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Leather Dresser: Tanner. sect. 32.

Census Returns 1891.

	Persons		
(1). Furrier Skinner.	6212	Females 3059. Males – 19. 531	
(2) Tanner Fell monger.	1164.	20 – 54. 3376	
		55. 410	7376
(3) Currier: Leather goods mkr. Bag Frame maker: carpet bag dressing case: purses: spectacle case Portmanteau maker.	8288.	Females. 1156 Males – 19. 1088. 20 – 54. 5328. – 55. 791.	8363
(4). Parchment Vellum mafr.	75.		
– Healers.			
	15.739.		15.739

[1]

Leather Dresser: Tanner.

Name	Occupation	Page.
Mr. Crisp.	Leather Factor.	1.
Mr. Palmer.	Tanner.	5.
Messrs Connolly Bros	Coach & Harness Leather Currers.	8.
George Morris	Leather Factors.	14.
Samuel Barrow	Tanner.	14.
Robert Bevington	Tanner, Leather Dresser.	15.
J. H. Osborn.	Coop. Leather manufacturers.	22.
Edwin Ellis.	Tanner: Hair & felt.	3½.
H. W. Cocking.	Fur Skin Dresser. Dyer.	28.
Dr. Bartholomew	Parish Dr. for Bermondsey.	46.
Koenigsberg	Furrier.	47.
W. C. Dorman Sheffield.	Bag fittings.	49.
Hewitt	Portmanteau maker.	50
W. Cole.	Furrier chambermaster.	57
Mrs Bunton.	Fur sewer.	62
John Edey	Patent Leather Dresser	66
T. H. Ince	Furrier.	70
Konigsberg.	Furrier.	75
A. Thümling.	Bag frames.	82
Brown Bert & Co	Portmanteau case makers.	86

Crisp. Leather factor.

The different centres of the Leather trade.

Auguct. 16th 1893 G. H. D.

Mr Crisp. of Messrs Whittard, Crisp & Co. Market Street Bermondsey: on a letter thanking for returns made & asking for an interview.

Said he was not a manufacturer & never had been one, he was only a factor or dealer

He explained the terms used in the Trade & spoke about the Trade generally.

Leeds is the centre of the light leather & medium.

Bristol of the heavy.

Warrington of the medium & heavy.

Bermondsey of the split hides.

London is the centre (Mincing Lane) for the East Indian goat & sheep skins - 8 sales a year at which one or 2 million skins are put up to auction.

A skin is flayed & then cured either in the

Process a hide goes through.

Grains.

Fleshes.

Splits.

Their employment in Boots.

Sun or put into salt. Then it is tanned, then curried, the curriers turning the leather from the crust state to the soft in which it is used for boots & shoes.

Grains. are the skins with the outer side shewing the places through which the hairs grew.

Fleshes. is the underside or flesh side. which is cut off thus making two skins out of one.
The old method was to pare away the flesh side until the skin was of the desired thickness, then you got good strong leather: now you get twice as much but not nearly so strong in the form of splits of which all the cheap boots are made. This form was introduced in America & has been taken up in England. people naturally prefer to buy a boot at 4/11 to one at 5/11 especially as they look exactly alike. The diff is that the boot made of splits will not stand being wetted.

Splits.

Skivers

Chamois leathers.

Kid.

The Butt.

Not very much of highest class
leather now made in London.

Kips.

Skivers. are sheep skins that have been
split & tanned in alum & salt.
The Flesh of a sheepskin is cut off from
the grain & tanned by the process known
Chamois as grounding into chamois leather.
Small men often buy these fleshes & turn
them into Ch. leather in their own back
parlours (grounding at the stake Mr
Crisp called it)
Kid. is made fit for ladies boots by nourishing
it with yolk of egg. (The whites of egg
are sold to wine merchants for clearing
wine so one of Mr Crisp's men said).
The Butt. is the back with the belly cut off from
the strongest leather.

The highest class of leather is no longer so much
made in London, not because you cannot
make it but because it is too expensive.
The best leather is tanned with oak or
birch bark & will take 18 months to
tan.
The East Indian Kips, is hides from the small

Less tanning in London now-a-day.

Effect of breeding a leather.

The trade a jealous one.

Earnings in diffft depts.

Considerable drinking.

cattle in the East Indies used to come over here sundried, now they come over ready tanned they have started tanneries over there & there is no longer so much tanning in London. Same is the case in Australia & New Zealand.

The ~~hoof~~ leather comes from beasts which are as near wild as possible, ie buffalos, the effect of breeding is seen in the difference in toughness of the coat of a race horse & that of a drag horse. The drag horse will have a very much tougher hide.

The Trade is rather a jealous one.

The shavers.
splitters. } are skilled men & will earn
dyers. } from £2 6 £3 a week.
grounders.
Tanners. earn from 22/- to 30/-.

Customers will not buy tanners goods: they are not so strong, heat brings out 'Cockles' in sheepskins, & also a skin does not get fully nourished until the beast has been shorn.

Mr Palmer.

Trade

Failure of threatened strike.

Prices & Australia.

Aug 16th 5.H.d.

Mr Palmer. of Oakley Palmer & Co. Mr Crisp took me over & introduced me to him. he was most unwilling to give me any information & as he said good bye asked me how long I had been working with the 'General' - he seemed much relieved when he found I was no connection.

Trade was very bad just now.
2 years ago the Tanners had threatened to strike for a rise of 30% in wages. Both he & Mr Barrow had declared they would close their premises; nothing further was then heard from the Tanners.
Competition was very great now Australia & New Zealand as well as Belgium & Germany were English competitors.
Prices had been ruinously low lately because the Australian had been trying to realise their skins for hard cash.

Healthy trade.

Rent of rooms

New system of quick tannages

A jealous trade.

Decline of Bermondsey.

Drink Prevalent.

Trade was a very healthy one in 1847. there had been less cholera in the Tanyards then in any other part of London.

It was supposed the men would pay 6/- to 10/- a week for 6 rooms

Tanning of the very highest class is from oak bark took about 15 mths. Cook of Shrewsbury did some of this class.

The trade had been revolutionised by the new quick tannages which did not take more than 3 or 4 mths.

As a jealous trade, he thought it wd be a good thing if there was a greater frankness & openness prevailing.

There has certainly been a decline in the number of houses doing business in ~~Charlesw~~ Bermondsey. Both he & Mr Crisp cd remember several tanyards which had been pulled down & were now built over.

The men as a class are very much given to drink, shavers might earn £6 but they prefer to be lazy & only work 5 days

Noseasons.

drink the rest.

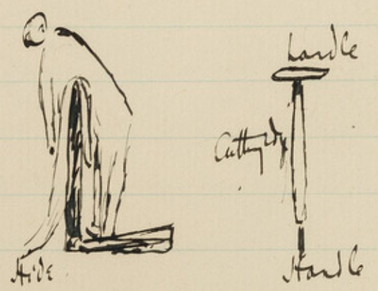
There are no seasons. & hands are always at work. "If you keep a tanyard going at all it is cheaper to keep it at full work".

He gave me a card of introduction to Colonel Berwick will ask his board about making the further wages return & will take me round some other day & introduce me to a Mr Dunfries a working man who knows something about the trade & "can talk beautifully for hours on Shakespeare & politics."

Connolly, Carriers.

Divisions of the Business

The duties of a journeyman Currier.



August 17th S.H.S.

Messrs Connolly Bros Carriers. On a letter asking for an interview.
Chalton Street. Euston Road.
Two brothers carry on the business, they handed me over to the head foreman who they said knew much more about the business than they did themselves.
Divisions of Business.
1. Carriers.
2. Machine men.
3. Tablemen.
The journeyman Currier is the most highly skilled. He stands on a raised board before a stout wooden board over which the hide is hung: he then takes a two handled knife, very sharp, with a wire along the edge to prevent it cutting more than a certain amount at a time & then shaves the hide to the desired thickness. It needs great skill to get the same thickness all over

Wages.

Hours.

No
Overtime rate

Seasons in the 1. coach Dept

2. Harness

Wages. 45/- is the highest paid to the journeyman carrier.
36/- the lowest.
35/- is paid to the machine table men because he has besides to understand the working of his machine.
30/- is the highest for table hands.
26/- is the lowest ..... .

Hours. 56½ hours per week is the regular time men keep good time except in weeks in which a holiday occurs.

There is no overtime rate because no overtime has ever been worked in the shops.

Seasons. The coach dept is where the leather is made for victorias & large open carriages, is busy from January till June because people order carriages during these months for the season's use & the coach builders buy in anticipation of season orders.

Harness Dept in former years no new harness was ever bought before May 1. This custom has quite died out, people now

3. Saddlery.

Shifting

Trade.

The different grades of skill.

Duties of Tablemen.

busy new harness just when they want it & the demand is regular throughout the year but Jan to June is still the better season for this.

Saddlery is wanted for hunting ∴ the busy season is in July & August.

