

Dead-End Street

By Alan Miles (email) September 2013

I love to visit Wood Street for this street has a very good history.

One historical incident I would like to tell you about took place in 1811, when a man was whipped tied to a cart and led down Wood Street, as a public example for stealing wood from the forest. And Whipps Cross was the place where, the whipping post stood. This incident was recorded in the book "Clark's History of Walthamstow".

An old ancient river called 'The Shern' once flowed at the bottom of Wood Street, and that's where 'Shernhall' gets its name from. For Leylines enthusiasts, where there are 'halls' (and there are so many in Essex) there are leylines, according to Alfred Watkins in his book "The Ley-Hunter". If anyone is interested 'hall' means a 'welcome or warm place', and it stems from the ancient Goddess 'Helga'. She was an ancient fertility goddess that dates back thousands of years. Names such as Hall, Hull, Holt, and Hell all stem from the name of this goddess.

Moving forward from 1811 to the 1960s I recall a sad and historical incident. An old mate of mine called Billy Mann, was in an accident going around the Whipps Cross roundabout near to Wood Street, on his 500cc BSA gold-star motorbike. He was only 16, a popular bloke albeit a rocker and he worked in a greengrocers in Wood Street. Although this was in 1964, I can still fondly remember him.

Returning to Wood Street as it is now I feel choked. The old Plough pub, an old dart players pub has closed, probably due to the anti-smoking brigade, and other economic factors forcing it to close. Equally saddening, is the closure of The Swan pub at the other end of Wood Street, and which is now a 'bookies'. Nonetheless, The Duke's Head is alive and well and seems to do a good trade.

Now when I go to Wood Street, there is a lovely Pie n Mash shop where I can enjoy a meal and also I like a good look around the pretentious antique market. The market was built back in the days, when the embourgeoisement of Walthamstow was dreamt up by a few scatty councillors.

Nowadays my main reason of visiting Wood Street is to visit the shop called "Peters Menswear", which sells classic designs of 60s styles of trousers, shirts, T-shirts, with names of Ben Sherman and Rael Brook stocked. Peter has become a very good mate of mine and it is a great shop for the 'Paul Wellers' of Walthamstow and elsewhere. "Peters Menswear" can be found next door to the antique market and is no 96 Wood Street.