

*From the Budge Adams' Collection - contributed by Derek Leach*

## The Good Old Days

*(written by Ernest Stokes when the Pier District still existed)*

Looking at the Pier District today one would be surprised to see it as it was at the turn of the century (1900) and wonder how so much habitation and business could be sited in such a small area. The housewife had everything she needed without going out of the area from the gates of the Western Docks to the Lord Warden Hotel (Southern House).

The menfolk could get drunk on three shillings having half a pint of beer at each pub without using the same public house twice. We start at the Western Docks entrance and drink half a pint at each stop. In Strond Street we stop at the Prince Imperial, Ship Inn, Royal Mail, Green Dragon, the Swan and Hotel de Paris.

Round the corner was Billie Mutton's where you could buy a packet of fags for a penny or a pennyworth of Shag tobacco. How he could sell it at that price was nobody's business. From there we go to see Mr Minoletti at the Pavilion at Custom House Quay.

We cross the railway line to the Shakespeare in Clarence Street. To save going over the same ground twice, we call at the Fleur de Lys in Council House Street and then back to the Rose and Crown and Cinque Ports in Clarence Street. Round the corner we come to the Silver Dragon in Middle Row and then in Bench Street the Railway Bell, Sceptre, Miners Arms, Deal Cutter, The Pier, Brussels and the Terminus.

Having consumed one gallon, we call on Bert Marbrook, who has the Pier Coffee Stall and who is 85 years old. Bert Marbrook Senior was landlord of the Hope Inn in Council House Street where we have a pennyworth of bread and cheese to soak up the beer before moving on to the Endeavour and Archcliffe in Bulwark Street, Granville Arms, Two Brewers, Exeter Arms and Kent

Arms in Limekiln Street.

Round the corner we use the Lion in Elizabeth Street, The Oak in Oxenden Street, Princess Maude, Neptune, Albion and Railway Inn in Hawkesbury Street, William Albert and Duke of Connaught in Oxenden Street, Scotch House in Limekiln Street and Three Compasses on Finnis Hill.

As all public houses were open twenty four hours a day, or nearly so, it was common to see who could drink a half pint at each house. I do not remember anyone going to the whole 36 pubs, only up to 28. One could get a pennyworth of gin, or two pennyworth of rum or four pennyworth of brandy. Ale was 3d a pint, beer was 2d and porter 1d. Wages were 15 shillings to 18 shillings per week and from the number of pubs in such a small area you will understand how poverty arose and why the area was called 'the Poor Pier'.

Up to the first few years of the twentieth century children could go to the pub to buy liquor, but then a law was passed compelling landlords to seal bottles and jugs became unlawful; landlords just stuck a piece of gummed paper over the cork which came off easily. Children were forbidden to go into bars with their parents and so many pubs provided gardens for children.

The hours of opening were also tightened up and one could only get a drink on Sunday three miles outside the borough. As I lived in the Pier District going through the town to the Plough (in Folkestone Road) was well over the three miles, but over the hills it was much less. So, on Sunday mornings Dad would say, 'Come on, Son, we'll go for a walk over the hills'. When I asked Dad where we were going, he would say, I must see my old friend, Mr Gould, at the Plough. Do you think you can walk it?' Could I? It meant ginger beer, a large biscuit and bro-

ken rock.

It's nice to look back on those days, good for some. Much more could be written of the Poor Pier', but, like everything else, it gets old and in the not too distant future nothing will be left.

Oh, by the way, we did not use all three

shillings. Assuming only 28 half pints of beer were consumed at 2d per pint, that still left 8d. What can we do with that without making gluttons of ourselves? Let's see a show at the Phoenix for 2d. I feel just about too full to walk home, so on the tram for 1d. What about a final half pint at the Swan? For he's a jolly good fellow!

## Working for Parker Pens 1948

*by June Dyer*

I was eighteen. The second world war had not long ended and evacuation was becoming 'history'. It was then I went to work for the Parker Pen company at the Eastern Docks for five years. I remember well the excitement of working in the Export Shipping and Accounts Department of an American company with all the new office equipment and furniture and what was to me a large work force.

The office staff seemed to come and go. There was one woman from Jamaica, another the wife of an army officer stationed in Dover, also a woman living at the East Cliff hotel at the time that all the channel swimming people stayed there. There were three divorcees and a German widow, remarried to an English army officer. One man was American and never as jolly as I thought Americans would be. Another employee was ex-Royal Navy, a teller of amazing tales of his exploits. They just could not have all been true, but I believed everything in those days.

The work was fascinating. As the export markets opened up postwar so did our dealings with countries worldwide. To me it was nearly as good as visiting the places.

Many of us cycled to work and we had to be careful that our wheels did not get caught in the train lines which at that time ran along the sea front and into the Docks. I fell off once and afterwards took

more care.

In the summertime it was a grand place to be. At lunch times we could go on the beach, have a swim and then have our lunch in the splendid canteen. At first the girls from The Quink department would go to the beach in swimsuits with their Quink overalls on top. However, Management asked them not to do this as it was not considered proper. If we did not choose to swim we could always walk on the sea front or up on the cliffs.

We had a thriving social club with various outings to London theatres, Brighton or Southend and to Newhaven for the company's Sports Day. There was a small drama group and we rehearsed 'Blithe Spirit' for some time. I was cast as the doctor's wife but for some reason the play was never put on and the group disbanded.

The first Christmas I was with the Parker Pen Co. we had an amazing party. We had paid in a certain amount throughout the year so that on the day all the refreshments would be free. I had not realised that it was unwise to mix drinks and tried quite a variety with the result that, although my behaviour was reasonably circumspect, I had a hangover for days! The party was held in the old Empress Hall in the Princes Street area and a certain female member of staff who collapsed had

*Continued overleaf...*