

WASC 2132

Poem

Wallham Abbey
ca 1812'

Samuel Bligh
[incl. ref. to
Mill explosion]

Waltham Abbey Historical
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central buildings round the cloisters) so that it can be explored on the ground. This is of course a long term project but in the meantime it is vital that the integrity of the precinct should not be spoilt by piecemeal planning. The ultimate aim should be borne steadily in mind by those who find themselves the guardians for the time being of this priceless piece of England's heritage.

Ken Barcombe 1972

PASTURE RIGHTS IN EPPING FOREST

Minnie Fenton

The ancient practice of pasturing animals goes back in records to the 8th Century, when reference to this was made by Ethelbald, who ruled Mercia 716 – 757.

Much treasured by the common folk was the 'Right of Pannage'. Pigs were allowed to range freely and feed on acorns, roots and beech mast. In fact they became effective ploughs and fertilisers as they grubbed through the leaf-mould. The pigs were ringed, and allowed on forest wastes from 15 days after Michaelmas (4th September – 8th November) when fruit was on the ground.

A 1790 Forest Court order allowed two cows or one horse for 'every £4 rental per annum' But thanks to a charitable trust the poorer families were excluded from this payment. This helped towards preserving the privilege of every family in the Parish, to take advantage of the right of 'Common of Pasture.' However, between 21st June and 21st July a 'Fence Law' prevailed stating all cattle were to be removed from the forest whilst the deer were left to drop their young. Those who disobeyed, had their animals impounded during this period and auctioned off at a local market.

MEMORIES OF WALTHAM

The following poem, written in 1870, has recently been received from Derek Low a descendant of the **Bligh** family who were resident in Waltham at the end of the 18C and throughout the 19C.

There were at least three generations of Samuel Blighs. **Samuel Bligh (1)** 1777-1829, the father of the poet, trained as a watch maker in London. He moved to Waltham Abbey in 1801 and became a draper. On 27th December 1802 he married Elizabeth Stammers, whose sister Sarah was the wife of William Brackett, the Minister of the Baptist Church in Paradise Row from 1797 – 1802. In 1812 **Samuel (1)** was ordained as Minister at Potters Bar Baptist Church, later moving to Whitechapel as an ironmonger.

Samuel and Elizabeth Bligh had 4 children, Elizabeth, (b. 19.11.1804) **Samuel (2)**, (11.2.1806) John (7.12.1807) and Sarah (24.3.1809) all born at Waltham, and registered in the register of non-conformist births at Dr Williams Library.

Samuel (2)'s poems were published privately just after his death in 1885, by his son **Samuel Edmund Bligh** (1842 – 1925).

WALTHAM ABBEY circa 1812

I remember, I remember the town where I was born,
Its antiquated Market Place, its Abbey's ruined form.
I remember, I remember the ivy-clad great tower,
With its ancient Gothic gateway, that standeth to this hour;
The ancient bridge that spans the stream – the millstream clear and bright
Where oft I caught the sticklebacks by morn's enchanting light.
I remember, I remember where I was taught to spell,
Miss Canon's little Infant School – she lived to love me well;
I remember, I remember that memorable day
When with reports like thunder the mills were blown away.

I remember, I remember, my early youth's play – places
And Bucknall's School upon Farm Hill, where oft I made wry faces.
And never can my heart forget the Chapel, old and square,
For twice on every Sabbath day our mother took us there.
And never will my ear forget my father's heavy bass,

With full-toned sonorous depth and strength – it shook the very place.
A well-known townsman comes to mind – powdered old Dr Carter¹
He very often bled the folk, and gave them physic ‘arter.’
Another I remember well, the beadle of the town,
Old Starr², whose heavy knobby stick could knock a bullock down.

I remember, I remember, the Green Yard, where content,
Dear old John Thompson³ kept his shop, and there I often went.
That shop is open still; his son now ninety years of age,
Is brisk as any boy of twelve – I’ll read to him this page.
‘Old Bungy Mason’⁴ well I knew, Joe Jessop⁵ and his father,
And Cox⁶ the butcher with bull head; and Law⁷ the man of lather.
I remember, I remember, John Brown⁸ the pastry cook;
Oft when I passed his savoury shop, I stopped to have a look.
Grand Mr Peake⁹ the auctioneer, ‘Old buckish,’ such a swell!
He looked as if he’d knock boys down; sworn brokers knew him well.
What is it to a stranger, the town where I was born?
And what the places and the men that I have freely drawn?
To me they shall have interest as lasting as my life,
For there I spent my childhood’s days, and there I won my wife.

¹ **Dr John Carter** 1760 – 1816 is described by William Winters as ‘a surgeon of this town’, he lived for some years in Sun Street. He and his wife Ann both attended the Baptist Church.

² So far no reference has been found to **Starr the Beadle**.

³ There are at least two **John Thompsons** who had a grocers and tea dealers shop in Greenyard, the elder 1754 – 1838, and a son 1792 – 1845. Neither of these fits in with dates mentioned in the poem – maybe this is poetic licence, or maybe another generation. The Thompsons were also Baptists, and when the Strict and Particular branch broke away from the main church in 1824 they met at the house of John Thompson in Greenyard. After the Declaration of Indulgence in 1671 Protestant dissenters could apply to have houses licensed for public worship, and according to Winters ‘John Thompson licensed his house in the Greenyard, and three sermons were preached there every Lord’s day.’

⁴ ‘**Old Bungy**’ **Mason** is William Mason, a brewer who died in 1820 aged 78. He too was a Baptist, and his massive tomb, ornamented with heraldic bearings, is one of the few still visible in the graveyard on the south side of the Chapel.

⁵ **Cox the Butcher** is Philip Cox who according to the Piggotts Trade Directories for 1823-4, 1826-7, and 1832-4 had a shop in Highbridge Street.

⁶ **Joe Jessop** who died in 1859 aged 72 was an attorney of Highbridge Street, one of the family firm who practised in Waltham until late in the 20th century as Jessop and Gough Solicitors, (now Curwens)

⁷ **Law the man of lather** had a barbers and hairdressers shop on the south side of Sun Street. It appears there were two Laws, Matthew and Robert - presumably father and son.

⁸ **John Brown** the pastry cook,- the location of this shop has not been established.

⁹ **Grand Mr Peake** the auctioneer died in October 1834 aged 58, he had premises in Sun Street.

TULIP TREE

Since his visit to Waltham for our 50th Anniversary Celebrations Sir Hereward Wake has expressed the desire to plant a tulip tree in the Lea Valley Park, on the site of the Old Denny Mansion, where the Wake family were resident in the 1730s. Arrangements are in hand with the relevant authorities. (We are sorry to hear that Sir Hereward has recently broken his arm, - we wish him a speedy recovery).