

Pracy walks

While researching my family history, I accumulated a large number of addresses, mostly from certificates and census returns. Having worked in Shoreditch and Hoxton, I had some idea where many of them were. It was, however, only when writing this history that I began to think seriously about where they were in relation to one another.

The changing face of London

In the Victorian era, much of 'Pracy territory' was rebuilt. Railways and new roads were cut through, and slums replaced with new housing.

Until the 1860s builders and occupiers had a free hand with naming and numbering of roads and houses, which caused considerable confusion. Names such as John St and Queen St were commonplace, and often numbers were repeated in the same street. The Metropolitan Board of Works, created in 1855, began to tidy up the worst of these anomalies. From 1888 the General Post Office and the newly formed London County Council tackled the problem in an even more radical and systematic way. In the LCC area, duplicate road names were changed and houses renumbered, with odds and evens on opposite sides of the road and the lowest number closest to the local post office.

In the 20th century, further slum clearance and the attentions of Mr Hitler ensured that little remains of the London of our Pracy ancestors.

How I prepared these walks

All this makes for difficulty in identifying exactly where they lived. I hope that with the use of contemporary maps and directories I have made a fair fist of working it all out, but corrections and additions will as always be welcome. Thanks especially to Pracy cousins Martin Hagger and Mike Jenner, who reconnoitred the territory with me and made many helpful suggestions.

I first prepared a [gazetteer](#) listing, in date order, all known addresses from the younger Edmund's New Street in the 1770s to the 1901 census. Unfortunately we don't know whether Edmund survived beyond 1794 or, if so, where he lived. Once his two sons were married, however, the position becomes much clearer. The family of Thomas (1781-1846) settled at Long Alley for over half a century, while John William [JW1] (1779-1831) had only two addresses, although there is some doubt about where one of them was.

This stability did not carry over into the next generation, and they were seldom in the same place for more than five years. With nine sons of JW1 and Thomas setting up households in and around Shoreditch, and addresses for several of their daughters also known, there was suddenly a lot of data to deal with. The

main sources were censuses and selected birth, marriage and death certificates. Certificates are quite expensive so we haven't bought all of them, and our family may have lived at other places of which there is no written record. Nevertheless, those addresses we do have give a good idea of their distribution and movements.

I haven't found a way of publishing a map of these walks without breaching copyright, so I have produced guided walks showing the routes. I have given a fair amount of detail but you should take a modern street atlas and, if possible, a contemporary map such as those published by Alan Godfrey. Please note that the LCC/GPO renumbering means that house numbers today may well be different from those of a century or more ago, so for some longer roads I have made some attempt to indicate which part our ancestor lived in.

You may well feel that trudging round some of the less salubrious parts of London looking at buildings that stand on the sites of our ancestors' homes is not a particularly profitable exercise. All I would say is that walking their patch helped bring home to me just how different their lives must have been. Their horizons seem to have been confined to a relatively small number of mean streets within easy reach of one another. Yet that very limitation probably ensured that they remained in touch as an extended family until about 1870, when the railway began to scatter them in all directions.

1 – City of London and Finsbury: a linear walk from Cannon Street station to Angel Islington Underground station

This walk covers important locations and known addresses for earlier generations of our family, mostly before 1850. The actual walk should take about two hours, but you may well want to linger in St Giles Cripplegate and Bunhill Fields, so allow three.

It starts in the City close to the Thames, where the cousins Edmund James (1808-1890) and Thomas Edmund (1810-1840) worked as carmen, presumably serving river traffic. It continues via Christ Church Newgate St and St Giles Cripplegate, the most important of the City churches in our family history. Then to Finsbury, where the family was settled until 1795 and occasional members lived later. The final leg takes us to City Road, where we see a private dwelling that survives much as our 19th-century ancestors would have known it.

Start at Cannon St station and take the Dowgate Hill underground exit. Turn left down the hill.

A few yards down on the right is the Dyers' Hall. The company moved to this site in 1731, while Charles (b. 1707) was serving his apprenticeship as a dyer. Edmund James lived at no. 23 in 1861 when the premises were used by a package case manufacturer, whose trade could perhaps have had some connection with Edmund's.

At the bottom of Dowgate Hill, turn right along Upper Thames St
Edmund James lived at no. 158 in 1851.

