

**Notice of the  
Annual General Meeting  
Wednesday, 1st July 1998**

The ninety-eighth Annual General Meeting of the London Topographical Society will be held on Wednesday, 1st July at the Banqueting House in Whitehall. We shall be serving tea from about 5.45pm and the A.G.M. proper will be held at 6.30.

The Banqueting House is perhaps the Society's grandest ever location and is charged with immense historical significance. Designed by Inigo Jones in 1619, it is not only London's first classical building, but also the last relic of Whitehall Palace. The ceiling paintings, including the apotheosis of James I, are by Rubens. Charles I stepped through a window on to the scaffold erected outside.

The nearest underground stations are Westminster, Charing Cross and Embankment – all about five minutes walk away.

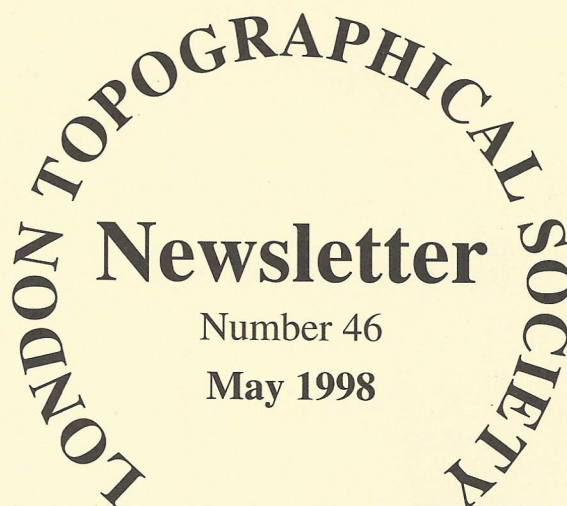
As usual, the annual publication will be distributed among members who attend the meeting, while others will be sent theirs by post, probably in August or September. Please write to the Hon Secretary if you would like to nominate anyone as an officer of the Society or as a member of Council, or if you wish to raise any matter under item 6 of the Agenda.

**AGENDA**

- 1 Minutes of the 97th Annual General Meeting
- 2 Annual Report of the Council for 1997
- 3 Financial Accounts for 1997
- 4 Hon Editor's report
- 5 Election of officers and members of Council
- 6 Proposals by members
- 7 Any other business

Items 1-2 are all published in this Newsletter

– Patrick Frazer, Hon Secretary



**98th ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
COUNCIL OF THE LONDON  
TOPOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY FOR 1997,  
incorporating the MINUTES OF THE  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The annual publication issued free to members during 1997 was *The Royal Exchange*, a substantial and lavishly illustrated book edited by Dr Ann Saunders, the Society's Hon Editor. The volume celebrates the four hundredth anniversary of the Royal Exchange coming under the management of the City Corporation and the Mercers' Company. It contains thirty-four essays, many of them written by members and officers of the Society. The heavy costs of publication were partly offset by generous support from a number of donors.

The Society issued its Newsletter in May and November. Sales of publications were boosted by reprinting some of its popular A-Z series and totalled £14,500. The Society's Council met in January, April and September to discuss the publishing programme and administrative matters including finance and membership.

During the year Caroline Ryan resigned as joint Publications Secretary and Felix Barker, a member of Council, died after a long illness. At the year end there were 855 fully paid up members, together with one free and three honorary memberships.

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the  
London Topographical Society 1997**

The ninety-seventh Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Westminster School on 16th July, 1997. Before the meeting a large number of members took advantage of the opportunity to visit the school buildings, including Ashburnham House, on two tours conducted by Peter Goddard, domestic bursar at the school. The Society's traditional welcoming tea, with home made cakes, was organized by Joyce and Donald Cumming and served in College Hall.



**Whitehall Palace 1670**

Between 4th and 5th January 1698, the greater part of Whitehall Palace burnt to the ground. It had been a royal residence ever since Henry VIII appropriated Cardinal Wolsey's London lodging, York Place, but it had never been planned coherently as a palace. Over the next century and a half, through seven more reigns, it grew, almost at random, buildings being erected, linked up, adapted, as need or whim directed, till it covered several acres in a vast, ungainly, jumbled sprawl.

In an attempt to impose some order on this chaotic warren, Charles II ordered Sir Christopher Wren to carry out a survey of the Palace; this would show who was entitled to work and live there, and exactly where their quarters were, and who was responsible for maintenance and repairs. The result was a very down-to-earth, practical document.

The original is now lost, but several copies were made of it and from one of them (now also lost) George Vertue made an engraving which was published in 1747. It is this engraving which we reproduce at full scale, in the publication for 1998, together with a similarly full-size colour facsimile of one of the surviving seventeenth century plans in the possession of the Society of Antiquaries.

Accompanying these maps is a monograph by Dr Simon Thurley, Director of the Museum of London, analysing the plans and making it possible, for the first time, to understand how the teeming Restoration court attempted to organize itself. This book means that, next time you walk down Whitehall, you will be able to imagine away today's stern Government offices, and replace them with the vibrant muddle of buildings that housed the Tudor and Stuart courts.

**Cakes and Ale**

One Whitehall building was not muddled at all and that was Inigo Jones' serene and dignified Banqueting House, which is where we are going to hold this year's A.G.M. on 1st July. Once again, the refreshments will be mistress-minded by Mrs Joyce Cumming, but we beg all of you who can bake cakes to do so, and we will eat them beneath Rubens' sublime ceiling, and on this summer's day we will scarcely think of the cold January afternoon in 1649 when Charles I knelt on the scaffold in the street outside, and Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector. Bring your cakes and we will only think of masques and merriments!

– Ann Saunders

The A.G.M. was held in School Hall and attracted a record attendance of about 260 officers, members and guests. The Annual Report of the Council, the Annual Accounts and the Minutes of the 1996 Annual General Meeting had all been circulated in advance and were approved. The Hon Treasurer reported that there was no immediate threat of an increase in subscription, in spite of the small deficit in 1996. Introducing the year's subscription publication, the Hon Editor recorded her thanks to the thirty contributors and to those who had helped fund the project. She explained that the book covered the topographical and intellectual history of the Royal Exchange buildings, which could be regarded as London's icon, a symbol of the City.

The Chairman reported that two members of Council, John Phillips and Felix Barker, had died and said that they would be sadly missed. Emma Stewart of London Metropolitan Archives was elected to Council and the other members of Council were all re-elected. The officers were also all re-elected, viz: Peter Jackson as Chairman, Roger Cline as Hon Treasurer, Ann Saunders as Hon Editor, Simon Morris and Caroline Ryan as joint Publications Secretaries, Trevor Ford as Membership Secretary, Penelope Hunting as Newsletter Editor, Patrick Frazer as Hon Secretary and Hugh Cleaver as Hon Auditor.

Suggestions made by members included a special event to mark the forthcoming 100th A.G.M., the establishment of an LTS web site on the Internet and the possibility of publications on CD-ROM rather than paper. A straw poll revealed that about fifty of those attending the meeting had access to CD-ROM players.

After the business meeting, Dr Tony Trowles, Assistant Librarian of Westminster Abbey, gave a short talk about the history of the school buildings.

**A note from the Treasurer**

I write to you from a new address which you will find on the back page of the Newsletter. The move, preparations for retirement and other aggravations have meant I do not have a complete set of Accounts to include in this Newsletter. The Accounts will be available at the A.G.M. and members wanting a copy in advance can obtain it from me by sending a large s.a.e. The audited Accounts will be published in the November Newsletter.

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The Copperplate Map: The St Paul's section (tracing). The sections of the map are engraved on copperplate and date from the 1550s. It is thought that there would originally have been fifteen sections altogether. This section was purchased by Princess Henriette Amalie von Anhalt (1720-93) and kept in trust after her death until it was given to the Dessau Art Gallery. Copyright the Museum of London. For details see piece on "London's Lost Map" in the News and Notes section of this Newsletter.



