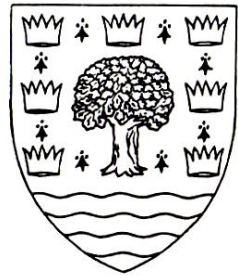


# Ilford Historical Society

## Newsletter No.133 August 2020



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Our website can be found at: <http://ilfordhistoricalsociety.weebly.com/>

Dear All

2020 will be a year none of us will ever forget, the year when the whole world fell silent as the coronavirus swept across the globe. In the UK lock-down started in mid-March and only key workers and those looking after their children were permitted to venture outside, other than for food when a 2-metre social distance was the rule. Many people used the internet to work from home but exercise was permitted in an effort to avoid the whole nation becoming 'couch potatoes'. This was a time when the doctors and nurses of the National Health Service were applauded every Thursday night for facing the very real danger of catching this terrible illness themselves while looking after the sick and dying. Mourners could not attend funerals, lonely older people were isolated and many found good neighbours willing to deliver shopping.

Lock-down was gradually eased during June and July but the virus remains a very real threat.

Our last meeting was held in March. **See back page for our plans for the Autumn.**



Ilford Town Centre deserted on Bank Holiday Monday 25 May 2020, photographed by Colin Runeckles

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The *Ilford Recorder* website on 27 July 2020, quoting the Office for National Statistics data, shows that in Redbridge there were a total of 312 deaths linked to the virus from March to June, which is a rate of 143.7 deaths per 100,000 people. Redbridge's death rate ranked 15<sup>th</sup> of the 32 London boroughs. Newham had a rate of 201.6 deaths per 100,000 people, the second highest in London after Brent. In that four-month period the area with the highest Covid-19 death toll in Redbridge was South Park (21). Newbury Park, Ilford South West, and Chadwell Heath West each had 20 deaths.



## The 1918-9 'Spanish Flu' Pandemic

The ongoing Coronavirus pandemic has focused attention on the world-wide influenza outbreak of more than a century ago which was named 'Spanish flu.' The annual reports written by the local Medical Officer of Health can be found on the Wellcome Library's website and the 1918 edition has a commentary about the influenza epidemic (as it was called then).

Firstly, the figures. The 1918 report cites the cause of death for Ilford residents from influenza as 249. In the following year's report, the corresponding figure is given as 64. Compare that with the average for those years available from 1912 to 1930 but excluding those two years which can be calculated as roughly 18-19. Although there were spikes of over 30 in two separate years, four years show deaths from the disease as 10 or under. The report notes "the common occurrence to find a whole family ill at the same time." But interestingly, neither Claybury nor West Ham Mental Hospitals reported many deaths and were thus largely unaffected.

Compare and contrast this extract from the commentary with issues raised recently:

*"The epidemic showed up in a glaring manner our national lack of organisation in combating disease. Nurses were impossible to obtain and those available betook themselves to the houses of the well-to-do, attracted by the high wages current.*

*The poorer parts of the community were left without nurses, with disastrous results.*

*As regards Ilford as much was done as was possible. Posters and handbills were issued containing advice as to the prevention of the disease. The schools were closed from 23<sup>rd</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November. As much paid and voluntary help as could be obtained was utilised in home-nursing. The accommodation at the*

*Isolation Hospital only permitted of a few cases being admitted. Much credit is due to the local doctors for their untiring efforts to combat the disease."*

© Dr Colin Runeckles, 2 June 2020

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Extract from the Annual Report of the Medical Officer for Health for 1918. These can be found in the link below.

<https://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/browse/?place=Ilford&startYear=1848&endYear=1972&page=1>

## Sources for Local History – Public Health Reports

An annual report to the council was written by the Medical Officer of Health and contains much usual information to researchers. The Wellcome Library's website holds 52 issues of the report relating to Ilford between 1893 and 1964 – all of which are fully accessible and can be downloaded.<sup>1</sup>

The first, compiled by James Shimeld, is very basic and comprises a handwritten summary and two tables covering births, deaths, population, and new cases of infectious diseases. The quantity of information about all aspects of the health of the district increased markedly over the following years. As an example, by 1900 there is a table showing cause of death and by age group which is how we can see the increases in the numbers of deaths though influenza in 1918-9.

As well as the usual sections of commentary and tables in each report, space is sometimes allocated in some reports for a fuller analysis of certain issues e.g. health of children at school, and milk supply. In each report there is an attempt to estimate the total population of the district. Accurate figures are measured only by the Census. I haven't yet attempted to review the numbers but this could be a useful indicator to illustrate the rapid growth of the town. There are also (for example in 1905) lists of the factories and workshops detailing the type of business being carried out. Slaughter houses, bakehouses, and dairies feature in practically every issue – sometimes for reasons which are not that pleasant to contemplate. See for example, the 1895-7 reports which tell of an issue of a bakehouse which had a stable very close by. Too close, in fact, for the medical officer's satisfaction.

As a researcher into streets and houses, I was particularly interested to see a section in 1898 on houses that were closed and some demolished. We are told that "three houses in Philpots Court were closed and five pulled down" – this was a small alleyway off Ilford Lane just round the corner from the High Road, the entrance to which can be seen in a number of photographs of the time.<sup>2</sup> Also, there are houses in Valentines Row closed and subsequently demolished; and eight houses in White Row were closed. Both of these terraces were located on the south side of Ley Street close to the railway line.

At times there are pieces of information that can be connected. In 1905 the sinking of a well in Mill Road is noted; and a bit further on it is said that ten houses known as Roding Cottages were to be demolished to make way for the erection of Pumping Station for the South Essex Water Company. Roding Cottages were on the west side of Mill Road close to the railway line.

