

## A Palace in the Mud

London's contradictions manifested themselves geographically in the contrast between the opulent West End and the penurious East End, (though other great pockets of poverty also existed elsewhere in the metropolis). A short journey from the City, wrote Jack London, brought one to a region that was "one unending slum."<sup>224</sup> By late-Victorian times, this vast benighted area stretched on beyond "traditional London" to the borough of West Ham, where urbanization and industrialization were occurring at fantastic speed. Nowhere was this more so than at Silvertown in the south of the borough where Samuel Silver's palace of industry rose from the Thames mud, dwarfing the slums around it, its cavernous machine

halls echoing with the throb of huge engines, the sky blackened with its reeking smoke. In Silvertown, great culture and invention coexisted in counterpoint to great barbarism and wretchedness. The sacrifice of which the *Times* writer wrote was made on the altar of the god of profit: the victims were the workers whose nameless drudgery created “the glory of England.” Silver’s management and shareholders would have applauded Cecil Rhodes’s boast that “to be born an Englishman is to win first place in God’s lottery.” Silver’s employees might have begged to differ; the dice were loaded against them and there was a huge gulf between Silver’s high-tech factory and its bleak surroundings.

The electric lights of this industrial Taj Mahal blazed out over a bleak workers’ suburb that had sprung up with the marsh weeds. Silver’s had sunk enormous sums of capital and expertise into the works, but there was little money to spare for the laborers. It was a case in point of what Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx had meant when they wrote, the “factory-chimnies [*sic*] that Radical politicians call ‘the glory of England’ are in truth, the curse of England.”<sup>225</sup> By 1889, a forest of such chimneys rose over Silvertown, the smoke blackening the sky and coating the workers’ hovels in layers of grime. The Cockneys craved bright colors and flowers because of the grey monotony of their world; the only patch of open green space between Silvertown and North Woolwich was the Royal Victoria Gardens. The Thames flowed past largely hidden behind the embankment and a wall of factories. Decades later, the Silvertown writer Melanie McGrath observed that the Victoria Gardens were “the only place to the east of the Lea, aside from Lyle Park, where there is an unimpeded view of the river water.”<sup>226</sup> As for the River Lea, there were no fish to catch in its waters, only diseases.

The lives of the Silvertown laborers were blighted by chronic destitution and systemic violence. In Queen Victoria’s reign, 32 percent of Londoners lived below the poverty line. Old age—should one live that long—would prove a nightmarish coda to a life of grinding poverty. One-third of the weekly wage earners of England died destitute or on Poor Law relief,<sup>227</sup> and the vast majority of London’s aged paupers—the “submerged tenth”—lived in the East End.<sup>228</sup> For many, old age meant incarceration in the dreaded “spike”—the workhouse—an institution that dated back to medieval times. In 1885, the social reformer Charles Booth estimated that 35 percent of the population of the East End was destitute.<sup>229</sup> Will Thorne sorrowed and raged over the “pitiabie sight” of “poor, ill-clothed children” shivering in the biting winter wind on West Ham’s Barking Road.<sup>230</sup> According to Jack London, 55 percent of East London’s children

died by their fifth year.<sup>231</sup> In Silvertown almost one in ten died in infancy. The figures point to a yearly holocaust of Cockney children.

### Silvertown: An End-of-the-World Place

By all accounts, Silvertown was a place apart. Although only six miles downstream from the Pool of London, it had—and in some respects still has—an air of isolation, strangeness, and remoteness. This was due, the *Daily News* noted, to its being “virtually an island because of the docks and the river.” It was an ugly place. “Its dreariness cannot be denied, though when the weather is very favourable there are some admirable views to be obtained beyond the river of the hospital at Greenwich, the arsenal at Woolwich, and . . . Shooter’s Hill.”<sup>232</sup> For Eleanor Marx, who came to know Silvertown well during the 1889 strike, it was an “end-of-the-world place,”<sup>233</sup> though she passionately defended the honor and interests of its inhabitants. A 1907 study of West Ham reported that Silvertown was “distinct in character” from the rest of the borough: “a large area with few inhabitants” because a “great deal of space is used for industrial purposes.” The West Ham socialist councilor Joe Terrett has left us a grim pen portrait of Silvertown at the turn of the nineteenth century:

In the south of the borough are Victoria and Albert Docks . . . and beyond that is the industrial district of Silvertown with its collection of immense factories and wharves fronting on the River Thames—a more desolate region, contrasted with which St. Helens or Widnes seem beautiful townships by comparison. The atmosphere is blackened with the noxious fumes of chemicals, and the stench of bone-manure and soapworks, and the only sounds are the shriek of railway engines and the mournful foghorn toots of the steamboats coming up the river.<sup>234</sup>

