







64.  
69.  
74.  
79.



| Name of Firm<br>or Worker.                   | Address                         | Page. |
|--|---------------------------------|-------|
| C. Olley (Cork mfrs)                         | 69 Mansell St. Minorics.        | 6.    |
| J. Busey <sup>ro</sup> (Cork mfr. splitters) | 200 Borough High St.            | 13.   |
| Funeral furniture maker                      | Remarks on ages (Census)        | 16.   |
| Willow cane & Rush basket                    | " " " "                         | 17.   |
| Cork bark cutters, workers                   | " " " "                         | 18.   |
| Other workers in wood                        | " " " "                         | 19.   |
| Mr. Olley, <sup>Corklets</sup>               | Cork burner, cutter             | 20.   |
| Mrs. Hope Smith res.                         | Cork Importers                  | 28.   |
| Mr. Cook                                     | Basket maker Dealer.            | 29.   |
| Mrs. Holman                                  | Chair mender.                   | 35.   |
| Wm. Arthurson                                | Cork sorting & roacher.         | 25.   |
| Charles Meers.                               | United Cork Trade Friendly Soc. | 37.   |
| Thomas O'Key.                                | Basket maker & rod merchant.    | 41.   |
| Messrs. Scott.                               | Basket makers.                  | 47.   |
| J. O'Key.                                    | Letter to the Trade.            | 51.   |
| School for Indigent Polins                   | Basket maker.                   | 54.   |
| J. Cooksey.                                  | Funeral Furnisher & Undertaker  | 57.   |
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| Heinrichs res.                               | Bamboo & wicker Furniture       | 79.   |



| Name of Trade<br>Society. | Meeting House<br>or<br>Secretary. | Days<br>of<br>meeting |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|



Queries terwood / Monday Dec-4-94 76

Who are the chief <sup>buyers?</sup>

S. 17-  
Sumers?

Home work.  
Factories are being replaced  
by charity for West Wind

Who are the chief <sup>com</sup> <sub>Sumers?</sub>

How much is machinery <sup>used?</sup>

only for cutting the logs.

What has been the effect  
of charity?

depressed prices  
Ch. Ar. sells 15 in bundle for 2/8  
whereas trade sell 13 in in  
2/10

What is the price of 100  
bundles now as compared  
with 20 years ago?

13 in bundle. 3/3 - 3/6  
20 yrs ago.

Meals -

all w 10 hours. at 12. & 4.  
get ready have tea.

Womans work -

days & the

Hours -

8:30 - 7:30. come in - about  
9-10 or 11.

overtime -

7:30 PM is latest

What is a bavin?

bundles of traps used by bakers.

Do the charities give a large  
bundle?

yes.



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# Queries for Undertakers 17

1) Are coffin makers ever <sup>1st or 2nd</sup> ~~the~~ men

2) What constitutes a 'job'?

3) Do the undertakers or the carriage masters provide the men to go to the burial

4) What do 15<sup>th</sup> turn men do when not out with a funeral

5) Are the masters organized?

6) When do layers out of the dead <sup>emerge</sup>

7) When are meals taken

8) Are carriage masters called 'black mates'

4iii  
17.  
coffin makers.

use

'inter house'  
or they congregate

Ret makers.

Ret - work upwards

13

14

15) When are meals taken.



# Queries for Basket Workers 517.

1. What are the chief things made by basket makers.
2. Price of tools.
3. Is machinery ever used.
4. Do men shift much from House to House.
5. What is a 'shop' knife used for.
6. What house is known as the 'Slaughterhouse'.
7. What sort of work do the blind do? & do they compete.
8. Dissos.
9. Do wives work.
10. What clubs women belong to outside to.
11. Is there any overlap going bet brush & basket makers.
12. Does one always begin at the bottom of a basket & work upwards.
13. Who make fish baskets.
14. Where are the women employed.
15. Where are meals taken.



414

Queries for Cork Trade 5.17.

- 1) Which is the largest shop & how many does it employ. <sup>rooms?</sup>
- 2) Is the 'notched' under the foreman or does the foreman notch.
- 3) Is the cork cut into lengths before being?
- 4) Have they a price list. how are prices arranged?
- 5) Do men working any part dress or shirt sleeves?
- 6) Do wives (or even something?)
- 7) Where are meals taken.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6



4.v

# Queries for Bamboo workers.

1. O.T. rates in East End & West -
2. Has the Union a price list?
3. Hours in the West End Trade.
4. Are the underworkers also pieceworkers in the E end trade?
5. What are the reasons for ~~these~~ <sup>these</sup> workers meeting -
6. Are bamboo the



Thursday October 18<sup>th</sup>. 1894.

G.H.D.

Mr. C. Olley is a Cork manufacturer, Importer of Foreign corks & Corkwood & dealer in wooden shivers & spiles.

69 Mansell Street. Minorico. E.

Works. 171 High Street Shadwell. E.

### Employs

|   |              |            |                 |
|---|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| 1 | man @        | 45/-       | foreman.        |
| 2 | "            | 30/-       |                 |
| 2 | "            | 26/-       |                 |
| 2 | "            | 25/-       |                 |
| 1 | "            | 20/-       |                 |
| 1 | woman        | 17/-       |                 |
| 1 | "            | 14/-       | } cork sorters. |
| 1 | "            | 10/-       |                 |
| 1 | "            | 8/-        |                 |
| 6 | boys between | 8/- & 11/- |                 |

Hours 8 AM to 7 PM. with 1 hour allowed out of them for dinner & ½ hr. for tea.

These he said were the usual hours in the trade.



On Saturdays at 2 they stop.  
Overtime is rarely worked. When it is necessary the men are only too glad to go on and are paid the usual rates for it i.e. they are not given anything extra.

The usual rates are

50¢ per hour for a good man.

70¢ ----- an average ..

60¢ ----- for a second rate.

70¢ may be taken as a fair average payment for a fair man on time work.

There are no marked seasons. He has orders from all parts of the world. & as the summer is different here & in the antipodes so he has orders both in winter & summer for things like ginger beer corks.

Work is very regular therefore as a whole though some times one man may have a sudden press for a special order while another may be slack.

The Minorics & vicinity are the cork



market of London & London is the largest market & clearing house (for corks) in the world.

Cork comes from S. France, Spain Portugal & Algeria. Spain & Portugal are the principal producers. Cork is the outer bark of a tree (sort of oak) which can be cut every 7 years without damaging the tree. The longer the cork is uncut the thicker it gets.

Very nearly all wine corks are cut abroad: it would not pay to cut them here. They are sent over here & then either transhipped or resorted & then kept or sent away to the colonies Germany & all parts of the world.

Bungs for brewers are always burnt & cut in London.

The cork is first <sup>grilled</sup> burnt, like chops on a brazier, man stands & turns them & prevents them ~~catching fire~~ <sup>burning through</sup>.

This is to close the pores & prevent any vozing from being possible. This done



they are swept to take off the loose black  
and sent to the cutter.

For this burning - the most skilled of all the  
processes - the man has to stand at a very  
hot fire. Perspires very freely but no com-  
plaint of drink. Their own man is a  
total abstainer & many of the men now  
drink oat meal water or barley water  
when they used formerly to drink beer.  
There is drink in the trade but not more than  
in all trades. It is no special complaint &  
he would say that the men were a very  
steady sober lot.

There is no shifting into other trades: a man  
when he is out of work goes to the  
Cork cutters club & puts down his name  
in a book there & when a master wants  
a man he sends there.

Burning is skilled & the men at the highest  
rates do this: the ordinary cutter is  
a 25/ to 27/- man.

Very healthy work tho' the sweeping & burning  
is very dirty work.



Apprenticeship system is dead though it used to be general. Machinery has made the cutting so simple.

Boys are taken on as errand boys: see the men at work & after a bit are put to the machines & so learn.

They are very friendly with their men, many have been with them over 20 years: most of them they have brought up themselves. There had been in the 70's a proposal to take foreign wine in some way which the cork merchants of London opposed. They sent a deputation & were received by Mr Gladstone who had surprised them all by his knowledge - "not of course of the practical workings" - but of the theory of the trade & the names of the principal kinds of cork trees & the districts from which they came. Mr G's knowledge was still talked of with wonderment in the trade.