Reading the reports, I can see many possibilities for more research to be carried out on certain aspects but in 1912 the then Medical Officer, Cornelius Stovin, took the opportunity to write about how his work has been hampered by certain individuals on the Council. He was, according to the following year's report written by his successor, suspended on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1913. One to look at in more detail!

In summary, the local health reports are not only an invaluable source of statistical information about all aspects of the health of Ilford's residents but also act as a commentary on the life of Ilford itself.

© *Dr Colin Runeckles, 2 June 2020*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wellcomelibrary.org/moh/browse/?place=Ilford&startYear=1848&endYear=1972&page=1> More issues may be held in the Heritage Centre but due to current restrictions I am unable to check. (5 Aug 2020)

<sup>2</sup> See p17 in *The Old Photographs Series* compiled by Dowling and Morris.



## Do you know a wizard?

The Chapel was recently contacted by a gentleman researching his family history, and who had come across the unusual name of Matilda Wizard, which interested him, even though she was not a member of his family tree.



Hospital Chapel almshouses, photographed in June 1988, Georgina Green

Matilda is first shown as living in the Chapel's almshouses in 1924 with Charles James Wizard, who she had married in 1899. Her maiden name was Matilda Carter. Charles died in 1933, but election registers show that Matilda continued to live there in '4 St Mary's Chapel Square, Ilford UD' until at least 1939.

Her death at the ripe old age of 86 was in January 1945 at Stisted Hall, near Braintree.

Stisted Hall is a grade II\* listed building dating from 1825, which became a care home in 1939 and is now known as Prince Edward Duke of Kent Court. It appears to have Masonic connections.

Matilda and Charles would have lived both in the pre-1927 and the current almshouses. During most of that time the Chaplain was the Revd. W J Sparrow Simpson.

As the Chapel had no medical care facilities I wonder if there was a regular link between it and Stisted Hall, to which people were transferred if they needed extra care?

*Thanks to the Redbridge Heritage Centre for providing some of this information.*

© *Martin Fairhurst, 10 March 2020*

## Westbury Road – Beyond Bricks and Mortar

As a resident for more than a quarter of a century I was very interested in Colin Runeckles' article about Westbury Road (April 2018), though naturally disappointed that he has debunked the legend of the road being built by the builders working on the estate running north from Ilford Station. That story was told to me by a neighbour within days of my moving in to no.114.

Fascinated by the story, I consulted the 1901 census to see if any houses were occupied by those in the building trade. I found only six out of the 46 houses listed, though it is possible that after the work was finished in 1897 the builders moved on. I was, nevertheless, pleased to discover that my house was occupied by a painter and paper-hanger, with his wife and two children. A plumber and three carpenters also lived in the road. According to the legend, two slightly larger houses on the corner were occupied by foremen, and indeed the householder of one of them is described as "overlooker on estate". Also present was his wife and lodgers – a ground foreman, a bricklayer, his wife and daughter, a total of six in what is still quite a small house.

By 1911 my painter and paper-hanger had moved away. Two of the carpenters remained, but the third carpenter and the plumber had moved. However, they had been replaced by another plumber and another carpenter. The foreman and his household had left.

It is interesting to examine where the first occupants of Westbury Road came from.

Unsurprisingly, most had moved out from the East End, but there are some surprises. Only 9 were born in Ilford. Many came from other parts of London and the home counties – Essex, Kent, Hertfordshire, Surrey and Middlesex. Residents from further afield include people from Scotland, Ireland, Derby, Birmingham, Somerset, Devon, Yorkshire, Shropshire, Pembrokeshire, Berwick on Tweed, Liverpool, Norwich, Newmarket and the Isle of Wight. Three residents were born overseas, in India, South Africa and Australia. Altogether 190 people were counted, in 45 houses.

In 1939 the majority of the houses were occupied by two or three people, though six people managed to squeeze into No.91. A neighbour, who has lived in the road since the 1930s, has given me a piece of paper dated 1937, a *Certificate of Local Authority as to number constituting the Permitted Number of Persons in relation to a House*, which states that “the number of persons constituting the Permitted Number of persons in relation to the above-named Premises is 7½ (seven and one half)”.

(See illustration page 6)

Some years ago, in anticipation of a boundary dispute with a neighbour, I obtained the deeds to my house. Fortunately the dispute never happened, but the deeds made interesting reading.

In 1894 Malcolm George Ross purchased a 999 year lease on a terrace of ten houses from A. Cameron Corbett. Mr. Ross sold my house in 1907 – I do not know whether the other houses in the terrace were sold at the same time.



Westbury Road, June 2020, photographed by Madeline Seviour

The sale was administered by the Masters in Lunacy, lawyers appointed to manage the business affairs of those deemed incapable. Mr. Ross was described in the deeds as “of unsound mind”.

He was born in 1865 in Limehouse, the youngest of seven children of Charles Ross and his wife Jane. In 1871 they lived in Burdett Road, Mile End. Charles Ross was a stone and ballast contractor, and barge owner. By 1881 they had moved to West Ham: sixteen year-old Malcolm was a student. In 1891 the family was living at St. Leonards on Sea, Sussex – Malcolm, at the age of 27, had no occupation.

On 6 July 1892 Malcolm married Emma Goodrich, a widow with a seven-year-old son, Eustace. In 1893 Malcolm’s name appeared in the register of the Institution of Electrical Engineers – until 1896 he was stated to be living in Hastings, but in 1897 had returned to Mile End, living in Burdett Road.

