

THE STAR BREWHOUSE, PRUSON'S ISLAND, WAPPING

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Introduction

This history of the Star Brewhouse in Wapping is the outcome of research by the author into his maternal family's past.¹ His great great great grandfather was John Brown (1755-1840), who changed his name from Willson after a family quarrel, probably concerning an estate in Bromley, Surrey, his older brother was to sell in 1795. Their father was William Willson. He inherited a third share of a brewery in Wapping, just east of the City walls, when his uncle, Henry Raine, died in 1738.

Henry's sister Elizabeth married Henry Willson, a cooper, in 1713, and had just one child quite late in their marriage. William was baptised in the parish of St. Dunstan on 27 August 1725. The family was living near Frying-Pan Stairs in Wapping and his father was doubtless providing cooerage for his brother-in-law's brewery and neighbouring maritime businesses. Elizabeth died in 1733 and Henry a year later in 1734. At his death Henry appointed Henry Raine and his sister Ann Rogers as the guardians of their eight-year-old son William. Henry sent him to boarding school until he could be apprenticed at the Star Brewhouse in 1739.

Henry Raine was a successful brewer and a devout Christian. He built a Charity School a short distance from the Star Brewhouse, where he lived until he built a fine mansion for himself in Woodford, Essex, in 1714. He married Sarah Petre from a well-known Catholic family in eighteenth-century Essex, but she died six months later in February 1725. Henry never remarried and his charity schools were to become the main beneficiaries of the wealth and properties he accrued through his brewing business. Raine's Foundation School is still

thriving and is now located in Bethnal Green. The original charity school building has survived unscathed for almost 300 years and is the oldest secular building in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, apart from the Tower of London.

Nothing now remains of the Star Brewhouse except the principal streets that would have surrounded it. However, happily, it has been possible to piece together much of its unique story from contemporary documents.



Figure 1. A bust of Henry Raine, kept at Raine's Foundation School.

Wapping

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the area immediately to the east of the City walls was home to many people involved in the maritime industries. Much of the land beyond that and adjacent to the river was marsh in the sixteenth century, but an Act of Parliament was passed in 1536 to enable a Dutchman, Cornelius Vanderdelfe, to drain 130 acres. By another Act of 1543/44, Wapping Marsh was to be divided between Vanderdelfe and its original owners, but he died owing money to Richard Hill, a mercer. Hill took over Vanderdelfe's share, which gave rise to litigation in the next century because no one was sure which half he owned.

The landowners beside the river were obliged to maintain the bank so that the area behind it was not flooded. However, in 1565 and 1571 the river broke through and caused a great deal of damage, so the decision was taken to allow the erection of buildings to secure the bank. Wapping in the Wose or Oose - ie, in the wash or drain - was described by John Stow in 1598:

From this Precinct of St. Katharine, to Wappin in the Wose and Wappin it self, the usual Place of Execution for hanging of Pirates and Sea-Rovers, at the low Water Mark, there to remain till three Tides had overflowed them, was never a House standing within these Forty Years: but (since the Gallows being after removed farther off) is now a continual Street, or rather a filthy straight Passage, with Lanes and Alleys of small Tenements or Cottages, inhabited by Saylor and Victuallers, along by the River of Thames, almost to Radcliff, a good Mile from the Tower.²

To ensure the recovered land was preserved, the owners were made responsible for maintaining the ditches, sluices and embankment. It was in their interest to improve their properties and within a few years there were gardens, orchards, meadows, with water-mills, and ropewalks (long covered pathways where the material used in the construction of rope could be laid out) intersected by green lanes leading to fields and open countryside to the north and east.

Friday the 24th of July 1629. King Charles having hunted a Stag or Hart from Wansted in Essex, killed him in Nightingale Lane, in the Hamlet of Wappin, in a Garden belonging to one who had some Damage among his Herbs, by Reason the Multitude of People there assembled suddenly.³

According to folklore, the king, still in his saddle, took a refreshing draught of ale at the Red Lion Inn at Wapping. Brewing was one of the more important London industries and traditionally this had taken place just outside the city walls, south of what are now St. Katharine's Docks.

