

THE PARISH OF ROTHERHITHE.

*Read at a Meeting of the Society at the Church of St. Mary, Rotherhithe.
on the 20th January, 1912.*

BY

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PRIOR to Roman times, history is silent as to the aspect of the district now known by the name of Rotherhithe. The river was not embanked, and the tidal waters flowed over a large area, so the land must have been uninhabitable. It is conjectured that the first efforts to embank the river and reclaim the land were made by the Romans, probably during the first or second centuries of the Christian era. The first settlers must have inhabited the river bank, as no other part of the land could have been habitable until the low-lying ground had been drained and brought under cultivation. Even now a great part of Rotherhithe lies below the level of Trinity high water-mark, and during the prevalence of abnormally high tides parts of the district lying near the river bank have suffered from disastrous floods.

The whole area of the parish comprises an acreage of about 886 acres, of which 365 acres are occupied by the Surrey Commercial Docks, now owned by the Port of London Authority; and 60 acres are within the park fence of Southwark Park, leaving little more than half the entire area for the public roads and streets, and for the habitations of the parishioners, who, in the one long street, called Rotherhithe Street, are shut in between

the river and the Surrey Commerical Docks for more than two miles.

The spelling of the name of the parish has varied from time to time: the name is supposed to come from two Saxon words, "Rethra" (a rower or mariner), and "Hythe" (a landing-place or haven). To this day many of the watermen write the word on their boats as "Redriff," and this name goes back some centuries.

The Manor of Rotherhithe was vested in the Crown. William Rufus, in the seventh year of his reign (1094, A.D.), reserved it to himself when he granted the Bermondsey Manor to the newly-erected Priory of St. Saviour, and Rotherhithe Manor remained in the Crown as parcel of the royal demesne till the time of Henry I, when that King gave one moiety thereof to Robert, his natural son, and the other moiety, in the twenty-seventh year of his reign (1127 A.D.), to the Priory of Bermondsey. Thus, half of the Manor of Rotherhithe came to form part of the endowments of the great Priory.

The moiety of the Manor of Rotherhithe, which was given to Robert by his father, King Henry I, became associated with the great lordship of the Honour of Gloucester; for Robert, by his marriage with Mabel, daughter of Robert Fitz-Hamon, was in possession of the Honour of Gloucester, and to it he annexed his Rotherhithe Manor. The Manor passed, successively, to William, son of Robert, and to Amicia, daughter of William, who married Richard, Lord of Clare and Earl of Hertford, and thus the half Manor of Rotherhithe passed into the possession of the great mediæval family of de Clare. Elizabeth de Burgh, grand-daughter of King Edward I, and a member of the de Clare family,

refounded the college which bears her name in the University of Cambridge—"the College, Hall, or house of Clare." Her brother Gilbert was lord of the moiety of the Manor of Rotherhithe, and 400 years later, in 1730, the Master, Fellows and Scholars of the College of Clare became patrons of the advowson of the benefice of St. Mary, Rotherhithe, in right whereof they have ever since presented the rectors of Rotherhithe to this living till the present day.

The other moiety of the Manor of Rotherhithe, which was given to the Priory of Bermondsey by Henry I, was, for a long time, mainly in the occupation of the family of Robert Burnell, Bishop of Bath and Wells. While Hugh Burnell was in possession of this estate, in the twenty-first of Richard II, the Priory of Bermondsey, of whom he held it as capital lords of the fee, became seized of the feudal property of the other moiety of the manor holden of the Honour of Gloucester by demise from the Abbot and Convent of St. Mary de Gratiis. From this time, therefore, they are to be considered as proprietors of the whole Manor, viz., one moiety in demesne and the other in demesne as of fee (1398). On the dissolution of the monasteries the convent was surrendered, January 1st, 1537-8, in the twenty-ninth of Henry VIII. In the same year the Manor of Rotherhithe (consisting of the two manors, now united) passed to the Crown, and so continued until the reign of Charles I, when it was granted, at the request of Sir Alan Apsley, and probably in trust for him, to William White and others. In the year 1668 it was in possession of James Cecil, Earl of Salisbury. About the year 1692 it appears to have been alienated to John Bennet,

