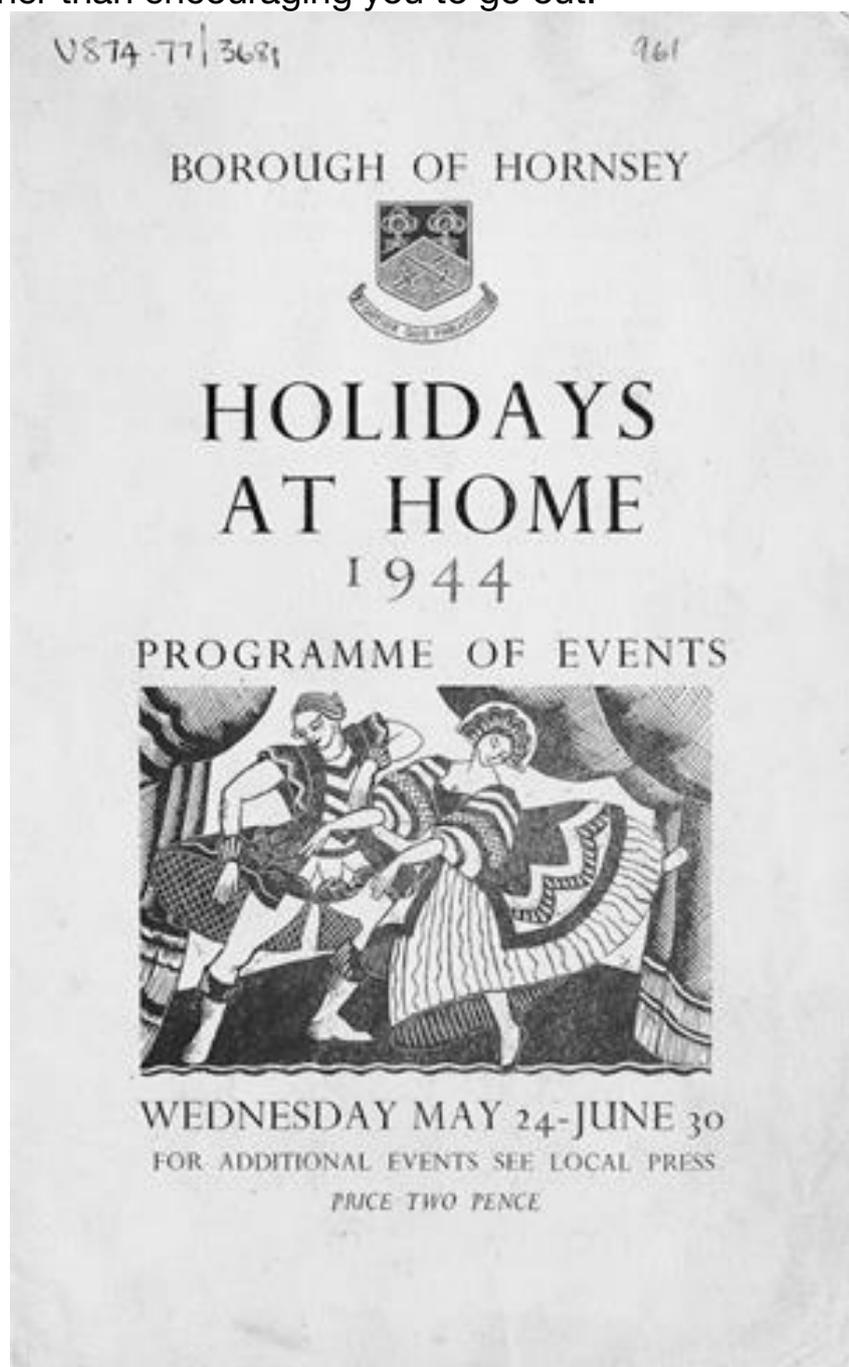


Easter Weekend Wonder: Holidays at Home Friday 10 April – Monday 13 April 2020

Welcome to our special **Easter Weekend Wonder** – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive.

We're going to look at **Holidays at Home** and bank and public holidays. In these trying times, with the sun shining, our minds are possibly looking towards better and easier times when we can move freely about and go somewhere else other than our local park or back garden. So, this post is to help take you away in your mind – to think of nice breaks you've had, events you've attended, or will have in the future – rather than encouraging you to go out.