Brewers' shivers (or bungs) & homoeopathic medicine corks are the chief London cut corks.



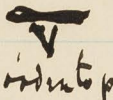
corks. Women & girls do the sorting<sup>g</sup> a thing which the foreigners have never learnt. Mr. Olley can make 3 or 4 qualities out of what he buys from abroad as one quality.

Brewers shiver they have tried to make but they always taper them the wrong way up i.e. the bellies (i.e. bottoms of the corks) are made of the outside of the bark & the backs (or tops) from the inside instead of vice versa. — He begged that this should not be made public.

Medicine corks are cut across the grain: there is less fear of leakage. a perfect cork should have no flaw across but be perfectly smooth.

Mr. Bucknall Sons are the largest firm in the trade & supply all the very best wine merchants who pay a good price to get a good thing & refuse to pay any lower altho' they might now get as good corks at a less price: they have always paid a high price & have come to believe that a good thing cannot be got any more cheaply.



Many corks are sent to have a wooden top which is often covered with metal. This is not done by cork cutters but by men who make it their special business. He sends the corks: the man cuts a hole in the top of the cork in sorts with glue & then  cork: makes it fast returns it.

He will let me see over their factory at Shadwell. (171 High St.) & send me a card when I may come.

Very friendly & willing to give any further information

He does not make cork sheets (rod' hatching, etc) this is a specialty of about 6 houses in London



Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>

13.

G. H. D.

J. Bussery & Sons. Cork manufacturers & splitters, makers.  
200 Borough High Street

I called to ask how it was they had failed to make  
any wages return & saw their traveller.

They employ 6 men & 5 boys on piece work which  
he said was usual in the trade ~~for~~. They used  
to have a few women & girls at sorting  
but now they have given it up and sell  
their wine corks in the quantities in which  
they buy them from abroad.

Spain & Portugal & Algiers are the chief cork  
supplying countries. He does not think that  
any comes from the South of France.

Their chief customers are Brewers, Wine mer-  
chants, & Druggists. & haters, cigarette  
makers for the fine sheets of cork that  
are used inside hats & helmets and  
for cigarette mouth pieces.

They had had an order for 5000 gross of strips



of cork 12 in long for cigarette cork tips from Christiana.

They have a particular machine for splitting which they keep very secret & only 3 men are allowed to go near it.

Young men & lads work at the cork making machines. It is merely hand & foot work - no steam - and can be learnt in 3 months.

Work is very regular all the year round.

It cannot be called a season trade.

A quick worker can make 35/- or more on P. and the usual wage for women (tho' they do not themselves employ any) is 9/- per week.

The work of a man results in 100 to 150 gross of corks in a day varying with the speed at which he can work.

Burning is the skilled part of the work.

They have no apprentices. When they want men they send round to the Cork makers Trade Society. They train up errand boys whom they think smart &



let them try at the machines when they get  
 older & so bring them into the work.  
 London is the trade centre for cork buying  
 & selling. Wine corks all come from abroad  
 ready cut. Medicine corks & crown  
 shims are London specialities. No  
 bags come from abroad.

1891 was a very fair year.

1893. - .. good -..

1894. Decidedly good.

The men he would say are a very steady  
 lot.



Taken from the Census Enumeration (1891).

Funeral furniture makers do not begin very early in life. There are only 9 of them in the trade under 15 years of age. But after 15. there are between 220 & 240 in every each decade up to 45. There there is a drop but they live long & out of the total 1036 males 90 are of 65 years upwards.

Undertakers coachmen are included by the Census under Coachmen, cabmen, groom.



Willow cane & Rush basket worker.

The greatest number of these are between the ages of 15 & 25 <sup>aproximately</sup> the large drop (of 50%) comes after 55 years of age. & another of 50% after 65.

Women are most numerous between 15 & 25 then there is a drop from ~~160~~ 160 to 90 between 25 & 35 & after that a slight rise between the ages 35-45 followed by the steady decrease in numbers owing to the gradual increase of old age.



### Cork Bark Cutter Workers.

The women employed are mostly girls between 15 & 20. Of the whole 217 in the trade 91 are between these ages. But 20 & 25 there are 50. Then there is another sudden drop & no recovery at a later age.

With the men the <sup>final</sup> fall is most marked after 55 years of age.

There are a good many young men in the trade for the decade 15-25 shows 294 men as compared with 158 between 25 & 35.

### Others in Wood Cork bark.

941 of all those <sup>men</sup> in the trade are between 15-25. Comparing with 494 between 25 & 35.

The numbers remain nearly steady till 45 is reached. Then there is a drop of 44% in the next decade followed by another of 50% between 65 —

The women are chiefly between 15 & 20. After 35 years there is no increase <sup>of men</sup> as compared with those between 25 & 35. Showing no return to work in later years



Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>

G.H.D.

19.  
Mr Olley, 171 High St. Shadwell. Cork burner  
burner & cutter. Is an introduction from  
his brother with whom he is in partnership

Employs 20 to 25 men throughout the year  
The 'burner' who is the most skilled and  
most highly paid man does his work  
piecemeal when he is burning.  
This he does here every other day of the  
week.

When he burns he earns at the rate of  
2/- per hour, and this is the regular  
rate of earning for 'foremen' throughout the  
trade.

In the cork industry 'foreman' means 'burner' simply.  
it does not mean that the man has  
any other man under him.

The Foreman stands at a great blazing  
open fire with large chimney.  
Fire fed by cork shavings. Across the  
fire is a 'grill' of stout iron bars. The  
burner.



burner stands with a bale or bundle of cork at his left hand. In his right he has a pair of tongs with which he takes the slabs of cork & places them on the grill. He must note each piece of cork & judge how much burning it will need to close its pores & cracks properly. The slabs on the fire, looking like huge steaks that have caught fire are turned by their cook & then thrown off on one side when they are sufficiently done. A boy takes them sprinkles water over them which puts out the burning embers & then stacks them for 24 hours. If then lit they curl up but can be bent straight either by standing on them for a minute or placing weights on them just when they come off the fire.

The next day the blacked <sup>red</sup> slabs are swept & passed on to the 'notcher' who cuts them into strips & squares ready for the machinists or cutters who with cut them up into brewers shives & taps



Pickle shivers. Known to the trade as 'Dafis' or into smaller chemist's corks called 'vials' or smaller still into Homeopathic corks. The machinist stands at a machine which he works with his left foot & right hand. With the right hand he slides along the knife which cuts the corks & with the left foot he presses on a treadle which makes the rough square of cork revolve against the knife and also helps the arm in pushing the knife along.

The cork shavings are used for the burners for & also sent to the linoleum or Kemptulic maker who grinds them up to make his floor cloth. So great is the demand for cork shavings that they are imported in bags from abroad.

The largest cork cutting establishments employ from 35 to 20 hands. The usual run is about 20. The smallest have about 3 men. But many so called manufacturers get their cutting done for them at trade rate



rate & he sells supplies many retailers in this way

Apprenticeship is no more. Smart errand boys are promoted to machines & the best of the machinists are moved up to being burners but burning is trying work & very few can stand it long.

Work is very regular year in & out. When the demand falls short he can always make for stock & do so. There are never > 12 men out of work in the whole trade (& two of the men at work corroborated this). The reason was that wages are so low that not very many are tempted to enter. But altho low they are regular.

Trade used to be altogether a Piecework trade but since the introduction of machines it is becoming more & more a timework one. He finds that time pays him better than piece for the men are rather more careful. He is always about the shop himself so that he sees that the men do not slack. The tradition used to be for men to keep Saint Monday



Monday always & seldom to work more than 3  
 or 4 days a week. This tradition still sur-  
 -vives and some masters do not mind as  
 they like to <sup>pay them</sup> employ 40 or 50 men instead  
 of 20 or 25 but the men work for 2 the  
 week naturally only get half the wages.  
 He will not keep men on these terms him-  
 self.

X | They used to be hard drinkers but  
 have sobered down very much of late years  
 when in want of new men he sends up to  
 the club house (Crown & Avon - Swan St.  
 Minorca - he will see).

One of the men said the soc. only had 20  
 members but no members seem to be  
 able to register themselves as if they  
 were members.

