

Who was Charles Eyre Pascoe (1842-1912) ?

At the end of February 1898, the following letter appeared in the *Morning Post* (issue 3920, page 3) under the heading “Wanted, a Theatrical Directory.” :

To the Editor of the Morning Post.

Sir, Why is there not a “Theatrical Directory”? If I wish to ascertain the qualifications of a doctor I take up the “Medical Directory” and read the record of his past achievements, and can decide, even as a layman, whether to consult him, or not. A “Theatrical Directory,” giving under each name the parts played, names of plays, dates and places where played, with the address of the artist, would surely be of great use not only to authors and managers, but to the Benevolent Society which naturally wishes to utilise its funds for the benefit of the most deserving cases. Yours, &c, Lincoln’s Inn.

A response appeared under the same heading in the *Morning Post* (issue 3932, page 8) a few days later:

Sir, Your Correspondent “Lincoln’s Inn” will find in the British Museum Library a book entitled “The Dramatic List: A Record of the Performances of Leading Actors and Actresses of the British Stage.” In its initiative it was to fulfil the very purpose your Correspondent suggests, except as to addresses. It is a book which cost a lot of money (several hundred pounds) and much time in its preparation, and helped to ruin the health of the man who undertook to edit it. Twenty years have passed since then. Possibly some younger enthusiast for the stage might now be tempted to begin where I left off., But first of all let him look for the equally enthusiastic publisher., - Yours &c., March 2. Charles Eyre Pascoe.

If this response sounds a little peevish, it is perhaps understandably so. Barely twenty years after the first publication of Pascoe’s *Dramatic Register* in 1879, the whole effort seems to “the man who undertook to edit it” to have given him only illness and oblivion. He might possibly be consoled to know that a century later, his work has been extensively cannibalised by Wikipedia and other resources for the study of the 19th century theatre, and remains an unparalleled source of basic information about some of its key players. There are of course many other attempts to itemise the actors and actresses who formed such an important part of mid Victorian theatrical culture, but this one was unusual in three respects.

Firstly it provides information only about actors and actresses currently living at the time of compilation. When a second edition appeared a year after the first, ten entries concerning “the principal actors and actresses who have died since the issue of the first edition” were removed to an appendix. The second edition contains 328 entries, which is some way short of the “five hundred and sixty” names mentioned in its Preface, but a considerable advance on the 216 Entries provided by the first edition. It is presumably a realistic sampling given “the number of names which are now utterly forgotten by the theatre-going public”.

Secondly it attempts to enumerate basic facts of those actors’ careers – the parts they played, in which productions of which plays, at which theatres, and with what success. This information was apparently obtained largely from playbills and the kind of career summaries still seen today in their modern successor, the theatrical programme. The preface to the second edition also makes clear that the majority of entries (all but 36 in fact) have been vetted and in some cases corrected by their subjects.

And thirdly, for about half of the entries, citations from reviews of these productions in contemporary journals are also included. These review snippets “selected after very careful and impartial consideration”, in some cases very lengthy, and in others only a few words long, provide a valuable additional perspective on the subject’s career.

Who was the “Charles Eyre Pascoe” who put this work together? In what context did he position his efforts? And what other works did he construct? Though almost entirely forgotten today, a look at his short career perhaps tells us something useful about little-explored by-ways of the late Victorian writing business. For business it undeniably was.

Charles Eyre Pascoe was born in Yeovil on the 22nd of June 1842, to Richard William Pascoe (1785-1869), a Captain with the rank of Brevet Major in the Royal Marines, and his wife Mary Ann, nee Hitchens (1808-1897). He was baptised a few weeks later. Taken in the preceding year, the 1841 census shows a “Richd” Pascoe with wife Mary Ann, and three sons : Wm Frederick age 5, Alfred Henry. age 4, and Robert James, age 2, all living in East Stonehouse, Devon. [2] At the time of the 1851 census, only the eldest brother William, now aged 15, is living at home with his parents and young Charles, the other brothers being away at school at St Paul’s. Richard Pascoe is now described as “Captain Royal Marines Retired on Half Pay”, and the family has moved to a modest house in Falmouth. [3] 62 Killigrew Street is a Chinese take-away now, but the houses a few doors down still look much as they must have in the 1850s. [4]

