

Into the Abyss with young Tom Hutchings

Many of us recollect Jack London's *Call of the Wild* from our youth, but it is his work just one year earlier that starts to prepare us for Tom's story:

When American author Jack London visited [London] in 1902 to research a non-fiction book published in 1903 as *The People of the Abyss*, the shock of the experience was never to leave him. His friend Upton Sinclair reported that "for years afterwards, the memories of this stunted and depraved population haunted him beyond all peace". And London himself declared: "No other book of mine took so much of my young heart and tears as that study of the economic degradation of the poor."¹

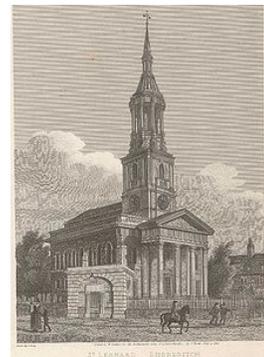
This is a story from that small slice of history called the East End of London in the nineteenth century. We may never really know what causes such a young person to take his own life, but perhaps we can gain a glimpse of the world that surrounded him. Anyone who has studied the East End during this timeframe knows that tragedies abound and triumphs are few, but even in this context there are some stories that stir those particularly haunting memories that Jack London experienced over a century ago.

Tom's story begins four generations earlier.

The First Generation, Descending: John Estall

JOHN ESTALL was baptised on 2 May 1773 at the Church of St Leonard Shoreditch in Hackney, London². Was it an omen that, just a year later and for the first time, the Vestry of this centuries-old church levied a special poor rate on the parishioners in order to set up a workhouse for the growing population of paupers?³

John was born in Swan Yard, Shoreditch but spent most of his life in the parish of Bethnal Green.⁴ He was the second of three sons of William Estall and his wife Sarah Bay. The Estall family had lived in the East End at least since the marriage of John's great grandfather William Estall to Leah Holt in 1721. However, John's parents brought major changes to the family, moving away from White's Yard on Rosemary Lane where his father, grandfather and great grandfather had all lived. John had at least eight aunts and uncles on his father's side that reached adulthood and married. We know that some portion of the family stayed in White's Yard for a lifetime, because his grand-parents John and Mary Estall were still residing there when they both passed away in 1810⁵, well into their eighties. So it must have been a big decision for William and Sarah to make the move away from the familiar family territory and perhaps an even bigger decision when William chose to enter the weaving trade rather than continuing in his father's and grandfather's tallow chandler profession.⁶



19th century print of
St Leonard Shoreditch

Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and the surrounding Spitalfields area had experienced much growth through the 18th century, starting with the arrival of the Huguenots who had been driven from France by persecution for their religious beliefs. With the passing of the Act of Toleration⁷ by William III in 1689, the Huguenots were welcomed in their new country and brought much-needed



Spitalfields Dress
Fabric 1742, Victoria &
Albert Museum

economic activity especially through establishing their silk weaving industry in England. It is probable that John's mother Sarah was of Huguenot descent⁸ and, if so, this would explain how his father William became the earliest known silk weaver in the Estall family. We can assume that John, like so many other members of the weaving families at the time, was probably helping with some aspect of the family business while still a young child. Not surprisingly and a testament to the success of the trade at that time, John grew up to be a weaver like his father and his older brother William. While John would not have had to undertake the formal seven-year apprenticeship required of those who worked within the 'Square Mile' of the London city walls,⁹ there is little doubt that he had spent many years honing his skills before reaching adulthood.

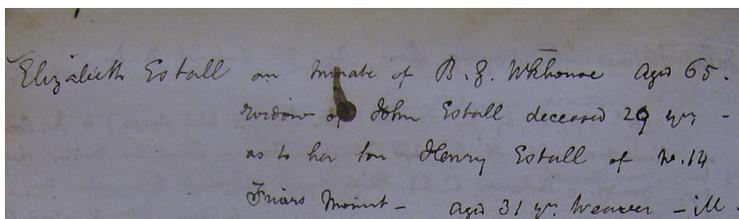
John married **ELIZABETH TOPS** on 29 May 1796¹⁰ at St Matthews in Bethnal Green. Elizabeth was born in about 1775¹¹. We know nothing of her parents or siblings but we can be sure that life was very busy for young Elizabeth who bore five children between 1798 and 1809¹². John then passed away in about 1811 only a year after his two Estall grandparents, leaving Elizabeth to raise their sons John, Samuel, George and William who all reached adulthood and married. John and Elizabeth also had a daughter Elizabeth but we have no record of her except a baptism.

There is some evidence that life was not easy for the widowed Elizabeth, as one might imagine. She and her children worked jointly in the family's weaving business, no doubt focused on the basic necessities in life. All of the boys remained weavers as adults, indicating that the trade still offered some ability to feed and shelter families. At the time John passed away, they were living in a rented accommodation on Tyssen Street costing £15 per year, and Elizabeth stayed in Bethnal Green for the rest of her life. Although times were no doubt difficult, Elizabeth had only to think of her sister-in-law to count her own blessings. Similar to Elizabeth herself, her sister-in-law Elizabeth nee Warburton lost her husband Samuel at a fairly young age in 1819 and was left with four children, two from Samuel's first marriage and two from her own marriage. Because the first two children were orphaned, Samuel's career in the Army quickly earned them places in the Royal Military Asylum at Chelsea¹³. However, Elizabeth then lost her little girl only six months after her husband's death but still had her remaining three-year-old son to raise. While the records are incomplete, it seems likely that she then had at least four illegitimate children over the next decade, with three of the four births recorded in the workhouse and probably only one child surviving.¹⁴ It would not stretch the imagination to think that she may have joined the thousands of other young women in the East End at that time whose livelihood depended on the streets.

