



Pearly Kings and Queens © Museum of London

Newham heritage fact: Pearly Kings and Queens

This is a photograph of three Pearlies drinking tea. Pearly Kings and Queens are members of an organisation started by Henry Croft who was born in 1861 and raised in an orphanage.

At the age of fifteen he became a road sweeper and rat catcher and got to know costermongers who sold fruit and vegetables on the markets where he worked. Costermongers traditionally decorated their trousers with pearl buttons down the side. Henry was impressed but went one step further and covered a whole suit!

He would wear the suit when he collected donations of pennies and halfpennies for the children in the orphanage where he grew up and it made him well known. People began to help him collect for the poor and they also wore suits covered in pearl buttons. They became known as the Pearlies.

Finish the sentences.

1. Pearlies are members of an organisation started by
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2. Henry Croft was raised in an

Underline the correct answer.

3. Costermongers sell

fish

fruit and vegetables

clothes

4. Henry Croft covered his suit with

feathers

ribbons

pearl buttons

True or False.

5. Henry Croft collected money for himself.

True

False

6. Pearlies are based in London.

True

False

Discuss with a partner.

What special clothes do people wear in your country?
Are there organisations who collect money for charity?