

Old London bridge : "beneath its arches commerce dealt with death" / published by William Lucey, ... To meet the deficiency of charitable funds in the district.

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OLD LONDON BRIDGE.



"BENEATH ITS ARCHES COMMERCE DEALT WITH DEATH."

PUBLISHED BY

MR. WILLIAM LUCEY,

CHURCHWARDEN AND INCUMBENT'S WARDEN, CHRIST-CHURCH;
LATE CHURCHWARDEN AND MINISTER'S WARDEN OF ST. JAMES';
RECTOR'S WARDEN & CHURCHWARDEN, ST. MARY MAGDALEN, BERMONDSEY.

TO MEET THE DEFICIENCY OF CHARITABLE FUNDS
IN THE DISTRICT.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY ALFRED BOOT, DOCKHEAD, S.E.

1864.

Gloria in Excelsis Dei.

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

"One of the noblest traits in a Christian's character is humanity."

THE Honorary Silver Medallion and Testimonial awarded, 1849, for saving several persons from drowning, Brunel, senr., being one, and Mr. Thos. Page, Resident Engineer of the Thames Tunnel, another, under the middle of the River.

Myself being therein during two eruptions of the River, and one of the first with Brunel to pass through the opening from Rotherhithe to Wapping, being the Government Contractor for the excavations and filling in the subsidence of the bed of the river with clay bags and Thames ballast, through which the tunnel is formed, assisted by the ponderous iron shield, weighing one hundred and eighty tons.

I was resuscitated from drowning with the usual restoratives of this blessed society, 1823.

"Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Vivat Regina.

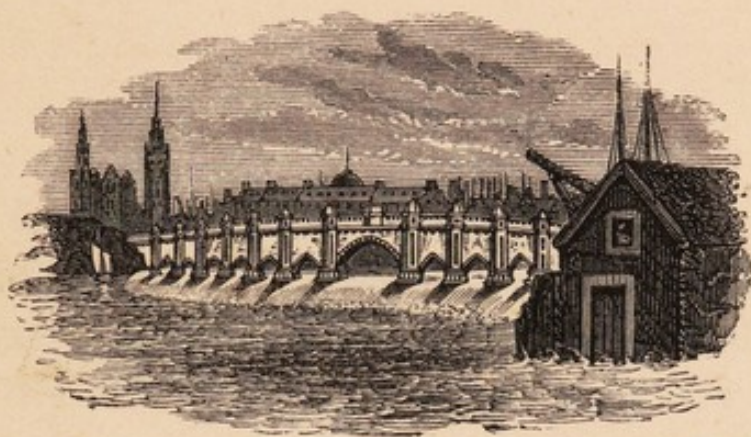
WILLIAM LUCEY,
Morden College, Blackheath.

Oct. 21st, 1889.

Lateat Scintilla forsan.

Idoc Pretium Cive Servato Tollit.

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OLD LONDON BRIDGE.



IN these days when the public appetite for novelty and sensation seems to grow by what it feeds on, "Old London Bridge" may possibly be regarded as rather a dry subject for reflection. Like any other topic, it may certainly be treated in a dull and uninteresting manner. The race of historicals and antiquarians is by no means extinct, but with this venerable fraternity we must disclaim all relationship.

"Old London Bridge" is, in our judgment, a wonderful monument of the labour and industry of "the good old times." The curiosities of its ancient architecture, the vicissitudes of its partial destructions and restorations, and of the town and population it bore on its back, and independently of its own peculiar annals and local associations, the various important historical events connected with it, surround this subject with an interest truly romantic. I propose in this paper to lay before our readers a brief summary of the more interesting events connected with the past history of "Old London Bridge," leaving to writers of more leisure and ability to fill up and elaborate the details of my imperfect outline.