Cross Queen St. Where a barrier blocks the pavement, go behind St James Garlickhithe, and left into Skinners Lane.

First turning on the right (opposite church) is Garlick Hill, on the left of which was Church Place where Elizabeth Hannah (1808-78) lived in 1841. Between Nov 1840 and Dec 1841 this unfortunate woman lost her husband Thomas Edmund, daughter Isabella and younger son Francis. Nothing survives of any of the three churchyards where they were buried, or of Allhallows Bread St where the children were baptised.

Past Garlick Hill, Skinners Lane becomes Little Trinity Lane, along which you continue a few yards further

On the left, on the other side of Upper Thames St is Queenhithe, where Thomas Edmund and family were living when Isabella was baptised in 1839. A little further along to the right, between Stew Lane and Gardener's Lane, was Naked Boy Alley, where the family were living when Isabella was buried in 1840. Unfortunately this splendid name was lost, and the site is now a building rather boringly called Globe View.

All the streets here were truncated when the Embankment was built in 1864-70 and little survives from before then. You can see the sites from where you are standing, so unless you are extremely dedicated it isn't worth crossing a busy main road to examine them more closely.

Continue along Little Trinity Lane, turning right under the Royal Bank of Canada building and up the hill.

Near the top, on the right, is Trinity Lane. When Thomas Edmund was buried in 1840, his address was 3 Crown Court Trinity Lane, a site where Mansion House Station now stands.

At the end of Little Trinity Lane, turn right into Queen Victoria St and cross it at the next road junction (Mansion House Station). Turn left along Cannon St towards St Paul's Cathedral. Cross Cannon St at the next junction (Bread St), and continue. Cross New Change, after which Cannon St becomes St Paul's Churchyard. Past St Paul's, take 2nd turn on right into Ave Maria Lane, which continues to become Warwick Lane, where Elizabeth Jane (b. 1815) was living when she married in 1852.

At end of Warwick Lane, turn left along Newgate St.

About 100 yards along is the Old Bailey, where in 1799 Elizabeth (b. 1777) was convicted of theft. Opposite is the church of St Sepulchre Holborn, where her husband James KERSHAW was probably baptised in 1777. And down the turning beside St Sepulchre (Giltspur St) is the famous St Bartholomew's Hospital (aka Bart's), where Thomas George (b.1852) died in 1874.

Cross Newgate St and turn right (back past Warwick Lane).

On the left is Christ Church Greyfriars, where Elizabeth, John William [JW1] (1779-1831), Thomas (1781-1846), Rebecca (b.1785) and Elizabeth Jane (b.1815) were married 1805-52. The church was destroyed during the Second World War but the tower and part of the walls survive. An information board gives details about the church and a garden that has been laid out on the site of the nave.

Continue along Newgate St, crossing King Edward St and St Martin le Grand, where Newgate St becomes Cheapside. Take 3rd turn on left into Wood St. Cross Gresham St and London Wall.

[If you have research to do at the Guildhall, you can reach it by turning right along Gresham St and left into Aldermanbury.]

At the end of Wood St, turn left to St Giles Cripplegate.

Here the first Edmund and his brothers had their children baptised 1728-34, and JW1's children were baptised 1808-28. Until 1813 at least JW1's family lived at Rodney Court in Chapel Street, on the site of the present-day Barbican Arts and Conference Centre.

St Giles was built in 1550 on the site of a Norman church. The well-preserved remains of London's Roman and medieval walls can be seen to the south of the building. In 1620 Oliver Cromwell married Elizabeth Bourchier at St Giles, and in 1674 the poet John Milton was buried there. St Giles was one of the few buildings to survive the Great Fire of London in 1666 but, like Christ Church, only its tower survived the Blitz. In the 1950s it was heavily restored to serve as the parish church of the newly-built Barbican development. Today, it is the only historic building in an area dominated by modern architecture.

Return to Wood St, turn left along Fore St, and then left into Moor Lane

On the right, between New Union St and Ropemaker St, was White St, where Frances Emma (1836-80) lived in 1860. The road has disappeared and the site is now occupied by a typically featureless City glass and metal office block. The northernmost part of Moor Lane was formerly called Type St. Here lived her father George Thomas (1812-53) when his son Charles was baptised in 1849. I found this the most dispiriting part of the entire walk but it does improve!