Young Charles was educated at Christ’s Hospital, according to his obituary (of which more anon), and seems to have been a bright lad. According to the local newspaper, *Luke’s Falmouth Packet and Cornwall Advertiser*, in its 8 Oct 1859 issue: “At a competitive [sic] examination on Tuesday the 27th ult., Mr Charles Eyre Pascoe, sixth son of Major Pascoe, R.M. Light Infantry, received his certificate of qualification from the Civil Service Commissioners; in addition to which an honorary certificate for his creditable knowledge of Euclid”. [5] The certificate Charles obtained qualified him to work as a civil servant in the Admiralty, which he appears to have done for the next ten years. By 1864 he had moved to Cornwall Road in Bayswater and is working as a clerk in Somerset House. As young Victorian clerks in London did, he got into debt. We know this because he filed for bankruptcy in 1864. [6]

In November 1869, his father died, leaving an estate valued up to £5000 according to the probate record.[7] One of the executors of the will was Robert James, the youngest of the Pascoe brothers, but I have not found any further details of the will, and therefore do not know whether Charles received a legacy. So it may be pure coincidence that this is also the year in which he decided to take early retirement from the Civil Service, start his journalistic career, and get married.

The lucky girl was called Jane Catherine Smith, and was three years younger than Charles. As yet, we know nothing about their courtship, nor her family (the surname discourages research); it’s possible she brought some money to complete whatever Charles inherited from his father. In any event, the marriage took place on the 30th August 1870 at St Michael’s Church, Chester Square, Pimlico and the happy couple moved into what is now a very swanky address at 51 Cambridge Street. [8] A daughter, Ethel Mary, was born in 1872 followed by a son Charles Corbett in 1876 and another daughter, Mary Agnes, in 1881. According to the three census entries in which she is mentioned, Ethel was born in the United States, but I have been unable to trace any record of her birth being registered there or elsewhere.

According to that same obituary, “In 1869 he retired on a commuted pension and took up journalism, and in the next year he got married and went to America, where he joined the staff of the “Boston Globe” as foreign editor. After three years he returned to England, and acted as London correspondent for several American newspapers. Among the work he did was an investigation of the English prison system for the “New York Journal” Later he joined the staff of “The Standard”, and wrote for that paper some striking articles on English canal life.” Striking or not, I have not so far been able to trace these articles. Pascoe’s own somewhat different account of his transatlantic connexions appear in a document he wrote for the Royal Literary

Fund in 1906, at which time he claimed “*Five years after the close of the American Civil War, Mr. Pascoe went to America, at a time when popular feeling in the Northern States was still irritated and unfriendly towards England, and there became appointed Editor of Foreign Intelligence to the Boston Daily Globe—the only Englishman in that city then admitted to the staff of an American journal.*”

It is clear that between 1870 and 1873 Pascoe established himself in the little community of Bostonian journalists. His appointment as “foreign correspondent” for the Boston Globe not only gave him an entree to that society, but also enabled him to continue the connexion when he returned to England in 1874. He is mentioned as being amongst the founder members of a celebrated Boston dining club called the Papyrus Club: indeed, according to J.J. Rouché’s 1891 memoir *Life of John Boyle O’Reilly* “We shall, perhaps, never know whether the father of Papyrus was a short and sturdy Briton named Pascoe, or one who still lingers with us, and who has been sometimes spoken of as ‘Causeur.’” [a reference to W.A. Hovey]. Rouché also quotes a printed invitation dated 26 February 1873 which is signed “Very respectfully yours, Chas E. PASCOE, Secretary.” From another reminiscence about the club, published in the *Boston Herald* in March 1888, we learn that “Pascoe was always called upon to sing “Guy Fawkes,” and was always ready to do it”.

As well as his contributions to the *Boston Globe*, Pascoe sold pieces to *Appleton’s Journal*, the *American Art Journal*, the *New York Journal* and others, sufficient for him to feel that he might well make a career in journalism. In 1874, he published a pamphlet contrasting the effectiveness of American and British attempts to control public drunkenness: “*The prohibitory law of Massachusetts versus the licensing law of England: with an account of the latter*” which demonstrates his fondness for detail, combining statistics with a desire to explain fully the complexities of British social organisation to a foreign audience. Perhaps this experience also helped him identify his target public: the relatively well-heeled tourist or visitor anxious to acquire some insider knowledge and expertise and willing to pay for it. Certainly it shows the first appearance of the voice which characterises all of his work: that of a knowledgeable mediator between contemporary British And American cultures.

