

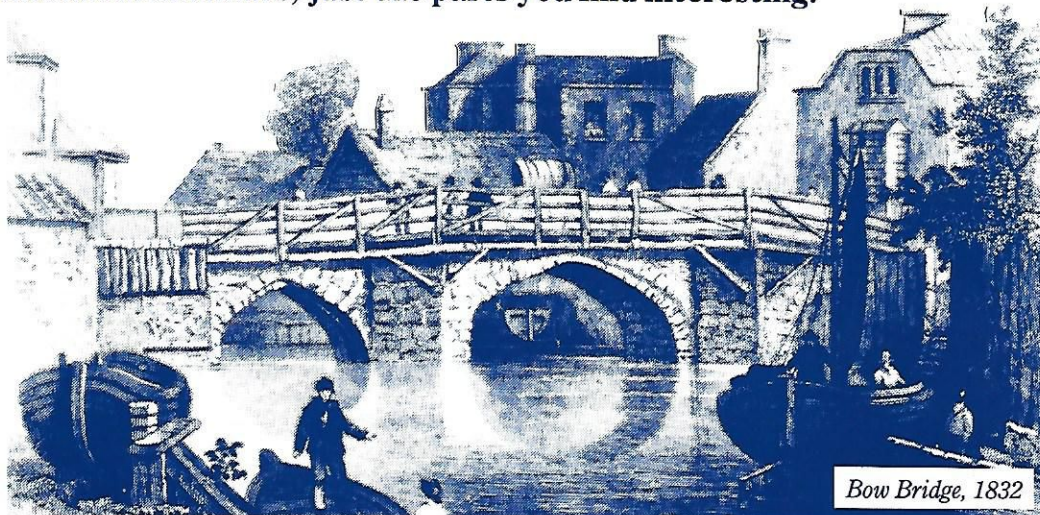


# BOW HERITAGE TRAIL

**BOW NEIGHBOURHOOD** has set up a signposted Heritage Trail throughout the Neighbourhood: it is hoped that local people will both find it of interest and will derive from it a sense of pride in the place in which they live or work. The trail follows a route through the Bow area passing places of historical interest, which will be marked with oval plaques commemorating any historical person or incident associated with the place. The trail will also link the various "Historic Buildings of Bow" plaques.

**THE HERITAGE TRAIL** should be both informative and interesting, letting people know some of the little known facts about the area, and marking out the better known for visitors. It can be used either as an educational resource, or as a pointer for an interesting Sunday afternoon stroll.

**THERE WILL** be some signposts to point the direction of the trail, and to invite people to join it, but the full route is shown on the accompanying map. There are three starting points for the trail; Bow Police Station (near Bow Road Tube); Besso House (near Mile End Tube); and the Neighbourhood Centre at Gladstone Place in the Roman Road. You can follow the trail in any direction, and don't have to walk it all, (that would take about six hours) just the parts you find interesting.



*Bow Bridge, 1832*



- = Heritage Trail Plaque
- = Historic Buildings of Bow Plaque



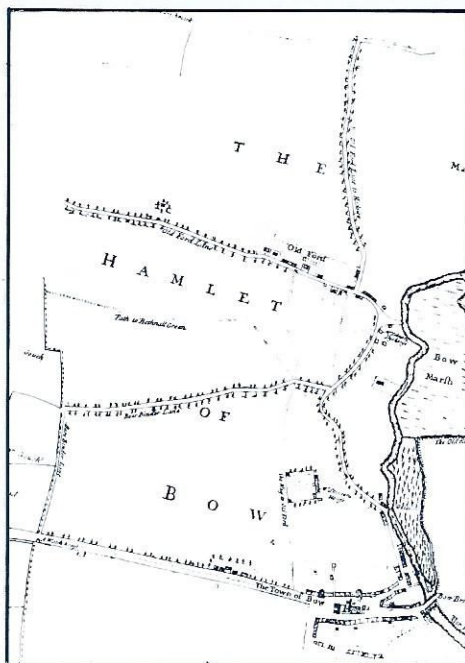
Old Ford Road at the end of Wick Lane about 1872

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF BOW

THE AREA we today know as Bow has a long history, stretching at least as far back as Roman times, when there was a Roman settlement by a ford over the River Lee at, not surprisingly, OLD FORD ●. For many centuries Bow was a small hamlet by another such ford, surrounded by fields and market gardens.