The workers’ houses occupied a central strip, close by the factories, “interrupted by the graving dock” observed the Fabians Howarth and Wilson,<sup>235</sup> and hemmed in by the marsh and river. Today, there is little to remind us of the past in Silvertown. Part of the suburb was torn down in 1912 when work began on the King George V Dock, and included the local Catholic church, whose “tall spire [was] visible to all the ships” plying the river.<sup>236</sup> More of it was flattened by an explosion in a local explosives factory in 1917, and the area is said to have been so severely

bombed during the Blitz that the old bonds of community largely perished along with the dead. What Hitler failed to achieve, slum clearance finished.

### “A Disgrace to Civilization”

During Victorian and Edwardian times, many of West Ham’s residents were casual laborers, picked up if they were lucky at the dock or factory gate for a day’s work. Permanent workers—and it must be owned that much of Silver’s workforce was in this category—were known locally as “staid men.”<sup>237</sup> As for the employers, wrote Dr. Pagenstecher, “most ... who draw their wealth from the teeming factories have left the neighbourhood to dwell in more fashionable quarters,”<sup>238</sup> a fact confirmed by Alderman Terrett.<sup>239</sup> This was in sharp contrast to the custom in the older East End, where the small employers lived close to their workshops—and their workers. Silver’s head offices were located in Cannon Street in the City, and managing director Matthew Gray lived across the river in Kent’s leafy Lessness Park,<sup>240</sup> a world away from Silvertown’s mud, smoke, and smells. The managers would have made their way to the works first-class by means of the railway, which ran through Silvertown to North Woolwich, and it is not likely that they paid the suburb itself much attention. It was a place to hurry through, shudder at, and forget. The famous Australian socialist Frank Anstey, who was born in Silvertown, might have recalled that there were no “silvertails” in Silvertown!

The residential streets and connecting roads of Silvertown were unsealed tracks laid out on soft alluvial mud, up to ten feet below the Thames high water mark. They were often deeply plowed up by carts, making them “so impassable in bad weather that the people cannot avail themselves of their privileges,” wrote a reporter in 1881. He concluded that “the conditions of the waste lands, and the rude [illegible, but possibly tracks] that are called roads are a disgrace to ... civilization.”<sup>241</sup> They were not the only disgrace. Silvertown had sprouted up like mushrooms after rain, a testament to the Victorian authorities’ *laissez-faire* indifference to town planning and the appetite for profit of those who controlled them. In 1857, Charles Dickens complained that because Silvertown lay outside of the City of London’s jurisdiction, town planning regulations did not apply: the inhabitants were free “to possess new streets of houses without drains, roads, gas or pavement.”<sup>242</sup> Nor did things improve much during the next few decades. Silvertown was out of sight and out of mind. “Who

is responsible?” asked the *Daily News* rhetorically, and answered, “What is everybody’s business is nobody’s business.”<sup>243</sup> In that laissez-faire age mud, disease, death, ignorance, and poverty were individual problems, not the concern of society as a whole. For Herbert Spencer, the father of Social Darwinism and the celebrity philosopher of his times, it all came down to biology: human society was governed by the law of the “survival of the fittest.”<sup>244</sup> The poor deserved their fate and attempts to change their conditions of life and work flew in the face of natural selection, the medieval dogma of Fate recast as “science” in an industrial age. As Karl Marx observed, “Capital . . . is reckless as regards illness or premature death of the workers, unless forced to pay heed to these matters, forced by social compulsion.”<sup>245</sup> There was precious little of such compulsion in Queen Victoria’s Britain. The authorities reserved compulsion for the dragooned and maltreated poor.