X | It pays him better to get new men rather than  
 to work overtime. Overtime is all very  
 well for a few days or even a week  
 but beyond that you get no more  
 work for the extra hours worked.  
 No extra or rate is paid. just the  
 usual 6<sup>d</sup>. per hour.



On time work ordinary men get 24/- or 25/-  
per week throughout the year: an extra  
good man may get 27/- or 28/-.  
On piece work they get 28/- to 30/- but have  
to ~~have~~ <sup>work hard</sup> for it



Wednesday  
Tuesday Oct. 24.

G.H.D.

William A. Hanson, Cork sorter & notches  
at the Crown & Anvil, Swan Street,  
Minorics. (Working man)

He is a Scotchman. Had served a 7 years  
apprenticeship in his youth but complained  
that though bound by an indenture his  
master had not put him through every  
branch of the trade (eg he had never mes-  
tered the art of burning). Is now out  
of work but fully able to do a good  
days work although he will be 75  
next birthday (November).

Foremen average 42s. per week and working  
30s to 35s all mostly on piece though  
a little time is now worked. But he  
was very unwilling to talk about earn-  
ings.

Hours are generally from 7-7. with 15 minutes  
off at 9 o'clock in which they eat  
the breakfast they had brought with  
them



Though they are supposed to have had it before.  
 Still there is not time to have much more  
 than a cup of tea before starting for  
 work. Then there is an hour for tea  
 from 12-1 and  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour for tea.  
 Some firms begin at 7.30 or 8 & do  
 not allow the breakfast interval.  
 On Saturdays some firms stop at 2 and  
 some at 3.

It is very healthy work & the men as a whole  
 are on the 'steady' side. He is himself a  
 comparatively old man but very strong &  
 well.

Foremen burn once, twice or 3 times a week  
 according to the orders in hand.

In his firm (employing) he said about 80  
 persons there were 3 foremen.

When not burning they turn to sorting  
 or notching i.e. cutting up the cork  
 as it arrives into pieces suitable for  
 the orders in hand: for <sup>ash</sup> cork is of  
 different thicknesses.

Apprenticeship is a thing of the past. Now boys  
 are



are taken on as errand boys & then put to the machines if found to be smart lads.

Women are a good deal used in sorting

Two shops use steam machinery for slicing the fine strips. Bangs are cut by hand & foot machines.

Wire corks & tap corks are cut across the grain.

No overtime rate is given & very little is worked. In one shop where he was 7<sup>hr</sup> OT rate was used after 7 P.M. But most shops give nothing extra.

There are no seasons in the trade. There used to be a great seasonal demand for ginger beer & lemonade corks but now either glass balls or the patent screw in stoppers are used & there is much less work in the line now. It is extraordinary that the trade should not have suffered but certainly it has not & there are never a great many out of work.



Oct 24<sup>th</sup>

G. H. D.

Messrs Hope, Smith & Co 3-7 Leaman Street. E.  
importers of cork.

Import a great deal of Foreign cork & virgin cork is one of their special lines. This is the outer bark of the tree under which the cork used for cutting & manufacture is found.

His manager knew nothing about the Lada manufacture. Corks he bought from Spain Portugal Algiers & S of France. Beyond this he was ignorant of what sort of trees it came from or how often cut or of what sorts were made in Lada. He imports great bags of shavings which he sells to the linoleum & floorcloth manufactories.

The manufactured corks come in bags of a loose <sup>made</sup> material & the slabs of cork in bundles or bales.



Oct 25<sup>th</sup>

G. H. D.

Mr. Cook. 140. Tabard Street. S.E. Basket  
maker & dealer.

Employs 7 men and one boy. The men  
average 33s. per week on piecework.  
There are no seasons and work is  
pretty regular throughout the year tho  
this year (1894) there seem to be dis-  
tinctly less than in former years  
work indeed is more regular than the  
men among whom there is some com-  
plaint about drink.

Hours are irregular, men come in when they  
like but one of those at work  
then said they never did more than  
9 hrs per day & vary according to  
their own pleasure from 5 to 9 hours  
per day. On Saturdays they stop at 2 hrs  
on week days they come in exactly when  
they like: there are no general hours for  
beginning in the trade



A good basket maker should be able to make any sort of basket. Those who can say they are fit for 'General' work.

Rather less skilled men keep to making

Hampers

Market sieves

• Builders baskets for carrying bricks etc. These are made of 'rods' which still have the bark on & as the bark is brown or green the rods are called 'browns' or 'greens'

'General' work includes laundry baskets, Dress baskets, chairs, Bassinette, grocery bottle baskets, bakers baskets etc etc. These are all made in Ludlow but there is very keen competition from Belgium

• France in laundry baskets. Nearly all those you see hang up in shops are imported. They are lighter to carry but are not so strong as English ones. Still they are cutting up the Ludlow trade altogether.

Ludlow is about the centre of the English basket



basket industry.

The blind are taught basket making and they are very good at Builders baskets but for other work in which so much has to be done by the eye they can never excel. It is almost impossible to measure exactly the size & shape of a basket before it is done.

It is skilled work. There is no regular system of apprenticeship but a father asks to be allowed to bring in his son and pay the master so much per week for his son's room. It is rather a Father to son industry.

The men sit working on a stout plank slightly raised at one end from the floor. At the higher end the man has a box on which he sits, as his basket grows bigger & in which he keeps his tools. It is tedious work the men in the shop said & makes the arms, wrists & fingers ache. But it is healthy & you can work on till any age only 40 or 50.



speed is not so fast & you cannot earn so much money.

The men shift about from shop to shop if they want a change. Mr. Cook said they more often left him than he sent them away, they were rather inclined to smoke & drink.

The 'rods' or 'wicker' come from England + <sup>& Belgia-</sup> France. English rods are better & stronger & have more life in them.

The Buff coloured wicker chairs are made by boiling the green rods in water & then peeling them. There is a dye in the bark of the willow which is very penetrating. It is also (in the bark) used by the chemical manufacturers in some bitter medicines or other.

The small square brown wicker baskets are almost entirely made by women in the country. He can buy them much more cheaply than he could make them himself.

Baskets or Strawberry baskets are made of split



split deal. This is a separate industry & very little of it is done in London market sieves are in demand when there is a good fruit season & prices are high.

Sails are hooping baskets. They are not made in London but are particular to Gwent & Newport.

The Rods are imported all ready peeled either in the country or abroad. In the trade they are called Rod or wicker but when sent by rail they are always called bundles of "osier".

The only part that is time work is done by the men employed by the telegraph dept. in mending the parcels post & letter baskets. So far basket making has defied machinery no machine has ever been invented to do it at all satisfactorily.

The Rods for working are steeped for 3 or 4 hours in water & then become bendable without breaking: afterwards they become hard & dry. The easiest to work have been soaked & then steeped up all night to let the slippery wet run off. The rods stick out & are



cut off flask with the basket by means of a knife  
with a handle <sup>blade</sup> handle called a 'picker'

Chair mending. when done in London is given out by  
the shops to women who work at home, & also  
by the blind in Tot. Ct. Road.

Bamboo cart making, is a diff. <sup>etc</sup> branch and is done a lot  
by Germans in London.

One of the men at work is a society man. Said it  
was fairly strong & has a price list which is  
enforced. Society work with some men.  
see A. Tyler.

34 Deacon St.

Stepney Green.

Some work is done at home but not very much  
so Mr Cook said. Sometimes his men work at  
home buy their own rods & sell to him.

Rushes are used in some work: bought ready plaited.  
Wicket workers also make baskets of split  
cane.



Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>

C.H.D.

Mr. Holman. 44 Wickham Place, Tabard St.  
 on an introduction from Mr. Cook.  
 He is a chair mender and chair bottom  
 cases.

She is sent so many dozen chair bottoms by the  
 big shops. She buys her own cane & returns  
 them.

Most chair bottoms are got from High Lyons.  
 She is given 7% for 1 dozen chair bottoms  
 (the ordinary chair). out of this she has to  
 provide her own cane at  $\frac{1}{6}$  of which she  
 splits herself.

By working hard she can cane one dozen in  
 two days.

The big shops if they do their work in London  
 at all, <sup>they</sup> give it all out to women to do at  
 home.

She has a young woman with her who is subject  
 to fits — "otherwise I would not be bothered with  
 the likes of her in my hands" — (the girl herself)



standing by all the time). She some times helps  
in caring.