A careful examination of various historical authorities conducts us to the conclusion that the presumed existence of a Roman bridge across the Thames is an error. The Roman roads, from what are now the towns of Sandwich, Dover, Arundel, and Lympne (near Hythe), all met in St. George's Fields, and travellers crossed the river by two ferries, one from what is now Stoney Street to Dowgate,—the other from the Southwark side of the Tower, or *arx palatina*, at the east end of the City. The first credible mention of a bridge is coeval with the mention of Southwark, in the year 1008, during the reign of King Ethelred, when, according to *Sturleson's Chronicle* (a reliable work), the Danes held a great trading place called Sudrviki, meaning Southwark. On the north side of the river the Danes had a castle, and between the castle and Southwark there was a bridge so broad that two waggons could pass each other. There were also towers and wooden parapets on the bridge, to defend it from the invasion seaward. Ethelred, aided by Olaf, afterwards King of Norway, took the bridge and Southwark also. Some time after, Olaf was killed in battle and canonised, and on the very spot of his victory of London Bridge we find a church dedicated to him—St. Olave's, Southwark. The *Saxon Chronicle* shows that London Bridge was not built, after its destruction by Olaf, up to 1023, as in that year we find the body of Archbishop Alphege conveyed in a ship over the Thames to Sudgeworke (Southwark), which would hardly be a likely mode of transit if a bridge had then existed. In 1052 the bridge is

mentioned, when Earl Godwin, according to the chronicles, passed through the arches at the south end of the bridge, to attack the King's navy lying at Westminster. William the Conqueror attacked and burnt Southwark, after the battle of Hastings, but there is not any record that the bridge, though then of timber, was destroyed or injured. In 1091 London Bridge was entirely swept away by a great storm, and in 1097 Rufus taxed the people to rebuild it. In 1136 the bridge was destroyed by fire, and a new one built of timber in 1163. In a description of the water sports of the Thames (formerly Tame-Isis) during the years 1170 and 1182, we have mention of London Bridge. In 1176 the first stone bridge was commenced, and occupied thirty-three years in its construction, not being completed till 1209. It consisted of nineteen pointed arches of stone of various sizes and a drawbridge with massive stone piers from twenty-five to thirty-three feet thick, raised upon strong elm piles, covered with thick planks bolted together. This bridge was 946 feet long and forty wide. On the centre pier, which projected into the river, on the lower or eastern side were built the chapels of St. Thomas-à-Beckett, the martyr of Canterbury, the odour of whose sanctity was fresh in the minds of the people. One of these chapels was for mariners, and nearly on a level with high water mark. The papal legate to France, Scotland, and England in 1176, and the then Archbishop of Canterbury, gave 1,000 marks towards the erection of the bridge, but it was mainly provided

for by a tax on wool. In 1212 a fire broke out in Southwark, which consumed the church of Saint Mary Overy, and a vast multitude got on the bridge; and the north end taking fire the masses were hemmed in between the two fires, and to use the words of the historian, "Then there came to aid them many ships and vessels, into which the multitude so unadvisedly rushed, that the ships being thereby sunken, they all perished, to the number by fire and shipwreck of 3,000 souls." The historical incidents of Queen Eleanor's not being allowed to pass under the bridge on her proposed journey from the Tower to Windsor by the "vehement exclamations and reproaches of the mob, and casting of heavy stones and much mud into her boat," and the crossing over the bridge by De Montfort, after the battle of Lewes in 1163, were aptly introduced, and the audience warmly welcomed the intelligence that to that sturdy baron, rebel and traitor as he was called, they were indebted for the establishment of the representation of the Commons in Parliament. In 1276, the market on London Bridge was forbidden by the Common Council, and in 1281, in consequence of the ruinous state of the structure, tolls were levied, and lands granted by the King, to maintain and repair the bridge, now known and administered as the Bridge House Estates. In the Christmas of this year, 1285, five arches of the bridge were demolished by the frost and a marvellous quantity of ice. In 1289, another subsidy was granted towards the maintenance of the structure, and in 1305 tolls were imposed upon certain merchandize, to be levied

for three years, for the same necessary purpose. In the same year, 1305, the heads of Sir William Wallace and other traitors were exposed on the bridge on a tower at the north end, but were not set up at the south end until 1579. The bridge was the scene of a contention with Wat Tyler and the well-remembered Sir William Walworth, in 1381. In the year 1392, King Richard and the citizens of London made up a quarrel of short standing, and the King rode over London Bridge with the Queen in great pomp, and in 1396 it was again the scene of a royal progress. After the battle of Agincourt, in 1415, Henry V. was received with great splendour by his good citizens at London Bridge, but in 1422 their gladness was turned into grief when the funeral procession of this brave and heroic monarch passed by the same route to its final resting place. In 1437, the great stone gate of the bridge suddenly fell, with two of the fairest arches of the bridge, into the river. Southwark seems to have been the resting place of rioters and insurrectionists, for in 1450 we find Jack Cade located there, and passing into the City over London Bridge, which fact is referred to in Shakespeare's second part of Henry VI, act 4, scene 4, and also scene 8.

