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| Census Return. | 1891. |
|---|---|
| (1) Furrier, Skinner | 6212 |
| 2) Tanner, Fell monger | 1164 |
| 3) Currier, Leather goods maker & Bel. | 8288 |
| 4) Parchment, Vellum Manufactur | 75 |
| | 15739 |

3) includes Bagframe maker, Carpet bag; dressing case maker. leather purse; spectacle case & portmanteau maker.

Vol 251-4

London Soc of Skinners. p48.
Grounders 49.
Neutral Curriers
Vellum & Parchment Soc 50.



# Leather Trades.

| Name | | Pages. |
|---|---|---|
| H Hawksworth | Pocket Book & Fancy Leather Case Makers Society | 3 |
| G. Oliver | 50 Tabling Road Bermondsey (Description of Trade) | 8 420 |
| Summary of Article on Tanning from Bermondsey Paper | | 11 |
| H Preece | Leather Trades Union Interview | 13. |
| G. Regan Sec. | United Society of Curriers | 14 |
| E. G. Fitzpatrick | Furriers' London Trade Union | 23. |
| T. Sandilands. | Fur Skin Dressers. | 26. |
| Trade Unions. | List of | 2. |
| J Roberts | Spanish Leather Dressers. | 33 |
| Transferred to Saddle & Harness makers. J. T. Morrison. | Saddle & Harness makers. | 36. |
| John Edey | Patent Leather Dressers. | 43. |
| A. B Hunt | Spanish & Morocco Leather. | 44. |
| | Light Leather Shavers Trade Soc. | |
| | Sec. form. (140 Abbey Rd) | |
| | United Tanners. Soc (see form). | |
| | Portmanteau & Trunk makers Soc (see form. | |
| 1. J. F. Stanton. | 59. Stockdale Rd Stewards Rd Portmanteau maker | see Pkt. |
| 2 Willis | Pkt bk & Fancy Leather. see pkt. | |
| 3 Fred Jones | Leather bag | |
| 4 S. Norris. | Millboard makers. | |
| 5 J. H. Dabson | Tanner | |
| 6 Mrs Gay | Hatters Furrier. | |
| 8 Strikes in the Tanning trade | | |

Black Saddlers. Bald faced stag. Worships St. Finsbury. (?) F. Whisker. 156 Newport Rd. Bow.

Collar makers. Will sew.

Fleshers & Purveyors Soc.

Stretching-out society.



# List of Trade Unions & Societies.

| Name | Meeting house. | Secretary. |
|---|---|---|
| United Society of Journeymen Curriers of G.I. Britain & Ireland | The Woolpack, Bermondsey S.E. | Geo. Regan. |
| London Soc. of Grounders President Mr Jackson | 50 Elect Rd | Mr Jenko. 316 Southwark Park Road. S.E. |
| London Soc. of Skinners | Crown & Cushion, Page's Walk Bermondsey. S.E. | Mr Bolton |
| Amal. Leather Trades Union Established 1890. Broke up Oct. 1892. | Temperance Hall, Station Rd Bermondsey. S.E. | H. Preece. 16 Grange Walk Bermondsey. S.E. |
| Mutual Society of Curriers | | Mr Richardson, 8 Page's Walk Bermondsey. S.E. |
| United Tanners' Society | Crown & Cushion, Page's Walk. Bermondsey. S.E. | |
| Leather dressers' Union No 1. | Black do do Seal work. | Mr Wallace |
| " " No 2 | The Crown, Long Lane. | Mr Hunt. |
| Shavers Society No 1 | Crown & Cushion, Page's Walk. | Works at Beverley |
| 2 | Leeds. | |
| Pocket Book & Leather Case Makers' Trade Soc London | Sessions House Hotel Clerkenwell Road. E.C. Monday. 8.30. | H. Hawksworth. 145 Offord Road. Barnsbury. N. |
| Portmanteau & Trunkmakers Trade Soc | Angel. High Street, Bloomsbury | W. Hyde. 4 Thornhill Grove Barnsbury. N. |
| Amal Trade Soc. of Fancy Leather Workers. | White Swan Inn Whitefriars Street. E.C. | |
| London Journeymen Furriers' Trade Union | The Windmill, Tabernacle St Finsbury, E.C. | E. Fitzpatrick. |
| Furskin dressers & Dyers. | Hospital Tavern. 208 Whitechapel Road. E. | Mr Sandiland. |
| Furpullers Union (Women) | Mr Herbert Burrows 193 Bow Road or Miss Augusta Brown can give information | |
| United Vellum & Parchment Makers of Great Britain | Crown & Cushion, Page's Walk S.E. | |
| Patent Leather Dressers' Union | The Conquering Hero, Upper Grange Road, Bermondsey. S.E. | Mr Brooks. Ewsey |

Have sent Uniform but
no list of fair & unfair houses 14.VIII.93

July 24. 1893 (3)

# Pocket Book & Fancy Leather Case Makers' Trade Society.

Secretary. H. Hawksworth. 45 Offord Road N

Meetings are held at the Sessions House Hotel, Clerkenwell Green on the second & fourth Monday in each month.

Established March 1834.

Called at the meeting house by appointment & found the Executive Committee. After explaining the objects of the Enquiry, they gave me a copy of the last Balance sheet & the Rules & promised to answer the questions on the printed form; also to give some information as to fair & unfair houses.