By all accounts, Silvertown stank, even in the nostrils of Londoners accustomed to the stench of an atmosphere containing “dust loaded with fecal matter, hot air, sewer gases, and smoke,” which metastasized into the infamous London fog. Sometimes of a “bottle-green color, sometimes pea-soup yellow,” the smog included “fuliginous matter” such as ammonium sulfate, which “crystallized on window-panes in tree-like patterns.”<sup>246</sup> Grace Foakes, a docker’s daughter from Wapping, recalls, “It is hard to imagine what a London fog was like” at the turn of the nineteenth century when

everyone had a coal fire, factories sent out great clouds of sooty grime, ships and tugs were driven by steam, their funnels belching out great quantities of thick black smoke. Winter would bring to the river such fogs as you do not see today. The air was so thick and yellow that you could not see where you were going . . . [and] big black pieces of soot would settle everywhere.<sup>247</sup>

Even half a century later, “unliftable black smog” reduced visibility along Silvertown’s “Sugar Mile” to “a mere foot,” and the passenger ferry between North Woolwich and the Kent shore sometimes drifted blindly, narrowly avoiding collisions with seagoing vessels.<sup>248</sup> The stench of Silvertown’s lanes must have been stomach turning, but there was no collective will or power to change it—that was only to come later with the development of working-class political organization and the takeover of West Ham’s local government by socialists such as Thorne and Terrett. Otherwise, the authorities acted only when they could no longer avoid

doing so, either from embarrassment or fear of the spread of contagion from the poor to the rich.

### Islands of Liquid Filth

In 1858, the “Great Stink” and associated cholera epidemics finally forced the Disraeli government to confront London’s drainage and public health problems. By 1865, the celebrated engineer Joseph Bazalgette had constructed huge connector sewers and pumping stations to channel the city’s sewage to outfalls at Beckton and Crossness. Silvertown did not benefit from Bazalgette’s visionary scheme, however, even though the Beckton outfall was close by, for at the time West Ham lay beyond the boundaries of Greater London. Even after 1893, when most of West Ham was connected to the northern London outfall sanitary sewer, Silvertown’s domestic wastes still ran straight into ditches alongside the residential streets or rotted in cesspools.<sup>249</sup> Indeed, as late as 1900, its sewage flowed into the marsh and street gutters. In that same year, Archer Crouch wrote that “the habitable area [of Silvertown] consists of islands of liquid filth, surrounded by stagnant dikes.”<sup>250</sup> The suburb was also periodically flooded with salt water when high tides and heavy rains caused the Thames to overflow the embankment. One doctor wore sea-boots to visit his patients. Even in “normal” times, noted the *Daily News*, the residents waded in mud and water in rain, or were “smothered in dust” when it was dry and windy.<sup>251</sup> Duncan Barrett and Nuala Calvi’s book on Silvertown in later times records the dismal effects of the great flood of January 1953:

At one a.m. the watchman at North Woolwich Pier reported that the Thames had reached a dangerous level. Less than an hour later, six feet of surplus water was spilling out of the Royal Docks and onto the streets of Silvertown, where it was flushed into the local sewers and back up into the lower lying neighbourhoods of Custom House and Tidal Basin. . . . On Monday morning, after much pumping from the local fire brigade, the waters had receded. But they left a carpet of thick black mud on the streets, and in the downstairs rooms of many people’s houses. The local residents mopped their ruined homes down and dragged what little furniture they owned out onto the streets, rinsing it with buckets of water and trying to avoid the rats that had been washed up from the sewers.<sup>252</sup>

Seventy or eighty years earlier, such floods were even more devastating, and the means of ameliorating them much more primitive.

### Dust Heaps for the City's Rubbish

Much of the stench of Silvertown came from the smoke and fumes of the factories. As a Newham History Workshop booklet observes, nineteenth-century West Ham—the borough of which Silvertown forms a part—“unlike London . . . had no laws controlling offensive trades.”<sup>253</sup> Alderman Terrett resented his borough being “the dust-heap on which the metropolis shoots its rubbish,”<sup>254</sup> but the situation was not new. East London had always been a dumping ground for the wastes of noxious industry, and three hundred years earlier the economist Sir William Petty had shuddered at the “fumes, steams and stinks of the whole easterly pile.”<sup>255</sup> What was new was the scale of the pollution; the air of Victorian London was fouled with “soot and tarry hydrocarbons,” twenty-four tons of which were dumped every week on each square mile.<sup>256</sup> The polluting heavy chemical factories of West Ham were concentrated in Silvertown and nearby suburbs, the lighter ones in the north with the exception of the great railway workshops. The smoke of the heavy chemical industries contributed to the thick green “London Particular” fogs,<sup>257</sup> which often blanketed Silvertown. One dark day in 1860, lost in the fog, the unfortunate Mr. Talbot, the manager of the Silvertown creosote works, lost his way, slipped on the slimy dockside cobbles, fell into the water and drowned.<sup>258</sup> He was not the first or the last to do so—many dockers and seamen perished in this way<sup>259</sup>—but nothing was done to curb the factories’ foul breath or the exhalations from domestic coal fires. Elsewhere in London, the smog was said to “grip the throat and set the eyes watering,”<sup>260</sup> but in Silvertown it literally burned the linings of throats and lungs. A 1907 account reported that “the inhabitants of Silvertown complain greatly of the fumes and smells from some of the factories,” and that the emissions were so caustic that they corroded machinery in local factories.<sup>261</sup> Silver’s contributed mightily to the smoky pall, its dozens of great furnaces belching clouds of smoke and smuts. The rubber vulcanizing process at Silver’s also discharged sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide, the latter known to schoolchildren as the rotten-egg gas in stink bombs.