Esquire; in 1715 to John Jolley and Benjamin Morret; and about 1732 to Thomas Scawen, Esquire. Sir Charles Wagner (or Wager), who died seized of this manor in 1743, bequeathed it to his wife, Martha, whom he appointed sole executrix of his will, desiring his "very good friend, Francis Gashry, to assist her in the management of her affairs." Dame Martha Wager, who was Lady of the Manor from 1743 to 1748, by her will dated February 20th, 1747, after bequests to her nephew, Burrington Goldsworthy, and her niece, Philippa Goldsworthy, appointed her niece, Martha Gashry, residuary legatee of all her real and personal estate, and her nephew, Francis Gashry, sole executor. On April 16th, 1748, Francis Gashry proved Dame Wager's will, stating that he was the lawful husband of the said Martha, the residuary legatee. Francis Gashry, Lord of the Manor from 1748 to 1762, was the Treasurer and Paymaster of His Majesty's Office of Ordnance, and died in 1762. Martha Gashry, his widow, was Lady of the Manor from 1762 to 1777. By her will, dated March 20th, 1777, Mrs. Martha Gashry gave all her manors in the County of Surrey to trustees, the Reverend William Butler and Edward Vanburgh, for the use and on behalf of her nephew, Philip Goldsworthy. Lieut.-General Philip Goldsworthy, Lord of the Manor from 1777 to 1801, was the son of Burrington Goldsworthy, who died in 1774, and his wife Philippa (née Vanburgh), sister of Mrs. Martha Gashry. General Philip Goldsworthy was Colonel of the 1st Regiment of Dragoons, and, in 1788, was appointed Equerry and Clerk-Marshal of the Mews to His Majesty King George III. He was M.P. for Wilton, and died January 8th, 1801, leaving his manor to his sister, Miss

Martha Caroline Goldsworthy, who was Lady of the Manor from 1801 to 1816. This lady and Miss Jane Gomm were for many years governesses to their Royal Highnesses the Princesses, daughters of King George III and Queen Charlotte. Miss Goldsworthy was appointed, in 1774, governess to the Princess Royal. By her will, dated February 24th, 1816, she bequeathed the manor to her "good and worthy friend and companion, Jane Gomm," for life, and from and after her decease to Sophia Louisa Gomm, daughter of Lieut.-Colonel William Gomm. Miss Goldsworthy died in March, 1816, and was succeeded by Miss Jane Gomm, who was Lady of the Manor till 1822. Miss Sophia Louisa Gomm, her niece, who was also named in Miss Goldsworthy's will, died unmarried in 1817, aged twenty-nine, during the lifetime of her aunt. By her will, dated May 8th, 1816, she left her estate between her two brothers equally. The younger of these, Lieut.-Colonel Henry Gomm, of the 6th Regiment, died in 1816, consequently the whole of her interest devolved upon her only surviving brother, Sir William Maynard Gomm. Miss Jane Gomm died in 1822, and the manor thus devolved upon Sir William Maynard Gomm, who held the estate from 1822 till 1875. He was born in Barbadoes in 1784; became a Field-Marshal, Grand Cross of the Bath, and Constable of the Tower. He died on March 15th, 1875, having bequeathed his estates to his widow, Lady Elizabeth Ann Gomm, who thus became Lady of the Manor of Rotherhithe. Lady Gomm only survived her husband for two years; she died on November 30th, 1877, bequeathing the manor in tail to her niece, Emily Blanche Carr; she and her husband, Mr. Francis Culling Carr, late of H.M.'s

Madras Civil Service, assuming the name of Gomm after their name of Carr in pursuance of Lady Gomm's will. Their eldest son, Hubert William Culling Carr-Gomm, was elected, in 1906, M.P. for the Rotherhithe Division of the Parliamentary area of Southwark.

Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century the only wet docks in London were the Howland Great Wet Dock, at the east end of Rotherhithe, and Perry's Dock at Blackwall, the latter a small private concern; ships had, therefore, to load and discharge their cargoes mainly in the River Thames, and a very active business must have been carried on on the banks of the river; people had to live near their work, as there were no railways in those days. They would, naturally, therefore, found churches as near the river as possible. The site of St. Mary's, Rotherhithe, is practically on the river bank. It is probable, although there are no records, that an original Saxon Church stood on the same site, and must have been succeeded by a mediæval church, probably in the early part of the fourteenth century, for the first rector whose name has come down to us was instituted in 1310; and the parishioners, in 1715, when petitioning Parliament for aid to rebuild their dilapidated parish church, speak of the existing structure as having stood for over four hundred years.

