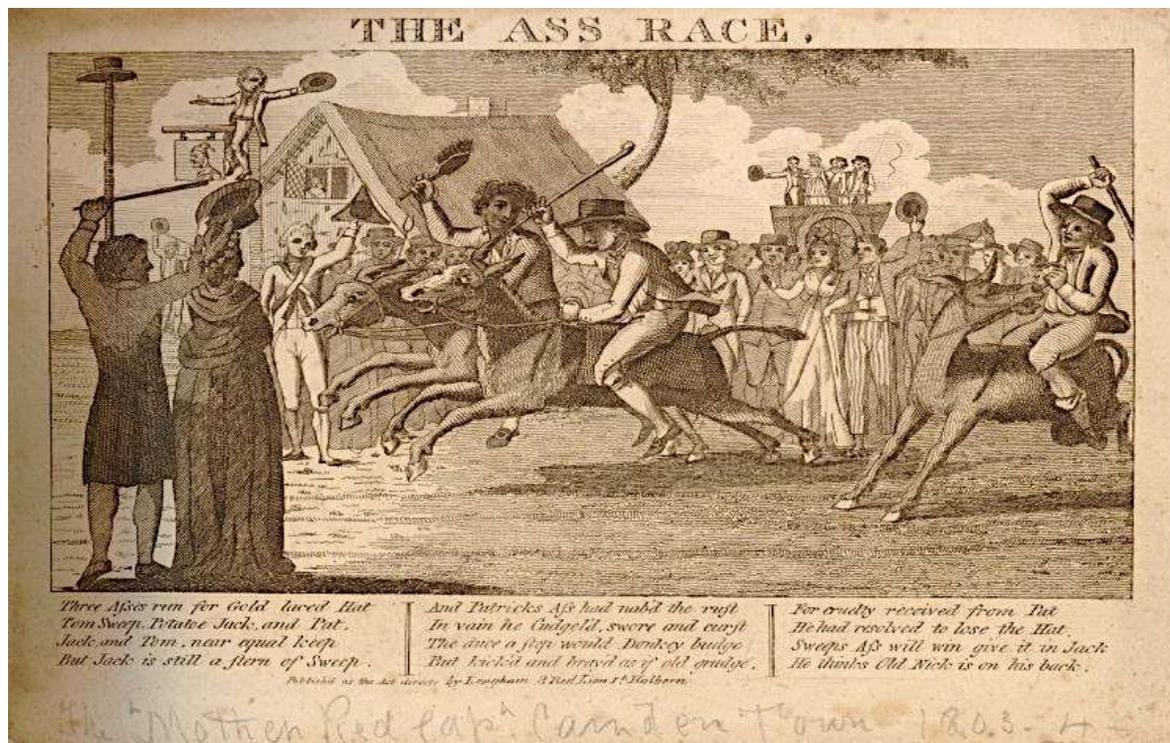


## Leisure

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.

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

<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.

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

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>

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



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

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

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', in the High Street, where there is now a blue plaque.<sup>8</sup>

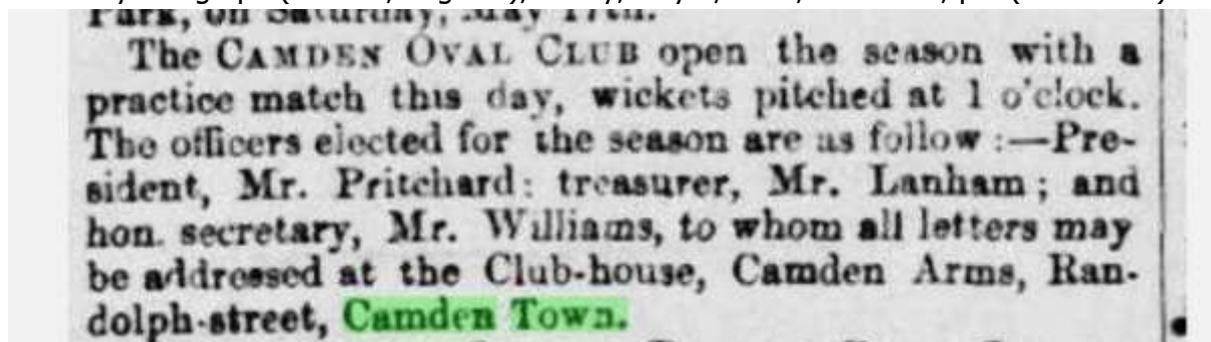
More gently, there was **cricket**

Windsor and Eton v. Islington Camden.

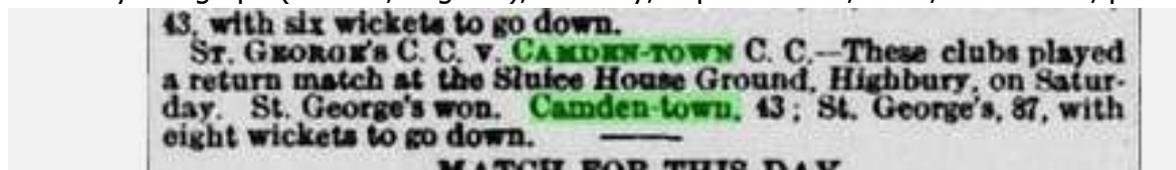
The match between the Windsor and Eton Junior and Islington Camden Clubs take place at Eton Tuesday week, the 11th July. The odds have started in favour of the Camden mt, from the readiness with which they are taken ...

*Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle*, Sunday 02 July 1837:3.

The Daily Telegraph (London, England), Friday, May 9, 1856, Issue 271, p.4 (354 words).



The Daily Telegraph (London, England), Tuesday, September 25, 1866, Issue 3516, p.2



<sup>7</sup> <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.