Below *St. Catherine's*, on the river side, stood the great breweries, or *Bere House*, as it is called in the map published in the first volume of the *Civitates Orbis*. They were subject to regulations as early as the reign of Henry VII.; who, in 1492, licenses *John Merchant*, a *Fleming*, to export fifty tons of ale called *Berre*. And in the same reign, one *Geffry Gate*, probably an officer of the king's, spoiled the brewhouses at *St. Catherine's* twice, either for sending too much abroad unlicensed, or for brewing it too weak for their home customers.⁴

When construction began on St. Katharine's dock in 1825 over 1,200 houses had to be pulled down, but Hoare's brewery, formerly the Red Lion Brewery, escaped the destruction. From as far back as the end of the fifteenth century there had existed on that spot a public 'brewhouse' where the citizens of London could bring their malt and raw material, and for a fee, or license, paid to the Government, brew their own ales.⁵

The Star Brewhouse

Henry Raine's Star Brewhouse, and that of his father and Anthony Bond's before him in the 1680s, was located just south of what was known as Pruson's Island, bounded by Wapping Dock to the south and Green Dragon Alley to the east. 'The Island' formed two precincts in 1693/94 when the *Four Shillings in the Pound Aid* was being assessed and was probably called an island because the area was slightly higher than surrounding land; as the marshes were drained they also dropped. From current topographical maps the area is still about 20 to 30 feet above sea level.

As for its name, 'Pruson' (Spruson, Prusom, Prusion, Prussen, and even Prussian) could have been that of Edward Pruson, who owned a 50-ton ship in 1625, the 'Pilgrim, of London', and was given a warrant to issue letters of marque or commissions to take pirates.⁶ Hildebrand Pruson supplied sails to the East India Company in the early 1620s, until he was dismissed



Figure 2. One of the earliest panoramic drawings of London to capture something of its size in the seventeenth century. It was drawn by Wenceslas Hollar in 1647 and shows the area of St. Katharine's, just to the east of the Tower. Although the perspective is exaggerated, Wapping Stepney lies beyond St. Katharine's in the forefront and continues through Shadwell towards Ratcliff in the distance. Reproduced with kind permission of wikipedia.org



Figure 3. This map drawn by William Morgan in 1682 shows New Crane Stairs and King Edward Stairs. Between them, the heavier lines seem to outline the boundary of the parish of St. George-in-the-East, created in 1729, and were drawn on the map at a later date. Reproduced with kind permission of wikimedia.org



Figure 4. The first map to provide any useful information about Wapping Stepney was by John Strype in 1720, based on John Stow's A Survey of London in 1598. Frying-Pan Stairs is not marked, but it was located where the parish of St. John bordered the parish of Stepney at the river (to the right or east of King Edward Stairs in the bottom map and to the left or west of New Crane Stairs in the top map). Reproduced with kind permission of the Stuart London Project at hrionline.ac.uk and Motco Enterprises Ltd, motco.com