The Rules, which were revised in 1891, state the Object of the Society viz to provide relief for members out of work; insurance against loss of tools by fire; the payment of death benefits & the adoption of "salutary trade regulations".

Management is by an Executive Committee of six free members. The members serve six months and three are elected at each quarterly General Meeting. The Committee is responsible to the General Meeting of members. held on the 1st Mondays in Jan.y, April, July & October. Members are fined 6d if not in attendance when the roll is

called before commencing business & at the conclusion of these meetings. The President serves six months, elected at April & October meetings. Three Trustees & three Auditors are also elected in April & serve one year. Each trustee holds the Bank book & vouchers for four months of his term & at the end of the 4 months his books are audited by the Secretary & other two trustees. The Secretary, elected annually conducts all the routine work of the Society & is paid £8.8 – per annum. The other officers are paid from 6d to 1/- per attendance & fined a similar amount if absent without a reasonable excuse.

Conditions of Membership. Candidates have to attend the Executive Committee meeting & be proposed by two free members. After paying half the entrance fee {the applicant would become a "probationary member" for 12 months during which period his only privilege is that of entering his name on the unemployed list. He would be finally accepted or rejected at the Quarterly meeting held previous to the end of his probation.

Entrance Fees. Age 21 yrs & under 30 – 2/6d
30 " 35 3/6
35 " 40 5/-

~~None~~ Only those who have been excluded for non-payment are admitted after age of 40 & then only within 6 months of exclusion &

after paying a fine of 10/-

Honorary Members. Any member of 10 years standing, who by reason of age, affliction or other infirmity cannot earn more than 15/- per week may become an Hon. member. A member employing a journeyman or apprentices must become an Hon. member and a member accepting a situation as foreman may be compelled to become an Hon. Member. These Hon. members have no voice or vote in the business of the Society.

Contributions. 5/- per quarter, books to be cleared on quarterly nights or fined 2d. Honorary members pay 4/- per quarter except those placed on Hon. list through age etc who pay 3/- per quarter. Burial allowance is the only benefit for Hon. members.

Benefits. Unemployed. These have to give in writing the causes of leaving last situation + sign the unemployed book daily before 3pm. If free, they are allowed 12/- per week for not more than 10 weeks in 12 months. A member losing his place thro' neglect or mis conduct forfeits all relief. Loss of Tools by fire – Executive ~~p~~ can grant any sum not over £2. if application is made within 14 days of

the fire. Funeral Allowance. If member dies during second year of membership £5 is paid to his representative & a further sum of £1 for every year of membership until a maximum of £15 is reached. At the death of his wife a member may receive half the sum to which his widow or other representative would be entitled on his death.

Strike Allowance. In the event of a dispute, the Executive Committee have power to deal with employers. If they fail a special General Meeting may call out the workmen who would then receive ~~25/-~~ 25/- per week while the dispute lasted.

Trade Disputes. Members are forbidden to ask or accept employment vacant by a dispute between employer & employed. "This line of action must be loyally" "adhered to by every member without any reference" "at the time to the merits or demerits of the dispute."

Shop Delegates are appointed in connection with the shops (one in each) to collect members' subscriptions.

Financial Condition. The statement for the year ending February 18th 1893 shows that the income slightly exceeds the expenditure ~~but only by the~~. It is summarized on the next page.

Summary of Cash Account from Feb 20/92 to Feb 18/93.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To Balance Feb 20. 1892 £ 443.7.11. | | | Unemployed Benefit (9 members; three have full 10 weeks. | | 33.14.— |
| Contributions | 66.9.9 | | Death Benefit (2) | | 16.— — |
| Fines | 3.5.7 | | Secretary's Salary & fees for other officials | | 16.12.2 |
| Entrance Fees & Postage 12/5 | 1.18.2 | 71.13.6 | Sub. to Pension Society | | 3.3.— |
| Interest on Investment & Bank % | | 11.2.5 | Other Expenses | | 10.18.10 |
| | | | | | 80.8.— |
| | | | Balance in Hand. Feb/93 | | |
| | | | Bank – 224.9.6. | | |
| | | | Consols 200 | | |
| | | | With Sec. & Auditors 21.6.4 | | 445.15.10 |
| | | £526.3.10 | | | £526.3.10 |

There were 79 members on. Feb 18th 1893.

Sat. "Nicor" Form filled in. 16.viii.93.

G.E.A. July 31/93 (5)

Mr Geo. Oliver. 2 Serjeant's Inn Fleet Street E.C.
and. 50 Yalding Road. Bermondsey.

Called by appointment. Mr Oliver, who has been 17 years in the leather trade, but is now in the office of the Liberation Society, said he would give any information he could. He also holds some office at the Bermondsey Radical Club near Grange Road. After giving the names of some of the Unions he entered on a resume of the trade summarized as under:

The leather trade is divided into two branches: the heavy & light trades.

The Heavy Trade is that in bullock hides and horse hides and roughly corresponds with the manufacture of leather such as used for the soles of boots.

The Light Trade is concerned with goats, sheep & similar skins and corresponds with the manufacture of leather as used for shoe "uppers"

The heavy skins are dressed principally with oak bark gambier & extract of hemlock: the light skins usually with alum and salt.

He then described the light trade, tracing the

skin until it ~~was~~ had become the finished product.

