

# THE LOST PUBS OF BOW, EAST LONDON



Credit: Ewan Munro

Years ago, London was absolutely covered in pubs. There was one on every corner; some streets had several. You never had to walk far to find your local boozer.

Pubs have been at the centre of community life for generations. Everyone knew the landlord or landlady. They weren't just places to get a drink. They were places to meet your neighbours, find out what was going on in the local community and chew over the issues of the day. Everybody knew everybody. If anybody didn't turn up, someone would go round to their house and check they were all right.

Pubs were for everyone. Kids could run around and play with their mates. They were the community centres of their day. Births and marriages were celebrated. If somebody passed away, there'd be a collection for the family.

I remember all the pub games – shove ha'penny was a brilliant one and I used to play cribbage in the league. I played some big games at the old White Horse on Cambridge Heath Road. It's now a coffee shop, or it was the last time I looked. All the big pubs had a football team and there were teams who played in the darts league too.

We've all read in the news that the traditional pub is in decline. That's why we started this project. These wonderful buildings and the stories that go with them are being lost. We hope that this project will preserve some of them by showing their importance. Pubs have been the beating heart of the East End for centuries. We all hope you enjoy reading about them and perhaps feel inspired to visit your local.

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## Geezers' guide to spotting old pubs



There's a mural tribute to Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Federation of the Suffragettes on the side of the Lord Morpeth pub. They were very active in the area, taking over a pub (now demolished), turning it into a nursery and renaming it the Mothers Arms.



# WHO ARE THESE GEEZERS, THEN?

The Geezers are group of gents who are mostly in their 70s, 80s and even 90s who live in Bow, east London. They get together once a week to hear interesting talks and discuss the issues of the day. They get involved in loads of different campaigns, and started 'Where's My Boozer Gone?' to highlight the disappearance of their local pubs.

Lots of The Geezers live in the Roman Road area. They have fond memories of the pubs and people that used to line this traditional market street in east London.

This booklet is a record of some of these Lost Pubs of Bow. The Geezers are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding this initiative. Now, let's visit some of these old pubs together.



# THE LOST PUBS OF BOW

Formerly The Black Horse, 67 Roman Road E2 0QN. Existed since at least 1869 and rebuilt in its present form in 1883. It had been a Truman's pub until 1985, when it was purchased along with several other small boozers in the area. Closure followed in 1995.

Roy tells us: I started going as a young man with my mate Mel. This was fifty-odd years ago. I have great memories of this place. It was a very busy pub, especially Friday nights with a group. Queuing for the bar often started at the street door but by the time we got to the bar two pints were always pulled up and waiting.





Formerly the Hand and Flower, 72 Parnell Road, E3 2RU. This was a pub since at least 1856 until its closure in 2009.

Most of the big pubs had a football team that played in the league. The Hand and Flower was no exception.



Ray tells us: Along with my mate Jack Morgan, I managed the football team that played out of the Hand and Flowers that Jack Ran. This was in the 1960s. It was called the RayJack football club and played on Hackney Marshes in the Hackney and Leyton league. Lots of the players were firemen from the Parnell Road fire station, which was next door.

We won plenty of cups. That's Jack in the back row on the far right in the photo below and I'm on the far left. Most of the 'lads' are in their seventies and eighties now!

When Jack passed away in the 1980's the players and supporters presented a Cup to the League (The Jack Morgan Trophy), which is played for annually in the League to this day. When Jack died, the team went over to the Ordell Arms, another of the Great Pubs we now have lost in the Bow area.





Former Ranelagh Arms, 599 Roman Rd, Bow, London E3 2RR. The pub was present from at least 1862. Previously at 279 Roman Road but at number 599 by 1944 because of road renumbering. Two brothers who became model speedboat racing record-holders were born here in the early 1900s – Sam Lewis and John Brewster.

In the 1911 census there are five children listed and seven staff including a nurse, a domestic servant, a servant/barman and another four barmen. It must have been quite a busy establishment. The pub suffered heavy damage in the Second World War with only the façade remaining. It was converted and is now a grocery shop.



The former Needle Gun, 527 Roman Road E3 5EL.

The pub was established in 1828 and was renamed the Trader (2007). By 2011 it had become a hotel. It was previously at 215 Roman Road before road renumbering changes.

This pub was known for two things: music and darts. Its darts team was very active in the Mann Crossman League, named after the Mann Cross Brewery that formed it. This later became the East London Darts League.

