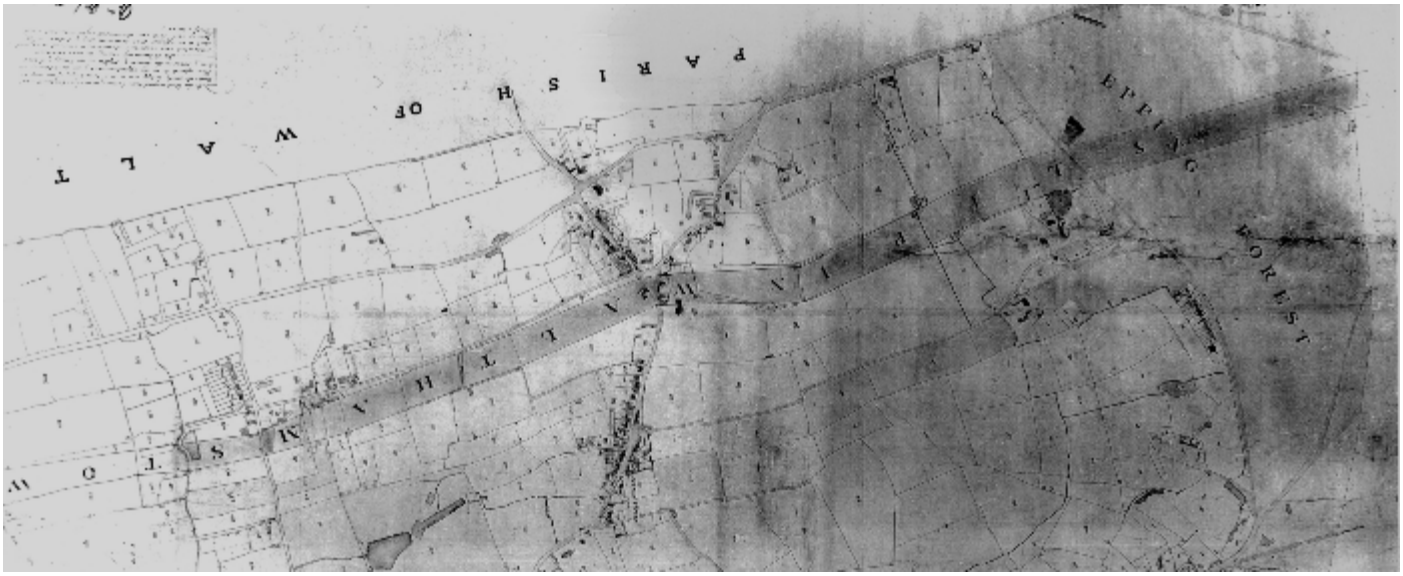
by David Boote

"© OpenStreetMap contributors".

Look at a map of Leyton and you will see that either side of Lea Bridge Road the streets run in the same direction. A common sense layout, but there is more to it than that. Boundary Road gets its name because Leyton is on the south side and Walthamstow to the north.

Capworth Street is at the southerly edge of a strip of land about 100 yards across, running from the River Lea to the edge of Wanstead parish at the Eagle Pond that was the 'Walthamstow Slip', belonging to that parish even though the land on either side was in Leyton.

There is no record of the process by which England was divided into parishes. The boundaries often followed rivers and streams and twisted and turned, but that between Leyton and Walthamstow was a straight line, more or less the whole distance.



The Leyton 'Tithe Map', prepared in 1843 before most houses in our area had been built over, shows that the field edges were aligned with the Slip and the parish boundary, as was the road now called James Lane. Why ?

Straight roads are usually attributed to surveying when Britain was part of the Roman Empire and swift movement by occupying legions was a key method of control. A section of Roman road has recently been found just off Capworth Street. However, the Lea Bridge Road west of the junction with Church Road and Markhouse Road is much later than that, a new creation of the 18th century turnpike trust. Capworth Street does not fit into what we know of the Roman road system on this side of London.