Light skin Trade. Description of processes. After the animal is killed the skin (sheep or goat) is sent to the fellmonger who is a skilled artizan. He lays the skins out with a layer of lime between the ~~two~~ insides of two skins, it thus acts on the skin without touching the wool. After a time the lime's action has affected the skin so that the fellmonger can pull the wool. As he pulls the wool off he sorts it ~~into~~ according to quality sometimes into five or six different kinds.

The skin then goes to the leather manufacturer who for some purposes splits it. He then has to destroy the lime in the skin; this is done by putting it in a solution, the best being one in which dog's dung is the chief ingredient. [There is a considerable trade in this commodity. Men collect it & sell it at 1/- per pail to the leather manufacturer. A large quantity is also received from the various kennels & hunting establishments] This rendered the skin soft by removing the lime & it is then ready for the tanner. If it is to be made up as mock kid it would be tanned in alum & salt; ~~solution~~ if for bookbinding or the tan colour glove it would be tanned in the ordinary way. The tanning only takes a few hours.

Mr O. says that Messrs Bevington & Son use 1000 eggs per day in this way. The eggs are broken into tins & the yolks caught in the broken shells. The glair or white is used in the finishing press.



After the skin is taken out of the tanning liquor it is dried in a hot stove & becomes very hard. The grounder then takes it in hand; softens it and cleans the flesh side of the skin by rubbing it. The dyer then receives it & dyes it whatever colour is required & he then passes it on to the finisher who polishes it, gives it the 'grain' etc.

The only difference between the dressing of these skins & calf skin is that the ~~calf~~ calf skin is put into the lime, except Mennel calf which is dressed with yolk of egg, flour, alum & salt. The yolk of egg is found to give a suppleness to the skin that nothing else will do.

The following is a list of workers, through whose hands a skins may pass:-

1. Fellmonger
2. Skinner
3. Lime jobber (or Labourer)
4. Flesher
5. Pewerman
6. Tanner
7. Grounder
8. Dyer
9. Finisher.

Thinks that the labourer in the skin yard is the worst paid individual under the sun. Some men work from 6 am to 6 pm at Bevington's Tan yard for 20/- a week.

Trade is leaving Bermondsey. Some leather is imported now & the tanning trade is going to the north – Leeds & Warrington.

Summary of an Article published in the Bermondsey Ratepayers' Chronicle by Simon the Tanner (G. Oliver) July 1891.

Tanning usually applied to the manufacture of heavy hides as used for sole leather, machine belting, harness &c. When the hide reaches the tanner, he soaks it in a solution of lime for a few days – this loosens the hair. The hide is then placed on a crescent shaped block called a 'beam' & then the "unhairer" pushes the hair off ~~with~~ by means of a long knife with two handles. It is a laborious occupation requiring some care. The hide is then placed upon another beam, ~~the~~ flesh side being uppermost; the "flesher" with a large very sharp two-handled knife tears off the first film & any flesh that may have been left by the butcher when skinning. Great skill is needed to tear off sufficient without damaging the hide. If the hide is intended for sole leather, the sides & neck are cut off & tanned in inferior liquors. The remaining part is called the "butt" & makes the best leather. A number of these butts are placed in a pit of weak tan liquor & shifted day after day into stronger liquor for several days until they are put into the strongest liquor when they remain until tanned. Formerly

when only oak bark was used it took one to two years according to the substance of the hide to make good leather. Now it is done in three to four months.

After the hide is tanned it passes to the shedman who attends to the drying & finishing during which process it is scraped & rolled with heavy weight.

Machinery for unhairing and fleshing has been only a partial success but some inventions have reduced the amount of labour in the shedman's work.

Lads used to be apprenticed to the trade & were taught all branches but now men only learn one skilled branch & that sometimes by favour of the master, who promotes a labourer.*

Wages. In full & good work (an unusual thing) the fleshers & unhairers earn 35/- to £2/-/- a week; shedmen without machinery about 30/- a week. Labourers' wages are generally 23/- per week but where piece work has been introduced they will earn about 30/- a week

Mr H. Preece. 16 Grange Walk, Bermondsey. S.E.
Late Secretary of the Amalgamated Leather Trades Union

The Amalgamated L.T. Union was started in 1890 and broke up in October 1892. Jealousy was the cause. a Mr Daybourne tried to get the Secretaryship; he led a strike and brought all the men out. They had previously won the 9 hours day. Had 2600 members at one time.

The trade was going from Bermondsey; Leeds was the chief competitor taking heavy & light work; Warrington took the light work only.

There were a large number of Societies connected with the trade but all were weak. An endeavour to combine them had been made but it failed. He was going to try again. Amongst other Societies having members in London he mentioned the following:

Leeds Society of Skinners
Birmingham Society of Skinners – headquarters at Lincoln.
Mutual Society of Currers – See Mr Richardson. Had only 13 members a short time ago.

Mem In the paper lent by Mr Oliver there was an account of an open air meeting held in Bermondsey Square on July 1891 by the Leather Trades Union to celebrate the conclusion of a nine weeks strike at Whitmore's Tannery, The Grange, Bermondsey. It was settled by arbitration, Mr A Lafone MP & Dr Cooper being arbitrators. They regarded the result as a triumph for themselves & Mr Preece in his speech claimed that the men had gained a 40% rise of wages. Mr Daybourne was a speaker.

United Society of Journeymen Curriers of Gt Britain & Ireland.

Gen. Secretary. Mr. Geo. Regan. The Woolpack. Bermondsey St SE.