It was one of lead Geezer Ray's locals. He fondly recalls landlady Hazel, who made everyone feel welcome. She had a brother, Lou Prager, who was a musician and had his own orchestra. He tells us:

‘This was a proper East End pub back in the day. Music ran in the landlady's family so there was always music. It had a piano and the usual pub songs were frequently belted out. Sometimes you could hear the music well before you reached the front door!





The former Imperial Crown, 50 St Leonards Street, E3 3BT.

This was a pub by at least 1835. It was a Taylor Walker Brewery pub and had a nice set of brewery tiles on the exterior, some of which can still be seen today.

There are memories of 'lock-ins' 'til the wee small hours, and of having to sneak out quietly into the night. The pub finally closed in 2003 when it was converted into flats. Thanks to Darren Stowell for the photograph.



The former Earl of Devon, 213 Devons Road, E3 3QX. This was a pub from at least 1869. We can see from the photo below that it was a pub well into the 1970s. It has now been converted to residential use.





The Rose & Crown was situated at 8 Stroudley Walk E3 3EW. This pub was first built in the 1720s as the Bowling Green Inn. It looked over the village green, bowling green and pillory. The pillory was used to punish wrong-doers - they would be stood with their head and hands in a wooden frame and subjected to public abuse.

It is almost impossible to imagine a village green here nowadays as the area is mostly a large expanse of concrete. The pub was rebuilt in the second part of the nineteenth century as the Rose & Crown, and the new is newer building is Grade II-listed. It was a Taylor Walker Brewery pub. Closed as a pub in 2007 and is now a restaurant.



Formerly the White Horse, 473 Roman Road, Bow E3 5LX.

This pub existed from at least 1869. It was previously at 167 Roman Road but road renumbering places it at 473 Roman Road from at least 1944, always on the corner of Ford Street.

There were some great live acts at this pub. It really was a legendary place for music. This pub closed in 2005. It was extended upwards and is now residential / a fast food outlet. The person on the top floor has a lovely big roof terrace.





Former Duke of York, 129 Antill Road, E3 5BN.  
This pub existed from at least 1869. It was  
owned by Smith Garrett's Brewery of Bow.  
Here is a picture of one of their beer mats.

The pub featured some very fine green tiling  
advertising that brewery's products, some of  
which still survive and are almost certainly the  
best monument to that brewery that can still be  
seen today.

This was the pub in which Geezer Charlie  
courted his future wife of 60 years, Renatta. It  
closed in 2002 and has since been converted to  
residential use.





The former Beehive, 230 Roman Road E2 0RY.  
Existed from at least 1851.  
Named the Beehive in the 1911 census summary books, it is classified as the Prince of Wales in the 1871 census. This pub closed in 1997 and is now in residential use. You can still see the old sign hanging outside, although all traces of paint are gone.





In the hot summer months, East Enders escaped the city on one of the annual coach trips, or beanos. Organised by their local pub, workplace or club, women and men travelled separately on a day out. Hastings, Clacton, Southend or Margate were popular destinations.

Pictured is a beano from the Beehive in the 1950s or 1960s. The only men in the photo are the coach driver and the accordionist. Of course there would be a good old singalong on the way. Simple pleasures.

Nowadays it's the housing associations that organise days out for people, and families can travel together. The Geezers are glad the tradition continues, even though it's not attached to pubs anymore.



**Photo:** courtesy of Joan Lord

Formerly The Ordell Arms, 22 Ordell Road, E3 2DS. The pub was here from at least 1871.

Ray remembers that young brothers John and Richard Petch were the Landlords, also very good footballers. They sponsored and played for the pub football team when it came across from the Hand & Flowers. The team became Ordell Arms F.C. and had some very successful seasons. They won the League Trophy in The Hackney and Leyton League many times, and London-wide leagues. When we won the London Sunday Intermediate Cup in seasons 1991-92 and 1992-93 seasons. Sadly by the mid 1990's the team ceased, due to age mostly.

Steve G remembers: Some great players played for that Ordell team (Darren Gallery, John Knight, etc). I believe some members of that team also played for other legendary Hackney and Leyton League teams such as MG Sports and Bricklayers Arms. Alan O remembers playing for both the football; and the darts teams for a while in the 1960s. The pub closed 15th June 2001 for conversion to residential





The former Moulders Arms, 50 Bromley High Street, E3 3EP. The pub was here from at least 1869 until it was sadly demolished in 2007.