# **The Ragged School Museum, Mile End: A Brief History**

by Richard Dunn

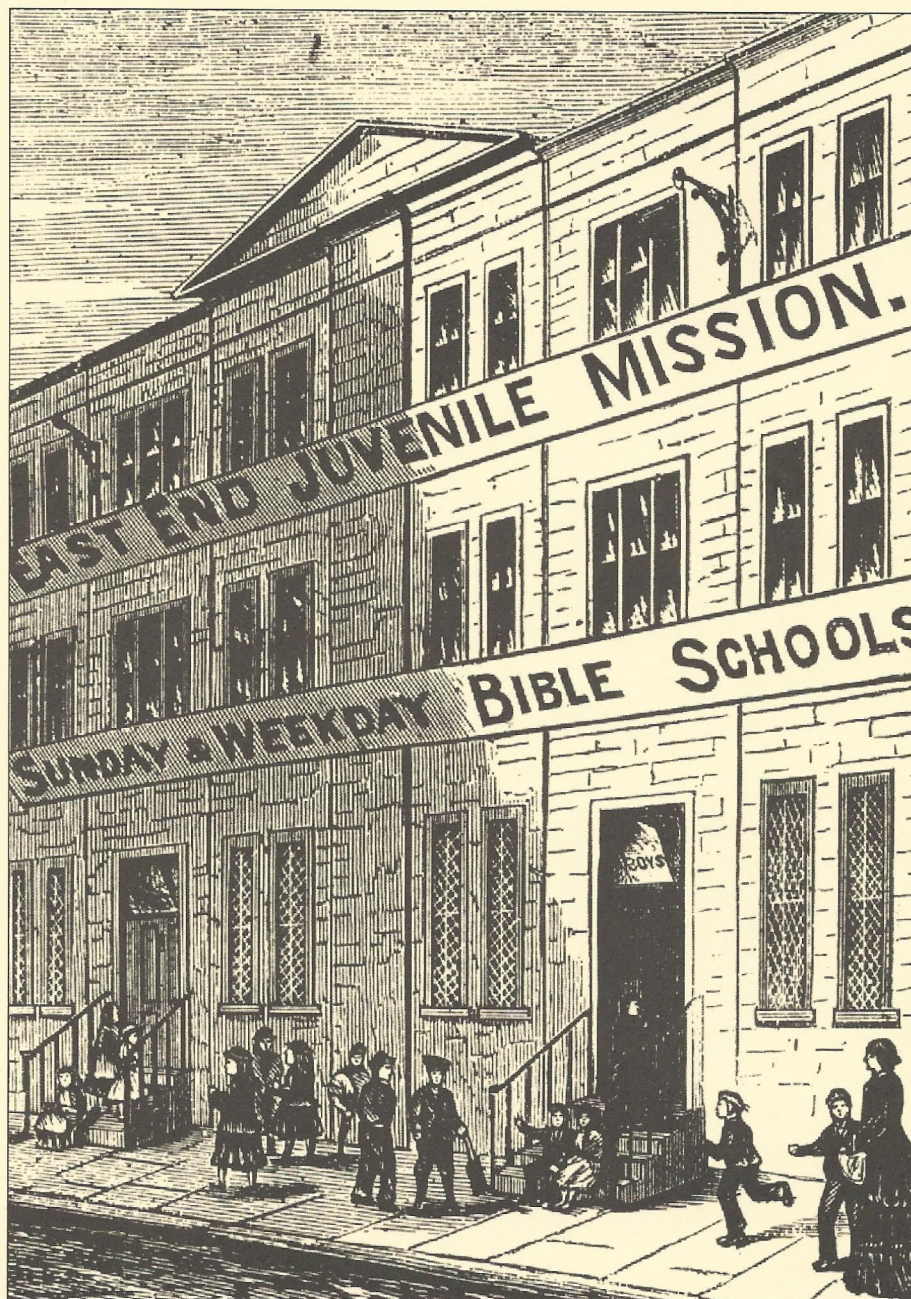
Standing in Copperfield Road between Mile End Stadium and the Regent's Canal can be found the Ragged School Museum of East End Life. As a Museum, it is young, although its buildings are of historical significance, having once housed London's largest ragged school, set up by Dr Barnardo. This article will discuss that story and the subsequent developments that lie behind the Ragged School Museum today.

The story really begins in 1866 with the arrival in London of a young man from Dublin named Thomas Barnardo. A recent and zealous convert to Christianity, Barnardo arrived with the intention of becoming a medical missionary to China and enrolled at Dr Hudson Taylor's China Inland Mission in Coborn Street, Bow, taking lodgings at 33 Coborn Street. While training and waiting for the call-up for China, Barnardo began helping Annie Macpherson (the pioneer of emigration to Canada), who was working with homeless children in Spitalfields. He also began preaching in the streets of East London.<sup>1</sup>

London at this time was changing dramatically, not always for the better for its inhabitants. The population had been expanding rapidly and while the middle classes were moving to more pleasant surroundings on the outskirts, the lower classes suffered from serious overcrowding and economic and health problems as the houses left by the middle classes were divided up and rented out. Nowhere was the hardship more evident than in the East End. Writing in 1884, for example, the Ragged School Union recorded that: "Many of the rookeries in which the poor were herded together were wretched almost beyond description – their so-called homes were dilapidated, dark, dirty, damp, unprovided even with the commonest decencies of civilized life, they had become the haunts of every kind of repulsiveness, the breeding places of fever and contagion".<sup>2</sup>

It is unsurprising, therefore, that in the 1866 cholera epidemic, during which Barnardo himself ministered to victims, three times as many people died in the East End than in the rest of London. Barnardo's experience of the epidemic and his other work in

the East End soon persuaded him of the need for continued work there, and in 1866 he began to teach at a ragged school in Ernest Street, becoming superintendent the following year. In 1868, however, having resigned from the Ernest Street school, Barnardo founded the East End Juvenile Mission at Hope Place, World's End, Limehouse. The mission held services and Bible and sewing classes in two former cottages, and from 1869 a ragged school was run from the site. It was here that Barnardo came face to face with the plight of the homeless, after which he set up, in 1870, the Home for Working and Destitute Lads at 18 Stepney Causeway – the beginning of the work for which the Barnardo organization became world-famous.<sup>3</sup> In the same year Barnardo took over another ragged school in Salmon Lane. By this time he was so busy with these and other schemes<sup>4</sup> that he abandoned any thoughts of going to China and devoted himself to the improvement of the lives of the destitute in East London.



The Copperfield Road Ragged School in 1879, two years after its opening. The separate entrances for boys and girls are visible, as are the wall cranes which remain on the building to this day. Reproduced by permission of Barnardo's.



Barnardo's success was rapid and by 1875 his ragged schools had become so popular that both Salmon Lane and Hope Place were condemned due to overcrowding. So in September 1876 he began leasing two canalside warehouses (now 46 Copperfield Road). Originally built by George Hewett, a local builder, in 1872, the buildings had never been a complete commercial success – their previous owners, a firm of three Scottish oil and provision merchants, had dissolved within a year of purchasing the buildings. In creating the school, Barnardo made a number of alterations to the buildings. A classroom with a fireplace was added on each floor and the basements were converted into playgrounds. Outside, the warehouse doors were replaced by windows and a triangular pediment was added to the top of the building to make it look more impressive. The wall cranes were left in place, however, and remain to this day.

At this stage it is worth explaining briefly the ragged school system. The fundamental aim of every ragged school was simple: to help the children of the poor and destitute by providing free schooling at a time when this was not a statutory requirement. The earliest recorded ragged school was begun in 1783 by Robert Raikes in Gloucester. Most, however, were set up during the nineteenth century, although we will probably never know the exact number since many were not officially recorded. The name "ragged school" – a reference to the state of the children's clothing – first appeared in print in 1843 in an advertisement in *The Times* for the Field Lane School in Holborn. By this time the number of schools had proliferated to such an extent that in 1844 a Ragged School Union was founded. The Union, which centred on London (other regional unions were founded later in the same decade), aimed to unite existing schools and to encourage the foundation of new schools. At its foundation, nineteen existing schools affiliated themselves to the Ragged School Union; within three years there were eighty.<sup>5</sup>

In order to be effective ragged schools were founded where their intended pupils lived. W. Weldon Champhreys, founder of several London schools, described them, for instance, as "nets to catch small fishes and they ought to be let down in the places where the fish abound".<sup>6</sup> Copperfield Road exemplified this, placed as it was in Limehouse, one of the most deprived areas of East London. Barnardo, for example, described Limehouse Fields in 1895 as "a thickly populated region covered with houses containing three or four rooms each, many of them with ceilings so low that an adult of full stature can hardly enter them without stooping. The streets are narrow, with numerous side-courts, alleys and squares. The population is largely a riverside one, but it includes very many hawkers, costermongers, fish-curers, proprietors of exhibitions such as attend 'fairs' in summer, and such like" and in 1897 he noted that "in these households earnings are precarious and there are frequent changes of address".<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Booth's

poverty map of 1889 classified most of the residents of Limehouse among the second lowest class, the "Very poor", whom Booth described as "a pitiable class consisting largely of struggling, suffering helpless people".<sup>8</sup>