Mr Regan gave me a copy of the General Rules; a copy of the Report for the quarter ending June 24th 1893 & the two Lists of Prices for Curriers' work viz for Boot Work - accepted May 1873; for Coach, harness & saddle work revised 1877. These lists give the piece prices for various classes of work & the 'boot work' list a short definition of the work that is included in the prices. See documents in pigeon hole marked A to D.

Constitution. By the General Laws the country is divided into six provinces: Bristol, Birmingham, Scotland, London, Manchester & Wellingboro'. Each province has power to make local laws but not opposed to general laws & levies a contribution at the rate it thinks necessary to defray cost of local management. The Executive for General Management is located in London & consists of a President, Secretary (who is Secretary of the London Province also) & two Committeemen; the latter are elected ~~annually~~ quarterly & the President & Secretary annually.

Benefits. These are (1) Out of work (2) Sick pay & (3) Emigration allowance and 30 old members may also receive Superannuation

members "on Tramp" + other out of works can claim other minor benefits e.g. a loan of 10/- for books after being 'out' for 6 weeks; Subsistence money (1/6 per day also a loan) is advanced until the following Saturday when a man has obtained ~~so obtained~~ work.

Contribution for Local fund is fixed at 3d per week for ensuing quarter.



Unemployed Benefit is 10/-, 8/-, 6/- + 5/- per week, each rate for 13 weeks; after which a member must work + pay for 13 weeks before he can receive the 5/- rate ~~and~~; another 13 weeks for the 6/- rate + so on. Sick pay at same rates may be drawn for 6 weeks in a year but a man must work at least 20 weeks before being entitled to receive sick pay again. A "gift" of £3 is made to the representatives of deceased members or pensioners. Emigration allowances of £3 are given to those going to North America + £6 to those proceeding to other British possessions. Money is paid to a shipping agent + this aid can only be received once. The qualification for the pension of 4/- per week are that applicants must be 60 years of age + have been paying members for 25 consecutive years. Members with greatest number of years' standing take precedence. Members with 30 years' service are eligible for pension, irrespective of age if disabled.

Contributions are 1/3 per week to general fund, out of which, the above benefits are paid. Contributions are not enforced from members over 60 years of age but if they pay 2d per week, they will be eligible for pension. Members owing 10/- (contributions + fines) are "placed on probation" for 13 weeks after clearing the books, e.g. their rate of benefit is reduced 1/- per week for that period. If arrears exceed £2, the man is not regarded as a member.

An Unemployed member when leaving a shop and having finished his work so far as it is ready, his shopmates will calculate how long the remainder will take to finish & the man will have to pay contributions for such time & benefits will commence at the end of the time certified. Any member leaving his shop without giving notice to his employer or leaving work in an unfinished state cannot receive benefit until he bring a certificate or clearance and if he obtain work in another, the Secretary shall, if complaint be made give notice to the town or shop stating how the man left his previous place and he shall be fined 10/ or other penalty as the Provincial Executive determine.

Members out of work are given a check book with duplicate & vouchers in which is entered the amount he is entitled to receive. When receiving benefit he signs one check & leaves it with the paying Secretary, who signs the duplicate. This book has to be produced to the Secretary of at any town he visits 'on tramp'

Strikes & Disputes. If a dispute takes place it must be brought before the Executive of the Province, who will if important enough submit it to the Province by circular. If it is not settled thus ~~on~~ or if it is likely to affect the funds seriously, a statement must be

laid before ~~the~~ all the Executives, who will take the opinion of their provinces. This decision will be final. No "turn-out" (the word "strike" is not used once in the rules) is permitted without first obtaining the advice & approval of the London Executive. Dispute pay. A member leaving work by order of the Union is entitled to 12/- per week for 8 weeks or if married to 14/- & 1/- per week for each children under 13 years old. If out of work 8 weeks; he becomes entitled to 'out of work' pay. Any officer discharged from his work thro' anything connected with his office is entitled to £1. a week until he obtains employment.

The London Province includes. Barnet, Bury St Edmunds, Ely, Ipswich, Stowmarket, St Ives & Chichester. ~~and~~ During the quarter 242 had their names on the London books but of these 11 were in arrears over £3 reducing the number of members to 231. This compares with 53 less 5 lps = 48 on the books of the other ~~two~~ towns of the province.

At the end of the quarter the membership of the London Province is returned thus: In Work 255; Out of work 13; Sick 1 = 269

Financial. The income of the Province for the Quarter ending June '93 was as follows: General Account £ ~~601. 15~~ 212 - £250. -
Local " 38. 3 £ ~~64. 3~~

Expenditure - General Account £202. ~~14~~
Local " 31. £233

Balance in hand - June. £407

Compare Census 1891 with 1871 on the question of deduction of men in trade.



Total Membership of Society on June 24th

| | In work | Out of work | Sick | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| London Province | 255 | 13 | 1 | 269 |
| B'ham " | 248 | 26 | 5 | 279 |
| Bristol " | 26 | 6 | – | 32 |
| Manchester " | 168 | 15 | – | 183 |
| Scotland " | 220 | 21 | 4. Women 3. | 248 |
| Wellingboro' " | 68 | 1 | – | 69 |
| | 985 | 82 | 10 . 3 . | 1080 |

United Society. Income for Quarter – £ 793.
Expenditure " 614
Surplus £ 179
Balance in hand at Jun. £ 6762

Mr Regan says that the trade (Currying) is being reduced especially in London. He attributes it to the importation of dressed leathers from France, Germany & Belgium. They seldom dress a calf skin now. "They (the foreigners) beat us practical at that". The number of men in the trade is declining now. Only about half as many as 20 years ago. This would apply to the whole trade as well. Machinery accounts for part of the displacement.