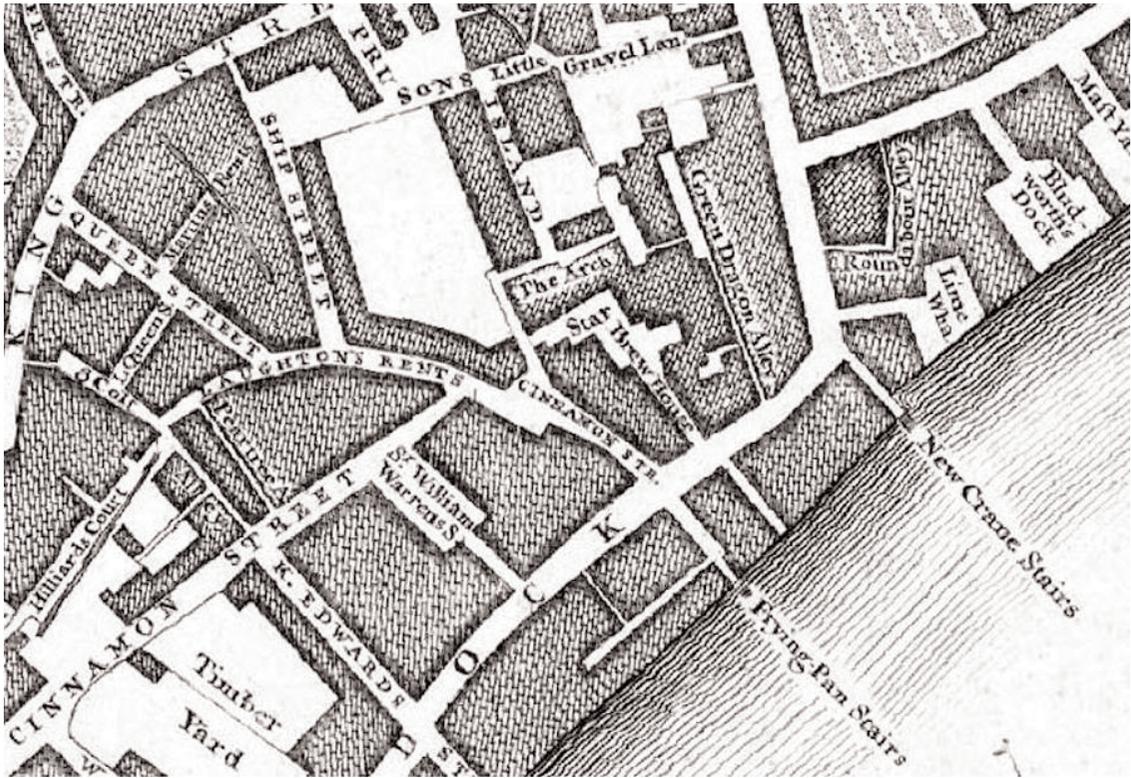


Figure 5. The first detailed map of London was by John Rocque in 1740. Here the 'Star Brew House' is shown clearly, as well as Frying-Pan Stairs. Frying-Pan Alley was the extension of Cinnamon Street (now Hilliard's Court) south of Wapping Dock (now Wapping High Street). Reproduced with kind permission of locatinglondon.org

from its service on 17 March 1624 for contempt⁷ and various other abuses.⁸

According to a celebrated trial in 1684,⁹ Peter Osborne conveyed what was then called the 'Breach, &c.' to (James) Woodshaw in the 25th year of Elizabeth I (1583). Presumably the Breach was so named because at this point the Thames broke through and flooded the drained marshland. It was then estimated as three (not exceeding four) acres, 'butting East on a Sluce, South on the Thames, North on Wapping Marsh, West on a piece of Ground next abutting and adjoining on a certain Way of Lane there, called Gravel Lane.' This is shown clearly in the map of the area (Fig. 7) that was subject to litigation in 1684. James Woodshaw conveyed it to Richard Glover in 1604 and his son Richard inherited it in 1616. It was during the Glovers' ownership that either Edward or Hildebrand Pruson leased the land, and doubtless serviced ships at anchor in the Thames off

New Crane Stairs, or Frying-Pan Stairs if they existed at that time. On 12 March 1661, Hildebrand passed a grant of land in the North and West Fens in Lincolnshire,¹⁰ but it was reassigned in August, implying he had died.¹¹

Meanwhile the land making up Pruson's Island was conveyed to (George) Warren on 26 March 1646 and he sold it to Richard Lloyd and John Wicken soon after. In April 1649 they sold it to William Crowder, Thomas Jordan, Thomas Horton and John Jolliff, trustees for Rebecca Whichcot, 'late the wife of Richard Glover'. By 1680 only John Jolliff was still alive, and the land was held by him and his son and heir William in trust for the heirs of Rebecca Whichcot. However, in 1679 Lady Ivy claimed and won title to this land by right of her grandfather John Stepkins, a wealthy London brewer, who she said had received it from Richard Hill, even though the heirs of Rebecca Whichcot could show they had held it by 'Copy of Court-Roll' since Edward VI's



Figure 6. The boundaries of the parishes to the east of the Tower help to make sense of the area. St. George-in-the-East was only formed in 1729, but the most important area to note is its boundary with the river between the parishes of St. John's Wapping and St. Paul's Shadwell. Reproduced with kind permission of wikipedia.org

time (1537-1553). The 'Famous Tryall' of 1684 was about her claim to land held by the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's in Shadwell and resulted in a hearing at the Court of King's Bench in front of Judge Jeffreys, who gained notoriety a year later as the 'hanging judge' when he had 160 to 170 rebels executed for treason after they joined the Duke of Monmouth's unsuccessful rebellion. During the trial, Lady Ivy was accused of 'finding' forged deeds to prove her claim, which led to the heirs of Rebecca Whichcot rebutting her claim in print in 1687.