Enter a Messenger.

K. HEN. How now ! what news ? Why comest thou in such haste ?

MESS. The rebels are in Southwark : fly, my lord ! Jack Cade proclaims himself Lord Mortimer, descended from the Duke of Clarence's house, and calls your Grace usurper openly, and vows to crown himself in Westminster.

SCENE VIII. *Southwark.*

CADÉ. What Buckingham and Clifford, are ye so brave: and you brave peasants, do you believe him? Will you needs be hanged with your pardons about your necks? Hath my sword therefore broke through London gates, that you should leave me at the White Hart, in Southwark?

Cade's head with some of his followers, adorned the Tower of London Bridge not long after. In 1471 the bridge was the scene of another conflict between Falconbridge, who professed to come to the rescue of Henry VI., then a prisoner in the Tower, and Alderman Jocelyn, Lord Mayor in 1464 and 1476, when nearly one-half of the houses were destroyed. In 1504 six houses were burned on the bridge. In 1526 the bridge was crossed by the great Cardinal Wolsey on his way to France, and in 1535 the heads of the great and good Sir Thomas More and Bishop Fisher were exhibited on the Traitor's Tower. The insurrection headed by Sir Thomas Wyatt, is another episode in the history of Southwark and Old London Bridge, and occurred in 1554, and after the death of the chief rebel, as was customary, London Bridge was literally "headed" by him also. Ten years later, namely in 1564, persons were able to walk over and along the Thames from London Bridge to Westminster, in consequence of a most severe frost. It was in 1579, as previously mentioned, that heads were first put up at the gate at the south end of the bridge, subsequently known as "The Traitor's Gate." Many booksellers had shops on London Bridge, and were distinguished by various signs, as customary in those days, instead

of numbers. The father of the great Burleigh made his fortune as a bookseller on London Bridge. The year of Charles II.'s restoration witnessed another regal pageant on the bridge, and in 1666 the great fire was stopped there in consequence of a space not having been built over after the calamity of 1632. In 1722 persons were appointed to compel all vehicles from Southwark to keep on the west side, and those in a contrary direction to go on the eastern or lower side. In 1725 another great fire occurred on the bridge, which burnt about sixty houses, and but for the stone gate, every one of the tenements would have fallen a prey to the flames. The bridge was, by the rubbish, &c., rendered impassable for some time, and coaches, carts, and wains were obliged to cross the river at Lambeth Ferry,—Blackfriars and Westminster bridges not being then built. The winter of 1739, and the frost fair then held on the ice, has been immortalised by Gay in his "Trivia," and many engraved and wood-cut views of this fair exist. The fair damaged London Bridge so much that the estimate for repairs was several thousand pounds. The completion of the new bridge at Westminster in 1739 contrasted disadvantageously with the narrow and dangerous passage over London Bridge, and the necessity of an extensive alteration or rebuilding began to be contemplated. In 1756, two Acts of Parliament were passed for building a new bridge across the Thames at Blackfriars, and for improving and widening the passage over London Bridge, by removing the houses and other obstructions. In 1757 a temporary wooden

bridge was erected, but in the middle of the next year a fire broke out at both ends of it, and entirely consumed it. Pictures of the bridge may still be seen, giving an admirable idea of the melancholy appearance presented at the time. The temporary bridge was, however, restored, and the bridge itself altered to meet the necessities of the time. This bridge lasted, with continuous alterations, and at an enormous expenditure of money and loss of life till 1823, when an Act was passed for the erection of the present bridge, which was opened in 1831, and, with such opening, the history of "Old London Bridge" ceased. The remains of the old structure were removed as speedily as possible, and the only remaining relics are some of the balusters which adorn the gardens of some old citizens, and serve as pedestals for sun-dials, whilst a great portion of the stone was used by the late Mr. Alderman Harmer, in the erection of Ingress Abbey, near Greenhithe, Kent.

THE END.

Dedicated to Sir John Lubbock, Bart., the Trustees and Members of Morden College.