Talking of the comparative merits of various firms, Mr R gave the following opinions:

Bad Messrs Conolly — Charlton Street Coach curriers. never employ Society men. Pay below standard rates.

Messrs W. R. Shaw & Son. Wild's Rents Bermondsey. Was a Society house. Had a dispute about prices; now non-society — pays low rates.

Castler Palmer & Co. Grange Road, etc. (Market Street etc.) Was firstclass before Mr Palmer died. did not take advantage of the men. There was a dispute on some points. Firm now struck off list of Government contractors.

Messrs Whittard, Crisp & Co. was a first rate firm — light goods line. Has recently transferred ~~all~~ its work to a sweating master and gets him a certain price for ~~them~~ skins. May be only an experiment.

Messrs Bevington & Sons Neckinger Mills. There is not a worse firm. All their work is done thro' ~~th~~ sweating masters. Used to be a good firm. Were always good to curriers, but they don't dress anything now.

Good. Messrs Dixon & Taylor, Tyer's Gateway. Bermondsey.

Tanners. Most of these men are labourers; only skilled men are the *beam men & unhairers.

* flesher

1865 Strike. Mr Wm Jeffery, 78 Brighton Road, South Croydon. induced Mr Samuel Barrow to give the 4/- advance & then the other masters had to follow him. The men held a meeting after the strike at which Mr Jeffery presided & was presented with a testimonial by the men. Mr Jeffery should be seen. He knows the trade well especially the market, buying etc. Use my name as an introduction G.A.



August 10/93

Second Interview with Mr G. Oliver 50 Yalding Road.

See pages 8-11

After some general remarks, Mr O. said that Mr. E. Benson of 1 Storks' Road, Bermondsey should be seen. He is President of the National Skinners Society, works at Bevington & Sons, could give evidence as to their condition & probably introduce ~~to~~ us to some. [In writing to Mr B. use Mr O. as an introduction Mr Oliver is going away until the 28th instant but if he can be any use will be glad to see Mr Duckworth &].

He then gave a few notes about his own connection with the leather trade. In 1865, he led a successful strike for the tanners' labourers, gaining an increase from 20/- to 22/- per week. Soon after the men obtained another 1/- rise & in a short time saved £200 or £300. They then wanted to fight. Mr O. discouraged the idea but it was adopted & a memorial sent to the masters. asking for an answer in 7 days. Mr Oliver & 4 others were discharged for signing this memorial (He was getting £3 a week) and the movement failed. He then got a labourers' place at £ 23/- a week but was forced to leave in a fortnight. He was then taken by a piece master, who said his name should not appear but this man was forced to discharge him. After took a Coffee house and the men gave him a benefit which realized £35 —

After this time the men gradually withdrew from the Union until in 1872 there were only 160 men connected with it. These shared out the £200 odd, which the Union had & dissolved it. Each man had about 30/- & they gave Alwin £15. Many of the tanners labourers are Devonshire or Somersetshire men and in the skilled parts of the trade nearly all are countrymen. This is due to the fact that in the country the men are apprenticed and taught the skilled part of the work. They then come to London and get work as skilled workmen.

Distinction between Curriers & Shavers.

(2)

Both work on light goods or split hides & use a double handled knife.

Currier takes the leather from the tanner. He first of all takes off the rough that the tanner has left on; then he greases the skin with dubbin or oil and shaves it again.

The Shaver shaves light goods, Spanish leather, goods dressed in alum & salt. These skins are not greased; they are used for chair coverings and bookbinding. The work is more delicate than that

of the curriers & the shavers get higher wages.

<u>Grounder</u> does not shave the skin but rubs it with pumice stone and scrapes it with a blunt knife. (The curriers & shavers knives are very keen). Most of thes work is on soft skins for glove work – the leather is too soft to shave.

August 3/93

# Journeyman Furriers London Trade Union

Interview with Mr E. G. Fitzpatrick, Secretary.
The Windmill Tavern, Tabernacle St. Finsbury E.C.

This Society numbers about 150 financial members. The men are very migratory; they go to Paris or New York & there is an understanding that when a man shows his card at the Societies in these places, he is recognised ~~and~~ and pays into the Society where he is. On his return to London, he is re-admitted to this Union without entrance fee if he has a clear card.

The Rules (in pigeonhole marked F) are printed in English and German. The Objects of the Union are defined as the raising of funds for the support of Members out of work or on strike "under certain restrictions", the protection and general interest of the Trade & the regulation of the relations between workmen and employers.

The Union is governed by an Executive Council of 17 members, consisting of President, Vice President, English Secretary, Foreign Secretary & 12 Committee men half English & half Foreign. There are also two Trustees

and a Treasurer, each of whom must be members.

Contributions – 3d per week and 2/6 entrance fee; also 1d per month for secretaries. Free after paying 12 months subscriptions. The case of Members 13 weeks in arrears will be brought before the Council & members 18 weeks in arrears are excluded.

Out of work Benefit is usually given in a lump sum (2/- amount). The funds for this purpose are raised by means of a concerts.