Lives in a 2 roomed house with wash house and garden  
or yard with a copper at the far end.

|| This the County Council made her landlord put,  
he then raised the rent so that now she  
pays for 2 rooms & washhouse 5/6 per week,  
which is as much as she used to pay  
in former days for 4 rooms when she lived  
over down the street.



Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>

G.H.S.

Mr. Charles News. Secy. to the United Cork Trade  
 Friendly Society. at the Crown & Anvil,  
 Swan Street. Minorics. Sat:ev.  
 private address.  
 17. Anbliff. St. Commercial Rd. E.

This is merely an out of work society  
 'Promoted' to assist members when out  
 of employment.

Subscription 3<sup>d</sup> per week.

Or. Benefit 10<sup>d</sup> after 6 months membership.

11<sup>d</sup> — 12 — — —

12<sup>d</sup> — two years — —

for 12 weeks.

But members may not receive more than  
 £7.4. in any 52 weeks.

This is an increase on the old rates,  
 which were 9<sup>d</sup>. 10<sup>d</sup>. & 11<sup>d</sup>. for 12 weeks

They have 100 members.

& a balance of £304.

& ~~7~~<sup>5</sup> men out of work at present.



Foremen burn once or twice a week, very  
seldom 3 times.

The largest house Evans' employs about  
200 altogether: on the South side of  
the water they have nearly 100,  
of whom 3 would be foremen & the  
rest machinists sorters etc.

On this side in the minors they  
employ another 100 mostly women  
& boys in sorting. (These numbers seem  
rather large. *good*.)

Foremen when not burning cut up the  
cork into lengths to suit the orders: this  
needs experience. Cork is of different  
thicknesses; it is cut up into lengths of  
the same thickness & then passed to the  
'notches' who cuts it again into quarters.  
This takes place both after & before  
burning.

Women & boys sort the common bottle corks  
as they arrive from abroad. They earn  
10p to 15p. Many women he said earn 15p  
& the average he wd certainly put at



11/ or 12/.

For notchers & machinists the average would be 28/ to 30/ all the year round.

Foremen make 45/ to 55/ or 60/ when they have a great deal of burning to do.

Trade is very regular. One demand succeeds another.

Nearly all Piece work. Very few time workers.

8-7 are the usual hours with 1 hr for dinner &  $\frac{1}{2}$  for tea & until 2 on

Saturdays. Some of the old fashioned houses do not shut until 3 or 4 on Sat

because it has always been the custom.

There is no OT rate tho' some houses (a few) pay  $T + \frac{1}{2}$ .

Foremen don't shift but the lower men shift a good deal especially the lower fringe of them.

Apprenticeship is no more: boys work their way up from being errand boys. The time it takes to learn depends on their aptitude.

They have no printed price list but custom



but custom has made me that is practically common to most houses.

Very healthy trade.

The trade is altogether diff<sup>r</sup> but what it used to be in the matter of sobriety. A few of the old men keep it up & don't work more than 3 or 4 days per week. but they have ruined their society by it. (it is now said to have only 20 members) whereas the soc increases every year: has a balance of \$384. was founded in 1880 & no soc prob gives so much for so small a labr.

Relations very friendly with the masters who send up to it when in want of new men.

Only members are allowed to sign on the m. list & that the man lowest on the list is chosen when a master sends up.

According to their out of work book there are 57 employees. friendly willing to give any other info wanted.

There are very few men now who only work 3 or 4 days for choice tho' it was common 20 or 25 years ago. Such as do it now are exceptions.

There are no special complaints in the trade.



Oct 27<sup>th</sup>

F. H. D.

Thomas Okey, Basket maker, <sup>1 Rd Merchant,</sup> 29 a. Old  
Montague Street, Whitechapel.

Mr. Okey had read a paper on basket making at Doynbee about ages ago & therefore called upon him.

He is the fourth Generation in basket <sup>making</sup> ~~making~~ so that both among masters & men the industry seems hereditary.

All work is on Piece & the men earn diff't amounts according to their various Capacities. One man will earn 28p. at work on the same kind of job & for the same hours at which another will make 36p.

He shewed me the books in which the variations in earnings were very much marked. Ordinary men seemed to make <sup>any thing</sup> between these limits. Good men he said when very



very busy can earn as much as 50¢.  
 most shops are open from 8-8. or from  
 8 to 7. but very few men come at 8.  
 they probably turn up about 9. there is  
 no fixed rule about meal hours. As it  
 is piece work the men take what time  
 they like.

The men do not certainly work more than  
 48 hours in the week or an average  
 of 8 hrs per day.

On Saturdays the rule is to stop at 1 or 2  
 Saint Monday is still kept with seeming  
 regularity but on the other hand  
 this is generally made up later.

The men say "they" put on the nose bag  
 on Fridays.

From May to Aug during the fruit season  
 is their busiest time then there is work  
 for everyone who calls himself a basket  
 maker; and again they are busy from  
 Oct to Dec. for the Xmas trade.  
 Masters can make up stock but they  
 won't do this with poor workers; ∴ less  
 skilled



skilled men are those who suffer. between  
December & May.

Brown work is market sieves, hampers etc  
is anything made with the ribs with  
the back on. This is less skilled than  
General work. The men make from 28/-  
onwards at this while on General  
work they can earn 30/- to 50/-

Skilled men are real artists. They must have  
a good eye & sense of proportion because it  
is hard to do anything by direct measure-  
ment. They are difficult to find.

The Blind are not good basket makers for the  
reason. They must have a skilled man  
with eyes always attending to them.

Good men remain where they are. They bring  
up their sons to the trade. It is a regular  
Father to son Industry. There is no apprentice-  
ship now.

The less good men shift about in search  
of work: you will always find a fringe  
of these in every trade.

There is a little <sup>but not</sup> much work done at home the  
growth



growth of Trade Societies has put a stop to it  
& created a feeling against it

The Ludo Union of journeyman basket makers  
is a strong Society and enforces a  
most elaborate priced list.

They have no OT rate.

Union work with non-Union men.

Trade is about stationary in London. These last  
years there has been no increase but  
at the same time no decrease.

Germany is a keen competitor in 'Domestic'  
basket work, picnic baskets etc

Belgium & France compete with laundry baskets  
but the foreign imports are now receiving  
a check at the hands of the workers  
in Nottingham & Grantham which like  
London are centres for the industry.

The tools used & provided by the men themselves  
are

1. Shop Knife price 8d

Picking Knife - - - 1/- for picking off  
the outside ends which stick out.

Iron or Plogger for driving the work  
Down.



✓ ✓ Bodkin for making holes to insert new  
rod - eg for the handles<sup>legs</sup> etc. price of  
Shears for cutting off the very stout pieces of  
cane or wicker.

Scott's is the largest house in the trade and  
does a great deal of wicker chair work  
employing 50 to 75 men of whom  
20 would be kept on chairs alone.  
They open at 8 - 7 PM. & until 1 on Sets.  
Hours vary from this size (ie Scott) down to  
one man working by himself.

Wicker comes from Belgium, France, Madeira  
England.

Basket-work means anything made of <sup>wicker</sup> ~~which~~  
which is not fastened by nails.

Wooden bottle case makers are carpenters.  
There are no women in the London wicker  
work trade.

Women work in chairmending and trim  
& fit the insides of baskets but  
do nothing of the outside work. There  
are also a few women rush basket  
makers but very few.



In France & Germany wicker work is done in certain villages.

In France, neighbouring villages have banded themselves together in a cooperative system. They employ a joint seller to dispose of what they manufacture.

Such home work as is done is sold to a house known in the trade as the 'Haus-Merkant' here any man can always dispose of his work but the price given for it is of the poorest.

Straw envelopes for bottles are imported from abroad where they are made in prisons. He had this morning received an offer to supply them of a superior quality with string, all delivered on board a vessel at 15 fr. per 1000.

Brown rods are sometimes soaked for a fortnight before use.

Was a friendly - will answer any further questions - will send some notes supplementary to those given above.



~~Mon~~ Oct. 31.

F. H. D.

Messrs Scott & Co. 144. Charing Cross Road.  
General Basket makers. Govt contractors.