All men have regular work i.e. 52 weeks work in the year

Shifting. There is not much shifting it is to the interest of master & man that the men should stick to that which they can do best, but a journeyman currier would be able to take a hide as received from the tanyard & finish it throughout.

Trade. 91. was not a very good year.
93. is the best since the jubilee year of 87.

It is a skilled trade the curriers needing the greatest amount of skill, the machine man next, & last the table man.

Tablemen. take the hide which has previously been soaked & softened in water & with knives or scrapers press the hide out

Apprentices.

How long to learn.

50 % belong to Union.

Drink

over large wooden or marble tables in order to make the surface quite smooth.

Apprentices are taught & taken through every branch of the business, 7 years is the regular term though sometimes less. They begin at the ages of 14 or 15.

A Labourer who should be taken on promiscuously knowing nothing at first would be worthless at starting, it would be two or 3 months before he earned anything for himself & his master, he would get better & better & would not be a good tableman until he had been at the work 3 years.

About 50 pc of the men belong to a Union, Mr Connoly makes no objection to the men belonging to Unions but he will not be set down as a Union shop to employ nothing but union men although he does employ pay Union rates.

The head foreman is a teetotaller & sets his face strongly at drink, a man the worse stays away a day on plea of illness, if a man comes drunk to the shop

Sickclub.

Leather for Loose.

For Lacquering

For harness.

he is sacked at once. But he said their shop was an exception & that drink did prevail in the trade.

Sickclub. The men have a sickclub towhich each pays 6d per week, 6/- per week benefit for 6 weeks is allowed in case of illness. Dowlew the healthiness the foreman said that out of his 32 men only 10/- had been paid for Xmas to Aug 7th 1893. The funds are divided among the men twice a year.

Leather for Loose must absorb as much grease as possible & is left with both sides greased for 15 months at a time in layers.

Leather for Victorias & Landaus must have no grease whatever, it must be 'buffed' i.e. a slight layer of the grain side taken off in order to enable it to take the lacquer. The hides are sent to the lacquerer, then returned to Cassidy & sold already lacquered.

Harness leather needs a good soaking in butter

London centre of coach & saddle.

is a mixture of tallow and oil.
London is the centre of the coach & saddle trade
Wals all & Birmingham of the harness, esp the
former though the very best is made in
London.

Rents in neighbourhood.

'The worst in London'

Mr Connolly will send actual earnings & Loss for
all his men for 2 given weeks; he said
to buy & black-wks were recognized, they
always worked the same.
He gave his card as an introduction to the
man who does their lacquering.

The foreman said the neighbourhood was the worst
in London, 4/ or 6/- paid for one room in a
squalid house, & miserable roomed houses paid 5/-
rent per week. Said they were chiefly in hab
by coters. They certainly looked a vicious & dirty
lot in the streets & small alleys.
A great many of their men live in Bermondsey & a
few near the factory.

George Morris

Season.

Trade.

Samuel Barrow.

Regularity.
Shifting.
Nº. skill.

Aug. 21st G. H. W.

Messrs George. Morris & Son. 51. Weston Street
Bermondsey: leather Factors, & do dealers
in American leathers only.

They are not manufacturers.
Spring is busy season for light goods.
August & January for heavier.
They were very busy in 91. & doing 50 pc. more than
now but perhaps that may not be true
of the whole trade.

He went round to Mr Sam. Barrow to see whether
he wd be willing to give information, but
he refused to see me as he said he wd
he did not see how he wd gain anything
by it & wd do nothing for nothing.
He went through Employers from which Mr
Morris took & the following are the answers
he brought back.
All have regular work.
Men do shift in every dept.
Is not a skilled trade.

Messrs Bevington. Tanners.

Divisions

9 in all.

Wages.

Aug. 22. G.H.D.

Messrs Bevington & Sons. Tanners. Neckinger Mills Bermondsey: on a card of introduction from Mr. Palmer.
Received by Mr Robert. Bevington as Colonel B was in the country.

Divisions. Glove leather dept.
Wool. "
Morocco. "
Calf Kid for Boots.
Seal. " " " "
Hat leather linings.
Foreign tanned skins further finished for boots.

9 in all. these are 9 separate depts: having different seasons & different rates of wage.

Wages. vary from 22/- per week to 30/- or 40/-. 22/- seemed to be the ordinary Time work price for ordinary labourers who are not skilled.

Actual wages earned in
Wool & glove dept.

Lime yard.

Hours of work.

Mr. Bevington read directly from the wages Book the following men employed in the week ending Aug 19th

Wool & glove dept.

4	@	22/.
1		30/.
1	"	24/.
1	"	32/.
1	"	21/.
1	"	16/.
1	"	28/.
1	"	25/.

Lime yard of which there are 3 or 4.

1	@	30/.
1	"	24/.
6	"	22/.

} all on time.

Hours. 6 AM to 8 AM.
8 " " 1 PM. } constitutes a days
2 PM " 6 " } work.

Work on Saturdays until 2: the men are expected on Sats: to take only ½ hr for breakfast (gen: a very liberal ½ hr.) & to take their lunch after 2 PM.
This makes a week of 57½ hours: thus

Regularity.

they are paid for 60 hours.

Those men dealing with calf & seal skins get regular work throughout the year: but taking the whole yard together perhaps rather more than 75 %. have regular work.

Men are turned off as soon there is no work for them unless they are highly skilled & can be transferred for a time.

No shifting to allied trades.

Those men who are turned off seek work in other leather yards but do not go out to any other trade.

And very little bet. Depts.

There is very little shifting in the departments themselves or bet. depts. Skilled men such as Fleshers & Shavers can turn to fleshing & shaving in other depts if they are clever & are generally given some kind of work so that they may not be lost to the firm.

Course of Trade

Trade was bad in 1891 & 1892. but better at the beginning of 93 though it is very quiet again now (22.viii.93).

Apprentices.

Apprentices used to be taken & some are still bound but Mr. R. Berrington does not favour them, they spoil a good deal & do not earn any

Business taught to.
Boys.

Men only for lime pits.

Extent of skill required.

Age

thing for their masters: the masters cannot turn them off at a days notice & it does not pay for waste of time to sue in apprentice in County court for breach of contract.
Boys are generally taken on at 6ᵈ or 10ᵈ. at the age of 14ʸᵉ. per week, they are engaged as dayworkers & can be dismissed when they offend.
Men are taken on in the lime pits, they either have learnt their business elsewhere or pick it up in the yard, they must be strong in order to be able to lift out the skins.
Apprentices never come premiumed & they wᵈ take them if they cᵈ get any, & are always kept in the dept. & do not learn the business through out.
Fleshers: shavers: grounders are skilled men Limeyard men must have become accustomed to their business but cannot be called skilled
Age no matter as long as the men are capable: men are taken on as wanted.

Seasons.

No regular.

All are as a rule busy & slack together though it may happen that one house is busy by chance when the others are slack.
Each dept has a diff.t season, & as the dept are being continually changed to suit the different demands, & special orders are worked for, it is difficult to name any regular season.
They make for stock, ie they are making now for orders which in the ordinary course of trade should come in next spring.

Sick Club.

Sick club. 6d. per week.
10/- for sickness & ak. the firm adds 2/6.
£5 at death ..... £1.
90 members belong.
There used to be a 3d boys club. but it has just broken up for want of members.
The proceeds of the subscriptions are shared out once a year.

A few Irishmen employed.

They employ a few Irishmen.

Piece work system of giving out work.

Most of the men work on piece: work is given to the foreman at a given price to do in a given time, he shares it out among the men who get it done as they like provided it is

done by the right time. A man on piece may begin & end when he likes, may leave the factory when he likes, he may go out to get beer or may bring it in with him.

Time workers are day-workers: they are paid by the week but may be sacked at a day's notice. Overtime rate is the same as the ordinary rate.

All the men drink though Mr B will not say they drank to excess.

On Bank Holidays they generally go off in a body for a drink he thought, at any rate they do not come back to work after a holiday. An habitual drunkard is of no use to them as he cannot do his work: but only a foreman will "probably be sacked at once if he was found drunk at his work".

Rents: one man who was called up said he paid 7/6 for 4 rooms covered yard in a decent street: he had lived in the same house for 30 years. His daughter who had married paid 9/- for 6 rooms with yard & garden: in Bermondsey.

Most of the men (Mr B said probably they did) live near.

Time workers.

Drink.

Rents of workmen's Rooms.

Men live near Factory.

Names of men employed in
calf kid Room.

The Factory
Men employed in making calf kid.

Lime Jobber.	
Flesher.	
Paerman.	
Dresser.	Time.
Shaver.	
Dyer.	Daywork.
Grounder.	Piece.
Finisher.	Time & Piece.

Grounders are peculiar to this dept: the rest of the names will apply to anything put in from the hair.

J. H. Daborn.

Leather Dresser.

Wages.

Hours.

Seasons.

Aug. 25th G. H. D.

