

Massive book from Suburb author

Panoramas of Lost London. Philip Davies

English Heritage / Transatlantic Press 2011 – £40



In some ways this massive book can be seen as the Cinemascope version of Philip Davies's wonderful book 'Lost London 1870-1945' which was published two years ago. That book almost instantaneously amassed a huge following of devotees. And deservedly so. 'Panoramas' is again drawn from the same rich archive of London's photographic history, but this time though, we get to see many of the same images blown up to a mega A3 size – the clarity of the photographs and quality of their reproduction is truly breathtaking.

I'm certain this publication is a response to the enthusiastic crowds who flocked to Kenwood House and other venues in 2011 to experience highlights of the 'Lost London' photos enlarged to poster size. What many of us adored about these black and white images is their ability to offer us a portal into which we felt we could almost physically slide back into their time – streets decorated with enamelled-iron adverts for ginger beer and shag tobacco and groups of cap-wearing boys and men huddled together gathered outside Dickensian slum-like dwellings.

Particularly strong in this collection are the images taken in Holborn, the City and in the East End when London was the largest city in the world. Mostly because these areas present the mighty chasm between wealth and poverty often just streets apart, and that they are splendidly photogenic – even in their ordinariness or in their squalor.

Several of these pictures, taken by what was then the London County Council to preserve an image of a sun-less place before its wholesale demolition, are outstanding. There's a Coffee and Dining Room's (a large rasher and two eggs for 4d) in Little Prescott Street near Tower Bridge taken in 1906 which shows a bunch of carmen outside with their horses and carts and a bonnet-wearing little girl who had also drifted into the shot. Keep looking at the image and you suddenly notice women looking out the windows, and you even begin to virtually smell the freshly dropped horse dung splattered on the cobbles. A later picture of another vanished street, taken

just after the end of World War Two shows Swedenborg Square which was situated just south of Cable Street. This one astonished me as this is the first picture I've ever seen of the place where my own maternal grandfather grew up one century ago. Today these kind of Georgian houses with their elegant Doric doorcases would most certainly have been conserved for the nation, but of course what this book sadly reminds us is what was lost to post-WW2 urban planning. A classic example is the sumptuous image of the enormous Euston Arch, the scale of which is dramatically shown as it dwarfs Finlay & Co tobacconist shop to its left.

One of the few photographs of a well-known local landmark

from a little further north is another cracker. It's 1912, exactly one hundred year ago, and The Swiss Cottage is open for business, as it had been since the 1840s, in that island between Avenue Road and Finchley Road, but without a single car in either direction. Yes, it was another world all right.

What this book, and its predecessor, have both exquisitely demonstrated is just how many wonderful photographs (which are now digitised and easily accessible) were taken by the authorities 'for the record' all those years ago. What's missing of course in these kind of images is the personal touch – that comes later, once ordinary people begin to own a camera and record their own lives in the Metropolis.

ALAN DEIN

Suburb resident Alan Dein is an award winning broadcaster and oral historian.

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A long time Suburb resident whose poems have appeared in Suburb News before, Mary Brainin Huttner's first novel is full of warmth and humanity.

LEN BAKER

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Booklover's Book Market

Stroll down most Suburb roads and you will see walls of books in house after house. Considering what a literate lot we are, it is surprising how few book selling events there are.

March 3 is the date of the first Book Market at St Jude's, 11am to 4pm – a chance to free up your shelves, bring books you have enjoyed and buy books your neighbours recommend. Organiser Jennifer Radice says, "Bring along books you would like to donate on the day or, even

better, bring them to St Jude's around midday on any Sunday. CDs and DVDs are also welcome. Let us know if you need someone to collect them from you. There will be tea, coffee, home-made soup and other refreshments." Booklovers will be helping to raise much needed funds for essential work in this 100-year-old Lutyens church.

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Gideon Leibowitz as Oliver and Elisa Daeschner as the Artful Dodger lead the cast in the Garden Suburb Theatre's production of Oliver!

Oliver!

This year for their February production, to coincide with the bicentenary of Dickens' birth, the Garden Suburb Theatre are performing the much loved musical Oliver! Music, Lyrics and Book by Lionel Bart.

In the title role is Gideon Leibowitz. The youngest of three brothers, Gideon, 12, already has several credits to his name. While at primary school, he played the part of Small Boy in the West End production on An Inspector Calls, which he followed with the part of Jason in the new, acclaimed play Mother of Him. Gideon sings in the Senior Choir of the Finchley Children's Music Group and has recently performed in Friday Night is Music Night, The Dream of Gerontius at The Barbican and recorded a new composition at The Abbey Road Studios. Gideon says he is thrilled to have been given this exciting opportunity to play the part of Oliver in the Garden Suburb Theatre's forthcoming production.

The Artful Dodger, is played by Suburb resident Elisa Daeschner, also 12. Elisa has been singing since she joined her primary school choir (Brookland Junior

School) in 2004 and is a currently a chorister at The Parish Church of St John-at-Hampstead. Among other drama productions, Elisa played Jasmine in Aladdin The Musical at the Finchley Youth Theatre last October and the Grandma in a children's musical production of Little Red Riding Hood at the Cross Key Drama Club last April.

The cast also includes many GST regulars: Tim Solomons, who has been treading the boards of the Henrietta Barnett stage, since he was 13, is Fagin and Owain Rose, who played the ugly duckling in last year's production, HONK! is Mr. Bumble. Playing Nancy is Fran Trewin, who won the award for best actress in the Barnet Borough Drama Festival in 2010, for her performance as Rita in Educating Rita.

Performances take place on: Saturday 25 February at 3pm and 7.30pm; Sunday 26 February at 3pm; Friday 2 March at 7.30pm; and Saturday 3 March at 3pm and 7.30pm. Tickets can be bought online (pick your own seats) at www.ticketsource.co.uk/gardensuburbtheatre or from 020 7723 6609.

Kindertransport at the Gatehouse

Kinder Transport is the story of one of the 10,000 Jewish children sent by their parents to safety in England from Nazi Germany. The author, Diana Samuels, apparently said that she had no pre-conceived ideas as to how her play should be produced, and left it to the directors to develop their own vision. Lumbered by the ghastly acting space at the Gatehouse, Ros and Michael Berg's vision had to overcome several disadvantages.

There was almost no scenery. One end of the long stage was Germany, the other end England and a sort of no-man's land existed in-between for rail journeys, meetings at stations and the arrival of an odd character, called The Rat-Catcher.

Unhappily the actors do not get an opportunity to rehearse in this theatre with the result that from some seats only their backs were visible. The important confrontation between Eve, Evelyn's daughter Faith and her mother meant that from my

seat neither face was seen. Eve, the nine year old Jewish child, was well portrayed by Jennie Eggleton, who has to grow from a child to a grown woman. The transformation was remarkable. Kate Oates, as Eva's mother, has to become the haggard survivor of a concentration camp. Her pivotal scene with Eve, when she is brutally rejected by her daughter after the war was truly tragic. Paula Morris, as Lil, the foster mother, was full of kindly concern.

The play's construction adds to the difficulties. Eva has become Evelyn, aged now 50, and her story is told in flashbacks to her daughter Faith who has no idea of her mother's traumatic past. Ashley Collins and Vanessa Williams did their best. Rusty Ashman had five small roles including the Dracula-like Rat Catcher who seems to be the Pied Piper. The children in that story also never got back home to their parents.

LEONIE STEPHEN

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