

FUNDRAISING FOR ST ANNE'S LIMEHOUSE

Some insight into the early decades of church maintenance may be provided by eighteenth century churchwardens' reports in the Tower Hamlets Local History Library not yet consulted.

1841

A surveyor's report specifies urgent repairs to the ceiling of the church, 'which in some parts is in such a state as to endanger the lives of those who sit under it'. The vestrymen refuse to set a parish rate to cover the cost of repairs but are persuaded by the diocese to do so, the work being undertaken in the spring of 1842.

1848

Joseph Adams, 'a staunch dissenter', is elected churchwarden. Discovering that the church has no insurance cover, he urges the vestry to take out a policy. They refuse.

January - Adams prevails upon the parish to purchase £5,000 insurance cover from the Imperial Fire Office for a premium of £131. 4s 8d.

Good Friday Fire - The roof falls in and the nave is gutted.

May 20th *John Bull*, p.2: 'The parishioners have determined upon restoring the Church as far as practicable to its original appearance; for that purpose they have entered into an agreement which will, in all probability, involve the expenditure of least £12,000.

1850

Towards this sum they have received £4,000 from the Insurance effected in the Imperial Fire Office, and they are anxious to raise the deficiency without further burdening a parish already overweighted with taxation imposing upon it a building debt for an indefinite number of years. The population of the parish is 25,000, occupying a space larger than 250 acres of land. The bulk of the population consists of labourers, employed in the Docks and the River; consequently the pressure of the poor rates upon property is more than usually heavy; and while the parishioners not attempt disguise their own liability, nor to shrink from performing their duty under the terrible catastrophe which has befallen their House of God, they cannot help thinking there are many wealthy individuals who, from admiration of the



1850

structure itself, or from sympathy with the sufferers, or from past associations with the parish and its maritime population, or, lastly, from pure love of the Church, may disposed to lend a helping hand in raising this "Daughter of Zion" from the ashes of deformity with which she is now covered.

With this view the public are respectfully informed that subscriptions may be paid to "THE LIMEHOUSE CHURCH RESTORATION FUND" either at the Bank of England; at the London Joint Stock Bank.'

1851

February - Bishop Blomfield of London writes urging the Rector, Rev. E.R. Jones, to initiate a private parliamentary bill enabling the parish to take out a loan on the security of the rates and pay it off by yearly instalments. He notes : 'There is no doubt but that the parishioners of St Anne Limehouse are legally bound to restore their parish church, and that too immediately, as no longer interruption should take place in the celebration of divine worship than is absolutely unavoidable.' In further correspondence with a local resident the bishop complains that the parishioners of St Anne's are being dilatory in restoring their fine church and says the archdeacon should use legal process to get the work completed. He advises the Rector to use a temporary pulpit and desk and set a moderate rate to allow completion of the work by stages.

1856

October 10th - *Morning Post* reports on a public meeting of St Anne's parishioners in the National Schoolroom in Copenhagen Place. It is chaired by the Scottish Presbyterian Duncan Dunbar, owner of Dunbar Wharf on Narrow Street. He gives a rousing summary of progress since the fire: the young men of the parish have collected the large sum of £1,901; another substantial contribution has come from a Mr. Biker, 'who might be considered the father of the parish'; Henry Green of Blackwall has given 100 guineas; they are now only £1,500 short of their target, and he calls upon local Dissenters to play their part. John Dicker, hon. secretary to the Limehouse Church Restoration Society, reports that they have raised £1,512 16s. 6d. in two years, including a substantial contribution from a group of local working men. This sum will cover the restoration of the lobbies, door-ways, christening-pew and screen, and also provide a



handsome and suitable pulpit. All that remains is restoration of pews, chancel, and other parts, for which a further £1,500 will be raised by voluntary subscription. The meeting raises £700 of that target.

October 25th *The Builder* p588 reports that the restoration fund has raised £800 and needs a further £700 to complete the edifice. 'A penny subscription collected at the church doors on Sunday before last realised upwards of £10'.

December - St Anne's is formally reopened by the Bishop of London. Apart from the insurance pay-out of £4,200 (plus £800 for the organ) and £1,150 levied on the rates, most of the cost of the rebuilding had been raised from voluntary contributions. Brasenose College, the Patron, has contributed £500, and the Bishop has made two gifts of £50 each.



May 19th - The *London Daily Telegraph & Courier* reports on a fund-raising drive by the Rector of Limehouse, Rev. F. N. Thicknesse: 'An endeavour is being made to raise £1,800, Sir Arthur Blomfield having stated that for that sum the church may be thoroughly restored. Already some £1,100 has been received in the poor East End neighbourhood, and the rector now appeals to a wider circle. Donations may be sent any office of the London and County Bank, for the Limehouse Parish Church Restoration Fund, or to the Rector of Limehouse. Sir Arthur Blomfield's reordering of the chancel is funded and completed over the summer of 1891 and the church reopens on October 8th.



Autumn - The church tower is repaired at a cost of £250, half from the Bishop of London via the diocesan share of the City Parochial Charities Fund. A further grant of £25 is made from the same source in the spring of 1900. In 1906 the Diocesan Estates Committee make a grant of £100 towards repair of the great east window, and another £100 eight years later towards unspecified repairs.



January - The City Parochial Charities Fund contributes £200 towards the £1,043 cost of new heating & electric lighting. In June 1923 they make a further repairs grant of £500.



1923

October - The journal *Architecture, a magazine of architecture and the applied arts and crafts* carries an appeal from the Rector to tackle woodworm in the nave roof. 'To repair the damage thus caused and to carry out sundry repairs to the church clock, said to be the highest church clock in London, has involved the parishioners in a bill of over £1,000. St Anne, Limehouse, is one of Hawksmoor's finest works, and is well known to all readers of Dickens. Contribution towards the cost are welcomed by the Rev. J. G. Birch, at Limehouse Rectory, E14. '

1931

February - The City Parochial Charities Fund contributes £250 towards a church repair bill of £981.

1951

£300 is granted from the City Parochial Charities (Ecclesiastical) Fund towards a £700 programme repairs to roof gutters, walls & flooring, due partly to dry rot.

1961

The Hawksmoor Committee is formed by Elizabeth and Wayland Young to publicise the work of Nicholas Hawksmoor, with restoration of Christ Church Spitalfields and St Anne's Limehouse as top priorities.

1966

Faculty is granted for 'various repairs' {no further details as special authorisation is required from the Diocesan Registry for access to post-1963 papers}.

1976

Care for St Anne's is formed by the incoming Rector, Rev. Christopher Idle, to relieve the PCC of the burden of stewardship for a historic monument. The Committee has an independent chairman and combines external members and parishioners.

1984

Care for St Anne's is established as a legal trust, registered charity no. 288889, with the object of 'restoration and future maintenance of Limehouse Paish Church (St Anne's) Commercial Rd, as once of the major examples of European baroque architecture. The deeds require half the trustees to be listed on the electoral roll as parish members.



1980-
2002

Care for St Anne's raises £1,845,000 for three phases of work, covering: repair of exterior masonry, strengthening the roof structure, creation of parish room in the crypt, repair of churchyard perimeter wall, railings and gates, landscaping, installation of a ring of eight bells, and restoration of the tower clock and organ. Donors and grantmakers include the former London Docklands Development Corporation, English Heritage, LB Tower Hamlets, Getty Grant Program, Baring Foundation, Headley Trust, Sainsbury Charitable Trust, Manifold Trust, Heritage of London Trust, Pilgrim Trust, and 250 individual members of the Friends of St Anne's.

MH

Chair of Care for St Anne's

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