At the end of Moor Lane, turn left along Chiswell St and take the 2nd turning on the right, down Lamb's Passage

William Charles's widow Charlotte (1833-96) lived at no. 7 in 1881. A few houses on the left suggest how the whole street may once have looked.

Turn left along Bunhill Row

A few yards along on the right is Bunhill Fields non-conformist burial ground, where JW1, his daughter Ellen Lucy (1825-7) and nephew David Edward (1819-26) were buried 1826-31. Jane Pracy of Lamb's Passage was buried there in 1807 aged two months but it is not certain that she was a member of our family. Famous people buried there include John Bunyan, Daniel Defoe and William Blake, and there are several memorials that are well worth a look.

At the end of Bunhill Row, cross Old St and turn left

Just before Ironmonger Row is the modern Redbrick Estate. On or near the site of Bartholomew Court until fairly recently was New St (later Caslon St), where the younger Edmund and his family lived from 1771-94 at least.

Crossing Ironmonger Row, you reach St Luke's church

Here from 1736-89 were all known Pracy baptisms and burials and a marriage.

St Luke's was designed in 1727-33 by Nicholas Hawksmoor and features an obelisk spire. It was built to relieve St Giles Cripplegate with which it was reunited after the Second World War. In 1959 the roof was found to be unsafe and was removed leaving the church at the mercy of the elements. However it has now been Grade I listed and transformed into a rehearsal, performance and education building for the London Symphony Orchestra with a cafe in the reconstructed crypt. Events include concerts and workshops open to the public.

If time or stamina is running out, return down Old St, past Bunhill Row, to Old St Underground Station. Otherwise, continue along Old St, taking the 3rd turn on the right past St Luke's into Goswell St. Continue for at least ½ mile, and take the 8th turn on the right down Wakley Street, formerly Sydney Street. Here Lucy (1783-1849) was living at the time of her death.

Turn left up City Road. On your left is 16 Dalby Terrace (now 366 City Road) where Lucy had lived earlier. It has changed little since her time and was almost certainly of far higher quality than any of the other places our family lived – an indication that she was very comfortably off, as shown by the will she made in 1848. Note on the wall at the further end a sign for 'Dalby Tarrace [sic] 1803'.

Cross and continue up City Road. Turn right into Islington High St, and Angel Underground station is about 50 yards up on the right.

2. Shoreditch - round walk from Liverpool Street Station

Thomas (1781-1846) and Mary (c1781-1863) lived in one of the oldest parts of Shoreditch from 1810 to 1863. His brother John William (1779-1831) [JW1] may have lived there from 1814 to 1831. Certainly most of their children stayed in the area until the 1850s. This walk links all their known addresses and those of a few Pracys there later. It should take no more than two hours.

Leave Liverpool St through the Broadgate exit and shopping arcade near Platform 1. Go half-left up a few steps to Eldon St.

The large brown anonymous building on the corner is on the site of 1 Maxwell Court Long Alley, where the family of Thomas & Mary lived. The pedestrian area to the right has changed out of all recognition, not only since their day but even since the 1980s when I worked near there. Known in their time as Long Alley, it was renamed Appold St in 1879.

Go along Eldon St and turn right along Wilson St

On the right is Whitecross Place where John William [JW2] (1810-68) lived in 1848. Cross Sun Street where in 1873 [Richard] Henry (1840-1875) was at no. 87. The house was 'between Finsbury Avenue & Finsbury Square' but I haven't established exactly where. Present-day nos. 5-15 are, apart from the nature of the shops they house, much as Henry would have known them.

Turn right down Earl St

At the Appold St end was 2a Kings Head Court, where JW2 lived 1858-61.

Turn left up Appold St

On the right just beyond Primrose Street was 56 Long Alley, where William Charles (1827-69) lived in 1862.

Turn left along Worship St

Near the corner of Long Alley and Worship St was Gould's Yard, where Richard (1817-52) lived from 1841-51. His wife Emma GOULD's father and brother ran a scavenger's business there from 1840-55.

In 1871 Edmund James (1808-90) lived at 26 Clifton St, which we cross now. A little further on the right, just before the junction with Paul St, was Three Court Court where JW2 lived 1837-46.

Turn right along Tabernacle St

For a short while we venture across the boundary from Shoreditch into Finsbury. On the right is Bonhill St, formerly Hill St, where JW2 was in 1855. A few yards down Hill St on the left was 5 New Court, where he lived in 1851. These two addresses may have been the same place.

