



## Roving Eye

*(more from David's adventures in London ...)*

Now that I was 'settled' with a place to sleep each night, my daily routine returned to the previously established pattern. Whenever the money started to get low, I would visit a labour exchange on a Monday morning and take some casual employment for a few days. This would provide enough income to last for the next couple of weeks, so I was then 'free' again to explore the city.

The hostel in which I was now staying was in a different part of the city from my previous room, in a much older part of London. Just a couple of minutes walk, and I was in the heart of the 'City', the area that had originally been surrounded by walls, and where every path and building had a history far older than the entire country in which I had grown up. It was immensely fascinating.

One day as I was prowling along, I bumped into a camera shop; they had a wagon outside with 'Sale' goods, and something there caught my eye - a large package containing many dozens of rolls of black and white Ilford film. I had a fairly old and battered 35mm camera with me that year, but hadn't used it much up to this point - looking at London 'live' had seemed of more interest. But seeing this pile of inexpensive film gave me an idea, and I bought the entire batch.

From that day on, I kept the little camera always loaded and ready at hand during my walks around the city. I had no illusions of myself as a 'photographer', but the city and its inhabitants were so hugely photogenic that it was impossible not to think of oneself as a kind of photo-journalist. I didn't simply click away madly, as we tend to do nowadays with our digital cameras, but tried to compose good shots, ones that had some kind of story to tell.

To this day I can still vividly remember some of the photos I took: a young girl of about five or six leaning out of a window resting her arms on a rough brick wall, with her hair shining in the sun; a view down a canyon-like city street with bright light at the end of it and deep shadows cast from tall buildings on all sides; a simple photo of a pond and stream in one of the city parks, with all the trees and bushes in blossom ... and all of it in black and white, so much more 'photographic' than modern colour!

Some subjects completely defeated me; I tried to take some interesting photos of St. Paul's Cathedral, but the subject was just so vast, and so suffused with history, both ancient and recent (this was only some thirty years after the London blitz, and there were still many unbuilt bomb sites in the area) that it was impossible for an amateur like myself to even think about capturing it.

It was interesting that I never actually saw any of these photographs at the time; after I finished shooting each roll I tucked it away into my bag, and the entire batch went back to Canada with me the next summer. I then developed the films myself, working in the bathroom, with towels jammed under the door to block out light.

Would you like to see some of those photos? So would I! But unfortunately, this is not possible. As I was in those years always 'on the move', I left various possessions in my parents' basement, and of course, as *they*

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were also always on the move - back to England, over to Australia, again to England, back to Canada, etc. etc., there were limits to how many things they could keep. At some point the box was tossed out.

But I still remember that little girl! I remember her as though it were yesterday!

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