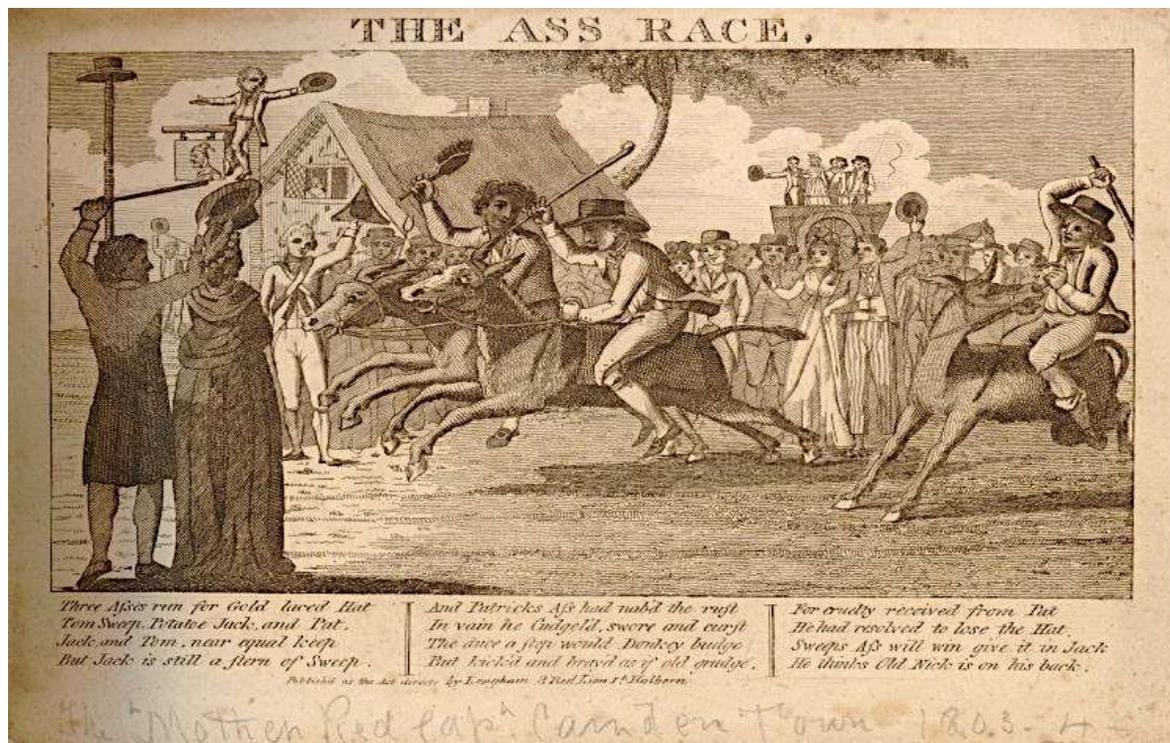


## Leisure

Leisure was enjoyed across classes.<sup>1</sup> A print from 1803 in the British Museum shows a mixed audience at a donkey race in front of the Mother Red Cap inn:



Races at the Mother Red Cap Inn, 1805 <sup>2</sup>

Fredrick Miller, in *Saint Pancras past and present*, draws on memories from the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> He describes 'gala days' in 1825 when there was a balloon ascent, from the Bedford Arms in the High Street, 'the fields around crowded with sight-seers'; how 'some people still remember gambols and kite-flying' in Rhodes' fields near Fig Lane; cricket on the village green near Kentish Town Road; and the gardens around the Mother Red Cap before rebuilding in 1809.

<sup>1</sup> Dion Georgiou, Leisure in London's Suburbs, 1880–1939, *The London Journal*, 2014;39(3):175–186. Hugh Cunningham, *Time work and leisure*, Manchester, 2014. Peter Borsay, *A history of leisure*, London 2006.

<sup>2</sup> British Museum, online collection, 1927,1126.1.23.58.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, *Saint Pancras*:237.

The Rev. Conyers Morrell, Vicar of St Thomas' church, relates memories of Camden Town in the nineteenth century:<sup>4</sup>

Another old resident, who remembers the tollgate and the carriages and horses coming out of 'Wrotham Hall' [Mr Agar's house], likes to tell about the days she lived at no. 4. It was one of those little houses down where the Dust Destructor [St Pancras electricity generator] is now: all down that side of King's Road there were houses with long gardens behind. We used to go into the field opposite and play all sorts of games, jumping and romping about. Dad was a well-known farrier and my husband was a farrier. His mother used to pump up the forges for him and I used to do it sometimes when he was shoeing a horse. We went to St Thomas' Sunday School down King's Road.

In 1848, at the north boundary of Camden Town, the Brecknock Arms hosted **Devonshire wrestling** in its gardens.<sup>5</sup>



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[Devonshire wrestling is between two men in jackets. Opponents seek to hold the other's jacket and pin him to the ground on his back. They cannot hold breeches or belt. They must touch the opponents back on the ground first, before shoulders, and

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<sup>4</sup> R Conyers Morrell, *The story of Agar Town: the ecclesiastical parish of St. Thomas', Camden Town*, London 1935:34,64.