The education offered by the schools was basic, with a strong emphasis on the "3 R's" – reading, writing, arithmetic – and a lot of biblical teaching. Barnardo emphasized this in 1890: "Only the rudiments of a very plain English education, in short what is termed now-a-days 'Elementary' Education, are aimed at... The three R's are the chief subjects, with a little grammar, geography and history. The Scriptures are also reverently read and taught daily".<sup>9</sup>

The schools also tried to teach some practical skills: sewing or knitting for the girls and tailoring or carpentry for the boys. As in all schools at this time, discipline was strict, although ragged schools in general, and Dr Barnardo's in particular, tried to avoid corporal punishment as much as possible.<sup>10</sup>

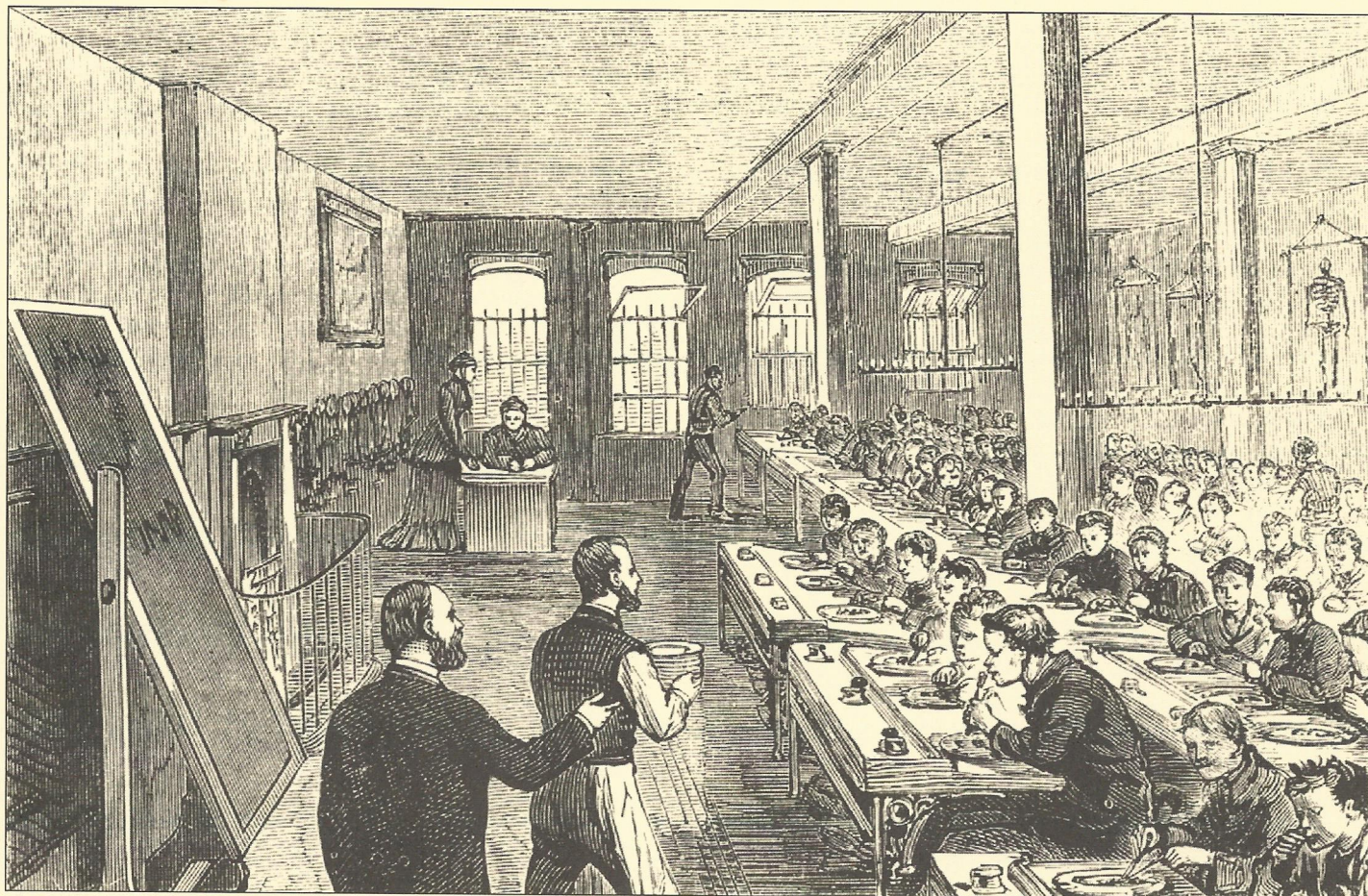
As well as their educational role the ragged schools provided other services that were equally, if not more, vital to their children. Chief among these was the provision of food. Indeed, in many instances, food was found to be essential for keeping the children healthy and alert enough to learn anything. Barnardo himself commented, for instance, that "They know what it is to have no fire in the grate and no bread in the cupboard; and we find in many cases that food is more essential than education".<sup>11</sup> And also that: "The classes at Copperfield Road... go hand in hand with an organized system of Free Meals; and the results of this combination have been highly satisfactory. The necessity for some such arrangement will be apparent, when it is stated that 30 per cent of the attendants on a single morning have been known to reach school without breakfast, that other 30 per cent had only had a piece of dry bread before leaving home, while 60 per cent expected no dinner".<sup>12</sup>

By 1888 the Copperfield Road school was able to provide breakfast and lunch every day in the winter, either free or for the nominal sum of a halfpenny for breakfast and a penny for dinner. As to the food itself, in 1889 the children were offered cocoa and bread for breakfast; for dinner, pea or lentil soup and bread, varied occasionally by rice and prunes or haricot beans.<sup>13</sup>

Ragged schools were also on occasion able to offer shoes or boots and clothing. Dr Barnardo, for instance, used to "hire" boots out to the children. No money changed hands, but the boots still belonged to the school so that the parents could not pawn them for a few needed pennies.

From its opening in 1877 Copperfield Road housed separate boys', girls' and infants' schools, teaching children up to about ten years old. There were four paid teachers, six paid monitors and an attendance of 106 boys, 100 girls, seventy infants. In addition, the Sunday schools there had an attendance of 1,500. There was also a Factory Girls' Club & Institute (with about 200 girls registered),





Free dinners being served at the school in 1879. Most of the children's time at school, including meals, was spent at their desks. Reproduced by permission of Barnado's.

which taught writing, sewing and clothesmaking and held Bible classes in the evenings for girls who worked in factories such as Bryant and May's match factory in Bow.<sup>14</sup>

The school continued to grow rapidly. By 1879 there were 370 day children and 2,500 Sunday school children, making it the largest ragged school in London. Moreover, under Barnardo's tireless direction, other developments took place. In 1884 a Working Lads Institute was opened in what is now 50 Copperfield Road. This aimed at "promoting the welfare of working boys and lads, and saving them from street temptations and vicious amusements by providing evening employment, entertainment, and instruction".<sup>15</sup> It was run every night for boys over the age of thirteen who attended the Sunday schools and offered a gym, a reading room and evening classes. This complemented Barnardo's other work with young boys in the East End, such as the Woodchopping Brigade and the City Messengers Brigade, each of which employed former ragged schoolboys.<sup>16</sup>

With the continual growth in student numbers, overcrowding became so serious by 1895 that Inspectors from the Education Department insisted on improvements. Consequently, Barnardo began to lease the building (now 48 Copperfield Road) between the existing school and the Working Lads Institute. Closing the school until 1896, Barnardo made further alterations, including raising the walls by four feet to give more height to the top floor classrooms, adding a bell to the pediment, and

fixing up 2,000 School Board regulation hat and coat pegs. A primrose and chocolate colour scheme was also introduced throughout the building. This colour scheme had a practical explanation: the chocolate brown ran to a child's head height and would not show up the dirty marks likely to arise from the children's hands; the primrose colour up to the ceiling allowed the classrooms to remain light.<sup>17</sup> When the school reopened in June 1896 it had 1,075 pupils registered at the three day-schools (with an actual daily attendance of between 500 and 600) and 2,460 at the Sunday schools.