One local, Rob, told us: Facing the pub about 50 to 100 metres to the left was a large house. My grandparents, mum and two uncles lived in this house from 1908 to 1914. There were about twelve rooms in the house and every room had a family in it.

On the ground floor was one toilet which everyone in house had to use, but also The Moulders Arms clientele had to use it because the pub had no toilet (the good old days). My mum told me that every weekend there was a continuous queue of people from the pub going past their room to use the one toilet, whilst singing at top note for everyone's enjoyment.



Photo thanks: Jimmy

The former Seven Stars, 94 Bromley High Street, E3 3EG. The pub is listed as early as 1792 and in more recent years was called The Pearly King.

In 1934 the new landlord, George Henry Gittos, came from the Rose of Denmark on Roman Road to the Seven Stars. It shows us how local some of these landlords were - no doubt they took plenty of their loyal regulars with them when they went.

The pub's address was at 94 High Street in 1934 and earlier. It is shown at Seven Star Row in the 1851 census. A lot of building renumbering used to go on in the old and olden days!





The former Rose of Denmark, 612 Roman Road, E3 2RW. The pub was here from at least 1869; the building still exists but is now a fast food place.

Here is a picture from c.1923. Judging by the large group of ladies outside in their Sunday best, and the charabanc, I'd say they were off on a beano. I wonder where they were going - Margate perhaps, or Southend on Sea?

Lots of the ladies look quite solemn, but we have to remember that back then, having your photograph taken was a big event if you were working class. George Henry Gittos, Licensee, can be seen in it. You can see his name above the door, as was customary. Thanks to John Carnaby for the picture.



The former Caledonian Arms, 62 Fairfield Road, E3 2QP.

This former Watney's Brewery pub had been present since at least 1851. It stood alongside the former Bryant & May match factory, scene of the famous 'Match Girls' strike of 1888. It's entirely possible some of the older girls even went there.

Nearby stands the statue of Prime Minister at the time, William Ewart Gladstone. Despite the efforts of the local council, he usually has red hands to symbolise his role in ending the strike, which was said to have been "paid for in blood".

The East End has a long memory.





The former Bromley Arms, 51 Fairfield Road, E3 2QA. Existed from at least 1856.

The Geezers remember that this pub stood opposite Bow Bus Garage. Because of this it was always heaving with bus conductors and drivers who had finished their shifts.

It had been a Watney's Brewery pub until 1989, when it was purchased by the Shepherd Neame Brewery of Faversham, Kent. It stood derelict for a while after its closure in 2005. It has since been converted to residential use.





The former Bombay Grab, 246 Bow Road E3 3AP. Present by 1805; by 1817 it had become the brewery tap for Hodgson's Brewery, which had relocated to an adjacent site. I wondered if that might be its chimney pictured but haven't been able to find out.

The name of the pub is believed to be a corruption of 'Bombay Gurab', a type of Indian boat that linked to the export beer trade. George P. Hans, whose name we can see above the door, was the licensee from 1899 until 1910 or so. Around the Second World War, former champion weightlifter and wrestler James Charles Lane was the licensee. The pub was rebuilt in 1933 and now houses a mosque and community centre.



Photo thanks to closedpubs.co.uk

The former Earl of Ellesmere. 19 Chisenhale Road, 5QY. This was a pub since 1866. It was a Taylor Walker Brewery pub, although by the 1980s it stood opposite the modern-day Godson's Brewery.

The Geezers remember this as a lively place, always with music and dancing. It closed in 2001 and has gone into residential use. Thanks to @eastlondonpubs over on Instagram for this brilliant montage showing the pub through time.





The former Aunt Sally, 2 Midlothian Road, E3 4SE. It was a Watney's pub, since at least 1881.

This pub has had more names than any other we have researched. Locals remember it as The Aunt Sally in the 1980s. It started life as The Victoria House and people also remember it as The Outpost, The Twilight Zone and The Melody Park Inn.

The Geezers tell us it was tell known as a music pub with karaoke, DJs, and it has also been a popular gay bar. It used to be at 2 St. Anne's Road before road renaming, finally closing in 2001 and becoming a restaurant.



Photo thanks: Ron Glenister

The Black Swan, now demolished. This pub was at 148 Bow Road, E3 3AH. This pub was present by 1822, and was almost certainly owned by the nearby Hodgson's Brewery. By 1915 the brewery had become Smith Garrett's of Bow.

In this photo it is called The Double Diamond, although you can still see the Black Swan insignia. As The Double Diamond, it was bang opposite the Kray's RR Club on Bow Road, RR standing for Ronnie and Reggie.