It is possible that John Stepkins was the first person to establish a brewhouse on Pruson's Island, but Rowland Raine was the first to be recorded as 'Brewer' at Frying-Pan Stairs in 1688 when his son John was baptised. Anthony Bond was also brewing there in February 1693 when he took Henry, another of Rowland's sons, as his apprentice. Bond was assessed in 1693/94 at £13 tax for properties with a rental value of £65 and stock worth £300 in the Frying-Pan Stairs precinct.¹² By 1709 Henry was supplying the Navy with beer from a brewhouse on the Island, but it is not known if it was Bond's original brewhouse. The site lay close to the Island 'Head' north of Wapping Street on the plan in Fig. 7; the

gap of 114 feet between the two drainage sluices coincides with the 53-foot river frontage of the parish of St. George, created in 1729.

In 1746 the Star Brewhouse and Frying-Pan Stairs were clearly identified in the map by John Rocque, but the parish boundaries were omitted. However, in Greenwood's map of 1827 Frying-Pan Stairs is missing, but the parish boundaries are included. By comparing the two maps (Fig. 8) it is possible to identify the outline of the Star Brewhouse in both, with Green Dragon Alley marked in the 1746 map and still shown in 1827. Cinnamon Street in both maps curves round to join Wapping Dock (Wapping Street in Greenwood's map), enclosing the Brewhouse site between its lower east side and the west side of Green Dragon Alley.

Both maps show the open triangular area in the middle of the site. From the 1827 map, it is clear that the buildings to the west of that area and east of Cinnamon Street were in the parish of St. George, and those to the east of that area and abutting Green Dragon Alley were in St. Paul's Shadwell. St. George's continues from Cinnamon Street to the south of Wapping Street with its west boundary along Frying-Pan Alley, its boundary with the