Called with an introduction from Mr. Okey &  
Saw Mr. Ernest Scott.

Mr. Scott hesitated a good deal at first but afterwards gave information more willingly & finally offered to do anything in his power to reach arriving at a proper understanding of the trade provided that he should not have to tell all the ins and outs of his own business which he said was unlike any other business in the trade.

They have been 200 years in the trade.

Employ (according to one of Mr. Okey's men) 500.  
75 men.

Mr. Scott will not say how many himself.  
They are the largest house in the trade.  
Their specialty is fine basket & chair work.  
They



He also make Govt parcel post baskets, clothes baskets, picnic baskets etc etc the bottom floor was stacked with them, all looking highly polished & mostly of strange shapes.

Market sieves & Laundry baskets they do not attempt to make. In laundry work there is foreign competition but no foreigners or in fact any other house in London touches the work they do. In fact we stand above competition in every respect.

They pay list prices

The average man makes 30/- to 35/-  
The good man 40/- & over.

He said 30/- to 35/- would represent the average earnings of a basket maker.

Their shop is not open until 8.30 & shuts at 6. They don't often work over hours they find its pays better not to do so. They is no OT rate.

All work is Piece work so the men can go out to meals when they like.

On Saturdays they stop at 2.



They are regular all the year round but are a bit busier as a rule before Xmas.

The men here are mostly regular all the year round. In the trade generally the custom is to engage men for a particular job & then to keep them or turn them off according as you have more or nothing for them further to do.

No machinery is used. It has been tried but has failed. It is one of the few industries of which this can be said.

A basket maker is therefore purely a handi-craftsman in the old style. He sits on his plank and with a few <sup>straight</sup> rods creates a basket or a chair & shapes it according to his fancy.

As a rule the Father apprentices the son to himself in his master workshop: these are regular legal indentures and the father pays the firm for doing this.

Five years is the regular term for which boys are apprenticed tho' of course it takes a good deal longer than this for a man to



learn his business thoroughly

The men - these men at any rate - are very steady and they have no complaints about drink. On Mondays they are a little slack about coming in which is the custom of the Trade.



November 1.

Copy of letter received from M. J. Okey.  
29<sup>a</sup> Montague St.  
Whitechapel.

" I have already referred to the Basket makers Union & some particulars may not here be out of place. This excellent Society which is a benefit as well as a Trade Society was founded in the early years of the Century, & now numbers 315 members

The contribution is 9<sup>d</sup> weekly

Strike pay is 15/- per week

Out of work . . . 15/- . . . for 13 weeks yearly.

Sick pay . . . 12/- . . . " " " "

Death pay to members £6.

— — — members wife £6.

It is interesting to note that wages have risen steadily & concurrently with the existence of the Union. In 1822 wages for a basket sieve was 5½ it is now 9<sup>d</sup>. being a rise of 65%. A 3 doz Hamper has risen from



$8\frac{1}{2}$  to  $11\frac{5}{11}$  a 50%. These are not exceptional cases but are taken as & fairly represent the average advance.

The proportion of unionists to non unionists is as 260 to 315. that is about 46.7% of the men are nonunionists. This I believe compares favourably with most other organized trades.

Moreover the workmen have benefited themselves in other respects. When some 30 years ago I went to work as an apprentice, we had to find our own light which they consisted of a tallow dip fixed in a cleft stick stuck into the wall. Now the employer is compelled to find sufficient light for his employees to work by & gas has become general. At that time the nominal shop hours were from 6-30. to 9. Now the nominal hours are 8 to 8 or 8 to 7. Meal times in each case included. But then as now these hours were only worked 4 or at most 5 days per week. I am sure the general decay of religious belief among



workmen the pious devotion to St Monday has survived, & on Saturday work is over by 1. or 2. p.m.

The type of workmen has much improved within my memory. The old ragged hard working, hard swearing, hard drinking twiggy is almost extinct. I can just remember one or two survivors into this degenerate age from <sup>the</sup> ~~classical~~ times. Men who would deliberately work like slaves for months & then indulge in hard fuddles of six weeks duration ~~etc~~ & yet live on to a green old age.

I am inclined to think that the comparatively high wages commanded by basket makers is partly due to the fact to which I have already referred among the general misconception as to the status of, & skill required for the art.



Nov. 1.

G. H. D.

School for the Indigent Blind. St. Georges Fields  
South work.

The report for 1894. says.

Of the male pupils now in the School 40 are basket makers, 19 brush makers, 14 weavers & mat makers, & 6 are learning pianoforte tuning: the remainder are studying music & are also attached to the basket shop where they learn chair caning & the lighter kinds of basket work.

Of the female pupils, 41 are employed in chair caning, 12 in brush drawing & 11 in the manufacture of sackline.

In the Adult Shop where are made some of our best baskets, mats & cocoa-nut matting there are 21 at workers of whom 19 are old pupils. The workmen in this department are steadily supporting themselves by their own labour, earning wages varying from 9s. to 25s. per week according to the usual trade



tariff"

"A type-writing machine with raised letters, if it could be produced at a moderate expense would open up a wide field of usefulness for the blind and afford them a new method of earning a livelihood"

The total wages paid in 1893. in the adult shop.

|                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| Basket makers. | £367. 13. 6.  |
| Mat            | £309. 19. 10. |
| Wood choppers. | £35. 14. 11   |
| Bush makers.   | £9. 5. 1.     |
|                | <hr/>         |
|                | £722. 13. 4   |

Average earnings of Basket makers. 14/9 per week.  
Mat. 14/10½.

Highest average of Basket .. £1. 4. 0

Lowest .. .. . 6. 6.

Highest .. .. Mat .. .. £1. 0. 9

Lowest .. .. . 8. 9.

Average earnings of woodchoppers 9. 6.

They also sell the work of former pupils who are outworkers.

There are also 18 assistants varying from 18 to 59 years



years of age, of \$4.10.0 each.

They have now (Nov. 1. 94) 15 at work in the shop.

Last week the lowest sum paid to any man was 10/- and the highest 26/-

Boys & women chairmen get 6/- or 7/-

They work from 7-6 and have from 1.30 to 2.30 a dinner hour.

All piece work paid according to the Union list prices.

They blind seem to work a good deal more slowly than those who see. They have one overseer with eyes.

When busy they take one or two on & dismiss when slack. They are busy before Xmas & in the summer for builders baskets.

Boys are taught by a special system.

The blind have a trade soc. of their own which meet occasionally. The list is Joff. C. R. also send members.

The Basket work trade generally is more flourishing now than it has been for years.



Nov. 6

57.  
G. H. D.

S. Cooksey, Funeral Furnisher & Undertaker,  
52 Amwell Street, Clerkenwell.

Funeral Furnishers are now generally also undertakers, that is they not only provide the conveyances, mate etc but also make the coffin etc.

There are a few 'brass plate' undertakers i.e. middlemen with a plate on their doors, who used to take the orders from the customer & then pass them on to the undertakers. This is prob. owing he said to the increasing competition and the feeling of the public that they get things both cheaper & better if they go to the actual maker.

The undertakers score by it because they can make their customers wait some hours or even a day or two & so get more business whereas a middleman must be supplied on the very day or hour.

It is somewhat a personal trade. A comes to you because



because you buried her friend B's aunt & soon  
you hardly ever get a stranger dropping in without  
an introduction. Some families will only  
be buried by one man & will put off the  
funeral rather than not have him.

Funeral furnishes attend to the carriage part.

The largest (say Sattridge) would have 100  
horses. Funeral homes cannot be geldings  
because they lose their colour at certain  
ages or mares because they are discoloured  
at certain seasons. They are naturally black  
& entire. They are bought at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years of  
age & can be worked pretty at once.  
These 100 horses would require 50 men  
to attend to them.

Beyond these there would be 10 first turn men  
i men who got <sup>the</sup> "change" every job that turned  
up. They are paid <sup>some</sup>  $4/6$  (the  
rule) per job) & have a standing wage  
of  $7/-$  per week at called yard money.  
 $6 \times 4/6 = 27/- + 7/- = 34/-$  would be  
their regular earnings.

They would besides get a certain amount of tips  
or



Drinks - Tips are more often given now. A generous man will give  $\frac{1}{2}$  to be distributed down to  $\frac{2}{6}$  they w<sup>d</sup> average perhaps  $\frac{4}{6}$  per job which would mean another  $\frac{2}{6}$  per week.