Nevertheless, even at the height of its success, the end was in sight for the Copperfield Road school, primarily as a result of changes for the better in education throughout the country. This had begun in 1870 with the Elementary Education Act, which marked the beginnings of state education as we know it. This first Act allowed for the building of schools out of the rates and set up School Boards, which ran the schools until they were taken over by the local authorities in 1902. Successive Acts also made attendance compulsory up to the age of ten (in 1876) and then thirteen (1880), as well as raising the standards that schools nation-wide had to achieve.<sup>18</sup> This hit the ragged schools hard and even by 1874 the Ragged School Union reported that twenty-six of its London schools had been forced to close. With the abolition of state school fees in 1891 (the London Schools Board had abolished fees in 1890), ragged schools finally lost their *raison d'être*, although it was another twenty years before



they finally ceased to exist.

By 1905 the Copperfield Road school had been earmarked for closure, although it did not finally close until 1908, by which time the London County Council had condemned it as unsuitable for the education of children. It was the penultimate ragged school to close in London; George Yard School, Whitechapel being the last to close in 1910. Nevertheless, Sunday school, evening classes and other activities continued at Copperfield Road until 1915, and the Factory Girls Club did not leave the site until 1916, almost forty years after starting there.

After the closure, the buildings reverted to commercial usage and had a number of different occupants. Number 46, the original school building, was at various times used by Jewish clothing manufacturers, rag-merchants, furniture-makers, linen-dealers and finally as a government surplus warehouse. Numbers 48-50 housed factories of various sorts, including most recently a manufacturer of motorcycle leathers.

By 1983, however, commercial activity had ceased in the buildings and plans to extend Mile End Park to the Regent's Canal led to a proposal to demolish them. This was prevented when a local schoolteacher, Tom Ridge, rediscovered the historical importance of the buildings and set up, with other local people, the Ragged School Museum

Ragged School Museum was officially opened, giving public access only to number 48 Copperfield Road, since this was all that funds permitted.

The Museum now boasts not only displays about life in the East End, but also a recreation of a schoolroom as it would have appeared when the buildings were used by Barnardo's school. It has also maintained its community involvement and the many volunteers that help run it come from the local area and enrich the visitor's experience with reminiscences of their lives in the East End. As well as the buildings, the Trust has also been collecting objects illustrative of education and domestic and working life in the East End, and has built up a collection in excess of 3,000 objects which continues to grow.

At this time the Museum's major activity is the schools education service, which offers recreated Victorian lessons to primary schools (for which there is a long waiting list). During the school holidays and on the first Sunday of each month free children's activities are laid on – again, always popular. In addition to the permanent displays on the history of the buildings and on life in the East End, the Museum runs temporary exhibitions of relevance to the local community and its history. There is also a history club, which runs monthly evening lectures on local history topics, and the Museum is able to organize adult group visits.



One of the Ragged School Museum's local volunteers, Ted Lewis, a former Billingsgate fish porter, telling visitors about his own life in the East End.

Trust, an independent trust which still runs the Museum. Within three years the Trust had ensured that the buildings were saved and granted a Grade II listing, and had purchased all three (46-50 Copperfield Road), with the aim of turning them into a Museum of East End Life. In 1990, the

As the Museum develops, the primary goal is not only to survive, but also to grow and develop the remainder of the site (in particular, number 46 Copperfield Road, the largest of the buildings) in order to become more completely a Museum of East End Life.



*The Ragged School Museum, 46-50 Copperfield Road, London E3 4RR is open every Wednesday and Thursday, 10am-5pm and the first Sunday of every month 2-5pm. Group visits can also be arranged at other times. For more information, contact the Museum on 0181 980 6405.*

The author, Richard Dunn, is Curator of the Museum.

#### Notes

1. Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (1979) is the most complete work on Barnardo and is the source for much of the biographical information in this piece.
2. Ragged School Union, *Forty Years Mission Work Among the Dens of London* (1884) p.3.
3. Most famously among the tales that surround Barnardo, it was his encounter with Jim Jarvis, a homeless boy who came to Hope Place in the winter of 1869-70, that opened Barnardo's eyes to the desperate light of the homeless. See Wagner, *op cit* pp.30-35.
4. Barnardo's various establishments occupied forty buildings in what is now Tower Hamlets.
5. Claire Seymour, *Ragged Schools, Ragged Children* (1995) pp.1-6.
6. W. Weldon Champhreys, *The Power of Resurrection* (1871) p.31.
7. Quoted in Tom Ridge, *Dr Barnardo and the Copperfield Road Ragged Schools* (1995) pp.11-12.
8. Charles Booth, *Conditions and Occupations of the People: Tower Hamlets* (1886-7).
9. Thomas Barnardo, *Something Attempted, Something Done!* (1890) p.175.
10. Seymour, *op cit* pp.24-26.
11. Quoted in Ridge, *op cit* p.7.
12. Barnardo, *op cit* p.178. Italics are as in the original text.
13. Ridge, *op cit* pp.6-7.
14. Barnardo, *op cit* pp.137-142.
15. *Ibid* p.162.
16. Ridge, *op cit* pp.15-16.
17. Similar colour schemes were also used in the new Board Schools.
18. Pamela Horn, *The Victorian and Edwardian Schoolchild* (1989) especially chapter 1.

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### **A member's query: Winstanley's Water Theatre**

In the last decades of the seventeenth century, a very successful enterprise was run "at the lower end of Piccadilly" by a man called Henry Winstanley (1644-1703). Henry Wheatley (*Round about Piccadilly and Pall Mall*, 1870) puts it at the western end of Piccadilly, about where Hyde Park Corner now stands. It was described as a

"Mathematical Water Theatre" or as "Winstanley's Waterworks Theatre", and seems to have combined displays of water-jets, fireworks and hydraulically powered automata. The pumps were probably themselves wind-powered, as there was a windmill on the top of the theatre. Some at least of the tricks and illusions seem likely to have derived from John Bate's *The Mysteryes of Nature and Art* (1634), the book that fascinated the young Isaac Newton in his Grantham days, and which itself drew heavily upon the revived tradition of hydraulic engineering that ran through the books of Aleotti, Ramelli and de Caus. But Winstanley was a considerable engineer in his own right. No identifiable illustration of the Water Theatre survives, though Winstanley did produce an engraving of it for sale.

There are a few surviving descriptions or mentions of the Water Theatre. These include a short note by Zacharias Von Uffenbach, writing of a visit in 1710: "In the afternoon we visited Henry Winstanley's Water Theatre. It is immediately behind St James Park and is an ordinary theatre, in which all kinds of water effects are represented. They all depend on the vat that stands in the middle, but the inner mechanism could not be seen. All kinds of tubes may be set on the vat, just as one pleases, and pulled towards the end of the theatre, while some fellow blows into them from above. In the vat they have put a tea- and coffee-pot, from the top of which water is tapped, as though it were springing up out of it. Above on the ceiling there were pulleys, to which a coffee-tray was fastened with ropes, so that it could be drawn hither and thither in the theatre and offered to people of the highest rank. Finally all the jets played on the stage, and that, with the glass candlesticks in which candles were burning, looked very well. The theatre is elegant, although it is only made of painted wood."

It is not easy to make out exactly what went on in the theatre, but the general effect is clear – a mixture of startling visual effects with almost magically delivered exotic beverages. In his diary for 20th June 1696 Evelyn records: "I saw those ingenious Water works invented by Mr Winstanley wherein are some things very surprising and extraordinary".

Further mentions of the Water Theatre date from after Winstanley's death in 1703, when his widow kept the theatre open – perhaps spasmodically – for the income it generated. They all take the form of advertisements or announcements in newspapers, and date from a single period of twelve months almost a decade after Winstanley's death, when Mrs Winstanley clearly spent money on the refurbishment and development of the Water Theatre (probably after marrying a painter by the name of Tissier). The *Spectator* (5th May 1712) announces that "The famous Water Theatre of the late ingenious Mr Winstanley is opened where is shewn the greatest curiosities in Waterworke, the like was never performed before by any. There is several new additions made, as three new stages, Sea Gods and Goddesses, Nymphs, Mermaids and Satires, all of



them playing water as suitable and some of them Fire mingling with the water and the Barrel that plays so many Liquors is broken in Pieces before the Spectators... boxes 2s 6d, Pit 2s, First Gallery 1s 6d, Upper Gallery 6d."