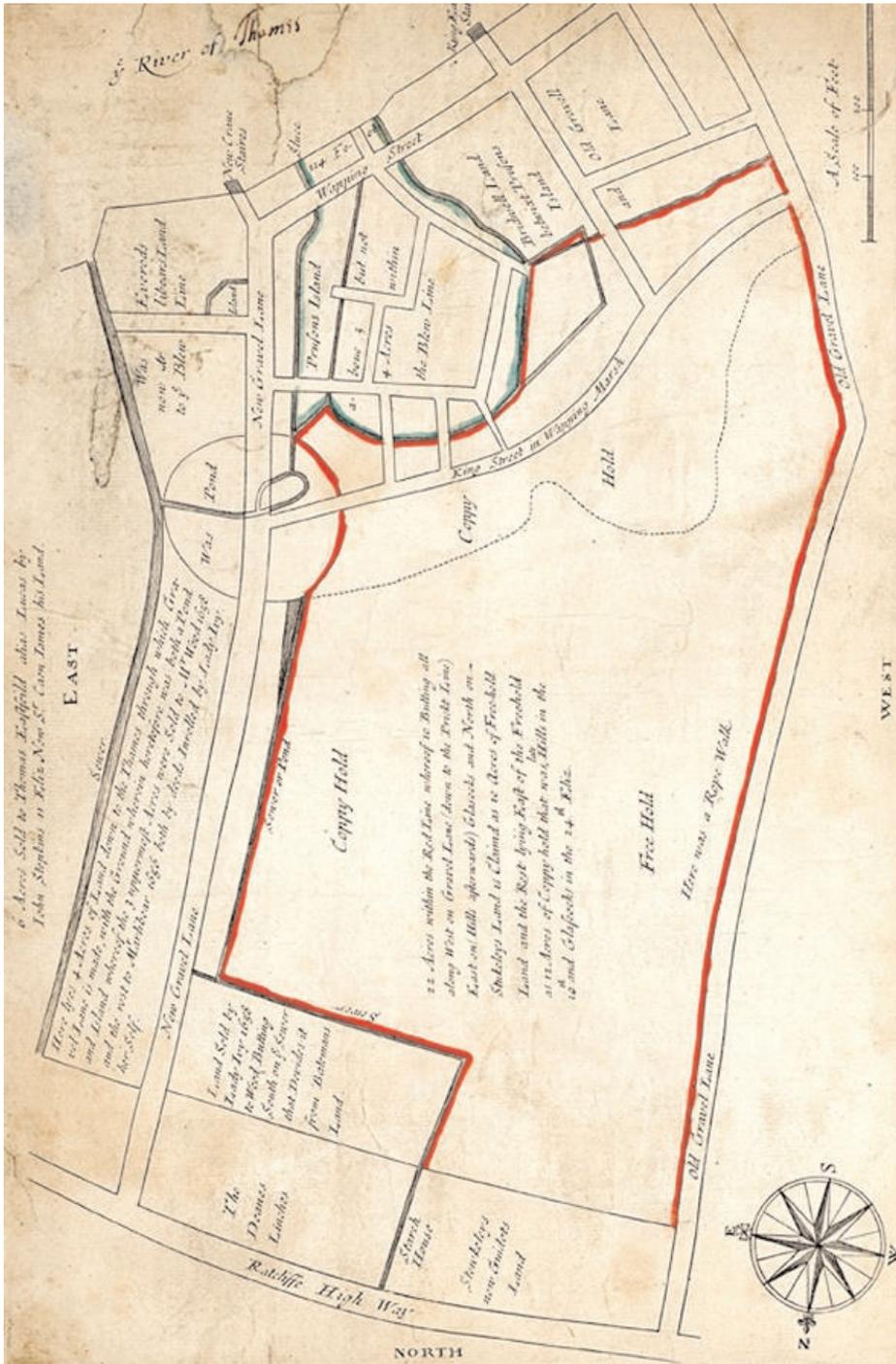


Figure 7. Plan accompanying the rebuttal of Lady Ivy's claim to the titles of land possessed by the creditors of Sir Anthony Bateman and the heirs of Rebecca Whichcot (1687).¹³ Reproduced with kind permission of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archive.



Figure 8. Rocque's 1746 map on the left showing Frying-Pan Stairs, and Greenwood's map of 1827 on the right (the dotted line indicates where St. George's parish boundary met the river). Reproduced with kind permission of locatinglondon.com, and Mark Annand, bathspa.ac.uk.

river extending for 53 feet towards the east, and its east boundary returning to the western edge of the open triangular area in the middle of the Brewhouse site.

Anthony Bond and Rowland Raine, quite possibly partners, were both dead by 1719. Intriguingly, Mrs Elizabeth Duffin answered for the Land Tax due on the Brewhouse and other properties in Shadwell from 1715, the year of the earliest surviving Land Tax records. Since Henry was brewing at the site from 1709 at the latest, it would appear that Elizabeth Duffin or her husband had some early involvement in the business. An Elizabeth Watkins of St. Andrew's Holborn obtained a licence to marry Thomas Duffin of St. Margaret Moses on 3 December 1712 at the parish church of Grays Inn. She was a minor at the time, and her mother Elizabeth consented to her marrying Thomas, who was at least 22 years old. Given the later family connections between Henry and the Duffin family, it seems likely that Thomas was a relation and that he or another Duffin were in a business relationship with Henry. Who acquired the Brewhouse site from Lady Ivy's heirs after her death in 1694 is not known. According to an indenture dated 16 July 1729, Catherine Clerke of Gracechurch-Street, London, a widow, leased to Henry Raine for a period of 51 years for an annual rent of £50 ...

... all that Dwelling House, Messuage, or Tenement, Brewhouse, Stables, Malt Lofts, Mill House, Compting House, Yards and all other Outhouses thereunto belonging, then situate, lying, and being in the Parish of *Stepney*, in the said

County of *Middlesex*, but now in the Parish of *Saint George* aforesaid, in the said County, and now is, and for several Years past, hath been in the Tenure, or Occupation of the said *Henry Raine*, which said Premises do about East on *Green Dragon Alley*, West upon a Passage-way leading to *Pruson's Island*, North upon *Pruson's Island*, and South upon a Street-way and Houses there, and also the Use and Privilege of the Wharf, together with the Crane, at a Place called *Frying-pan Stairs*, near the said demised Premises, adjoining to the River of *Thames*, for the Landing and Shipping off Goods.¹⁴

This clearly describes the area mapped 17 years later by John Rocque. The southern boundary was made up of several houses facing Wapping Street, between which there was direct access to the Brewhouse from the street. One of these tenements or messuages was in the tenure or occupation of Henry's brother John Raine; adjoining was another in his own tenure; another at the 'Island Head' leading into Wapping Street was in the tenure of Cornelius Benson; and adjoining that was another in the tenure of Henry Wilson (most likely Henry's brother-in-law and the father of William Willson). Presumably, the 'Island Head' was the intersection of the 'Passage-way leading to Pruson's Island' and Wapping Street. Later this passage-way was called Cinnamon Street, but it has also been called Pruson's Island and is now Hilliard's Court.