Borough of Hornsey's *Holiday at Home* festival programme of events, 24 May-30 June 1944
From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

The word 'holiday' derives from the term Holy-days, when people would celebrate various religious festivals, consecrated days and royal events. Unlike these sacred days, the notion of a 'Bank Holiday' in the UK is a relatively modern concept. It came about through a Parliamentary Act in 1871, drafted by the banker and politician, John Lubbock, first Baron of Avebury. The [Bank Holidays Act 1871](#) enabled the Bank of England and other banks to close on designated days, putting commerce and transactions on hold, without incurring any penalties.

On top of the already established public holidays such as Christmas Day and Good Friday, the first bank holidays in England, Wales and Ireland were Easter Monday, Whit Monday, the first Monday in August and Boxing Day (Scotland already having some different public and bank holidays, including New Year's Day). Having statutory holidays enabled people to plan their time off and venues and organisations to schedule programmes and events to draw people to them. The newly-opened Alexandra Palace did just that, quickly realising there was a large potential audience free to attend events and performances in their halls and grounds.



© Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

This lovely painting of a fair in the grounds of [Alexandra Palace](#) is thought to be at the time of the opening of the first palace on Saturday 24 May 1873, which would have been the Whitsun Bank Holiday Weekend, the celebration of Pentecost in the Christian calendar. Known then as the 'Palace for the People' or the 'People's Palace' (later becoming affectionately known as Ally Pally), it continued to put on grand exhibitions, wondrous events and entertainments to

draw people from all over London and the surrounding counties on public and bank holidays.

A newspaper cutting from the Easter Weekend of 1895 (see below) notes the breadth and variety of entertainments available over weekend put on by the new management, such as:

- *Handel's Messiah* by the Alexandra Palace Choral Society and Orchestra, 'a thousand strong'!
- *The New Electric Railway* taking people from Wood Green to the Palace doors.
- *The Cairo City*, and outdoor feature, giving a 'realistic representation' of the Egyptian city, including bazaars, camels and donkeys.
- *Daring Aerial Navigations*, including hot air balloon ascents and a parachute race – never before attempted!
- *Revelation in Fire Works*, billed as a fireworks spectacle of the "Last Days of Pompeii" by the lake.
- Other outdoor amusements such as military tournaments, performances by eight military bands and '*al fresco Baden-Baden*' concerts.

With typical Victorian aspiration, it was also part of the management's endeavour to enlighten and instruct the visitors as well as entertain them. The exhibitions in the Great Hall showed models of some of the most lauded industrial advances, such as HMS Minerva and working manufacturing machinery.

London's New Pleasure Centre.

The Alexandra Palace Opened Once More, with Every Prospect of Success—What the New Management Propose To Do—Great Attractions.

To-morrow (Good Friday) Alexandra Palace will once more be open to the pleasure-seeking public. The new managers have learned the lessons of the past failures both of this Palace and the sister Palace at Sydenham, and are sanguine that the third opening will be permanently successful. In past years the Palace flourished so long as it was well managed, notwithstanding that it stood splendidly isolated on the summit of what Mary Howitt graphically termed the Northern Heights of London, and miles away from bricks and mortar. Now the swelling city has deposited a great population at its doors, and the green fields to the south of eight years ago, when the Palace suddenly came to grief, have given place to villadom, with several hundred thousands of people to cater for. But the outlook from the Palace is still beautiful, and for twenty miles northward and eastward one can get an uninterrupted view of wooded country, and, on a clear day, the Surrey hills in a southerly direction, with the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, are distinctly visible.

The present lessee, Mr. Thomas Hawkins, is making the most of his opportunities, and during the few months since he came into possession has worked a revolution in the Palace and extensive grounds. A small array of decorators and fitters have been busily employed with the interior since October, with excellent results. The many halls and galleries have now quite an artistic appearance, and everything has been done for the comfort of the visitors.

