

What a Change

By Arthur Boswell

Arthur Boswell wrote stories to accompany his lantern shows. Here is a poem referring to the changes Bexleyheath underwent during his lifetime.

What a change...

...The effect a revisit to Bexleyheath would have on an old couple born and bred here but having been living on the other side of London for the past forty years.

An old couple sat in the twilight,
Thinking of days that are gone,
Trying to recall what happened,
To the town where they were born.

Let's take a trip down to Bexley,
We haven't been there for years,
I don't think the old Heath has changed much.
According to what I hear.

A ticket for Arsenal station. Return?
I hope so, old dear,
We're taking a day off to Bexley,
And we shall return, never fear.

The Porter says Arsenal station,
All right mate, don't make a fuss,
Just walk up the steps and outside there,
We'll get Murray's two-horse bus.

There don't seem to be one a'waiting,
They always change horses just here,
Maybe them's a bit late this morning,
Bob's stopped at the Nag for a beer.

They waited sometime on the pavement,
No horse bus came in sight,

So they asked a friendly policeman,
If he could put them right.

You'll want to go round the corner,
You'll find your bus right there,
But Bob and the horses have gone Dad,
It's years since they left Woolwich Square.

These trollies run very nice, mate
We feel like a couple of nobs.
What! 6d to go to the Market?
It was only 2d on Bobs.

They don't go awful fast mate,
Don't give you time to look,
I can't see where we're going,
But to the Market Place I've booked.

Hav'nt seen Wickham or Welling,
Nag's head he's calling - don't laugh,
We know the Nag when we see it,
Now Danson Park, why he's daft.

He says it's the Market Place now mate
Don't seem much like it to me,
Can't see the old Drinking Fountain,
He's made a bloomer, you see.

Here Dad, this is the Market,
You and Ma better get out,
Mind how you cross the road there,
With the motor cars rushing about.

What do you think of it all mate?
Can't see a place that we know,
Everything seems to have changed now,
Whichever way we go.

Matthew's the grocer is Penney's,
Mason's has turned into Boots,
Buckland the butcher is Farrer's
But Hides are still selling suits.

Jenkins is here busy printing,
Braybrooks still sell Calico,
But where the dickens is Uncle,
To pawn my old watch for I go.

Look! There is a place called the Regal,
Harston's used to stand there,
What a nice garden they had mate,
Also a carriage and pair.

Opposite here was the club, too
Where all the Nobs used to go,
Having the time of their life, boys,
Going home all in a row.

There is still the old Coffee Tavern,
Still going strong so I see,
Many a cold frosty morning,
I've drunk that scalding tea.

Round here mate is the Steeple,
Why! Who pulled the bally thing down?
Will nothing be left of the Heath now,
To remind us of the old Town.

Church Road is opposite here mate,
Where all the Shows used to be,
What a crowd they always drew,
With Wombwells & Taylors to see.