The 'Walthamstow Slip' was an unusual feature and may be the key to the mystery. This was a strip of land, running from the River Lea across to the eastern edge of Leyton parish, which was part of the parish of Walthamstow though either side was Leyton. There was a tale that Leyton forfeited the land in the Slip because its people did not bury someone who died by the Lea. That would not explain the straightness of the main boundary between the parishes.

The 'crop marks' seen in aerial photographs have helped identify quite a few examples of a prehistoric feature, pairs of ditches running parallel with each other for some distance, and often meeting a ditch at the end that joins the two long ones. This type of earthwork is known as a 'cursus'. One was found on the site of the Terminal 5 that was built for Heathrow Airport and archaeologists have suggested 'at sunset at the mid winter solstice the community would gather outside the HE1 enclosure, possibly having observed their leaders processing along the C1 Cursus to this point'[1]. Many of the known cursus features are close to rivers, often starting or ending at the river. They often incorporate changes of direction, slight

1 from the review by Timothy Darvill in Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society Volume 58 2007 of 'Landscape Evolution in the Middle Thames Valley: Heathrow Terminal 5 Excavations Vol 1
2 Pathways and Ceremonies, The cursus monuments of Britain and Ireland, edited by Alistair Barclay and Jan Harding

but definite[2]. It is possible water flowed along the cursus ditches[3].

I walked as close as I could to the Walthamstow Slip on 21st December 2008, and considered myself very lucky that the cloud cover was less than 100%. Walking down Capworth Street shortly before sunset at 4 o'clock on 21st December 2008, the brightest part of the sky was not straight ahead but somewhat to the right, to the north. There was no chance of seeing the sun dip beneath the horizon even if there had been no clouds. So an alignment to the winter solstice sunset is at best unproven. The experiment did show the importance to winter solstice ritual of a flat landscape with a clear view. The Walthamstow Slip was kept clear of buildings until after 1860.

View across Hollow Ponds on or near the 'Walthamstow Slip' less than an house before sunset on 21st December 2008

Looking southwest down Capworth Street shortly before sunset on 21st December 2008

Marsh grazing for livestock was often divided between a number of parishes. Along our part of the Lea the manors within the parishes stretched from the river through the fields to the barren gravels of the 'Flats'.

2 Pathways and Ceremonies, The cursus monuments of Britain and Ireland, edited by Alistair Barclay and Jan Harding

3 'Great Monuments, Great Rivers' J Leary & D Field British Archaeology Sept/Oct 2011

This may have come from more than a sense of fairness. It may have helped run a system by which livestock such as cattle could graze on the poorer, higher land when the marshes were under water or being used to grow hay (or even new-growth sedge). The parish of Wanstead stretched from the place itself round the Flats and through Cann Hall to reach the Lea at the edge of West Ham. In this way Wanstead got permanent access to the Lea marshes. It does not help explain the straightness of the Leyton-Walthamstow division.

Could a route have been created between Leyton Flats (now Hollow Ponds) and the River Lea, for use in ceremonies to mark the changing seasons ?

