



History of Bread Street Ward Club.

What is a City of London Ward Club?

In days gone by, the City was residential as well as being a place of business and trade. As times progressed and communications improved, many of the people who had worked and lived in the City moved house to suburban areas. Some who had moved regretted the passing of the old neighbourliness and the loss of the active community life of which they had formed part.

Accordingly, they began to create Ward Clubs enabling them to *meet* their business neighbours socially. The first 'modern' Ward Club was formed as long ago as the 18th century. Bread Street's Club is *one* of the *newer*, re-formed in 1967.

A word or two on Wards themselves might at this point be of interest. For local government purposes, the City has always been organised into areas known as Wards. In Saxon times the City was in reality a small independent federated state of wards (holding Wardmotes) with its governing body, a "folk mote", the predecessor of the present Common Council. Even after the Battle of Hastings the City maintained its independence; William the Conqueror only gaining possession of it by means of a Treaty with the City's Burgesses. Today there are 25 Wards each being represented by an Alderman and members of the Court of Common Council, the complete Council providing the civic government of the Corporation of London.

Where is Bread Street Ward?

Our Ward, one of the smallest in the City, covers 4 hectares, or 10 acres, to the east of St Paul's (total area of the City is 274 hectares, or 677 acres). The Ward is roughly square in shape, and, as shown on the map, bounded by Cheapside, the buildings on the east side of Bread Street, through Cannon Street, Distaff Lane and New Change. City boundaries were fixed long ago, so that today they sometimes run through modern buildings, such as Bow Bells House, part of which is in Cordwainer Ward!

The Wren church of St Mildred in Bread Street, said to be the finest un-restored example in the City was, with almost everything else in our Ward, destroyed in the blitz of the Second World War.

All Hallows church once stood on the east side of Bread Street. It was burned down in the Great Fire and rebuilt, only to be pulled down in 1876-77. In Henry VIII's reign two priests of this church had a most unpriestly quarrel in which *one* of them was wounded. Both were imprisoned and made to walk barefoot in penance from St Paul's through the City.

Two other churches were in the Ward, which today has none. They were St Margaret Moyses and St John the Evangelist. Neither survived the Great Fire.

Three Livery Companies had halls in the Ward. The Cordwainers, shoemakers by trade who were so called because of their use of the leather of Cordoba: the Fishmongers, who traded in Friday Street which was so named because fish was much in demand on Fridays; and the Salters whose wares were obviously in demand by the nearby fishmongers.

In Cheapside, on the south side between Old Change and Bucklersbury, was Silversmith's Row, partly in the Ward. Built in 1491 by Thomas Wood, a silversmith and sheriff, this was a row of splendid houses and shops four stories high, "beautified towards the street with the silversmiths'

arms and likenesses of Woodmen, in memory of his name, riding on monstrous beasts, all richly painted and gilt".

The Bank of England's post-war building, most of which is in our Ward, is appropriately sited. Old Change, close by, was so called from the King's Exchange where bullion was kept for coinage. In Friday Street the Scottish financier William Paterson, whose idea it was to found the Bank, is said to have met friends each week at, strange to relate, the Wednesday Club.

In addition to some of the people already mentioned, others of note lived in Bread Street ward. Of interest are:-

Sir Nicholas Brembre "the worthie and puissant man of the City" was a collector of customs for the Port of London and at one time employed Geoffrey Chaucer for his comptroller. He was an Alderman of the Ward, was a Lord Mayor of London (1377/78 & 1383-86) and was the chief supporter among the citizens of Richard II. Although popular with his supporters, he was tyrannous during his mayoralty of 1383/84, among other things executing a Cordwainer for complicity in a riot in Cheapside. He had powerful enemies and was eventually vanquished by them, being impeached for Treason by his archenemy the Duke of Gloucester. Notwithstanding his known support of the Monarch, he was executed in 1388.

The poet John Donne (1572-1631) was born in the Ward as was the eminent poet John Milton (1608-1674) in his father's house in Bread Street, close to the junction with Cheapside. He was baptised at All Hallows.

Thomas Carpenter, a haberdasher, who lived in Friday Street and who died in 1731, left a sum of £1,000 in trust to assist poor young men in the Ward of Bread Street to establish themselves in business. Later the Fund was extended to assist in the education of children whose parents are residents or employed in the Ward of Bread Street. Trustees administer the funds, which have of course grown considerably and from which numerous educational grants have been made. Some of the present Trustees are members of the Bread Street Ward Club.

Percival Pott, (1714-88), lived in Watling Street and was a notable surgeon at St Bartholomew's Hospital. In medical circles his name still has world-wide fame. The term Pott's fracture is commonly applied to the compound variety of broken ankle which he sustained "as he was riding in Kent Street, Southwark; he was thrown from his horse, and suffered a compound fracture of the leg, the bone being forced down through the integuments (skin). Conscious of the dangers attendant on fractures of this nature and thoroughly aware how much they may be increased by rough treatment or improper position, he would not suffer himself to be moved until he had made the necessary dispositions. He sent to Westminster, then the nearest place, for two chairmen to bring their poles, and patiently lay on the cold pavement, it being in the middle of January, until they arrived. In this situation he purchased a door, to which he made them nail their poles. When all was ready he caused himself to be laid on it, and was carried through Southwark, over London Bridge, to Watling Street, near St Paul's, where he had lived for some time. At a consultation of surgeons the case was thought so desperate as to require immediate amputation. Mr Pott convinced that no one could be a proper judge in his own case, submitted to their opinion, and the proper instruments were actually got ready, when Mr Nourse (his former master and then colleague at St Bartholomew's Hospital), who had been prevented from coming sooner, fortunately entered the room. After examining the limb he conceived there was a possibility of preserving it; an attempt to save it was acquiesced in, and succeeded:'

Sir Richard Ford, who died in 1678 and was Lord Mayor 1670/71, Sir Richard Hoare, who founded a bank, was Lord Mayor in 1712/13 and died in 1718, Brass Crosby, Lord Mayor in 1770/71 and Ralph Holland, Alderman from 1435-44 all have a colourful tale to tell. The above mentioned are obviously only a sample of the many famous/notorious characters connected with the Ward. Owing to lack of space it is impossible to mention all the others.

The City and our own Ward have inevitably over the years been changed beyond recognition. Amidst all the change we in Bread Street Ward Club are glad to continue a tradition by having our own Ward Club.

[ABOUT THE WARD OF BREAD STREET - CITY of LONDON]

Original researched and compiled in 1982 by J Derriman and C M G Durston, past Chairmen of the Ward Club. Revised and updated January 2001 by Angus Ross and Michael Evans, recent Chairmen of the Ward Club. Acknowledgements - Thanks are due to the Clarendon Press for their permission to quote the text on "Percival Pott" which has been extracted from page 20 of "Dictionary of National Biography from the Earliest Times to 1900, 1921-1922 edition; also to the Corporation of London for their permission to quote passages on the sale of bread from The Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London" and from "Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London".]