It is believed, rightly or wrongly, that the name “Bow” came from the shape of its arched bridge which was probably founded in 1110 by Queen Matilda, wife of Henry I. A regular traveller to Barking Convent, she is said to have fallen into the River Lee on one occasion while crossing the dangerous ford, and to have been nearly swept away by floodwaters. It was at this point that she decided that a bridge might be a good idea.

The somewhat unpredictable nature of



Bow from Gascoyne's map of 1703

the river was partly responsible for another of Bow's well known landmarks:-the church. The locals, fed up of having to wade all the way to Stepney, knee deep in mud and flood, to attend the church there, pressed for their own chapel. The “Chapel of Ease” that was granted to them in 1311 by Edward II was the forerunner of today's church.

Floods aside, Bow was always considered a pleasant place, with its “cornfields, pastures and pleasant meadows”. Samuel Pepys noted in his diary that he strolled out here for a cream tea. Will Kemp, a friend of Shakespeare's, who in 1599 agreed to Morris Dance all the way to Norwich for a bet, could have made Bow his first refreshment stop, but resisted the temptation. (He won the bet, incidentally.)

It was not until the second half of the last century that, with the vast increase in the population of London, Bow began to be a built up area. With this change came problems of poverty, unemployment and overcrowding. There was a workhouse on Bow Road, opposite the Church.

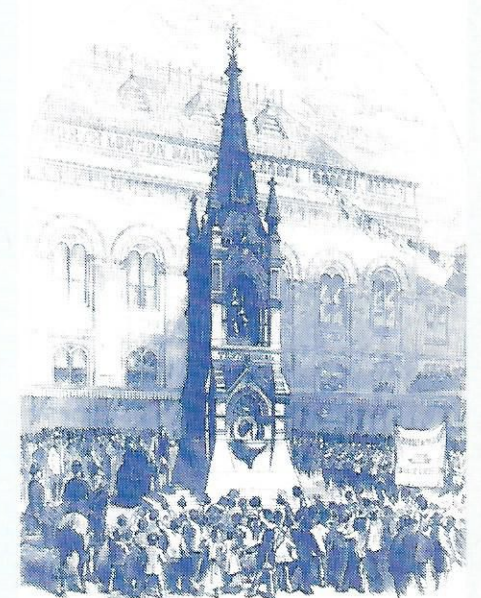
Early this century, the local councillor and MP George Lansbury did much to try and make the lives of the people of the East End less harsh. The East London branch of the Suffragette movement, headed by Sylvia Pankhurst, and renowned for their militant tactics, were based in Old Ford Road, and did much to help local people during the First World War.

More recent habitués of the area include the Kray brothers, who had a club in Bow Road.

Bow does have a long, varied and often colourful history, which we hope you will enjoy exploring on the Heritage Trail.

If you start, for example, at the Bow Road Police Station commencing point, you can go down Bow Road and enjoy leafy BOW CHURCHYARD ●. On the way, you pass the old POPLAR TOWN HALL ●. This, incidentally, stands on what used to be the site of the annual Bow Fair. This Whitsun Fair was a yearly event, and quite a crowd puller in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; and a rumbustious and rollicking time must have been had by all, for in 1823 it was closed down due to “rowdyism and vice”. Beyond Bow Church, where the flyover stands today, was the earlier, and prettier, Bow Bridge.

A short detour up Fairfield Road will lead you past the imposing FAIRFIELD WORKS, formerly BRYANT AND MAY'S MATCH FACTORY ■, where the ill-used women employees embarked on their historic industrial action, the first against sweated labour and atrocious working conditions, in 1888. At the far end of Blondin Street is the site of CLAY HALL ●, a tea room where Londoners flocked during the eighteenth century to try, among other things, the eel pies. They had to be careful on the way, however, because of the large numbers of footpads and highwaymen along the Mile End Road!



Bow Railway Station in its heyday.