Shop strikes are forbidden, except by sanction of the Union obtained by a ballot of the members.

List of shops.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Good. | International Fur Stores, | Regent St. W. | Employ about 10 men |
| | Poland. | Oxford Street. | Very good firm. |
| | Nicholay ?) | " Street. | |
| Fair. | Sugden | Aldermanbury. | 10 or 12 men |
| | G. Smith & Son | Watling St. | 3 men |
| | Réveillon | Queen Victoria St. | |
| | Olhansen & Co. | Carter Lane. | About the largest. |
| Bad. All piece work. | Wagner & Co | Golden Lane | "Greatest Sweating Den" |
| | Kœnigsberg | Commercial St. E. | |
| | Louis Victorson | Barbican | |
| | Prœger | Jewin Street. | "Very bad sanitary conditions" |

Piecework. There are some shops working piece work, mostly Jewish. Some of these stop some of the workers' earnings for coals, gas, etc – 5%. Have just won a case against Rubinstein for making this illegal deduction. [Guildhall Aug 2/92. See Daily Chronicle] This was the case of a man working in the shop. The employer has given notice of appeal. This decision does not touch the custom of wholesale houses deducting 2½% or 5% from the agreed price when buying from the Chambermasters.

Fur Sewing Machines. Jewish women have taken to working these machines in the East end. They are used in the West end but there is a greater proportion of hand work in this part of the trade.

[ ~~The~~ For other information ~~sheet~~ see Union Sheet. Mr Fitzpatrick is willing to give any information he can. Write to him at the Windmill. He will also get some furriers to give information if wanted ].

Fur skin Dressers Union.

Used to Consist of 3 branches.

Falling away of the Dyers.

Founded in 1889.

Numbers of members.

Proportion of Union & Non Union men



August. 28th G.H.D.

T. Sandilands. Secretary to the. Fur skin. Dressers Union. at the Hospital Tavern, Whitechapel Road. (Private address. 41. Barnby Street West Ham).

The Union used to consist of 3 branches.
1. Dyers 2. Unhairers 3). Pelt side.

The Dyers who are the highest paid & most reg. ularly employed in the Trade have fallen away & having been allowed to get 12 mths subscription in arrear they were finally expelled.

This Society was founded in 1889.
There are 800 men in the trade (including Dyers of whom there are 400).
370. Unhairers & Pelt side men belong out of a possible 400.

Among the Unhairers there are no non unionists
Pelt side — — — .. 30 . . . . . .

Union & Non Union work together.

Relations good.

No boards of arbitration

Hours.

Wages.



Unionists & Non U. work together in some shops, the majority of shops do not employ Union men

Relations bet masters & men are good except in the little shops employing 4 or 5 men.

There are no board of arbitration, in cases of disputes a deputation in each shop is advised & the Union makes allowances where it may be thought that men have been dismissed for having had a hand in a deputation (see rules)

The Fur Side (No 2.) work from 8–7. and no later

The Pelt Side (No 3) work when they like for the skins are not always ready for them sometimes they are not ready until the afternoon in which case the men will work on till 10 or 11 at night.

Wages. (a list of prices for every species of skin was given).

50/- is a fair average week's wage in the Busy season which lasts 4 or 5 months for Unhairers (No 2).

The wages of the Pelt side are very uncertain

Regularity.

Seasons. Busy.

Slack.

Overtime.

All are out of work together.



A man may get £1 today & nothing to morrow
in a busy week he gets about 50/-

Regularity. For the last 4 years Nos 2 & 3 have
not succeeded in making more than
4 months regular work in the year.
This is owing to the Behring Sea trouble
& the scarcity of seal skins.

November to January are always busy some
houses may be busy until May but then
others will be slack.

May to November is the slack time.
The end of Oct. or beginning of Nov. begin
the busy time because then come the
seal skin sales. Every nation sends her
buyers here

Overtime is usual among the Pelt side men for
reasons given under Hours.
but Fur side men never work later than
7. Their hours are from 8–7. this is
the customary day.

In slack times all the Fur side & Pelt side men
are out of work together, a man might
perhaps get a day per week.

Alternative trades.

Shifting.

Training

Conditions of admission.



Mr Sandilands himself has been a builders labourer, plumber & painters help, he knows men who turn to Painting, Building, Docks costermongers or anything.

The Pelt side is Shavers & Fleshers shave cross-wise, the leather shavers shave straight, so that they cannot interchange.

Men shift from Employer to Employer according as one house may be busy or not.

Training used to be by apprentices, the Pelt side had to serve 7 years before they were considered to know their business.

The Fur side can be learnt with a 3 mths apprenticeship

Now none is learning the business, the Union consider there are many more men than there is work for, they will not allow anyone to be apprenticed.

In the ordinary way men are taught by being put to work with experienced men at the age of 18.

All Furskin Dressers over the age of 18 are eligible must be proposed & seconded by 2 members.

Chief houses in trade.

Drink.

Masters buy from merchants.



The chief houses in the Fur Trade are.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hastings | employing | 160 | of Nos 2 & 3 | in busy times. |
| Rice | — | 90 | — — — | |
| Smith | — | 31 | — — | |
| Wischusen | — | 22 | — | |

Journeymen unhairers live chiefly in Bermondsey & Leytonstone.