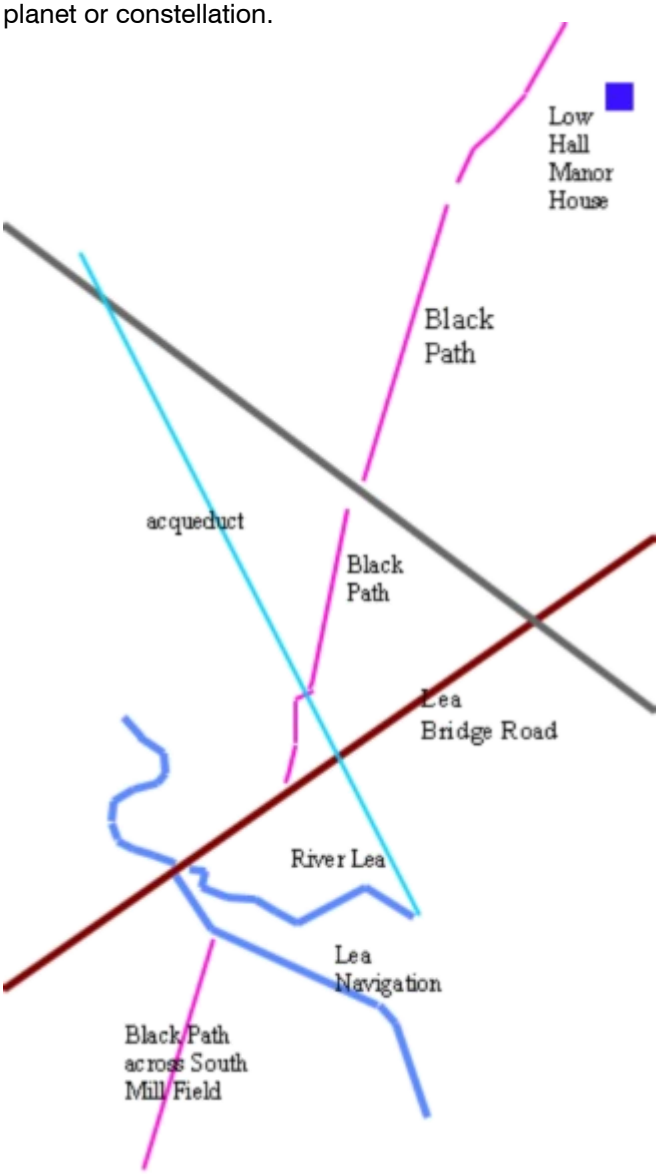
At Flag Fen near Peterborough a long wooden trackway dating back 3,500 years to the Bronze Age has been found (photo of a preserved section below), and adjacent deposits of precious objects suggest it served a religious purpose. Comparable roads across the valley of the River Witham in Lincolnshire had precious objects deposited by them from Stone Age times and were chosen as the location of a chain of medieval abbeys.

Ditches at Flag Fen have been seen by Francis Pryor as hedge-lined droveways for livestock management. (Below is a photo of a reconstructed droveway at Flag Fen.) Might the Walthamstow Slip have served a practical function for driving livestock to and from the rich grazing of the marshes ?

Francis Pryor also believes that the Flag Fen causeway and droveways could have been used as boundaries between landholdings. Long straight banks and walls on Dartmoor called 'reaves' are also now interpreted as boundaries. Some of these are 'co-axial', running parallel with other reaves, and are a part of the division of land into fields. Sections have been used as parish boundaries. That might be the origin of the Walthamstow Slip, the Lea Bridge Road and the main boundary between Leyton and Walthamstow with their parallel but separate courses. The causeway at Flag Fen had four narrow lanes. There were parallel routes, on one of which the Romans built a road (marked with trees in the photo below; modern posts show the route of a Bronze Age 'post alignment').

Wanstead's access to the Lea marshes took a route from the barren gravel of the 'Flats' to the low-lying and thinly populated area at the southern end of Leyton High Road. The section through Cann Hall farm is another straight line that survives in present day streets. The area each side of Capworth Street and Lea Bridge Road was farmland as far back as we can know. Livestock would need to be moved in such a way that kept them to a narrow trackway and minimised damage to crops in the growing season. The day on which the commoners of Leyton and Walthamstow could start grazing on the marshes after the hay crop was cut was 1st August, well within the crop-growing season.

Another ancient route runs from what was Low Hall Manor, Walthamstow to Lea Bridge, and is still followed by the 'Black Path' cycle track. It roughly lines up with a reasonably straight route from Hackney Town Hall south-west along Hackney Grove, Martello Street, Broadway Market and Goldsmith's Row. This was sometimes called 'Porters' Way'. The down to earth reason for people using that route would be to cross the River Lea where the Bridge was later built, or to bring wheat for grinding at a water mill there. Porters' Way changes direction slightly at several points which makes me doubt an alignment with a rising or setting sun, moon, planet or constellation.



We have a range of possible origins for the Leyton alignment in that the summer sun rises in the northeast and at winter the sun sets in the southwest. With one dominating alignment it might have seemed sensible, and also respectful of the supernatural significance of that alignment, to use it as the basis for adjacent field divisions. Or the Leyton alignments may possibly be the vestiges of multiple lines of spiritual significance, as can be seen near Carnac in Brittany.