Returning to Bow Road, you can follow the trail West, past what used to be Bow's two MAIN RAILWAY STATIONS ●, until you reach the site of GEORGE LANSBURY'S HOUSE ■. As a Labour



# Bow Heritage Trail

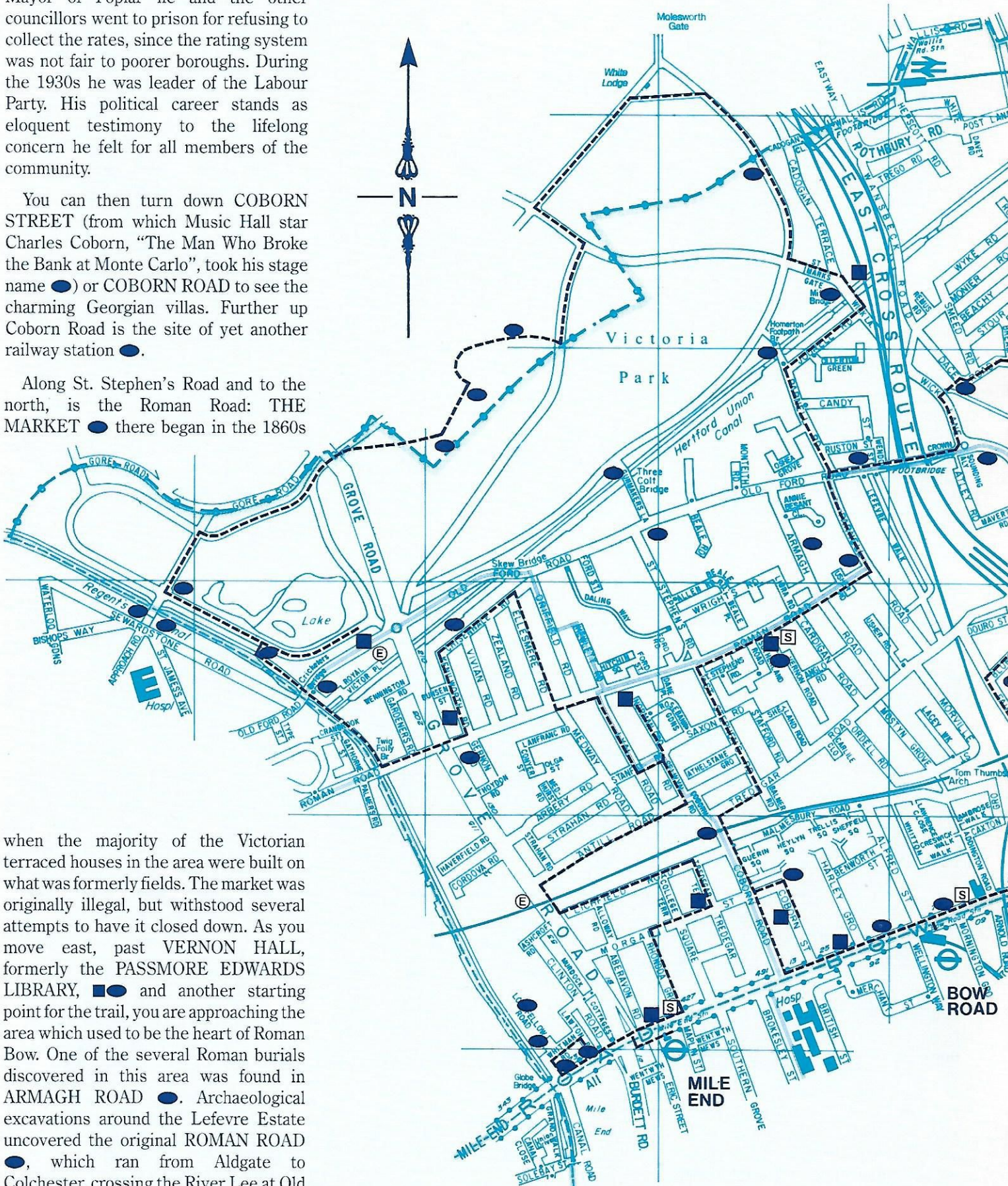
MP, he resigned his seat in Parliament over the issue of votes for women. As Mayor of Poplar he and the other councillors went to prison for refusing to collect the rates, since the rating system was not fair to poorer boroughs. During the 1930s he was leader of the Labour Party. His political career stands as eloquent testimony to the lifelong concern he felt for all members of the community.

You can then turn down COBORN STREET (from which Music Hall star Charles Coborn, "The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo", took his stage name ●) or COBORN ROAD to see the charming Georgian villas. Further up Coborn Road is the site of yet another railway station ●.