The benefice of St. Mary, Rotherhithe, is valued in 20 Edward I, and afterwards, at 20 marcs per annum; at which time it paid a yearly pension of 20s. to the Prior and Convent of Bermondsey. In the Valor of Henry VIII it is rated at £18 per annum, and is charged with the payment of £1 16s. to the King for tenths; 2s. 1d. to the Bishop for synodals; and 7s. 7½d. to the Archdeacon for procurations.

The rectors of this church had license, in 48 Edward III, to amortise two tenements in the Vintry in London to the Abbey of St. Mary de Gratiis on Tower Hill, at a fee-farm of 40s. per annum, which tenements had been granted to the rector and his successors in compensation of certain tithes of land that had been taken away for repairing the banks of the Thames, and in lieu of which they had been hitherto paid out of the Exchequer.

The dilapidated state of the old mediæval Church of St. Mary's, Rotherhithe, had for many years been a cause of grave anxiety and continual expense to the churchwardens and parishioners: and at length it became clear that it must be pulled down and rebuilt on the same site. The present church was erected in 1714-15; the internal fittings comprised galleries all round the church, a three-decker pulpit with rector's desk, reading desk and clerk's desk; high family pews of all shapes and sizes, and a row of benches for the poorer sort in the middle aisle. The four columns in the church are of oak, cased over. The East Window dates from 1805. In 1876 the old pews were removed and uniform open benches with kneeling boards substituted; a large part of the north and south galleries, and of the children's galleries at the west end of the church, was removed, together with the large lobby beneath the organ gallery, where the bread had been distributed each Sunday. The bread hutch was removed into the tower, the open arches of which were now provided with doors so as to enclose the whole tower space. A choir was constructed extending into the body of the church, and a tessellated pavement, gradually ascending by steps from the nave level to the marble pavement of the sanctuary, which led up to the footpace of white marble on which a new

altar-table was set up to replace the existing table, which was removed into the clergy vestry. The choir stalls, with stalls for the clergy, were constructed out of the carved oak which was previously scattered over the church pews.

In the latter part of the year 1888 a further instalment of the scheme of church renovation was carried out, and several important works which had been left over from 1876 were now taken in hand. The two side galleries were entirely removed, and only the great western gallery remains, extending across the entire width of the church. The fourteen great windows were reglazed to a design by Mr. Butterfield, the architect, in bands of rich ruby colour on a ground of yellow-green cathedral glass.

The benefice is a rectory in the Deanery of Southwark, and was originally in the Diocese of Winchester, afterwards of Rochester, until the new Bishopric of Southwark was created in 1905. The Priory of Bermondsey had the first presentation to the benefice, which now vests in the Master, Fellows, and Scholars of Clare College, Cambridge.

The antiquity of the church is proved by the succession list of its Rectors, the first recorded, John de Tocklive, having been instituted on the 28th June, 1310-1. The list is complete to the present day, and numbers forty-six, including the present incumbent, the Reverend J. C. V. Durell.

Amongst the notable men who have held the benefice was Thomas Gataker, who was incumbent from 1611 to 1654, a period of nearly forty-four years, the longest term of any rector. In 1648 he was the first of the forty-

seven ministers who signed a remonstrance to the Army and the General against the design of trying the King.

Perhaps the next most notable rector was the Reverend Edward Blick, who was incumbent from 1835 to 1867. When he came into residence there was only one church in the parish for a population of nearly 13,000. Through his exertions, three new parish churches, besides St. Paul's Chapel-of-ease, were erected to meet the needs of the increased population. He was also instrumental in establishing numerous schools in the parish.

But perhaps the best-remembered incumbent was the late rector, the Reverend Edward Josselyn Beck, M.A., whose ministry extended from 1867 to 1907, the longest tenure of any next to Mr. Gataker. He was a Fellow and Dean of Clare College, Cambridge; Rural Dean of Southwark from 1875 to 1887; and Hon. Canon of Rochester from 1893 to 1905. He set about the erection of a new church in Plough Road, St. Barnabas, which was completed in 1872 from the designs of Mr. Wm. Butterfield, F.I.A., the architect.