This seems to imply that it had been closed for maintenance and the additions described. The *Postboy* of 18th December 1712 advertises Winstanley's house at Littlebury on the Cambridge Road as an attraction, and notes that Winstanley was "the same Winstanley that made the famous Water Theater at the lower end of Piccadilly near Hide Park [which is] in the possession of his widow". The following spring there were two announcements in *The Guardian*. On 23rd April it announced that the newly augmented Water Theatre was open again, noting that it "is at the lower end of Piccadilly, towards Hide Park, and is known by a windmill on the top of it". Less than a month later, on 14th May 1713 and marking the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht, the same paper announces: "At the request of several persons of quality that came on Thursday last to the Mathematical Water Theatre of the late ingenious Mr Winstanley, when the house was full that they could not come in, this present day between 5 and 6 o'clock, will be given to the spectator as before: 6 sorts of wine and brandy, to drink the Queen's health, all coming out of the barrel, with bisket and spaw water; and, as peace is enlarged, there will be added Claret, Pale Ale, Stout, and water playing out of the head of the barrel when it is in the pulley. The house will be particularly adorned this night with several new figures and machines, playing of water and fire mingling with water, and a flying dragon, casting out of his mouth at the same time a large stream of water with fire, and perfumes, and a prospect of the Coaches going to Hide Park in cascades of water".

We know a certain amount about Henry Winstanley, a well-known figure in the history of north-west Essex who built – and died in the wreck of – the first Eddystone lighthouse. But one of the big gaps in our knowledge is his life in London. He was apparently a successful mercer, and by the end of the century is said to have owned five ships (though he may well have simply owned shares in them). We don't know where he lived in London (near the Water Theatre? Or in the City near Devonshire Square, the centre of the Levant silk trade?), or where he worshipped and paid tax. We know nothing about his mercery business or his shipping, his partners or his funding. And we know nothing about who, after his death, carried on with the hydraulic works at Piccadilly, which were clearly being developed by a reasonably accomplished engineer – conceivably his widow's second husband, Tissier, as late as 1713. Can any members of the LTS shed further light on the Water Theatre – or on any other aspects of the London life of the late ingenious Mr Winstanley? Please reply to Martin Rose, 20 Beeches Close, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4BT.

## News, Notes and an Invitation

### Putting Old London Back Together Again

Bird's-eye views, strip cartoons, medals and figurines by our Chairman

**Peter Jackson**

The Council of the LTS cordially invite you to a Private View  
for members on Thursday, 21st May,  
6.00–8.00pm.

In the Print Room, Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ. Do come!

Please notify Patrick Frazer (address on back page of the Newsletter) if you will be coming, by 14th May, to help those who have kindly offered to cater for us. On this occasion we must limit numbers to members only, without guests.

The exhibition continues until 23rd September.

### London's Lost Map

Reproduced and inserted with this Newsletter.

A missing section of London's oldest map has been discovered in Germany. Until recently it had been thought that there were only two surviving sections (the Moorfields section and the plate showing Guildhall) of the "copperplate map" which can be dated to between 1553 and 1559 and was probably a royal commission.

Now a third section featuring old St Paul's has been discovered at the Dessau Art Gallery in Germany, raising the question of the possible survival of another twelve sections on copperplates. One clue in the search for the missing sections is paintings of the Tower of Babel on one side of two of the copperplates – owners, collectors and curators are urged to examine the other side of Tower of Babel paintings on copperplate.

The three copperplates showing London in the 1550s form the centrepiece of a small exhibition (the impressive model of old St Paul's made for the White City exhibition in 1908 is included) at the Museum of London until 10th May. Hurry!

### John Stow Day

A study day at the Museum of London on Saturday 9th May (10am to 4.30pm) commemorates the publication of Stow's *Survey of London* in 1598. Speakers include John Schofield, Rosemary Weinstein and one of our Vice-Presidents, Stephen Marks, who will give a lecture on the copperplate map (see above). The sessions will look at the life and writing of Stow and the archaeology and pageantry of Stow's London, as well as the influence his survey had on subsequent map-makers



and writers on London's topography. The fee is £16 (£10 concessions for the over sixties and full-time students). Please contact the Bookings Officer at the Museum, tel. 0171 600 3699 ext. 200.

### **New centre for London Archaeology**

London's archaeological archive consists of the records and finds from over 2,500 excavations and observations which have been amassed and stored over nearly a hundred years of archaeological investigation in the London region. The London archive contains over three times more material than the second largest archive at York, and is increasing in size with every excavation. It forms a major resource for London historians and topographers: site reports, plans, drawings and photographs relating to the excavations provide a wealth of information about our capital, its shape and development. The very size of the paper archive, together with hundreds of thousands of boxes of objects, poses problems in terms of storage, curatorship, access, and of course funding. These pressures forced the Museum of London to close the archaeological archive.

In the last few months the Museum has launched a new initiative with proposals to establish The London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre at Eagle Wharf Road, N1 (Hackney). The Museum already uses a warehouse there to accommodate its social history collections, and plans are afoot to extend and convert the building to house the entire London archaeological archive. If these plans materialize, academics, schoolchildren, local historians, planners and surveyors would have access to a large and diverse source, hitherto inaccessible to all but experts and recently closed altogether. There would be a study area for researchers, an activity/seminar room, guided tours, a library and photographic collection.

The stumbling block to this admirable scheme is finance. In order to raise the necessary funds, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Corporation of London and the National Heritage Memorial Fund must be persuaded that the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre is a sensible, popular solution to a problem. The prospect of a vast source of virtually untapped material on London's past becoming available for education and research must be welcomed.

### **A new Museum**

The Museum in Docklands has been launched with a grant of £11,525,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The new Museum will occupy five floors of one of the warehouses at West India Quay, near Canary Wharf, E14. The warehouses were built in 1803 as part of West India Docks – the first of the great docks of the port of London and this particular warehouse stored rum, sugar and molasses. One feature of the first gallery has already been planned: a dramatic recreation of the *Rhinebeck*

*Panorama* (LTS publication no. 125), exhibited as a large mural and as a "digitised interactive". The Museum is due to open in 2000.

### **Royal collections opened up**

The Royal Collection Trust, with practical assistance from the Attingham Trust for the study of the country houses and collections in Britain, is offering a ten day course, 30th August–8th September, based at Windsor. The school will study the patronage and collecting of the royal family from the fifteenth century. Directed by Giles Waterfield heading a team of lecturers and tutors, the course will include visits to royal palaces and gardens to examine the architecture, interiors and of course the collections. The leaflet warns that the programme will be very full and physically strenuous; it is also expensive – £1,650 to include accommodation, meals, tuition, admissions, guide-books and travel by coach. Some scholarships are available. For further information contact the Director, Royal Collection Studies, The Cloisters, Windsor Castle, Windsor, Berks SL4 1NJ.

### **British Library galleries and bookshop open**

The new British Library at 96 Euston Road opened three new exhibition galleries last month: the John Ritblat Gallery with Treasures of the British Library (the Magna Carta and Lindisfarne Gospels, for example), the Pearson Gallery of Living Words (exploring the history of the book) and the Workshop of Words, Sounds and Images which explains book-making through the ages. There is also a larger bookshop than before (stocking some LTS publications). Access to the exhibition galleries, bookshop, restaurant and coffee-bar is free, so go and browse and contemplate the controversial new building.

### **London's Found Riverscape**

Following the example of a 1937 photographic panorama of the north and south sides of the River Thames from London Bridge to Greenwich, a new riverscape has been created to record the scene sixty years later. The project, undertaken by Mike Seaborne, Graham Diprose and Charles Craig in association with the Museum of London and the L.D.D.C., with sponsorship from Fuji Photo Film and Ilford, provides a fascinating study. Following a small exhibition at the Museum of London showing contrasting sections of the 1937 and the 1997 panoramas, there are plans to cover the walls of the rotunda at the Museum with the photographs (large), for a book and possibly another exhibition. Whatever, the project has provided a valuable archival record of the development of the waterfront 1937-1997.



## Support the Victoria County History

Many readers will know that the V.C.H. has suffered a funding crisis in recent years. Seven volumes covering the outer areas of Middlesex had been completed by 1984 when the programme of work for the inner Middlesex parishes was curtailed by financial crisis. Several boroughs – among them Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham, Tower Hamlets – cut off their funds. Staffing was reduced and the volumes for Stepney and Bethnal Green await publication; work progresses slowly on the volumes for Westminster and Chelsea. Fortunately, a revision of the criteria for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund will for the first time enable the V.C.H. to apply for funding from this source. If the bid is successful, publications would be speeded up and the project could look forward to a more secure future. If you have used a volume and found it helpful, or wish generally to express support and appreciation, a personal letter would be greatly welcomed. Please write as soon as possible to Dr R.J. Currie, General Editor, V.C.H., Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU.