Along St. Stephen's Road and to the north, is the Roman Road: THE MARKET ● there began in the 1860s

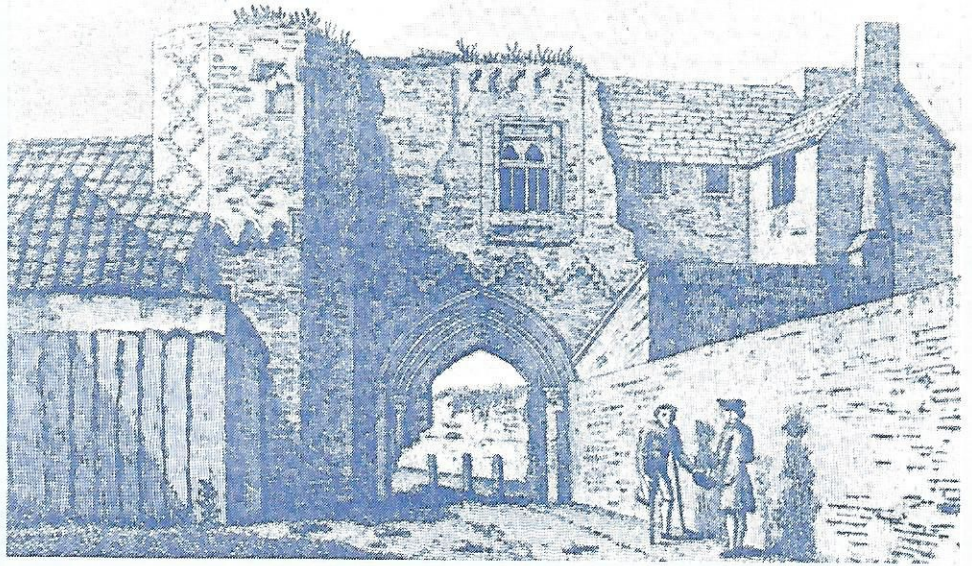
when the majority of the Victorian terraced houses in the area were built on what was formerly fields. The market was originally illegal, but withstood several attempts to have it closed down. As you move east, past VERNON HALL, formerly the PASSMORE EDWARDS LIBRARY, ■● and another starting point for the trail, you are approaching the area which used to be the heart of Roman Bow. One of the several Roman burials discovered in this area was found in ARMAGH ROAD ●. Archaeological excavations around the Lefevre Estate uncovered the original ROMAN ROAD ●, which ran from Aldgate to Colchester, crossing the River Lee at Old Ford. More recent excavations, in 1990, have uncovered further evidence of Roman occupation in the area.

Earlier excavations of the fourth century Roman settlement at Old Ford have revealed large quantities of cattle bones showing the marks of butchery. It



- ⓔ English Heritage Plaque
- Ⓢ Starting Plaque for Trail
- Historic Buildings of Bow Plaque
- Heritage Trail Plaque





*King John's Castle, 1787*

## THE LEE VALLEY

Up Parnell Road and across the footbridge over the East Cross Route lies the site of a medieval mansion house, known as "KING JOHN'S PALACE" ●. Should you wish to venture further into the Lee Valley you can see the feat of Victorian engineering that is the NORTHERN OUTFALL SEWER ●, and at the end of Dace Road, the RIVER LEE ●, itself once the dividing line between Saxon and Viking territory successfully defended by King Alfred the Great in 894, when he blocked the river and the Vikings had to abandon their ships and flee.

The Lee Valley in the past, as today, has been an area characterized by industrial activity.

One aspect of the "food industry" concentrated around the River Lee from the medieval period onwards was baking. Flour was ground in water mills along the river, later windmills. Some of the best documented bakers of Bow are those of the sixteenth century mentioned in John