In the same year, and also with a Boston imprint, appeared the first of many Guide Books: *A London directory for American travellers for 1874 : containing the fullest information, in the best form for reference, respecting all that is valuable in connection with a visit to London, with an appendix*. Originally published by Lee and Shephards, this venture was successful enough to warrant several subsequent editions, both in the USA and in London, where the 5th edition appeared under the imprint of Simpkin Marshall & Co in 1876. It is a bravura cut-and-paste job, combining railway and steamer time tables with detailed advice on obtaining accommodation, entertainment, nourishment and polite amusement at a modest (but not insignificant) cost, liberally spiced with advertisements. It must have been as irresistible to the novice tourist as it remains to today’s enthusiast for Victoriana – as witness the fact that so much of Pascoe’s output is now readily available in facsimile form from print on demand specialists such as “Forgotten Books” or “Creative Media Partners” or “Kessinger Publishing”, as well as from the usual digital archives.

In the Post Office directory for 1875, his London operation has its own posh address : 6A Vigo Street, just off Regent Street, where he is registered as “*editor of Pascoe’s Guide for American Travellers, Boston & New York*” [9] Also registered at the same address were a tailor, a “financial agent”, a shirt maker, and a wine merchant: it is thus unlikely to have been a residential address. Over the next decade, to complement regularly updated versions of his Guidebooks, Pascoe embarked on an ambitious programme of reference publishing.

For the 1877 season he first experimented with a somewhat up-market venture. However, his catalogue of the exhibits offered by the “supplementary art galleries” for the 1877 season, allegedly produced in emulation of Blackburn’s well-established *Academy Notes* was not repeated. *The Examiner*’s review is somewhat dismissive of both:

Academy Notes, 1877. By Henry Blackburn. (Chatto and Windus.) Illustrated Handbook to the Supplementary Art Galleries, By Charles Eyre Pascoe (Hardwicke and Bogue)—Mr, Henry Blackburn’s ‘Academy Notes’ have made their usual appearance, and are just as useful as usual. ... As every successful thing finds imitators, and Mr. Blackburn’s ‘Academy Notes’ have proved successful, Mr. Charles Eyre Pascoe has brought out an illustrated handbook of the supplementary art galleries, under which head he groups the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, the Institute and the Society of British Artists, the Dudley Gallery, and the Grosvenor. An illustrated handbook to the Grosvenor alone would have been far more useful and appropriate than one which gives it a few pages in connexion with half-a-dozen other shows.” [10]

In the same year, and more successfully, he published with Sampson Lowe “*A Practical Handbook to the Principal Schools of England*” of which the *Examiner* remarked “This is an exceedingly useful work and one that was much wanted”, though it still manages to find something to carp about: “The value of the work would have been much increased and extended to a larger number, however, if a few more facts had been added. Thus, something about the traditions and customs of the various schools would not have been unwelcome; the Montem at Eton might have been mentioned, and the time when it ceased. Also a little infusion of literary feeling would have done no harm, as any mention of Charterhouse that does not mention its most famous pupil, Thomas Newcome, seems imperfect.” [11]

The following year appeared his “*Practical Handbook to the Principal Professions*”, published by Hardwicke and Bogue, a reference work monetizing and sharing his own Civil Service experience. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was a little dismissive: “Mr. Pascoe has produced a little volume a large portion of the information contained in which is obtained from official sources, and may be procured by any one who applies for it. Still it is well to have the recent regulations concerning admission to the Civil Service, the navy, army, and other professions, printed in a convenient form. ...”[12]

The first edition of Pascoe’s *Dramatic List* appeared in 1878 under the imprint of David Bogue, a well-established publisher of reference works. It received a cautious welcome from the established theatrical press; for example *The Era*’s notice reads as follows:

Our Actors and Actresses.

Under the title of “*Our Dramatic List*,” Mr C. E. Pascoe gives in a compact volume a record of the performances of living actors and actresses of the British Stage. The work is published by Mr David Bogue, of St. Martin’s-place, Trafalgar-square, and will serve as a useful memorial of some of the most important representations of the present time. The book is arranged in alphabetical style, so that the name of the actor or actress and their chief performances may be readily ascertained. All the best known of our popular performers are included in the work, which we can easily imagine has cost the author no little time and trouble. As a work of reference for the actor or the playgoer it will be welcome, as those who wish to recall any special performance, or the characters sustained by any popular histrionic celebrity, will be enabled to do so with ease by referring to a work of this kind. We say nothing on the score of dramatic criticism, because a work of this kind should be and is rather a record of actual work done than a critical inquiry as to its merits. ‘*Dramatic Notes*,” by the same author, is a series of sketches of performances now proceeding at our principal Theatres, with illustrations of some of the chief scenes in the pieces. [13]

In the *Dramatic List* Pascoe applies the same cut and paste techniques deployed earlier. Each actor’s entry enumerates the productions in which they appeared, the role they played, and some remarks on their reception, usually quoted verbatim from contemporary notices. In many cases, the amount of quoted material far exceeds the length of the editorial summary. Pascoe does not generally give his own

opinion as to the merits or otherwise of a given actor, though we may infer something from the length of the entry, or the nature of the remarks selected. As noted previously, the originality of the work lies rather in the way it presents itself as a collection of objective data, combining the facts of an artists' career with the reactions of the press (or some parts of it) to them.