In the 1901 census Emma Ross and Eustace were at 33 Ingleby Road, Ilford, but Malcolm was a boarder in a house in Torquay; aged 37 he was described as a “retired electrical engineer”. Could this be the first hint that all was not well with Malcolm Ross? How could he have “retired” in the usual sense in his thirties? Had he become unable to work? Was the house in Torquay some kind of care home?

His father, Charles, had died in 1891, leaving an estate valued at just over £38,000, a substantial amount in those days. Possibly Malcolm received a bequest, but Charles Ross had a wife and seven children –if the estate had been divided equally Malcolm would have received under £5,000, but I do not know if that was the case. However, it might have been an inheritance that enabled him to invest in property in Westbury Road.

In the 1911 census Emma was still at 33 Ingleby Road, but Malcolm was absent.

He died on 5 May 1938 at Peckham House, Camberwell. The National Probate Calendar records his home address as 33 Ingleby Road, Ilford. In the 1939 Register No.33 was unoccupied – I do not know what happened to Emma.

Peckham House was an asylum for the mentally ill. Built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, a grand country house with extensive grounds, it was sold in 1826 “for development as a private asylum for mentally ill people, with the house itself set aside for private patients and with outhouses for paupers.” Initially 172 paupers and 40 private patients were accommodated.

I searched the 1911 census record for Peckham House in search of Malcolm George Ross but with no success. For reasons of confidentiality the patients were listed by initials only, plus ages and places of birth. No M.G.R., nor anyone with the correct age and place of birth, appears in the list.

Whenever it was that Malcolm Ross was admitted to an asylum, he would most likely have been a private patient. Could that be why he sold the property – or properties – in Westbury Road in 1907, to fund his care? Perhaps he entered another asylum around 1907, moving to Peckham later. Peckham House operated as an asylum until 1952; the building was demolished in 1954.

So a sad ending to the story of the first owner of my house. The price, leasehold, in 1897, was £155; the sale in 1907 raised £320 for Malcolm Ross. It was sold again in 1919 for £185. In May 1936 the price was £300, but two months later it was re-sold for £420 – clearly a successful speculative investment. In 1975 the then freeholder, a company named “Hearts of Oak” offered leaseholders in Westbury Road the opportunity of buying the freehold, which most accepted.

© *Madeline Seviour*, 28 March 2020

#### Sources:

Censuses 1871 – 1911

The 1939 Register

GRO Indexes of births, marriages and deaths

London Church of England Marriages & Banns  
(London Metropolitan Archives)

National Probate Calendar

Website of The Peckham Society

B. 11505

**BOROUGH OF ILFORD.**

Certificate of Local Authority as to number constituting the Permitted Number of Persons in relation to a House.

**HOUSING ACT, 1935 (SECTION 62)**

To A. E. Wood, Esq.  
106, Wandstead Lane,  
Ilford.

The (Landlord) (Occupier) of the Premises\* 72, Westbury Road

I hereby inform you, in reply to your application dated the 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, 1937, that the number of persons constituting the Permitted Number of persons in relation to the above-named Premises is 7 1/2 persons. THIS PERMITTED NUMBER IS CONDITIONAL UPON A SINGLE LETTING.

Dated this 21<sup>st</sup> day of May, 1937.

A. H. G. BURTON, M.D. *AMB*  
Medical Officer of Health.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICES,  
VALENTINES MANSION,  
ILFORD.

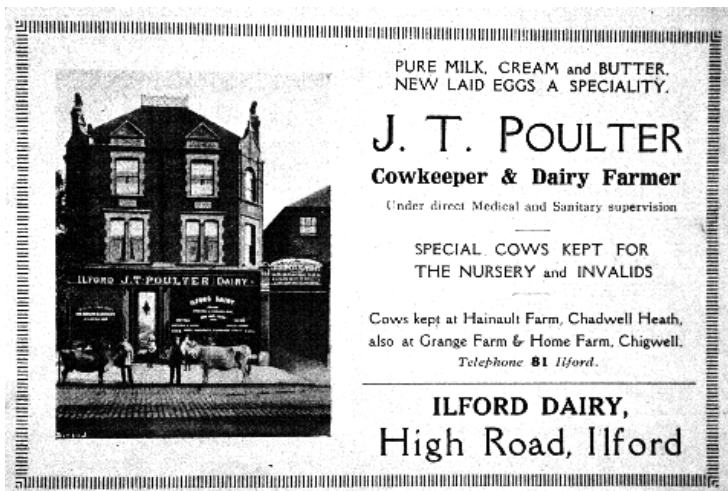
\* Description and Address of Premises.

## Update from Redbridge Museum & Heritage Centre

Our work is still continuing during lockdown although most staff are on furlough apart from Gerard (the Manager) and Nishat (Museum Officer). Nishat continues to regularly update our very active facebook and twitter posts so please sign up to find out more. We're preparing a 360° virtual tour of the Museum for Open House in September so you can visit from the comfort of your own home! We're also starting to upload many of the films made by the Museum to YouTube including one made in 2008 about Fairheads.

The Museum featured in a recent BBC News film about the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The BBC wanted a reconstruction of a 1930s kitchen for part of the film and contacted the Museum. Filming was arranged in March just before lockdown. The 1930s kitchen which is part of the Museum's permanent exhibition can be seen at 08:58 minutes into this remarkable story of 'The Schoolgirl Who Helped To Win A War' although she did not have any personal connection to Redbridge.

One recent intriguing enquiry was from a member of the public who was befriending people during lockdown. She was in touch with a lady who wanted to find out the location of a mica factory she had worked in during the Second World War. Mica, a type of mineral, is used in a huge variety of products which included insulators on valves for radios. In her recollections, the factory was close to the Town Hall and she thought it had been a farm. I suggested that instead it



may have been converted from a dairy or stables as she remembers working above in a hayloft while downstairs were metal rings for tying up animals. Ilford had many small backstreet dairies before fridges were common and I was aware of J.T. Poulter Dairy, 245 High Road, Ilford (see advert) but there were also several stables for horse-drawn shop delivery wagons.