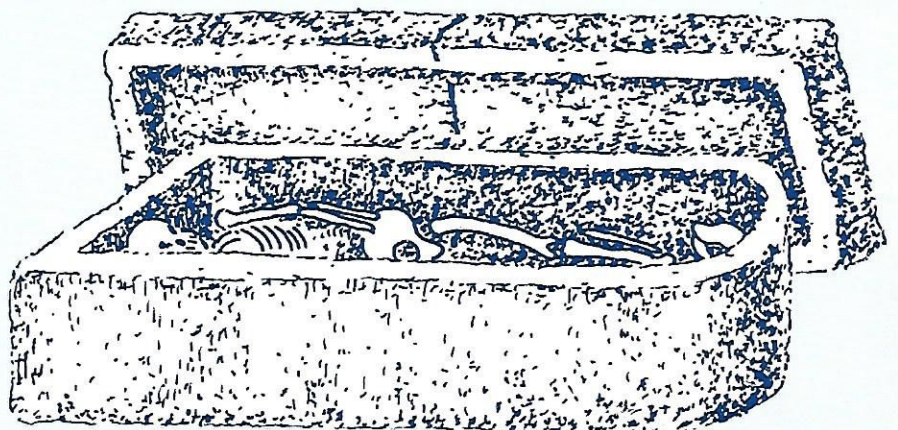
Stowe's "Survey of London" who fed the city in 1512, when "there was a shortage of wheat in the garner of the city, not a hundred quarters in all". Stowe later mentions the unequal terms under which bread was allowed to be brought into the city: bakers of bread at Stratford-le-Bow were allowed to bring daily, except Sabbath and principal feasts, "divers long carts laden with bread, the same being two ounces in the penny wheat loaf heavier than the penny wheat loaf baked in the city, the same to be sold in Cheape".

Moving on to the eighteenth century, and another aspect of industry, the historian Harrison mentions the great number of scarlet dyers and calico printers located at Bow, "for the particular convenience of the place for the execution of their business". Perhaps an echo of their labours remains in the name of Dye House Lane.

During the eighteenth century one notable trade in Bow was the manufacture of porcelain, the first indeed to be manufactured in Britain. It was the result of an attempt to reproduce much admired

is possible that the village was an assembly point for cattle from outlying farms in Essex, which were slaughtered there, whence the carcasses were carried into the city.

This was a process that was to be repeated in later years; during the plague of 1361 cattle were by order slaughtered on one side of town at Stratford and at Knightsbridge on the other "so as to keep the air free from filthy and putrid smells". This occurred again at the height of the Great Plague of 1665 according to Daniel Defoe, who in his "Journal of the Plague Year" mentions that meat was killed at Mile End or that way, and brought to market upon horses.



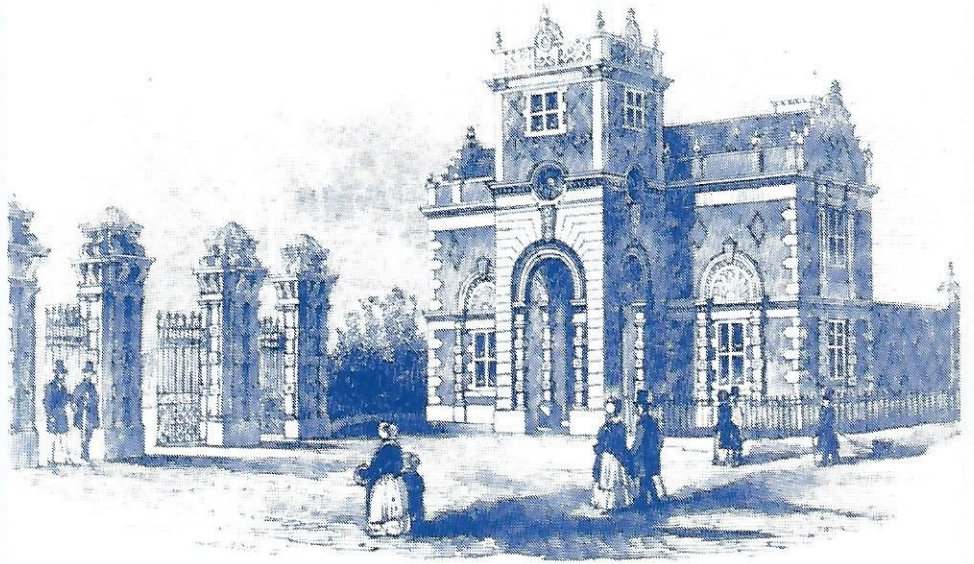
*Roman Burial found near Morville Street in the 1860's – the coffin was probably re-used – note the mismatching lid.*



Chinese porcelain. A factory was founded in Bow, then moved to the east side of the Lee, where it was known as New Canton. Production began around 1740. New Canton wares were very popular indeed by the 1750s; large quantities of table wares, bowls and vases were made, as were figurines on popular and topical themes.