This section of Tabernacle St was formerly Windmill St, and William Charles lived at no 7 in 1867. The old name is commemorated in the name of the pub on corner, which was shown on the 1872 OS map. Look left along Epworth St to see another building that would have been familiar to our ancestors – the HQ of the Honorable Artillery Company.

Turn right along Epworth St and cross Paul St

Charles (1849-1922) lived on the corner at 22 Paul St in 1901, returning to the area when most of the Pracys had moved away.

Carry on along Scrutton St

Joseph William (1820-1879) lived here in 1844, when it was known as Chapel St. The street scene in this area is more like that our ancestors would have known than in most of the walk.

Turn left up Phipp St

The northern half of this street was formerly John Street, and may have been the John Street where JW1 lived from 1814-1831.

Turn right along Christina St

JW1's widow Elizabeth Jane (c1787-1871) lived here in 1851 when it was called Motley St, a name commemorated in Motley Avenue, a cul-de-sac R.

Turn right for a brief detour down Curtain Road

On the same side at no. 21 is the site of St James Curtain Road, where from 1857-72 most of our family were married. The church was demolished in 1935 and now there is no sign that it ever existed.

Cross the road to Hewett St, formerly Gloucester Rd. Here Thomas George (1852-74) lived at no. 14 in 1871 and Edmund James had his carman's business at no. 9 in 1875-6. The street once featured some fine Georgian buildings but is now a rather undistinguished industrial area, although it does boast a plaque commemorating Shakespeare's Curtain Theatre, which was nearby.

Turn right out of Hewett St and continue as far as Holywell Lane R, which at the time of writing had no obvious street sign

Ahead R Frances Julia (1818-95), widow of George Thomas (1812-53) lived in Curtain Rd at what was then no. 109. It was between Holywell Lane and New Inn Yard.

George Thomas lived from 1851-3 at 25 Holywell Lane. The road was cut in two when Great Eastern Street was built c1875. No. 25 was probably demolished in 1860 to make way for the North London Railway, which is straight ahead.

Turn R down Holywell Lane and cross Great Eastern Street with care. Turn left into King John Court and right along New Inn Yard.

On the other side of the railway bridge is a street sign for Reliance Square, also known as Red Lion Square. It is now a cul-de-sac that doesn't appear on all maps. In 1851-2 Richard (1817-52) lived at no. 16.

Turn back, and right along New Inn Street

Here was George Brown & Co, a fancy soap factory owned by Joseph William and, after his death, his son Thomas Richard (1848-87). Joseph's nephew John William (1835-1903) had a chandler's shop in the street from 1879-84.

Turn left along Bateman's Row

In 1837 Thomas Edmund (1810-40) lived here. In 1881 Thomas Richard's brother Henry Edward (1854-92) was at no. 2.

Turn right along Curtain Road

On the right is Dereham Place, formerly Norfolk St, where Mary (b. 1815) was a servant when she was married in 1846.

Turn right along Rivington St

The other section of Rivington St, west of Curtain Road, was another John St. It is therefore another candidate for JW1's home in 1814-31, though it is further from St Giles Cripplegate where his children were baptised and so less likely.

Cross Shoreditch High St with care to St Leonard's church

This is one of the churches featured in the old nursery rhyme Oranges and Lemons – '...When I am rich, said the bells of Shoreditch'. Here 'Edman Preacy' and Lucy CARLTON were married in 1767. All Thomas and Mary's children were baptised there in the 1810s and 1820s.

Turn back down Shoreditch High St and cross Commercial St at the lights. Turn left and right again down Elder St.

The section north of Fleur de Lis St was formerly called Upper Elder St, where in 1862 William Charles lived at no. 15. Here is a remarkable mixture of old and new. The cobbled streets and elegant houses have changed little since they were built by immigrant Huguenot silk weavers in the 18th century, yet looming over the terraced houses in Folgate St is a typical late 20th-century office block.

In the 1970s a vigorous campaign saved Spitalfields from redevelopment, and among its leaders was the TV presenter Dan Cruickshank, who now lives in Elder St. A less happy consequence of the campaign was gentrification and high prices, and the departure of the working-class heirs of William Charles.