J. H. Daborn. Secretary to the London Cooperative Leather Manufacturers Society Limited.
24½ Leroy Street (late John Street). Old Kent Road.
They are leather Dressers.

Wages. 14/- is the av. wage for boys up till 18 years of age (when they perhaps earn 18/ or 19/-)
20/- for lads engaged in blacking skins & seasoning.
24/- & 26/- for finishers (those preparing mock calf & this is also the wage for those engaged by the permanent men to do work for wh the master has offered a set price.
33/- for glazers (This is the price paid here).

Hours. 54 per week.

The Seasons follow the Boot trade which has 3 the Spring, Summer & Winter trade.
January & August are fairly busy & then gradually falls off up till Christmas.

All regular here.

And in the trade generally.

Shifting.

10% of trade still do work throughout.

The Colour Trade (ie making brown boots for ladies) ends in August & starts again in October when Shop keepers are getting out their new patterns.

All the men have regular work & get 52 weeks in the year. // The Secretary (who gets £2 a week to manage the business) has to try & secure that the work is not all done at once & spread it over the seasons // this being one of the benefits of Cooperative Societies.

Of the Trade generally (Leather Dressing) he would say that 5% were without work 2/c in busy times & 30% to 40% lose one month in the year. ie lose 3 months a year.

In the trade 9 years ago & this is still the case in the small factories — men used to receive the skin (bottoms) & finish it throughout, but with large factories & greater subdivisions under the system of subcontracting, there is little skilly men learn to do one thing best & keep to it. Here there is shifting in slack times who in order to give a man a job but it never pays either master or man & is not

Trade.

Training.

No regular system.

Skilled dept.

encouraged by either one or the other. (Cl. VI p 132.)
Trade is busy now in the Factory because they are supplying the Coop.B Factory in Leicester wh. gives work to 9 men at least throughout the year.
But the trade generally is slack.
As to training you must start as a lad & force your way, if you are smart & liked by the foremen he may tell you things & shew you dodges which it would have been very diff. for you to have found out by yourself.
There is no regular system a boy will prob. learn the light work & more skilled branches a man will learn by working with some-one else, in the Dressing track you must be strong & you must also have the knack of lifting heavy goods, a great many comby men come into this line eg fr. Devonshire where they have generally learnt in small tanneries of which there are an immense number all over the country.
Staving, is shaving the skin to its desired thickness (2) is skilled, so is Graining. ie putting on.

Skilled Dyers.

Age a wh- Capacity is lost.

The less healthy part of the business.

the grain by doubling over the leather & rubbing it along with a kind of stiff Flesh Brush with a cork surface, or with the same with a ribbed wood surface.

Striking out, is expanding a skin on a board, (fixing) with nails as far as it will go not too far.

Dyeing. may be called skilled for the men who superintends the process, the actual process is carried out by boys, the object is to get a good even dye & to be able to repeat the same shades for the same customer at diff.t times.

Men should be able to do good work until 45 or 50 & earn good wages, some last till 60 but they are not common.

There is nothing unhealthy (said to be v. healthy) exc. in the (fur fluting? fairing dept.) here the skins are taken & placed over a wheel revolving 2000 times a minute, they are put flesh side downwards & pressed by hand with a soft brush. The loose pieces of the flesh side fly off in a very fine dust, & men do not work at it for more than 2 hrs at a time, the fine

The sub. contracting system.

Leather dressing superseding currying.

Increase of business.

Drink

gets down the lungs & nostrils. The leather results in being better finished softer & more pliable.

The subcontracting (2) system.

In some houses perhaps a ¼ of the trade (eg. Wickelow's & Doggett's) this system of giving work out to 2 permanent skilled hands i pursued, work at a given price & to be done by a given time these two understand how to do the whole but employ others to do the less skilled parts at day-work paying 24/- to 26/- per week for such work.

This leather dressing is completely superseding currying in Bermondsey. The old curriers are being ousted because they will not adopt new methods.

In the last 5 years the great demand for coloured leathers has sprung up, & it is to take advantage of this demand that this sort was started.

Last year they did a business of £400.

This year they have already done one of £1000

Shavers & Tanpit men do drink considerably:

Mr Dabora said that the trade was a very sociable one, the men got together in clique

but never drank more then 3 half pints of an evening, he said in some places men were allowed to have their beer into the Factory to any extent.

Clubs. They have one to which each pays 2d wkly but it has only been started 8 mths & they do not know whether to make it a Sickness or some other Kind of fund.

All shops in the trade he thought had sick clubs. the foreman said that the 4 shops. Solomons, Kippax, Whitelaws, Nicholsons, in ash. he had worked before certainly had them; you paid 3d or 6d wkly in them.

Clubs.

Dwellings & rents.

The men live chiefly in Bermondsey, some in Rotherhithe.

Mr Dabron pays. 8/- for 3 room. in a flat.
a four roomed house in popular part of Bermondsey inhabited (in by 2 families 10/- or 10/6 a week.
2 room upstairs 5/6. rent
2 — ~~downstairs~~ 4/6 ..
The downstairs are supposed to keep the house in order & ∴ pay 6d less rent.
8. room. 16/ & 18/6. in Grange Road.
New Estate Rotherhithe. 6 rooms 11/6. but in Bermondsey. 13/. or 14/.

H. W. Cocking. fur dressers & dyers.

Divisions

15. IX. 93. Piecework. work in a gang & divide earnings equally unless any have lost their time unfairly.

Wages.

Hours.

Overtime.

Seasons.

Aug. 28th.

H. W. Cocking. manager to F. W. Smith, furskin dressers & dyers. 29. Spelman. Street. Spitalfields.
Or an introduction from a friend of E H's a Mrs Skilbeck.

The Business is divided into Fur dressers & Fur dyers.
Able youths of about 16 or 17 (not younger) are taken on and get. 16/- shillings a week.
Men get 23/- to 28/- Mr C. said that the average would be 25/-
Full week 54 hours.
Overtime is regularly worked in the winter but there is no overtime rate though generally a little extra is paid for it
Winter is the busy & summer the slack season,
In the winter extra hands are taken on in the Fur dressing dept perhaps

Seasons more marked than formerly.

Summer Slack

Seal season.

Regularity.

The seal men.

50 or 60 of them as the work in land requires, the seasons are getting more accentuated as buyers are very chary now of buying before they are certain of a demand. then they rush in & feverish work is followed by deadly slackness.

The Summer is slack & all men come into work at 9 instead of 7 & leave off before the usual time.

October is the busy time for seals in anticipation of the seal sales, this year (93) owing to the Behring Sea difficulty they have been postponed until November, hence there is nothing doing now.

All the Fur dyers get regular work all thro' the year though they must work both overtime & short time according to the seasons.

⅔ of the men have regular.

The one third get 8 or 9 months work in the year, they are the pieceworkers & the hardest to deal with, they can some

Shifting to other trades.

Course of trade.

times make £3 a week. In the summer they drive omnibusses (he said the Co. put on many extra ones in the summer), go into the country & do wool sorting, make Boots or go into Building.

1885-90. was far better than now, nothing was ever worse than the present trade, although London is the Skin market of the world & every nation sends buyers here yet we are not able to turn out furs so cheaply & so well as in Berlin & Leipsig. We can do furs very well indeed & worse can touch us in Seal skin but labour is too expensive & the trade is going abroad.

The effect of the Union.

The Unions will not let more than a certain number of young men enter the trade nor will they reduce their wages though we had tried to persuade them they would save the English business if they would.

All the best men are in the Union, if you offended one they wd all go out & it wd be impossible to replace them. We has often

Trade now very bad.

Training.

No skill.

almost to go down on his knees to beg them in busy times to let him take more men in to do the work.

Trade now is worse than it ever was. The Behring Sea dispute has prevented there being any seals in the market & things are very slack.

America has a duty of 40% on imported furs & does a little very badly for herself, the tax has chiefly been paid by the American as they will have the best sealskins at any price.

Young men of 16 or 17. (Mr C will not have boys) who must be strong are put to carry the skins about & if they shew themselves lads they are put down to work under the supervision of a steady man. They can very quickly learn to be useful though they do not become fully qualified for 1 or even 3 or 4 years.

It is not a skilled trade, men have to get a knack, but no skill is required exc by the foremen who have to settle what

Age.

Sick Club.

Foreigners.

Lower grade men.

kind askin is, how much curing & dyeing it will stand & how it should be dressed.

Mr C. never discharges a man for old age, they are generally given lighter work after 50 but he has one or two very valuable men of 60.

Sick club. 6d per week.
10/- Benefit for illness for 16 weeks.
£2. at death of wife.
£1. for death of child or wife.

The majority of the men live on the other side of the Whitechapel Road.

There are a great many foreigners, esp. Germans Mr C. will not admit anyone who cannot speak English but in the small shops in Whitechapel there are an immense no of Germans employed as fairies at starvation wages.
These are the men who keep down the price of the lower grade men.

These lower grade men are those who tread skins in grease & sawdust raked in a tub on piece & only earn 25/- per wk.