There is a very sad wartime story attached to this pub. On the night of 23 September 1916 it was destroyed by a direct hit from a bomb dropped by a German Zeppelin in one of the very first ever air raids on London. Several lives were lost.



Photo thanks: Keith Emmerson



The photo below shows the damaged pub. It is a very sombre picture. You can clearly see each floor of the building and where the different rooms were, each with their own fireplace.

The Zeppelin itself was later shot down over Essex and the crew of 21 surrendered to the local village policeman. They are said to have been the only uniformed German troops to have set foot on English soil during the First World War.

The pub was rebuilt in 1920, although from then on was said to be haunted by the ghosts of the former landlord's two daughters who had died in the air raid. The pub was demolished when Bromley High Street was widened in the 1970s.



Photo thanks: Fraydizzle

Let's not forget our cover star. The former King's Arms, 167 Bow Road, E3 2SG.

This pub was established by 1850, although the building looks older and the pub too may date from an earlier age. It was a Taylor Walker Brewery pub which, in later years, was very much an Irish pub – clear from the large 'Kilkenny' sign that hung overhead. It closed in 2009 lay empty for a long time before becoming a B&B. Thanks to Ewan Munro for the photo.





The former Morpeth Castle, 69 Cadogan Terrace, E9 5HP.

This pub was established by 1860 and survived as a pub for 130 years. It was a Truman's Brewery pub and still exhibits some brewery signage - the Truman's black eagle is still visible.

Although at the time still owned by Truman's, by 1983 the pub had been renamed Manhattan's. By 1986 the name had been changed to Butlers, and it closed in 1990. By 1992 it had been converted to residential use.



The former Atlas, 37 Roman Road, E2 0HU. This was a pub by 1869. Now in use as a grocer's shop / off licence. This pub has felt the effects of both street renaming and renumbering, having been previously listed at 37 Green Street (1940) and 6 Chester Place, Green Street (1861).

It is just down the road from the Black Horse at number 67 but closed down many years ago, possibly shortly after the Second World War. Thus it could easily be forgotten. Thanks to Stephen Harris for the photo.





# HOW TO SPOT AN OLD BOOZER – A GUIDE BY THE GEEZERS

There are old pubs absolutely everywhere in London. You just need a keen eye and a few pointers to begin spotting them. Next time you're walking about, take a good look at the buildings around you. What might be unassuming at street level could be something special if you look up.

If you're on the bus, sit upstairs as this affords a view you wouldn't normally see. Look for the tell-tale signs of old pubs. Make a note of what you saw and where, or click a quick photo with your phone. Then you can do your research when you get home.



- Old signs
- Tiles
- Corner buildings
- Elaborate entrances
- Ornate iron work
- Fancy facades

To test our guide, I took a walk around another famous east London street: Brick Lane. I thought there would be plenty of old pubs along here because old Truman Brewery was based here and the chimney still dominates the area. I was not wrong. Read on to see what I found and don't forget to send us your pictures of old pubs: [www.facebook.com/groups/wheresmyboozergone](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wheresmyboozergone)





## **Helpful sources for your research:**

[www.closedpubs.co.uk](http://www.closedpubs.co.uk)

Holden's Directory

<https://trumanhanburybuxton.tumblr.com>

## **London pubs only:**

<https://pubwiki.co.uk/index.shtml>

[www.surveyoflondon.org](http://www.surveyoflondon.org)

<https://spitalfieldslife.com/2016/10/23/the-alphabet-of-lost-pubs>

Kelly's Post Office London Directory

## **Bow pubs only:**

<https://www.pubology.co.uk/indexes/e3.html>

<https://www.ourbow.com/category/wmbg>

## Fancy facades

Here is a perfect example of looking up to spot something special. Take this betting shop on Whitechapel High Street. If you didn't look up you'd never know this was formerly The Grave Maurice, favoured haunt of east London gangsters The Krays.





Built in 1874, as can be clearly seen by the tiled lettering on the façade, the pub was converted into a bookies in 2010.

In its heyday it had a giant snooker room on the top floor and an open fire in the bar. There was a small private lounge with elaborate brass lighting and everything was leather and red plush drapes.

You'd have to watch the movies to see anything like that now. The former pub is at 269 Whitechapel Road if you want to go and see for yourself.



## Corners

This pizza restaurant looked likely to be an old pub. This turned out to be the case. It was the Phoenix, present since at least 1805. Remember how much those Victorians loved renumbering? This has appeared variously at 180, 159, and its present 79 Brick Lane.