Turn right into Fleur de Lis St and left into Blossom St

Frances Julia was living at no. 3 in 1881. The factory on the right is dated 1886, so she may have been moved out to make way for it.

Turn left into Folgate St.

In 1891 Frances Julia had gone round the corner to 36 White Lion St, now Folgate St. This is likely to have been in the attractive terrace now numbered 32 and used for offices. At no. 18 is the Dennis Severs House, an extraordinary time capsule that gives a wonderful idea of how our 18th-century ancestors might have lived. (Website: <http://www.dennissevershouse.co.uk/>)

Come back up Folgate St, cross the main road and turn left

About 100 yards south of Primrose St, where the Exchange Arcade is now situated, was Acorn St. Here on the 1841 census George Thomas was listed in a separate household from his wife Frances Julia, mother-in-law and daughter.

In 1871-2 [Richard] Henry (1840-75) and his wife-to-be Charlotte BENNETT were working in a coffee shop at 167 Bishopsgate. This site is now no. 135 and by happy coincidence it is partly occupied by a branch of Caffe Nero, described as 'probably the best of the Capital's coffee shop chains', although Wetherspoons opposite is decidedly cheaper. Reward yourself with something refreshing and

return to Liverpool St station.

3 – Hoxton and Haggerston:

a linear walk from Old Street Station to Hackney Road

In the 1850s and 1860s the family spread to Hoxton and Haggerston. Although administratively part of Shoreditch, they were distinct districts north of Old Street. Hoxton was west of Kingsland Road, and Haggerston east. Little survives of the area as our ancestors would have known it and the street scenery is seldom very exciting, but I have prepared this walk in order to show what does remain and to give an idea of how close our family still were to one another. Allow 2-3 hours.

At Old Street Station take exit 2

Before setting off you may like to take the precaution of using the toilet near exit 7, because it was about two hours before I spotted another one!

At the top is what appears to be part of the ventilation system for the station. On this site was St Mark's church, which was opened in 1848 and closed in 1937. Here Henry Charles (1828-1909) and Elizabeth Jane (b. 1815) were married in the mid-1850s, and Edmund James (1808-90) twice in the 1860s.

Turn round and go along City Road

Across the road is the Grade 2 listed Imperial Hall, formerly the Leysian Mission and now converted into expensive flats. Immediately on its left was the City of London Lying In Hospital, which moved to the corner of Old Street and City Road c1771. It and similar maternity hospitals founded in the 18th century were principally intended for the wives of poor industrious tradesmen. The babies of Lucy Pracy (d.1787) may well have been delivered in the hospital or with its staff present at home. As far as I can gather, the hospital was demolished c1983, when Old Street roundabout was built and the station redeveloped.

After 100 yards turn right into Brunswick Place

Here in 1854 Henry Charles was married from no.12. In 1871 Edward and Ann (b. 1840) DELAFORCE and her mother Sarah Pracy (1813-76) were at no. 40.

Go straight ahead through Charles Square and turn left along Pitfield St

On the right is Bowling Green Walk, where at no. 10 John William (1810-1868) died of chronic asthma in 1868. His widow Sarah presumably moved in with their daughter Ann Delaforce soon after that.

Continue up Pitfield St for 200 yards

To the left the houses in Haberdasher St are similar to those our family would have known, though probably of rather better quality. An original 1802 street sign has been incorporated into the modern building, although immediately above a brash advert for 'Cheap Booze' isn't entirely in keeping with it.

Ahead is St John the Baptist church which was built to serve the area north of the church, known as Hoxton New Town. The construction of the Regent's Canal and the New North Road in the 1820s opened up an area of former market gardens for development as a densely populated estate of poor-quality terraced housing described by contemporaries as 'fourth-rate'. The little back yards contained communal cesspools and only around 1900 were toilets installed.

Curiously our only family event at the church was the marriage of Richard (1817-52) and Emma GOULD (1818-79) who are not known to have lived in Hoxton New Town, even though several other members of the family certainly did.

Turn right into Fanshaw St where half way along there is a slight kink, and at the end left up Hoxton St

To the right, on the site of the new Shoreditch Library, was Red Lion Passage, where John the printer (1835-1917) was living at no. 2 in 1861.