Even I can see flaws in my speculation. I am suggesting that earthworks undertaken in the Stone Age have shaped the street layout of present day Leyton. I mention another type of alignment from the Bronze Age. The only possibility that explains the three parallel boundaries between Leyton and Walthamstow is the most far-fetched, the alignments of Carnac. No trace of a causeway has been found under the marshes, or even the Roman crossing of the River Lea, but people were clearly travelling backwards and forwards in all periods. We are left guessing which routes were used most, and how they have influenced today's geography, but perhaps we can make some informed guesses. Any development of a site on or close to the Walthamstow Slip should be preceded by an exploratory excavation.

The Black Path

by David Boote

The Black Path is a route across Leyton and Walthamstow Marshes from a ferry crossing of the River Lea to St James Street. It can be seen below left on a map drawn by Thomas Milne in 1800, here highlighted by blue arrows beside, not over, the representation of the path with dots. Note how the path for a time follows the boundary between Leyton and Walthamstow, indicated by Milne with groups of three dots. The map below right shows the current streets and pathways, the route closest to the Black Path here highlighted by brown arrows beside it.

The direction of the Black Path is the same as that of the 'Porter's Way' from the Lea ferry crossing through Hackney and London Fields to Shoreditch.

Little is known about the Black Path. Why was it relatively straight in direction ? Why that direction ? How did it get its name ? It is actually straighter now than it used to be. The deviation along the parish boundary disappeared when the railway line was built in 1840 from Stratford to Cambridge through the Lea Valley. The Black Path took its direct course to the ferry crossing only through the marshes nearest the river which were unfenced common grazing for part of the year, and its route through the enclosed fields of meadowland reflects some of the boundaries. Those driving animals or carrying goods may have wished to avoid paying tolls on the turnpike Lea Bridge Road and Lea Bridge itself, breaking the law by crossing at the Horse and Groom pub.

Is Local History Amateur History ?

by David Boote

History is definitely a profession. It is taught in schools. Qualifications can be obtained up to PhD level, around the world. There are many professorships and other senior academic posts, there are prestigious bodies (such as the Royal Historical Society in the UK), and many journals in which research and theories are published. In contrast, I am an amateur in the way I research and communicate the history of Leyton and Leytonstone, because I am not a student, nor a member of the teaching staff, at any academic institution. I do have a university degree in history, obtained 40 years ago, but that did not involve original research.

There are institutions at which a student of local history can study, obtain qualifications and apply for employment. Leicester University has a Centre for English Local History. Local History Magazine's website lists courses at the universities of Birmingham, Cambridge, Essex, Exeter, Hull, Keele, Kent, Leicester, Lincoln, Liverpool, London (Birkbeck and the Institute of Historical Research), Kingston, Nottingham, Oxford (within the Department for Continuing Education) and Roehampton. This is however a far shorter list than the number of courses in history without a narrow geographical specialism.

Local history written under the influence of those anxious to meet academic standards will have many source references. These are useful to follow up particular points, and to assess which aspects of the subject have been researched by others. The journals of the British Association for Local History and the Family and Community Historical Research Society set good standards. Less fortunate is a tendency to write in a stilted, cramped style which is meant to convey professionalism but sometimes fails even to convey clear meaning. Turgid language can be imprecise or ambiguous.

Those who help run local history societies do not want to distance themselves from the general public. Holding the attention of an audience, and producing newsletters and booklets that ordinary people want to read, are essential requirements for local history societies. This can make them appear superficial. Complexities and detailed reasoning are omitted. It is easy to understand why local history may seem unprofessional. Its practitioners may even wish to seem unprofessional.

History taught for school examinations a few generations ago may have emphasised the memorisation of dates and names, and concentrated on diplomacy and on power rivalries between states and between politicians. This left many adults with the impression that history is boring and irrelevant to the lives of ordinary people. Local history societies naturally want to dissociate themselves from this kind of unpleasant studying, but they run into another great danger. The researcher of one particular place will have few colleagues to supply the criticism that is very helpful in identifying errors. He or she may underestimate the amount of background reading necessary to understand the past and reveal the many different ways in which we can explore it.