The reference to Frying-Pan Stairs was described in greater detail in an indenture two days earlier on 14 July 1729,¹⁵ when Andrew Chelton of St. Paul's Shadwell, a

turner, assigned to Henry Raine for the remainder of a term of 61 years from Christmas 1697 for an annual rent of £3 'all Ways, Passages, Lights, Easements, Waters, Water-Courses, Profits, Privileges of the Wharf called *Frying-pan Alley*, being a Passage of Eight Feet wide, lying and being in *Wapping-Street* aforesaid.' This indenture also included the area of the Brewhouse site to the north of Wapping Street in St. Paul's Shadwell, 22 feet wide on Wapping Street, west 94½ feet deep abutting 'Mr Anthony Bond', north 30 feet wide abutting 'Mr Anthony Bond', east 65 feet abutting 'Mr - Nichols' and 27 feet bordering Green Dragon Alley.

By a further indenture of 24 November 1733, Catherine Clerke of the parish of St Alban, Wood Street, London, leased to Henry Raine for a period of 71 years from Christmas 1733 at an annual rent of £12 ...

... all that Piece or Parcel of Ground, Yard, and Wharf, and all that Messuage, or Tenement, standing upon the same, containing Fourteen Feet and Four Inches of Assize, little more or less, in the Front, and abutting North on *Wapping-Street*; and Fourteen Feet Four Inches of Assize, little more or less, in the Rear, abutting South on the River *Thames*, and Seventy-one Feet deep square with the said Front, abutting East on the Passage or Stairs there called *Frying-Pan Stairs*, and West upon the Messuage, or Tenements, then of *William Franklyn*, Salesman, being a Parcel of Pease Field, and an Island on the South Part thereof, and of the Ducking Pond, or some, or one of them, situate, lying, and being, in *Wapping Marsh*, in the said County of *Middlesex*, and also free ingress, egress, and regress, to and from the River *Thames*, by and through the Passage or Alley, commonly called *Frying-pan Stairs*, to ship off or take in Goods unto the said *Henry Raine*.¹⁶

After the death of Catherine Clerke, the leases between her and Henry Raine were renewed by Thomas Langford, gentleman, of Nottingham, on 8 June 1734,¹⁷ together with 'free Liberty and Licence ... to pull down, demolish, and lay level all and every, or any of the said last mentioned Messuage, or Tenement, and Premises, and in the Room and Stead thereof, to set, erect, and build, such other Erections and Buildings, as he the said Henry Raine, his Executors, Administrators, or Assigns, shall think fit' for the yearly rent of £72.¹⁸

From these indentures and near-contemporary maps, we can be sure of the extent of the Brewhouse site when Henry died in 1739. It can be assumed that the 8-foot-

wide *Frying-Pan Alley* led from *Wapping Street* to *Frying-Pan Stairs*, which gave the Brewhouse access to the river. There is no mention of the messuage or tenement to the west of *Frying-Pan Alley* in the renewed lease by Thomas Langford, so this property (in St. John's Wapping) may no longer have been required by Henry. The right to use *Frying-Pan Stairs* and the crane continued to be provided by the new lease and the lease with Andrew Chelton.

Table 1 provides some idea of the output of well-known brewhouses in London between 1748 and 1780. The figures are in 1,000 barrels per year. The Red Lion Brewery in Lower East Smithfield, not far from the Star Brewhouse, was producing about 35,000 barrels per year in the 1750s. It was owned by Humphrey Parsons, who was also an executor of Henry's will in 1736. Humphrey was elected Master of the Brewers' Company in 1730,¹⁹ an alderman for Portsoken ward in 1720 (one of the wards in the east of the City of London), and served as sheriff in 1723, Lord Mayor in 1731 and again in 1741,²⁰ but died in office.²¹ In 1728 and 1735 he represented London in Parliament.²² In 1731, Richard Hoare, presumably of the same Red Lion Brewery, was also one of the sheriffs.