I searched the 1939 Register and found two young women who lived in Ilford and worked as 'mica splitters' which

was a good start. Next I searched the list of local building plans held by the Heritage Centre and in February 1951, the Essex Mica Co. Ltd submitted a plan to Ilford Council for lavatories followed the next month by plans for ladies' lavatories. The plans were submitted by Mrs Norwood so we will need to check if she was the owner of the company. But where was the location of the factory? None other than 245 High Road – the former site of Poulter Dairy! In the Museum collection and on display we have a milk measure from the Poulter Dairy.

The mica factory (and former Poulter dairy) was located a few doors down from the General Havelock pub and immediately to the right of the Thompson (Meeting) Rooms which had been erected in 1846. On the 1962 OS map works and warehouses are indicated for the mica factory and the 'Little Theatre' is next door which operated between 1954-68. The whole site, which presumably included the mica factory, was demolished and redeveloped as the Centreway site of shops and flats from 1969-71. Have any members heard of the mica factory before?

© Gerard Greene, Museum & Heritage Centre Manager, 10 July 2020



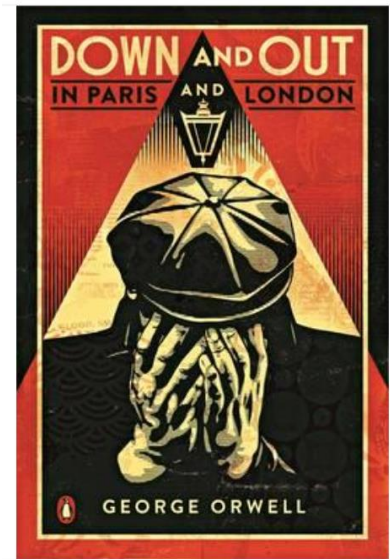
## Ilford's Homeless - past and present!

In November 2018, the *Ilford Recorder* reported that there were 7,100 homeless people in Ilford. An increase, they suggested, which was up by 13.6% on the previous year. More disconcerting was the figure of 449 homeless people who had died the previous year and a figure that suggested 65 rough sleepers were present in the borough. At this time the British Asian Christian Association was working towards beginning a 'Meals for the homeless project'.

Ilford is not the biggest or oldest town in London, but it must have been large enough to attract rough sleepers in the 1920s as Eric Arthur Blair, more commonly known by his pen name George Orwell, mentioned our small town in his first ever publication *Down and out in Paris and London*. I learned about the book after a discussion with Pub Landlord, David Christof, at the 'Prince of Wales' on Green Lane - piquing my interest in Ilford's historic help for the homeless.

In his book, Orwell suggests that many venues were dingy and quite unhygienic places where homeless people often had to pay a small fee for an overnight stay. However, they were all very well-used (there were few affordable alternatives) and visitors queued for hours. No doubt, these establishments provided an element of safety, respite from the cold and a chance to eat some hot food, even if it was only butter and toast.

Orwell and his contemporaries in the 1920s never used the word homeless but used names like tramp, vagrant or beggars. A more savoury list of names is given in the glossary of Orwell's book. He describes the various types of temporary residence available to them such as Casual wards/Spikes where homeless people would be required to work for their stay. Homeless people would have to break rocks with a hammer and spike or tease ropes with a spike, and it is believed by some that this is where the nickname spike came from. Another more disconcerting belief is that a spike was the implement that held drunk people upright at the casual wards.



On entering a spike homeless people would have to remove their clothes (which would be fumigated). They would usually be crammed into rooms with bunk beds or mattresses and locked in their rooms overnight like prisoners. Food would be very basic, with bread and dripping (fat from roasted meat) and either a cup of tea, hot chocolate or skilly (hot water and oats - the least favourite).

One such spike referred to in George Orwell's book is from a town he has named Romton. By estimating the geographical route taken by George Orwell in his description, it is easy to surmise that the place named Romton is Romford and that Edbury is Edmonton. It is believed Orwell disguised the name for legal reasons and later publications do state that some names were changed at the insistence of publishers.

The Romford Spike had no beds and Orwell described the shock he felt when he realised their absence - so this could not have been a common feature. Descriptions of how 50 homeless people were forced to share water in two tubs to wash themselves, would horrify homeless people currently in temporary housing, induced by the COVID-19 lockdown. However, if a homeless person opted to have a full bath they would be given a bath full of clean water.



Spikes/Casual wards were linked to workhouses financed by local parish councils to help local people. As 'tramps' were itinerant, they were only allowed to stay for one or two nights at a few locations. Tramp Majors were responsible for managing the Spikes and they would be supervised by a Board of Guardians who were elected. They could refuse entry to 'tramps and vagrants' which could lead to their arrest and detainment on hard labour for two weeks.

Orwell describes in his book, how after his stay at the Romford Spike he was given a food voucher from the Tramp Major, to use at a coffee shop in Ilford. For me this is fascinating. Primarily it reveals how my town of birth was involved in helping rough sleepers as far back as the 1920s. Moreover, it describes a phenomenon I have not been able to find anywhere else. Vouchers to be used in coffee shops by the homeless back then are not described anywhere else to my knowledge.

I have undertaken some research of coffee shops in Ilford around the 1920s using Kelly's Directories, with my sister Naomi. We discovered one that was in the Red Lion Hotel on Cranbrook Road up until 1925 but then disappears from historical records.