Note the corner location, big windows and the remains of ironwork. If you want to take a look, it's on brick Lane at the corner with Hanbury Street.





## Tiles

Here's another stunning example of an old pub. There's no way this building could have been anything else. It was The Dolphin, a Truman's pub that was open from at least 1807 until 2002. Like so many pubs on these pages, it's had different addresses in the past – 38 Church Street in 1880 and several decades later 85 Church Street. It's a handsome Georgian corner building that still boasts its original green tiled facade. It's at 85 Redchurch Street if you want to see for yourself.



## Old signs

This isn't a sign in the classic sense but the ornate roof decoration reveals that this was once The Frying Pan pub. Records show the pub went back to at least 1805. There were ironmonger and brazier businesses in the area, and a street called Frying Pan Alley is a few minutes' walk away. On top of the pub you can just about make out crossed frying pans on the terracotta panel.





## Look closely for another old sign

Atop this old building is a white crest featuring a swan, signalling that it was once the Swan Tavern.

In place since at least 1802, the pub closed before 1983. It is now a fancy spa. Thanks to Stephen Harris for the photo.



Here's another example of those classic green Victorian tiles that are so associated with pubs.

This was once the Two Brewers, which was a pub from at least 1805. This one really shows how much the Victorians loved changing the numbers of buildings. Formerly at 68 Brick Lane; in 1856 & 1869 it was at 83 Brick Lane.

It has been 'settled' at 154 Brick Lane since 1891. Now a clothes shop, but the classic green tiles give away its former life as a pub. It can be seen on the corner of Brick Lane and Buxton Street.





This building stuck out from its neighbours and I noticed the remains of iron sign brackets so I took a photo. It was The Dukes Motto, a pub from around 1855 until at least 1962. It looks like it was rebuilt in the 1920s. The pub had closed by the early 1980s and is now used as a clothes shop. You can see it at no. 137 Brick Lane.



## Old signs

Looking up, you can't miss the fact that this used to be a pub. It was The Jolly Butchers from at least 1805. A 'Truman' shaped plaque with ornate golden letters, dating from 1881, is clearly visible above today's donut shop.

The 1805 Holden's Directory lists the landlord as Donder, the Turkish Slave. This pub subsequently had a succession of names that seem to hark back to him: Turk & Slave, Turkish Slave and Turkish Head. It can be seen at 157 Brick Lane.





## Old ironwork



These offices are called The Alma and it's for a good reason. The Alma pub opened here prior to 1870, and closed in 2001.

According to [closedpubs.co.uk](http://closedpubs.co.uk), the last landlord was an eccentric character who disappeared one day in 2001 amidst rumours of close interest by the taxman. The pub never reopened.





## More corners

There is little to suggest this was ever a pub but I had a hunch because of the corner location. Turns out it used to be the Old Crown, which existed from at least 1792. The building is currently in use as a vintage clothes shop – the area's latest version of the rag trade. If you want to see it, it's on the corner of Brick Lane and Cheshire Street.





## Even more corners

Right opposite the former Old Crown is another old pub - The Hare. This pub was present by 1794. It is very easy to imagine people nipping between the two - maybe chancing their luck if the landlord of one politely asked them to leave.

In the 1920s this was a grocer and is now a shop selling leather jackets and the like - a reminder of the area's link with the 'rag trade'. There's nothing much to suggest this was ever a pub apart from the corner location, but I snapped a picture and did some research.



We hope you've enjoyed reading this booklet and perhaps learned a couple of things about old pubs. These old buildings tell us a lot about the history of an area – about the people who lived there and the lives they had.

Although this is a booklet about boozers disappearing, let's end on a high note. Yes, almost a hundred local pubs in Bow have gone in the last couple of decades. But there are a number of notable survivors and the Geezers are glad to see these going from strength to strength.





## Take action

If you have a pub near you that needs protecting, you can list it with your local council as an Asset of Community Value. The excellent news is that in July 2019, 35 pubs in Tower Hamlets were given this status. That's over a quarter of all remaining pubs in the borough. They now have added protection from demolition or development. Let's hope this helps our pubs to thrive.

We call on you to go and visit some of them, smile and chat to somebody you don't know. You never know who you might meet, what stories you might hear or what traditions you may uncover.



**Thank you**

Thanks to our mates at the Heritage Lottery Fund and Tower Hamlets Archive for making this booklet possible. The Geezers salute you.