

## The Wood Street Walk



The Wood Street Walk was an annual eight-mile walk that was sponsored, from 1920, by the owner of a local café. It was open to anyone living within a mile-and-a-half of Wood Street and the first prize was a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. There have been occasional attempts to revive the event since the 1950s but, as the authors of Wood Street's history <http://woodstreetfirst.org/2013/03/21/wood-street-family-fun-day-get-involved/> point out, the London Marathon now seems to have greater appeal. However, as part of the locally organized Wood Street Family

The image above is from Vic Lee's large Wood Street mural commissioned by Waltham Forest Council [http://www.viclee.co.uk/Vic\\_Lee\\_Store\\_Home.html](http://www.viclee.co.uk/Vic_Lee_Store_Home.html)

Fun Day in June 2013, there was to be a sponsored walk, open to all, that would retrace part of the route of the historic Wood Street Walk. Unfortunately, this event was cancelled.

I only knew the event in the early 1960's. It was a good day out especially when it was sunny. Crowds thronged Wood Street and were thickest around the start area. A local band played from a float and the local Wood Street pubs (*The Plough, Flowerpot, Dukes Head and White Swan*) did a roaring trade. Although some of the participants were serious walkers, a large number were 'fun' walkers. Some of these 'dressed-up' and a few pushed prams that contained adults dressed as babies. Some 'cheated'!

**Christine Clarke** who lived in Cuthbert Road before her family moved to St David's Court on the corner of Forest



Road and Wood Street writes: 'Does anyone remember the Wood Street Walk? My dad and uncle were disqualified for getting on a bus, I can't remember what time of year it was run, and I know they ran up to Whippes X and round and down Forest Rd, it was very exciting and pulled in a big crowd.' <http://www.francisfrith.com/walthamstow/memories/Living-in-wood-street-353891/>

**Rob**, writing on the *Walthamstow Memories* site tells us that: 'Fred junior won the first 'Wood Street walk; in 1922'. He was the son of Frederick Loomes who lived in Brandon Road between 1922 and 1929 and his father was part of a double act called *Nickle & Silver* who appeared at the Walthamstow Palace Theatre and the Buxton social club.

<http://www.walthamstowmemories.net/html/familyhistory/l.html>

**Lee Pullum** wrote to the Walthamstow Memories site and told us: 'I have many memories of that period but one which may be of interest was my grandfather, **Alfred "Deffie" Pullum**. A local character and winner of The Wood St. Walking race in 55 and 56'

Picture above by courtesy of John Moppett

**John Moppett** posting to the Walthamstow Times facebook site <https://www.facebook.com/walthamstow.times.7#> = tells us: 'My father ran a chemists Shop in Wood Street from 1946-1976. When the Wood Street Walk was re-started in the mid 1950s he competed for some years, then went on to the organising committee. He was also a keen photographer, and I am sorting through hundreds of photos that he left. These are a few of the Wood Street walk, probably early to mid 1960's...'



I do not make any excuses for using the above rather large image which, for me, encapsulates the Wood Street Walk. The man in the flat cap with a stick was the walk 'starter' and you can see the band between the shops. The image is by the courtesy of **John Moppett** who posted it on the *Walthamstow Times* facebook site and he tells us that 'Number 11 was known as 'The Mad Major' and always competed wearing the solar tope (hat!)

He also says: 'My father ran a chemists Shop in Wood Street from 1946-1976. When the Wood Street Walk was re-started in the mid 1950s he competed for some years, then went on to the organising committee. He was also a keen photographer, and I am sorting through hundreds of photos that he left. These are a few of the Wood Street walk, probably early to mid 1960's. If people are interested I can always add detail and memories.'

<https://www.facebook.com/walthamstow.times.7#> (There are more on the Facebook site)

**Alice Fuller** replied to a *Walthamstow Memories* correspondent who asked if anybody remembered the Wood Street Walk saying: 'In reply to your message back in 2011, I do!!! Well, my Dad (57) and Granddad (92) do! They both grew up in/around Walthamstow (where I now live) and have told me about an annual walk from Epping to Wood St. Apparently, every year prior to the race a bucket of coppers were thrown onto the pavement for the kids to scramble after. They can both remember this well but there is very little about it online, which is strange as they think it definitely carried on into at least the 1960s'. <http://www.walthamstowmemories.net/html/familyhistory/l.html>

**Jean Robinson** responded to this saying: 'I remember the Wood Street Walk quite well, as I lived in Waverley Road, a turning off Wood Street. I first recall it being held on the Sunday after the Carnival that was held on the Saturday,

with the stage erected for the Carnival being used for the dignitaries. A very busy weekend for everyone. I remember it was said to be an 8 mile walk from the Dukes Head to the Warren Wood pub and back again. In the mid sixties my then boyfriend and 2 of his friends took part around 1966-67. I can still see us down in Wood Street for the start and about 2 or so hours later to see the winners return. As a youngster the same names seem to come up every year. If it was a hot day then those that really pushed it arrived back *in Wood Street almost in a state of collapse*.

**Bill Bayliss**  
**November 2013**