In 1879, a second and revised edition appeared, with a preface explaining that each of its almost 400 entries had been vetted by its subject "In some instances complaints were made of my having inserted criticisms which were unduly severe; but ... I have not thought it desirable to substitute others for those already printed. I have, however, largely curtailed this portion of the book" . This received an encouraging notice in the *Literary Examiner*:

Our Actors and Actresses, by C. E. Pascoe (David Bogue), is also a work of reference, one which must have cost much time and trouble to compile. It is curious that no encyclopaedic almanac or dictionary of our living dramatic artists was attempted before Mr. Pascoe published his "Dramatic List," of which this is the second and revised edition. Probably the difficulty of the task frightened away many. Even Mr. Pascoe apologises for the inevitable incompleteness of the work, for, as he says, "new players are constantly coming forward while old ones are constantly dropping out of sight." The apology was almost unnecessary, for the book would satisfy all, except that class of critics which is never satisfied. The author has carefully avoided mere gossip, while giving the material facts in all the biographies, and has succeeded in producing a volume which is not only valuable but even interesting." [14]

"Not only valuable but even interesting" is a phrase one might apply to much of Pascoe's subsequent works. He continued to publish new and revised editions of his Guidebooks, in particular the Guide to London which from 1876 on appeared each year, each time with more ambitious advertising pages and illustrations, with factual updating, but treating largely much the same topics as the 1874 Guide aimed specifically at visiting Americans.

In 1879 first appeared another useful handbook aimed at anxious parents, attempting (according to the *Basingstoke and North Hampshire Gazette*) to answer the question "What to do with the girls? This perplexing question has just received another response from Mr Charles Eyre Pascoe, who, in his volume on "Schools for Girls and Colleges for Women, answers it very completely, supposing that the young ladies are still in statu pupillari – that is, if they are not yet out of leading strings and their parents are seeking a school for them, or if their ambition propels them to become sweet girl-graduates, golden haired or otherwise." [15] A somewhat less sexist and more serious review appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "Information of every kind likely to assist a parent in the choice of school will be found in these pages, which abound with details and estimates of cost. Girls' schools, in general, the writer says, are lacking in stimulus and inducement to work: but it would be more correct to say that they were formerly deficient in these respect; for the examinations now so common supply the stimulus that was lacking. The fear is lest these examinations should be treated as of primary importance, and all school work made to turn upon them. " [16] -- a concern which continues to our own day.

In 1881, Pascoe published "Everyday Life in Our Public Schools. Sketched by Head-scholars of Eton, Winchester, Westminster, Shrewsbury, Harrow, Rugby, Charterhouse : to which is Added a Brief Notice of St. Paul's and Merchant Taylors' Schools, and Christ's Hospital : with a Glossary of Some Words in Common Use in Those Schools". This was cobbled together from a number of illustrated essays he had originally written for *The Leisure Hour: a family journal of instruction and recreation*, [17] enriched somewhat with contributions from distinguished old boys of the schools listed. In all, Pascoe edited four complementary works on educational opportunities : the "Practical Handbook to the Principal Schools"; "Everyday life in our public schools", "Schools for girls and colleges for women", and "Where shall I educate my son (a manual for parents of moderate means)" all of which remained in print throughout the 1880s, though whether they brought him much income is less certain.

In the 1881 census, the Pascoe family is registered at 2 Mayfield Villas, a recent development in Wandsworth [See Keith Bailey's "The Building of the Southfields Grid" (Wandsworth Historical Society Paper 12), 2003.] [Southfields grid text version 20181007.pdf](#) .] Pascoe is described as a "Retired Civil Servant and Author", born in Yeovil. His wife Jane C., daughter Ethel M., and son Charles C. are all in residence, as is a domestic servant called Mary Hart. Ten years later, in the 1891 Census, although Pascoe himself is missing for some reason, his household now includes a third child, Mary aged 9. The family is still well enough off to employ a general servant, Kate Cooper, but has moved to 89 Hopton Road, a moderately sized Victorian semi which is still standing. The street is located a few minutes walk from Streatham railway station in one direction and from Streatham Common in the other. In Wandsworth, the Pascoes mixed with builders; here they are in prime commuter country,

At the turn of the century, in the 1901 census, the Pascoe family is registered at 22 Hopton Road, Streatham. His wife Jane, his oldest daughter Ethel, now aged 28, his son Charles aged 24, and his daughter Mary, now aged 19 are all in residence. Pascoe is described as following "literary pursuits", as are the two elder children. Also lodging with them is one Jose Lopez, a 20 year old "student" of Filipino origin: perhaps helping with the rent, and a domestic servant called Lizzie Edwards. [18] sadly number 22 is no longer in existence, though many other reasonably imposing late Victorian houses are visible.