There was however an Aerated Bread Company (founded 1864)<sup>3</sup> tea shop at 96 High Road, and J Lyons (founded 1884) tea shop at 165 High Road, from 1927. My best estimation is that one of these tea shops was frequented by Orwell between 1928 - 1929.<sup>4</sup>

If I was to hazard a guess, I would suggest the ABC was the establishment mentioned. They were more egalitarian and were already providing free meals to their workers and were the first establishment that permitted woman in their building unaccompanied - this was unusual for the time. Moreover, the ABC would have been the larger of the two businesses and was located extremely close to the Salvation Army in Ilford, which would have exposed them to homeless people. Furthermore, the ABC was less expensive and attracted people on lower incomes than J Lyons, so having homeless visitors would cause less friction with existing clients.

The Salvation Army, is a group still pivotal in the care of Redbridge's homeless people in modern times. Ilford's Salvation Army celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2015, suggesting the church began in 1865 - by the 1920s they would have been quite well established.

To commemorate the presence of George Orwell in Ilford while researching for his first ever publication, the British Asian Christian Association will be redesigning the mural on the side-wall at Clementswood Community Centre in the coming weeks. Denise Humphries, a former homeless person they have helped get off the streets, will be painting the mural.

© **Hannah Chowdhry, 20 May 2020**

At the time of writing Hannah is a student at Kantor King Solomon High School and a Member of Redbridge Youth Council who volunteers with the British Asian Christian Association.

A more detailed version of her article can be found at

<https://hannahchowdhry.blogspot.com/2020/05/ilfords-homeless-past-and-present.html>



Hannah outside Tesco in Fleet Street with the 'ghost' of the ABC sign just visible, June 2020

<sup>3</sup> Sir James Hawkey, Bt, of Woodford was Vice-Chairman of the Aerated Bread Company, (the ABC), and during the General Strike in 1926 he organised the Eastern Food Depot which was situated at Woodford Green.

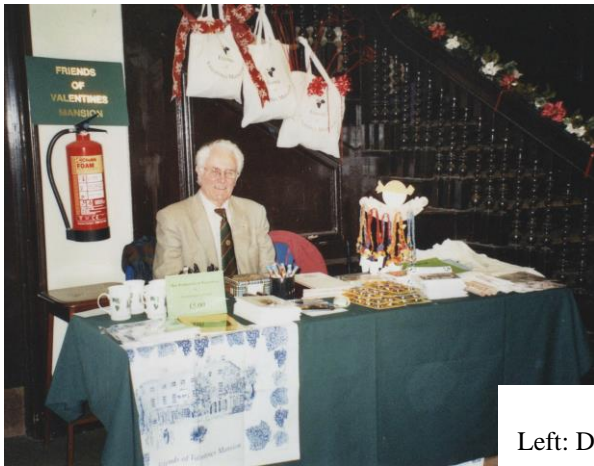
<sup>4</sup> There was a change in numbering for buildings on Ilford High Road.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions I cannot confirm if that would have affected my research on former coffee shops.

## Valentines Mansion and its 'Friends' 2000 - 2020

On 26 February 2020 the Friends of Valentines Mansion celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their formation with a special gathering in the Mansion. For guests, as well as bubbly and birthday cake, there was a presentation of the role of the FOVM's past, present and future given by members of the committee. It covered how the group was formed following a suggestion by the then Valentines Mansion Steering Group (later the Valentines Mansion Trust) to be a support group for their bid to develop Valentines Mansion for the community.

The FOVM committee was formed under the leadership of the late Peter Wright and with his drive and passion of the building the FOVM became a force in their own right, staging many events to make people aware of this truly special building. The income from these events, May Fairs, History Days, Wine-tasting, Quizzes, Talks, Musical Evenings and Christmas events grew and we decided to start our own restoration project in support of, what was now the LBR's Heritage Lottery Bid.



Above: Kitchen Range, 8 Sept 2001, before restoration  
Left: Dec 2008, Dick Small, Treasurer of the Friends since it started

Our first project was the huge Victorian Kitchen Range and we canvassed support from local businesses, which sadly was not forthcoming but again local people and groups donated and we were able to go ahead. The Victorian Kitchen is now one of the most popular areas for visitors and many of the items 'dressing' the area were donated by our members. FOVM made every attempt to make people locally and further afield aware of the Mansion by advertising events nationally, giving talks and hiring stands at History Fairs. Many other projects followed.

When LBR submitted their final Bid to Heritage Lottery it included the evidence of our commitment. After much holding of breath the Bid was granted and the restoration of the building and the surrounding Park began. During this period the Project Manager Nigel Burch, who had supported us throughout, allowed us to visit the site and view the discoveries which had been uncovered.



At last on Sunday 14 February 2009 Valentines Mansion was opened to the public, the FOVM members having had a preview the day

before. It was quite magical to approach the restored building as the snow was falling and see it glowing with light. We had done it! You could image Dr and Mrs Ingleby, returning from an evening out to a sight like this.

We are delighted to say FOVM are still here with many of the original committee members working to support the Mansion with gifts of furniture, restorations, etc.

It was a difficult time financially nationwide when the building first opened but its future now looks good and with the Manager Jan Ellery in place plus her dedicated staff and a bank of volunteers, plus us, it has an exciting future.



7 Sept 2002, Shirley Chinaloy & Cherry Hooker  
preparing food for a Friends event



Jan Ellery and Cherry Hooker presenting  
Georgina Green with her certificate, 26 Feb 2020

However the highlight of that day back in February this year was a special acknowledgement of the part Georgina Green has played in the Mansion's history and how much we owe to her. Because of her meticulous research we now know so much about the building and the families that lived there. Our thanks and that of the management of Valentines Mansion took the form of a sealed scroll giving her The Freedom of Valentines Mansion, an honour no other person has had.

