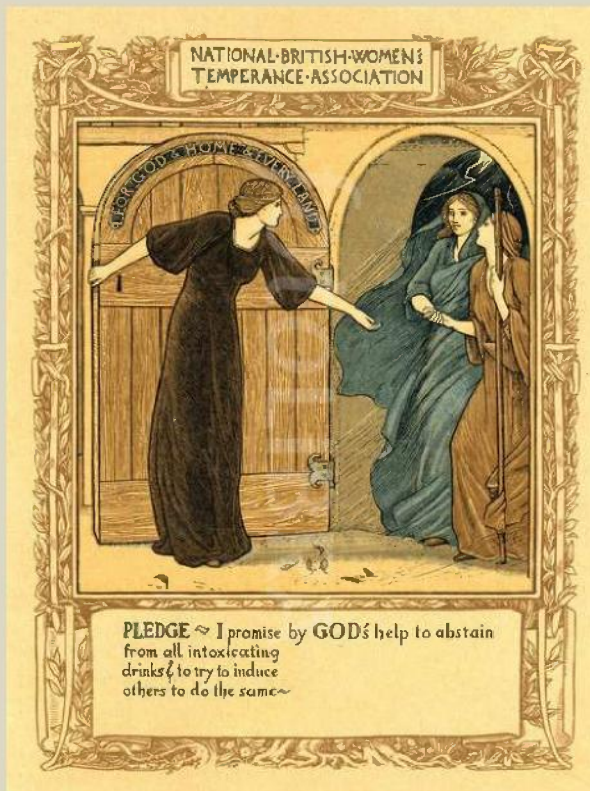


The Walthamstow Temperance Poem of 1884

By Bill Bayliss

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Today, it is commonplace for us to see newspaper and television images of people being completely drunk and obnoxious in public places and we tend to think that excessive



drinking is a modern day phenomenon. Of course, that isn't at all the situation and perhaps the worst time of excessive drinking was in the middle of the 18th century when the craze for drinking cheap gin became a national problem and scandal. So bad was the situation that, when then government tried to pass laws to control the sale of gin, there were riots in London.

A similar situation occurred in the 19th century when the prevalence of cheap booze and its effects on working people led to the formation of the Temperance movement that endeavoured to persuade drinkers to take a pledge to forswear from all intoxicating drinks

I have a strong recollection of my own Grand-mother being very scathing about her father, who had been a professional soldier, and then worked as an Ostler (A sort of present day Mini Cab dispatcher) in a stable.

Between jobs, he made frequent visits to the local pub and over the course of a very long day consumed a lot of beer. Most days when he went home he was drunk.

Of course, I don't share the same sentiments and I am in favour of alcohol, like most things, being OK when taken in moderation. However, I was vividly reminded of my Grand-mother's position on drink when I came across the following poem against the 'evils' of drink and wanted to share it with you. What I particularly like is the list of Walthamstow pubs in 1884.

The following poem comes from an Appendix to a Waltham Forest Memories Oral History Workshop 2010 called 'Behind the Bar (The Licensed trade in Waltham Forest)' and I thoroughly recommend it to you. You can find it at:

[http://www.inquitaudio.co.uk/wfohw/Behind the Bar 11 2010.pdf](http://www.inquitaudio.co.uk/wfohw/Behind_the_Bar_11_2010.pdf)

The 1884 Temperance Poem

*Worthy Sir, ladies and gentlemen,
I've come from Higham Hill;
To give you a recitation,
My promise is to fulfil:
'Tis about the public drinkshops
That are in Walthamstow,
Which you may have no knowledge of,
And perhaps would like to know.*

*At right, at left, and all around,
Sign-boards are hanging out;
With 'Sparkling Ales', 'Old Pale', and 'Mild',
And 'Splendid Double Stout'!
These inns and taverns, and the like,
Are not a very few;
And some of them are very old,
While others are but new.*

*And it might be said of one and all,
That each is but a tap,
From the 'Hole in the Wall' - hard by,
To the Essex 'Brewery Tap'
A trap, we mean, so far as this.
That ere the tipplers pass,
They think that whether cold or hot,
They'd rather have a glass.*

*At Higham Hill we've four such shops:
The Tavern', 'Prince of Wales',
The 'Woodman' and a little one,
Where may be had such 'Ales'!
Ahead! The 'Royal Standard' shows;
'Essex Arms'; 'The Cock'; 'The Chequers';
The 'Coach and Horses'; 'Common Gate';
All of which are total wreckers.*

*The 'Duke of Cambridge'; 'Volunteer';
'Grove Tavern'; 'Chestnut Tree';
'Lord Raglan's'; 'Castle'; 'Windmill'; - then
'Queens Arms' comes next! You see.*

*'Nag's Head' is at Church end so called,
'Plasterers Arms' not far away;
'The Plough' and 'Flower Pot' comes next.*

*And 'Duke's Head', all in array!
'The Swan' and 'Woodman' Hagger-lane
Has its 'Foresters' Arms' intact!
Yonder to the east are the 'Rising Sun',
And Royal Oak compact.
North-west there are the 'Rose and Crown',
'The Victory'; 'Bell'; and 'Billet';
This number, sure, must be reduced -
We think the people will it?*

*What means this strange device of men?
I'm sure we ought to know
Why so many drink shops do abound,
In the parish of Walthamstow!
The drinks at all these houses sold,
Of course are very strong;
They do the people out of right.
And render to them wrong.*

*If men were just what men should be,
Of judgement, tact and sense,
They'd ne'er support such shops as these,
At such a vast expense!
For if seven thousand pounds by three
Were rightly multiplied,
'Twould not exceed the amount by which
These houses are supplied.*

*Such money spent on Baccus - would
For every year right through,
Four hundred families well support,
And educate them too.
Think not, you folks who're in the trade,
We hate you in the least:
No! tis the horrid drink we hate,
Which makes a man **A Beast.***

Mr Bradley