The Palace will open to-morrow at three o'clock with a performance of the "Messiah" by the newly formed Alexandra Palace Choral Society and Orchestra, a thousand strong. The soloists engaged for the occasion are Madame Marie Duma, Madame

and a multitude of their pagan enemies, the processions in the temple, the denunciation of Arbaeus by Glaucus, and the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Herculaneum, which has been designed from authentic records, recovered during recent years. Hundreds of supernumeraries have been engaged, and the gorgeous luxuries of the time will be richly represented. Messrs. Pain have expended over £12,000 in the production of this novel spectacle, which will be ready in May. On Monday their display will include a representation of the British advance up the Nile, showing gunboats in action, the bombardment of the Dervish forts, &c.

There will be many other outdoor amusements, such as military tournaments, performances by eight military bands, al fresco Baden-Baden concerts, &c.

REPRESENTATION OF ZOLA'S TRIAL.

Should the weather be unfavorable, the visitors will find much to interest and amuse them within the walls of the Palace. The management has striven to make the exhibition buildings instructive as well as interesting. Working models illustrating various processes of manufacture have been obtained, and the model of H.M.S. Minerva, constructed at the Chatham Dockyard, which was one of the features of the last Lord Mayor's Show, has been secured. Louis Tussaud has set up a waxwork exhibition in one of the galleries, and his collection will include a vivid representation of Captain Dreyfus in his terrible cage prison on the Devil's Island, a portrait model of Zola, and *fac simile* of the recent famous trial at Paris.



A VIEW OF THE PALACE.



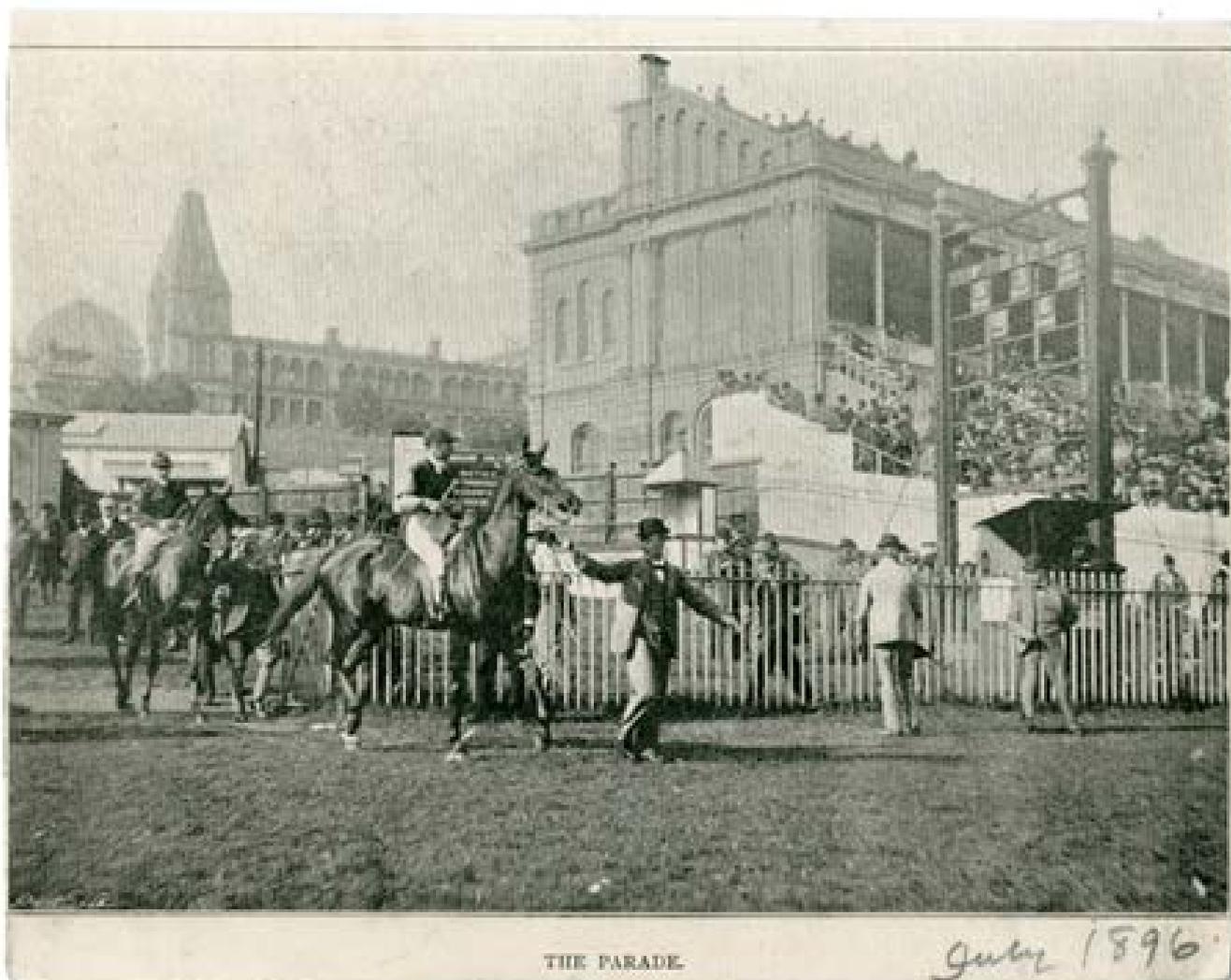
THE THEATRE.