## Post Office Archives

The Post Office records span more than 350 years of Post Office history and the archive is open Monday to Friday 9am to 4.15pm. Local historians can find out about the growth of the Post Office in their area and there is a large collection of postal maps, paintings and posters. A new range of fourteen free information sheets is also available on subjects such as pillar boxes, Penny Postage, postcodes and the mail coach. Contact Post Office Archives at Freeling House, Mount Pleasant Complex, London EC1A 1BB. Tel. 0171 239 2570.



## Book Reviews

### **The Buildings of England.**

#### **London 1: the City of London**

by Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner. Penguin Books 1997. 702 pages, figures, maps, 157 black and white illustrations. £30.

How very welcome is this new volume. It supercedes the City section of *London 1: the Cities of London and Westminster* (first published in 1957) and we eagerly await a companion volume on Westminster, due for publication in 2000 or 2001. Meanwhile, look out for *London 4: North* to be published this October, and two paperbacks, *London Docklands* (reviewed below) and *City of London Churches*, expected in June.

Since the edition of 1957 and revisions of 1962 and 1973 much has changed. The building boom of

the 1980s, the destruction wrought by terrorists and the redefinition of its boundary altered the City's physical appearance. Advances in archaeology, innovative building techniques, readjustments of taste, style and our perception of the environment called for a re-evaluation of the City and its architecture, achieved in this new "Pevsner". Advertised as an extensive revision of its predecessors, the book is more: it is a re-evaluation of the City of London.

Fortunately, the author and his team have retained the flavour of the original editions, while re-organizing the text and introducing some innovations such as a chronological list of City surveyors and architects. The Introduction now stretches to some 130 pages, dealing with the development and architecture of the City from prehistory to 1996, and the earlier sections benefit from contributions by the late Ralph Merrifield, Dominic Perring and John Schofield. The subsequent text follows the familiar pattern, although we are indulged with only two perambulations. There is a separate section on livery halls (thirty-four survive) and Simon Bradley captures their different characters from the "Grecian and gentlemanly" Fishmongers' Hall to the "endearingly domestic brick box" that is Pewterers' Hall. Detail is not always so felicitous. If the researcher had consulted the Apothecaries' records more thoroughly he would have discovered that Thomas Lock was appointed surveyor for the post-fire Hall in 1668 not the following year, and that there are references to Wyatt being paid for stuccoing in 1783 and Adams for artificial stone in 1785.

In the tradition of the master, Bradley is not afraid to give an opinion or a judgement. Who would not agree that Broadgate is "by far the most attractive and impressive piece of post-war planning in the City", where Venus can be found "as if frolicking in the waters" not far from "a very disturbing little gathering" (the sculpture by Corbero)? And few would argue with his pronouncement that Lloyds of London is "the most consistently innovative building the City has seen since Soane's Bank of England".

Nor is the author afraid to look into the future, which poses many questions. Is the City skyline threatened by the proliferation of towers such as the one proposed for the Baltic Exchange site in St Mary Axe? Will the redevelopment of Paternoster Square ever be achieved? And what is going to happen to the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane? Presumably, the planning officers of the Corporation of London (the Corporation is a sponsor of this book) are addressing such questions.

– Penelope Hunting



## London Docklands, an Architectural Guide

by Elizabeth Williamson and Nikolaus Pevsner with Malcolm Tucker. Penguin Books 1998. 320 pages. 87 photographs. Numerous plans, drawings and illustrations in the text. £11.99 paperback.

My first thought on seeing this new architectural guide to the buildings of Docklands was how pleasant it will be to have a "Pevsner" again that will slip comfortably into the back pocket of a cycling jersey. This will guarantee both that it will get the heavy use that it deserves and that it will need to be regularly replaced.

Two questions, though, seem to be posed by the appearance of this pocket Pevsner. First, why do we need a new volume when we already have the excellent *London 2: South* for Docklands south of the river, and will soon (I hope) have *London 5: East and Docklands* for the rest? Secondly, now that the London Docklands Development Corporation (L.D.D.C.) has been retired to the footnotes of administrative history, what has been the outward and visible legacy of their seventeen brief but eventful years of life?

On the former question the first thing to be said is that since *London 2* was published in 1983 so much has happened that an update is both timely and useful. However, it does need to be pointed out that the guide's coverage is limited to the area administered by the L.D.D.C.: the riverside parts of the London Boroughs of Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Newham. This omits significant stretches of the working river on its southern side, including the sites of the historic Royal Dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich, both established in the sixteenth century. Both closed in 1869 and so are not so well known as the yards at Chatham, Portsmouth and Devonport. They do, though, still contain important buildings and the Deptford site is now occupied by one of the busiest working wharves on the river above Tilbury. It could be said that this volume covers "Docklands" rather than Dockland.

It also needs to be said that a slimmer volume in no way indicates a step down-market. The standard is fully up to what we have come to expect of the Buildings of England series. Particularly valuable is Malcolm Tucker's essay in the Introduction on Industrial Developments from 1800 to the twentieth century, in which are distilled the fruits of some thirty years of detailed investigation of Dockland buildings and structures to give a clear and concise account of how the working river worked. The depth of coverage of the industrial structures to which the character of both pre- and post-L.D.D.C. Dockland owes so much will be of enormous use to architects, planners and conservation officers working in the area as well as to students and lovers of the area generally.

The legacy of the L.D.D.C. is something about which there will continue to be strongly differing views: from those for whom the initials stood for Lingering Death for Dockland Communities through to those for whom they represented the

finest opportunity there has been for unfettered free enterprise to show what it can achieve.

On the ground, though, matters do not appear so simple. Take the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood Centre. This is the only conventional public building to have been erected by the Corporation, whose clients, the neighbourhood council, promptly and with happy irony, named it after Jack Dash. It is a good building for a public authority to be remembered by. Not in the Edwardian tradition of civic pride celebrated at Deptford and Woolwich but nevertheless of solid, unpretentious worth. Which is more than can be said of Canary Wharf.

Canary Wharf, says the guide, is what the majority of visitors to Docklands come to see and no doubt this will remain true for some time to come. The whole complex is described and assessed at length, as is fitting. It is a criticism of the coverage, though, that the visual impact on the wider London scene is not given more weight. From some quarters this has been positive in the best sense. From the Thames Barrier and from the Woolwich Ferry genuinely dramatic riverscape has been created. But from Greenwich Park the impact is dire. The overweening scale and the deliberately eye-catching materials impose themselves to devastating effect on the setting of the Queen's House and the Royal Naval College. Reference is made to the re-positioning of blocks "because of the sensitivity of the site in relation to Greenwich Park" but in considering the consequences of this tinkering it is words like "deckchairs" and "Titanic" that come most readily to mind.

The point is well made in the Introduction that "unfettered enterprise does not necessarily unleash good building: some of the worst buildings have gone up within the former Enterprise Zone....., some of the best have been built under the stricter planning guidelines introduced by the L.D.D.C. since the mid 1980s". With the very large sums of money that have been spent in recent years it is good to be able to say that some at least of it has been spent to good effect. Many good riverside buildings left derelict in the 1970s are now in use again (though many were needlessly demolished). The L.D.D.C. has itself repaired major buildings in preparation for new uses, most notably in the West India and Royal Docks.

There is good new building too, well worth cycling ten miles into a head-wind to see, and the guide's clear descriptions and pithy judgements will help you to find it. My favourites must include the several new footbridges. The best of all spans the entrance to St Saviour's Dock. It was designed by Nicholas Lacey and Whitby & Bird, and Williamson rightly describes it as "magical". The best time to see it is very early on a mid-summer morning, when the glow of virtue you will feel at having got up so early will be matched by the play of sunlight on the spider's web of stainless steel suspension cables. Magical indeed.

– Paul Calvocoressi



## **The Streets of London: The Booth Notebooks - South East**

edited by Jess Steel. Deptford Forum Publishing (441 New Cross Road, London SE14 6TA, tel. 0181 692 7115) 1996. 318 pages, 16 coloured maps. £17.99 hardback, £10.99 paperback (£12.99 to include post and packing).