© *Cherry Hooker, Chairman Friends of Valentines Mansion, 6 June 2020*

## What's in a Photo?

Open any book on the history of Ilford and there will more than likely be photos of how the town used to be. Often there will be a caption, usually short, telling the viewer the location and maybe an approximate date of when the photo was taken. Do you agree with the caption or is there something in it that makes you think that something isn't quite right? Maybe there are elements – a shop name, perhaps - that means you can place it or maybe so much has changed that it is impossible to picture what it looks like now.

IHS member Carol Franklin has been working on providing more detailed descriptions for some of the photos held by the Heritage Section in Redbridge Central Library using her knowledge of the area and resources available e.g. Kelly's Directories, phone books etc. Having access to the original photos enables the fine detail to be brought out.

But one day when looking through pictures of Ilford Lane I came across one that not only had I not seen before but could see that there were so many facets to it, it made me want to write about it at length.



## The Photo



Reproduced by kind permission of the Redbridge Heritage Centre.

Firstly, the location. This was taken at the top of Ilford Lane looking north towards Station Approach. If you turned the corner to the left, you'd be going down Ilford Hill; to the right, into the High Road.

What immediately caught my eye in this picture – and it's not a viewpoint seen very often – is just how *narrow* the top of Ilford Lane was at the time compared to the same place today i.e. the top of Chapel Road. There are only two lanes in the photo compared with the four there are now. In the middle of the road we can see the tramlines and above the overhead lines for the trams which began running through Ilford in 1903.

### Let's look at what else is in the photo going from left to right.

On the left is a wall. This belonged to the grounds of Salisbury House, at the time the home of James Shimeld who was the Medical Officer of Health for Ilford until 1901.<sup>5</sup> Upon Shimeld's death in May 1905, the land was sold to W.P.Griggs almost immediately afterwards and he had the house demolished and Broadway Market built in its place. These shops are still standing today. Beyond this wall can be seen the distinctive wall of the bank on the corner of Ilford Hill. This was built in 1896 for London and County Banking – now of course it is a branch of Nat West. In the middle of the picture is the famous clock tower. Donated by W.P.Griggs and built in 1901, it stood in that position until 1923 when it was moved to South Park but destroyed by

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<sup>5</sup> Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health 1905, p29

enemy action in WWII. To the right of the clock tower stairs going down can be seen. To where? The toilets were further down at the entrance to Roden Street. Was this an alternative entrance?

Behind the clock tower are shops built, I think, in the late 1880s or early 1890s. It's hard to be certain since the plans do not appear to be in the Heritage Centre although there is a plan for alterations to 5 & 6 approved in May 1891 and submitted by G.Radford who ran a grocer's shop for many years. Had it been open we could have seen the shop of Prentis and Company to the left of the clock tower. Next to this – and partially obscured looks like a poster for a show or film but even with consulting local newspapers it might be difficult to ascertain what it was advertising. The “Borou...” is the Borough Theatre in Stratford High Street. We are more fortunate with the shop to the right. The shop sign tells us that this is H.B.Pick, and if we were unsure as to the business being carried out, above the sign can be seen the last few letters of “foreign” and “cigars” and half of the word “cigarettes.” Henry Pick ran his tobacconist shop on the corner of the Broadway from c.1894 until 1905.

To the right of Station Approach are what were thought to be tram sheds but in fact belonged to a cab proprietor. The plan for the layout of Station Road approved in June 1896 shows this as a “Cab stand G.E.R.” – the plan for a covered yard having been approved the year before. The plan was submitted by Mr Emery who is listed in the 1899 Kelly's Essex Directory as a cab proprietor in Ley Street and Station Road. Around 1910 shops were built on this site and then eventually it was taken over by Bodgers after the Second World War. Just in front of the sheds and on the corner of Station Road, the 1897-built three storey Cranbrook Buildings can be seen.

Possibly the most interesting building in the photo is the one on the corner of Ilford Lane and the High Road. Just below the road sign for Ilford Lane on the wall can be seen the sign for Newstead and Drayton. These were tailors who had been in that shop since about 1901. Now, at this point it is worth saying that occasionally there are links between photos that enhance the viewing and understanding of both. In the first volume of the Old Photographs Series there is a photo of this corner taken shortly after this one but from the other direction – probably from the Ilford Hill side of the clock tower.<sup>6</sup> In that photo the side wall has been covered by posters to the extent that the windows that can be seen above are hidden completely. Carol has dated the photo to 1905 based on the poster for the Borough Theatre. If we needed further evidence that Newstead and Drayton were no longer there, there is a large sign above the upper floor stating that “These premises will be opened by Messrs Gruchy & Wright. The well-known City tailors of 64 & 65 Bread Street, Cheapside.” There are other posters on the front of the shop including one for Gruchy & Wright. Sadly, for Gruchy & Wright, they would have only have been occupying that shop for a year or so before plans were approved for the building of the Ilford Hippodrome. This involved not only demolishing old cottages in Ilford Lane down as far as The Hope PH but also the shop we can see in the photo and the one next to it – Fred May's saddler business.

## Dating

From what I have discussed above it would appear that the photo was taken between the introduction of trams; and the vacating of the shop by Newstead and Drayton, and the approval of the plans for Broadway Market. That is to say, between March 1903 and late-1905. We can only speculate as to *why* this photo was taken but it remains a possibility that it was the novelty of seeing tram line and wires in Ilford that made our photographer capture the scene for posterity.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ilford* (Dowling and Harris, 1994), p.17

## Continuity vs Change

One of the questions that can be asked of any photo is whether the location is recognisable or whether so much has changed that this is impossible without further investigation. In the photo above the only connection to what we can still see today are the walls of the bank and Cranbrook Buildings and these are but fleeting glimpses. But anyone with a knowledge of Ilford might be aware of the clock tower even though they almost certainly wouldn't have seen it in this location.

