

# newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 177

Jan 2000

## Edwin Chadwick: A Reputation Deserved?

Thurs, 27 Jan, 7.30pm  
Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890), social reformer and a leading figure in the 19th-century movement to improve public health, still has almost a saintly reputation. He was also an advocate of life assurance and public policing, and a friend of Jeremy Bentham which, of course, brought him into other spheres of social endeavour. But does he deserve his reputation? Were there things about him that have been quietly forgotten by all but academics?

Our speaker on this fascinating subject will be Dr Ruth Richardson who, apart from her researches in the fields of the Anatomy Act and burial practices etc, is also a medical historian. She has some interesting views on Mr Chadwick!

## Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Thurs. 24 February, 7.30pm  
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church,  
top end of Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2

Shaftesbury Avenue was built economically and with very little style. Even today, despite the theatres, architecturally much of it is dreary. It was therefore a bit of a cheek for the government agency responsible for letting out plots in this new highway to be concerned that the building of a major baptist church there would not (because it was baptist) be an architectural asset. The story is that they assumed there would be no spire, but in fact the architect, John Gibson, gave them two which, unfortunately, were demolished in 1951 after war damage. However, it is still a very handsome building and this is the first time that we will meet there.

The church pioneered a mission to the very poor and ran an enterprising day school. It was reconstituted in 1905 as a central mission.

Our speaker is Faith Bowers, whose book on the building has recently been published. (*The Story of*

*Bloomsbury Chapel and Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church 1848-1999*, 472 pages, 200 ills, price £20.00 plus £2 p&p, from the church at 235 Shaftesbury Avenue WC2H 8EL).

**Please note that the talk will be preceded by a very short extraordinary AGM. Those who were at the AGM in June will remember that the accounts were not ready for submission and it was agreed that these should be circulated to members with a later *Newstetter* and approved or otherwise at a convenient general meeting.**

## Advance Notice

Our March lecture is entitled 'Greenwich marsh before the Dome', by Mary Mills. It is on Thurs. 23 March at Burgh House.

## Catching the Past

As part of our millennium research and memories project we are to stage a large historical exhibition in the summer, to be followed later in the year by smaller local exhibitions featuring material from interviews with residents and pictures from 'Click Week'. We have very kindly been offered by London & Continental Railways, the use of the coffee-room in St Pancras Chambers (the old Midland Grand Hotel) as the venue for the major exhibition. It is being offered free of charge and will be open most days of the week for the same hours as the public are allowed in to see other parts of the building. The exhibition, entitled 'In the Forefront: Catching the Past in Camden' will run from 1 June to 25 June.

The name of the exhibition spells out its theme, which is that the component parts of the borough of Camden have been at the forefront of most of the important aspects of London's history. Transport, public health, education, open spaces, the arts, are just some of the fields in which Camden has been prominently involved. More news anon.

Other news of the project: Robert Leon has over 60 interviewees and is still taking on more. Members of the society in particular are very welcome to take part in this. Peter Woodford has a good clutch of people doing research on many of the items in our topic list which has already been circulated. It is not too late to volunteer to take on a subject. Robert may be contacted on 0171 372 5784, and Peter on 0171 435 2088.

## Ten Generations

The government wishes to encourage people of all ages to use information technology. It has established a New Opportunities Fund to distribute grants for projects relating to the digitisation of learning materials, which will then be made available on the internet.

Camden libraries, archives and museums, have formed a consortium with Brent, Hackney, Islington, Westminster and the Bishopsgate Institute to apply for a grant to pioneer a project designed to provide innovative and easy electronic access to the wealth of their collections, for people of any age or background. The Society will be consulted in this and will be asked for a supportive statement.

## Celebrating the Royal Free

Whatever you may think of the architecture of its present building, there is no doubt that the Royal Free has been in the forefront of hospital service in the country. There has recently been an exhibition in the hospital in Hampstead devoted to its more modern role, since the transfer of facilities to Pond Street. As from 7 Feb to 7 April, the exhibition will be at the Local Studies and Archives Centre at Holborn Library in Theobalds Road.

## Julian Tobin

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Julian Tobin at the end of November. He was, together with the mayor, Roy Shaw, the longest-serving member of Camden Council and was, this year, accorded the honour of being appointed joint deputy-mayor in recognition of his long service to the community. It is very sad that he did not complete his year. Julian was also a long-standing member of this society, and was also active in research work for the Victoria County History.

### KEATS HOUSE CLOSURE

Members are reminded that Keats House is closed for extensive repairs. It will reopen on Easter Sunday, 23 April.

### NEW TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Confusion will reign, of course, on 22 April when all London telephone numbers change. For most of us it will be abandoning 0171 and 0181, but the Local Studies and Archives Centre in Holborn is having a new number altogether: 020 7974 6342. A reminder of opening times: Mon 10-7, Tues 10-6, Wed closed, Thurs 10-7, Fri 10-6, Sat 10-1 & 2-5, Sun closed.

### NORTH END SCHOOL

Helen Riddiford, who lives in New Zealand, is writing a biography of Dr George Samuel Evans (1802-68), a graduate of Glasgow university, who became briefly headmaster of Mill Hill School, but who then went on to set up a school in Kilburn, which he removed to North End, Hampstead in 1830. He was still taking

classes at North End House or Academy in 1836.

Ms Riddiford is particularly interested in any information she can obtain re this school plus of course any illustrations. Did he continue there after 1836, or was it taken over by his brother Richard? In 1836-8 he was living at 3 Pelham Road, Hampstead.

She has sent a photocopy of a prospectus for the school dated 1831. 'The Establishment, whose prevailing features we are about to describe, was, originally formed at Kilburn, for the purpose of combining the thorough education of the old English Grammar School with the personal superintendence of a private family, and those improvements, in the communication of general knowledge, demanded by the progress of society.

'...Mr Evans has secured the mansion and grounds at North-End, Hampstead, recently in the occupation of the late John Vivian Esq. and formerly of Lord North, the minister....'

This is, presumably, not the school of the same name, which was built at the expense of the Hoare family for poorer children in the late 1840s in Sandy Road. If any member has information we should be happy to print it in the *Newsletter* and send it on to Ms Riddiford.

### HEATHER ON HAMPSTEAD HEATH

Peter Woodford raised the question in the last *Newsletter* as to whether heather was visible on the Heath up to the 1st World War. Sheila Ayres has sent us a copy of pp 50-51 of the *Hampstead Heath Flora Habitat Handbook* no. 1, published by the GLC in 1986. It records Bell Heather and Cross Leaved Heather there in 1912 and 1914 respectively. Also there was *Calluna vulgaris* (the vernacular name for heather) in 1927.

## Theatrical Hampstead

Hampstead has long been associated with the theatre, and, as early as 1709 a play house was erected but shortly closed down due to local opposition. It was however in the late 19th century that Hampstead initially became a centre of theatrical activity both on an amateur and professional level. The Hampstead dramatic society was flourishing as early as 1890; the actor-manager (and resident of Hampstead) Beerbohm Tree performed in the West End and played Svengali based on du Maurier's novel.

From this time many of the small theatres were opening in Hampstead. In 1896 the Theatre Royal opened in Belsize Road and in 1907 the New Empire opened on Kilburn High Road. Since then, of course, there have been the ground-breaking Everyman Theatre, to be followed by the Embassy Theatre and the Hampstead Theatre Club, not forgetting the theatre at New End in the old mortuary building.

An exhibition on the theme of Theatrical Hampstead will run at Burgh House from 4th February to 30 April.

## An Academy in Highgate Road

Members familiar with the *Panorama of Kentish Town* drawn by James King c.1848, and with the section on the subject in John Richardson's *Kentish Town Past*, will know that at the junction of Gordon House Road and Highgate Road stood the Gordon House Academy (see illustration) – it gave its name to the road, rather than the other way around. The artist of the Panorama knew the school well, for he went there himself: "An old establish'd Academy kept by Mr. Cooper, who died suddenly of Apoplexy in the year 1788 whilst sitting at his Desk giving Lessons to his Pupils; among the number was the Artist of this Sketch. His Successor was A. Mensal esqre, from Aberdeen, who married the Widow."

To add to our knowledge of this establishment, Eileen Hathaway, who lives in Swanage, has sent us some material relating to the life of John Henry Cooke, who was born in St Pancras. He was at Gordon House Academy 1791-1804 and, possibly, could have been there at the same time as James King. Cooke published two volumes of memoirs, one of which (1835) gives great detail of life at Gordon House. Some extracts follow:

'When first I went to the academy, the edifice was composed of a dingy brick, the wings abutting to the front from either end. The old fashioned window frames were fringed by a deep red brick, so much in vogue at the time of its construction. There was a gravelled playground in front of the house, which was skirted by open palings on three sides, and shadowed by trees.

Once while away for the summer holidays, on my return (with downcast eyes and heavy heart), I was not a little astonished to find that the old carcass had

vanished, or rather the greater portion of it was cased within the shell of a new and more lofty exterior edifice of more modern workmanship, and that all this prodigious labour had been executed within a few weeks. The interior rooms were remodelled, squared, and shaped, as if by invisible hands, from week to week. The long schoolroom behind this house was the only part of the premises untouched, and which continued in its original state. My dormitory was now changed to the southern attic or wing of the edifice, which was lighted with a swinging bull's eye window.

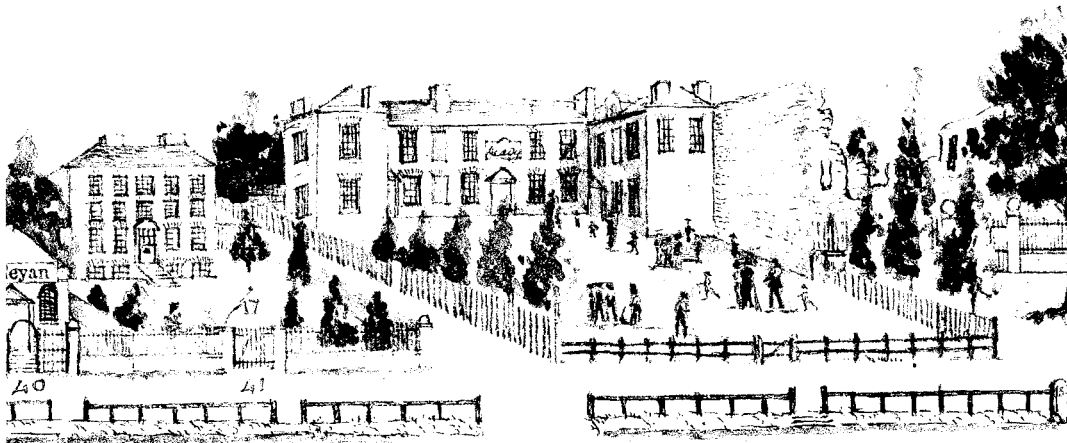
This establishment counted over and above 100 boys, large and small, not all from the county of Middlesex, coming as they did from distant parts of the globe; such as tawny boys from the east, and creoles and black boys from the west.

One of the French ushers was a refugee. He took snuff to excess, powdered and pomatumed his crown pretty considerably, wore a spencer down to his hipbones, carried a pink silk umbrella under his arm, and in cold weather shoved either hand into the ample spencer cuffs to answer the loss of the more comfortable muff.

One day Sir Francis Burdett walked through the playground to solicit the suffrage of the schoolmaster: Sir F. was most enthusiastically cheered, and he politely uncovered to the boisterous youngsters. He was then a tall, slim, gentlemanly-looking man, possessing a keen and searching aspect.

The grand ceremony of all was the neck and face washing once a week, and the painful hair-combing of the croppies, the hair being cut very short for the health of the boys... More properly speaking it was poll-combing, by a tall woman of sedate milk-and-water aspect. Clapping the palm of her hand on the scalp, with the long fingers hanging over the face, she

*Gordon House Academy, as depicted by James King on his Panorama of Kentish Town. The drawing is meant to represent the school c.1800. (Copies of the Panorama may be obtained from the Local Studies and Archives Centre, Holborn Library, Theobalds Road.*



began to scrape away with the fangs of a stout horn comb, in this way scarifying the head, and ever and anon entangling the ear within its horny mazes.... Never shall I forget the combing night: the most heroic boys quailed.