These men I saw treading away with a loose

shift & brown sacking tied from their knees round the tub, they said it was very laborious work. The heat of the foot seems to cure the skins & rub in the grease & sawdust most satisfactorily & make the skins supple in a way that machinery fails to do tho' Mr C uses machinery for some skins.

Whitechapel is the centre of London trade & London is the centre of the world's trade.

The pieceworkers drink somewhat & are troublesome to deal with.

The French get up rabbit skins better & much more cheaply than we can.

A skin is washed in hot soda waters, then the fat & grease is taken out by a 'blabberer'. Then it is washed in salt waters & put into the tub to be cured by grease & sawdust, then into revolving tubs of sawdust to clean, then dyed & dried in rooms 110–120 F

Double shifts are worked by the engine staying on.

Whitechapel the centre of the trade.

Process.

(?)

See accounts in Skin dressers union

Edwin Ellis Tanner

Beamhouse

Division.

All piece.
Av. wage 30/-

Subcontracting.

Aug. 30th. G.H.D.

Edwin Ellis. Tanner. Horney Lane. Bermondsey.

The following are the different divisions of the business with the process a hide goes through in the course of tanning.

I. Beamhouse:
- i. Lime jobbers.
- ii. Unhairers. } manipulate the hides in
- iii. Fleshers } first stage.

They all work a piece.
Average wage 30/- per week.
The work is subcontracted. The hides are given out at 8d each, a certain number to be done in a certain time to some responsible & gen older man who then employs a sufficiency of men to finish the job: if the fleshers & unhairers are slack he gets some of them or employs outside men, the profits are then divd

Extent of skill.

Reclamation.

Splitting.

ii. Hard.

needs brute strength.

Unhairing can be learnt in a fortnight.
Fleshing needs some skill, can be acquired in two or 3 months.

The men suffer from rheumatism owing to the slops in which they have to work also: they are out of doors.

The hide is then left a pure piece of gelatine.

When splitting is necessary it is now passed to be split by machinery at 6d per hide.
The average earnings being.
1 @ 35/- 2 @ 30/- 2 Labourers. 26/- 28/-

Then it passes to the

II. Hard.

This work needs more brute strength & a certain knack.

The hide is put into a weak liquor to start with (if put at first into strong it becomes case hardened & will not absorb any more tannic acid). It is then passed on into stronger & stronger until finished.

There has been great roguery in this dept the men are a bad lot & drink hard.
They used to be on piece but it was found

Drink.

Handling.

Sheds. III

The best lot of men.

that they made false entries of the number of times they had handled the hides & they have now been put upon Day work
They earn the standard rate in Bermondsey is 23/- per week.

'Handling' is taking out the hides between each pit & putting them in a heap. when they squeeze their moisture out to a certain extent by their own weight & dry a.

After a hide has taken most of the tannic acid out of a liquor, the liquor is naturally weaker & it is pumped back in to the weaker pits.

'Casting' is moving the used tan from the pits is worked overtime & brings the wages of these men up to an average of 28/-

III.

Sheds.

Here are the best men, they are getting better since Mr Ellis has known them
They work under cover & are known as shed men being divided into

1. Scourers known as Strikers. This was done by hand but is now entirely by machine.

Offal strikers
Shed jobbers

Butt & offal rollers.

When the hide comes from the yard it has a 'bloom' or flowery colour which must be be scrubbed off. (N.E. said the machine did it much better than ever hand work had done).
This was piecework.
It is now day. 2 @ 35/. others at 37/-
2/. Offal strikers who scrub.
3/. Shed jobbers (5½ hr) who wash & scrub & drive & move offal
(Offal is made of the bellies, shoulder pate - it is spongy leather & is sold at 5½ lb. when good leather fetches 1/-)
4/. Butt rollers. Offal rollers (6½ hr) Butts are rolled by a heavy roller worked by hand: it does not reduce the bulk of the hide so much as if you machine rolled it straight away).
This rolling is done to give the leather a face & take out the wrinkles.
5/. Finishing split hides by hand by means of Kind of knuckle dusters

Semi skilled work.

Hair & Felt Dept.

Ruining trade by trying
for cheap men without quality.

J. Newton & Co.

To make felt — The hair is first worked in working tubs & then dried.

All this is semi-skilled work can be learnt in 3 or 4 days.

Hair & Felt Dept. this is in a very bad way & has been by cements & asbestos.
It used to be used largely by the Admiralty & also private houses for covering boilers.
The Admiralty still use some but the private firms have completely given it up.
The trade has probably been ruined by a firm in Canal Bridge road who have turned out cheap & rotten stuff which has been bought because cheap but has not given satisfaction & created such a prejudice against the use of hair felt that people will use cements wh. are also better conductors of heat.

Felt is made by taking the dried hairs & moistening them over hot pans wh. makes them curl up & working them backwards & forwards with the hands. It is a close felt

The old men they employed once at Bow sometimes come in the winter & beg for empl.

Use for White Hairs.

The effect of wool duties in America.

ogment. Mr E. gave them some last winter at 20/-
& how has stacks of this fell wh he says
he will prob. never be able to sell.
This hair is also used for plasterers to mix
with their plaster but has nearly been sup-
seded by quick drying cements: for this it
is sold at somuch a ton.
The only thing that makes the hair dept work dog
is in the white hairs.
The Beamsmen are given 4d a bushel for
putting aside the white hairs they shave off.
They are packed & ported to the States & sold
for 3d & 1' a lb. to mix with wool & give it
the stamina which it lacks in america.
Hair has no duty to pay though wool has.
& therefore goats hairs are excluded & Mr E
has a mass of useless goats hairs.
Goats hairs were so difficult to distinguish
from Persian wool that duty was put on
them today Persian wool used to be imported
as goats hair & it was so very difficult
to tell the difference.

All regular.

No Seasons.

Difference made by weather.

Little shifting.

Trade.

Regularity. All men here have regular work at any rate 80% perhaps 90%.
The goods take 6 months to make & they make for stock to keep men employed & they have no seasons though there are regular buying & selling &.
The weather makes a great deal of diff. so that a man may have no work one day & then have to work overtime the next if a drying wind sets in.

Hours. 10 hour day. (excl. meals. 2hrs).
6 —— Saturdays (really 5. have dr. stood into it).
In winter the men come first after breakfast for it was found they did no work on empty stomachs.

Shifting. Men do not shift much.
As far as possible they are given regular work in their own depts.
Where men must shift then the Skilled man in dept does labourers work in another.

Trade. 1891 was one of the best years.
1893. v bad has not been so bad for years.

Extent of skill

No Apprentices.

Training.

45C

The Dress of shedmen
50 years ago.

Old men the best men.

23

Flesher & Unhairers are skilled to a certain extent
Unhairers can learn their work in 2 or 3 weeks.
& Fleshers in 2 or 3 month
There is no system of apprenticeship & the trade is not learnt in all its branches -
Boys come into the sheds & gradually pick up their business.
A great many Germans & Belgians used to come as apprentices & are now emptying abroad so that noone will now receive them, they have to go into the yards as common Labourers if they get there at all & some even do this.
Boys begin as Unhairers & then work up to Fleshers.

50 years ago the sheds used to be occupied by small middle class men whose dress was always a blue frock & top hat, they could do any part of the business, it was then more of a skilled business than it is now : everything was done by hand.

The old men are the best men, they know that they

23

No sick club now.

Much Drinking

Credit Pats & Tallies

can turn to nothing else & are therefore more industrious than the younger men.

There used to be a sick club which was shared out once a year but one very hard winter when the men saw that all the money wd be used up in sick pay they refused to pay their subscriptions & it has never been started again.

There is a great deal of drink, men "drink beer before breakfast" they used to be allowed to have it into the yard, Mr E has stopped this & they used to go out & then not come back again so that now a man is allowed in at 4 PM with a can of beer.

There are many 'pubs' in Bermondsey which allow men credit & when a man is given his pay on Sat. they employ 'tallies' to prevent them from spending their money anywhere else.

There are a few Irish here, when "a sober Irishman is the best of workman but a tippler the worst" most of them do drink it seems.

Out of work Dockers in the yards.

25

The Yardmen have perhaps become worse owing to the greater regularity of work at the Docks. The Docks pay a higher wage now & insist on having better men who are better off now than they ever were but the less good men have not even irregular work to fall back on & seek it elsewhere & often get into the Yards

Failure of Coop. Societies in South London.

Mr Ellis tried to start a cooperative soc. among the men but it failed, all the Coop Soc. in South London are failing because the men will not trust their managers sufficiently & pay them high enough salaries to command good men

Rents in Bermondsey.

The men live chiefly in Bermondsey where the rents are very high & the houses very bad, there are a great number of Dwellings & Tenements in B. but the workmen dislike them although they are certainly cheaper cleanlier & healthier than cottages.
The cottages are crowded & ill built, rents of 8/ to 12/ per week. & for half a house 6/ or 7/ must be paid.

To deal with Leather.