Pascoe was now an established producer of guide books. Niche resorts such as Brighton, and a small collection of ancient towns served by the Northern railway as well as ambitious destinations such as Paris and more unlikely venues such as York (re-imagined as the object of a quest to track down Dotheboys Hall) were amongst places given the Pascoe treatment throughout the 80s and 90s.

For the 1902 Coronation, a special edition of the "London of To-Day" guide was published under the title of *The Pageant and Ceremony of the Coronation* (Simpkin, Marshall). The Guide "not only describes and explains the ceremony, but acts as a guide to the side shows for the provincial and American visitor, describing the sights of London and the country that must be seen, and reliable information about hotels, flats, boarding-houses, and places of amusement that can be recommended." It must have faced stiff competition, and certainly did not make Pascoe's fortune.

We know this because in 1906, at the age of 64, he made an application for financial assistance to the Royal Literary Fund. His application[19], dated 22 September 1906, makes rather depressing reading. Under the heading "Present means" he writes "*None : Five years ago I had £500 in Bank now expended in supporting my home. I calculate that supporting myself and 3 others it has cost me £160 a year. I have earned less than £20*". This is followed by a printed list of eight "Titles of Published Works" and a summary description of the work he undertook for American and English journal publishers. The application is also supported by two letters in Pascoe's own scarcely-legible hand, lamenting his inability to find work, which he seems to attribute largely to ill health, though he also writes "*the whole condition of publishing is changed. Journalism is changed. There is no longer any limit to literary working as a calling. The wealthy are at it. MPs do newspaper work for pay. Old staid honourable magazines are dead. The old editors are dead. All of which you know. The enclosed curiously enough states my literary history. I should wish to have this section I sent returned.*"

The committee of the Royal Literary Fund did not find this persuasive, and his application was rejected with the brief annotation "authorship insufficient".

Pascoe published a few more titles before his death. In 1908, using material which had previously appeared twenty years earlier in the pages of *Leisure Hour*, he put together a de luxe Duckworth publication entitled *No. 10, Downing Street, Whitehall: Its History and Associations Large octavo (25 x 19cm), pp.[16] x; 344 [2]. With eight colour plates after illustrations by Flower, including a frontispiece; as wells as four sketches; six plans; and 40 black and white portraits of Prime Ministers.* He also experimented with new kinds of directory such as the 1909 *Chambers of commerce year-book. ('A directory of places in the united kingdom where they are instituted, and a record of their aims and work. supplemented by specially contributed articles and other information)'*. Again, this did not have the same success as some of his earlier ventures in data publishing.

In 1912, Pascoe's son Charles Corbett (described as an "Advertising Agent") and his wife Constance presented Pascoe with his first grandchild, Jean Marion, who was baptised on June 11th.
[media/pascoe1912baptism.png]

At the time of his application to the Royal Literary Fund, the Pascoe family had moved to a new home on Marchmont Rd, Wallington. The street does not appear on maps before 1911, at which date it first appears adjacent to an area of farmland called Beddington which was destined in 1932 to become the site of the London (Croydon) air field. It's impossible to say exactly where the house was, since house numbering had not yet been introduced. All the sources I have so far found simply supply a name ("Penwerris") for the house, and locate it not in Marchmont Rd, but in Hillside Gardens. Google Maps shows this to be a wide curving street of large houses, some of them with an arts and crafts flavour, connecting a sports field with Marchmont Rd.

Pascoe died here in November 1912. The probate record, dated January 13, shows that his estate, comprising effects with a total value of £88 15s 9d , was inherited by his widow, Jane Catherine Pascoe. [20] If we are to believe the newspaper accounts, his death was precipitated by the barking of a neighbour's dog. The *Sutton and Cheam Advertiser* gives a detailed account, which constitutes the only obituary notice I have been able to find. [21] Several other provincial papers picked up the story, and gave it a paragraph or two [22], but there does not seem to have been any formal notice in the national press, beyond the official record in the *Westminster Gazette* (12 Nov 1912). Pascoe's name seems to have disappeared from history as thoroughly as the world he inhabited.