The introduction of the Elementary Education Act in 1870 caused a good deal of anxiety to the rector, owing to many of the scholars being attracted from the National to the Board Schools; but during his time not a single Rotherhithe school ceased to exist. At the present time the position of the voluntary schools is, to say the least, precarious; in fact, as voluntary schools, they were practically extinguished by the London Education Act of 1903.

Yet another church, St. Katharine's, in Eugenia Road, on part of the old St. Helena Gardens, was erected by Mr. Beck in 1886, with assistance from the

Ten Churches Fund of the Bishop of Rochester's Diocesan Society, and other sources, to meet the needs of the new residents around the new Southwark Park. Mr. Beck lived to see a great change in the inhabitants of the parish, as nearly all the people of the better class formerly resident in the neighbourhood had, with the facilities offered by the East London Railway, migrated to other districts.

The monuments in the church are both numerous and interesting, and show the quality of the people who formerly inhabited the parish, many of whom belonged to the Naval and Military Services, as well as to the Mercantile Marine.

A certain Captain Henry Wilson, of the Honorable East India Company's service, had brought to England a native prince, named Lee Boo, son of Abba Thulle, king of one of the Pelew Islands in the Western Pacific, to be educated. He, unfortunately, died here from small-pox on the 27th December, 1784, and is buried in the churchyard. The following inscription on a slab in the church records the occurrence:—

“ In the adjacent churchyard lies the body of Prince Lee Boo, son of Abba Thulle, Rupack or King of the Island of Coo-roo-raa, one of the Pelew or Palos Islands, who departed this life at the house of Captain Henry Wilson, in Paradise Row, in this Parish, on the 27th day of December, 1784, aged 20 years. This tablet is erected by the Secretary of State for India in Council to keep alive the memory of the humane treatment shown by the natives to the crew of the Hon'ble East India Company's ship 'Antelope,' which was wrecked off the Island of Coo-roo-raa on the 9th of August, 1783.”

The Prince, when aware of his approaching end, taking Mr. Sharp, the ship's doctor, by the hand and fixing his eyes steadfastly on him, said earnestly: "Good friend, when you go to Pelew, tell Abba Thulle that Lee Boo take much drink to make small-pox go away, but he die; that the Captain and mother very kind—all English very good men; was much sorry he could not speak to the King the number of fine things the English had got."

The registers of the parish date from 1555, and are contained in forty-one volumes. From 1674 to 1854 they have been carefully indexed. The earliest volume, 1555-1630, is of vellum leaves, and contains baptisms, marriages, and burials. With Volume XIII begins the printed registers issued by the King's printers "in pursuance of the Act of Parliament 52 George III, Cap. 146" (passed 28th July, 1812). The occupations of the inhabitants may be seen from these registers.

The Church Plate was catalogued in 1900 under the direction of the Surrey Archæological Society, and comprises the following articles:—

Silver Cup, London Hall-marks of 1619.

Silver Paten, London Hall-marks of 1632.

Ditto, London Hall-marks of 1639.

Silver Flagon, London Hall-marks of 1666.

Silver Cup, London Hall-marks of 1672.

Silver Paten, London Hall-marks of 1672.

Silver Alms Basin, London Hall-marks of 1703.

Two Silver Covers for Cups, London Hall-marks of 1713.

Silver Paten, London Hall-marks of 1715.

Ditto, London Hall-marks of 1715.

Silver Spoon, date about 1740.

Two Silver Alms Plates, London Hall-marks of 1745.
Silver Salver, probably foreign and early seventeenth century.

Beadle's Staff, dated 1808.