Below these are the 'yard men' or second class men who are paid a standing weekly wage of 28/- per week. They get second choice of jobs & when they do get one they pay in all their money to the firm. Dottleidge w<sup>d</sup> have 20.

Below these again are the 'odd' men who wander around and are taken on as wanted. There are a good many of these who are known to the employers, men who do not care about regular work perhaps. When employed these men get job money in  $\frac{4}{6}$  and  $\frac{1}{6}$  for washing up & tips.

Work is for 6 days in the week. Very rarely on Sundays now tho' it used to be common. The cemetery here made many restrictions you must be there before 9 am etc so it is not often

He himself has 6 horses for whom he has 2 men always & then takes odd men as wanted.

Under



Undertakers measure the body  
and make the coffin: he the  
coffin made to style: arranges with the  
Cemetery people: provides the carriages & men  
& goes with the funeral.

The coffin maker whom he employs are not  
highly skilled. It is more important to  
have a fairly strong: presentable man with  
a good suit of black clothes & respectful  
& sympathetic manner than a highly  
skilled one.

They earn 25¢ to 40¢ per week according  
to the class of work they are on.

Generally time work. Sometimes when  
there is an extra job & he engages more  
men to get a certain batch of work  
done for him.

There is no Trade Society. It is a trade quite  
by itself & has no connection with cabinet  
making. Not everyone likes to do it so  
perhaps wages are higher than in other  
trades. Father will teach son. There is  
no system of Apprenticeship. Most men  
are picked because of their respectability  
etc



& then taught the little that is required.  
 They are steady men. They must be. The masters  
 reputation depends on it. Did not know how  
 the reputation of the 'jovial' undertaker  
 ever came in. They used to drink a good deal  
 & 80 yrs ago he remembers he could not get  
 a funeral as far as Highgate cemetery without  
 stopping for an hour by the way for the  
 men to liquor up. That was when you  
 hired other mens horses. Now you keep  
 your own & most men do, you insist on  
 their coming back within a certain time.  
 Funerals for an adult cost anything from £2.15  
 upwards.

Poor people pay for show on the way to the  
 grave & rich pay little for show but a  
 good deal on the grave itself.

An ordinary tradesman's funeral would  
 cost about £10.

When busy the profits are very large. 92 & 93  
 were very good years but 94 is the worst  
 on record the deaths are  $\frac{1}{3}$  below the  
 average. Most men must have been losses  
 what.



What undertaker like is a good steady death rate any excess causes too much anxiety and a slackness is sure to follow. They have their horses always & they may just as well go out to work every day as stay at home & kick the stable to pieces.

They are busy during the cold biting winds through the winter & spring.

There used to be what they called a "Plum Season" in the autumn but improved drainage has completely put an end to this.

Frathers have gone out of date. There used to be several workhouses for this only now he knows of me only. Only cobblers & sweepers have them now.

Engraved plates are done out. The ordinary 'wiggly' scroll is now done in by the coffin maker. All the handles & furniture come from Birmingham.

Lead coffins are very little used now. Used to be common. The trade has a centre for these in one shop who keeps them in stock, & a plumber.



Crape used always formerly to be provided for all the mourners by the undertaker. This was an expensive item. 30 yrs ago some were buried without all the followers wearing Crape. Now it is never done. Then flowers were unknown. They were have been considered popish. Now crape has disappeared & flowers are very common. Now wutes are very rarely seen, and very few are buried in vaults.



Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>

F. H. D.

H. Schneider, Manufacturer in all kinds of  
Bamboo & Cane work. 6. Shackwell Lane  
3 doors from High St. Kingsland. Not far  
from Dalston Junction. An introduction  
from J. Aggle.

The business used to be a good one & paid well  
& the work was done by skilled men.

He himself served an apprenticeship in  
Hamburg & then came over in answer to  
an advertisement. That was 30 years ago.  
Now he has set up for himself & employs  
2 men & 3 of his own boys.

Now the trade is almost entirely in the  
hands of foreigners mostly Germans &  
Polish Jews.

The Jews have taken it up & have cut the  
prices lower & lower.

Brotendorf } employ forty or 50 hands &  
Englander }  
Francis } are the largest employers.



Francis' is in Tabernacla Street. The others are  
 in & about Curtain Road which has  
 become the centre of the trade. It is now  
 almost a part of the furniture trade though  
 it really had its origin in the basket  
 industry.

The west end used to be the centre & good work  
 was done there but now there is not so  
 much but a firm 'Jewson' in Tottenham  
 mens still does a good deal.

Work used to be on piece: now a little is  
 done on piece but time work is becoming more  
 general.

Earnings are very low. Hours are both  
 very long & very short.

40. 50<sup>d</sup> per hour would about represent  
 the rates for men.

Many would also work for 30<sup>d</sup> & then  
 work often 16 hours in order to  
 get a decent days earnings.

A good deal of overtime is worked before  
 Christmas but no extra rate is paid.

When work is on P each shop has its own  
 price.



price list.

From the middle of October until Xmas the trade is closed busy. Then they are very slack after Xmas. They brighten up again for the Spring when people clean up & want something fresh looking. They are slack again in the Autumn.

A man's success depends on his inventive qualities. Bamboo is easy to work, does not require much skill but you must devise new shapes & use to please the public. eg newspaper racks, music stands, tables, chairs, ornaments in fact every conceivable thing into which bamboo ~~work~~ can be brought to bear.

All bamboo comes from Japan. They buy it ready marked & fit for working. The end at which the joints are made are filled with wood & sometimes the whole rod is - but only in the best work - Any boy can fill the ends & cut them ~~pieces~~ to the proper size. Skilled work is only necessary to make a good join.



Therefore factories have a few skilled men with a great many lads or young men practically unskilled working for them.

In this way a man learns

X The custom is for a man to provide his own tools which are simple, i.e. a rasp or two and a saw, which in all would not cost more than £2 at the outside.

X These men possessing their own tools work at home when out of employment. They buy some stuff, cut it up, make their families help, then hawk it round. So prices are still further cut.

If successful in selling the man may set up permanently for himself especially if he can hit on any thing which suits the public fancy.

It is very healthy work & not very laborious. The cause of these men is drink. They are not a very steady lot. It is so easy to buy you are a bamboo worker & many rough men have come in.

There is no foreign competition. The stuff would <sup>take</sup>



take up too much room on board ship

very willing to give any further information.



Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>

S. H. D.

Mr. Sottridge B<sup>ms</sup> East Road, City Road, N.  
 Funeral carriage masters. Undertakers,  
 manufacturers, Importers & warehouse men  
 (To the trade only). - Branches in Birmingham  
 & Carrara (Italy).

They employ 200 to 250 men.

Send out carriages daily for from 30 to 40  
 funeral & sometimes more.

Do all kinds of funeral work. Supply  
 coffins, inside trimmings, upholstery,  
 masonry.

They only work for the trade unless it be  
 for one of their own relations or  
 servants.

The Undertaker measures the body, arranges  
 for the men, style of funeral etc &  
 then sends up to the wholesale furnisher  
 to send him coffin, men, carriages etc.  
 Undertakers seldom make their own coffins  
 & not one in 10 has his own horses.



Some like their coffins sent in the 'white' is unpolished, some as plain rough board; it just depends on the skill of the undertaker & how much he likes or is able to do himself.

Undertakers now prefer to be called 'Funeral directors'.

Mr. Dott ridge can supply goods done up to any stage you may chose to order them.

Of the 200 - 250 men employed. 50 would be coach men. The rest are.

- First turn men.
- A. { Back turn men.
- { odd men.
- { Coffin makers.
- B. { Monumental masons.

A. are concerned in the funeral carriage master's work.

B. in the undertaking line.

First turn men are those who are paid so much per job (gen 4/6) plus 7/8 some-time



times called yard money.

Back Turn are paid by the job when they get it & also paid so much per horse per day to wash down & clean. The Back Turn men only get second choice of jobs.

Odd men are called in from outside when they are busy.

Coffin makers are all on piece work. When very busy they work long hours but are not paid anything extra except for mid-night work in an emergency.

They earn 60 to 90 per hour according to the class of work they are on.