<sup>5</sup> Morning Advertiser 15 June 1848:1

cannot at any point place their own body between the opponent's and the ground. Sporting Life.<sup>6]</sup>

In fields nearby (perhaps Copenhagen fields), some years before had been the last fatal **duel** in England.<sup>7</sup>

In 1848 also, **Tom Sayer** came to work as a bricklayer and stayed with his eldest sister who had married a Camden Town builder. Sayer became a celebrated prize-fighter, and in retirement, lived in Camden Street at his 'cottage and garden ... [where b]usts of Lords Palmerston and Russell were placed on pedestals at the entrance'. His died with consumption (and dementia) at the house of Mr Mensley, 'who had always made his fighting boots', where there is now a blue plaque.<sup>8</sup>

### Cricket

The match between the Windsor and Eton Junior and Islington Camden Clubs takes place at Eton, Tuesday 11th July. The odds have started in favour of Camden ... *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, Sunday 02 July 1837:3.

Blackheath v The Camden-Town Junior Club at the Brecknock Arms Cricket Ground was a draw. *The Era*, Sunday, 29 May 1842

CAMDEN TOWN EAGLE v. PUTNEY CLARENCE.			
This match was played on Monday, on the Brecknock Arms Cricket Ground, Camden Town, and drew together nearly 2000 persons. The play throughout was excellent on both sides, and a more pleasant and gentlemanly game could not have been desired. The same good feeling was carried to the festive board, where Mr. Bromley had provided a first-rate spread; and good wine, good songs, and good fellowship made Old Time progress with more than his wonted alacrity. The return match will be played on Mr. Finch's ground, at Putney, early in July. Annexed is the score:—			
FIRST INNINGS. CAMDEN TOWN EAGLE.		SECOND INNINGS.	
G. West, bowled by Roseblade ..	4—	bowled by T. Finch.....	2
Harland, caught by Pope .....	5—	caught by Lobjoit .....	5
Burden, hit wicket .....	5—	not out.....	8
Swaine, bowled by T. Finch.....	21—	bowled by Pope .....	6
Clarke, bowled by Wood .....	3—	run out.....	7
Morice, bowled by T. Finch.....	7—	bowled by Pope.....	1
Jackson, caught by Wood.....	2—	ditto .....	14
Ricardo, caught by Pope .....	13—	ditto .....	3
W. West, bowled by Lobjoit.....	9—	ditto .....	2
Collingwood, not out .....	4—	ditto .....	4
Metcalfe, caught by Pope.....	0—	caught by Lobjoit.....	3
Byes, &c.....	29	Byes, &c.....	25
Total .....	102	Total.....	74
FIRST INNINGS. PUTNEY CLARENCE.		SECOND INNINGS.	
W. Finch, leg before wicket.....	4—	caught by Clarke.....	3
J. Lobjoit, bowled by Swaine....	6—	run out.....	3
Pope, bowled by Burden .....	5—	caught by Swaine.....	4
T. Finch, bowled by Swaine .....	10—	ditto .....	0
Wood, bowled by Burden .....	13—	run out.....	1
J. Roseblade, ditto .....	4—	not out.....	2
St. Aubyn, hit wicket.....	0—	caught by Clarke .....	0
Woolf, not out .....	11—	bowled by Burden .....	0
W. Lobjoit, leg before wicket....	6—	caught by Jackson .....	3
Sanders, bowled by Swaine .....	4—	run out.....	1
Holloway, ditto .....	6—	caught by Swaine.....	0
Byes, &c.....	17	Byes, &c.....	6
Total.....	68	Total.....	23

*The Era* Sunday, 16 June 1844.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.devonshirerestling.org/>

<sup>7</sup> <[archive.spectator.co.uk/article/8th-july-1843/5/a-duel-with-fatal-result-took-place-at-camden-town](http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/8th-july-1843/5/a-duel-with-fatal-result-took-place-at-camden-town)>

<sup>8</sup> Henry Miles, *Tom Sayers: his life and pugilistic career*, London 1866.

The Camden Club v the University College, *The Era* Sunday, 25 June 1848.

Both clubs 'of recent origin ... fielding and bowling on the Camden side subject of frequent comment'.

Park, on Saturday, May 11th.  
The CAMDEN OVAL CLUB open the season with a practice match this day, wickets pitched at 1 o'clock. The officers elected for the season are as follow:—President, Mr. Pritchard; treasurer, Mr. Lanham; and hon. secretary, Mr. Williams, to whom all letters may be addressed at the Club-house, Camden Arms, Randolph-street, **Camden Town.**

The *Daily Telegraph*, Friday, 9 May 1856.

43, with six wickets to go down.  
ST. GEORGE'S C. C. v. **CAMDEN-TOWN C. C.**—These clubs played a return match at the Sluice House Ground, Highbury, on Saturday. St. George's won. **Camden-town, 43**; St. George's, 87, with eight wickets to go down.  
MATCH FOR THIS DAY

The *Daily Telegraph* Tuesday, 25 September 1866:2.