This book reproduces the verbatim text of the hitherto unpublished notebooks used by Charles Booth's collaborators to compile not only his *Life and Labour of the People in London* but also the *Poverty and Wealth* map published by the Society in 1984. It is supplemented by an index (useful) and colour reproductions of the relevant maps (slightly too small for easy use). Intended to be the first of eight district-based volumes reproducing all these notebooks, this volume provides a fascinating street-by-street survey of South East London, stretching from Lambeth right across to Woolwich, exactly a century ago. For example: "Lewisham Hill. From Morden Hill to Prince's Road are large detached houses. YELLOW [i.e. colour to go on map to show wealthy inhabitants]. South of Prince's Road are terraced houses (3 storey plus basement) occupied by good class tradesmen and retired people. All keep servants. Clergy and doctors".

This desirable bourgeois comfort contrasted starkly with what was recorded for poorer areas such as off Walworth Road: "Lion Buildings... have a very bad reputation; an awful place. Drunks and fights, shoeblacks and loafers, women flowersellers and a few thieves. Narrow stair entrance".

Booth divided the whole of inner London (excluding the City of London) into a number of "walks" and these were covered on foot by one of Booth's trusted researchers, usually accompanied by a school board official or a police officer – in other words, someone who would be familiar with the inhabitants. In this volume the cicerone is invariably a police officer, and each one is introduced by a pen portrait. To take just two, Inspector Green was "a fat man rather over middle height, jovial rubicund face", while Sergeant Sziemanowicz was, unusually, of Polish descent and while "not very intelligent [was] willing to take any amount of trouble in order to please".

The police officers, who predictably knew the vices of everyone and the value of nothing, seem to have imparted upon Booth's researchers a fairly jaundiced view of the poorer areas. "Women fight like tigers" in Topaz Street; Gurney Street was the home of hooligans, and used to contain brothels. The researchers, though, were no less able to supply their own ungenerous views: Crosslet Street came across as "...dark, dingy... bread and mess in the street. While we were there a brickbat was heaved out of one of the upper windows. Tenants all casuals...". Indeed, as the editor notes in the preface, Booth's researchers and their policemen companions could be somewhat patronizing, and made blatant generalizations. The records of the walks, however, comprise far more than "penny

dreadful" vignettes, valuable even as they are, and the notebooks provide vivid portraits of people encountered on the perambulations: the jobbing builder, the estate developer, the recalcitrant landlord are characters any reader of George Gissing's novels would instantly recognize.

There is also much on broader social changes as they affected late-nineteenth-century London. Being an update of a survey originally carried out ten years previously, Booth's researchers convey a feel for the dynamics of suburbia, often noting tendencies both upwards and downwards. In inner areas, larger houses were now being sublet while those along the main roads were being converted into factories. Only the smaller houses were still occupied by single families. The consequences of railway clearances in Southwark and Lambeth were particularly noticeable, causing an eddy whose effects were visible five miles away. In New Cross, for example, railway clearance in those inner areas was leading to increasing demand for houses and, the researcher was pleased to note, was causing rents to rise and hence driving out the former population of "undesirables".

Transport improvements were also having a palpable impact. The introduction of trams and cheap railway tickets now meant that only labourers resided in Lambeth; the mechanic and the skilled artisan were able to take advantage of this new mobility and had decamped to Brixton and Stockwell. Similarly, the availability of buses running over newly built Tower Bridge was leading to social improvement in the adjacent part of Southwark. Such changes would have been particularly noticeable when the preponderance of rented accommodation facilitated short-term mobility.

It was not, however, always good news on the transport front. Booth's researchers thought that Blackheath was declining on the social scale because of its "villainous railway services" – trains seldom kept to the advertised times and the journey to London could take as long as an hour. As one researcher commented, it was "thanks to the execrable train service that nightingales still sing" on Shooters Hill.

The evidence in these notebooks is idiosyncratic and subjective, and there are particular limitations in using visual evidence to assess social conditions. The police could only assess poverty in terms of the criminality quoted above. The nuances of gentility and outright prosperity were even more difficult to pin down as the inhabitants were both less visible and less subject to police scrutiny; hence the concentration upon the number of servants, and "respectability" as yardsticks. Any social survey, though, is bound to have idiosyncracies resulting from its methodology, and the value of the Booth survey – and of this volume – is in no way diminished by recognizing them.

For anyone who wants to study London in three dimensions, this is an invaluable work: an ambulatory eye witness to our city 100 years ago. It provides a unique and vibrant insight into late



Victorian London. It reflects many things: visual appearance; the condition of its inhabitants; and above all the concerns of the compilers and their police guides, especially in relation to the threats of violence, drunkenness and prostitution. It enlivens the historian's inanimate tools – the map, the street directory and the topographical account. It will describe your road and provide a pen portrait of your district. It will bring to life sights and smells not experienced for a century, and suggest what it was like to live here 100 years ago.

In short, this is a most valuable book. If you want to see your area covered, then reach for your chequebook as the publishers need sponsorship. £30 sponsors a street, £250 a borough. The volume reviewed contains an impressive list of individual sponsors, so it is very much to be hoped that residents of other areas will be equally as generous: the publisher's address is set out at the head of this review.

– Simon Morris

Note: the volume on East London is to be published later this year.

#### **London 1066-1914:**

##### **Literary Sources & Documents**

edited and with Introduction by Xavier Baron. Vol i: Medieval, Tudor, Stuart and Georgian London 1066-1800, 832 pages. Vol ii: Regency and Early Victorian London 1800-1870, 832 pages. Vol iii: Late Victorian and Early Modern London 1870-1914, 616 pages. 34 illustrations. Helm Information Ltd 1997. Boxed set of three volumes £250.

This is a truly remarkable publication. The three volumes present a unique collection of written descriptions and interpretations of London from the Norman Conquest to the eve of the Great War taken from an unparalleled range of primary source material, much of it inaccessible to most readers and from a broad range of disciplines.

Here are extracts from every piece of significant London poetry and prose written and published between 1066 and 1914 complemented by selections from chronicles, official documents, private letters, travel memoirs, sociological and cultural studies and excerpts from novels and short stories which evoke the spirit of London.

Each of the seven main periods has its own specific introduction giving an overall view of the London scene with a valuable chronology and a critical bibliography of sources and documents while every author, no matter how obscure, is given his own brief biography.

To call it an anthology is to belittle its value as a research tool. For although we have the usual extracts from Fitzstephen, Stow, Defoe, Lamb and Mayhew, there is much here which is virtually unknown and unexpected. Nor are they mere snip-

pets; with poetry the Editor has, wherever possible, tried to present the complete work; with prose, excerpts long enough to convey the style and tone of the whole book. The selections from Dickens, for example, are taken from thirteen books and occupy over 130 pages.

Nor has pictorial London been ignored. The book ends with "Afterword: London in the Visual Arts 1066-1914" which gives a detailed overview of how London has been depicted in art from the earliest manuscript drawings to the paintings of Sickert, together with a critical bibliography of books in which reproductions of these images can be found.

Only the illustrations are a disappointment. Though well selected, their reproduction is poor and the maps are so small and muzzy as to be virtually useless. However they are mostly well known and in no way detract from this wonderful book's importance, representing as it does a whole London library in microcosm.

– Peter Jackson

#### **The World of William Hone**

compiled, introduced and annotated by John Wardroper. Shelfmark Books 1996. 328 pages, 80 wood-cut illustrations. Hardback £28.50, paperback £12.95.

"A real hodgepodge" was the first reaction of a colleague. And so it is. But then so were the works by which William Hone is best remembered. His *Every-Day Book* (1826), *Table Book* (1827) and *Year Book* (1832) have had an honoured place on my shelves for as long as I can remember, standing happily next to Chamber's *Book of Days*. They have much in common, for Hone must have been one of the first to use the days of the week as a basis for the recounting of anecdotes and facts. The same formula was used forty years later in Chamber's *Book of Days* and has been used frequently ever since.

This selection, however, does not rely on the day by day method but the compiler has grouped the miscellaneous material together into subjects, one of which, of particular interest to us, is "London Scenes, London Life".

For those unfortunate people not already familiar with Hone's work, this is a splendid introduction. John Wardroper has chosen the material well, including eighty of the original wood-cut illustrations with useful annotations and a brief but informative biography of William Hone. The quality of the printing is beyond reproach and, although admittedly a hodgepodge, it is a glorious hodgepodge.