Detail of a newspaper cutting (paper unknown), with Alexandra Palace being under new management advertising the Easter programme of events in 1895. From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

With the '[Dreyfus Affair](#)' trial in Paris capturing the interest of people throughout Europe at the time, Louis Tussaud (great grandson of the famous Madame (Marie) Tussaud), set up a wax work display of a *Representation of Zola's Trial*, which included an imprisoned Captain Dreyfus and Émile Zola in the courthouse.

Other events that were put on over bank holidays at Alexandra Palace and the park included horse racing. The Alexandra Park Racecourse was the only racecourse in London, and known as 'The Frying Pan' for its distinctive shape. The Starting Gate pub opposite Alexandra Palace station today, references the starting point for the horse races. The racecourse opened in 1868 and remained open for over 100 years, with the last races being held there in 1970, when its licence was withdrawn by the Jockey Club on safety grounds.

This photo (below) shows the horses being paraded before their race, in July 1896.



From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive



This poster, from Great Northern railway, advertises the races at Alexandra Park and how to get there by train via Wood Green for the May Bank Holiday in 1889. [From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive](#)



'Starting Prices at the A.P.' – lithograph by D. J. Higgins (c.1940-1950)
[From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive](#)

In this lithograph above, the tic-tac men get ready to relay bets under the name of 'Billy Westfield' at a horse race at Alexandra Park racecourse.

So, grab your bucket and spade, we're off to the seaside!

The Victorians were famous for their seaside resorts and, with the development of the rail networks from the 1850s, opportunities opened up for people to travel to places that were not accessible to them before. The railways and, later, motor vehicles, made resorts like Southend, Margate and Brighton popular day-trips or holiday destinations for Londoners from the mid-19th century, throughout the 20th century and still today of course!

If you fancy a *virtual trip* to the seaside this weekend, board this [this link to Brighton](#) in 1947.

Companies also took advantage of the new transport networks to organise pleasure trips and days out for their workers as a thank you for their hard work throughout the year. Management, employees and their families would all head off for a lovely day in the sun (hopefully!), by the sea. For some, this would be their only opportunity to escape out of London, even if just for the day, so these Days Out were very much looked forward to by both employees and their families.

The next two photos show pleasure trips in charabancs, early open-topped busses, (one here is called the 'Enfield Belle') hired from Beaumont & Co, Enfield, for the employees of Burgess's Department Store, formerly of 578-592 High Road, Tottenham c.1924-30s. Opening in 1924, Burgess's was one of the finest drapery emporiums in North London and was admired for its modern and spacious store layout, arcades, island windows and lighting.





Both photographs © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

For the families able to make a trip to the seaside it was the highlight of the year. Here, **Les Rawle (1925 - 2012)** from Tottenham, and a Friend of Bruce Castle, talks about trips to Southend as a child in the 1930s (*Interviewed 2006-2007*).