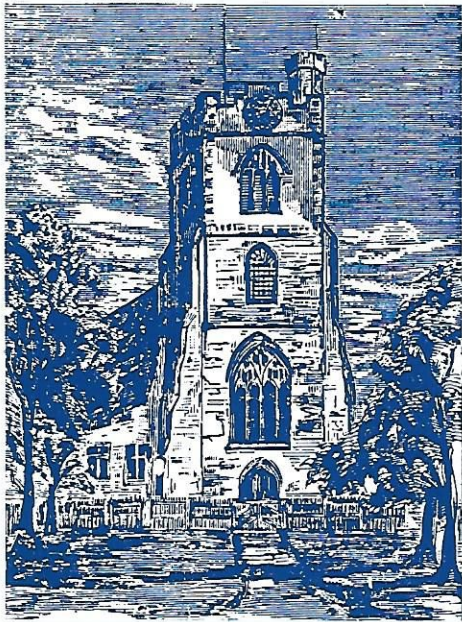
Business flourished during the 1750s, only to decline markedly during the 60s due to the rise of other such manufacturers at Chelsea, Worcester, and Lowestoft. Finally, in 1775, the business was sold to one William Duesbury, who moved the manufacturing lock-stock-and-barrel to Derby. The factory was then turned over to the production of turpentine and small liniments.

The nineteenth century saw the heavy industrialization of the Lee Valley, attracted by the plentiful supply of water, and proximity to the city, and hence a substantial market and a large labour



*Bonner Hall Gates, the main entrance to the park, in the last century ●*

force. A map of Bow of 1862 reveals around the River Lee a manure works, soap works, lime kilns, gas works and tar works.



*St. Mary's Church, Bow c.1896*



*1906 – St. Barnabas' Church to the left and the Earl of Aberdeen Pub to the right.*

Returning to the main trail, this continues up to VICTORIA PARK, passing an "Historic Buildings of Bow" plaque ■ located on the "TOP O' THE MORNING" PUBLIC HOUSE which commemorated one Thomas Briggs of Clapton, victim of the first murder to be committed on a railway train. On 9th July 1864, while travelling on the North London Railway, he was viciously assaulted by one Franz Muller, who intended to steal his gold watch, and when found on the tracks in a critical condition he was carried to this pub. He died later the same day.

The trail then enters VICTORIA PARK, ● an area of great interest in itself and a very popular place. It was begun to be laid out in 1844 for the recreation of the people of what was a very cramped and congested East End. The trail passes many points of interest in the park; the STONE ALCOVES which once formed part of old LONDON BRIDGE ●; the old bathing lakes – private bathrooms were in short supply in the nineteenth century, and the lakes were very popular up until the building of the LIDO in the 1930's ●; the MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN presented to the park by philanthropist Baroness Angela Burdett-Coutts in 1862 ●; and the forum and demonstration ground, used for speeches and public meetings from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, and by interests as diverse as the Suffragettes and the followers of Oswald Mosely. ●



*Entrance to Bow going east, 1783*

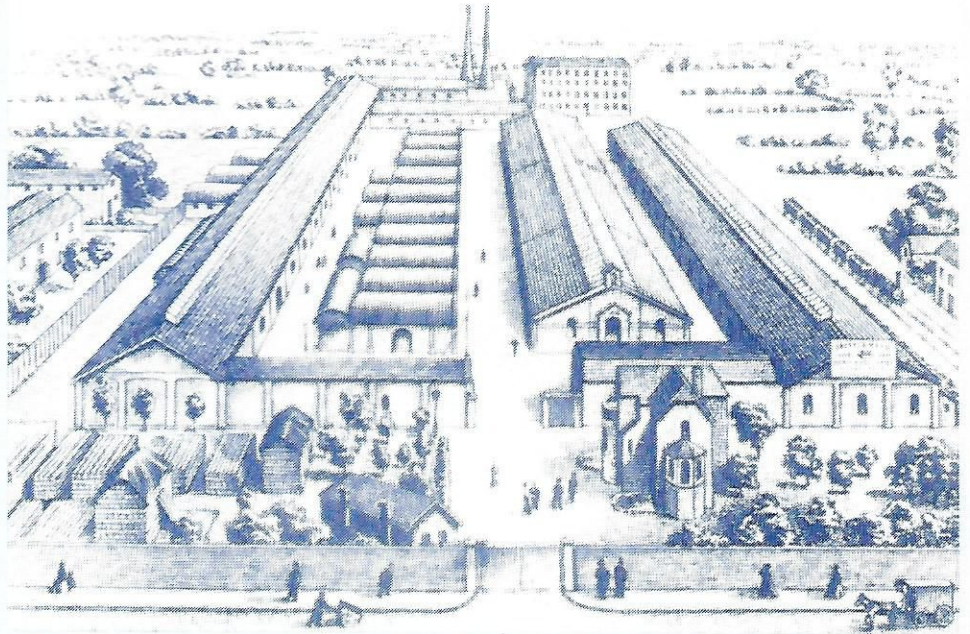
Leaving the park, the trail progresses south along the canal tow path, past the old warehouses opposite Royal Victor Place on the Hertford Union Canal, as far