Returning to Elizabeth (nee Tops), wife of John, while she was apparently able to manage for several decades, important changes were afoot with the passing of the new Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834.¹⁵ Generations of the Estall family, including Elizabeth, would experience the impact of this Act and some of its key principles¹⁶:

- The principle of 'less eligibility' (workhouse conditions should be made less preferable than those of the lowest paid labourer)
- The prohibition of outdoor relief (relief outside the workhouse)
- The abolition of 'rate-in-aid' (grants to supplement low wages)

Elizabeth became an inmate of the Bethnal Green Workhouse sometime prior to when she applied for relief for her son Henry in 1840.¹⁷ This must have been an especially troubling time since Henry already had at least four of his own children to raise by that time. We'll talk more of the Workhouse in the next generation, but Elizabeth's conditions were difficult and we catch our last glimpse of her at age 65 in the census¹⁸ before she passed away in 1843.¹⁹



Excerpt from the Poor Law Rough Examination of Elizabeth Estall (nee Tops) regarding her son Henry Estall, 1840; London Metropolitan Archives

Lineage

1 JOHN ESTALL was born 25 Apr 1773 at Swan Yard, Hackney, Middlesex and baptised 2 May 1773 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney, Middlesex²⁰. He married Elizabeth Tops 29 May 1796 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green, Middlesex²¹. He died circa 1811 at Bethnal Green, Middlesex²².

Parentage

John's baptism record states that he is the son of William and Sarah Estall, living at Swan Yard in the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch, Middlesex. Estall was an uncommon surname at the time; even allowing for some misspellings, there were less than 60 people in total with the surname Estall in the 1841 census of England and less than 10 families with children, almost 70 years after John's birth. To date, I have only been able to identify two William Estall's who were possibly of an age to be John's father. I am confident that John's father is William born 1749 who was a weaver and at age 21 married Sarah Bay in 1770 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green.²³ The other possible candidate lived in Westminster, an area of London very distinct from the East End, and his administration identifies that he was a coal dealer.²⁴

Spouse

Elizabeth Tops was born circa 1775 and was buried 19 Nov 1843 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green²⁵.

Children

The children of John and Elizabeth (Tops) Estall are as follows:

- i. **JOHN ESTALL**, born 2 Jul 1798 and baptised 22 Jul 1798 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green; died Q2 1874 at Bethnal Green.²⁶ He married **MARY SOPHIA WEST** in 1822 in Hackney²⁷ and had children Mary Louisa, James, John, Robert, Mary Ann, Harriet, George, William and Mary Sophia.²⁸
- ii. **ELIZABETH ESTALL**, born 24 Nov 1801 and baptised 20 Dec 1801 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green.²⁹
- iii. **SAMUEL WILLIAM ESTALL**, born 5 Feb 1804 and baptised 26 Feb 1804 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green.³⁰ He married **ANN CARR** on 27 May 1825 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green³¹ and had children Samuel and George.³² He married second **SUSANNAH CARR** on 28 Jun 1834 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green³³ and had children Elizabeth Ann, Susannah Sarah, Henry and Hannah.³⁴
- iv. **GEORGE ESTALL**, born 2 Jun 1806 and baptised 29 Jun 1806 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green; died 25 Dec 1871 at Bethnal Green.³⁵ He married **CATHERINE MOORE** on 11 Sep 1848³⁶ at St Peters, Bethnal Green and had child George.³⁷

- v. HENRY ESTALL, born 6 Feb 1809 and baptised 26 Feb 1809 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green; died 2 Feb 1866 at Bethnal Green.³⁸ He married ELIZABETH RICE on 21 Oct 1828³⁹ and had children Elizabeth, Mary Ann, Susannah, Sarah Ann, Henry, James, John Joseph, George Benjamin, Elizabeth Ann, William Edward and Hannah Maria.⁴⁰

The Second Generation, Descending: Henry Estall

HENRY ESTALL was baptised on 26 Feb 1809 at St Matthews Parish Church in Bethnal Green, London⁴¹. He was the youngest of the four sons of John and Elizabeth (nee Tops) Estall. St Matthews was a familiar church to the Estall family, beginning with the baptism of Henry's grandfather William Estall in 1771. The church registers tell the story of a close-knit community where one is left with the impression that the English had done more to integrate into the life that the Huguenots brought from France rather than the Huguenots adapting to the East End way of life.

Child's Christian Name	Parents Name		Abode	Quality, Trade, or Profession
	Christian	Surname		
Caroline born 20 Mar 1812	Abraham & Sarah	Lefever	St. John's	Weaver
George & Frederic born 26 Dec 1811	Barnaby & Esther	Sharp	Cabley St	Weaver
Mary Ann born 17 Mar 1812	Barnaby & Esther	Sharp	Cabley St	Weaver
William born 20 Mar 1812	William & Sarah	Brown	St. John's	Weaver

Excerpt from the St Matthews Baptism Register 1814, London Metropolitan Archives & ancestry.co.uk; notice the weaving professions and 'Lefever' Huguenot name

Henry's marriage to Elizabeth Rice in 1828⁴² exemplifies this tight community. Elizabeth and her five siblings were the children of Samuel Rice and Mary Ann Bass⁴³. Like Henry's family, virtually all members of Elizabeth's family including in-laws that we're aware of were East End weavers. Her sister Sarah married James Auvache⁴⁴, close cousin of Sarah Auvache who married Henry's nephew James Estall⁴⁵. Also typical was the fact that these Auvache families were descendants of Huguenot emigrants, Jacques Auvache and Esther LeRoy, who arrived in London in the late 1600s from Mantes-Sur-Seine, France⁴⁶. Further reinforcing the point, Henry and Elizabeth's son Henry Estall would later marry Elizabeth's niece, Sarah Jane Rice, in 1858⁴⁷.

But the community was under threat and Henry and his young family began to experience the reality that Bethnal Green was on its way to becoming the poorest district of Victorian London. The weaving industry was already starting to decline and the Estall family would soon have to turn to general labourer jobs to try to feed their families. It must have been a very difficult change for many of Henry's generation who had been at their looms for a lifetime. Steam engines brought sweeping changes to the industry, where one person could suddenly tend many looms at a time. Middle men swept through the communities, charging the weavers already on subsistence wages for every aspect of their weaving tools. Then the potato famine of 1845-1852 ravaged Ireland, where approximately one million died and another million emigrated. Many of these people came to the East End, desperate to work for almost any wage if only they could have some food to save their families. Wages tumbled as the new arrivals found that they could enter the weaving trade with relative ease. In addition, with the rapidly increasing population, the already inadequate housing and sanitation systems reached breaking point.