“Our usual was a day at the seaside, Southend, or my Dad had had some work and got a bit of money, and we’d be woken up, get the bucket and spade from the corner, and walk round to South Tottenham Station. 2/6d [two shillings and sixpence] to Westcliffe and we’d get out and walk from there. We’d go down to the Front, walk along the pier, usually finish up at Thorpe Bay by the gasworks (with the Bulldog Café opposite for a tray of tea, when we went with our children). This was the 1930s. I’d imagine we had fish and chips for lunch, I don’t think we took anything with us.

Deck chairs were on the pavement behind a little wall, I don’t remember if Mum and Dad had one. We made sandcastles, when the tide was out. It was mud really at Southend. Penny plate of cockles, I used to eat them, couldn’t face them now. My dad used to love, near the Kursaal, a chap used to have a barrow with a large tray with pieces of pineapple, so you got this tray with a layer of pineapple juice and pineapple, penny a slice. Gorgeous.”

Les’ wife, **Queenie (1925 - 2016)**, also went to Southend as a child, and adds: *“We stayed in Bed and Breakfasts, and Mum and Dad would take the breakfast and the lady cooked it. Lunch would be in a restaurant I imagine, I can’t remember if we had an evening meal. I don’t think we even had a cup of tea. We had a number of holidays at Southend. Then we started going to caravans; the first was an old railway coach in about 1931 or ’32 and then it was a caravan the next year until 1939.”*

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P.P.

An advert for Sprite Caravans from 1955, popular for holiday makers in the UK.

Others used different forms of transport to get out of the city, such as **Jim Clark (1925 – 2018)**, another Friend of Bruce Castle, who was a keen cyclist. He made a trip with a friend to Leigh-on Sea by bike during World War Two! This is an excerpt from an oral history taken with Jim.

“Sat. 23/9/1944. A friend of mine had an invitation to visit his aunt at Leigh-on-Sea for the weekend and the invitation extended to a friend also. So it was that we set out on our bicycles on this fine Saturday morning and arrived well before lunch. It was very good of the lady whose name I never discovered to show such hospitality in difficult times, and I a complete stranger too.

The next morning it was raining hard and a gale blowing, we wanted to go out but we had come only in our jackets and flannel trousers—no waterproofs. The good lady lent us a lady’s mac each and one umbrella, out we went not caring how we looked. The umbrella blew inside out as soon as it was opened so we had to make do without using it.

When, at last, we came in sight of the sea front and saw the gigantic roll of barbed wire stretching for miles the effect was truly dramatic. It had been shown enough times on cinema newsreels but to see it in reality—the barrier to help prevent enemy invasion—it silenced our conversation.”

In 1971, a hundred years after Lubbock’s original Bank Holidays Act was passed, it was repealed and incorporated into the Banking and Financial Dealings Act of 1971. New bank holidays were created at that time, including New Year’s Day in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – it’s hard to think it took that long for the rest of the UK to finally catch up with Scotland and have January 1st as a bank holiday! The 1971 Act also allowed, subject to a Royal Proclamation, new bank holidays to be appointed or, as in the case of the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe this year on 8 May 2020, dates to be moved.

So we will leave you to think of holidays past and those to come, with just one more attraction from Alexandra Palace. A teaser in the back of an Easter programme from 1932, advertising the Whit Monday holiday programme of Maurice Chesters’ famous, ‘sporting dogs’! We’d love to have seen that football match and wonder how long the football lasted.



Coming attractions to Alexandra Palace on Whit Monday holiday in East programme from 1932.
From the collections of Bruce Castle Museum & Archive

So we hope you've enjoyed our virtual holiday issue. If you'd like to catch up on any of the previous **daily local history posts** we've sent out, [just follow this link to our new webpage](#) on the council website. We'll update the page after the end of each week.

To help keep the family entertained we've also attached a '**Holidays At Home Activities**' sheet with fun and creative things to make and do. Why not have a go?

And don't forget to send us photos of any artwork or activities you've created – just email it to museum.services@haringey.gov.uk We're also putting together a virtual gallery on our website, and will be showing off the amazing artwork and activities we've been sent over the last few weeks. There will be more news next week.

As it is the long Bank Holiday weekend, we will be back next week with a new daily post on Tuesday. From everyone at Bruce Castle Museum and Archive we wish you all a lovely Easter. But most importantly, **stay well, stay home and stay safe** – enjoy the stay-cation!

Julie Melrose
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