59

Dealing directly with mast.

'The shoddier the goods the easier to sell'

No more blacksoled boots since Crimean war.

Leather is chiefly bought & sold through Factors who often really act as 'pop-shops' if you have too much leather on stock you send your stock to the Factor who advances you so much a. it & then sells it at his own price & sends you the diff(if any) Otherwise he takes your stock & warehouses it at his own risk & sells for you on a commission of 2½%.

The fashion of dealing directly with masters is now rather increasing.

Mr Ellis said that he must confess that the shoddier the leather the easier it was to sell. This is partly perhaps because people wear lighter boots now than they used to It would say there was a craze for cheapness among the upper & labouring classes, the middle class only buy a good quality. All red leather is American: it is strong & resists damp. Since the Crimean war when brown paper was sent out blacked, people have insisted on having a white sole to shoes & this is always of English leather

Reasons for present depression.

Trade has been so bad because of the crashe both in America & Australia. England has had money & Consequently all the leather has been sent over to realise at any price for cash :. English tanners are having a very bad time :.

Drink

Aug 30th S. St D.

Dr Bartholomew parish doctor for Bermondsey said that drink was not so rife among tanners as among the waterside men because their work was more regular - there certainly was a great deal in Bermondsey not only among men but among women.

He had never thought at all about the drink question & did not know whether there were any credit public houses in the neighbourhood but there might be.

He lives in Tooley St.

Dr Butler Dr assistant & Dr Pepean of Tooley St who is at present away said he had only been 3 mths in Bermondsey.

Had noticed much drinking esp. amongst the women who wd frequently feed their children off beer.

Königsberg. Furrier.

A sweating shop.

Frequent visits of Factory Inspectors had annoyed him.

All piece work.

Sep. 14. G.H.D.

Königsberg. Furrier, dealer, sewer, cutter, blocker
Commercial St. Whitechapel on a letter
of Introduction from Canon Barnett.

He is reported to be the greatest sweater in the Trade, is a Jew. small rev[erend]-looking.
They say that he works his men & women beyond regulation hours & the factory inspectors have found much fault with him.
He was angry at my coming & told me to go
in a mixture of German, Yiddish & English.

He son was rather more amenable: said the Governor was rather put out because he had had Factory inspectors round 3-6 times in the last fortnight. Business was very bad & he had been told to make many alterations in his workshops.
They employ Germans, English & French.
They all work on piece.
When they are busy they take a new hands

Earnings

Sick club.

& when they are slack discharge them at once.

They are usually very busy at this time but this year is abnormally slack.
They expect to be busy in a fortnights time & if I can wait till then they will send me a card & I can go over the works.

Women earn 3/. in busy times
& men 6/ - . . . . . on valuable fur (sable) work.

There is a sick club among the men: young K said he had try to start one in ah the firm would join but the men wd have nothing to say to it.

Mrs. Betjeman. Bag fittings.

Only high-class goods.

Much done outside.

Effect of watch industry on
Districts round Clerkenwell.

Sep. 13th G. H. D.

Mr. Cardland manager to Mrs. Betjemann
37-40 Pentonville Road.
Bag fittings, dressing case & fancy articles makers.

Make only high-class goods for West End shops & must always invent something new to catch the public taste.

They had not long ago made a dressing case for over £120 for Mrs. Langtry & had orders for Indian rajahs & Persian & Siamese princes

A great many of the things are made out-of-doors only put together in the factory
The work is all skilled, the industry has grown up in Islington & Clerkenwell probably from the skilled men who used to be employed in the watch trade

He will send employers form regularly filled in & probably the further wages return

Wm Stewitt Portmanteau maker.
(workman)

Divisions of work.

Lords. {

Portmanteau 'Lords'

Sep. 14th G. H. D.

Wm Stewitt. 5 Kersley Street Battersea.
Portmanteau leather lined hand in the employ of Messrs Cole Bros. 24 Short Street Covent Garden.

Messrs Coles was he said the very best wholesale house & made for Allen, Asprey's, Davis. They had kept consistently to the manufacture of a good article.

Division of work.

Fitted Case Stand. is the most skilled he will get 50/. a week all the year round & does Piecework.

Leather lined hand. is "lining" the best class of portmanteaux with leather (split). He makes 45/. a Piece & must be able to do fitted case work if a man in the first category does not turn up.

These two are known as the Lords of the Trade (a silly name Wm H. said but as it was so it was).

Portmanteau 'Commons'. Commons.

Wages.

Season.

Black Hands. is those who make those portmanteaux of hard millboard and cov. with oil cloth, the edges only being rimmed with leather. These earn 35/- wk.

Basket Hands. is those who make dress baskets. a good man will make 36/- wk and a second rate 26/- to 30/-

Bonnet cask hands. good men make 36/- to 38/- they get better wages because their work is somewhat artistic & they must learn not only to make things well but they must also look nice.

Suit-case hands.

These four sets of men are known as 'the Commons' of the trade.

July to September is the busy time for the trade generally. Of late years they are now busy till Xmas as people have taken to giving one another suit-cases as Xmas presents. But the great demand is in the Autumn when people wish to go abroad. This year has been unusually slack. thought that the late session had affected

Slack seasons, time reduced
all men kept on.

One House busy while
another is slack.

Re. Draws

Trade.

trade.

All the men (40). at Coles have regular work, when there is not so much to be done then time is reduced all round, hands are not turned off as in cheap houses, the men prefer to earn rather less all round.

One house is often busy while another is slack but during the slack time only.

There is no shifting from Coles. every man is anxious to get there & it is a recommendation which makes it easier to get other employment, to have been there.

Draws is a bad firm, they put in a great deal of shoddy work though they make a great show in their windows.

Men go to Draws when they are waiting for a post somewhere else.

(He said he thought Draws were anxious to make their business into a Company, but he thought they were in a bad way he had heard of so many complaints of their work).

1891. was a good year. 92. was passable but

Skilled trade.

Apprentice system still in vogue.

Drink.

Foreign work.

Shop Keepers in Trade.

is bad, with this Autumn Session people will not go abroad.

The work is decidedly skilled: to do his work well a man must be a bit of a carpenter & a bit of a locksmith. Very often the bar-frame maker will not work to $\frac{1}{16}$th of an inch, they say $\frac{1}{8}$th is good enough & then to make a tray fit properly you must know how to file away the metal.

There are a great many Apprentices both with & without premiums -

& Fathers may always teach their sons.

Drink is better now than it used to be, there was a great deal but owing to Board Schools perhaps he thought there was not so much now but still a good deal.

Foreign work is not so durable as English. Their things are showy & light & will not stand banging about.

Frenchmen are very good at living, better than the English but not at heavy work.

The trade suffers from the ignorance of the retailers. The small shop keeper has hardly ever seen

self been a working-man; when customers come he cannot see how to get what they want done, if they were workmen they could add many wrinkles to the trade by learning to understand the needs of travelers from travelers.

At Coles only the privileged men belonging to the 'Lords' are allowed to work on piece. the rest of the men are on day work.

Mr Hewitt himself earns £2.5 per week the whole year round. As he is on piece he is only paid when working while those on time get their regular wage even during holidays.

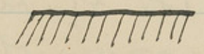
There is a sick Club. 4d weekly sub.
Benefits 10/- for 4 weeks and 5/- for another 4.
Boys pay 2d get half Benefits.

A boy in the trade will start at 10yrs (Mr Hewitt did). & will be put to soaking labels off old boxes & portmanteaux. Then he will learn to make wax ends (a thread to stitch with).
Then he learns to stitch a piece of leather the holes being made diagonally with a pricking iron.

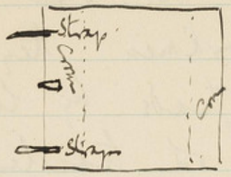
Only privileged men work on piece.

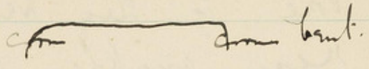
Sick Club.

How the Business is learnt.

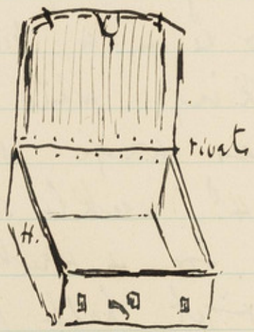
 pricking iron.

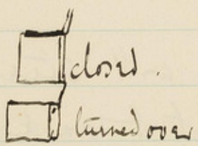
Body Piece.

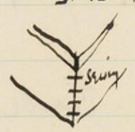




A Portmanteau.







Other Houses.

Then he does straight stitching & then handle stitching by guess ie the holes are not made out for him

Then he turns to bar binding ie covering the iron or steel band forming the rim of the box with leather.

Then to sewing crowns down: the top of a portmanteau is made of a large flat piece the two ends must be let & then sewn down to form the lid.

The Back of a portmanteau is riveted on.

The frames go inside the Cross & come down & meet the outside frame in front.

The edges are either: welted, closed, turned over or shoed

Southgate in the City does cheap work.