Henry had health problems from a relatively young age, likely related to the bronchitis that would later take his life. The Age of Industrialisation wreaked havoc on London's air quality, where buildings are still being cleaned to this day from the soot that encompassed them a century ago. In the 1860s, John Ruskin referred to it as "That great foul city of London, — rattling, growling, smoking, stinking — ghastly heap of fermenting brickwork, pouring out poison at every pore. . . ".⁴⁸ Henry's mother Elizabeth applied for aid for her son on grounds of ill health shortly before she passed away, when Henry was only in his early thirties. Fortunately, he was able to continue his weaving⁴⁹ and provide sufficiently for nine of his eleven children to reach adulthood and marry. However, he did continue to seek poor relief and only survived to age 55.

Henry's siblings faced similar circumstances, all of them having also chosen the weaving trade. Like Henry, they were able to raise most of their children. But tragedy struck deeply when Henry's brother George froze to death on Christmas Day in the Bethnal Green Workhouse⁵⁰. Although the workhouse had recently been renovated, it appears that bureaucracy took its toll on the inmates as they were forbidden to light the fires that were needed to heat the workhouse. George's plight made national headlines and one can only hope that it helped to prompt some of the urgent reforms

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BETHNAL Green furnishes us with a Christmas story which, unhappily, can lay no claim to what is conventionally termed originality. Its subject is a pauper's death, "accelerated" by one of those agencies which in this nineteenth century of ours are left to play their part in ridding society of inconvenient encumbrances. Some time ago, as we gather from the report of a coroner's inquest, a new wing was added to the Bethnal Green Workhouse. What this fresh extension as a whole was like we do not know; but there can be very little doubt as to the character of ward No. 4, in which GEORGE ESTALL died on Christmas-day. It was "a very large" apartment. It "had a fire grate, but no fire," and it was ventilated with a vengeance. The unfortunate invalids consigned to this place growled bitterly about the damp and cold. These complaints reached the ear of the workhouse master, but not in a "formal" way, and, of course, no notice whatever was taken of them. Moreover—though this seems incredible—the "orders of the Poor-law Board" were construed as strictly enjoining that, cold or no cold, not an ounce of coal was to be consumed in the interest of the starving wretches. In this, as in so many other cases, the spirit of red-tape was true

Death of George Estall; excerpt from The Guardian
30 Dec 1871 at archive.guardian.co.uk

needed in the care of the poor.

Lineage

2 HENRY ESTALL was born 6 Apr 1809 and baptised 26 Feb 1809 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green, Middlesex⁵¹. He was born at No. 2 Prince's Cottages, Tyssen Street.⁵² He married Elizabeth Rice 21 Oct 1828 at St John at Hackney, Middlesex⁵³. He died 2 Feb 1866 at 8 Collins Place, Bethnal Green, Middlesex.⁵⁴

Parentage

Henry's baptism record states that he is the son of John and Elizabeth Estall, in the parish of St Matthew, Bethnal Green, Middlesex⁵⁵. To date, I have only been able to identify two John Estall's who were possibly of an age to be Henry's father and still living at the time Henry was born. I am confident that Henry's father is John born 1771 who was a weaver and at age 23 married Elizabeth Tops in 1796 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green.⁵⁶ The other possible candidate is John Estall born 1779 in Stepney, Middlesex, but I have found no records to suggest that John of 1779 even survived childhood and he would have had to marry as a minor (assuming a marriage prior to Henry's birth) in order to have a child in 1809. However, the most compelling evidence for Henry's parentage is his mother Elizabeth's application for poor relief for Henry in 1840, an application that identifies her husband John, son Henry and Henry's children⁵⁷.

Spouse

Elizabeth Rice was born 13 Sep 1808 and baptised 9 Oct 1808 at St John at Hackney, Middlesex⁵⁸. She was the daughter of Samuel Rice and Mary Ann Bass who married 31 Mar 1804 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney⁵⁹. After Henry's death, Elizabeth married John Granshaw on 5 Sep 1870 at St James the Great, Bethnal Green⁶⁰. Elizabeth died in Q1 1873 at Bethnal Green⁶¹.

Children

The children of Henry and Elizabeth (Rice) Estall are as follows:

- i. ELIZABETH ESTALL, born 18 Jan 1831 and baptised 5 Nov 1834 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney; buried 18 Feb 1836 at Gibraltar Row Protestant Dissidents Burial Ground, Bethnal Green.⁶²
- ii. MARY ANN ESTALL, born 29 Nov 1832 and baptised 5 Nov 1834 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney.⁶³ She married JOSEPH KNIGHT on 1 Aug 1859 at St Philips, Bethnal Green.⁶⁴
- iii. SUSANNAH ESTALL, born 9 Oct 1834 and baptised 5 Nov 1834 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney.⁶⁵ She married SAMUEL JOHN POTTER on 9 Dec 1855 at St Peters, London Docks, City of London⁶⁶ and had child Susan Frances Elizabeth.⁶⁷ She married second CHARLES SHIP on 27 Sep 1869 at St Philips, Bethnal Green.⁶⁸
- iv. SARAH ANN ESTALL, born 30 Jan 1837 and baptised 23 Feb 1837 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney; died Q4 1870 at Bethnal Green.⁶⁹ She married WALTER HENRY BERRY on 19 Dec 1854 at St John at Hackney⁷⁰ and had children Sarah Ann, Walter Henry and James Walter.⁷¹
- v. HENRY ESTALL, born 25 Oct 1839 at Bethnal Green; baptised 16 Feb 1840 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green; died Q2 1914 at West Ham.⁷² He married SARAH JANE RICE in Q2 1858 at Bethnal Green⁷³ and had children Emma Jane, Sarah Ann, Henry John, Mary Elizabeth, William James, Sarah Jane, Maria Ann and Rose Matilda.⁷⁴
- vi. JAMES ESTALL, born circa 1840 at Bethnal Green; buried 10 Aug 1842 at St Matthews, Bethnal Green.⁷⁵
- vii. JOHN JOSEPH ESTALL, born 8 Sep 1844 at Bethnal Green; baptised 12 Apr 1846 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney; died Q3 1916 at Poplar.⁷⁶ He married or partnered with EMMA COUSINS circa 1865 and had children John George (1865), John George (1867), William James, Emma Mary Ann, Ann Elizabeth, Thomas Henry, Charles, Henry, Louisa Maria, George Richard, Mary Ann Caroline Susan, Henry, Betsy, John Charles and Emma.⁷⁷
- viii. GEORGE BENJAMIN ESTALL, born 8 Aug 1847 and baptised 2 Sep 1849 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney; died Q1 1924 at Bethnal Green.⁷⁸ He married ANN CUTBUSH POOL on 23 Mar 1868 at St James the Great, Bethnal Green⁷⁹ and had children George William, Ann Eleanor, Susan Clara, Jane Emma, Richard Henry, James Thomas, William John, John Henry, Henry Samuel, Emma Mary, Albert John and Lily Rosina.⁸⁰

