

## SILVERTOWN

### Marriage

*Jenny Fulcher lives in the East End. She is twenty nine now and been courting with a Len Page who lives two streets away. They are getting married.*

On the morning of 25 September 1932, dressed in his good suit Frenchie Fulcher walks the bride, Jenny Fulcher, from her home in Caulfield Street along East Ham High Street to St Bartholomew's church. The bride meets her groom in an ivory dress.

The service is the usual Church of England and the vicar is polite. Back at Caulfield Road, the wedding party drink beer and eat sandwiches made with potted meat, and one by one the male guests press gifts of money into the groom's hands. After that the guests start up a sing-song, but because there is no piano they decamp to the pub where the men continue drinking beer and the women knock back port and gin and everyone gets merry and drinks to the happy couple. After closing time, Len and Jenny make their way back to their new place in Altmore Avenue, about four streets away from the Fulchers in Caulfield road.

Jenny quickly learns the job of being a wife. In particular she learns the skill of making a slice. Len likes his morning slice. And not just any old slice, but the right kind of slice fried in the right kind of way. Len's slice must be cut from half-stale bread, the middle section, before the crust tumbles down to meet the sides. The perfect slice has to be of the correct thickness, not so thick as a stack of four half crowns but thicker than three. It must be fried in lard which is not fresh but not yet rancid, preferably from bacon or gammon. Once the lard is hot but not yet sizzling, the slice can be placed flat down. It must be fried for two minutes and then turned and fried for a further two until it is the colour of a milky cup of tea. Only then can it be served, piping hot, with a little gravy if there is any, or salt if there is not.

'What the bleedn hell is this?' Len will say if the slice is not up to standard.

'A slice,' Jenny will reply.

'A *slice*,' Len will say. Shoving the plate to the other side of the table, he'll continue 'What colour do you call this?'

Jenny will try to avoid his eyes 'A bit on the dark side.'

'A bit bleedn dark?'

'Yes,' she'll say 'Darkish.'

'Darkish my arse,' he'll say '*This....*' He'll hold up the slice by one corner, shaking his head as though revealing some national shame 'This is bleedn black. You could put this on the bleedn fire and keep a family of bleedn Eskimos warm for a bleedn week with this.'

Len likes his morning slice just right, and if he doesn't get it 'just right' there's all hell to pay.