

LOCAL HISTORY IN PICTURES.

Dr. Joseph Denfield's recent and most successful exhibition of photographs of early East London was of particularly great interest and importance to all interested in our local history. It has opened up a new source of accurate information about East London's past promising to be as fruitful as it is fascinating. It has served moreover to direct our Society's interest in undertaking a comprehensive survey of all our old buildings and sites of historical significance.

I am sure that no one interested in our local history could read pp 133 - 135 in Thomas Baines's recently published "African Journal" (V.R.S. vol.42) without a considerable quickening of interest.

In these pages Baines, the well known South African artist of a century ago, describes a fleeting visit to East London in the year 1849. On arrival he passes by "the handsome stone Barrack, now building" which is our Fort Glamorgan. While seated on the river bank sketching "the river and as much of the town as I could see .." he was accosted by Capt. Edward Rooper. Rooper, besides being East London's first Civil Commissioner, was also an accomplished and prolific water-colourist. Baines spent a night at Fort Glamorgan sharing Rooper's quarters, and spent the evening admiring his host's numerous sketches of local scenes and a collection of over a hundred reproductions of local wilf-flowers in water-colour - by no means yet complete.

It would appear from Baines's account that Capt. Rooper's sketches of local scenes were fairly numerous, and must have constituted a perfectly fascinating pictorial history of East London during its infancy.

Where are these water-colours of Capt. Rooper? The Africana Museum, Johannesburg has thirty-one of Rooper's water colours, but only two of these, alas!

are of local interest, namely, "Fort Glamorgan now East London" and "Fort Grey : Goolah Heights".

Come on chaps! Forget the "Grosvenor" treasure - This is serious!

M.H. Taylor.