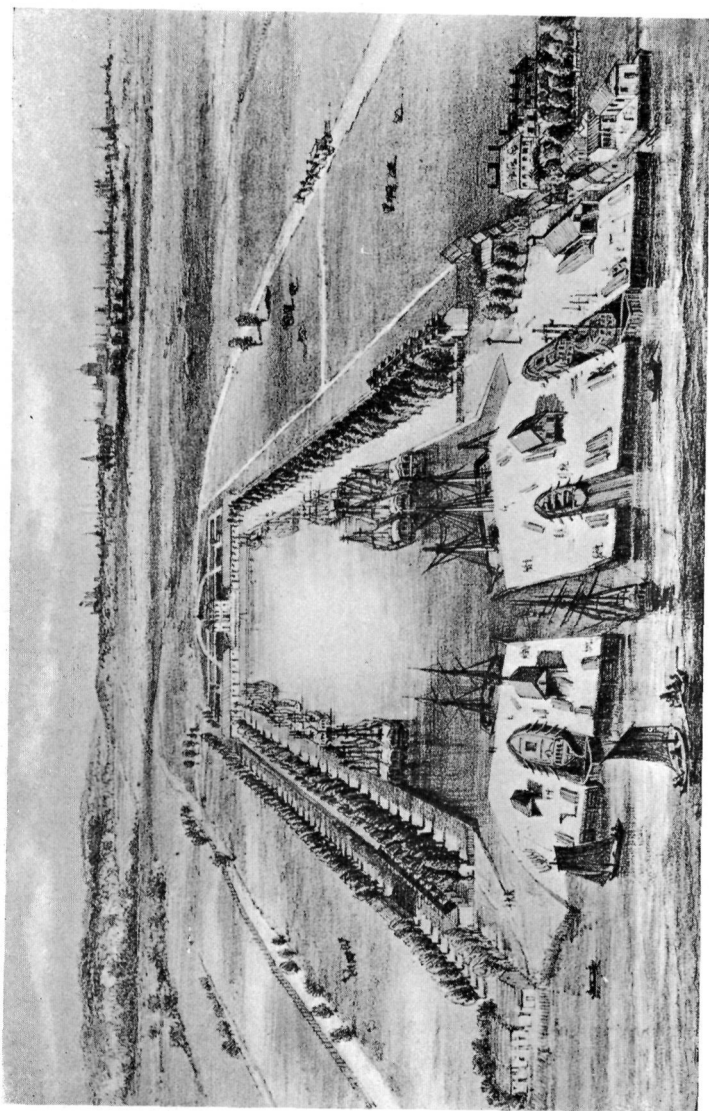
The docks of Rotherhithe are chiefly used by shipping connected with the timber and grain trades, and afford employment for a large number of the parishioners and others. The Howland Great Wet Dock, to which reference has been made, formed the nucleus of the system of docks, and was of very early construction. It is conjectured that it may have been the entrance of the canal cut by Canute the Dane, in the year 1016, when he sought to get his ships past London Bridge. Maitland, in 1739, attempted to trace the course of the canal, and asserted that "its outflux from the River Thames was where the Great Wet Dock below Rotherhithe is situate." In 1525 a list of the King's ships includes the "Henry of Hampton" at Rotherhithe "being of small valour." In the seventeenth century there are various references to ships at Rotherhithe, and to its dock. The place is described between 1670 and 1680 as "a hamlet where there is and long hath been a dock and arsenal where ships are laid up, built and repaired." Two bomb vessels lay there in 1693. A dry dock had been made in the seventeenth century, at the east end of the parish, by the Howland family. This dock ultimately became known as the Commercial Dry Dock, in the occupation of Messrs. John Brodie and Company; it passed, together with an old mansion and all the Howland property, to the Duke of Bedford on his marriage with the heiress of the Howlands of Streatham. On a petition of William, Duke of Bedford, Lady Rachel Russell, relict of Lord William Russell, his son,

and Elizabeth Howland (on behalf of Wriothesley, Marquis of Tavistock, son of the said Lord William and Lady Rachel Russell, and the Marchioness, his wife, daughter of the said Elizabeth), dated 11th February, 1695-6, and setting forth that a dry dock had been made at the expense of £2,500, and praying powers to raise the further sum of £12,000 for making also a wet dock, an Act was passed for that purpose, which received the Royal assent on the 10th April, 1696.

Authorities differ as to the date of construction of this dock. Canon Beck, in his memorials of the parish, puts the date at 1599; and Forrow* states that it actually existed in 1660. Both appear to be wrong, as the Act authorising it was not passed till 1696; and Lysons, in his "Environs of London," states that it was finished in 1700, which would allow four years for its construction.