Drews. Piccadilly & City does shoddy..

Pound does both good & bad.

There are a great many bad houses who make for drapers & other general shops which sell cheap goods

The points of a good portmanteau.

A good portmanteau must be heavy: it should not have a cover for this while keeping up appearances destroys the hardness wh. the leather acquires by exposure & lets it go soft. It should have straps all round. Have steel bands inside first inside the corner bits. Leather lining is a luxury & does not add to its wear, better to have stiff brown paper. The leather itself shd be of a rich nut brown, all light or uneven brown is poor stuff.

Rent of Lease in Battersea.

There is often but little work on a Monday. The men 'take a Mike' & often have to 'slog it on' later. 'Mike is the proverbial street pipe layer who merely looks at his pick & does no work.'

Mr Sterritt gained 1st prize (£5) for a portmanteau at the National Workman Exhibn.
He lives in a good middle-class st in Battersea.
4 pays. 17/6 wkly or £34 per year taxes included.
1 small room.
2 larger.
1 large front
1 large back
1 Kitchen.
1 garden. 35ft long in all. 25ft by 13. in broad part-wedge shape.

Sep. 15th G.H.D.

W. Cole. Furrier. 100 Bishops Road. Cambridge Road Bethnal Green. on an introduction from the chief cashier at Messrs Smiths of 29 Spelman Street. Spitalfields.

He is a chamber master employing 10 hands in busy times & doing first-class work only.

A. Furriers business is divided as follows.

1. Cutter. is the man who cuts up the furs & fit the pieces together, This is highly skilled work & men will get from 30/- to £4 or £5. at weekly work.
2. Nailer is the man who damps & stretches the skins in a given pattern by means of nails. 20/- & 34/-

Sewer. who sews together the bits of skin which have been cut & fitted by the cutter

Finisher. gets 14/- to 16/- is more skilled than Sewer

Quilter. who makes the quiltings for cloaks They earn. 12/- to 24/- a piece.

Cloak liners. 16/- to 20/- for best

Furrier.

Divisions of a Furriers Business.

Wages.

Women's work. all piece.

Seasons.

The effect of machines.

Fur machinist. 15/- 30/- (they gen make 16/67 on piece).
Jacket cape liners 12/- & 25/-

Sewers. Finishers. Quilters. Cloak liners. Fur machinists. Jacket & cape liners are all women. They do their work on piece.

July to the end of November is the busy time for making new stuff & up till Feb. for repairing.

6 months of the year are slack & all except the absolutely essential hands are turned off.

The increased use of machines has displaced a good deal of labour. A machinist can do as much as six sewers. The work is good never better: the hems look very neat & more evenly stitched but a machine makes a slight rim which is absent in hand work; Mr. Cole who is in favour of machine work, said that the very best sewer was far better than a machine but only the best.

Regularity.

Little shifting

Training

99

Three of his hands only get work throughout the year i.e. 1 quilter.
1 liner. } women.
1 sewer. }
These have to work short time in the slack season.
The remaining 7 only get six months during the year. They then wait for the busy season to come round again, some of them go off to mantlemaking but not gen. sewers if they can get the opportunity take to finishing but not ulsters.

Trade was very good for 5 or 6 years previous to 92. 75-91 were very successful years 92 falling & this year everything is quiet though some others are expected now.

Mr. Cole himself was articled for 3 years
Cutters are as a rule apprenticed for 5 years though not so much now as formerly.
But in most cases it was in families who learn from one another.

Mr. Cole lived with his mother (his father a

Runs in families.

79

A woman learns in 2 seasons.

Cutters, nailers & beaters suffer in health.

Drink.

No Union.

Furrier was dead/ in the house of furriers.
he married a daughter of the Landlord
his wife & wifes sister were fur sewers,
his two brothers-in-law are furriers,
another sister-in-law a quilter, his mother-in-law a jacket linier. & his uncle a furskin dresser. (This is perhaps not quite exactly remembered but very nearly so/.

A woman sewer can learn in two seasons & will then be able to earn 14/. to 16/-

There are very few men in the trade over 50 years old. The fur gets up the nose & into the lungs. Mr C himself was hoarse & suffered from it. (Act. 35(?))

Cutters are great drinkers though the Board schools he thought had made some difference now & it was not so marked as before. Still 'Cutters do drink'.

Nailers also suffer from the fur dust & beaters ie those who beat the fur clean & free from moth in repairing work.

There is no Union in the trade, one started but failed two years ago, there is no coercion

Habitats of Farriers.

among the men.
Farriers live mostly in Islington (the better class)
then come North London & Bethnal Green
The hours of work are
8 – 8 for men.
till 2 in Saturdays
9.30 – 8 for women
2 Sats.
There is about 2 months of overtime in the
year when cutters are paid 9d at rate of
8d an hour.
6d. for nailers

Overtime rates.

It has a large airy house. 8 room & scullery.
& garden. for £40 a year.

The German Jews live mostly in Whitechapel
but do not do the first-class work.

Mrs Banton. fur cape liner.

All piece.

Price at which 'Butterflies' are sewn

Her earnings.

Sep. 15th G. H. D.

Mrs Banton. 42. Clarence Street. Kingstown.
on an introduction from. E. Ayres.

She works for Mess Rylands in Manchester Avenue, which she said was a dirty shop. they have many at. door hands.

She is a fur cape liner. all her work is on piece, she gets 1/6. for 1 dozen 'Butterflies'.
This is the name by which those capes with raised shoulders are known in the trade. There is 2 yards of hand sewing to be done in each. (2 prob. 4 yards in all 2 yards each edge).

She shewed her wages book for last week. Her best day brought her in 1/10.
She is a slow worker says that another woman at the same work who sits by her side can make 18/- in the week.
Her earnings for last week were 7/10½

Cannot shift.

Hours.

Her history.

She cannot shift to the better-paid 'finishing' as she has never had an opportunity of learning.
She works every day from 9–8 & sometimes they would like them to work till later.
She takes the train one way & walks back.
Her usual luncheon is bread & cheese.
Last night she fainted from weakness on getting back from work.
She has had to keep her son (æt. 19) who was out of work until today when he has been given a job at 10/ per week at covering tobacco tins with papers.
She has had 7 children. 1 dead.
3 daughters married one of whom keeps her youngest girl of 11.
Her daughters spoke uppishly last time she saw them & "she is not a one to knuckle under to her children", they must come & see her first or she will never see them again.
Her husband was in New Zealand & she was going out to him when she suddenly.

Rent.

Busy season

2

The other tenants of the house.

A fur-sewer.

Machine versus hand-work.

heard of his death.
She pays 2/6. per week for one room, long narrow at the back of the house, & owes 7/6. for rents when she was out of work.
Says she thinks her work now is better than when she used to button-hole shirts for 3½d.
The busy season she said for fur caps lining was from March until Lord Mayors day (sic)
The other houses in the street she said let at 4/6 for two rooms.

The first floor of her house was occupied by an old couple aged 70 & 71, the old Lady had been in bed for 5 weeks & the old man had had a stroke. Their married daughter was in the house, had come in from two doors off to converse & put them to bed.
Said that she was a fur sewer or had been & had had a machine of her own but that machine work though good she did not think so good as the best hand & that

Busy season.

Hours & wages.

80

unfinished Sealskin

she cd make 15/6 /-

All her family in the trade.

when she made her man a waistcoat she would not think of using the machine. Sept - to Nov. was the busy time for fur-sewing

She used only to do the best work, she wd go to a shop & take the furs home: this she was allowed to do as she could offer a security of £50.

With her machine & working from 8 AM until 9 PM each day with only 2 intervals of ½ an hour each - But the the pleasure of making your own money!

When her husband was better off he sold her machine, said that the work was too hard for her but she has regretted ever since the little extra of her very own earnings.

She worked for Weights (3) furriers in the City.

She is one of 13 children.

her brother-in-law Uncle & all her relations are in the fur line.

Patent leather Dressers.

Wages.

Seasons.

Sep. 20th

J. H. W

John Wey. patent leather Dresser & enameller
11. Brameote Road. S. Bermondsey.

He is secretary to the Patent leather Dressers Society & gave information with great hesitation & begged that nothing should be put on paper while he was there.

Wages. They used to get 2½d a side which is a board 12ft × 8 now they get 8d a risk which he said had been brought about by the Union 12 sides make a full days work & they count on making 40s per week as an average throughout the year

Summer is the busy season because then there is a good deal of carriage work. They receive the leather from the curriers & put on the japan or enamel for splash boards, harness

All work Piece
no such thing as Overtime

carriage hoods etc.
All work is piece work & therefor there is no such thing as overtime & they have a given number (as above) to make a full days work but they do not bind themselves to work for only the number of hours (notstated) implied in getting 12 sides done.
A great deal depends on the heat of the room & state of the weather.

Regularity.

In slack times (ger the winter) some men are fully employed & sometimes employer gives out less to each man.
To each job there is a man & a youth.