By 1857, wrote Charles Dickens, Silvertown had become “quite a refuge for offensive trade establishments turned out of town; those of the oil-boilers, gut-spinners, varnish-makers, printers’ ink-makers, and the

like.”<sup>262</sup> Other firms produced creosote, naphtha, and other coal-tar products. Odam’s chemical manure works, Silvertown’s second-oldest factory, manufactured nitrates, phosphates, and superphosphates from the corpses of diseased cattle, a business that dated from the rinderpest epidemic of 1866, when thousands of infected beasts were herded to the knackery for slaughter, a throwback to a London City ordinance of 1371.<sup>263</sup> The horror of the rendering works is conveyed in Barrett and Calvi’s description of John Knight’s soap works as seen by the workers at the adjacent Tate & Lyle sugar refinery:

From their vantage point on the top floor, the Blue Room girls could see the swarm of overfed bluebottles that buzzed constantly around the rotting pile [of dead animals]. Every so often, the poor men would appear whose job it was to shift the putrid mound, and as they shovelled away, rats measuring at least a foot long would come scurrying out, only to be chopped in half by the men and added to the top of the pile.<sup>264</sup>

On windy days coal dust blew from Cory & Son’s on the foreshore, where “a battery of hydraulic cranes and a floating derrick unload[ed] coal directly into barges.”<sup>265</sup> The anchored mother barge measured 270 by 90 feet and boasted its own plant to produce gas for lighting,<sup>266</sup> and Cory’s handled two-thirds of the two-and-three-quarter-million tons of coal imported by sea each year into London.<sup>267</sup> Other local factories produced vitriol, asphalt, benzene, candles, jute bags, matches, cube sugar, syrup, and jams, their chimneys belching smoke and odors. “We used to have sweet and sour,” recalled an old resident of adjacent North Woolwich; “Knight’s would make you gag . . . then there was Tate and Lyle’s sweet, sickly smell.” Worse still, she would sometimes wake in the night and think there was a cesspool in her room.<sup>268</sup> Woe betide anyone unfortunate enough to fall into the Thames, for the pollution was “absolutely atrocious” and at low tide the banks would be strewn with “bones, horses’ heads, and stuff like that,” she recalled, because “they used to dump it straight in the river,” causing a terrible smell.<sup>269</sup>

### Fires and Accidents

Fires and explosions were relatively frequent occurrences in Silvertown’s factories. One broke out at Silver’s in 1864, just before the firm became a public company.<sup>270</sup> In April 1880, a “terrible” fire raced through the

premises of Burt, Boulton & Hayward, manufacturers of tar, creosote, pitch, naphtha, and benzene,<sup>271</sup> killing eleven workmen before it was extinguished. The blast sounded like “a clap of thunder” to seamen aboard ships in nearby Victoria Dock,<sup>272</sup> and resulted from a blocked worm in the condenser of a creosote still.<sup>273</sup> Observers warned of further disasters and another “great fire” broke out at the Anglo-Continental Guano Works in early 1886,<sup>274</sup> and a “fire of enormous magnitude” swept through the Manhattan Wharf in Silvertown on the night of Thursday, 9 June 1887, igniting 80,000 gallons of oil stored in drums.<sup>275</sup> In August 1897, a thirty-two-year-old laborer named Joseph Gardiner was roasted to death in molten sulfur when a boiler blew up at Silver’s. The explosion occurred when a fitter, acting on the instructions of his supervisor, was experimenting with pressures in the steam lines.<sup>276</sup> Less than two years later Keiller’s Silvertown jam factory was partly destroyed by huge gas explosions,<sup>277</sup> though it was repaired and for decades afterward made the well-known “Branston” pickles and other preserves. Worst of all was the huge explosion at the Brunner Mond munitions factory on the night of 19 January 1917 when fifty tons of TNT ignited, causing around seventy deaths and hundreds of serious injuries. The blast sent tremors as far away as Burton-on-Trent in the Midlands and was considered the world’s largest-ever peacetime explosion, greater than the immense explosion triggered by British army sappers at Messines Ridge on the Western Front in 1917.<sup>278</sup>