It is not skilled work except in the very best. A great deal of machinery is used & they keep large stocks.

It is very much of a father to son trade but no regular apprenticeship.

They have no union and are not connected with the cabinet makers.

It is a separate branch of the trade by itself.



The firm is open from 7.30 to 7.

Dinner hours 12 - 1 & men may take their meals in the workshops if they like. Some do but the majority go outside to the cheap coffee rooms & shops of which there are plenty about.

They allow  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour for tea.

Stop at 2 o'clock on Saturdays.

They are busy during the cold winds and during epidemics.

But after every rash of deaths the weakly are taken off & a slack time is sure to follow. Thus at the beginning of cold & fogs those who suffer on the chest fail & there is a pause of work but those who survive the first onslaught don't succumb at all.

They were very busy indeed during the influenza it was almost too much for them.

for all the undertakers apply to them since there are only two or 3 whole sale firms in London. This year the equable temperature has made the rate low.



No coffins are imported from abroad in good class work. Most are made in London.

A good many are assigned to them by people who do not wish their dead relatives to be buried abroad.

Sailors are superstitious & so they are generally sent over as 'Natural History' specimens.

The men are a steady lot he would say, at any rate there is not more drink in this than in most other trades.

They have a sick club in the shop to which all the men belong. They are not forced to, but they do because the firm will make them no allowance when ill unless they are members. Subscription 3<sup>d</sup> per week & 10<sup>d</sup> per wk Benefits.

Every Xmas they share out & start afresh.

Would be very glad to see a proof before it was put in  
Book form.



Monday Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>

74.  
G.H.D.

E. Burridge. Funeral Furnisher & Undertaker  
296 Walworth Road. S.

Mr. Burridge was just going out to secure a job as I arrived. He said he wd. return in  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr. if I wd. wait & left me in the shop with his foreman. The following is therefore an interview with the foreman as Mr. B. never returned altho' an hour passed.

This foreman was a coffin maker & was head in this which is only one of their shops. Messrs Burridge are the largest undertakers on the south side of the River. Their Factory is at Peckham.

Coffin makers are generally time workers tho' in the big shops or when hired for a special job some are on piece. They earn 30/- to 35/- per week though there wd. be a good many who would not make more than between 25/- & 30/- No



great degree of skill is necessary. Fathers generally bring up their sons to the trade. There is no apprenticeship. It is a distinct branch from carpentering cabinet making etc & although a carpenter could in a month or two learn coffin making & become better than a <sup>ny</sup> coffin maker by trade yet a coffin maker would be no good as a carpenter.

Drinking is not so very bad though he must confess that they do like a drop now & then. Would say there was more drinking in this than in other trades. Sometimes they have such very nasty jobs - But you get accustomed to it after a bit & don't mind. The worst he ever was in was after the wreck of the Princess Alice, shant forget that in a hurry.

Men don't shift very much. You must have decent manners. On receiving an order it is generally the principal who goes to measure the corpse

'Winrods' is only one of the code names for a



a certain size of coffin supplied by Dorrbridge,  
the largest wholesale maker in London.  
Some are called Crown Nimrods, others  
Jupiters, Venuses, Mars etc. These  
you telegraph for when in want of  
anything of a sudden.

Coffins are usually made of Elm, the inside  
fittings are supplied by wholesale firms  
who make these a specialty. The outside  
furniture comes from Birmingham & is  
supplied to the trade by a firm called  
Hardy in Stamford St. Lambeth.

Lead shells are not often used now; they  
are supplied by plumbers.

The busy season is during the cold winds  
but they have never been so slack as  
during this year not for the 33  
years he has been in the trade.

Supposed that "blasted County Council" had been  
about improving the drainage" had been  
to blame in lowering the death rate.

The Plum season in the Autumn is a thing  
of the past. The improved drainage has  
killed



killed this too.

The average rate at Burridges is to send out 4 funerals per diam. Mr. B has 30 horses of his own & a 'beautiful stock of coffins & choicest of hearsees' to be seen any day at the Peckham works.

My size for a coffin w<sup>d</sup> be 6ft 1 by 17.  
At Burridges those who are 'first turn' one day become second turn the next.

There are also a good many odd men about on the look out for jobs. I think this is a fairer system than having a lot who are always 'first turn'.

Dips don't amount to very much. It just depends. There is no Trade Society and he wishes there was.

On Sundays something extra is generally paid & he showed a slip of paper showing the earnings of himself & his mate for last Sunday which were 12/- between them.

The worst of the business is that hours are so long & you don't get anything extra for O.T. An order will come in late at night & you must stop up for it.



21.  
The curve is given to the coffin sides not by  
steaming the wood but by making  
incisions with the saw <sup>on</sup> the inside  
and then bending & holding in place  
by nailing to the ends.



Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>

G. H. D.

Henrichs & Co. Bamboo & Wicker furniture  
manufacturers. 123-8 Old street. St. Luke's.  
Workshop in Central street corner of Powell St.  
St. Luke's.

Employs 100 persons of whom 70 are  
young men or boys earning under £1  
per week.

The most highly paid are as a rule English.  
They are the best workmen. Many of these  
(about 6) make 48/- as a weekly wage.  
The other highly paid men are Germans,  
Poles, Russians earning from 20/- to  
35/- per week.

Under them & working for them come the  
majority making 8/- to 18/6. per week.  
on piecework.

2 women & a girl he employs to varnish.

The men earning high wages have others working  
under them. He takes 2 or 3 young men  
'Green men' from Germany & Poland he called  
them



them he starts them at 7/6 per week telling the head man to make what use of them he can. The work is done piecework. On Fridays it is all brought in & paid for. From the total Heinrichs himself deducts the sums due to the under workers. If the total made allows too large a margin for the head worker then he says the under man must be given more & therefore raises their pay. He never allows the lumpsum to be paid directly to the head man & then distributed.

Hours 7-7. with 1hr. for dinner &  $\frac{1}{2}$  hr for tea a few feed in the factory if they do & they use his gas to heat up their dinners. he charges each 6<sup>d</sup> per week, but most of them go outside for dinner.

On Saturdays they stop at 2.

They make mailcoats in summer, all sorts of bamboo goods. writing tables, looking glasses, wicker screens (the most skilled work), wicker chairs. make up bent wood chairs (wh. are sent over from Austria in kit). tea tables etc etc. The great thing is always to invent something.



Something new. It invents new patterns continually  
 has them drawn & coloured by draughtsmen  
 & then registered. There is a great deal of  
 cribbing among both small & even big men  
 Mr. H. goes around with his solicitor  
 pretty often. If they could not pay damages  
 he threatens them, if they can he sues them.  
 Not long ago he got £400 out of a firm  
 which infringed one of his patents.

There is a good deal of home work. Men make up  
 wobbly things 'bolchers' he called them  
 & then hawk them round. They have cut up  
 the trade which has gradually sunk in  
 quality. It began in the West End but has  
 gradually descended to the E. losing caste as  
 it went.

They are busy before Xmas, in the Spring and  
 Summer for children's mail carts. There  
 is a great trade in them.

Slack in the autumn.

When slack he employs about 20: his is  
 the most regular house in the Trade.

When slack the skilled men generally stay  
 away



and come in for a day or two's work when they like. He could not say whether the skilled or the unskilled were those whom he especially turned off.

He does a great deal of work for the <sup>pre-</sup>whole-sale houses such as Barker in Kensington Evans' etc. He always says he is one of these men when asked for fear of losing their custom. "I am always very straight & honest about that" he said. But he would prefer to deal with the public direct if he could.

The men shift a good deal in search of work. They join the booze & will not come in on Mondays. This is his chief complaint against them. Especially when he has a good deal on hand will they make a point of staying away.

Although they are piece workers they are bound to keep the hours of the shop, otherwise they are fined & this is deducted from their wages.

When a man comes he is made to sign a paper saying



he will come in punctually on Mondays & not use  
 indecent language or misbehave him-  
 self. That he will finish any job &  
 will be responsible for it. That if any  
 work of his has to be finished for him  
 he will himself pay the man.

As a matter of fact he is very glad to get half  
 his men in on Mondays.

The Englishmen drink the most, earn the  
 most money but they work the best.

The foreigners when green are sober  
 but they soon learn to go on the booze.

