

**Stratford sub Castle Guild Report
Teaching in East London**

**May 2023
Terry Ereira**

The Guild talk this month was highlights from my time teaching in Newham, East London. I worked at the same school for my entire career. Whenever I got 'itchy feet' I got promoted, from Biology teacher, to Head of Careers, Head of Year and finally to Head of Lower School

For background I showed the area where I grew up. I am a proud cockney, born in Bethnal Green hospital, within the sound of the 'bow bells' of St Mary-le-Bow church Cheapside. My two younger siblings and I were brought up in a tenement block by my single parent mother; my father having left when I was 3yrs old. This was the domain of the notorious Kray twins, who lived about 5 minutes' walk away. They went to the Secondary Modern school at the end of our street.

Mum ensured we had a good early education. We could read, write and were numerate before we started school. All 3 of us went to Grammar school. This sowed the seeds of wanting to become a teacher. Education was my way out of the hardship of my early years and I wanted to give that chance to others from a similar background.

I compared Newham with Salisbury and my school with some Salisbury schools. Newham: population 308,000, density 1,800 per sq mile, 41% of children 'in poverty' (no.3 in the country). Salisbury: population 42,000, density 6,000 per sq mile, Wiltshire (no figures for Salisbury) 12% of children 'in poverty' (no. 144 in the country).

My school: large site spread over a quarter of a mile, roll 1920, 12% SEN, 48% free school meals (nationally 15%). BWS and SWGS: combined roll 1943, 0.6% SEN, 2.4% free school meals. The 3 Laverstock schools: spread over one tenth of a mile, combined roll 1554, 6.6% SEN, 7.8% free school meals.

I did many extracurricular activities and helped with football and cricket teams. A memorable school trip was to USA in 1980 with a football team playing games in New York, Washington and Florida. In 1981 we went on an educational Scandinavian cruise on SS Uganda, the year before it served as a hospital ship in the Falklands War. The school held many in-house social events which I attended or supervised. In the 1980s we took leavers on a riverboat cruise on the Thames aboard the pleasure steamer Marchioness. In August 1989, a month after one such trip, it sank after being hit by the dredger Bowbelle.

In 1985 I was promoted to Head of Careers, then to Head of Year in 1987. Organising a 2 week work experience programme for 360 pupils was a steep learning curve. Over those 2 years I saw a lot of Newham's local businesses, planning talks, visits and placements. Leading a team of 12 form tutors and running a year group of 360 was both rewarding and demanding. This role is key to a school functioning well. Everything from Pastoral care and discipline, to organising Parents' and Presentation evenings, Exams to charity fundraising.

I am proud of working with the Save the Children Fund. We fundraised sponsoring a child's education in each of Lebanon, Kenya, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Another notable moment was one of my year groups achieving an 87% A level pass rate, 6 going to Oxbridge.

I spent time explaining why the 1990s brought changes to teaching. The 1988 Education Reform Act brought in the concept of Directed Time. This established that teachers should work for 1265 hours in any one year. Parents' evenings and staff meetings were included. Lunch times were not included (because teachers do not work in their lunch break!!). Voluntary activities were not included (because they were not part of a teacher's contract!!). Many teachers stopped after school clubs and school sports etc. The Act introduced a fixed number of days a teacher should work. The effect for most teachers was to reduce their holidays by 5 days. The Secretary of State who devised this was Kenneth Baker; we called these "Baker Days". The Act also introduced the first statutory National Curriculum.

I calculated I worked on average 1515 hours a year in school. Adding after school clubs, sports teams, marking, preparation and report writing (all at home) this became 1820. Little wonder the Act is not favourably considered by teachers of my generation.

I hope I conveyed my passion for teaching. I thoroughly enjoyed my career and never wanted to do anything else. I think my talk was well received by members who asked many questions. I had to limit the questions to allow tea and coffee time.

Terry Ereira

Please note: this review is not an exercise in narcissism. I was asked to write it.