The description, given above, between 1670 and 1680, applies, not to the Howland Great Wet Dock, but to the Dry Dock, which may well have existed in 1660, although the exact date is not recorded. It is possible that the gutway forming the entrance to Canute's Dyke may have been utilised for the construction of the Dry Dock; but a reference to the Act of Parliament authorising the construction of the Howland Great Wet Dock, which was a Private Act, proves conclusively that the property settled upon trustees for the purpose, consisted of marsh and pasture lands, the various parcels of which were particularised, and totalled 139 acres. The Act was intituled: "An Act to enable Trustees to raise money for making a Wett Dock and improving the Estate of the Marquesse and

* The Thames and its Docks, 1877.



ROTHERHITHE : THE HOWLAND DOCK, IN THE 18TH CENTURY.
FROM FORROW'S "THE THAMES AND ITS DOCKS" (1877).

Marchionesse of Tavistock att Rodderithe in the County of Surrey." From and after March 26th, 1696, the property was to be actually vested and settled in the trustees, William Hambly, of Tooting; Jacob Reynardson, of London, merchant; John Spencer, of Great Stroughton, Hunts; and Richard Petit of Covent Garden.

The dock was 1,070 feet from east to west, 500 feet in width, and had a depth of water of 17 feet. On the development of the Greenland Fisheries in 1725, the South Sea Company took a lease of the property, and the dock was specially laid out for the ships engaged in that trade, and, consequently, was named the Greenland Dock. In 1763 the dock and the adjoining property was sold by John, Duke of Bedford, to Messrs. John and William Wells. In 1806 it was purchased by William Ritchie, Esquire, and thenceforward it was used by vessels from Norway and the Baltic laden with timber, deals, tar, etc. About the year 1807 a Mr. Moore, who owned some forty-five acres of land in the neighbourhood of this dock, projected a company, to be known as the Baltic Dock Company; he subsequently sold his land and transferred the exclusive privileges he had acquired to the promoters of what was afterwards known as the Commercial Dock Company. This company also purchased the Greenland Dock from Mr. Ritchie in 1807. The accompanying view of this dock shows the whaling-ships dismantled and laid up for the winter.

The company gradually acquired the adjoining property, including Lavender Dock, Acorn Pond and Yard, together with Lady Dock and Russia Yard. In 1851 they purchased the East Country Dock.

The Grand Surrey Canal was commenced in the year

1800, but it did not exist as a dock company till 1854. Three years later this company united with the Commercial Company and took the name of the Surrey Commercial Dock Company.

On the passing of the Act of Parliament in 1908 constituting the Port of London Authority, the whole of the property of the Surrey Commercial Dock Company, together with all the other wet docks in the River Thames, excepting the Regents Canal Dock, passed to that authority.

A notice of the Parish of Rotherhithe would be incomplete without a reference to its dry docks, of which it formerly possessed ten. A large business was carried on in these docks up to the year 1890, when they began to decline owing to the large increase in the size of ships, both sailing and steam, and to the construction of dry docks of a larger size farther down the river and in various parts of the world. Of the ten dry docks originally existing, only two now remain—namely, the Horseferry and the Nelson; the other eight have either been filled in or devoted to other purposes, thus throwing out of employment a large number of shipwrights, caulkers, boilermakers, labourers, and other workmen, and causing great loss to the rates of the parish.

The following is a list of the ten docks:—

NAME OF DOCK.	PROPRIETORS.
Bull Head	R. Jarvis and Co.
Prince's	John Brodie and Co.
King and Queen	Dry Docks Corporation of London, Limited.
Upper Globe	J. Stewart and Son, Limited.
Lower Globe	J. West.

NAME OF DOCK.	PROPRIETORS.
Horseferry	J. McDowall and Co.
Lavender	Turner.
Nelson	Mills and Knight.
Commercial	John Brodie and Co.
Clyde	B. M. Lindwall.

There are two great works connected with Rotherhithe which merit a brief notice—namely, the Thames Tunnel, now used by the East London Railway, and the Rotherhithe Tunnel, running from the lower road, Rotherhithe, to Stepney. *The former is so well known* as not to require description. The latter was constructed in 1906 by the London County Council at enormous cost, nearly two millions, for vehicles and foot-passengers.