Shifting.

There is no shifting for every Japanner is also an enameller & does whatever comes in his way in the line.
And there is very little shifting from one employer to another. Good men hardly ever shift.

Training.

Apprentices who must be strong youths begin at 8/- and at 18 years of age

Apprenticeship for 5 years

Not unhealthy for strong men

Smaller houses being absorbed.

Drink.

at 21 they earn 21/-. They have to serve for 5 years

In slack time these men out of work do not seek any other employment. They wait until things are busy again & are allowed 12/- for 12 weeks by the Union.

He declared the trade was in no way unhealthy for a strong man but there is great heat to be suffered by those who attend to the stoves & when charging & emptying them as each one has to do & presumably the fumes of the hot enamel are not very pleasant.

Said there was a tendency for small men to be swallowed up by the larger. Doerr the largest house in the trade who employs 34 men has absorbed 8 other houses.

There is not much complaint as to drink, we say they were a distinctly sober lot. Mr E himself always takes 2 qts of tea in hot weather & finds that he is more refreshed & that it is much

Methods of work.

a sleaker. (?)

better for him than beer.

The leather is received ready for treatment from the currier.

Pieces are taken + nailed up as to cover a board 12 ft by 8, which are then put in the vats + dry thoroughly.

Then it is covered with the first coat of enamel (a mixture of linseed oil + Prussian Blue). Not more than a certain amount is allowed on the leather by the use of a tool called a "sleaker", behind the sleaker comes the boy who makes it quite smooth with his hand + crosses an even mess all over.

When this is finished the leather is naturally very dry + is taken + hung over pits containing neat tan refuse + takes the necessary amount of moisture + is thereby nourished.

T. H. Pree. Furrier.

Wishes that good tradesmen should be received in the best society.

Oct 16th. G. H. D.

T. H. Pree: Furrier. 156 Oxford Street. Is the most expensive & supposed to be one of the best West End furriers.

He was very friendly & began with a solemn question as to whether it was right that tradesmen as such should be debarred from entering the best society & going to parties simply because they earned their living themselves & enabled others to do so also. He cheered up a bit on being told that ought to have one of the first place.

He gave the following table which he had made out with the help of one of his men whom he said had once belonged to the Union & had the figures of men employed at his fingers ends. That the Union was in a very poor way now.

The Cutters & tailors of London.

Cutters.	Grades.	Wages.	Regularity	Sewers to each Cutter.	English.
50	Special 1st cl.	£5 – £7	Constant	4	
80.	2nd class	£3 – £5	constant	4	10
270	3rd class		10 mths	2 to 3 some piece.	20
400 ? tailors	Jews.	18/- week	3½ mths.		Thirds are German.
			7 to 7½ mths average of all cutters		

In addition there are about 100 chamber masters about ⅓rd of whom are English.

5% of the manufactured Furs sold in England are made in France.

⅓ to ½ of the Mantles & cloaks lined & trimmed Fur, sold here are made in Berlin, Bremen & Hamburg.

Liners additional

Seal Dressers & Dyers & Factories.

There are from 1200 to 1400 Dressers & Dyers for seal skins & small Furs. the former are employed about half the year.

June to Sept. is the American season. This year it has been a very poor one.

Dressers & Dyers.

Seasons.

Regularity.

Wages.

Liners & Sewers.

It pays to make the workpeople comfortable.

In London if the weather is cold the west End season lasts from Sept. to Xmas.
Mr Pilee tries to give all his men women regularity of employment, it pays him to do so for then in the crush time he is sure of his hands & they are sure of him & will not leave him for another who may offer them a rather higher wage.
Out of the 30 women he employs: 25 have work all the year round. There is no reduction of rate per hour in slack times but they only work from 9–5 & he gen lets them go in the busy season they work from 9–8
Cutters get their pay throughout the year. To one man his fitter he pays £3 per week. This is a man who knows how to fit 'The Dispositions as well as the figures'.
Liners. women. earn 21/- medium & 22/- best.
Sewers " 16/ wkly. regular.
He gives them tea in & finds that it pays him to do so as well as pleasing the workers.
He was very strong on the point of a medium of comfort & regularity of work & appeared to

Trade.

Extent of skill.

have arrived at the conclusion after having tried both ways: said it distinctly paid him in better work for the slightly extra expense & trouble.

91 was a good year.
92 not so good.
93. bad.

The Fitter is the most skilled hand.
Then comes the Cutter, then the tailor & the sewers.

The cutters suffer from the bits of fluff &c in the fur. It sometimes affects their eyes & they are not able to match pieces well & it gets on to the chest so that their breathing is heavy.

Very few are good past 50. an exceptional man we once had known who was good till 55.

Unhealthiness of cutters duties.

Machinery.

Machinery did very fair work we believed & was used a good deal in the East End but he did not understand it himself & considering the nature of his business it was not worth his while to run any risk.

Bast cutters are Germans.

it was not as if he made anything by the dozen, he had got a machine but he never made any use of it.

All the best cutters are Germans. They have a better & more systematic training in Germany than they do here. Here they pick it up as they can, in Germany they are taught their work.

Condition of work.

There was a small back greenhouse in sh. a man was heating furs to get out the dust.
1 front room with 10 female sewers & 3 or 2 cutters.
1 back room with 1 cutter & 2 sewers.
upstairs was a meal room with a fire. The workers bring their own luncheon & cook it for themselves. There was an old woman in the room looking after what they had brought & peeling potatoes.
He has other workers in a street close by where rents are not so high.

He buys his own furs & does all & then sends them to diff. places to be dyed & dress[illegible] in the skill & experience of a master Furrier shewn.

Oct 16. S.H.D.

Koenigsberg. the man with the "unenviable distinction".

Koenigsberg. 25. Commercial St EC. (see also page 47). makers of furs & cloth caps.

Miss Koenigsberg a lady of any age between 30 & 45 was told off to shew & explain everything to me, she apologized for her Father's rudeness on a former occasion, said he had been a bit out of temper, had thought I was another Factory Inspector.

She Lady contradicted herself a very great many times during the interview, the different members of her family who looked in from time to time made statements directly contradictory, so that the following interview is only an attempt at the exact truth.

They have the following classes employed.
Cutters. Sewers. Blockers. Liners.
Setters. & Packers.

Buy their skins at the Great sale when they have to pay ready money & then send them out to be dressed & dyed.

Divisions of business.

Wages.

Regularity.

Trade.

Many foreigners but few Jewesses.

Blockers is the trade word for Nailers'
Nr wages of cutters were given variously as
£2.15. 4/4- £3 throughout the year. They seem
from the actual wages taken down from the
wage book to be really £1-0-0 to £2.10
9h busy time they employ 200 men & w. & about
half that number in slack.
They take on & dismiss as occasion a-
rises but persisted in saying that
they had no seasons & that everyone had
regular employment throughout the
year.
May to the end of Oct. is the busiest time
Nailers become cutters when they can.
91 was good.
92. nicely.
93. middling: began very well indeed in the
early part of the year but the late
season has only just begun.
There is no shifting each man takes his own
work & sticks to it.
50% of the people employed are foreigners but
very few Jewesses. Said there were not 40

The girls a wild lot.

unhealthiness.

* Wage 9.

Conditions of work.

79

Jewesses working in the London Trade – she is herself a Jewess, her father is very strict & never worked or allowed any of his people to work from sunset on Friday thro'h & few came in on Sunday.

The girls employed were very quiet in the factory but were a wild lot outside especially the 'Woman's machinists'* these are the girls who work the machines (made by one Woman) used in sewing caps together.

One of the cutters on being asked said that the fluff got on to his chest & in to his eyes it depends rather on the quality of the skins. Sometimes a great deal flies about if the skins are poor. He also said that all his family from father were employed in the Fur line & that it ran more in families than any other trade that he could think of.

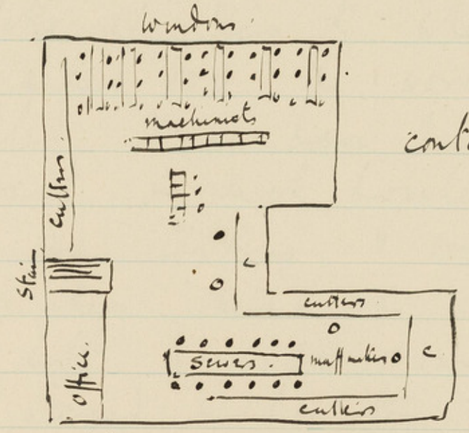
The fur work was all done on the top floor which was a large & fairly airy room & I calculated that there were about 60

Plan of Top Room at
Kanegsbergs.

A Sweating Shop.

men & women working. The women in front running down & across the room at their machines

Top. Room.



containing about 60 workers

Skylight over the part.

The second floor was of about the same shape but not so light or airy as there was no skylight as in the top room.

The cutters in this dept were cutters of stuff for capes. Men and women were here very much crowded, there was not very much ventilation & a good deal of the "puzza del prossimo".