- ix. ELIZABETH ANN ESTALL, born 14 Aug 1849 at Bethnal Green; baptised 2 Sep 1849 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney; died Q2 1893 at Whitechapel, Stepney.⁸¹ She married JOHN EDWARD MEPHAM on 25 Jul 1870 at St Jude, Bethnal Green⁸² and had children John Edward, Elizabeth, William George, Thomas Frederick and Jane.⁸³
- x. WILLIAM EDWARD ESTALL, born 4 Jul 1852 at Bethnal Green; baptised 26 Sep 1852 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney; died Q3 1906 at Bethnal Green.⁸⁴ He partnered with SARAH WHITMARSH circa 1880 and had children William and Ann.⁸⁵ He married SARAH ANN HUTCHINGS on 2 Mar 1891 at St James the Great, Bethnal Green⁸⁶ and had children Alfred Hutchings, Harriet Hutchings, Thomas Hutchings, Bessie Estall, Susan, Rose, James and Robert.⁸⁷
- xi. HANNAH MARIA ESTALL, born Q4 1854 at Bethnal Green; died between 1891 and 1901 at Bethnal Green.⁸⁸ She married FRANK SMITH on 6 Jul 1873 at St Jude, Bethnal Green⁸⁹ and had child Ann Caroline.⁹⁰ She married second DAN SHEPPARD on 5 Dec 1876 at St James the Great, Bethnal Green⁹¹ and had children Dan Alexander, Elizabeth Lucy, Susan Maria, William, Jane, Emily and Henry Samuel.⁹²

The Third Generation, Descending: William Edward Estall

WILLIAM EDWARD ESTALL was baptised on 26 Sep 1852 at the Church of St Leonard Shoreditch in Hackney, London⁹³. He was the youngest son of Henry and Elizabeth (nee Rice) Estall, the eighth of nine children. William was born at New Inn Yard at a time when this area was becoming increasingly encompassed by the poverty that Jack London would soon characterise as the ‘abyss’. Yet, the community still clung to some semblance of dignity, as highlighted by the Booth Poverty Map⁹⁴ which shows New Inn Yard categorised as ‘purple’ or ‘intermittent earning ... The victims of competition and on them falls with particular severity the weight of recurrent depressions of trade’, rather than the approaching ‘blue’ and even ‘black’ described as:



William's birthplace, New Inn Yard, as shown on the Booth Poverty Map of London

The lowest class which consists of some occasional labourers, street sellers, loafers, criminals and semi-criminals. Their life is the life of savages, with vicissitudes of extreme hardship and their only luxury is drink.

The Reverend Isaac Taylor sheds some light on the resilience of this community when he wrote of the neighbouring St Matthias parish in 1867⁹⁵:

The poverty and misery of Bethnal-green are notorious... [H]e sees the broken, rag stuffed panes – the black fetid plaster peeling from the mouldy walls – the cumbrous looms blocking up the small rooms – the pale, wan faces of young children bending over their weary labour – and the gaunt, unshorn, famine-stricken men plying the endless shuttle. This portion of Bethnal-green is what is known as the Spitalfields silk trade. The silk weavers ... are descendants of those Huguenot exiles who, for the cause of God and truth and liberty and life, fled from the sunny plains of their native France ... Many of them still cherish proud traditions of their ancestry ... [I]n the parish of St Matthias, there is no venal vice and no professional crime; we have only

to deal with excessive indigence, and with the prevalent irreligion which indigence so often entails .. The great difficulty which confronts us is the dead level of excessive poverty...”

However, the conditions eventually prevailed and by the time William reached adulthood, his life differed dramatically from that of his ancestors. His brothers had moved into general labourer work, one a gravedigger, one a matchbox maker, another a brickmaker. As William began to make his own work choices, he may have considered the experiences of his older brother Henry who had been signed up for the Royal Navy as a 13-year-old Boy 2nd Class aboard the 120-gun HMS Waterloo⁹⁶. William followed the military route and enlisted in the British Army as a labourer at the age of 22⁹⁷. He had grown to be almost 5’8”, 10 stone, with brown hair, hazel eyes and a fair complexion. While the records are not complete, it appears that he spent some time in Ceylon. His conduct seems fairly ordinary, appearing in the Regimental Defaulter’s Book on average once a year but with no major transgressions. However, in short order he started to have significant medical problems. First he contracted scarlet fever, attributed to the climate. Then he suffered from epilepsy, losing several months. After five years of service, he was then listed as having palpitations, at which point he was deemed medically unfit. William was discharged in 1879. After leaving the service, he found intermittent labour work as available and, presumably, as he was physically able.

Traditional family structures must have felt the pressure of the changing social conditions and alarming mortality rates, perhaps contributing to William’s complex family situation. In 1881, William was living with his partner Sarah Whitmarsh along with her children from a previous marriage. Shortly thereafter, William and Sarah had children of their own. It appears that Sarah then returned, along with all of the children, to her husband while William entered a new relationship with Sarah Ann Hutchings. By the time William and Sarah Ann Hutchings married in 1891, they already had three children born with the surname Hutchings. Another five Estall children were soon to follow.