At the spring and fall of the year, the same female was again at her post *sine die*, a living statue, her left-hand resting on a huge brown jar of brimstone and treacle, the fingers of the other mechanically coiling round the long handle of an iron spoon, its bowl rivalling those seen in gravy dishes. The boys were placed in Indian file, one hugging the other's back, awaiting the direful moment, while some of the bigger boys acted as turnkeys to hinder a bolt... Then in succession, every one tamely crept up to the starched and erect personage, when her well known hand crowned the scalp or head piece. ...Then followed the stately spoon into the orifice. I will not say how far it entered, as it signifies little whether dame nature had given jaws expanding wide or not, for the ruthless spoon found passage, leaving the overflowing residue of brimstone and treacle rolling down each side of the mouth.

Sometimes the school [walked] to the top of Highgate Hill, and passing the toll bar descended by that rural road running between Bishop's and Kaen woods, thence passing the Spaniard's tavern, and the nine elms which are planted on the eastern verge of Hampstead Heath. From this delightful spot is seen the spire of Harrow steeple. Half a mile from the nine elms, at the end of a broad plateau on the summit of Hampstead heath called Gang-moor Hill, there is a second tavern called Jack Straw's Castle, the view from the windows of which has often caused a controversy – whether the glades of Richmond Hill or those of Hampstead are the most to be admired. From Gang-moor Hill the outlines of Windsor Castle are perceptible to the naked eye.

On other occasions we walked up Mill Farm Lane [Millfield Lane]. This private road runs betwixt Fitzroy Farm and the park palings which enclose Kaen wood.

## New Books

*A History of Muswell Hill* by Ken Gay; published 1999 by Hornsey Historical Society price £6.50 plus 80p p&p (from the Society at The Old Schoolhouse, 136 Tottenham Lane, N8 7EL (116pp paperback, 43 illustrations)

Our friends in Hornsey have expanded their publication list with a history of Muswell Hill by one of their popular authors, Ken Gay. He traces the development of the area from medieval to modern times, though in truth not a great deal happened before the last quarter of the 19th century when the presence of Alexandra Palace and the advent of better transportation alerted people to the beauties of the place, with views in all directions.

In Muswell Hill existed one of those administrative anomalies beloved of local historians – to the east of Colney Hatch Lane were 64 acres stretching from the Broadway to Goodwyns Vale, owned and administered by Clerkenwell parish. This arcane arrangement was not cancelled until 1900. Indeed, William Pinks in his monumental history of Clerkenwell published in 1865, devotes much space to this part of the parish, detailing the wells which fell within the 64 acres, which gave Muswell Hill part of its name (the old word for moss being the other).

By the middle of the 19th century Muswell Hill had still been isolated. Dr Draper, who edited the letters of the Italian patriot, Giuseppe Mazzini (a frequent guest of the Ashurst family at Muswell Hill), noted that the area 'was not at that time very accessible. By night no help could be obtained from rail or stage, and cabs being too expensive for most of the habitues, it was customary for the friends who had enjoyed Mr Ashurst's hospitality to assemble in the porch at about half-past ten and journey together on foot as far as the Angel, Islington, where cabs and omnibuses were available'.

The most important person in the development of the area was James Edmondson, who reconnoitred the area while out cycling (on a penny farthing). His purchase and development of two estates as from 1896, set in train a rapid sale of properties, some of them to himself. He had already been closely involved with the building of Crouch End, and he went up the hill both in investment and architectural style, in the swift transition of Muswell Hill. Ken Gay gives a comprehensive and readable account of these early days, and it is a very welcome addition to the published material. I would wish, however, for a lot more material on the years after the last war.

JR

*Holborn, Bloomsbury and Clerkenwell*, by Brian Girling. Published 1999 by Tempus Publishing, £9.99

This is a new volume in the Tempus series called Images of England. In effect it consists of pictures and long captions but, trying to capture three large areas (each of which merits at least one book) it is necessarily brief in its attention span. It will be of interest to a person casually interested in local history, but apart from the pictures, will frustrate a more assiduous reader.

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society. The Editor is John Richardson, 32 Ellington Street, N7 8PL (Tel: 0171-607 1628, Fax: 0171-609 6451), to whom all contributions should be sent.

The Secretary of the Society is Mrs Jane Ramsay, Garden Flat, 62 Fellows Road, NW3, 3LJ (0171 586 4436), and the Treasurer is Marion Bennathan, 24 Murray Mews, NW1 9RJ. The Editor of the *Camden History Review* is Peter Woodford, 1 Akenside Road, NW3 5BS (0171-435 2088). The Society is a registered charity - number 261044

# newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 178

Mar 2000

## The Marsh before the Dome

Thurs, 23 Mar, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

Putting aside whether you like the building or its contents, the decision to place the Dome on what until recently was one of the most disregarded areas of London was a brave one. The land there is a low-lying peninsula which, until the construction of the Thames Barrier, was always at risk from flooding. Before the 19th century, the marsh was drained enough to sustain farming but there were few residents until the later part of the century when industry arrived. The area's remoteness made it suitable for the manufacture and testing of gunpowder and the lack of residents, or at least of residents of any status, allowed the presence of noxious chemical factories, or else the manufacture of cheap fuel from a mixture of broken coal, dust and tar, and the arrival of many other industries which needed the proximity of the river.

Since the 1880s the manufacture of gas and electricity has dominated the scene, so much so that the ground was heavily polluted by the gas industry and had to be cleared before the Dome could be constructed.

On the face of it, not a promising subject, but Mary Mills has recently published an interesting book on the area, and is our speaker in March.

## Hampstead Remembered

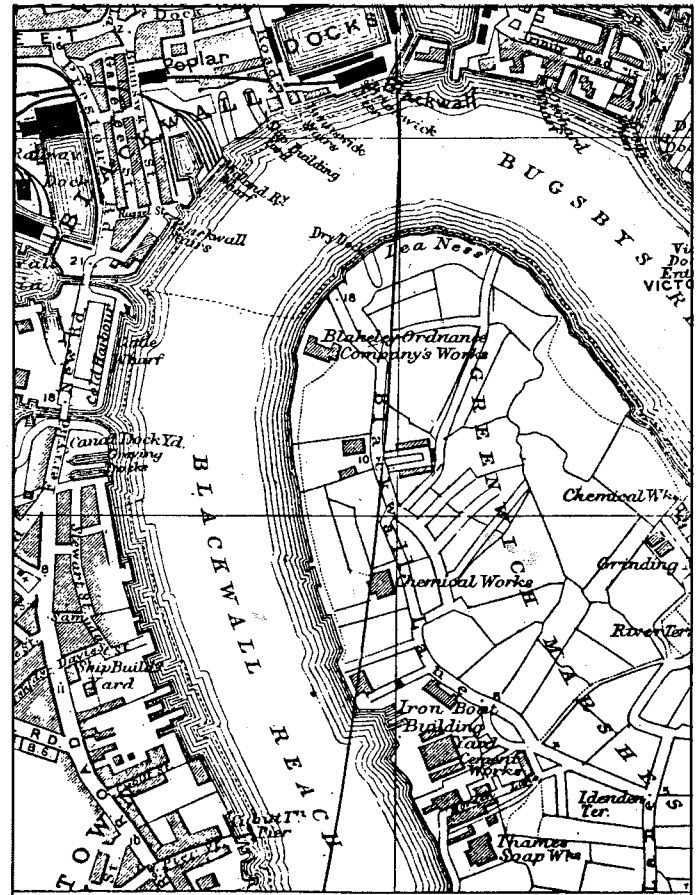
Thurs, 13 April, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

To celebrate a publication by Burgh House, and a new edition of *The Streets of Hampstead* by CHS, a number of old residents of Hampstead will be combining to recall their memories of Hampstead before it became dominated by restaurants and estate agents. This is a joint meeting with Burgh House.

## Advance Notice

Please note that the May meeting is on 18 May at Burgh House. Its subject is University College, London and the speaker is Negley Harte.



The Greenwich Peninsula, as shown on Bacon's 1888 map of London.

## Congratulations

Our Editor of Publications, Dr Peter Woodford, has recently been appointed an Associate of the Royal College of Physicians. This is notable in itself, but it is especially worthy of congratulations because he is the first such Associate of the College. The rank is equivalent to that of a Fellow, and was created specially for non-medical candidates. He is therefore the College's first non-medical Fellow / Associate since its foundation in 1518.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

Please note that for those who do not have arrangements such as a standing order or covenant, subscriptions are due. A form is enclosed with this Newsletter. It would help the Treasurer considerably if you renewed promptly.

## Catching the Past

As reported in the last *Newsletter*, the main millennium exhibition in June will be held in St Pancras Chambers in Euston Road. Selection of items has now been made and the design of the panels is now in progress. It is the Society's aim to have a bookstall there as much as possible during the run of the exhibition and Sheila Ayres would very much like to have volunteers who can sit in for a few hours whenever possible. If you are able to help out, please let her know on 020 7794 1735.

One of the strands of the *Catching the Past* project is 'Click Week', when as many streets in Camden as possible will be photographed. We need large numbers of volunteers to photograph their own and other streets. It is your chance to give pleasure to residents of Camden generations hence. Can you imagine how pleased you would be today to find in the archives a photograph of your own street taken in 1900? The nearest we have now are the many postcards issued as from 1905, but these cover only a fraction of the streets of the borough. So, please be generous with your time and cameras for the sake of future residents. Click Week commences 22 May. For details telephone Robert Leon on 020 7372 5784.

## London Garden Squares Day

Following upon the successful introduction of this event last year, the London Historic Parks and Gardens Trust is once again organising London Garden Squares Day, on Sunday 4 June, 10am-5pm. The Trust hopes to encourage the opening of as many as possible of London's garden squares on that one day of the year, and to help raise public support for their maintenance. Last year, half the available income went to participating squares and the rest to 'green' charities working in London to improve the environment. For more details, write to the Trust c/o Duck Island Cottage, The Store Yard, St James's Park, SW1A 2BJ (Tel: 020 7839 3969).

## Obituaries

### WENDY TREWIN

Many members may not remember Wendy Trewin, who died in early January after a short illness. She was an active supporter of CHS for many years but never in the limelight, except in theatrical circles where she was the doyenne of drama critics.

For CHS publications she was constantly supplying biographical and topographical titbits, always shrewd and well-informed, and often funny. Her contributions to the latest edition of *The Streets of Hampstead* have been duly acknowledged. C.W.

### GLADYS BECK

Gladys Beck, a long-time member of the Society, has died just 5 weeks short of her hundredth birthday. She was an Oxford history graduate of the 1920s, and

for a time worked as the Librarian of the *Architects' Journal*. For many years an active member of the CHS, she contributed an article to the *CHS Review* in 1974, on the Boys' Home, Regent's Park, and was one of the group which researched and produced the first edition of *Primrose Hill to Euston Road* in 1981.

### JEAN SCOTT ROGERS

Jean Scott Rogers has died at the age of 93. Jean was an enthusiastic member of the Society until about 12 years ago when she had to move out of London and settle in the quiet village of Coddendam in Suffolk where she entertained many friends and, at the same time, battled with more and more restrictions on her mobility. She was particularly interested in the life of Richard Cobden and, apart from writing an article on the circumstances leading up to the erection of the Cobden statue in Camden Town (*CHS Review* 9), she wrote a fascinating and moving account of the letters between Cobden and his wife, in a book entitled *Cobden and his Kate*.

## A talk on Bevan

A plaque was unveiled last October to the painter, Robert Bevan, who lived at 14 Adamson Road. The Belsize Residents' Association has arranged an illustrated talk on Bevan, and has invited members of the CHS to attend. The talk is entitled *Cab Horses and Coloured Shadows: Robert Bevan and The Camden Town Group*, and the speaker will be Dr Justine Hopkins who is a freelance lecturer with Bristol University, the National Portrait Gallery, the V & A and the National Gallery. She has also been closely involved with courses run by the Tate Gallery.

The talk is on 3 April at 7.30pm, and the venue is 57 Eton Avenue, NW3. Wine, soft drinks and nibbles will be served after the talk. An entrance charge of £2 per person will be payable at the door.

### HARRIETTE WILSON

Adam Smyth writes to say that he is conducting research for Dr Frances Wilson of the University of Reading, who is writing a biography for Faber of the fascinating Society courtesan, bestselling author and blackmailer Harriette Wilson (formerly Dubochet) (1786-1846?). Harriette is most famous for her notorious *Memoirs* of 1825. She seems to have spent the early years of the 19th century living in 'Sommers Town' (perhaps Dukes Row), but details are scant. Mr Smyth is anxious to find anything he can about Harriette – when, where she lived etc.

He is also interested in her close friend Julia Johnson (formerly Storer) who was brought up at Hampton Court, where her mother was Maid of Honour to Queen Charlotte. In the early years of the 19th century she was living at Primrose Hill.