Salisbury House appears on the Tithe Award of Barking of 1847 and was likely to be a good deal older than that. Even if they had been rebuilt, shops had been on the corner of Ilford Lane and the High Road for many decades or even centuries. Within a year or so of this photo Salisbury House had been replaced by the Broadway Market, and the shop on the right demolished before its replacement by the Ilford Hippodrome. This picture captures the top of Ilford Lane before it is changed forever after looking much the same for possibly sixty or more years.

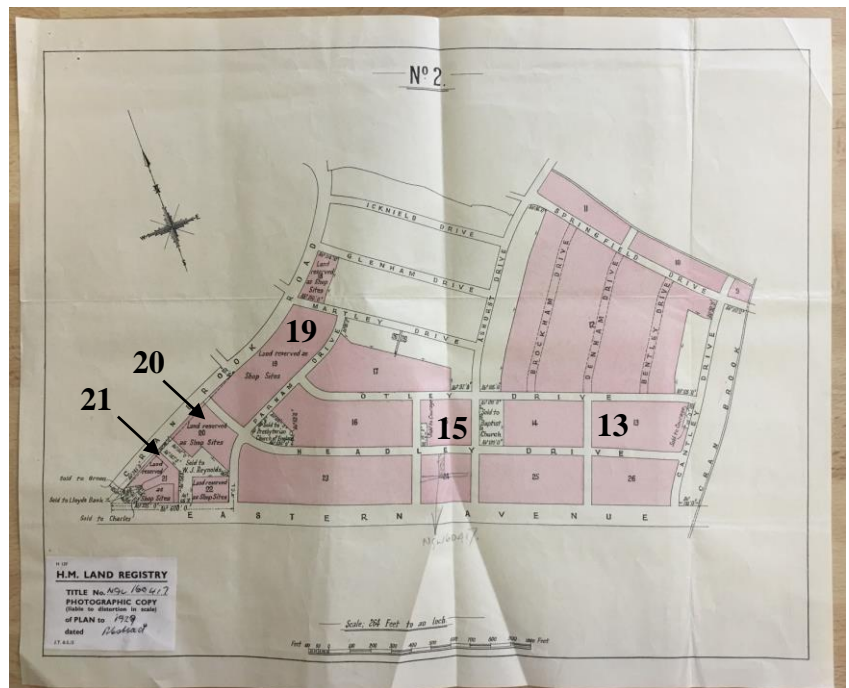
So, what's in a photo? The answer is a lot – but it needs to be unlocked in order to tell a story.

© Dr Colin Runeckles, 18 April 2020

## H.M. Land Registry Plan of North East Gants Hill, 1929

For those of you who don't know me, I have run a printing business in Gants Hill for over 35 years. I was also brought up in Cranbrook Road North in the 60s, 70s and 80s, and my mother still lives in the same house. I have always had an interest in the local history of the area, and have spent many years collecting photos and articles of interest, which I have on permanent display in the reception of my shop. I also upload photos daily on the Gants Hill Facebook page which I administer.

An old friend, whose late parents lived at 56 Headley Drive, recently brought me a file of papers which she no longer had any need for, relating to this property which consisted mainly of title deeds dating back to 1935. Also included in the package was a plan of the area dated 1929 (*right*) which I don't believe has been previously available to the public. I will donate the papers to the Redbridge Heritage Centre in due course, but I wanted to first share the plan and interesting points of note with you.



The name Gants Hill was still not recognised by the Ordnance Survey maps as a place name up to 1939. The only mention would have been Gants Hill Cottage which stood on the site of the King George V Public House. We can see on the plan (sectors 15 and 13) that Courage had purchased a couple of plots, presumably for public houses.

