

## Old Raineians Walk

Walk begins at front gate of Lower School. Look across the road at the white flats. These were built after the Second World War. Tom Wright (School keeper) told me that they were built by German and Austrian prisoners of war before they went home. John Ferguson (Media Resources Officer) told me that the railings around the top are old metal stretchers manufactured for war use in case of massive air raid casualties (small ones for children). Subsequent research indicated that there were a number of blocks in London which used these but I know of no other. Ever wondered why blocks are named after Greek gods? Because built around Minerva Street.

***Turn right and walk to Cambridge Heath Road Cross and walk down Patriot Square, by side of old Tower Hamlets Town Hall (before it moved to Mulbeny Place).***

This was originally the town hall of the old London Borough of Bethnal Green. The old local boroughs of Stepney, Poplar and Bethnal Green were amalgamated in 1965 to form Tower Hamlets. Note Blind Beggar motif on the top. This can be seen on a number of buildings in the area which were constructed by the Borough of Bethnal Green (e.g. Vaughan Estate in Diss Street). According to the legend the blind beggar was secretly rich. Many men courted his beautiful (naturally) daughter but they all halted their suite when they found out her father was apparently poor. The one true heart was pleasantly surprised on the wedding day when he found out he had, essentially, 6 numbers on a medieval National Lottery.

***Continue on to Russia Lane***

Russia Lane at the turn of the century was gang land. Strangers were not welcome and terrorised whilst the police always went in uniform and in twos. A massive block of flats, Quinns Buildings took up a quarter of the street (which was longer than it is now).

***Now walk down Robinson Road to Upper School.***

Building was originally built for Parmiters School. Thomas Parmiter, a local silk merchant, was a contemporary of Henry Raines. He made provision in his will in 1682 for a school for poor children. As with Raines School, Parmiters moved several times. Parmiter Street takes its name from school building which stood there in, C19th. This building opened 13th September 1887.

Most famous (notorious) old boy of Parmiters - Nick Leeson but he went to school at new site north of London. Very strange co-incidence, I know two people who live in Approach Road who worked at Barings Bank, one of whom was Santa Clause at their annual children's party! Approach Tavern opposite has had recent injection of new life and was even in Evening Standard ES magazine. Now run by two ex-teachers (but Harry is still about). Have turned upstairs into an Art Gallery. At a recent exhibition of 3 (big) pictures two bought by Charles Saatchi and third went to the Tate. Art Gallery is a blessing from noise point of view. Upstairs room used for a number of years for live music. One Polish band the 'Gdanskys' played their one night and sounded like 27th April 1941 when Approach Road had special delivery from Luftwaffe.

***Walk towards park Cross Bonner Road and peer through railings to see plinth.***

This bears the name of local IQ a century ago who was an Indian. Chest Hospital built on site of old palace of Bishops of London, most famous of whom was Bishop Bonner. Legend has it that after his death his ghost could be seen in vicinity in coach pulled by black horses - but if you saw it you would die!

***Walk to gates of park.***

Originally there was a gatehouse here similar to one at other main entrance to park but bombed in war. Park was laid out in the 1840s by James Penethome but canal was here first and the original canal bridge would have been a simple brick affair. Before park there were market gardens which ran down to River Lee. The park was built partly as a place of recreation for a growing East End population but also to try and curb the tendency of that population to visit the parks in central London, taking diseases with them.

***Cross bridge, turn right into park noting the dogs on the plinths as you go.***

These dogs are the Dogs of Alcibiades', copies of the original Greek statues made over 2000 years ago. They were presented early in this century at a time when Victoria Park was the one of the busiest in London. In 1892 for example more than 300,000 people went through its gates on one day.

***Now walk along to path which leads to towpath. Go on to the towpath, then turn left and continue walk.***

During the war there was a prisoner of war holding compound on the park side of the canal about here and about 10 years ago, on a walk through the park with some pupils, one brought me a small German coin with the swastika on it. I imagine that this was dropped by one of the prisoners.

At first set of locks will come to old steam engine pumping house which pumped water from lower pound. In 70s comedy film called (I think) *Return of the Yeti* this area is featured for a short time. Local hero Bernard Breslaw was the star.