Mr Smyth may be contacted at 79b Fordwych Road, NW2 3TL (0181 450 5855).

## From Amphitheatre to Guildhall

Twelve years ago archaeologists made the dramatic discovery of a Roman amphitheatre beneath Guildhall in the City of London. Excavation continued intermittently for many years, as the new Guildhall Art Gallery, which opened recently, took shape on the east side of the amphitheatre site. But many questions remained unanswered. Was it just coincidence that the medieval Guildhall complex, with its narrow open yard to the south, was founded directly over the underlying amphitheatre? Why do the two buildings share the same orientation. How, in brief, did the Roman ruins influence the development of the most important civic building in the medieval town?

We may have moved some way towards answering these questions as a result of new investigations by the entrance into Guildhall Yard from Gresham Street. The excavations uncovered the gravel and cobbled surfaces of the street that led northwards to Guildhall from the 11th century to after the Great Fire of 1666. They also exposed, for the first time, remains of the great gatehouse that stood there in the heyday of the Guildhall precinct in the 15th century. The gatehouse appears to have been built as early as the 13th century and, fascinatingly, appears to have been built directly over the southern entrance into the amphitheatre. This raises the possibility that enough of the Roman structure survived to influence the siting not only of the street and the gatehouse but of Guildhall itself and the church of St Lawrence Jewry, whose strange alignment may shadow the elliptical form of the amphitheatre beneath.

By Nick Bateman and Ian Blair, Museum of London Archaeology Service. Taken from *Archaeology Matters* (Dec 1999) published by the Museum.

## Shaw as a Vestryman

Long before the CHS was formed (in 1970), the publication of historical articles about the then borough of St Pancras was undertaken by the *St Pancras Journal*, a magazine published by the Libraries department. Nominally edited by the Borough Librarian, Frederick Sinclair, but with the historical features no doubt put together by Eric Jeffcott, the rather reclusive local history librarian who functioned from Chester Road library, this admirable publication came out every two months. It also kept residents up to date on library developments and new books.

In the issue for Nov/Dec 1950 appeared an article by Mr A.D. Corrick who retired from the staff of the borough council in 1942, and who had begun his service in 1897 on the old St Pancras Vestry at the very time George Bernard Shaw first became a member. Corrick then went on to be the mayor's secretary for 27 years, and was deputy town clerk for 15 years.

The following were some of his reminiscences about Shaw's time on the Vestry and Council.

'I find it somewhat difficult to realise that it is 53 years ago since G.B.S. became a member of the St Pancras Vestry, yet I remember the occasion well. I was present in the Vestry Clerk's office when he took the statutory declaration of office. This was in 1897, and G.B.S. continued as a member of the local authority until 1902, after which date he did not seek re-election. During that period of six years I attended every meeting of the Vestry and the Council as a junior officer. At that time the meetings took place once a fortnight, with the several committees meeting in between. It is true to say that all the Vestrymen and women, and the officials ... revelled in the fortnightly public entertainments, for such they became whilst G.B.S. was there. Owing to his humorous, pungent and witty style of speech we were delighted to listen, and were attracted by an exquisite personal distinction and quality of voice. G.B.S. did not reign supreme over the proceedings, nor did he take more than his fair share of time. There were other very able and telling speakers, e.g., Nathan Robinson, Frederick Purchase ... T.H.W. Idris... and many others.

There were 120 members of the Vestry, and when the council was constituted and first met in 1900 there were 70 members - 10 aldermen and 60 councillors. G.B.S. performed his due portion of municipal duties, and although at first he was looked upon as a jester and theorist with an alarming audacity, he soon proved that he was a practical administrator as well. In all his speeches he kept to the subject under discussion and it was never necessary to rule him out of order, like many other rebels. He was essentially a gentlemanly and respectable rebel, although he shocked and rebuked his Victorian colleagues.

In those days, once the election was over, the members carried on their work with much more independence and individuality than is the case today. The party line was often over-ruled, and G.B.S. frequently commented upon the freedom of constraint. He would have rebelled against modern party dominion. G.B.S. was a member of many committees, and in particular he was a prominent member of the Electricity Committee. He was well equipped for the latter because in his early days he was engaged in the electrical industry. He was such a useful member that the committee passed him a special vote of thanks for his valuable services.

I remember Mr Shaw being appointed to attend a conference of local authorities for the purpose of considering the formation of a municipal insurance organisation. The report of G.B.S. was fully printed in the council minutes, and is worth perusal and reproduction. It was a masterpiece of prose, as we should expect from him, and the Council did eventually join in Mutual Insurance, which has proved a good business venture...



A very quiet Makepeace Avenue on the Holly Lodge Estate, Highgate, depicted on a 1920s postcard.


Many Pancratians will remember Mansfield Lane, a public right of way which connected Highgate with Hampstead, and was a lovely walk through the fields adjoining Kenwood. This right of way is now merged into the open space of Kenwood. The Lane was originally fenced with high railings by the owner of the adjoining land. One day it was discovered that the railings on one side had been taken down and re-erected to a line which narrowed the Lane over a portion of its length, leaving some of the trees standing on the private side. G.B.S. seized upon this peccadillo with the greatest zest and made it his business, through the Council, to force the owner to restore the land and trees and put the railings back.

During his membership G.B.S. wrote *Getting Married*, one of his most delightful plays. One of the characters is a mayor, who bore a likeness in some respects to the second mayor of St Pancras (W.H. Matthews 1902-03). W.H.M. took no offence, in fact he chuckled over the play. If his framed oil painting hanging in the Town Hall is studied it will be observed that Matthews looks an aristocrat, although in fact he was a greengrocer and none the less worthy on that account.

Many admirers of Bernard Shaw possess some of his inimitable postcards. Here is one which he wrote to me on the subject of titles: "A great deal of artistic work is done by people who lose money by it, and, if they can afford to lose it by possessing independent incomes, get no recognition of their services. The rule in pioneering work in art is more kicks than halfpence. For the pioneers who are left destitute the only remedy within our constitution is a Civil List pension. For the ones with independent incomes, the remedy is a knighthood or an OM or a CH. I am well paid for my work, and have so much fame that a title or a couple of letters after my name could add nothing to it. But I can use my influence to get pensions and titles for others. Accordingly, I do."

As everyone knows, G.B.S. was made a Freeman of St Pancras a few years ago when he was 90 years of age, and now at 94 he has gone to his eternal rest.'

**\* CAMDEN UNITY SILVER PRIZE BAND. \***



**Mr. T. BROWN,**  
Librarian.

→ To-day's Programme. ←

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1. MARCH "The Warrior's Return" *Myddleton*
2. SONG ... "I Give You Love" ... *Ros*
3. SELECTION from the Works of *Sullivan* ...
4. MORCEAU ... "Minuet" ... *Bocherini*
5. GAVOTTE ... "Stephanie" ... *Cziutha*
6. FINALE ... "God Speed" ... *Myddleton*

**ANNUAL CONCERT, Prince of Wales Rd. Baths, Thursday, Nov. 18, 1909**

Postcard advertising a concert at the Prince of Wales Baths in 1909, showing the programme and the band's 'librarian'.

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society. The Editor is John Richardson, 32 Ellington Street, N7 8PL (Tel: 020-7607 1628, Fax: 020-7609 6451), to whom all contributions should be sent.

The Secretary of the Society is Mrs Jane Ramsay, Garden Flat, 62 Fellows Road, NW3, 3LJ (020 7586 4436), and the Treasurer is Marion Bennathan, 24 Murray Mews, NW1 9RJ. The Editor of the *Camden History Review* is Peter Woodford, 1 Akenside Road, NW3 5BS (020-7435 2088).

The Society is a registered charity - number 261044



# newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 179

May 2000

## The Godless College

Thurs, 18 May, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square NW3

The foundation of University College, London in 1828 was attended by great controversy, to the extent that eminent churchmen and politicians were obliged to found a rival, King's College. It seems extraordinary now that until that year London was the only significant capital city in Europe which did not have a university. To redress that omission was one of the motives for UCL's foundation, but the aim was also to provide a secular university and accept scholars who were not Anglicans - at that time barred from Oxford and Cambridge. The deficiencies of the older universities were well known then. They were, as Bentham put it, 'two great public nuisances' and 'storehouses and nurseries of public corruption'. And when the classical building arose in Gower Street, designed by William Wilkins, the Anglican detractors were only confirmed in their opinion that UCL was to be a 'godless' college.

The story of that foundation and the subsequent years of UCL is the subject of our May lecture, which will be given by a well-known expert on the history of the University of London, Negley Harte, who is Senior Lecturer at UCL.

## The Annual Meeting

Thurs 22 June, 6.30pm

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, WC1

We meet for this year's Annual Meeting at the smaller hall at Conway Hall, the headquarters of the South Place Ethical Society. This society, founded in 1839 by Moncure Conway, a liberal Christian, became agnostic 30 years later. It is renowned for its Sunday afternoon chamber concerts, which began in 1887. Terry Mullins, who is the society's Registrar, is our speaker for the evening.

We begin the Annual Meeting at 6.30pm as usual with refreshments, the business meeting is at 7pm and the talk at 7.30pm. You are invited to nominate people for the following CHS offices (names of present incumbents are given).

PRESIDENT: Prof. Christopher Elrington  
VICE PRESIDENTS: Frank Cole, Christina Gee, Dr Ann Saunders  
CHAIRMAN: John Richardson  
VICE CHAIRMAN: Christopher Wade  
SECRETARY: Jane Ramsay  
TREASURER: Marion Bennathan  
PUBLICATIONS EDITOR: Dr Peter Woodford  
PUBLICATIONS MANAGER: Sheila Ayres  
MEETINGS SECRETARY: Michael Ogden  
PUBLICITY OFFICER: Joan Barraclough  
ARCHIVIST: Malcolm Holmes  
HON. AUDITOR: Audrey Nottman  
Council Members: Peter Barber, Roger Cline, Ruth Hayes, Sue Palmer, Dick Weindling, Robin Woolven.

Since the last AGM, Gillian Tindall has resigned as a Vice President, and Ivor Kamlish has resigned as a Council member. Please send your nominations to Jane Ramsay whose address is on the last page of this *Newsletter*.

## CONSTABLE'S HAMPSTEAD

From mid May a large display of Constable material at Hampstead Museum will be hung in the Constable Room at Burgh House. The curator will be giving a guided walk around Constable's Hampstead on Saturday, 20 May at 11am, meeting at Hampstead tube station. The walk is free although a donation of £1 would be welcome. Please bring walking shoes and an umbrella.

## ATTIC CLEARING

In the new magazine published by Camden Local Studies & Archives Centre, called *Backtracks*, a plea is made not to throw away items which may have a social history value. Photographs in particular get jettisoned which could well be used in the archives.

Recent donations to the Centre include hundreds of photographs showing the work of the Fleet Community Education Centre in the 1970s and '80s; publications about the Pearl Assurance Company; photographs and information about *HMS Quilliam*, a destroyer adopted by Hampstead Borough Council in the last war, and three photos were lent for copying of Princess Road School (now Primrose Hill Primary) in the 1880s.

## Catching the Past

Much progress has been made in each of the strands of our *Catching the Past* Millennium project.

An historical exhibition which takes as its theme those areas in which Hampstead, Holborn and St Pancras were involved in innovative developments opens on June 1 at St Pancras Chambers (the old Midland Grand Hotel entrance in Euston Road, opposite Camden Town Hall). Weekdays it will be open 11.30am – 3.30pm, and on Saturdays 10, 17, 24 from 10am – 4pm, and on Sunday 25 June, the last day, from 10-4.

What we would like to do as often as possible is to manage a bookstall during the exhibition opening hours. We should be glad if society members could offer their services for this as soon as possible so that we may construct a rota.

'Click Week' is 22-28 May, in which we hope to arrange for all streets in Camden to be photographed either for their social or architectural interest. Robert Leon, who is organising this, already has 900 streets covered, but there are still at least 200 more needing photographers. Members of the Society are urged to join in this 'Domesday' photographic survey, so as to provide images for researchers in the long distant future. We would, after all, be very grateful indeed if such a survey had been done in 1900.

Some of the streets still to be covered, many of them quite small are listed below. If you think you can tackle any of them, please ring Robert on 020 7372 5784 and he will brief you on the procedure.