In the mid-1890s, William and Sarah Ann moved to Quinn’s Buildings, Russia Lane in Bethnal Green. As the Booth Poverty Map highlights, William was now squarely in the grips of the lowest categorisations of poverty. Superintendent W. Weston of the Bethnal Green Police mentioned these buildings when interviewed for the poverty mapping work⁹⁸:



William’s residence in the 1890s, as shown on the Booth Poverty Map of London

As to Buildings, he thinks that the builder or owner of large blocks who put in really strong caretakers and then back them up do more to humanise a rough neighbourhood than “all the Churches, Chapels, Missions put together”. What that class want is discipline and a sense of orderliness introduced into their lives. All buildings have rules and if the caretaker enforces them properly moral improvement must follow... But on the other hand where the rules of Buildings are lax there are no worse places to be found. He mentioned as an instance of the latter *Quinn’s Buildings in Russia Lane*.

Sarah Ann passed away in 1899 from meningitis and in August 1900, William arrived ill at the Bethnal Green Workhouse identifying seven children ranging in age from 8 months to 14 years. He retrieved some of the children in 1901, but this was a temporary situation as they were orphaned in 1906.

Lineage

3 WILLIAM EDWARD ESTALL was born 4 Jul 1852 at New Inn Yard and baptised 26 Sep 1852 at St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney, Middlesex⁹⁹. He partnered with Sarah Whitmarsh prior to 1881¹⁰⁰. He married Sarah Ann Hutchings 2 Mar 1891 at St James the Great, Bethnal Green, Middlesex¹⁰¹. He died in Q3 1906 at Bethnal Green, Middlesex.¹⁰²

Parentage

William's baptism record states that he is the son of Henry and Elizabeth Estall at New Inn Yard in the parish of St Leonard Shoreditch, Hackney. Henry is identified as a weaver. There were no other Henry Estall's living at the time who were of an appropriate age to be William's father. William then appears with his parents in the 1861 census.¹⁰³ His marriage record to Sarah Ann Hutchings also identifies his father as Henry Estall, deceased by that time.¹⁰⁴

Partner & Spouse

William's partner Sarah Whitmarsh was born circa 1854 at Bethnal Green, Middlesex¹⁰⁵. She was the daughter of Henry Thomas Whitmarsh who married Sarah Stagg 1 Mar 1851 at St Simon Zelotes, Bethnal Green¹⁰⁶. She married William French Q4 1873 at Bethnal Green¹⁰⁷.

William's spouse Sarah Ann Hutchings was born 6 May 1860 and baptised 1 Jun 1860 at St Mary Magdalene, Woolwich, Kent. She was the daughter of William Hutchings and Harriet <maiden name unknown>.¹⁰⁸ Sarah died 24 Dec 1899 at Bethnal Green¹⁰⁹.

Children

The children of William and Sarah Whitmarsh are as follows:

- i. WILLIAM ESTALL, born 18 Feb 1882 at Sydenham, Kent.¹¹⁰
- ii. ANN ESTALL, born Q1 1885 at Lewisham, Kent.¹¹¹ She married HUGH DUFFY on 23 Apr 1905 at St Saviour, High Street, Lewisham¹¹² and had children Hugh George, James, George (1910), George (1911), John, William, Francis and Robert.¹¹³

The children of William and Sarah Ann Hutchings are as follows:

- iii. ALFRED HUTCHINGS, born circa 1884 at Bethnal Green, Middlesex; died Q1 1894 at Hackney, Middlesex.¹¹⁴ Alfred was an illegitimate child and there is no definitive proof that William Estall was his father.
- iv. HARRIET HUTCHINGS, born circa 1887 at Bethnal Green, Middlesex.¹¹⁵ Harriet was an illegitimate child and there is no definitive proof that William Estall was her father.

- v. THOMAS HUTCHINGS, born 11 Jul 1889 at Bethnal Green, Middlesex; died 8 Sep 1910 and buried 9 Sep 1910 at English Cemetery, Cairo, Egypt.¹¹⁶ Thomas was an illegitimate child and there is no definitive proof that William Estall was his father.
- vi. BESSIE ESTALL, born 16 Apr 1891 and baptised 3 May 1891 at St John, Bethnal Green, Middlesex.¹¹⁷
- vii. SUSAN ESTALL, born 9 Jul 1893 and baptised 1 Nov 1895 at St John, Bethnal Green, Middlesex.¹¹⁸
- viii. ROSIE ESTALL, born 14 Oct 1895 and baptised 1 Nov 1895 at St John, Bethnal Green, Middlesex.¹¹⁹
- ix. JAMES ESTALL, born 6 Sep 1897 and baptised 24 Sep 1897 at St John, Bethnal Green, Middlesex; died Q4 1964 at Enfield, Middlesex.¹²⁰ As JAMES ESTALL KENT, he married ROSETTA MINNIE WEBB on 19 Oct 1921 at St Andrew, Enfield, Middlesex¹²¹ and had children James C. Kent and Jeffrey J. Kent¹²²
- x. ROBERT ESTALL, born 26 Nov 1899 and baptised 8 Dec 1899 at St John, Bethnal Green, Middlesex; died 7 Jul 1900 at Bethnal Green Infirmary.¹²³

The Fourth Generation, Descending: Thomas Hutchings

THOMAS HUTCHINGS was born on 11 Jul 1889 in the parish of Bethnal Green, Middlesex. He was born in the Bethnal Green workhouse, the illegitimate son of Sarah Ann Hutchings who identified herself as a fur sewer from Cranbrook Street¹²⁴. Like other newborns in the workhouse, he would have been issued his first set of pauper clothes the day he was born. They would not be his last.

Tom was the third of eight children of William Estall and Sarah Ann Hutchings. William and Sarah didn't marry until several years after Tom's birth which might explain the lack of any baptism record for him, even though illegitimate births were a common occurrence in the church registers. With his father working intermittently and five more children to feed over the course of the next ten years, Thomas' childhood must have been difficult. The family moved several times before settling into the Quinn Buildings, perhaps doing the 'moonlight flit' that so many of their neighbours and cousins were using to avoid paying rent that they simply did not have. Thomas then lost his oldest brother Alfred in 1894. Given that a third of Estall children born between 1840 and 1900 in the East End did not survive childhood¹²⁵, William and Sarah's family could still be classed as survivors at that point. However, Sarah and her month-old son Robert entered the Bethnal Green Infirmary in late 1899, where she died a short time later. The breakdown of the family had begun.



