St Andrews Church, Thringstone

in memory of the right honourable

Charles Booth born at Liverpool 18th of

march

1840 died at Grace Dieu 23rd of November

1916 and of his wife Mary

Catherine daughter of Charles Zachary

McCauley

born at Bristol November 1847

died at Grace Dieu 23rd of September

1938. during many years

he devoted the leisure of an arduous

life to the study of the condition

of the poor in London he diligently

sought for a foundation on which

remedies could be based

and he lived to see the fulfilment of a

part of his hopes in the lightning of

the burden

of old age and poverty to those who

lived under his immediate influence

he brought help and joy he leaves them a

precious

example

you might be wondering why such a great

social reformer is buried here in

Thringstone churchyard

well he chose to be buried amongst the

people he loved Charles

and his brother Alfred ran the booth

shipping line based in Liverpool

and Charles was living in London he

wanted to find a home for himself and

his family

somewhere between the two his search

brought him to Grace Dieu Manor

he rented the manor and lived there with

his family for many decades

until his death in 1916.

whilst there he undertook a massive

survey of London

looking at the plight of the poor he was

ably assisted by his wife Mary

who drafted and edited many of the

reports

his work resulted in 17 volumes and this

is volume 2. his study took him 17 years

and cost him 40,000 pounds of his own money

he also produced maps which were colour

coded to show the various levels of

poverty

in each street and court

black was the lowest level and red the

more wealthy

but there were various shades in between

his work showed that 30% of people were

living below the poverty line

and that was a phrase coined by Charles

booth himself

he also was concerned about older people

and what he discovered there is that

once their income had stopped coming in

they soon fell below that poverty line

too and their health declined

and many of them would die earlier than

they should Charles

campaigned for many years for a state

pension for the elderly poor

an act of parliament was finally passed

in 1908

and came into force from 1909.

fortunately Charles lived long enough to

see that happen

Charles and Mary liked to arrange fun

events for families in the grounds of

the manor

but they also did much more to enhance

the life of the community

Mary would invite local women up to the

manor where she would teach them to sew

and read

Charles did many things including

helping to start the Whitwick and

district nursing association

and starting the Grace Dieu cricket club

which still exists today in 1901

Charles bought a rundown farmhouse in

Thringstone and turned it into a

clubhouse

there were reading rooms a billiard room

and allotments at the back

later a large extension with a hall was

added

initially the clubhouse was for men only

but later

women were also admitted and Mary was

able to use it to help local women

improve their skills

I’m now in the very room in the

community centre where Mary sometimes

worked with the local women

the clubhouse went on to become what is

believed to be

one of the first community centres in

the country

its name was recently changed to the

Charles booth community centre

a lasting tribute to what he and his

wife gave to the people

of Thringstone

Charles was a humble man and he actually

turned down a peerage

the likes of being buried in Westminster

Abbey were not for him

and so he lies here with his wife and

one of his daughters Julia Mary

for eternity