**Belsize area:** Central Studios, Eton Court, Fountain Mews

**Chalk Farm:** Access to Safeway from Chalk Farm Road, Eglon Mews, Fitzroy Yard, Juniper Crescent

**Dartmouth Park:** Bramshill Gardens, Brookfield (mansions), Brookfield Park

**Gospel Oak:** Alan Cheale's Way, Barrington Court, Hemingway Close

**Hampstead:** Bakers Passage, Boade's Mews, Branch Hill Mews, Cornick's Yard, Flask Cottages, Ginsberg Yard, Grove Place, Hampstead Gate, Holly Place, Mulberry Close, Sandy Road, Spaniards End

**Bloomsbury:** Russell Square, Tavistock Square, Gordon Square, Bloomsbury Square, Bedford Square

**Kentish Town:** Baptist Gardens, Castle Place, Herbert Street, Marsden Street, Modbury Gardens, Newbury Mews, St Ann's Gardens, St Silas Place, St Leonard's Square, St Thomas's Gardens, Shipton Place

**Primrose Hill and Regent's Park:** Ainger Mews, Delancey Studios, Regent's Park Gardens Mews

**South End:** Elia Mews, Tranley Mews

## A VIDEO ON HIGHGATE

You will find with this *Newsletter* a leaflet from our friends in the Hornsey Historical Society about their proposed video on Highgate. The Hornsey Society was brave enough to invest a great deal of money in its first video on the Northern Heights in 1994, which paid off handsomely. They are now attempting another ambitious project and do need some help from donations.

## DR JOHNSON'S HOUSE

There are probably many members who have never been to Dr Johnson's House at 17 Gough Square, EC4. It is a late 17th-century building, the only original house left in the square, and was saved from demolition by Cecil Harmsworth in 1910. A pleasant introduction to the building is available on 17 and 18 May when 'Dr Johnson's Day' will be celebrated with an entertainment of poetry and music (doors open 7pm). All tickets must be bought in advance from the curator (020 7353 3745) price £10, which includes wine and light refreshments.

## BABY IN A BASKET

The following letter appeared in *Family Tree* magazine in March, from Raymond Riven who lives in Farnborough:

'John Titford's article in December's issue included an extract from the register of St Pancras, London: 'William Euston. Child found in a box in a railway carriage at Euston Station. Baptised 14th July 1894'. He noted the similarity to the main theme of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

In July I attended a performance of that play in Chichester. The programme printed an extract from the *Worthing Gazette* of 11 June 1894. This said that a man took a hamper to the goods department of the Great Northern Railway, King's Cross, and asked that it should be sent to a lady in Richmond. The hamper was later found to contain a young baby. The police collected the child. the man was not found.

The programme goes on to say that Wilde was on holiday with his family in Worthing that summer and it was there that the play was written. Hence the name Worthing for the baby.

It is surely the case that John Titford found the real origin of John Worthing in the true story of William Euston.'

## The beginnings of Belsize Village

The early days of Belsize Village may be of interest. In 1853 Belsize House was demolished and over the years much of the 45-acre estate was developed by Daniel Tidey, a builder. Work started late, for reasons given by Professor Thompson in his book *Hampstead: Building a Borough*, but in November 1856 there appeared on the scene a short terrace comprising a 'new tavern', not yet open, and three shops. Belsize Tavern, owned by Tidey, was soon in business and competing for the wages of his workmen; but only one other unit was occupied, as a coffee shop, and it closed within 18 months.

Nothing had changed by 17 April 1858 when, on the petition of a creditor, Tidey 'builder DC' was declared bankrupt. The letters stand for dealer and chapman, a job description often employed by a debtor to substantiate his claim to be a trader, who alone was entitled to the legal status of being a bankrupt. 'Trader' came to have a wide definition but, if you failed to qualify, you faced an indefinite stay in prison as an insolvent debtor. Fortunately Tidey soon overcame his problems and on 25 June he was discharged with a Certificate of Conformity, second class because he was deemed partly to blame (PRO B6/100; Legal Records Information 5).

By May 1859 the shops were four in number but only one was in use, as a residence for Owen (or John) Sturgis and his family; he was himself a builder, probably a sub-contractor to Tidey. The development had become known as Upper Belsize Terrace, with the pub as no. 1. 'Belsize Terrace' the obvious choice, had been claimed in 1855 by 79-83 Belsize Lane (now listed), the first buildings on the estate and apparently not by Tidey; in 1934 the name, long forgotten, was revived in the village. Late in 1859 Belsize Mews started in a small way as 'stabling etc'.

Tidey then completed the terrace with seven more units and, where a shopkeeper could not be found, he let the premises temporarily to an associate or employee. In April 1861 there were only two shops, one a greengrocer's, the other, a dairy, was an off-shoot of Belsize Farm, near the bottom of Daleham Mews (see the illustration on p1 of *The Streets of Belsize*). The remaining nine units were allocated to the pub manager, Sturgis, Tidey's clerk, and a plasterer and other artisans, not forgetting a miner. In the whole terrace there were now 95 people, with 51 in the mews.

A few weeks later five shops again stood empty and soon became seven; Tidey must have realised that vacant possession, despite earlier failure, was needed to attract shopkeepers. It took over six months but this time, with rising local population, the village at last came to life: by May 1862 the greengrocer and dairyman had been joined by a baker, grocer, boot and shoe maker, toy dealer and chemist, with a cheesemonger to follow.

There was also Richard Coles, a butcher, in no. 6. His absence on census nights in 1871 and 1881 seems in each case to have been temporary; and in 1883 he was succeeded by William, born about 1861 and presumably his son. The family was not here to the end but the shop, now 39 Belsize Lane and a delicatessen, was a butcher's under the sign W Coles until 1980.

The map in *Newsletter* 174 shows that terrace and mews were squeezed into a corner of the former wall around the gardens and park of Belsize House, 25 acres in all. Near the corner, the wall was also the estate boundary but later more land was obtained; and in 1869 another builder, William Willett, made a start on the high terraces across the top of the village, intersected by Belsize Crescent. Belsize Mews appears to have been enlarged and straightened out in 1880-81.

Tidey again went bankrupt in January 1870 but he or his family kept control of the pub, which after some years as Henry VIII reverted to Belsize Tavern. Willett soon started to plan his Belsize Court estate of 1880. This would join the top of Belsize Crescent but access from the south involved two sharp turns in the village: on the *Newsletter* map, oriented as printed, the original west corner of Belsize Terrace/Lane would be 4mm to the right of the 218.2 spot height and inside the obtuse angle in the old wall. These turns could be eliminated by slicing off a narrow wedge along the back garden of 18 Belsize Park (on the crossroads SE of the village), leased by Alderman Figgins of 35 Russell Square.

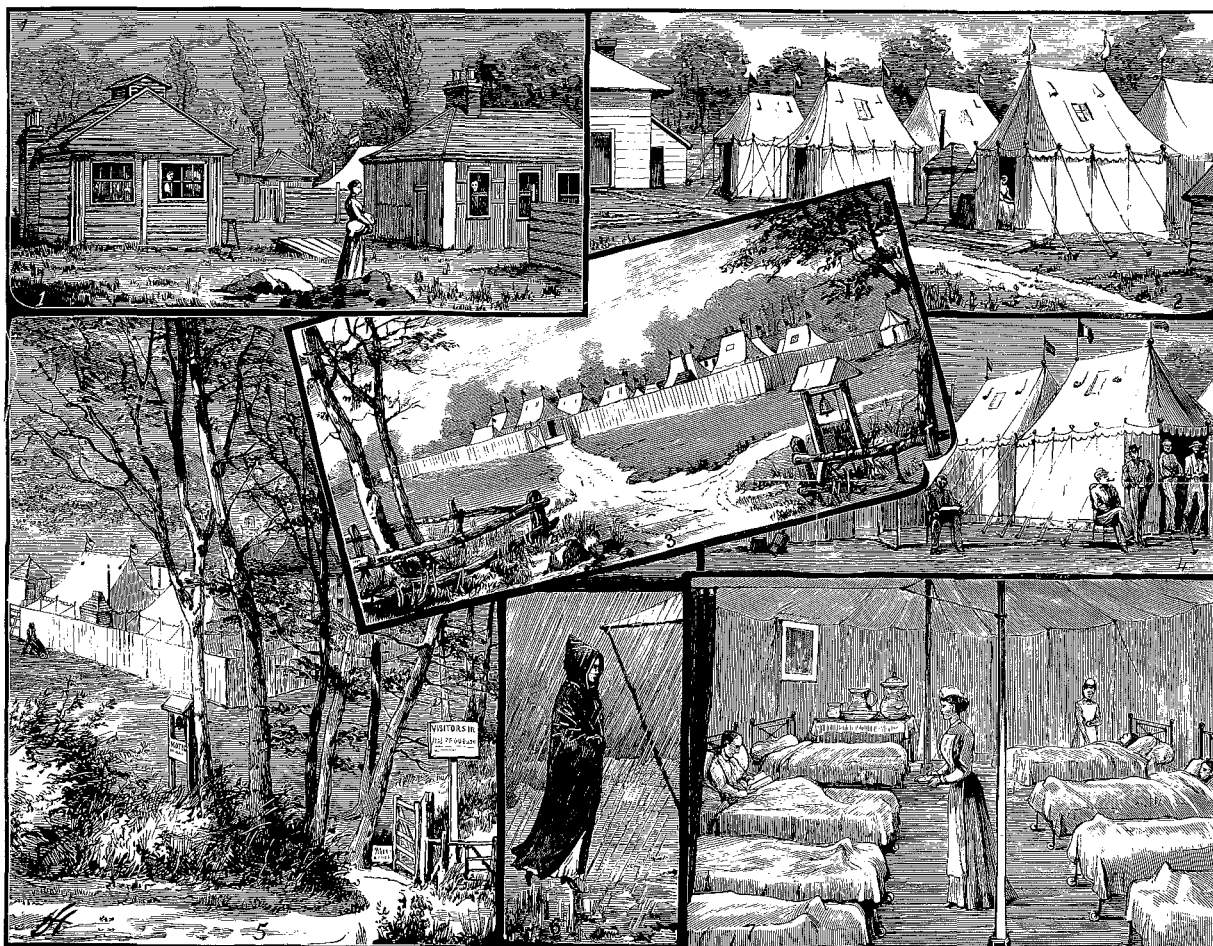
In October 1875 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners gave the alderman permission to 'throw' part of his garden into what is now Belsize Terrace, and to demolish an adjoining stable on the street corner near the spot height. Willett was to pay Figgins £800 and spend about £200 on making up the road. Alongside no. 18, a kink in the garden wall (here a balustrade) shows where the realignment started. These works created the pleasant open space in the village, and gave an easy approach to Belsize Crescent; but in recent years they also led to a commuters' rat-run to Fitzjohns Avenue, brought to an end on 4 January 1994 with the closure of Belsize Terrace.

**Roy Allen**

### FORTY WALKS FROM ALLY PALLY

This book of 60 pages with 35 maps explores forty walks in Haringey, Barnet and Enfield from a starting point of Alexandra Palace. Walks vary between one mile and twenty, and exploit the public transport network. They are well designed for family outings.

The publication may be obtained from Fiennes Print, 268 Alexandra Park Road, N22 7BG, price £4.50 plus £1 p&p.



Large epidemics, such as the one described below under 'The Paradise at Tooting' remained common well into the last century. The above picture comes from *The Graphic* of 9 July 1881, when a smallpox epidemic filled up the St Pancras Hospital encampment at Finchley. Top left is the laundry and kitchen, top right are the Ward Tents and Nurses' Tents, centre is a general view with the medical officer's tent to the right, centre bottom is a wet matron, and bottom right is the interior of a Ward Tent.

## The Paradise at Tooting

Local History Publications have published an interesting booklet, entitled as above, on the 'Tragedy at Drouet's Infant Pauper Asylum at Tooting' in 1849. This has particular interest in that many of the children who died of cholera there that year were paupers from Holborn. It was revealed after the event, in which 118 children died, that they were undernourished, poorly accommodated and ill-clothed, generally in no fit state to withstand an epidemic.

Peter Drouet, who ran the asylum and farm upon which the children worked for free, was paid 4s 3d per week by vestries who sent their children there to be looked after. Dickens commented that this establishment was 'brutally conducted, vilely kept, preposterously inspected, dishonestly defended, a disgrace to a Christian community, and a stain upon a civilised country'. In the 1840s the establishment typically contained 1500 children.

Despite later criticisms it has to be said that a visit by members of the Holborn Board of Guardians in 1847 noted that the food was wholesome and sufficient and the premises clean, and in 1848 that the children

generally were in good health. However, in May that year when the visiting Guardians asked the gathered children if they had complaints about 40 held up their hands, whereupon 'Mr Drouet's conduct became violent'. Boys were beaten later after the Guardians left.