Clearly, these factories were hazardous places, even more so since the workers’ houses were crammed next to them, as the Dockers’ Union noted angrily after the 1917 explosion. As we shall see, there were many other hazards inside Silver’s and the other factories. The *Standard* reporter cited above was fearful of the sharp teeth of the masticating machine that shredded the gutta-percha, and not without reason. Although there is no record of any visitor being maimed by this or similar machines at Silvertown, accidents must have been a common enough fate among the employees, and compensation was at the management’s pleasure, not a legal right, and niggardly at that. The Factory Act of 1875 did prescribe a number of long-overdue reforms, but much of the machinery of the age was unguarded and a trap for the tired, unwary, inexperienced, or merely unfortunate worker.

One such worker was Henry Reed of Silvertown, a married man with four children, who lost four fingers and part of his right hand in an accident at Silver’s Works in 1886. Six years later, “after a few words,” Reed attacked Christian Gray in the street in Silvertown, wounding him in the

throat. Afterward Reed fled into a field near the Silvertown railway line and slashed his own throat “to the bone from ear to ear with a razor.” Shortly before, Chris Gray had given orders to foremen that Reed was not to be reemployed after he had allegedly gone on a drunken spree and absented himself from work.<sup>279</sup> Reed’s wife, Henrietta, however, insisted that he had been off work due to illness, not the drink. The coroner recorded a verdict of “suicide while of unsound mind.”<sup>280</sup> Given the bleak future facing the dismissed one-handed man, perhaps it was a rational decision, although it left his widow and children without hope of support.

221. *British Weekly Commissioners, Touters in London*, 214.
222. The metaphor was originally that of the English economist J. A. Hobson. See his *Imperialism: A Study* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972). Originally published in 1902.
223. See, for instance, Tully, *The Devil's Milk*, pt. 2.
224. London, *The People of the Abyss*, 6.
225. Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx Aveling, *The Factory Hell*, Socialist Platform No. 3 (London: Socialist League, 1885).
226. McGrath, *Silvertown*, 34.
227. Torr, *Tom Mann*, 9.
228. London, *The People of the Abyss*, 40.
229. Cited in Fishman, *East End 1888*, 11.
230. Thorne, *My Life's Battles*, 54.
231. London, *The People of the Abyss*, 254.
232. "Silvertown as It Is," *London Daily News*, Wednesday, 30 November 1881.
233. Cited in Chushiehi Tsuzuki, *The Life of Eleanor Marx, 1855–1898: A Socialist Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 198.
234. J. J. Terrett, "Municipal Socialism" in *West Ham: A Reply to 'The Times,' and Others* (London: Twentieth Century Press, ca. 1902), 5. St. Helens and Widnes were grim industrial towns in south Lancashire. Much of what George Orwell later wrote in *The Road to Wigan Pier* could also describe them.
235. Howarth and Wilson, *West Ham*, 58. Edward G. Howarth and Mona Wilson, *West Ham: A Study in Social and Industrial Problems* (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), 58.
236. Essex Record Office (ERO), Chelmsford, Essex, T/Z 25/407-459, "Memories of an anonymous Silvertown resident." Contained in a file of recollections from old people's centers in Essex dating from 1961.
237. Howarth and Wilson, *West Ham*, 58.
238. Pagenstecher, *History of East and West Ham*, 102.
239. Terrett, "Municipal Socialism" in *West Ham*, 5.
240. *London Gazette*, 18 April 1902.
241. "London Over the Border," *Daily News*, Wednesday, 30 November 1881.
242. Charles Dickens, *Household Words* (London: September 12, 1857); cited in Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 66.
243. "Silvertown as It Is," *Daily News*, Wednesday 30 November 1881.
244. Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1864), <http://www.archive.org/details/principlesbiolo05spengooq>.
245. Marx, *Capital*, 1:274.
246. Porter, *The Thames Embankment*, 57.
247. Grace Foakes, *Four Meals for Fourpence* (London: Virago, 2011), 10.
248. Duncan Barrett and Nuala Calvi, *The Sugar Girls: Tales of Hardship, Love and Happiness in Tate & Lyle's East End* (London: Collins, 2012), 179–80.
249. NHW, *A Marsh and a Gasworks*, 31.
250. Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 68.
251. "Silvertown as It Is," *Daily News*, Wednesday 30 November 1881.
252. Barrett and Calvi, *The Sugar Girls*, 191–92.
253. NHW, *A Marsh and a Gasworks*, 7.
254. Terrett, "Municipal Socialism" in *West Ham*, 5.
255. Cited in McGrath, *Silvertown*, 22.
256. London, *The People of the Abyss*, 44.
257. The fog lent its name to the thick green pea and ham soup still favored by Londoners.
258. Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 71.
259. Interview with Mick and Rose Geany, ECH, Silvertown, 2 March 2000.
260. Morton, *Heart of London*, 34.
261. Howarth and Wilson, *West Ham*, 58.
262. Dickens, *Household Words*, cited in Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 66.
263. *Ibid.*, 86.
264. Barrett and Calvi, *The Sugar Girls*, 168.