The men working machines were very small looking foreigners with sunken pale cheeks. Of the women some looked ill

& others tried & all were working as if their very lives depended on it, as indeed they probably did. There was no looking up as we passed & the scowls & evident dislike of Miss K when we passed & she asked how the work were ill con-cealed. Never have I seen machines worked so fast or such hopeless faces, there was no talking & very little giggling even when Miss K was called away & I was left to walk round by myself. They seemed mostly too tired.

Downstairs there were 4 girls measuring the caps & pasting in or rather licking & sticking in the small tickets of their diff.t sizes

Underground was the place where the furs were stretched & nailed on boards & the caps blocks & the felt hats with a fur rim made.

Here there was no daylight. at one end of a long room there was a small grating on a level with the pavement & at the back

Measuring caps.

Underground workers.

there was another dark opening in the ceiling which might lead up to a passage.
Calculated there were about 50 men working in this room. which was hot from the gas jets & steam cap blocking place & the gas presses for the felt hats.

Ladies felt flat hats with a fur rim are made as follows. The felt is only stuff & not felt at all pasted tightly on either side of a piece of pasted backing to give it stiffness. These are hung up to dry as stiff pieces & are then taken to a press containing the mould of the exact shape of the hat. The pieces is then pressed & the gas jets turned on to heat the outside of the press to make the backram stuff more pliable. The edges are then trimmed with a pair of scizzors & the fur sewn on by hand.

Ladies flat felt fur trimmed hats.

The man who does this work takes out so much at a certain price, employs other men to help him get as much

Cap Blocking.

out of it as he can.

Caps after being machine made must be given some shape so they are stretched over blocks & then put into a steam chamber & then allowed to stiffen & dry.

Miss K. gave the exact wages paid out to the women in the four depts in a green book & black book. She read out & I copied. In the first instance she seemed to choose the highest amounts only & shut up the book when I attempted to look. But was somewhat ashamed & in the end allowed me to copy down directly.

Was anxious to give all information she could & would let me come again or write any further Qu's also wd give introduction to small Jewish Drapers.

Mrs K produced cakes & wine in a medicine bottle bread up with.

Slaters 34. Castle Rd. Burdett Road is a small Draper whom I might call on & mention their name.

A Schmiling . Bag. frame maker.

Divisions of Business.

Seasons.

Regularity.

Oct. 18th G. H. S.

A. Schmiling . Travelling bag. frames, locks & furniture maker. 19. Greek Street Soho on a letter asking permission to call.

Cheapers bag frames & locks come from Germany the better sort are made here & chiefly in London.

His employs.
Brass finishers . 30/ 36/-
Locksmith . (Levers & Drummers & those for push)
Frame makers . 36/- £2/.2/-
Engineer turner &c. 36/—38/.
Gilders . 36.
Plater & Polisher.

Bag frame makers here work all the year round. May till August & Oct to Dec are the busy times for the retail sellers.

He employs 18 men all the year round & does all the work except polishing in his own factory.

Men shift very little each keeps his own.

The Men.

Trade.

Wages & Hours.

Drink.

None of his men belong to the union though they might belong to the Bag & Sack makers if they would.
They are an improvident lot & keep bad time unless well looked after but are better than they used to be.

91. good.
92. not so good. } This year has been so bad
93 worse. } that he has had to work short time
54 hours is a full weeks work. Across big trade all work is day work which does not pay quite so well as piece work but he can be sure of having every part well done & nothing hidden up; & he is there himself the men are not able to idle & so he gets along fairly well.
Wages are 5½ to 8½ an hour. 5½ only for those men who are still learning.
There is a good deal of drink: of his 18 men 1 belongs to Oddfellows. 2 to late clubs & the rest to nothing.
He himself has joined clubs in order to induce the men to follow his example.

Very few Appr.

Bag frames of iron.

He does not now take Apprentices. They are too much trouble but any errand boy who has shewn himself capable is allowed to go to the bench at 4/6 or 5/- a week.

Work is healthy: a certain amount of brass dust is inhaled perhaps but men can live till 70 & he has one in his shop.

The other men come from anywhere some from Wolverhampton & Brammagem.

In Birmingham the casts for the locks are made & he works them up here.

Very few bag frames are made of steel, the majority are of iron or manganese.

Steel costs too much. where iron is 1½d per lb. steel is 8d, some makers insist on pure steel & then he puts in much less steel than iron & it comes to the same thing.

All the masters are themselves practical men in this line.

The iron or steel is sent in long bars & then forged to shape. They are responsible for

Life of Mr Thümling.

the different inventions in the openings of bags. from the arrangements for taking out the fittings of dressing-bags.

Mr T. is himself German. He worked at the University in Germany as a practical engineer after having passed through an apprenticeship in London at this trade. His Uncle after he had passed his examination asked him to come help manage the business with him.
Came over, found the men most irregular, his uncle in a fury because men would not come to work, sent round to all the public houses to beg them come in, they would not so he unscrewed all their benches & when they came into work they found they could not work very angry.
Nephew Thümling had to put all straight & ultimately inherited the business.
Gave exact wages for 2 wks.
Offered any further help or introduction in the portmanteau trade.

October "18"[illegible] G. H. D.

Portmanteau Makers.

Messrs Brown Best & Co. Wholesale portmanteau & leather case makers.
Wardour Mews. Portland St. Soho.
on a letter commending their exhibits in the Nat. Work mens Exhibition held in June at the Agricultural Hall.

Mr. Brown & Mr. Best are both practical men & work at the bench themselves.

Seasons.

They are busy in June July & Aug. & slack when people go away & slack from Octr to March
The winter trade is only just enough to keep the tools warm.
5-9 then are constantly employed. he never takes on extra hn busy time but works overtime: he does not believe in overtime work but cannot help himself

Piece prevails.

Piece work prevails in the trade, in the

Women & machines in the East.

Shifting in slack times.

Retailers are not practical men.

Drews work.

City women & children help in the lighter parts & machines do the straight sewing but in the West men are always employed for everything except silk linings.

In slack times men shift to get a job where they can. The "Slopers" in the East will offer a man a wage of 25/- to 30/- when in the West in a busy time they get £3 & gen. £2.

Mr B. will only have day work & allows sucking in the factory. He says a great deal has to be spent in tips, tips to the buyer, to the salesman & the great drawback in the Trade is that one of the men retailers are practical men.

Lodon is the centre of the high class work but there is a great deal of shoddy about. Drews shops used to be the best, now Mr B would be ashamed to touch some of the things in his window which are still offered as first class goods.

90 was a good year.
91. falling off.
92. declining.
93. v bad.

The Drank & Portmanteau Trades Society is not very strong, they get their prices where they can if they cant they take what they can get, they make the mistake of admitting incompetent men & then expecting masters to give them full wages. The effect of their insisting on high wages made the Army & Navy Stores introduce machinery & if they are not careful the whole Trade will be taken up in this way, Engineers will find that they can make machines to sew round corners as well as to the straight & then the men will go to the wall. Men must be supervised & their Trade Unions & wages must be reduced if Trade is to be good.
Germans too got a foot in ages ago when the men were striking with their

Drank & Portmanteau Trades Society.

Its position

Do Remedy Trade?

More Piece than Day work in the Trade

23

The best workmen always Drink.

Heaviness of good trunks.

light & flimsy cane Trunks.
Now money was only to be made by light & flimsy goods, the cheaper & shoddier the article the easier it was to sell.
There is perh more piece than Daywork in the Trade generally.
There is a Benevolent Club attached to the Union & most of the men are in some sort of sick club.
The best workmen are always Drunkards
The man whose work had got the first prize at the Nat Workmen Exhibition had been so continually drunk on the money which he had been given as a prize that they had had to sack him.
It was a strange thing but a fact, the best men always drank, he saw some men about the streets begging for pence who had been among the most skilled in their early days.
A good trunk must be heavy you cannot have good leather which is light & he was not going to use bad stuff.

City houses do pocket-books.

It takes 5 or 7 years to learn the trade but very few apprentices are now taken.
City houses do pocket-books chiefly but they have had their noses put out by the Germans.
With him all is daywork.
8.30 — 7. 1½ hrs. for meals wanted on Saturdays is his rule.
Hours 2hrs overtime in Summer.

Was very friendly: anxious I should buy a good portmanteau offered any other information in regard wages for slack weeks.

B 96.

Queries. 1. Is Chamois leather often ground in back parlours?

2. Are leather dressers superseding currier

3 is Sub-contracting common in Bramhope work?

4 is there only a small permanent staff in any firm?

5 is 56 or 58 hr the week unit for splitters

6 is Day work the rate on Splitting machines?

7 How much has machinery affected?

8 Does a limejobber in one place get a Bramhope some shop or must he pick up Bra when seek Bram work in earn

9. Do shelmen call themselves Tanners Curriers?

10. Diff bet fellmongers retainers?

11 Is currying for heavy leather

12. Wages of Cutters.

Pieces repd