The rest of the story may be gathered from this useful account, obtainable at Local History Publications, 316 Green Lane, SW16 3AS for £2.76 inc p&p

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# newsletter

No 180

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Jul 2000

## Railway Hotels in Camden

Thurs. 20 July, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

It is probably true to say that railway hotels began in Camden, when two were built beside Euston Station soon after it opened in 1837. These were modest affairs compared with what was to come in London. An early 'grand' one was the Great Northern Hotel by King's Cross station (it is still there) which opened at Easter 1854. By then railway hotels had sprouted up in other cities - Birmingham, York and Stoke, to name but some. The Great Northern Hotel was built by the relatively unknown Lewis Cubitt.

This hotel was eclipsed in luxury and prestige by the Midland Grand Hotel fronting St Pancras Station. This magnificent neo-Gothic building by George Gilbert Scott was opened to guests in 1873 when it was still incomplete, and the building was not finished until June 1876. Unfortunately, it came just too early, for it had no en-suite bathrooms and central heating only in public areas. And as the area gradually went down in social status the physical disadvantages of staying there gradually put the hotel out of favour. Closed in 1935, it was used as offices by the Midland Railway and, after nationalisation in 1948, by the British Transport Commission. No doubt confident in those post-war years that the building would be pulled down as irrelevant (and indeed Victorian architecture was much derided in that period), little was done to renovate the building. It has been virtually empty and much of it derelict for many years now. Those of you who have visited it will know just how wonderful it could be, and we can only hope that the predicted linking of St Pancras to the Channel Tunnel route will revive the building's fortunes.

Our speaker on the context and development of Camden's railway hotels, will be Michael Ogden, already well known to members.

## The Annual Outing

Saturday, 12 August

With the last *Newsletter* was included a form to book for our annual outing. This year we go to Suffolk on a trip to be arranged by Jean Archer. We shall be making an early start so that we can spend the morning at Lavenham (where coffee has been arranged). This town is a marvel of survival - wonderful thatched houses in a film-set arrangement with cobblestones. We shall be visiting the Guildhall of Corpus Christi, a timber-framed building now owned by the National Trust, dating from the late 15th century, overlooking the market place. Inside there are exhibitions on local history, farming and the medieval woollen cloth trade. There will be time to explore this picturesque town which has wonderful houses, pubs and a historic church. Lunch can be obtained there easily, or you can take sandwiches.

We then go on to Melford Hall at Long Melford, also a National Trust property. This is a turreted brick Tudor mansion, with little changed externally, and with the original panelled banqueting hall, an 18th-century drawing room, a Regency library and Victorian bedrooms, showing fine furniture and Chinese porcelain. There is a small garden and an attractive walk through the park. A cream tea has been arranged before we drive back to London.

Please return your booking form as soon as possible. You will receive instructions then as to boarding points, times etc.

### VIVIENNE JUDGE

We are sad to hear of the death of a long-term member of the Society, Vivienne Judge, after a protracted illness. She was very active in local organisations. She could be encountered at St Peter's church, Belsize Park, in the Friends of the Earth, at the Camley Community Centre and at Highgate Library. She was enthusiastic about Kensal Green Cemetery, and the industrial history of the Chalk Farm railway lands, not to mention folk dancing at Cecil Sharp House. She was also adventurous in her trips abroad. She camped from Alaska to California, went on a conservation holiday in Spain, took a bus and a train rover around Scandinavia and visited Portugal.

## The Annual Meeting

This year's annual meeting was held at the Conway Hall, concluding with a short talk by Terry Mullins on the history of the Hall and the South Place Ethical Society which owns it. Officers and members of the Council elected were:

PRESIDENT: Prof. Christopher Elrington  
VICE PRESIDENTS: Dr Ann Saunders, Frank Cole, Christina Gee  
CHAIRMAN: John Richardson  
VICE CHAIRMAN: Christopher Wade  
SECRETARY: Jane Ramsay  
TREASURER: Marion Bennathan  
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Roger Cline  
EDITOR OF PUBLICATIONS: Dr Peter Woodford  
PUBLICATIONS MANAGER: Sheila Ayres  
MEETINGS SECRETARY: position unfilled  
PUBLICITY OFFICER: Joan Barraclough  
ARCHIVIST: Malcolm Holmes  
HON. AUDITOR: Audrey Nottman  
Council members: Peter Barber, Roger Cline, Steve Denford, Ruth Hayes, Sue Palmer, Dick Weindling, Robin Woolven.

The Chairman noted that the thirtieth year of the Society had been probably its busiest. Not only had there been three publications, but the Society had staged the *Catching the Past* project (see below). The deputy-mayor, Cllr Roger Robinson, congratulated the Society on its work and suggested that the time had come for a Camden Museum to be established.

## Catching the Past

There have been some tangible achievements so far in the Millennium programme. In the 'Click Week' project, virtually every street in the borough of Camden – there are over a thousand of them – has been photographed by volunteers, using free film kindly supplied by Fuji. Robert Leon, who organised this, is to be much congratulated in succeeding in what was thought to be an impossible venture. The results of Click Week will be archived at the Local Studies Centre and we hope to have mini-exhibitions in local libraries to display many of the pictures.

Peter Woodford has been directing the 'academic' research – dealing with people who have taken up the subjects in our list published a year ago. The results of these researches, or at least some of them, will be in the *Camden History Review* later this year, a bumper issue, which will be sent free to members as usual. Other research projects will be printed in 2001.

Robert Leon was also responsible for pulling together the interviews with residents. All these will be indexed and archived at Holborn, and we also hope to publish an occasional paper devoted entirely to these interviews.

The major exhibition at St Pancras Chambers attracted about 3000 visitors. It was splendidly designed by Ivor Kamlisch, with the exhibits chosen and written up by Peter Woodford and John Richardson. Overall, we received a great deal of help from Richard Knight at Camden Local Studies and from his colleagues there. The other good news is that we received a grant of nearly £5000 from the Heritage Awards for All Scheme for a millennium project. This will pay for most of the expenses of the exhibition, leaving us to use the grant from Camden in making sure that the whole project will be archived properly (4000 pictures alone) for future generations.

## RESEARCHING EAST CAMDEN TOWN AND SOMERS TOWN

There is as yet no adequate or memorable title to describe the area of Camden which is about to be researched. Steve Denford, who is in charge of the research group, says that the area is bounded north to south by Camden Road and Euston Road, and east to west by York Way and Hampstead Road. The team which has just finished *St Giles* is now turning its attention to this central Camden area. If there is any member who would like to join them, or has useful material on this area to share, please contact Steve on 8923 1515 (evenings and weekends) or write to him at 223 Saint John's Road, E17 4JL.

## Advance Notice

Please put the following dates in your diary:  
Nov 16: The launch of the Society's book on the St Giles area, to be held at the Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church  
Dec 14: Ann Saunders on the monuments in St Paul's Cathedral, at Burgh House.  
Meetings for September and October have still to be finalised.

## HAMPSTEAD MEMORIES

Those members who enjoyed our April meeting at Burgh House which featured residents reminiscing about Hampstead past, may like to know that the memories of 60 residents have been compiled in a fully illustrated book of 216 pages, available from Burgh House from 22 June at a cost of £12.

The Hampstead Museum, by the way, has been a recent recipient of a coffee table from the Isokon flats in Lawn Road. Restored now, it can be seen by appointment. In the corridor at Burgh House is currently an exhibition on some of the historic houses of Hampstead. It includes Admiral's House in The Grove, in which Lieutenant North adapted the roof to look like a deck of a ship from which he occasionally fired cannon. It also features that odd house in East Heath Road, The Logs, described by Pevsner as 'a formidable atrocity ... with excrescences in all directions. Two of the more tabloid residents have been Marty Feldman and Boy George.

## Camden Maps

Alan Godfrey has recently published three facsimiles of Ordnance Survey maps of Camden. The 1870 map of Kentish Town and Camden (they mean Camden Town!) covers from Parkhill Road and Leighton Road in the north to Primrose Hill and the middle of Camden High Street in the south. The Midland main line has only just swept through the Caversham Road area of Kentish Town, leaving plenty of open spaces to be infilled later; along the canal, the Princess Road school has yet to be built and a potato market borders the LNWR main line at the top of Jamestown Street, then called Upper James Street.

A small portion of the King's Cross railway lands is shown, but these are shown in full and at a bigger scale in the Old St Pancras map of 1871-94 that has a detailed plan of the St Pancras Workhouse which included the Vestry Hall in its front garden. There were still two cut-off portions of St Pancras graveyard between the tracks out of St Pancras station and the Coal Drops of Camley (then Cambridge) Street. The Adam and Eve tavern, a school and a terrace of houses line Old St Pancras Road on the site of the present ceremonial gates to the joint St Giles and St Pancras Gardens. The large scale enables us to see structures down to a smithy, saddler's shop and multiple weighing machines. On the south side of the canal, the retort houses and the canal basin of the gas generating station whose gasometers are the main current relic, lie across the line of the present day Goods Way. Flour mills occupy the site of the petrol filling station on the corner with York Way (then Brecknock Road).

Another large scale facsimile is of Fitzroy Square in 1870 and extends from Regent's Park, still including the Colosseum and showing Nursemaids' Tunnel under the Marylebone Road on the west, to University College on the east; in between there are a cotton mill, the Eagle Brewery, a foundry and the Fitzroy Market containing a ragged school. The University College Hospital occupies only half of the block facing the College and was presumably a precursor of the Waterhouse structure which Negley Harte in our May meeting told us has reverted to research laboratories for the College, the public health departments now being conducted from the modern block to the north of Grafton Street. Thrown in as a bonus is the 1921 version of the same map, where the ragged school has become public baths and the large scale development at the top of Tottenham Court Road has begun.

Alan Godfrey maps are available from most bookshops – and some of them from our own sales stall or from Camden Local Studies Department. They cost about £2 each. All of Camden is covered by ordinary scale maps, but the large scale coverage is limited to the two mentioned above and two others between them.

**Roger Cline**

## THE ICE HOUSE

The London Canal Museum is a small treasure tucked away in an Islington back street. It is situated in a former ice warehouse in the Battlebridge basin. It documents the history of the Regent's Canal and features a sectioned narrow boat and some beautiful examples of picturesque bargee costume and décor. But it also has a permanent exhibition on the history of ice cream, since its building includes the ice house of the Gatti business, which supplied ice cream to Londoners. He imported ice from Norway which arrived via the Regent's Canal at Limehouse, to be deposited in the ice well in New Wharf Road.

The area of the warehouse declined as the canal declined and as that part of Camden and Islington succumbed to the pollution and noise of the railway industry. But things are changing. Even King's Cross is becoming gentrified and the good buildings around there rescued from their dereliction. The Canal Museum's volunteers and trustees are now very keen to preserve as much documentation as possible about the area's history. They would like to hear from anyone who can tell them anything about the museum building, in particular between 1935 (the ice business was abandoned in 1902) and 1985, when the museum was founded. If you have information, please telephone the museum's press officer, Leila Hackett, on 7483 1909.

## RESTORING THE DOVES

Sheila Ayres writes:

I was recently invited to attend a ceremony to celebrate the return of the ceramic 'Doves' by the sculptor Gilbert Bayes to the St Anne's and St Mary's estate courtyard off Drummond Crescent. Our members will remember the story of the Doves from the excellent talk by Malcolm Holmes on Father Jellicoe and the St Pancras Housing Association.

The Association already has the funds to replace the ships – with the Christmas tree on the centre finial – to the washing lines on their St Nicholas estate but would welcome any suggestions as to possible sources of finance to allow them to return the Royal Doulton ceramics to their other Camden estates. St Christopher's estate is waiting for the return of 24 blackbirds and a Jenny Wren and at St Francis a group of tailors with a snail on the centre finial. St Michael's washing lines were decorated with devils grouped around the archangel Michael.

The restored washing lines and Doves can be seen in the courtyard of the St Anne's and St Mary's flats via a small passage close to the front entrance of the Basil Jellicoe Hall in Drummond Crescent.

(The Drummond Estate was built in the 1930s around two courtyards, St Mary's and St Anne's. Each courtyard had a circle of 16 concrete washing line posts, around a central column, each surmounted by a ceramic sculpture designed by Gilbert Bayes and made

by Royal Doulton. The theme of the courtyard of St Joseph is inspired by the life of the saint and illustrated by a large sculpture of a carpenter's tool bag in the centre surrounded by 16 doves. The stoneware ceramics are very colourful and the concept of this sculpture is surprising in the context of public housing.

Over the years the finials suffered vandalism and theft. The posts remaining were broken and rusted and the finials lost or blackened by pollution.)

