

76. An Old Fishing Village

District IX (Treptow-Köpenick), the former fishing village of Kietz, off Müggelheimer Strasse
S47 Spindlersfeld then Tram 60, 61



Across the Frauentog to Kietz

Berlin is a relatively young European capital city, its written history stretching back only to the early 13th century, when the two settlements of Berlin and Cölln grew up on opposite banks of the River Spree (see no. 1). Trading in fish, rye and timber they formed an alliance in 1307 to become Berlin-Cölln, a successful trading city controlled by the Margraves of Brandenburg that would eventually become the capital of Prussia – and finally of all Germany.

The small fishing settlement of Cölln occupied what is now the southern part of Museum Island (Museumsinsel). In medieval times the area was called Fishermen's Island (Fischerinsel), although little remains here today except for names and memories: during the 1960s the old, densely-packed houses were swept away by the GDR authorities and replaced by anonymous-looking apartment blocks. A few 17th century houses were left standing on Brüderstrasse (see no. 5) and a handful of buildings re-erected elsewhere (e.g. the Zum Nussbaum inn was rebuilt at Am Nussbaum 3 in the St. Nicholas Quarter (Nikolaiviertel) and the Ermeler House (Ermeler-Haus) was moved to Märkisches Ufer 10). Therefore, to gain an impression of how Cölln's Fisherman's Island might once have appeared, an excursion out to Köpenick is highly recommended, where parts of the former fishing village of Kietz are still extant.

Lying on the tranquil banks of the Frauentog, sleepy Kietz began life as a Slavic fishing village and was first documented in 1355; it retained its independence until its incorporation into the district of Köpenick in 1898. Strung out along its main street, which is known also



Fishermen's cottages in the old village of Kietz

as Kietz and runs south from the western end of busy Müggelheimer Strasse, 31 single-storey houses once stood, a handful of which have been preserved. With their attic windows, tranquil courtyards and tiny gardens these traditional fishermen's cottages built in the 18th and early 19th centuries are easily distinguished from the four-storey apartment buildings that sprung up when suburbanisation arrived here in the early 1900s. A good example of the original architecture is the cottage at number 8, with its effigy of a fish nailed above the door, opposite which is a later building carrying the Köpenick arms – one of Berlin's oldest – that again depicts fish. Farther along the street at number 22 is another cottage with a fish above its door, whilst number 21, which has been carefully restored, retains its cobblestoned passageway, called Breite Gasse, once used by the fishermen to gain access to the river. Across the road at number 12 is the former village bakery dating from the mid-18th century, which still retains its traditional fishing rights; for those interested in traditional accommodation bed-and-breakfast is offered in its attic rooms.