***Continue along canal, passing over entrance to Hertford Union Canal and under Roman Road bridge.***

The Roman Road bridge was once known as Twig Folly Bridge. Legend has it that it got its name from an incident concerning a man who made baskets from twigs. Aggravated by boys who stole his fruit he shot one and then, in panic, made over his property to a friend on condition that when he came out of prison he should get it back. But when he came to claim his property his friend would not give it back and used the proceeds of the sale to build houses near this bridge. The basket maker realised his folly but it was too late and it must have rubbed salt in his wound to hear that his friend had named the houses after his misfortune!

***Now continue down towpath. First stop for a drink? the Palm Tree in park to left. Then continue walk***

Regents Canal built after Napoleonic War and the section from, more or less, here to Limehouse Basin was constructed by demobilised soldiers under early welfare scheme as company had run out of cash and government helped out. Was once very busy commercial canal (look out for rope marks on bridge and lock sides). Before First World War a good deal of ice (brought by sailing ship from Norway) was brought up from Limehouse and placed in ice houses along canal as there were no refrigerators. Kings Cross Canal Museum is built around one of these ice houses.

***Continue under railway bridge then pass newish students accommodation blocks on right.***

The blocks belong to QMC. When plans were made to expand QMC and build on this area part of the land was used as a Jewish Cemetery. Unlike Christian graveyards, Jewish Cemeteries are rarely built over (the one in Brady Street for example was closed for burials in 1858 but is still maintained). However special permission was granted and remains were exhumed and transferred to another site.

***Continue walk under Mile End Road Bridge.***

Look for old swans nest on right as you approach next road bridge, The swans abandon the nest when the cygnets have hatched but it seemed to be taken over by moorhens last year. The Regents Canal is a haven for birds. On January 1st this year I saw a pair of kingfishers making their way along, looking, it seemed to me, for a good place to nest. Herons are often to be seen stalking their prey at the side of the water.

***Continue walk past next lock and you will come to the road bridge that carries Ben Johnson Road over the canal. There are steps leading up to the road which you should climb.***

The Ragged School Museum stands by this exit from the canal. This is housed in a warehouse in which Dr Banardo organised the largest ragged school in London. A Ragged School was for very poor children who had nothing to wear but rags. 'Victorian' lessons are also given today, and there may be some Old Raineians who remember going there about 10 years ago when they were in their first year.

***Turn right over the bridge and walk along Ben Johnson Road***

This road was named after the Elizabethan poet. On your right you will see the parameter wall of the Stepney Gas Holding Station. Note that the first part is purpose built but that the second is a really the filled in facade of an old terrace of buildings with the windows and doors bricked in.

***Pass the old Crown and Sceptre (now Perfect Fried Chicken) and walk along until you come to the shops. Turn left by the side of Moores Confectioners and Tobacconists and walk up to the boarded up 'Owl and the Pussycat' pet shop.***

Look up and you will see the plaque to Dr Banardo. Banardo.

***Leave the 'Owl and the Pussycat' by turning right into Elsa Street and walk along to then turn left along Whitehorse Road***

'The Fish and Ring' is boarded up but note the 1757 and the Tankard with Wings which is the motif of Charringtons Brewery. The brewery, then in Ale End, was established in that year although John Charrington did not buy in to it until 1766. By the 1780's Charrington had acquired control for his family. This control provided a good living over the following years but led to a reaction from Frederick Charrington who renounced his inheritance (estimated at more than a million a century ago) to pursue campaigns against alcoholism in the East End.

Although the Fish and Ring~ is closed the 'Little Star' is still open for business - time for a second?

Leaving the 'Star? turn left and look across the road to the facade of the old 'Morgan's' provision shop. In a time before cheap personal transport made the supermarket the only place to stock up, shops like these provided a service in every part of English towns and cities.

***Continuing your walk by the side of the children's playground will bring you to the side gate of St Dustan's Churchyard.***

Note the gate posts. They were manufactured in Whitechapel seven years after Queen Victoria came to the throne and have seen many coats of paint since. But by the time these gates were put up the history of the church was already lost in antiquity having originated in Saxon times.

***Go into the churchyard and follow the path to the front entrance to St Dustan's and notice, as you go the Red Ensign flying above the tower which mark the long association of the church with the merchant navy.***

Over the main door way you will see one stone carving which echoes St Dunstan's link with the sea and another which alludes to the traditional story of St Dunstan and the Devil. St Dunstan was evidently tempted by the Devil and promptly picked up a pair of hot tongs to tweak the Devil's nose. Those tongs appear on the coat of arms of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets too.