Turn right into Falkirk St, formerly Huntingdon St

Ann Delaforce was at no. 46 in 1876 when her mother Sarah died there. From 1881-1901 at least, Ann's sister Elizabeth Jane SAGROTT (b.1848) and her family lived at no. 52. In 1901 Ann, her second husband William BAYNTON and their two sons were also at no. 52. So too was her brother Henry (b. 1858), apparently separated from his wife Mary Jane (1859-1929). She was further up Kingsland Rd in the workhouse, to which we come later.

Continue to the end of Falkirk St and left into Kingsland Rd. Turn left again into Shenfield St, formerly Essex St.

In 1881 Henry, his wife and daughter were among 19 people in 7 households living at no. 22, apparently an ordinary little terraced house. This sounds horribly overcrowded even by the standards of the day, and it is unsurprising that their marriage seems not to have prospered.

Halfway along on the left the cobbles in the street may be originals from Henry's time, for here was a short link road called Cross St. On the right at the end, the backs of a row of shops in Hoxton St give an idea of what the houses in Hoxton New Town would have been like.

Carry on across Hoxton St and along Crondall St

In 1891 Henry, wife and niece were at no 48.

Turn right along Pitfield St

A little way up is Buckland St, where John the printer was living at no. 15 in 1865, and George Joseph Thomas (1841-1904) at no. 51 in 1871. Nothing survives of their homes, so for a more pleasant walk I suggest you...

Continue up Pitfield St and left into Shoreditch Park

Bombing and V2 rockets destroyed much of the former Hoxton New Town, and some of what survived was damaged beyond repair. The park has been created on part of it, giving an open aspect like the market gardens two centuries earlier.

Cross Shoreditch Park diagonally towards the Gainsborough Studios building (named in huge letters on the roof). Exit Park at opposite corner, and turn right into Poole St. For an easier but noisier walk you can turn right into Mintern St, left into New North Rd, then right into Poole St.

Henry Edward (1854-92) lived here in 1891 – at no. 45 in April, and at no. 34 in November. Soon after this some of the houses made way for a power station, which in the 1920s was taken over by the famous Gainsborough Studios. It survived the threat of demolition to become the centerpiece of an imaginative

and fashionable development, a world away from the terraced street that Henry Edward and his family would have known.

Go straight ahead down Penn St and Hyde Rd. Cross the roundabout and go down Hoxton St. Just past Wilmer Gardens and before the sign for Hoxton Market, turn left down Nuttall St. At the time of writing, Hoxton St and Nuttall St had no street signs.

A few yards along on the right is the back of St Leonard's Hospital. Over the wall is a good view of the older buildings that were formerly Shoreditch Workhouse.

Here Ann (b. 1821) had her daughter Caroline, who was born and died in 1845. Her death was unsurprising, for in 1847 a Parliamentary report on workhouse provision criticized conditions at Shoreditch. It was found to be overcrowded, with 1,000 inmates in accommodation designed for 800. Its 150 chronically ill people were housed in poorly ventilated wards close to the healthy inmates.

On the 1901 census Mary Jane was listed as one of the 769 paupers there though apparently still married to Henry, who was nearby at Huntingdon St. In 1881 Charlotte (1833-96, widow of William Charles) was at 4 Ely Place, which was later demolished and absorbed into the south of the hospital grounds.

Cross Kingsland Rd and continue along Whiston Rd. Note on the left the Haggerston Leisure Centre with its splendid weather-vane in the form of a ship. Turn right down Thurtle Rd, formerly Brunswick St.

A few yards along on the site of Charlton Court were the Shoreditch New Almshouses where in 1871 Elizabeth Jane (1787-1871, widow of John William 1779-1831) was an annuitant. The old street name is commemorated in the naming of Brunswick House.

Turn left along Kent St.

R is Scawfell Street, which originally ran from Whiston Rd to Dunloe St. Until 1878 it was known as Cumberland St, and on the 1861 and 1871 censuses Edward BROWNE and his wife Elizabeth Jane (1815-1876) were living at 10B. The numbering of the street was eccentric even by the standards of the time, and it's impossible to identify exactly where the house was.

Cross Queensbridge Rd at the zebra crossing and go into Haggerston Park.

This was formerly a gas works. Part of the imposing perimeter wall is the only feature to survive. A few yards along on the left are some toilets. Follow the road round to the right and past a Woodland Walk on the left. The road here follows the line of Tuilerie St, where in 1861 Henry Charles and family were living at no. 11. It was demolished quite recently so the park could be enlarged. On the side of the London Picture Centre is a fine old-fashioned sign for Tuilerie St.