## GREATER LONDON HISTORY SOURCES

A new book to be published later this month, called *Greater London History Sources, Vol. 1: City of London*, is a guide to printed and visual materials, archives and manuscripts held by the City of London. It will be followed by other volumes on different areas of Greater London. The present volume, devised by Richard Knight of Camden Local Studies, and Geoffrey Yeo, formerly archivist of St Bartholomew's Hospital and more recently of the Royal College of Physicians, deals with the City's Record Office, the Guildhall Library and St Bartholomew's Hospital Archives.

The book is published by the Corporation of London, Guildhall Library Publications, in association with the Greater London Archives Network. It may be obtained from various libraries including the Guildhall, but also from Camden's Local Studies and Archives Centre in Holborn Library, Theobalds Road. In hardback it costs £14.95 and in paperback £9.95.

## The Missionaries of Mornington Crescent

David Jones, who is archivist to Eltham College, has sent us some material relating to a School for the Sons of Missionaries located in Mornington Crescent in the 19th century, a forerunner of Eltham College. It was at no. 1, which was at the northern end of the Crescent and has since been renumbered. Mr Jones says that it was on the corner of Arlington Street, but the right hand part of it no longer exists and in its place is the end wall of a block of flats called Mornington Court which actually fronts on to Arlington Street.

The official history of Eltham College, published in 1952, records that:

'A house was rented – No. 1 Mornington Crescent, a somewhat grim, forbidding, four-storey residence in Camden Town, a dejected neighbourhood now, but then quite a superior suburb. This house was furnished, and opened on 16 January 1852 with a very interesting religious and social service at which sixty people were present, including parents of some of the boys.

There was an opening enrolment of twenty-nine boys. This number increased rapidly, so that within that same year house No. 2 had also to be rented and was

soon full to capacity, with forty-eight boys in all. The fees charged were £15 per annum, and the total budget required was estimated at £450 per annum, apart from the rent. In the first instance, the houses were taken for 'two years certain'.

The first headmaster was William G. Lemon, who remained there for 14 years at an initial salary of £60 per annum, eventually raised to £100. A Mrs Flower, who had been a missionary in India for several years, became matron, and a Mr Harris gave medical attendance. Additional accommodation was secured at the Camden Town Congregational Chapel and a playground was also provided nearby. The curriculum included Physics, English Literature, Singing, German, Drawing and Algebra.

The Revd George Stallworthy, who went to the school, recollected the place in the 1850s at a school reunion in 1907. He recalled arriving there from Buckingham via Euston. He notes that what was had been nos 1/2 were now 36/35.

'Over the steps leading up to the door of no. 1 was an iron arch, having at its apex an extinguisher, used in older days for putting out the flaming links that lighted the home of the festive citizen. The iron extinguisher was still there a few years ago. Now it appears to have rusted through and broken off. Two or three months ago I re-explored the locality, using the Hampstead tube, that has nearly proved the death of the yellow omnibuses that for those 50 years of more have been passing to and fro monotonously across the end of the crescent.

The statue to Cobden at the end of the High Street is of more recent date [1868]. A low-roofed shed flanking Arlington Street was, no doubt, the said festive citizen's coach-house and stable, and it now served as a small covered playroom for the forty-eight boys here from the ends of the earth'.

Stallworthy worked as a missionary in Samoa and sent his own sons to the school, which had by then removed to Blackheath, where it can still be seen in all its Victorian glory.

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society. The Editor is John Richardson, 32 Ellington Street, N7 8PL (Tel: 020-7607 1628, Fax: 020-7609 6451), to whom all contributions should be sent.

The Secretary of the Society is Mrs Jane Ramsay, Garden Flat, 62 Fellows Road, NW3, 3LJ (020 7586 4436), and the Treasurer is Marion Bennathan, 24 Murray Mews, NW1 9RJ. The Editor of the *Camden History Review* is Peter Woodford, 1 Akenside Road, NW3 5BS (020-7435 2088). The Society is a registered charity - number 261044



# newsletter

No 181

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Sep 2000

## Ragged Schools

Thurs 21 Sept, 7.30pm  
Pax Lodge, Lyndhurst Road, NW3  
(just past the old Lyndhurst Chapel on same side)

Ragged Schools were an important element in the educational facilities before the advent of state education for young people in 1870. While many children from working class homes went to National or British Schools, for which there was a small fee, there were many from homes too poor to afford these or else were excluded for their appearance and social status. The Ragged Schools, very much a creature of the Earl of Shaftesbury, were established precisely for these multitudes of children. The best known in Camden was the Field Lane School in Holborn.

Almost always a Ragged School would be in run down cheap accommodation, the children taught by volunteers who had to contend with large class sizes of all ages. No-one would pretend that the education received was advanced, but it was a start.

This phase of English education is the subject of our September talk. The speaker will be Richard Dunn who is Curator of the Ragged School Museum Trust.

## Catching the Past

Thurs 19 October, 7.30pm  
Burgh House, New End Square NW3

Members will know that for the past year the Society has been organising a millennium event called *Catching the Past*. Its purpose was to persuade as many people as possible to put on paper their memories of Camden, or else to encourage erudite articles on Camden subjects, and to photograph all the borough's streets. We also staged a large exhibition at St Pancras on Camden themes. We were fortunate to employ Robert Leon, a West Hampstead resident and also a member of this Society, to co-ordinate two of the strands of the project. He organised the interviews with Camden residents and managed the virtually 100% photographic coverage of Camden streets.

At the end of September the project comes to an end and Robert can retire with much solid work done. In October he will speak on the results of the scheme and of the many interesting reactions he encountered.

## Advance Notice

Please put these dates in your diary:  
Thurs 16 November at the Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church, the launch of the Society's new publication on the St Giles area of Holborn.  
Thurs 14 Dec at Burgh House, Dr Ann Saunders on the monuments of St Paul's Cathedral.

## The New Review

Enclosed with this *Newsletter* is the new edition of the *Camden History Review*. It is a bumper edition, containing much of the work resulting from research during the *Catching the Past* millennium project. It is free to members as part of their subscription, but otherwise costs £6.95.

The *Review* has a very wide range of subjects. These include the Governesses' Institution in Prince of Wales Road – the building is still there (and the iron gates with the Institutions initials intertwined). Robin Woolven has tackled the formidable subject of Baroness Castle who, as Barbara Betts, was a St Pancras councillor. Yvonne Melnick writes about the women's suffrage movement in Camden, and Marianne Colloms and Dick Weindling summarise the history of West End Fair which eventually was banned because it became too popular. The editor of the immaculate *Review*, Dr Peter Woodford, himself contributes an article on the early history of the St Pancras Civic Society and Isobel Watson writes about one of the property developers in the borough – they are not generally written about. All this and more in a splendid edition designed impeccably as usual by Ivor Kamlisch.

## A new Meetings Secretary

Members who were present at the AGM will know that we had to leave open the post of Meetings Secretary for lack of a nomination or volunteer. Fortunately, Dr Peter Woodford, our Editor of Publications, has volunteered to take over part of the duties and will deal with the programme itself, booking speakers etc. We still need to find someone to organise the 'on-site' arrangements - booking the hall, making sure we have projector (that works) etc.

## Walking the Bounds

Hopefully, this edition of the *Newsletter* will arrive with you before 16 September, because that is the day when the mayor, Cllr Heather Johnson, will be walking the bounds of the borough in aid of charity. She will not be alone, of course, and she invites everyone who wishes to join in. The walk is the successor of the old 'Beating the Bounds' annual or bi-annual ceremony when the civic dignitaries walked the bounds of their parish to ensure that boundary marks were still in place and that there had not been encroachments of buildings or fences. In those days the civic representatives were accompanied by charity school children, who did any repair work to the markers and, allegedly, were frequently beaten so as to fix the memory of markers in their heads.

However, nowadays the mayor's walk, in aid of the Mayor's Charity, takes in the whole of the Camden area – all 17 miles of boundary. There will be frequent stops for refreshment, including that at the Flask in Highgate where the 17th-century tradition of 'Swearing on the Horns' will be enacted, using the ancient horns now in the possession of the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution.

Please join in for all or part of the route. It is good fun. For details ring Caroline Bartram at the Mayor's Office, Camden Town Hall on 7974 1989.

## Lavenham and Long Melford

Joan Barraclough reports, as usual, on the Society's annual outing in August, this time to the town of Lavenham and to Long Melford house:

The historic farming and wool town of Lavenham and the Tudor manor of Long Melford were joint destinations this year. Lavenham came first with a visit to the historic Guildhall, finely preserved. This contains what must be one of the best museums in the country. CHS members were able to see a historic kitchen with no oven, but a roasting spit and iron pot on a tripod, plus heavy crocks and basins. There were various tools and implements made by the local blacksmith, including a dough scraper. There were many illustrations of the fine horses that worked the local farms. The importance of the head horseman and his work was made clear. Where other animals were concerned, documents and bills preserved showed the modest sum paid to a local vet – 25s for castrating 25 calves.

There were pictures of the local sugar beet factory, which failed. In spite of this, sugar beet has long been established as an important crop in East Anglia.

Wool next with a loom preserved, plus samples of very scratchy cloth. It was noted that Dutch weavers coming in introduced a variety of wool fabrics, to the annoyance of broadcloth suppliers. This was in about 1794, but broadcloth survived another century.

Time allowed a walk about town. It was noted that the external beams were painted or lime-washed the same colour as the brick or plaster between. Black painted beams were a Victorian innovation. Many very lovely houses could be seen on the walk down to one of the finest wool country churches, from which, and the coach park, there was the short ride to Long Melford.

The house, once a monastic property, is perfect Tudor externally. Within it contains historic rooms and much of the very fine china our eighteenth-century ancestors liked so much. The house passed from the Cordell family into the hands of Sir Hyde Parker, one of Nelson's admirals, actually his senior and the recipient of a turbot on the way to Copenhagen in an attempt to curry favour so that he would permit the second-in-command to have his own way. There is a portrait of this fierce-looking character. His subordinate has to make do with an engraving.

Cream tea as usual, then home.

## Crossing the Thames

The theme of this year's LAMAS local history conference is crossing the Thames – by boat or by bridge. It includes talks on the legendarily rude watermen, the bridges both old and new, and a talk by our own Roger Cline on railway bridges.

The conference is on Saturday, 18 November, from 10am to 4.30pm at the Museum of London. Tickets, which include tea, cost £4. They are available from the Local History Conference, 36 Church Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7PX. Cheques should be made out to the London & Middlesex Archaeological Society.

## A NEW BULLETIN

The new *Bulletin* of the Hornsey Historical Society has recently been published. Its 40 pages include an article on Gladstone's connection with a church in Stroud Green and an interesting survey by Roy Hidson of the public libraries in Hornsey from 1896-1939. He points out that though permissive legislation to establish public libraries was passed in 1850, many London areas had to wait nearly fifty years for one to open. The decision to establish (or usually *not* establish) them was taken in a referendum of local residents who held property over a certain rateable value. The chief opponents were not the affluent but the small tradesmen who tended also to run the local authority.

In the case of Hornsey the proposal for a public library came from a leading member of Hornsey Council who in June 1895 organised at his own expense a ballot of five Hornsey wards, obtaining 1400 votes in favour out of 1800 polled. Despite the reluctance of the Council, Burt obliged them to adopt the Act in 1896.

Copies of the latest *Bulletin* may be obtained from the HHS at The Old Schoolhouse, 136 Tottenham Lane N8 7EL price £3.00 plus 75p postage.

## Research at a Dead End

Using the facilities held by the Camden Local Studies Library and the range of other sources of information in London it is normally possible to find a satisfactory answer to most of the questions raised in local history research but occasionally a full stop is reached. This example may be of interest as it shows just how worthwhile it is to take research a stage further but also how annoying it is to reach a dead end.

Some years ago I was researching 'Air Raid Precautions in St Pancras' and produced, amongst other papers, an article on that subject in *the Camden History Review* No 16 published in 1989. I used to spend my lunch hours in Richard Knight's then small Holborn Local Studies office reading the comprehensive minutes of the St Pancras Borough Council on ARP across the metropolitan borough. One entry that I did not follow up at the time was the fact that in April 1938 the Council recruited a 'Mr Henry George D. Barrett BSc (Eng) of 220a Camden Road, aged 38 with 11 years' experience and an instructor and lecturer as an Assistant Air Raid Precautions Organiser'. In June 1938 Barrett qualified as an Instructor First Class at the Government Anti-Gas School at Fairfield, Glos. A report a month later had him leading the North St Pancras ARP Organisation. In October 1938 he resigned from his post in St Pancras having obtained a similar post in Bournemouth and I wondered just why he moved on so soon after joining the efficient St Pancras ARP organisation.