Ironically it was from a house next to St Dunstan's that plans were made to dissolve the monastic orders which were so important to the Medieval Catholic Church. Here, on the orders of Henry V I 11, Thomas Cromwell drew up the 'hit lists' for his 'visitors'. A stranger from Stepney must have been a very unwelcome sight in the woods of North Yorkshire or the flat lands of Norfolk.

***Leave St Dunstan's and cross Stepney High Street and then turn left down Bromley Street. Walk down Bromley Street until you come to the junction with Waiter Terrace on your right***

Before you leave Bromley Street note the row of flat fronted terrace houses on the left. Each has the same chimney pot arrangement and none has a television ariel let alone a satellite dish, The old fashioned telephone pole makes me think this part of the street is being specially preserved to be let off for huge sums as a genuine backdrop for some 'As We Were' blockbuster.

***Now turn down Waiter Terrace and walk along. As you ~ number 29 note the old stone marking the boundary of the old Hamlet of Ratcliffe which has been set into the wall by the entrance. A nice little touch! Take the left hand footpath when you reach the end of Waiter Terrace and follow it round until you come to the junction with Copley Street.***

The street furniture is painted puce here, not to everyone's taste and a throwback to the days before 'The Strange Death of Liberal Tower Hamlets' when the borough was divided into seven Neighbourhoods each of which had its own livery. I am not sure whether the people at number 82 were Liberal supporters but the rose bush nearest the fence is the only light purple rose I have seen in the borough!

***At Copley Street turn right and walk up past the leylandi hedge (muzzled at the moment but, surely, soon to be registered under the forthcoming Dangerous Tree Act). At Aylwards Street turn left and walk along to the junction of Arbour Square and then turn left. This will take us to our third destination, the 190 7 Raines building.***

There can be few, if any, other London schools which have ever moved from an Edwardian budding to a late Victorian one. Despite the attractions of Approach Road there is no doubt that the Arbour Square building is lighter and more spacious than the one built two decades earlier. Those large 20 paned sash windows caught the afternoon sun but the high ceiling rooms never seemed to get too hot. That, of course, was in the days of film strips, bandas and line ups when the National Curriculum was no bigger than a black cloud as big as a man's hand on the horizon.

Leave Arbour Square by West Arbour Street and then plunge into Clearbrook Way by the signboard. At the end turn of Clearbrook Street bear left and walk down the footpath to Summercourt Road. Turn right here and at the end follow the signs to the Shopping Centre. At the end of the passage you will come to a square and you should exit from this by turning left into Commercial Road. Now follow Commercial Road towards the city, cross Jubilee Street and then cross on to the other side of Commercial Road.

Note the old' Synagogue of the Congregation of Jacob on the right and the star on the top of the facade.

At Deancross Street turn left and follow the road round to the junction with Tarling Street. Time for a swift half at the Dean Swift? Behind the Dean Swift you will see the impressive edifice of Winterton House. This was stripped down to its steel skeleton a few years ago and re-faced with brick. I was Lower School representative for Winterton House once and had hoped that there might be some spin off for me at the time of rebuilding (Penthouse Suite, ground rent etc.) but no such luck.

At the junction with Tarling Street turn right, follow the road round to the left then turn off right into Dunch Street and so make your way into Bigland Street. As you make your way along Bigland Street you will see, in gold on blue and high on the facade of a shop, the words which mark a connection with 19th Century Raines-

Leave the Raines building by turning left and walk down Cannon Street Road to Cable Street and turn left. In 1936 Cable street was the scene of the Battle of Cable Street when Sir Oswald Mosley's blackshirts tried to march through the East End. This event is commemorated on the gable end painting that you will see by the Britannia. Note the whirling blades of an autogyro - an early type of helicopter which the police used to survey the situation. Continue a few yards down Cable Street until you come to the passage which leads off to the right. This could take you to St Georges Baths but bear off right into the churchyard of St Georges Church. here you will find the tomb of Henry Raine - surely every Old Rainian will know this. The church itself is a Hawksmoor Church and has been a place of worship for nearly 3 centuries except for the few years in the 1940s when it was replaced by a temporary building called 'St Georges in the Ruins'. Now the only ruined building is the old nature study museum which stands forlorn and roofless close by.

Leave the churchyard and cross the Highway and make your way down Wapping Lane. What Henry Raine would make of Babe Ruth's is anyone's guess but, as a shrewd business man, he would probably be keen to pitch for the beer supply. After passing Tobacco Dock you will come to the old Raines building on the right.