265. Porter, *London: A Social History*, 232.
266. Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 64.
267. Porter, *London: A Social History*, 232.
268. Interview with Ken and June Griffiths, ECH, North Woolwich, 12 December 2002.
269. *Ibid.*
270. LMA, B/BTR/ IRGP/01, “Minutes Book, General Meetings IRGP”; “Minutes of Extraordinary General Meeting, Held at the London Tavern, Thursday 30 June 1864.”
271. “Terrible Explosion at Silvertown,” *Daily News*, Wednesday, 30 November 1880.
272. “Fatal Explosion Near North Woolwich,” *Penny Illustrated Paper*, Saturday, 17 April 1880.
273. “The Explosion at Silvertown,” *Graphic*, Saturday, 24 April 1880.
274. “Great Fire at Silvertown,” *Standard*, Monday, 8 February 1886.
275. “Great Fire at Silvertown,” *Reynold’s Newspaper*, Sunday, 12 June 1887.
276. “The Fatal Boiler Explosion at Silvertown,” *Morning Post*, 18 August 1897.
277. *Ibid.* “Fire at Silvertown,” Tuesday, 4 April 1899.
278. Blake, *The Great Explosion*; and Hill and Bloch, *The Silvertown Explosion*.
279. “Tragedy at Silvertown,” *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, Sunday, 17 July 1892; and “Tragedy at Silvertown,” *Illustrated Police News*, Saturday, 23 July 1892.
280. “Tragedy at Silvertown,” *Illustrated Police News*, Saturday, 23 July 1892.
281. NHW, *A Marsh and a Gasworks*, 1.
282. *Ibid.*
283. *Ibid.*, 20.
284. “Memories of an anonymous Silvertown resident.”
285. *Ibid.*
286. Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 67.
287. Raw, *Striking a Light*.
288. Marriott, *Beyond the Tower*, 80.
289. James Thorold Rogers, *Six Centuries of Work and Wages: The History of English Labour* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1884), 538.
290. London, *The People of the Abyss*, 219.
291. Stan Dyson, Silvertown resident and writer, personal communication to the author, 22 February 2012.
292. Howarth and Wilson, *West Ham*, 58. “Coppers” in this sense were large metal basins in which the weekly wash was boiled before being laboriously rinsed and wrung out.
293. Porter, *London: A Social History*, 253. The author does not give any sources for this information.
294. London, *The People of the Abyss*, 217.
295. Howarth and Wilson, *West Ham*, 10–12.
296. *Ibid.*
297. *Stratford Express*, Wednesday, 9 October 1889.
298. Interview with Alfie, Eddie, Norman and Rose, ECH, Cundy’s pub, Silvertown, 28 February 2000.
299. Dickens, *Household Words*, cited in Crouch, *Silvertown*, 66.
300. Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 67.
301. Mrs. Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914), 55, 61.
302. C. F. G. Masterman, ed., *The Heart of Empire* (repr. London: Harvester Press, 1973), cited in Banks-Conney, “Political Culture and the Labour Movement,” 35.
303. NHW, *A Marsh and a Gasworks*, 34. Emphasis added.
304. Banks-Conney, “Political Culture and the Labour Movement,” 35.
305. Interview with Alfie, ECH, Cundy’s pub, Silvertown, 28 February 2000.
306. Dickens, *Household Words*, cited in Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 66.
307. Crouch, *Silvertown and Neighbourhood*, 67.
308. Donald McDougall, ed., *Fifty Years a Borough, 1886–1936: The Story of West Ham* (West Ham: County Borough Council of West Ham, 1936), 100.
309. Howarth and Wilson, *West Ham*, 60.
310. Robert Woods and Nicola Shelton, *An Atlas of Victorian Mortality* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 50.