When, some years later, I knocked the dust off my St Pancras ARP papers, I wrote to the Local Studies Librarian in Bournemouth to see if she had any information on Mr Barrett and I was intrigued when I received a fascinating and comprehensive reply. They told me that they had the unpublished memoirs of Mr Harry Mears who had been the wartime ARP Controller in Bournemouth and was later mayor of the town for three years. Mears recorded that:

'In December 1939 his wife, being of partly German extraction and a fluent German speaker, entered Bournemouth Town Hall and overheard a man speaking on the telephone in German. On opening the door she recognised the speaker as Mr Barrett. This she related to Mr Mears who took it further. As a result of a completely unrelated traffic offence the police searched Mr Barrett's flat and a number of incriminating items were discovered including material in German. The Home Office then took over and Barrett was taken away and he was never seen in Bournemouth again. A letter of resignation was received.'

After the war Harry Mears was able to discover that Barrett 'had been a German agent and that all the information he had given for the post in Bournemouth was false.' He was unable to find out what happened to Barrett.

The Bournemouth local paper of 3 June 1940 reported that Barrett had resigned from his appointment and

had left the town while, on 13 August 1940, the *Daily Express* reported Barrett's arrest in Bournemouth without giving further details. Next day the local paper reported that he 'had been detained by Bournemouth police under Defence Regulations. It is not known what charges, if any, will be preferred against him' and there the trail vanishes. I have checked the court records without finding any reference to Barrett and the Home Office, after some two months' research, regretted that it was unable to find any trace of him or his case. So what is the truth about Mr Barrett who cut his ARP teeth in St Pancras? I was able to confirm that there was a Mr Henry Barrett who was awarded a BSc (Eng) degree at London University in 1934 and St Pancras Council recorded his success at the Anti-Gas School course, so I wonder what was the false information that Barrett supplied in his application to Bournemouth Council. Incidentally, Baroness Castle, who was on the St Pancras ARP Committee in 1940 (see the current *Review*) does not recall the case of the Borough's former employee so, do any members recall anything of Mr Barrett or of any relatives, colleagues or friends that he might have had in St Pancras?

**Robin Woolven**

## A BELSIZE EXHIBITION

The Belsize Conservation Area Committee is staging an exhibition about Belsize Park in the restored Hampstead Town Hall from 31 October. The venue will be the glass covered atrium which joins the old and new parts of the building, a light-bathed space ideal for exhibitions.

## CATCHING UP WITH CATCHING THE PAST

Those who missed the Society's exhibition in June, when it was staged at St Pancras Chambers, have a second chance to see part of it. A section is now erected at the Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre at Holborn Library, Theobalds Road and will be there until 21 October.

## ACTIVE IN SEVEN DIALS

The Seven Dials Monument Charity is an active body. It is enthusiastically encouraging the 'greening' of the Seven Dials area with plants, window boxes etc, and in this they have been assisted by pupils of two local primary schools.

Also the celebrated artist, David Gentleman, has generously donated a drawing of the Monument and its surroundings, the printing of which was donated by Westerham Press. This monochrome image in a limited edition of 150 (size 21" x 24") is available at £75 - all income to the Charity. Copies may be obtained from the Seven Dials Monument Charity, 68 Dean Street, W1V 5HD. (Tel: 7437 5512). Your cheque should be made out to the Seven Dials Monument Charity.

The Charity is also campaigning for better street facilities and a reduction in traffic in the area.

## Two new Blue Plaques

Camden has a large number of blue plaques and, as new ones usually now record more recent celebrities, the borough will probably acquire proportionately more than most other central London areas.

On 14 August the crime writer P.D. James unveiled a plaque at the former home of Dorothy L. Sayers who, among other things, was the creator of Lord Peter Wimsey. She lived at 24 Great James Street in Holborn from 1921 to 1929, and from her flat there produced seven of her works including her first novel *Whose Body?* (1923), the book that introduces Wimsey.

Another plaque recently unveiled was to the poet, Sylvia Plath at the house where she lived with her husband Ted Hughes, 7 Chalcot Square in 1960-61. Sylvia Plath committed suicide around the corner at 23 Fitzroy Road in 1963.

## Weedington Road Memories

Mrs Joan Brinson, who lives in Chadstone, Victoria, Australia, has sent us childhood memories of her husband, who was born in 1920, and his sister Florence, aged 88.

Her husband recalls a character called Old Trusty: 'I am not sure where Old Trusty lived; I know that it was not very far from where we lived at Weedington Road. I rather think it was one of the little roads behind Rhyll Street School – I know he lived in an attic room which he also used as a kitchen to make his sweets. My favourites were a soft melting fudge, crunchy coconut toffee and golden honeycomb. It was always a difficult choice when the maximum outlay was usually a half-penny or at the most one penny. Trusty had a pitch at the Gillies Street end of Queens Crescent Market. He was crippled by a bad limp and carried his wares to the Market in an old pram. In the winter he adapted his pram to carry a coke brazier, and served small roast potatoes and roast chestnuts in season. These he served in newspaper squares to save burnt fingers. I was born in 1920 and my early memories of Trusty must have happened when I was about five years old.'

His sister recalls Christmas parties in the 1920s: 'I lived at 138 Weedington Road, Kentish Town, my great-uncle Albert – known to us as Uncle Ob, and his wife and six children lived further up Weedington Road at No. 204. Their home was the rooms above a stable which housed two large horses and coal carts. Outside was a cobbled yard where firewood was chopped. Entry to the coal yard was through a wooden door that was cut out of the two great timber gates that were on the front of the cobbled yard. It was necessary to open these doors daily to let the horses out. The horses drew the big carts down to the coal yards at the railway to pick up coal in hundred-weight sacks. These were loaded onto the carts and sold around the streets of Kentish Town. I think it must have been very

hard work for my uncles. They were not very big men. When we went to 204 in the evening the big gates were closed for the night and entry was up a wooden staircase on the outside of the house.

At Christmas time other aunts and uncles came with their children. The men of the family would bring out great beams of wood and shore up the ceiling of the stable to take the strain of the family when festivities began. My cousins Kate and Nellie both played the ancient piano and we all sang the old music hall songs well into the small hours. *Nellie Dean* was a great favourite to end up with, usually followed by a spirited rendering of *Knees up Mother Brown* in which old and young all took part. We only lived down the road a bit but we always slept over at Christmas, head to tail with cousins, some of whom we only saw at these gatherings.'

## DICKENS vs JOHNSON

An interesting lunchtime debate will take place at the Bishopsgate Institute, 230 Bishopsgate, EC2 on 26 October, beginning at 1pm. It is organised by Dr Johnson's House Trust. Was Dickens or Dr Johnson the London Man of the Millennium? Supporters argue their respective cases and will question a panel of experts who include Frank Delaney, Beryl Bainbridge and Dr Graham Nicholls. A light sandwich lunch will be provided for those who purchase a ticket before 9 October. Tickets available from the House (7353 3745) at £7.00. Cheques to be made to Dr Johnson's House Trust.

## PRIMROSE HILL REMEMBERED

Volunteer residents of the Primrose Hill area have put together during 2000 a book of local people's recollections. The book is virtually ready to go to the printer on disc. The group has been unsuccessful in applications to Millennium charities, and is now seeking donations towards the costs of printing (which we in this Society are well aware are considerable). Those donating £20 or more will receive a free copy of the book when published. Should there be any profits from the project, these will go to Friends of Chalk Farm Library and other local institutions.

Donations will be welcomed by Sieska Cowdrey, 46a King Henry's Road, NW3 3RP. Please make cheques payable to *Primrose Hill Remembered*, giving your name, address and postcode for acknowledgement and your free copy if the contribution is £20 or more.

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The Society is a registered charity - number 261044

# newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 182

Nov 2000

## The Streets of St Giles

Thurs 16 November, 7.30pm  
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church  
235 Shaftesbury Avenue WC2

The Holborn research group is to be congratulated on completing its trilogy of books on the streets of Holborn. Out now is *The Streets of St Giles*, the last volume devoted to the former borough of Holborn, taking in some of the oldest parts of Camden. The area stretches from Charing Cross Road to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and from New Oxford Street down to an irregular border in the Seven Dials/Covent Garden quarter.

It should be said that the area has not been tackled seriously since Parton's large history of 1832 and the *Survey of London* volumes before the 1st World War, so there have been many changes to notice, not the least being the remarkable resurgence of Seven Dials which, within recent memory, was a down market, rather slummy area ripe for redevelopment. It has been bolstered by the financial success of the Covent Garden transformation and yet has retained many of its old buildings. Provided that you haven't yet reached your spending limit on your credit card, it is a pleasure to walk round.

As is usual when we launch a 'Streets' book, members of the group concerned will be giving their own individual stories and finds in a series of short talks in November. Our venue is the spectacular church at the foot of Gower Street or the top of Shaftesbury Avenue, whichever way you want to view it.

## The Monuments of St Paul's Cathedral

Thurs 14 Dec, 7.30pm  
Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

Our end-of-year talk is again by Dr Ann Saunders, one of our vice-presidents. This time she has chosen to speak on the monuments of St Paul's, which include the statues of John Howard, the prison reformer, Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Turner. Wellington is featured, of course, with a monument in a chapel there, as well as being buried in the crypt. Nelson, too, is buried in the crypt, in a sarcophagus

made originally (but not used) for Cardinal Wolsey. There are many, now almost forgotten, notables who have monuments in the cathedral – military and naval figures, surgeons and physicians, scholars and historians. Our speaker will, we are sure, put much flesh and bone on these stone figures.

## Advance Notice

Peter Woodford has been working hard to arrange a programme covering year 2001. So, once you have your new diaries, please put in the following talks, though more details will, of course, be published in subsequent *Newsletters*:

*18 Jan:* at British Medical Association (BMA) House in Tavistock Square, talk by Mandy Mordue on the History of Tavistock House (the forerunner of BMA House, in which Dickens was once a resident). For the sake of security BMA need a list of those attending. Therefore if you wish to be there, please lodge your name as soon as possible with Peter Woodford either by telephone on 7435 2088, or fax 7794 6695, or else write to him at 1 Akenside Road, NW3 5BS.

*15 Feb:* Marjorie Caygill, on the history of the Reading Room of the British Museum. This will be at a new venue, Netherhall House, on the corner of Maresfield Gardens and Nutley Terrace.

*15 March:* Gillian Tindall on the magistrates' courts of Hampstead and Clerkenwell. At Burgh House.

*27 April:* Heather Creaton on the observations of travellers who have visited London. In the Haldane Room at University College London.

*17 May:* The history of the Pearl Assurance and the conversion of their magnificent building in Holborn. This will be an opportunity to view the building in its new guise as the Renaissance Chancery Court Hotel. We also hope to have a talk from one of the architects responsible for its conversion.

*21 June:* For our AGM, we are at the restored Hampstead Town Hall and our speaker will be Dr Stephen Inwood, London historian.

*19 July:* David Hayes on the St Giles Missionaries. This again will be at a new venue – the church hall in Kelly Street, Kentish Town.

August: Summer outing, to be announced.

20 Sep: Roger Cline on the 'New Streets' of London, at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church.

18 Oct: Philip Ward-Jackson on Baron Marochetti's sculptures of engineers in London, including Robert Stephenson at Euston station. Venue is Netherhall House.

15 Nov: Guy Holborn on Lincoln's Inn, featuring, most unusually, that extra-parochial enclave's relations with its Holborn neighbours. At Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church.

## The Good Grave Guide

The new CHS publication, *The Good Grave Guide to Hampstead Cemetery, Fortune Green*, is just out. The research team began work some eight years ago but the massive project was ultimately completed by local authors Marianne Colloms and Dick Weindling. Opened in 1876, Hampstead Cemetery covers some 25 acres and is one of London's most important cemeteries. In addition to the linked pair of chapels, 18 monuments have been listed by English Heritage. The cemetery is currently undergoing major refurbishment as a result of an award from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This fascinating illustrated guide provides biographies of 230 people, of local and international interest, who are buried there. And if you decide to visit the Cemetery, detailed maps will help you locate a particular grave. Artists, architects, writers and inventors are all represented as well as the more unusual – an inscription in shorthand from a grieving husband, and a ventriloquist buried along with his favourite dummy. There's a history of the site and also an interesting exposition of the symbolism of the various motifs and carvings on the headstones, their meanings now largely forgotten.