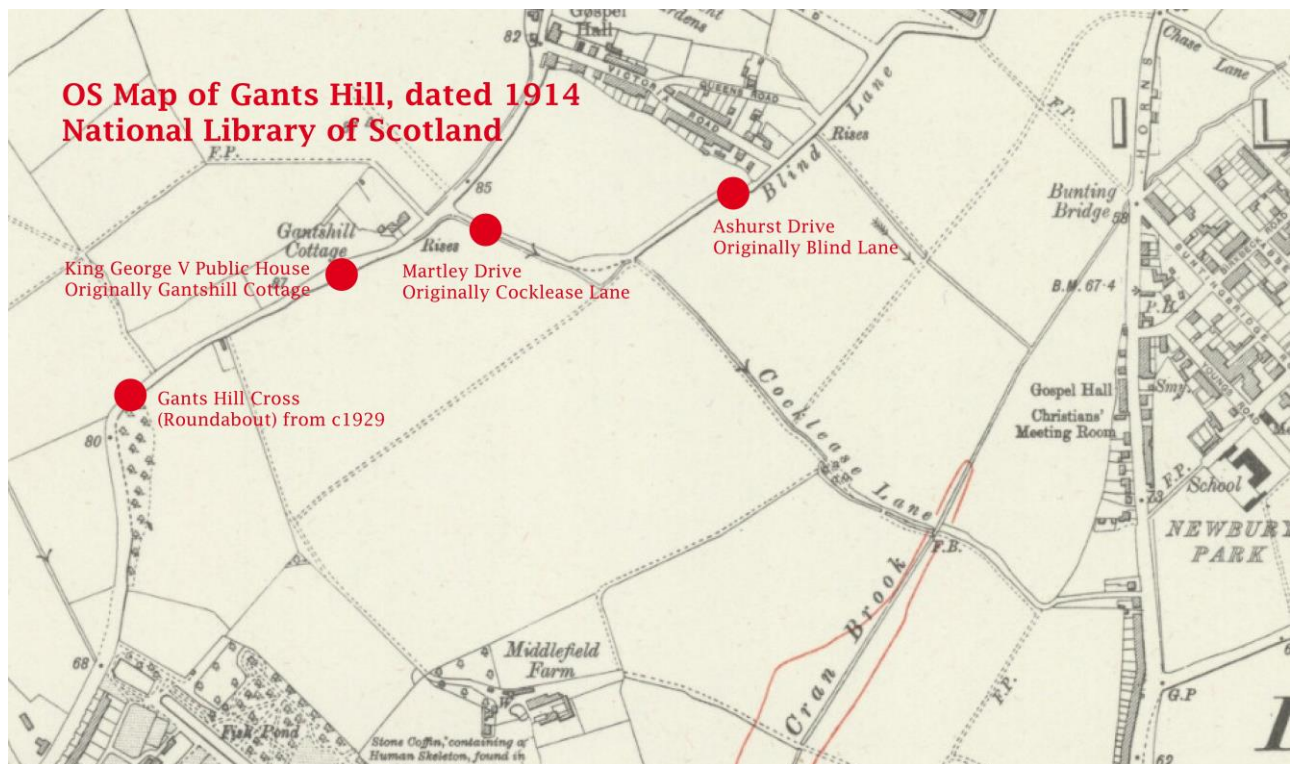


On the extreme right of the plan, by Cantley Drive (subsequently renamed Cantley Gardens) we can see the route of the Cran Brook, which is a tributary of the River Roding.

The block of land at the junction of Cranbrook Road and Eastern Avenue (20 and 21) hadn't yet been developed, but plots were sold and/or reserved, most noticeably for Lloyds Bank which still stands proudly on the corner to this day. The plot next door to the bank at, what is today, 432 Cranbrook Road, had been "sold to Green". I am wondering whether this was the same Green Stores situated at Beehive Corner at that time although there is no evidence of this when looking at Kelly's Directory. The shops leading north from Lloyds Bank were not developed until the 1950s and served as the ground floor offices of Pearl Assurance Company for many years.

As we move up Cranbrook Road, the block bordered by Parham Drive (19 on the plan) was, according to the 1929 plan, originally land reserved for shops. As it transpired, shops were never developed. Instead, the Library opened in 1938, next to that was eventually the Car Park, and at the junction of Martley Drive and Cranbrook Road, became the Recreation Ground.

Moving up a little further, the area between Martley Drive and Glenham Drive was also reserved for shops, but in the course of time, residential houses were built on this area. It clearly illustrates on an OS Map published in 1914 (*below*), that Martley Drive was known as Cocklease Lane. This ancient lane ran into Ashurst Drive (originally Blind Lane) and then all the way to Horns Road in Barkingside.



In addition, and with the kind help of Dr Colin Runeckles, plans from Ilford Urban District Council dated 10 February 1903 showed some altogether different ideas for housing in this area. Although Waremead Road still exists, other road names appear on this map including Walmer Road (which became Gants Hill Crescent), and in between Waremead Road and Walmer Road was Woodfield Road which never became a road at all!

Other roads leading off Waremead Road included Ringwold Road and Buckland Road which also never saw the light of day.

© Vincent Goodman, 3 May 2020

## Generous Donation

We were delighted to hear that Hannah Chowdhry won a Rotary International Young Citizen Award which came with a prize of £300. She divided this 50/50 between Ilford Historical Society and British Asian Christian Association and the IHS committee would like to thank her for her most generous donation. (See pages 8 – 9)

## IHS Programme for Autumn 2020

**14 September 2020** *The Tithe Maps of Redbridge.* The maps and accompanying awards give us fascinating details of the ownership, occupation and land use of the borough in the 1840s. by Georgina Green, author and Ilford HS Vice President.

Because we have no definite date when we can meet again in the Central Library, this talk will be presented by ZOOM, a free computer programme. Please contact the society's secretary, [janetseward@aol.com](mailto:janetseward@aol.com) if you wish to see it. We are happy to help you install Zoom if you do not already have it.

**We hope to recommence our meetings from October with the programme as below. Please check our website: <http://ilfordhistoricalsociety.weebly.com/> for updates.**

**12 October 2020** *The Odyssey of a Suburban Church.* A History of the Wycliffe Church from the Minories to the Cranbrook Road, Ilford. by Michael Potter, Ilford HS member.



**9 November 2020** *The Sale of Clements 1879.* The Beginnings of Modern Ilford. by Dr Colin Runeckles, local historian and Ilford HS member.

**14 December 2020** *Christmas Social, Quiz & “Will no one rid me of this turbulent priest?”* Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered 29 December 1170 in Canterbury Cathedral and 2020 is the 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary. by Jef Page President, Ilford HS.

**11 January 2021** *Domestic Service in an Essex Town, Ilford 1850-1914.* by Rev John Brown, St Lukes church, Ilford.

Under normal circumstances, our regular monthly meetings are held in the Gloucester Room, Ilford Central Library, Clements Road, Ilford IG1 1EA on the second Monday of each month, September – May. There are often walks for members in the summer. Refreshments are served from 7pm and we start our talks at 7.30pm, finishing at 9pm. Visitors welcome, £3 per meeting, with free refreshments.

Membership of the society costs £10 this year which includes 3 newsletters.

Assuming we meet in person, the next newsletter will be available at our December meeting or from the editor (details on page 1) after 15<sup>th</sup> December.



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