ALL hail the munificent, persevering, patient, Founder's name! ye gentlemen, pray prostrate fall,
We'd brought forth a splendid radiant diadem, and crowned him, brethren all;
The sanctified Holy Law of the Great Jehovah's Mouth, we have oftentimes been told,
Was much dearer to this departed virtuous great man than thousands of silver and gold.

At His supreme command the raging foaming seas were rebuked, and mysteriously stayed,
And Morden's three missing richly treasure-laden ships were providentially saved.
To decayed merchants and ship owners endowed his whole fortune considerable,

This memorable, sympathetic, generous, great benefactor's deeds are exalted and imperishable.

To his angelic, noble, compassionate, God-fearing, pious, sainted, tender-hearted wife,
Refulgent as the constellation of the morn and evening stars, we'll dedicate our solemn thoughts in life;
She to her blessed husband's comforts did impart, and gave to him her affectionate hand and heart,
In all his various movements made she faithfully subscribed, and diligently did do her part.

Enshrined in the consecrated sepulchre of the Chancel, sleeping in Jesus, are the illustrious dead,
With both their time-honoured heraldic escutcheons placed over their revered heads,
I hope the music of God's Holy Mouth refreshed their fervent pious souls in death,
Till time will be no more with me, shall be my departing fleeting breath.

How beautiful were these resplendent, bright and shining lights that stood on Zion's hill,
Brilliant as the star-spangled firmament, they brought salvation on their lips, and words of peace revealed,
Gloria in excelsis Dei, they're with angels, archangels, spirits of the just made perfect, not yet dead;
Exult, ye dust and ashes, they've joined the immaculate crucified Prince of Peace, Christ, their Head.

Christopher Wren, prince of architects and clever staunch good old mason, designed
This firm, substantial, glorious, matchless, superb, convenient, palatial Kentish pile,
Replete with every comfort, ease and care, he thus scientifically began,
With square, level, plumb, rule in hand, worked out the several proportions of his matured elaborate plan.

He formed the magnificent, handsome façade, piazzas and quadrangular square,
Laid the solid foundations, based upon true masonic principles, I hereby do declare;
These pathetic master-masons joined hand-in-hand, and by each brother firmly did stand,

Good divine Samaritan, shepherd to his flock, and devout, zealous servant to his Omnipotent Master ;
Here the undefiled truths of the evangelical religion of our highly-favoured country are propounded,
And the true tenets of the pure Protestant faith are upheld and ably expounded.

Nature bequeathed her majestic stately trees, variegated shrubs and choice scented flowers,
Wafting their fragrant luxurious perfumes to the comfortable well-shaded bowers ;
Attentively view the beautiful landscape of the delectable rich college lands o'er ;
There is intellectual food for a skilful artist to meditate upon, admire, and much to adore.

The good Christian Treasurer carefully attends to our comforts so affable and kind,
In reason supplies our several wants, and in tribulation soothes our disappointed minds,
Descended from a worthy, gallant, patriotic, naval hero, it is very well known,
Who served under brave Nelson—Norfolk claimed him a native one of their own.

I beseech you, brethren, uphold and sustain the peaceful injunction of the Founder, each member possessing
Meet thankfulness of heart, the Grand Architect of the Universe granting His kind blessing ;
The battle of life being over, steer your course to Paradise, onwards, Christians, forward go
To celestial joyfulness in heaven, where sickness, sin and sorrow cease to flow.

The well-played organ, Soyer sending forth musical strains, quietude pervading, causes in me thrilling emotions,
More especially to assemble with reverential venerable gentlemen at their sacred devotions,
In good health better than fortunes, some of them verging on the patriarchal age of near a century ;
The bounties of Providence are here well bestowed upon a good representation of grave old Mortality.

My old shattered worn-out barque has sailed the spacious salt seas o'er,
Let go the anchor in good holding ground, now safe and securely moored
In Morden's Blackheath hallowed haven of rest, 'twill ne'er sail again
Till bound for that happy land of pure delight where saints immortal reign.

Man's adversity is God's opportunity ; and He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death,
neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

And when the true Messiah comes again on earth in His glorious majesty, with clouds descending, heralded by the angelic
throng, proclaiming Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords, that you and me will be found at the right hand of the Crucified
Saviour, in the realms of eternal happiness, is the sincere and fervent prayer of

Yours affectionately and fraternally,

WILLIAM LUCEY.

GREETING THEE WITH A NEW YEAR'S GIFT,
January 1st, 1886.