Leave the park by the Hackney Rd entrance and turn left

Opposite is Warner Place, where from 1854-7 Joseph William (1820-79) had a chandler's shop at no. 21. Nothing survives so it isn't worth crossing the road.

Turn left along Goldsmith's Row, where on the left is the famous Hackney City Farm. Turn right into Kay St and immediately left along Teale St.

At the end is Marian Place, behind which was Marian Square where Angelina (b. 1838, widow of George Philip 1837-1866) was living in 1881 and 1891. The Pritchard's Road Centre now stands on the site but the gasholder that she would have known is still a prominent feature.

From Marian Place, turn left along Pritchard's Road and right into Hackney Rd. Here you can cross to catch a bus back to Liverpool St or Old St.

4 – Bethnal Green: a walk from Bethnal Green to Whitechapel Road

When members of our family moved to Bethnal Green in the 1860s, it was probably the poorest and most overcrowded parish in the country. The railway had arrived and the area was intensively developed with housing much of which was officially described as 'fourth-rate' – that is, of the worst quality.

Bombing and slum clearance accounted for much of it, yet plenty of 19th-century houses survived. Public buildings including a church and a hospital have been most imaginatively converted into flats. The walk is therefore more interesting and pleasant than I had anticipated.

You would be well advised to make yourself comfortable before you set off, because the public health improvements of the 19th century have been well and truly reversed and I didn't see a single public toilet anywhere!

From Bethnal Green Overground Station (service run by National Express in the week I happened to write this), turn left along Dunbridge St into Cheshire St

Cheshire St was formerly Hare St, the main street in the 18th-century country hamlet of Bethnal Green. (Confusingly, Dunbridge St was formerly called Cheshire St.) In the 1860s three of our family lived there, but by then Hare St had changed out of all recognition. It was a busy high street with small businesses occupying all the buildings, so they must have lived 'above the shop'. On the 1861 census [Richard] Henry (1840-73) was lodging at no. 65 with a boot and shoe maker. In 1862 Eliza (b. 1841) was married from no. 85, which was a greengrocer's. In 1864 her brother John Gould (1843-1915) was married from no. 11, the Red Cross pub. (The street was renumbered in the 1860s, so the numbers aren't the same as today.)

Turn R then L along Wood Close to St Matthew's Row

From here you can get a good view of St Matthew's church, which was built when the new Bethnal Green parish was taken out of Stepney in 1746. Even when overcrowding was at its worst, the church was set in the spacious grounds you can see today. It was damaged during the war but has been attractively restored in brick. Here in 1866 William John (1866-7), son of George Philip (1837-1866), was baptised. On the corner of Wood Close is the Watch House where you can see an original street sign for Church Row, the former name of St Matthew's Row.

Turn L down St Matthew's Row back to Cheshire St and turn R

A little further on L, the small shops and workshops give an idea of what Hare St would have been like. No. 46 appears to be the only one surviving from the 1860s, although the block from no. 40 to the junction with Brick Lane (the main road at the end of Cheshire St) was probably developed around 1872.

Turn R up Chilton St and across Bethnal Green Rd, ahead past a sign for Shacklewel St and, after about 20 yards, into Gibraltar Walk

In 1884 John William (1835-1903 – JW3)'s daughter Elizabeth Sarah (b. 1861) married Alfred DAVIS. She gave her address as 31 Gibraltar Row, now Walk. It was then much longer, running from Bethnal Green Road to Wellington Row.

Turn L past some garages then R along a path with a netball court R

The netball court is part of Daneford School, which was built on the site of New Tyssen [Tyson] St. There in 1866 George Philip was living at no. 21. Contemporary maps suggest that even by the standards of the time the housing here was exceptionally cramped and perhaps unsanitary. This may explain why George Philip, daughter Angelina Alice (1865-1865) and son William John died within 18 months of one another in 1865-7.

Turn L as far as a pillar box then R through an open car park area.

Turn R along Chambord St (where at this point the only street sign is L on the opposite side of the car parking area) and past Chambord Court. At the end turn L into what is still Chambord St and continue to Columbia Rd

On the 1891 census at no. 30 was Edward DELAFORCE, separated from wife Ann (b. 1840) but said to be married. Ann was listed as Annie BAYNTON, wife of William, and they had two sons. She was living at 42 Baroness Rd on the other side of Columbia Rd, 200 yards or so from Edward. They must sometimes have seen one another, and I'd like to think they remained on good terms.