Waterloo Road Workhouse, 1935
from www.workhouses.org.uk

Soon after his mother's death, Tom's three-year-old brother James was placed with the Kent family who lived near the Estall family and probably knew them. Then in February 1900, Tom now ten years old, his ill father and his remaining siblings arrived at the Bethnal

Green Workhouse at Waterloo Road¹²⁶. Tom's father William and his little sister Bessie soon joined baby Robert in the infirmary, who only survived a few more months¹²⁷. The remaining children – Tom, Harriet, Susan and Rosie – were sent to the Bethnal Green Union School at Leytonstone, Essex. William recovered by mid 1901 and left the workhouse with Tom, Susan and Rosie from the school as well as Bessie from the infirmary. Presumably Harriet, who was now fourteen, had been placed as a domestic servant by that time, a typical posting for girls of Harriet's age.

Apparently, Tom and his family were able to manage for the next five years until 1906 when his father passed away. It's conceivable that Tom, then seventeen, may have had to make the decisions on his younger siblings at that point. Bessie, Susan and Rosie came under the care of Miss Annie Macpherson's Children's Home situated on Commercial Road in Spitalfields¹²⁸. We can't know what Tom knew of Annie Macpherson, but the lives of his sisters were radically changed by this 'pioneer of child emigration to Canada'¹²⁹. Bessie and Susan left England in 1906 en route to the Knowlton Children's Home, run by Annie's sister Louisa Birt, in Ontario, Canada¹³⁰. Rosie however remained in England and was placed in the Gilmore Children's Home. In 1909, she was returned to the Bethnal Green Workhouse.

What happened to Tom? Although he had said farewell to his younger sisters, we do know that he was aware of where they were and at least had some contact with Rosie. He managed on his own for a short time, but the following year he decided to enlist in the British Army. Although he was only 18, he stated that he was a 21-year-old photographer and used the name Thomas Estall¹³¹. He requested three years' enlistment in the Coldstream Guards, the 'oldest regiment in the Regular Army in continuous service'¹³². He identified his next of kin as his sister Rosie at the Bethnal Green Road School in Victoria Park. By then, he had grown to the same height as his father, 5'8", but he was a slim 9 stone, with brown hair, blue eyes and not surprisingly, a sallow complexion. For some reason, he was first found unfit for the Coldstream Guards but upon re-evaluation, he was accepted. In October 1907, Tom was posted with the 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade, regimental number 2451, and his enlistment period was altered to seven years. He was first sent to Winchester and in 1909, he shipped out to the Citadel in Cairo, Egypt. Although his medical record had been almost clear, Tom then spent several months in hospital in early 1910 with a foot condition, due to a malformation resulting from an old injury. The doctor's last recommendation was to 'get a larger pair of boots'. In August, he was back in hospital with stomach problems. Then, the last entry on Tom's medical card was recorded on 8 September 1910 in Cairo, when he died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head.

The inquest of Private Thomas Estall, aged 21 but believed to be aged 24, began the following day at the Consular Court in Cairo¹³³. Once the judge and jury had viewed his body, he received a Church of England burial at the English Cemetery that same day. The Orderly Medical Officer on duty the night of Tom's death testified that the bullet had been fired through the roof of Tom's mouth, exiting from the base of his skull. The Officer testified that he did 'not think anyone would let anyone else put a gun in his mouth'. Tom's Acting Corporal testified that, upon hearing a gunshot and shortly thereafter the screams of others, he found Tom lying on his bed with his rifle between his knees and face upwards, still alive. The Orderly Medical Officer had testified that by the time Tom arrived at the hospital, he was quite unconscious and only lived about ten minutes. Tom's Acting Corporal, who had known Tom for about 18 months, went on to testify:

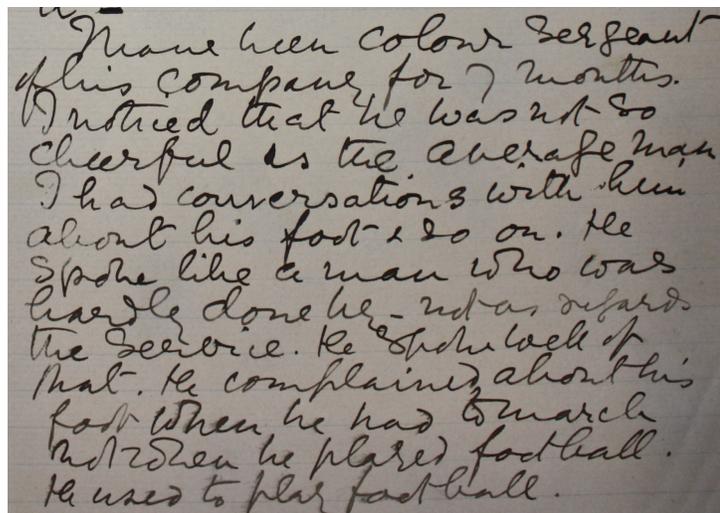
I had never noticed anything particular about deceased. He was very quiet and was careful about money matters. He did not drink at all. I had not noticed anything unusual about him lately. He used to complain about his foot especially after marching. He said he was expecting to purchase his discharge and go to Canada. He was on good terms with the others but was quiet and did not mix much with others.

A fellow Rifleman testified:

I had not noticed anything about him recently. He never complained about his health or the heat. He was a very quiet man. He was civil to everybody.

His Sargeant reported:

I have been Colour Sargeant of his company for 7 months. I noticed that he was not so cheerful as the average man. I had conversations with him about his foot and so on. He spoke like a man who was hardly done by – not as regards the service. He spoke well of that. He complained about his foot when he had to march and when he played football. He used to play football. He was not very popular among the men. He kept alone and kept to himself. He had not quarrelled with anybody. He had a boot made for his injured foot to his entire satisfaction.

A photograph of a handwritten note in cursive ink on a light-colored background. The text is a testimonial from a Colour Sargeant named William Miller, describing his observations of a man in his company over a seven-month period. The handwriting is somewhat slanted and dense, with some corrections or additions visible. The text matches the typed transcription provided in the document.

'He spoke like a man who was hardly done by',
Colour Sargeant William Miller's testimony
at the inquest of Private Thomas Estall

The inquest returned a verdict of 'suicide by shooting himself with a rifle while temporarily insane thereby fracturing the base of his skull'.