**SINGULAR CASE AGAINST A CRICKET CLUB.**  
BLOOMSBURY COUNTY COURT, Sept. 16.  
CAROLK v. NORTHOVER.—The plaintiff in this case is a highly respectable tradesman, and the defendant a gentleman of position, and secretary of the **Camden Town United Cricket Club.**  
Mr. Williams, of 4, Grafton street, Fitzroy-square, appeared for the defendant.  
The case excited considerable interest amongst cricketers, many of whom were in attendance, as it was thought the decision would settle a very nice question.  
The facts were shortly these:—The plaintiff was proposed and elected a member of the club in April last, when he paid 15s. entrance fee and subscription. He attended the meeting of the club for play at Primrose Hill on the 1st of May last, and took part in the day's sport as a "fielder." It is supposed the ball hurt the plaintiff's fingers and put him out of temper, upon which he became so violent and abusive to the members present that he was deemed a most dangerous companion. The result was that a meeting of the committee was held on the ground, and, under the 10th rule, the plaintiff's name was erased from the books and he ceased to be a member. The plaintiff thereupon, as Mr. Williams said, like a little boy that had eaten his cake and wanted his money back, applied for a return of his subscription, and, failing in obtaining it, brought the present action.  
His Honour said it was difficult even to conceive upon what ground the plaintiff could base this claim. The moneys subscribed were, from time to time, expended in the purchase of bats, balls, &c., and the plaintiff had received the benefit. If he had been wrongly turned out of the club he might have his remedy for breach of contract. The plaintiff must be nonsuited.  
The plaintiff intimated that he should take out such a summons.  
The parties then left the court.

The *Derby Mercury* Wednesday, 22 September 1858

*Anecdote of Dr. W—, of Camden Town, near Islington, London.*

**T**HIS reverend clergyman, so well known for his researches into the original Greek text of the Evangelists, and not more distinguished for his extensive learning, than for his propensity to those amusements which characterised Parson Adams, recently related the following anecdote of himself to a select circle of friends. The conversation happened to turn upon the folly of some men's wives; upon which, said the doctor, I will give you an instance of the folly of mine, and I am persuaded, you must acknowledge it exceeds every thing you ever heard of. He thus proceeded: "You must now know, that some time ago, the bishop of London was contemplating a translation of the four gospels, and it occurred to his lordship that he probably might derive some advantage by consulting me upon the subject. I need not tell you how much attached I am to my pipe, nor what irresistible charms I find in a game at skittles. Now I happened to be enjoying both my favourite amusements at the Wheat Sheaf, when his lordship, ordered his carriage, and repairing to my house, enquired whether I was at home? Mrs. W—, instead of absolutely denying me, as a sensible woman ought to have done, immediately said I was at the Wheat Sheaf. The bishop naturally thought the Wheat Sheaf might be some corn chandler's, where I was disposing of my tythe corn, or the produce of my glebe land.—He said to his coachman, "John, do you know where the Wheat Sheaf is?"—"O yes, my lord," replied John.—"Well, drive there."—John obeyed, and in a few minutes the carriage stopped at the ale-house, where I was in the height of my glory. The bishop stared at the appearance of the place, as well he might. However he alighted, and asked the landlord whether one Dr. W. was there?—"Always at this hour (returned Bonnyface,) you'll find him in the skittle-ground."

“The skittle-ground (muttered his lordship as he advanced), what can he be doing there?”—He soon discovered me, in the midst of the *profanum vulgus*, who were attending minutely to the circumstances of the gymnastic game. I was the hero of the contest, and was unluckily, at that precise moment, in the very act of endeavouring to tip all nine. I was stooping down with my pipe in my mouth, the skirts of my coat tucked under my left arm, and a bowl in my right hand; my wig a little awry. I was aiming at the middle pin. I exclaimed, “*Well, here goes at the head of the church!*”—Before the bowl had well quitted my grasp, the bishop tapped me on the shoulder, saying, “What, doctor, is it you?”—I looked round, and became petrified as if I had seen the Gorgon’s head. I could not speak for some time, but at last I stammered out, “Yes, my lord, it is me.”—“I am surprised to see you in such a place,” added his lordship.—“And I am equally astonished at seeing your lordship; but you must know, my lord, that I am afflicted with a pain in the chest, attended, at times, with a difficulty of utterance.” Your lordship may easily perceive how I am affected at this moment.” I do perceive it indeed,” rejoined the church dignitary. I continued, “for this complaint my physicians order me to use the exercise in which you see me employed, and they tell me I shall derive great benefit from it.” The bishop turned upon his heel, and left me with this remark—“Proceed, good doctor, with your game, I wish you all the benefit from it your physicians have promised you; but I am afraid it will never procure you a benefice.”—“Now, my friends, I ask you, whether you ever heard of any woman’s committing an act half so silly as a clergyman’s wife sending a bishop to a skittle-ground in search of her husband?”—The company admitted the application