You can find in the guide, and in the Cemetery of course, the founder of *Exchange & Mart*, a famous editor of the *Ham & High*, a boy scout bugler, a leader of the CND and a master butcher with shops around north London.

The book, handsomely designed as usual by Ivor Kamlish, is on sale at meetings or in local bookshops for £7.95, or else may be obtained, plus p & p, from Sheila Ayres, CHS Publications (7794 1735).

## Surfing the Net

If you are tracing your family tree, interested in local history or wanting to find out more about other archive services, you can now search the internet in the Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre. There are now two computers there with links to family and local history websites, including the Public Record Office, National Monuments Record, Guildhall Li-

brary, London Metropolitan Archives, Family Search, Familia (family history resources) and Archon (archive services). If you are interested, call the Centre on 020 7974 6342 to book a PC. The Centre is at Holborn Library, Theobalds Road WC1.

## STOCKTAKING CLOSURE

The Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre will be closed for stocktaking from 6 December until 10 December.

## THE ENIGMA OF KING'S CROSS

The above is the alluring title of a talk to be given by Robert Leon at Chalk Farm Library, Sharpleshall Street, NW1 on Friday 17 November at 7pm. All members of the public are welcome, but admission is by ticket only at £1. Tickets may be reserved by telephoning 7974 6526 on Mondays, Fridays or Saturdays – on those days tickets may also be booked at the library itself. Robert Leon, as we are sure you will need no reminding, has just completed his year's co-ordination of the Society's *Catching the Past* project.

## Visions of Hampstead

To celebrate Hampstead Museum's 21st birthday during Millennium year, the Museum is staging an exhibition reflecting on the twentieth century. *Visions of Hampstead* exhibits artistic views of Hampstead street scenes spanning every decade of the last century. It shows how artists have repeatedly been attracted to the picturesque corners such as New End, Well Walk, Flask Walk, Heath Street and Holly Bush. Also on display are original watercolours by Mary Hill, whose coloured views of Hampstead made very popular postcards in the 1930s.

Please ring 020 7431 0144 for opening hours.

## Africans in 18th-century London

London's Black population in the late 18th century is variously estimated by modern historians at between 5,000 and 14,000. Whatever the true figure, many Africans must have lived in the then urbanised areas of what is now Camden.

In *Camden History Review* 12, Gene Adams described the life of the Black girl Dido Belle, who for some thirty years lived at Kenwood House as a protégé of the 1st Earl Mansfield. The Earl, who considered slavery "odious", was noted for his 1772 judgement that no runaway slave in England could be 'repatriated' to the colonies against his will. A liberated slave named Ignatius Sancho is recorded as having referred to Mansfield's house as his "sweet box at Caen Wood".

The same Sancho is among the subjects of a fascinating new article, in the *Westminster History Review*\*, by Vincent Carretta, Professor of English at the Univer-

sity of Maryland. Carretta stresses the severe obstacles faced by the researcher into 18th-century Black Londoners – the lack of ethnicity data in contemporary public records; the difficulty in tracing those using ‘slave names’ given by their former ‘owners’; and the fact that most were “servants or labourers who, because of their social status rather than their ethnic origin, tended to be poor and illiterate, thus leaving few traces in written records”.

Carretta describes the lives of three freed slaves lucky enough to gain an education and make their mark through their writings on the evils of slavery. Though Westminster-oriented, his account strays occasionally across the Camden boundary, and two of his subjects had Camden connections. Sancho became a protégé of the 2nd Duke of Montagu, a regular visitor to Montagu House in Great Russell Street (on the site of the British Museum) and later the valet of a subsequent Duke. After his death in 1780, some of Sancho’s correspondence was published by Frances Crewe, a well-known resident of Hampstead (CHR10, p5).

Olaudah Equiano (*aka* Gustavus Vassa), whose autobiography was published in 1789, lived at various London addresses, including 13 Tottenham Street (Fitzrovia) in 1788 and, a year earlier after a downturn in his fortunes, at 53 Baldwin’s Gardens, Holborn. (Incidentally, nearby Theobalds Road was the much later birthplace of the Black composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, famed for his *Hiawatha’s Wedding*, born at the now demolished no. 15 in 1875.)

For a full story of three remarkable 18th-century African Britons, and for an insight into London’s (and Camden’s) long multi-ethnic past, Prof. Carretta’s article is highly recommended.

**David Hayes**

\*‘Friends of Freedom: three African-British men of letters in eighteenth-century Westminster’, in *Westminster History Review* 3 (Westminster City Archives 1999).

Mike Pentelow also writes to say that he was instrumental, through the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, in getting a Green Plaque erected to Olaudah Equiano at 73 Riding House Street (just outside Camden). However, Equiano had Camden associations. He was a slave (captured from what is now Nigeria) who gained his freedom and settled at 13 Tottenham Street in 1788, and then at what is now the medical school in Riding House Street the following year. In that year he published his autobiography chronicling his experiences of slavery, which was reprinted 17 times during his lifetime.

Mr Pentelow, in his speech at the unveiling of the Equiano plaque, noted that the African National Congress had its London office at 49/51 Rathbone Street during the 1960s and 1970s, and that Thabo Mbeki worked there from 1967 to 1970. In 1990, Mbeki was in the delegation which finally negotiated the end of apartheid.

(Mike Pentelow is keen to trace the precise address of the Cock Inn in Grafton Way (Street) at the beginning of the 19th century.)

## THE SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY

May I point out an error on p.1 of the *Newsletter* where it deals with the South Place Ethical Society in which it says that the Society, ‘founded in 1839 by Moncure Conway, a liberal Christian, became agnostic 30 years later’.

Conway was born in Virginia, America in 1832, so he could not have founded a society in 1839. His connection with the South Place Society began in 1863 when he was in London and visited William Johnson Fox, formerly MP for Oldham, and from 1817 to 1852 pastor of South Place Unitarian Chapel, Finsbury. In 1834 this chapel was legally recognised as Unitarian, under W.J. Fox.

Fox died in 1864 and Moncure Conway, assisted by Fox’s artist daughter, Mrs Bridell Fox, gave lectures in Fox’s honour in South Place. The congregation invited Conway to be its pastor, and he officiated there from 1864 to 1884. After a gap of eight years he became pastor there once more from 1892 to 1897. During that last period Conway brought to fruition the work of Fox, and in 1895 the South Place Ethical Society was legally and officially recognised. When Conway Hall was built in the 1920s it became the permanent home of the SPES.

Incidentally, the musical element which is maintained at Conway Hall, could be said to have begun in South Place, Finsbury, in 1841, the work of the musician, Eliza Flower, her poet sister, Sarah Flower Adams, and William Johnson Fox. The Sunday afternoon chamber concerts in Conway Hall in some way reflect the songs and music of those services, over forty years before.

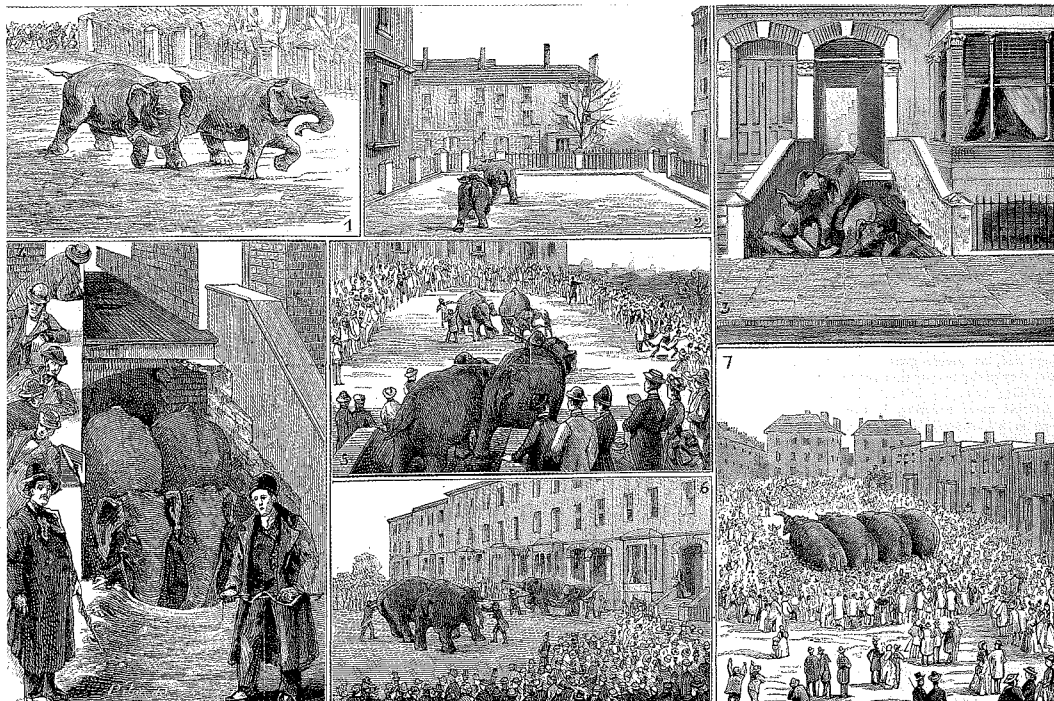
**Brenda Colloms**

## THE DR CRIPPEN STORY

John Ashton of Just Television is currently researching a series of TV programmes about famous crimes, including the Dr Crippen case. He is hoping to speak to people knowledgeable about the story and the local area. If you have anything to offer, please contact him on 7916 6200.

## THE GOODALL STORY

This *Newsletter* may reach you in time to be interested in attending a meeting of the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society on 15 November at the Lecture Theatre 2, Science Block, Bart’s Medical School, Charterhouse Square, EC1. There will be a talk that evening (6.30pm) by Michael Goodall about the firm of his ancestors, Goodall & Son, premier printers of playing cards which had its factory in Royal College Street. Goodalls were also Britain’s first commercial producers of Christmas cards. Further information 8692 8512.



1. They Break Loose, and Run Gaily Down Cathcart Hill.—2. They Enter a Passage Leading from Francis Terrace to Pemberton Gardens.—3. They Fall Into a Cellar in Pemberton Gardens.—4. Here They Remain.—5. Until the Arrival of Help.—6. When They are Pulled Out of the Cellar.—7. And Go Off Contentedly with their Rescuers.  
THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF TWO RUNAWAY ELEPHANTS IN KENTISH TOWN, LONDON

John Richardson has this pictures of elephants at large in Kentish Town, printed in *The Graphic* on 15 March 1884, but does not know the circumstances. Why were they in Camden Town, unless landed off the Midland Railway there en route for London Zoo?

## NEW ADDITIONS

In its newsletter *Backtracks*, the Local Studies and Archives Centre at Holborn library details some of its more recent acquisition. (During the year the Centre added 3793 new items to the collection and some 7 metres of archives!)

New additions include *Greater London House* produced by Resolution Property, which details the recent restoration of the old Black Cat building at Mornington Crescent, and two unpublished volumes of recollections by Gordon Goold about growing up in Holborn and Bloomsbury during the 1920s and 1930s.

## AROUND SOUTH END GREEN

Joyce Maxwell has recently compiled a pamphlet detailing a walk around the South End Green area. She throws her long memory back over the years and records the changing street scenes of this area. Copies are available from Ms Frances Hetherington, 22 Wentworth Mansions, Keats Grove, NW3, price £1.25 inc p & p.

## THE PEOPLE'S CONCERT SOCIETY

Alan Bartley is researching the history of the People's Concert Society (PCS) which was active in London between 1878 and 1935, mainly in working class areas of the metropolis. He wonders if any member has information.

He has established via the Annual Reports of the South Place Ethical Society and the monthly reports of the Bermondsey Settlement that the PCS was arrang-

ing recitals of classical music in many areas in the East End, Bermondsey, Greenwich, Holloway, Poplar, Stepney and Whitechapel. By the time of the 1909 season it had given over 1,200 concerts. But he has not managed to track down any further information re venues, performers or audience response.

He also knows that the Society was established by middle/upper class people in tune, presumably, with the Victorian concept of rational recreation for the lower classes. The name of the Society's secretary during the Edwardian years was Mrs Arthur Smith who, as Ethel Robinson, ran a concert agency from Wigmore Street.

Mr Bartley may be contacted at 15 Sutherlands, Newbury, Berks RG14 7RL (01635 41142), but if any member has information relevant to Camden, please also let us put it in the *Newsletter*.

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society. The Editor is John Richardson, 32 Ellington Street, N7 8PL (Tel: 020-7607 1628, Fax: 020-7609 6451), to whom all contributions should be sent.

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