– Peter Jackson



**Immigrant Furniture Workers in London  
1881-1939 and the Jewish contribution to the  
Furniture Trade**

by William I. Massil. London, The Jewish Museum in association with the Geffrye Museum 1997. 84 pages, 20 illustrations. £6 plus postage and packing from The Jewish Museum, Camden Town, Raymond Burton House, 129-131 Albert Street, London NW1 7NB.

Have you ever looked under the drawers of that veneered Victorian chest of drawers you bought a few years ago? If you were to do so, it is likely that you would find a stamp with a Jewish-sounding name and an East End address. If your interest is whetted, you will find out much more in William Massil's well-illustrated memoir.

It recounts a little-known chapter of London history from the inside. The book charts the story of immigrant furniture workers and their workshops from their small beginnings in the East End to their expansion and period of glory, generally in the inter-war years, to (despite the impression given by the book's title) their decline in face of cheaper mass-produced foreign-made furniture from the late 1960s. The majority of the immigrant furniture workers were Jewish refugees from Russia and elsewhere in eastern Europe who arrived in London between 1881 and 1905 with some late arrivals (notably Chaim Schreiber) in the 1930s. It has been estimated that there were between 8-10,000 Jewish furniture workers in the East End by 1950. Very few of these firms have survived into the late 1990s, however, and the founding families are generally no longer involved.

The first few sections of the book give the background to the London furniture trade and to the Jewish immigration. The bulk consists of brief accounts of selected "outstanding" firms, combining biographical information about the founders and their descendants with details of the types of furniture (or parts of furniture) that were produced at the different periods in response to changing tastes and economic and political circumstances. Several of these firms, it should be mentioned, were (somewhat confusingly in this context) founded by Christian immigrants from Italy, Germany and the Netherlands. A brief excursion into Jewish furniture firms in the English provinces and into the histories of the suppliers of the raw materials is followed by short biographies of four outstanding immigrant (Jewish and gentile) furniture makers and ruminations on the future of the British furniture-making industry. Appendices include a chronological listing of some immigrant furniture workers from 1815 to 1938, giving their places of origin, where known, the date of their commencement of their commercial activities and the nature of their products. Another lists the number of furniture workshops in the East End in the early 1920s and the (high) percentage of these that were Jewish.

Mr Massil is excellently qualified to tell the story

since until his retirement in 1964 he was the managing director of the woodturning company, Massils of Marshmoor, founded in about 1912 by his father Hyman, an immigrant from Byelorussia. He is meticulous in citing his printed sources, but the bulk of the book is based on his own memories and on interviews with the descendants of other immigrant families. The accounts are enlivened by anecdotes, by Mr Massil's doubtless well-founded opinions (for instance on the "shoddy" work produced in London's West End as opposed to the "quality" produced in the East End) and there is much general information about the evolution of furniture production in this century.

There is, however, disappointingly little about the specifically Jewish contribution hinted at in the book's subtitle, leading one to wonder whether there was one, other than the simply numerical. There are a couple of pages describing in general terms where and how the Jewish furniture makers lived in London. There is a passing mention of the pre-1893 Hebrew Cabinet Makers' Society, a few words about the use of Yiddish and about the United Workmen's and Wlodowa Synagogue founded in the early 1920s at 21 Hare Street off Brick Lane, and hints of intermarriage between the leading families. Perhaps this book might be followed by an article giving more information about Jewish furniture workers and firms as a group. Was there a distinctly Jewish stylistic or other contribution? Did the Jewish makers stick together? Did the synagogue play a role and, if so, for how long? When did Yiddish give way to English?

This is not to detract from the book's value. It makes a considerable contribution to the history of furniture-making in this country and could only have been produced by someone, like Mr Massil, with first-hand knowledge of the industry. It will be indispensable to future researchers. Whether or not there is a sequel, the author is to be congratulated on compiling a most valuable account of an important and hitherto under-researched phenomenon.

- Peter Barber



## **"For Freedom's Battle": Heinrich Heine and England**

A bicentenary exhibition held at Christie's 16 January–6 February 1998. Catalogue including essays, illustrations, available from Julia Rosenthal, PO Box 801, Oxford OX1 3BX for £10 including postage.

The bicentenary of Heine's birth in Düsseldorf in December 1797 was the ostensible occasion of a sparkling exhibition held earlier this year. In fact, although other aspects of his life were by no means neglected, the central thrust of the exhibition was "Harry" Heine's complex, ambivalent, and often simply muddled, relationship with England and the English. The focus was firmly on the four months he spent in London, with excursions to Ramsgate, Margate and Brighton, in the summer of 1827. This, although hardly representative of all that England might have offered, was enough to disabuse the twenty-nine year old poet and essayist of any lingering notions that England was the "land of liberty" he had once perhaps idealized. Freedom of a kind he certainly found, but he was never able to excuse the fact that a free people were also free to be ugly, free to be surly, free to be selfish and free to be poor. He never returned.

The exhibition, displayed with great elegance and charm, was to a large extent put together by Julia Rosenthal, in association with the Heinrich-Heine-Institut of Düsseldorf. Between them they brought together over 200 items from institutions both in this country and in Germany, mixed together with a pleasingly high proportion of exhibits from private collections – much harder for the organizers to trace but much less often seen. The work involved must have been formidable. The articles on display ranged from a lock of Heine's hair, through family portraits and memorabilia, and on, of course, to the books, with an impressive array of manuscripts and association and presentation copies. Particularly effective use was made of contemporary newspapers, playbills, peepshows and caricatures. For members of the LTS, some of whom were prominent among the lenders to the exhibition, the most arresting sequence was a display of prints, maps and paintings brought together to recreate the London that Heine saw in 1827. Despite Heine's horror at the fog, coal-smoke and crowds, it was a London revealed in one of its busiest phases of building, and at one of its richest periods in terms of topographical coverage by artists of more than common ability. With images from the Havells, the Cruikshanks, R.B. Schnebbelie, T.M. Baynes, and both George and Thomas Shepherd, there was no lack of items to catch the eye, although the most admired of all seemed to be the Guildhall Library copy of the Havell aquatint panorama of 1823, here ingeniously displayed at all its full length.

The catalogue prepared to accompany the exhibition was made into far more than a simple list of what was on display. There is annotation for every

exhibit, the illustrations are profuse, and many of the items are reproduced in colour. There are also four brief but illuminating essays, with Ralph Hyde setting the scene with his usual clarity and mastery of the facts with "London in 1827", Professor T.J. Reed on a principal theme in "Unrequited Dislike: Heine and England", and further more specialized pieces from Professor J.W. Smeed and Thomas Schmidt-Beste, on Heine and the Faust theme, and on Heine and Mendelssohn. Congratulations to all concerned, and in particular Julia Rosenthal, for one of those "little" exhibitions that although modest in ambition are often so much more rewarding and better handled than far more lavish and heavily publicized affairs.

– Laurence Worms

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## **STOP PRESS**

### **Street signs for sale**

LTS member Joss Mullinger is offering for sale four old style City of London street nameplates from King Edward Street, Bartholomew Lane, Minories and St Brides Avenue. Each sign bears the title and crest of the City of London and is accompanied by an official Corporation of London decorative numbered certificate of authenticity. Please telephone or send sae for details to Mr Joss Mullinger, 13 Belmont Drive, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 6JZ (Tel. 01628 624895).

**The list of new members will be included in the November Newsletter.**



## **The officers of the London Topographical Society**

### **Chairman**

Peter Jackson FSA  
The Vane  
The Avenue  
Northwood  
Middlesex HA6 2NQ  
Tel. 01923 829 079

### **Membership Secretary**

Trevor Ford ARAM  
151 Mount View Road  
London N4 4JT  
Tel. 0181 341 6408

### **Hon Treasurer**

Roger Cline MA LLB  
Flat 13  
13 Tavistock Place  
London WC1H 9SH  
Tel. 0171 388 9889

### **Publications Secretary**

Simon Morris MA  
22 Brooksby Street  
London N1 1HA  
Tel. 0171 609 0890

### **Hon Editor**

Mrs Ann Saunders PhD FSA  
3 Meadway Gate  
London NW11 7LA  
Tel. 0181 455 2171

### **Newsletter Editor**

Mrs Penelope Hunting PhD FSA  
40 Smith Street  
London SW3 4EP  
Tel. 0171 352 8057

### **Hon Secretary**

Patrick Frazer MA MSc  
36 Old Deer Park Gardens  
Richmond  
Surrey TW9 2TL  
Tel. 0181 940 5419

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