X  
 ✓ "It is not as if they bought bamboo  
 furniture with their high earnings but  
 the men who work the most only have  
 deal tables & chairs, it all goes to the  
 pubs"

His is the largest <sup>firm</sup> in the trade. Next  
 would come a good many round Curtain  
 road & Tabernacle Street - all foreigners  
 employing foreigners. Francis of Tabernacle  
 St. was really a pole named 'pobbelow' -  
 (or something like it) & had been trained  
 by



by Heinrichs himself. Then there was Engländer  
Eissler & others. I thought they would not  
last very long they were putting such  
shocking goods on the market.

He showed all his wages books.

Earnings of men for a full week were

8/- 9/- 10/- — 18/6. a piecework.

Bamboo work was paid rather more highly  
than cane work though cane work was  
much more difficult & needed skilled work  
the reason he said was that bamboo work  
was newer than cane.

Poles, Germans, Russians & Frenchmen & English  
were all working together in his shop.

The one he took to me was new & well  
lighted with w.c.s on the roof, one  
for each floor.

He had a Russian East working for him who  
had come round begging for some work.

X  
✓ | He was a fine looking oldish man who  
spoke 5 languages & now earned 28/8  
for a full week. Spoke a little English  
said he had been in the factory 10 months  
but



X) was sorry to find there was only one branch he was any good at in making tripod with a tray at the top. If the demand for these ceased he was afraid he wd have to go.

There was also a German nobleman.

These however were exceptions, the others were mostly from the country parts & had been presents.

He has a shop in Dresden & exports a great deal out there. In Germany you can get bad things more cheaply than in England but you must pay just as highly for any thing good out there & often it will not be quite so good. He was making up a great many screens for Germany. The German work would not stand <sup>the</sup> crossing so not much is imported into London.

He had just exported £200 worth of goods to Germany for which he had had to pay £40 in carriage & a duty besides.

If he got a good contract he paid his men rather extra & would give them a present now or then. "It always pays me to do this for



I get it out of them again one way & another & they are pleased at it.

Chair Carvings work out at he wd say.

7<sup>0</sup> 18<sup>0</sup> for <sup>skilled</sup> bamboo workers per hr.

9<sup>0</sup> for a few & sometimes even 11<sup>0</sup>

6<sup>0</sup> per hr. for cane workers.

Chair carving he gets done by women out. He pays

7<sup>0</sup> per doz & a woman if she were good & ch. work fast would get done about 3 doz in a week.

When pressed he gets some other of his work done out

Rush work is done by some men in Southwark.

Fish baskets at one house in the West-18<sup>0</sup> Rd.

near St. George's Circus. Kampenfeld (I think) by name.

Some of his greens have the option of taking one of his rooms which he furnished well & cleanly (he said) at 2/6 each per wk. 3 or 4 were put in the one room.

There is no system of apprenticeship, he teaches young men by putting them under older & skilled men; then they went more than he



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he will give, they are so ungrateful, they will go  
& set up by themselves & try & cut prices.  
But they are sure to come in again & beg for  
money to keep them going which he never  
refuses

The cane & bamboo & all the trays & stamped  
leather paper come from Japan. He is afraid  
his this years goods will all have been  
stopped by the way. Goods which should  
have reached him now have never arrived,  
& won't get to him till February next.

Mr Heinrichs who had started by saying he had important  
business & other matters to attend to; then said he  
w'd give any further information at any time -  
I had been with him well over 2½ hours. (There were  
several interruptions of buyers etc)



November. 23<sup>rd</sup>

G.H.D.

Mr. James Glover of Mess. Glover. Sawmills.

They make wooden boxes, cases, & firewood  
Hatcham Mills. Ormside St. Old Kent Road  
Called with reference to their firewood cutters as  
they are nearly the largest workers in  
London in this line.

The trade has been ruined by the competition  
of General Booth, Workhouses and the  
Church Army.

Their trade varies from 50,000 to 150,000  
bundles of firewood per week.

All work is piecework: So much is  
paid per 100 bundles. Men women  
& girls work together & are given  
out so much wood from which they  
make so many bundles.

The price used to be 14<sup>d</sup> per 100  
bundles. Now Gen. Booth who  
obtained the School board con-  
tract by offering to do it 2<sup>d</sup> lower  
than



then their trader has taken it from them.

He is the worst sweeter in the trade  
 he only pays his people 20 per 100 &  
 gives them a cup of tea or bread  
 in addition. Instead of elevating a  
 single person he is depressing a thousand.  
 He refused to take their wood to cut up  
 though they offered it to him as cheaply  
 as any other person in the trade. In fact  
 no words were bad enough for him.

Here the system is to work in 'berths' of  
 man, woman, & girl.

The man cuts the logs up with the  
 old fashioned bow saw.

The woman chops them

The girl ties them up <sup>into</sup> bundles

The three working together can make 30¢  
 in a week.

The men are generally dock labourers in  
 the summer & come to this in the  
 winter.

He has 15 to 20 berths employing 30  
 to 45 persons.



You very seldom get the men in of a Monday.  
The tradition of London is against  
Monday work.

Twenty years ago not one of the men  
could write their names.

Education has improved this, the old  
system must die & if the work is to  
be done at all it must be done  
by machinery.

They now use a circular saw to cut the blocks  
for the women to chop.

He said there were never accidents with the  
chopper. The women became so practised  
that they could cut to  $\frac{1}{2}$  an inch in the  
dark but I noticed that several of  
them had one or more fingers of the  
left hand (which holds the block  
of wood) tied up.

The women were evidently of the poorest class  
& all working away in berths divided  
by a skirting of wood in a <sup>barn</sup> ~~box~~  
open to the air on one side.

They were working so hard that not one  
stopped



stopped to look up as ~~Harry~~ Mr. Clover ~~or~~  
came in.

I saw no men at work. There was a boy to  
the circular saw cutting the blocks. To one  
left A woman was chopping. A girl gathering  
up the pieces chopped & a woman  
pressing them into bundles on a 'horse'  
& tying them.

The 'horse' is a wooden table with a partition  
in the middle.

The girls stacked the wood one side  
of the partition. The woman took a  
certain number of sticks from this  
stack placed them in a rope which  
she twisted tight with a wooden screw  
& then when sufficiently compressed  
tied them up with the bits of tarred  
string.

Against workhouse work he was very strong  
but admitted that the blind might be  
allowed to do some.

Referring to the 'submerged 10<sup>th</sup> of Gen  
Booth' he said that 'these sort should  
be



allowed to die & not to drag others down to the same state as themselves.

The work is skilled he said very much so, but there is no system of training or apprenticeship. The work in London is decreasing owing to the increased use of firelighters & gunny mixtures.

Thinks the Union has broken up.

He will be glad to answer further questions if written with the questions on one side & a space left on the other for the answers.

The men are probably casuals with very irregular earnings & habits.

The women are probably wives of the casuals & daughters working to keep the home together.

Cold & draughty work. The class who would do it would compare with the furpullers.



Nov. 1. Dec. 3. 1894.

Copies of two letters received from C Newman  
Secretary to the Fancy Cane, Wicker and  
Bamboo Workers Union.

Address. C. Newman.  
51. Almorah Road.  
Islington.

Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 1894

Dear Sir.

In answer to your letter the number of members in our  
Union at the present time are sixty five.

B. The English Union & non-unionist work together, but there  
are shops in the East of London, where Polish & Lithuanian  
workers only are employed, as we cannot drag ourselves  
down to their level. I have forwarded two copies of our Rules  
as we are just having the new ones registered.

I remain

Yours respectively

(signed) C Newman.







Dec 6<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Dottridge head of the firm of Dottridge Bros.  
East Road..

He had been sent the report to revise.  
Everything he said was substantially cor-  
rect. One or two points however might  
be altered with advantage.

The work did need some skill and there  
was a demand now for a simpler  
coffin. This meant that defects  
cd. not be covered up with nails  
& ornamentation.

A skilled carpenter cd. get into the work  
in 2 or 3 w<sup>ks</sup>.

The class of undertaker & men was improving.  
Very few indeed made their work thorough  
but all customers liked to think they  
were buying a coffin that was made  
by their own undertaker in their  
own district.

This feeling is so strong that sometimes



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