There is a great deal of drinking especially among the pelt side men: among the unhairers there has been a marked decrease thanks to the Union a fact wh. the masters so wrs I said, acknowledge.
The average heat in the drying room is 170°. This makes people wish to drink.
The men must go in front several times during day, to hang up their skin & see how they are getting on.
The masters live by the orders they get from the merchants rather than from the skin which they buy themselves.

Dyeing.

Foot tubbers German.

Process of dressing a sealskin.



a merchant will send his skins to be dressed by one house & then to another to be dyed.

The great secret lies in the dyeing: only one man in each house is supposed to know it.

The house pays £1000 a year to one man merely for his secret, he retired from business & they bought his plant for £4000 & now pay him this annuity besides (Olsson was the name he gave (?)).

The Germans are the chief foot tubbers & dyers

There are a great number of small masters, all Germans & Jews who get over other young Germans called Greeians & pay them 8/ or 10/ per week & give them their lodging.

The following is the process that a sealskin must go.

1/. Blubbered i.e the skin is rubbed over on the ~~skin~~ fur side with a blunt knife & the blubber is squeezed out.

2/. Washed in hot soda water.

3/. it is stretched over a large iron hoop

## Dressing a sealskin.



& hung up to dry in the drying room (fen by boys)

4. Soaked in cold water.

5. Is laid hair downwards on floor of hot room to dry the hair only, the pelt must be left damp.

6. The hairs are parched out by blunt edged knife or beam.

7. Placed in loops again to dry.

8. Pelt damped but fur must be left dry.

9. Leathered ie the pelt is battered (greased) & then put into tubs or machines which work the grease in & make pliable leather of the pelt.
Small work is leathered by foot tubbing in grease & sawdust.

10. Sheared (cross wise).

11. Cleansed in revolving tubs by sawdust.

12. Dyed

13. Sheared to make pelt white where it has become black - from the Dyer.

G.A.
October 3/93

Interview with Mr Jas. Robert, Secretary of
The Spanish Leather Dressers Benefit Society
60 Wansey Street, Walworth Rd. S.E.

Established 1801 – Registered 1832.

An old Society: originated by men engaged in the Morocco leather finishing, they only being eligible. It was then known as the Finishers & Shavers Society. Has since been widened in scope so as to take any person working in the leather trade. Have balance sheets as far back as 1852.

Contributions & Benefits. Used to be 8d per week & 1d for management or 9d in all. At that time they laid by money so quickly that the benefits were raised & the contributions reduced 1d per week. Sick pay rose from 16/- to 18/- per week & funeral benefit from £12 to £14 for a 10 years member & over 14 years membership £18. About 1860 when valuation was made compulsory the Society found it was not solvent so contributions were raised to 9d again for those under 25 years of age:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 25 years & under | 31 | – 10d per week |
| 31 " to | 33 | – 11d " " |
| 33 " to | 35 | 1/- " " |

Entrance fees were also fixed

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Under 22 years of age | | – 2/6 |
| " | 25 | " 5/- |
| | 28 | " 7/6 |
| | 31 | 10/6 |
| | 33 | 15/- |
| | 35 | 21/- |

Sick Benefit is now 18/- for 26 weeks; 10/6 for another 26 weeks and 4/- a week during the time illness continues. A member can only draw full sick pay for one six months in two years. At Death members get £12, £14, or £18 according to length of membership. Members wife £12.

Superannuation. Members 60 years of age & with 30 years membership may be allowed 5/- per week but at present no new applications can be entertained until after the valuation in 1896. There are now 6 annuitants. They seem to have been lax in regard to this as two of the annuitants are not qualified by age. They were incapacitated by illness & the members voted the annuity out of sympathy – one has drawn it for 6 year already.

Membership has varied. In 1876 – 170; in 1878 – 174 (highest) now (1893) 120. Difficult to get new members: the young men join the Oddfellows. There are several strong Lodges in Bermondsey.

Funds. average £13.17.9 per member. Superannuation

and Burial Fund amounts to £1640. Money is invested with National Debt Commissioners & in House property.

Trade Sectional jealousy. In reply to questions, Mr R said that the various sections of the trade will not mix. In this Society men belonging to most of the branches are found. They come to the Club Room to pay their subscriptions but when they go down stairs to have a drink, they separate into their little groups; shavers with shavers; finishers with finishers etc.

Trade is bad & undoubtedly leaving Bermondsey. Many places had been closed entirely of late years (e.g. Chesseman & Powell) & others were not employing nearly so many hands.

[Mr Roberts gave the addresses of three other secretaries who were members of this Society]

London Saddle & Harness Makers.

Organized.

Membership.

Mr Nor U do work together



Drawing Rooms coachman used also always to order new harness. Mr M went to look on at the last but only noticed 20 out of 400 carriages with new trappings

Moses is the worst sweating firm in London.

London Saddle & Harness Makers.

Organized.

Membership.

Mr & Mrs H do work together



For Drawing Rooms coachmen used also always to order new harness; Mr H went to look on at the last but only noticed 20 out of 400 carriages with new trappings

Jenkinsons is the worst sweating firm in London.

Patent Leather Dressers Society.

Founded



20. 12. 93. G.H.D.

John Edey. Secy. Patent Leather Dressers Society. 11 Bramcote Road. S. Bermondsey

Founded. 1868. when there were 130.
1893. 84 members. in trade altogether

Only 12 Non Unionists.
The numbers are so low now owing to depreciation of Trade & migration of men to the Colonies.
Unionists & Non Unionists do not work together
The relation bt Employers & men are good the employers have met the men very fairly. They get 8d a side now.
There are no recog. boards of Arbitration.