There ends Tom's journey.

Lineage

4 THOMAS HUTCHINGS was born 11 Jul 1889 at the Bethnal Green Infirmary, Middlesex.¹³⁴ He died on 8 Sep 1910 at the Citadel, Cairo, Egypt and was buried on 9 Sep 1910 at the English Cemetery, Citadel, Cairo, Egypt.¹³⁵

Parentage

Thomas' birth certificate states that he is the son of Sarah Hutchings of 27 Cranbrook Street. No father's name is given. Since Thomas was illegitimate, I cannot provide proof that he was the son of William Estall. However, Thomas' mother married William Estall on 2 Mar 1891 when Thomas was less than two years old. He is identified as a stepson in the 1901 census, however Sarah was a spinster when she married William¹³⁶. Upon Sarah's death, William continued to raise Thomas and identified Thomas as his child when they entered the workhouse in 1900. Also, William knew that Thomas had been born in the Bethnal Green Infirmary.¹³⁷ This evidence indicates a high probability that William was Thomas' natural father. However if William was not the biological father, there is no doubt that he was the only father that Thomas ever knew.

Epilogue

We know from the Coroner's Inquest that Tom had hopes or dreams of going to Canada, almost certainly to be reunited with his sisters Bessie and Susan. There is still much to learn about what happened to Tom's siblings and whether or not there are living descendants, but some fragments of information can be found. Bessie and Susan grew up at the Stratford, Ontario establishment that they had travelled to in 1906. At the respective ages of 20 and 17, they travelled into the United States as Bessie and Lillian Estelle en route to domestic service positions in Los Angeles. They listed their contact as Mrs. W. H. Merry of Stratford, Ontario¹³⁸, presumably the wife of the Mr. Merry who had accompanied the girls when they emigrated in 1906. We lose sight of them from that point. Tom's sister Rosie remained at the Bethnal Green Workhouse until she reached age 15. She was discharged on 7 March 1911, identifying her next of kin as her 'orphan brother No 2457 Rifleman Thomas Estall, 4th Batallion Rifle Brigade, Alexandria¹³⁹, almost six months after Thomas' death. We don't know if or when Rosie learned of her brother's fate. Remarkably though, she was discharged from the workhouse to Mrs. Kent of Enfield, Middlesex, the same Mrs. Kent who had taken in Rosie's brother James in 1901. In the 1911 census, Rosie and James both appear as adopted children of John Charles Henry Kent and his wife Ellen Rebecca (nee Wichett)¹⁴⁰. John Kent was a weighing machine maker living in a five-room home. For the first time in five years, Rosie was in a family home. Perhaps it was the first place in her life that felt like a home. We lose sight of Rosie from that point, but her brother James who was using the name James Estall Kent went on to marry Rosetta Minnie Webb in 1921¹⁴¹. Rosetta came from a large family, with 13 siblings at the time of the 1911 census.¹⁴² James and Rosetta had at least two children, James and Jeffrey.¹⁴³

¹ Ridgwell, Joseph. "Jack London's Journey into the Abyss." *Latest News, Comment and Reviews from the Guardian* | *Guardian.co.uk*. Guardian News and Media Limited. Web. 29 May 2010. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog>>.

² London Metropolitan Archives and Guildhall Library Manuscripts, London. "Church of England Parish Registers, 1538-1812." *London, England, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812*. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. Web. 29 May 2010. <<http://ancestry.com>>. Borough of Hackney, St Leonard Shoreditch, 1771-1778, Image 56.

³ "St Leonard's, Shoreditch." *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc. Web. 29 May 2010. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Leonard's,_Shoreditch>.

⁴ London Metropolitan Archives, City of London Corporation. "Bethnal Green Board of Guardians, Settlement and Removal, Examinations (rough), 29 Nov 1839 - 24 Mar 1840, BEBG/267/001." Examination of Elizabeth Estall. **Check that it's vol 001, not 002, also see if there's a date or page ref.**

⁵ *Deaths and Burials*

⁶ Apprentice records for William and John tallow chandler

⁷ Wikipedia

⁸ Explanation of Sarah Bay's evidence

⁹ Requirements of apprenticeships

¹⁰ *Marriages and Banns*

¹¹ *Births and Baptisms*

¹² *Births and Baptisms*

¹³ Royal Military Asylum references

¹⁴ Evidence of Elizabeth Warburton's illegitimate children

¹⁵ Poor Law source <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/poorlaw/plaatext.html>

¹⁶ Poor Law Amendment reference

¹⁷ *LMA Poor Law Rough Examinations*

¹⁸ *1841 Census*

¹⁹ *BMD Death Index*

²⁰ *London Baptisms*, see previous ref

²¹ *London Marriages*, see previous ref

²² *Poor Law Rough Examinations*

²³ William and Sarah's Marriage Certificate

²⁴ Administration of William Estall of St George Hanover Square

²⁵ *London Burial Record* for Elizabeth (Tops) Estall

²⁶ Records for John Estall b 1798

²⁷ Marriage of John Estall and Mary Sophia West, Pallot's

²⁸ Records for children of John and Mary Sophia

²⁹ Record for Elizabeth Estall b 1801

³⁰ Records for Samuel William Estall b 1804

³¹ Marriage of Samuel Estall and Ann Carr

³² Records for children of Samuel and Ann

³³ Marriage of Samuel Estall and Susannah Carr

³⁴ Records for children of Samuel and Susannah

³⁵ Records for George Estall b 1806

³⁶ Marriage of George Estall and Catherine Moore

³⁷ Record for son of George and Catherine

³⁸ Records for Henry Estall b 1809

³⁹ Marriage of Henry Estall and Elizabeth Rice

⁴⁰ Records for children of Henry and Elizabeth

⁴¹ *London Baptisms*

⁴² *Marriages & Banns*

⁴³ *Baptisms* for Elizabeth's family

⁴⁴ *Marriages & Banns*

⁴⁵ *Marriages & Banns*

⁴⁶ Huguenot Records for Auvache

⁴⁷ Marriage of Henry Estall and Sarah Jane Rice; baptism of Sarah Jane; show Jeremiah was Elizabeth Rice's brother