as Twig Folly Bridge. It then moves along the Roman Road to turn off through the Driffield Road Conservation Area, which contains many pleasant Victorian houses.

As the trail continues south along Lyal Road and Selwyn Road, it is possible to take a short digression to 45 NORMAN GROVE ■, in the rear yard of which was sited the suffragettes' Co-operative Toy Industry during the First World War. Women workers there were, unusually for the times, paid the full male wage rate of 5d an hour or £1 a week. This and other schemes of the suffragettes, such as nursery and cost-price restaurant were an attempt to help women of the area, already a poor one, weather the even more straitened times of the war. Unfortunately, the toy factory could not compete with commercial concerns which paid far lower wages to their workers, and closed shortly after the end of the war.

Moving south again, there is an opportunity to view the grandeur of Tredegar Square, one of the finest Georgian Squares in this part of London. It was built as part of the great development phase of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, on the lands of one Sir Charles Morgan of Tredegar, after whom several streets and



*Bryant and May's Match Factory.*

Reaching Mile End Road again, one further side track passes west of Grove Road, past GUARDIAN ANGELS CHURCH ●, which was opened in 1903, and the building of which was paid for by the then Duke of Norfolk and his sisters Lady Margaret and Lady Mary Howard. Beyond that lies the NEW GLOBE PUBLIC HOUSE built in 1821, behind which was the NEW GLOBE PLEASURE

where it was found by a worker who had never seen a balloon before: he raced to the farmer, saying, "Come quickly and bring your gun; there's a monster in the long mead rolling about in the agony of death. There is also an ordinary man laying dead on the grass."

Near there also, in LONGFELLOW ROAD, since demolished to make way for Mile End Park, at number 57, lived Eddie Philips, British Light Heavyweight Boxing Champion between 1935 and 1937. ●

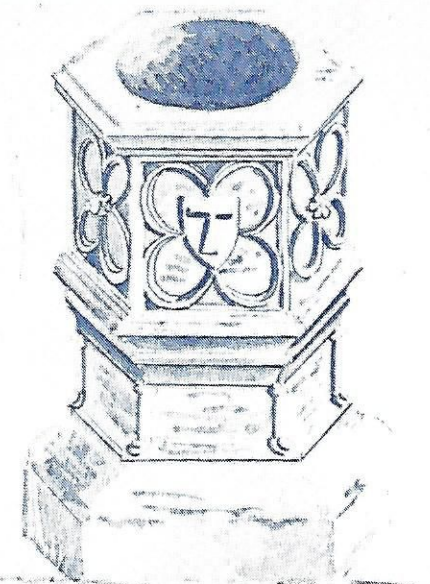
This, is but a brief introduction to the Heritage Trail; there are many more plaques to be seen, and many more interesting facets of the Neighbourhood's history to be discovered.



*Roman Road Market, 1914*

pubs locally have been named. TREDEGAR SQUARE itself was begun in 1828 and on the north side developed in a grand manner. When completed, it attracted mainly professional people; for instance William Ephraim Snow, apothecary, surgeon and general practitioner and his family lived in numbers 25 to 26 from at least 1845. ■

GARDENS. ● This was the scene of a great hoax in 1844, when a hot air balloonist about to give a display there, in order to avoid going up in the balloon himself, substituted for himself a sack filled with straw, and a mop wearing hat and a false wig and whiskers. The crowd was taken in. The balloon meanwhile, unattended, came down in a country farm



*Old Font, Bow Church*