In 1884 Ann's niece Elizabeth Sarah married Alfred Davis at St Thomas's church, which was in Baroness Rd. It was built 1844-51 but demolished as a result of war damage. Nothing survives from the time our family were there and, although the road still exists, it's not really worth a detour.

Turn R past the Birdcage pub along Wellington Row

In 1891 JW3, who stayed in this immediate area for most of his adult life, was living at no. 51. Amazingly, the house is still there. Apart from Lucy Pracy's rather grand house in City Road, it is the only one formerly occupied by our ancestors to have survived, although others would probably have been similar.

Turn R down Barnet Grove

In 1901 JW3 was living at no. 87 which was in the northern part of the present road, the lower part being called Hart's Lane. The site is now a small park so the house was probably destroyed by bombing. On opposite corners of the junction with Wellington Row were attractively built matching pubs, the Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales, but both have been converted to other uses.

Turn L along Florida St and detour L along Pollard Row

In 1871 JW3 was living at 9 Pollard Row. No housing survives from this period but well worth a detour is the Queen Adelaide Dispensary, L at the other end of the green. Built in 1866 in response to the cholera epidemics in the area, it is now a Grade II listed building that has been converted into social housing.

Retrace your steps and cross Florida St to the end of Pollard Row

Running parallel with Pollard Row is Pollard St. In 1872 JW3's sister Sarah (b. 1846) gave it as her address when she married William DAY at St James the Great, but again nothing survives and it isn't worth a detour. Built in 1844, St

James is on the corner of Pollard Row and Bethnal Green Rd. It was closed in 1981 and the parish united to St Matthew's. The church and the next-door vicarage have been most imaginatively converted into flats.

Turn R along Bethnal Green Rd and 2nd L down Buckfast St to Hereford St

Here in 1861 at no. 6 lived JW3 and his brother George Philip with their wives, sisters Sarah Maria and Angelina MEADWELL. Both families had daughters called Elizabeth Sarah. There is a modern no. 6, which is very close to where the old one would have been.

Turn L along Dunbridge St and R down Vallance Rd

Note the remarkable design and construction of the brickwork for the railway bridge. Do a slight detour L to Selby St, where at no. 18 John Gould's son John (1872-1944) was born. Again there is a modern house with the same number, but I'm less certain that it was in the same place.

Continue to the end of Vallance Rd and turn R along Whitechapel Rd

At or near a modern office building numbered 75 was Black Lion Yard. (It has given its name to Black Lion House at no. 65 but that's not exactly where the Yard was.) There in 1871 at no. 7 was Emma (1818-79) widow of Richard (1817-52), and at no. 3 was the HORTON family. Later in 1871 Emily Pracy (b. 1849) married George Horton, and in 1872 her brother Richard (1845-1901) married his sister Sarah Horton.

In the late 1880s one of the men said to be Jack the Ripper, a Jewish bootmaker named Nathan Kaminski, lived at No. 15, but the case against him is not convincing. More positively, Black Lion Yard contained 21 shops of which 12 were jewellers and several bookshops. It was called the Hatton Gardens of the East End and every prospective Jewish bride went there with her mother to buy her Sabbath candles. Opposite is the world-famous Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

Continue along Whitechapel Rd to Aldgate East Station or...

The whole of the area covered by this walk is in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. If you want to do any further research on it, you can visit their Local History Library and Archives at 277 Bancroft Rd (open Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at the time of writing).

For the Library and Archives, retrace your steps along Whitechapel Rd

On the other side of Whitechapel Rd is the Royal London Hospital, where Emma (wife of John Gould) died in 1907. This was the year in which the BBC set its *Casualty 1907* series, fictional but based on the diaries of Nurse Ethel Bennett who worked at the hospital. It acquired its prefix when the Queen visited in 1990. On the way L is the Blind Beggar pub, which takes its name from the legend of Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green. Once famous as the place where William Booth of the Salvation Army preached his first sermon, it is now more notorious for its associations with the Kray brothers.

Continue past Stepney Green station, and Bancroft Rd is L a little further on. The library is R a few yards up.

David Pracy, 2006, 2010.