



"Old Custom House Quay or Old East India Company Wharf" by Samuel Scott, circa 1756. The painting shows an open oil jar standing on the quay in the right foreground, with a closed jar in its straw rope travelling case on the left.

(Photo: Victoria and Albert Museum)

## The Oil Jar as a Shop Sign: an addendum

JOHN ASHDOWN

IT IS extremely pleasing to receive so many letters following the publication of the article on oil jars as shop signs, in the last summer issue, and I am grateful to all those who wrote. Certain of the information received needs to be acknowledged and noted in these pages as an addendum. Gale Canvin, Graham Dawson, Oliver Pearcey, Edwin Masson Phillips, Derek Purcell and J. West (for Lewisham Local History Society) have added four more examples of shops in London and one each at Gillingham, Devonport and Ramsgate with oil jar signs still in position. To my shame I should have known all the London examples but somehow I could not recall them. On the other hand I do not visit Gillingham often, but I did pass through on my way back from Ramsgate recently, only to find Mr. Pearcey's letter awaiting me on

reaching home!

Several people sent corrections and information on shops or jars now lost or demolished. Mr. D. R. Ruthven loaned photographs of examples in the Barbican area; through Mr. West and Mr. Willmot I was able to see details supplied by Messrs. E. R. Goodrich of Stratford; Miss Goshawk and Mr. Grove provided the Maidstone example; Eric Smith kept me up to scratch on Clapham; John Martin supplied details of Acton Lane; and Mr. Rudd told me about Thomas Greenewell of London, Oyleman, buried 1662 at St. Lawrence, Morden, Surrey. The Historic Buildings Division have photographed most of the surviving London shops, and the Ramsgate and Gillingham Libraries provided local details.

## Addendum List of Oil Jars used as Shop Signs

The notation continues from *L.A.* 2 No. 7 p. 169. Numerals denote jars surviving in position in 1974 and letters indicate lost examples.

### GREATER LONDON

#### City of London

1. 32 Aldersgate Street, E.C.1. Robert Dyas Ltd. (oilman, dry salter and colourman) 2 half jars; building now demolished. (Inf. Ruthven)

#### Islington

- m. 132 Whitecross Street, E.C.1. Jolly's Stores (oil and colour shop). One whole and two half jars; now demolished. (Inf. Ruthven)

#### Lambeth

21. 72 Westow Hill, S.E.19. Crystal Palace (now Colorite) 2 half jars fixed above the cornices of the first floor windows, building c. 1870/80 (G.L.C. 74/8/10932/3) (Inf. Dawson)
22. 17 New Park Road, Brixton Hill, S.W.2. McKay Stores; 1 half jar remains (1 lost), building 1870/80. (Inf. Canvin)
- n. 19 Upper Tulse Hill, Brixton Hill, S.W.2. 4 half jars now removed—scars remain. (Inf. Canvin)

#### Lewisham

23. 36 Catford Hill, S.E.6., formerly domestic stores, now Chinese restaurant. 1 half jar remains fixed, 3 whole jars loose (red). (Inf. West)
- o. 123 Lewisham High Street, S.E.13. Smith and Co. (oil dealers). 2 jars; now demolished. (Inf. West)
- p. 81 Woodpecker Road, Deptford, S.E.14. E. R. Goodrich. 2 whole jars; now demolished. (Inf. West)

#### Southwark

- q. 35 Old Kent Road, S.E.1. E. R. Goodrich (Inf. Goodrich/Willmot/West)

#### Tower Hamlets

- r. 208 Bow Road, E.3. E. R. Goodrich; now demolished. (Inf. Goodrich/Willmot/West)
- s. 354 Commercial Road, E.1. E. R. Goodrich (Inf. Goodrich/Willmot/West)

#### Westminster

24. 38 Star Street, Paddington, W.2. Domestic Stores (now closed). 2 whole jars, building c. 1830. (G.L.C. 74/12209) (Inf. Purcell)

### KENT

25. 58 High Street, Gillingham. L. Williamson, electrical engineer, formerly Mence Smith (oilmen) 1903-1961, 4 half jars. (Inf. Pearcey)

## Local Societies

The first list of amendments to the list of local societies published in Vol. 1, No. 9, is as follows:

**Brunei Exhibition Project/Rotherhithe;** Sec. N. Falk, 46 Ainger Road, NW3 3AH (inadvertently included among the 'C's).

**Greenwich and Lewisham Antiquarian Soc.;** Sec. Mrs. D. Mounsey, 16 Chesterfield Gardens, SE10 8HL.

**Hornsey Historical Soc.;** Sec. Mrs. Williams, 16 Barnard Hill, N.10.

**London Nat. Hist. Soc., Arch. Sec.;** Chmn. J. Cresswell, 142 Harborough Road, SW16 2XW.

- t. 19 High Street, Maidstone, formerly Mence Smith. 2 jars now removed. (Inf. Grove)
26. 49 Addington Street, Ramsgate, formerly Mence Smith, now gallery. 2 half jars, building 18/19 century Ramsgate vernacular. (Inf. Purcell)

### DEVON

27. 6 Cumberland Street, Devonport, Plymouth. 2 whole jars placed in semi-circular headed recesses, building c. 1820/30; does not appear to have been an oil shop, but was tobacconist in 1893 and 1902 (Inf. Phillips)

### SCOTLAND

- u. 231 High Street, Old Town, Edinburgh. James Gilliespie (tobacconist). Whole jar now removed to Shop Signs Room of Huntley House, Museum, Canongate.

The following corrections can be made to the first list in *L.A.* 2 No. 7:

Ealing 6—formerly Ladd's Domestic Stores. 1 half jar, building c. 1890/1900. (G.L.C. 74/11948/9)

Lambeth 11—building is 1792 but did not become oil jar shop until 1880.

Lewisham 13—this has 1 whole jar which is the survivor of 3 erected in 1912.

The revised list brings the total of shops with jars surviving in London to 22 (at least one set, Southwark 14, has been removed since 1973) with other examples surviving at High Wycombe, Ramsgate, Gillingham and Devonport. All these new examples appear to be jars of type 1(a). Further details of lost signs have filled out the London framework of distribution but this aspect is endless in potential. The useful additions are those in Tower Hamlets which suggests the East London blank area on my location map (in last summer's issue) may be partly due to chance.

The most valuable additions however are the three in Kent which suggest that the High Wycombe example might not be so isolated as it first appeared. Are there other examples to be located in the Home Counties, or are these outliers expressions of London inspired traders moving out along the main routes of communication? The fact that the Gillingham, Maidstone and Ramsgate shops ended their days as branches of the Peckham based Mence Smith chain must be significant. It should be stressed that compared with the former density of examples in central London, the provincial shops with signs are few in number.

The Devonport jars at Plymouth appear to have been connected with tobacconists rather than oil and colourmen. This produces a parallel with the use of an oil jar by a tobacconist in the Old Town at Edinburgh, now removed to the Huntley House Museum. Further examples of the use of large jars by tobacconists may be forthcoming. I should be particularly grateful should anyone be able to provide any European examples of jars used as shop signs. Please write via the Editor.