To become a member you must be a skilled man or a sad an apprentice: further you must be proposed & seconded.

* NB. The printed title on the contribution card given was "London New Friendly Soc of Spanish & Morocco Leather Finishers

Boot & mill hands carries.

Spanish & Morocco Leather Dressers.

the full number for whom there can always be work. The men shift from the several divisions of the Trade.

Divisions of Trade.

Skins used.



Oct 25 E.H.D.

written to with U. form. 20.1.94.

A.B. Hunt 48. Alma Road. Bermondsey.

Secy No 2 Soc. Spanish & Morocco Leather Dressers Soc.

*

Instituted 1868.

101 members out of a possible 101 ∴ 101 are

1 App to 7 men the fully number that can be employed by certain given hour

it is no use having more men if there is only working for 101.

In ~~extra busy times~~ — never busy altogether

Paste grain. Winter season. (Bookbinders)

Morocco grain. Summer.

Dull
Bright grain.

Plains.

Calf & hide. for book covers & ledgers.

Cape goat — for hardwear in book & furniture

Goat : sheep : Persian sheep : skivers (split sheep)

Goat is much stronger than sheep

for the leather trade you must be conversant with

Process.

The Intricacy of the Leather Trade.

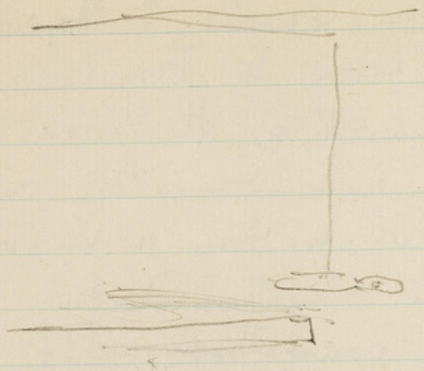
Nos 1 + 2. Society.

Benefits.



you can hardly be taught it
Skin goes from Dammer to Dyer, Dyer to Beamer, Shaver to Finisher who puts the fancy work on the Grain:
Same amount of men masters in the Trade since
the best of it is done in London.
Its a marvel the leather Trade, its that peculiar, youse got a job before yer, men wont learn another once they have got a secret, the masters dont know how the things are got up & the men wont tell them.
No 1. has about 120. they work with a certain No of shops.
Nos 1 + 2 never intermix unless things are very bad, probably will be amalgamated soon
Tramping Benefits: allowed 7/6. for each town they go to.
Subscription 6d. week
Out of work - 8/- to 12/- according how long a man has belonged.
Death £10 for member £10 for 1st wife
£5 - 2nd - -
A good deal of drink

Graining.



Hours.

Rents.

Or Tenements.



Fluffing perishes the skin.
Rare all of Bermondsey are pagilists;
Nancy Gong.
Some piece & some day: it amounts for the men to
about the same thing.
Mr Hunt is in favour of Piece work: then a
man works fairly; it is justice to the
man & to the master.
6 AM — 7 PM is general run.
½ hr breakfast
15 m. - lunch.
1 hr. dinner
½ h. tea.
7 M. 1-2 on Sats.
av. earns 35/- 36/- to £.
Rents in Alma Road. 12/- to 14/- 6 room wash-
house
12/6 tax.
small piece of garden
Thinks it a shame that blocks shd be built
giving the children no yard to run about in
must go into the streets. learn all
kinds of language.
He will send the list of questions filled

in by Saturday Oct 28.
He Asked if this enquiry was likely to
do anything for the workman &
on being told of the volumes on &
Lodon Labour said 'Oh if it is
the same chap as did those then it is
certain to do some good'.

16. VII. 94.

H. Preece — 11 Grange Walk Bermondsey.
R. London Soc of Skinners. about 180 members.

Skinning like all the wet trade are having London.
Skinners travel all over the country
Members of the London Soc: do not travel
so much as other Skinners.

The Nat Soc of Skinners does not exist.

London Soc of Grounders. numbered last year
about 120.

United Vellum & Parchment makers. have now moved
to Mitcham. (firm Gibbs & Roberts)
Loosley is the only firm (in Marlboro' Road)
doing any business in London.
many of the parchment makers & Skinners
would put themselves down as frizers.
where they wd slave in the heavy goods
they would frize in the light.

London Soc of Skinners - have a price list but it is
not strictly enforced.

10/- ow. 13 wks. } Dat admit daywork wage but a fitting
10/- sick. 13 -
5/- ow 13 } 6d hr. is reg rate all round for daywork.
6/- sick. 13 - } (according to old custom).

Union & non U do not work together: men must belong to either Birmingham, Leeds or London. The Leeds soc admits daywork in practice, the rest in theory

Skinners deal with no heavy Leather.
founded. 1861. out of work. 1/- sub. 1 levies.
Friendly with masters.

Grounders 10/- on. 8 wks. } on 1 strike
5/- — 8 —
no sick
no death
no other form of Benefit
Have a price list & enforce it generally. They are strong in the shops. But they are not progressive. nothing propagandist about them. They work their way up (chiefly in the country or with men who work at home) Men don't work so much at home as they used to. 7! wk 1 levies.
U 1 Non U do not work together

Mutual Carriers. 17 members founded. 91.
(see Richardson. Ancient Brit. Wills Rents Bermondsey)