The subject matter of local history is closely connected with regional, national and occasionally global history, yet its authors tend to have weak links with those who research geographically broader themes. Some aspects of general history do have a local dimension. Many topics will be focused on regional to global phenomena, pollution for example, and on national legislation and decision-making, but may be usefully supplemented with local examples and disputes. Theories that occur to the historian looking at central government records - apparent trends, interpretations, policy changes - ought to be tested in the records of what actually happened at specific locations. But the local research that might benefit the researcher of national and global themes will differ from the facets of local history that are popular : nostalgia, a sense of identity with a home town, admiration for impressive buildings and historic landscape features, and wonderment at the huge changes in every aspect of life such as is illustrated by old photos, pictures and video.

Academics are expanding the range of history, and some of the new fields of research are highly relevant to local history. In the 19th century central government took control of care for the destitute and the education of

ordinary people. Campaigners and proposers of legislation described the existing situation in ways which made the case for change as strong as possible. It is necessary to examine what was actually happening in particular places to counter-balance this natural bias. Those interested in the status and experiences of women look at relevant law, and at writings arguing for and against change, but must also read personal accounts of life experiences where these have been recorded. Greater recognition is being given to the extent to which people's lives are beyond the reach of government and the law. As well as family and personal relationships, places are important. Public houses, for example, were used as meeting places. As historians cast their gaze away from those exercising political power, they find interesting material at the local level. Indeed, for many themes such evidence as exists is at the level of individuals, families and small groups.

Local history is seen as having an educational value. Local subjects provide study material and opportunities for projects that can be undertaken by children of primary age, with visits to sites a short travelling distance away and to local museums for which school trips are a mainstay. The relationship between museums and local history societies is weakened by a preference of staff to have total responsibility for their own exhibition displays, publications and activities. This is probably what the staff prefer doing, rather than administration and the management of people. There are only weak sanctions to deter volunteers from failing to deliver promised outcomes. The funders of museums will be monitoring the quality and timeliness of exhibitions and other activities, and assessing the implied social values. It is understandable that museum managers will take personal responsibility for these crucial matters. This ought to be combined with a recognition that volunteers can expand the range of activities offered by heritage sites, museums and archives, and share their enthusiasm with the general public.

School teachers welcome to their classes elderly people with long memories. They do not look to local historians for help with teaching material. This is puzzling. Teachers may fear that an approach to a local history society will take up more time than they can spare. They must surely look at the society's website and publications.

Whilst family history research, genealogy, is now a sizeable commercial market, local history is a small and fragmented one, not benefiting from the significant amounts of time and money devotees of family history are willing to spend on their hobby. Interest in local history is strong and strengthening but it is usually a passive one. Only a few people experience the fascination of research in archives and libraries, a fraction of the number who like to read and hear the results.

The quality of local history research and publication is dependent on the personal motivation of the amateur enthusiast, although, to have an audience of any size, she or he has an incentive to build up a reputation for reliability, for a good sense of what others find interesting, and for attractive presentation. Self publication is dangerous. Sometimes the result is good, but there are examples of books that are almost unreadable and plenty more that are marred by basic errors and avoidable shortcomings.

One terrible possibility is that the very concept of 'local' may mean little to future generations. I have never spoken to people who have lived across the street from me for over twenty years because they always travel by car. This lack of personal contact with neighbours will become even greater as more shopping is done over the internet, and as internet social networks like Facebook, and special interest websites and discussion groups, become the usual way to form new friendships. The aspects of life which will resist this trend are schooling, particularly primary age, and sports and religious observance, which will continue to bring strangers into personal contact.

Another alarming phenomenon is indifference as to whether records of local significance are preserved. The National Archives and British Library are high prestige institutions in glamorous buildings. Central government departments have policies on preservation of records. There seems no encouragement for local government, including local healthcare trusts, to retain important records beyond the organisations' own short term needs.

As someone who values local history highly, the forces that threaten its long term future worry me a lot, but there are some cause for hope. Local historians are gratified when their audience is sizeable, at a talk or reflected in purchases of a booklet or visits to a website. The higher the number of listeners and readers, the greater the

number of potential critics. Good local history should eventually drive out bad local history - if the records are available to study.

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