⁴⁸ John Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive*, lecture I: Work, sections 23-24 (1866)

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- ⁴⁹ *UK Censuses of 1841, 1851, 1861*
- ⁵⁰ Newspaper clipping on George Estall's death
- ⁵¹ *London Baptisms*, see previous ref
- ⁵² Poor Law application, image 35
- ⁵³ *London Marriages*, see previous ref
- ⁵⁴ *Death Certificate*
- ⁵⁵ *London, England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1538-1812*, Tower Hamlets St Matthews, Bethnal Green 1808-1812 register, page 8
- ⁵⁶ William and Sarah's Marriage Certificate
- ⁵⁷ Poor Law application, see previous reference
- ⁵⁸ *London Baptisms* for Elizabeth Rice
- ⁵⁹ *London Marriages* for Elizabeth's parents
- ⁶⁰ *London Marriages* for Elizabeth's second marriage
- ⁶¹ *BMD Death Index* for Elizabeth
- ⁶² Records for Elizabeth Estall b 1831 (show by Poor Law application that she was born in Bethnal Green, not Shoreditch; also Gibraltar Row record from bmdregisters.co.uk)
- ⁶³ Record for Mary Ann Estall b 1832
- ⁶⁴ Marriage of Mary Ann Estall and Joseph Knight
- ⁶⁵ Records for Susannah Estall b 1834
- ⁶⁶ Marriage of Susannah Estall and Samuel Potter
- ⁶⁷ Records for children of Susannah and Samuel
- ⁶⁸ Marriage of Susannah Estall and Charles Ship
- ⁶⁹ Records for Sarah Ann Estall b 1837
- ⁷⁰ Marriage of Sarah Estall and Walter Berry
- ⁷¹ Records for children of Sarah and Walter
- ⁷² Records for Henry Estall b 1839, including BMD Birth, London Baptisms, BMD Death
- ⁷³ Marriage of Henry Estall and Sarah Jane Rice
- ⁷⁴ Records for children of Henry and Sarah Jane
- ⁷⁵ Records for James Estall b circa 1840
- ⁷⁶ Records for John Joseph Estall b 1844
- ⁷⁷ Records for children of John and Emma
- ⁷⁸ Records for George Benjamin Estall b 1847
- ⁷⁹ Marriage of George Estall and Ann Pool
- ⁸⁰ Records for children of George and Ann
- ⁸¹ Records for Elizabeth Ann Estall b 1849
- ⁸² Marriage of Elizabeth Estall and John Edward Mepharm
- ⁸³ Records for children of Elizabeth and John
- ⁸⁴ Records for William Edward Estall b 1852
- ⁸⁵ Records for children of William and Sarah Whitmarsh
- ⁸⁶ Marriage of William and Sarah Ann Hutchings
- ⁸⁷ Records for children of William and Sarah Ann Hutchings
- ⁸⁸ Records for Hannah Maria Estall b 1854
- ⁸⁹ Marriage of Hannah and Frank Smith
- ⁹⁰ Records for children of Hannah and Frank
- ⁹¹ Marriage of Hannah and Dan Sheppard
- ⁹² Records for children of Hannah and Dan
- ⁹³ *London Baptisms* for William Edward Estall
- ⁹⁴ *Booth Poverty Map*
- ⁹⁵ *Bethnal Green Poor* news clipping
- ⁹⁶ *Service papers* for Henry Estall b 1839 (40)
- ⁹⁷ *Service papers* for William Edward Estall
- ⁹⁸ *Booth Poverty Map* interview, B350, p 39
- ⁹⁹ *London Baptisms*, see previous ref
- ¹⁰⁰ *1881 census* for William and Sarah Whitmarsh, explain the evidence
- ¹⁰¹ *London Marriages* for William and Sarah Ann Hutchings
- ¹⁰² *Death Certificate* for William

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- 103 *1861 Census*, William with his parents
104 *London Marriages*, see previous ref
105 *Census records* with parents for Sarah Whitmarsh
106 *Marriage Index* for Henry Whitmarsh and Sarah Stagg
107 *BMD Marriages* Sarah Whitmarsh and William French – NEED TO GET CERTIFICATE
108 *Birth certificate* for Sarah Ann Hutchings – NEED TO GET CERTIFICATE
109 *BMD Death Index* for Sarah Ann
110 *Birth Certificate* for William Estall b 1882
111 *BMD Birth Record* for Ann Estall b 1885
112 *Marriage* of Ann and Hugh Duffy
113 *Records* for children of Ann and Hugh
114 *1891 census* and *BMD Deaths* for Alfred Hutchings
115 *1891 census* and *Workhouse records* for Harriet Hutchings
116 *Birth certificate* and *Coroner's Inquest* for Thomas Hutchings
117 *Birth certificate* and *London Baptisms* for Bessie Estall
118 *London Baptisms* for Susan Estall
119 *London Baptisms* for Rosie Estall
120 *London Baptisms* and *BMD Deaths* for James Estall (Kent)
121 *London Marriages* and *BMD Marriages* for James Estall (Kent)
122 *Birth Indices* for James and Jeffrey Kent
123 *London Baptisms* for Robert Estall
124 *Birth certificate* for Thomas Hutchings
125 *Birth and Death Indices* for Estall 1840-1899
126 *Workhouse Records* for April 1900
127 *Robert's entry and death* in the workhouse
128 *Reference to Rosie* at Miss Macpherson's home
129 www.britishhomechildren.org for Annie Macpherson
130 *Canadian archives* for Bessie and Susan
131 *Service Records* for Tom
132 *Wikipedia* Coldstream Guards
133 *Coroner's Inquest* for Tom
134 *Birth Certificate* for Tom
135 *Coroner's Inquest* for Tom, see above
136 *William and Sarah's marriage certificate*, see above
137 *Workhouse Records 1 and 2*, see above
138 *Border Crossings* of Bessie and 'Lillian'
139 *Workhouse Discharge* for Rosie
140 *1911 census* for Rosie and James
141 *Marriage Index* for James and Rosetta
142 *1911 census* for Rosetta (Rose)
143 *Birth Indices* for James and Jeffrey -- GET CERTIFICATES