Estimating the size of the Star Brewhouse in comparison to others where their output has been recorded for later years can only be very approximate. If we assume the Star was producing half the number of barrels as that of the Hour Glass Brewery inside the City walls, and roughly followed its annual output trend, it would have produced about 5,000 barrels in 1710. That year Henry complained to the Commissioners of Transport about them cancelling his contract to supply 180 tons of beer to the Navy. An imperial long ton converted to about 6.25 barrels of 34 imperial gallons each in 1683, so 180 tons was about 1,125 barrels. This would have represented something like 20% of the Star's annual output in 1710. Extrapolating, its annual output could have been around 10,000 barrels in 1720, 15,000 in 1730 and close to 20,000 when Henry died. By the time William Willson, the Star's later owner and Henry's nephew, became a Freeman of the Brewers' Company in 1749, its output may well have exceeded 30,000 barrels a year, making the Star one of the larger brewhouses in London.²³

When William Duffin, another of Henry's nephews, inherited his two-third share of the Star after Henry

Proprietors	Thrale-Barclay Perkins	Whitbread	Truman	Sir W. Calvert Felix Calvert	John Calvert	Meux-Reid	Hammond- Gyfford- Shum- Combe- Delafield	Parsons - Goodwyn - Hoare
Brewhouses	Anchor Brewery, Deadman's Place (now Park Street), Southwark	White Hart Brewery, Chiswell	Black Eagle Brewery, Spitalfields	Hour Glass Brewery, Upper Thames Street	Peacock Brewery, Whitecross Street	Griffin Brewery, Liquorpond Street (Clerkenwell Road)	Woodyard Brewhouse, Castle Street (north side of Long Acre)	Red Lion Brewhouse, St. Katharine's, Lower East Smithfield
1748	35.6	?	39.4	55.7	53.6	?	?	39.0
1749	40.7	?	49.9	57.1	52.6	?	?	40.5
1750	46.1	?	46.0	56.6	57.2	?	?	42.0
1758	32.6	64.6	55.5	55.0	61.8	?	?	31.7
1760	32.7	63.4	60.1	52.8	74.7	/	?	34.1
1776	75.4	102.1	83.0	84.1	101.1	21.8	81.0	?
1777	85.3	110.1	80.9	87.0	106.4	27.5	81.1	?
1778	87.0	96.9	81.5	82.3	94.1	20.5	69.8	?
1779	73.4	96.4	76.4	75.7	98.4	25.7	81.2	30.9
1780	65.5	96.6	80.7	79.1	92.0	20.4	82.2	41.8

Table 1. Annual output of London brewhouses, 1748-1780 (thousands of barrels). Source. Mathias, P. (1959) *The Brewing Industry in England, 1700-1830. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Statistical Appendix, p.551.*

Raine died in 1738, it must have been a very successful business. We know it was already profitable enough for Henry to be able to build a fine mansion for himself in 1714, so it is likely that he grew his trade on the back of contracts with the Navy rather than supplying local pubs and inns. To the east of the City there was already strong competition from other nearby brewhouses like the Red Lion at St. Katharine's and the Hour Glass in Upper Thames Street.

It is also interesting to note that Henry must have been well regarded by his competitors. As already mentioned, Humphrey Parsons, a prominent figure in the Brewers' Company and the City of London, was an executor of his will. Mary Haddock, his sister Martha's daughter, married George Calvert, an officer in the

Coldstream Guards. George's father was Richard Calvert, one of the four children of Felix Calvert, owner of the Hour Glass Brewhouse at 89 Upper Thames Street, which had been founded as long ago as 1431.

William Duffin died in 1744 and his wife Elizabeth continued running the business while William Willson, Henry's other nephew who had inherited the remaining third share, was an apprentice. Elizabeth remarried and her new husband, Edward Harman, a clerk in the Navy Office, ran the business until William joined it when he came of age in 1747. In August 1748 William had it valued according to the requirements of Henry's will: the stock in trade was worth £43,323 and debts were £1,550.²⁴

In litigation concerning the way the business had been run while he was an apprentice, William claimed that Elizabeth and both her husbands had drawn out considerable sums of money for their personal use without properly accounting for his one-third ownership of the business, nor the interest of William Duffin's son, whose grandfather Richard Duffin brought a 'Bill of Complaint' on his behalf in 1750.²⁵ Duffin's only child was born two months before his father died and only reached 21 in 1765. He was to marry Katharine Willson, one of William Willson's daughters, and was buried at St. George-in-the-East in 1793.

Legal wrangling,²⁶ intense competition and the general downturn in trade after almost half a century of growth must have had a serious impact on the business because Willson was no longer able to pay his debts in 1772. He was declared a Bankrupt and committed to debtors' prison. Although there are no records of the sale of the Star, a John Philipps insured it on 10 April 1787 with the Sun Fire Office. Erasmus Philipps of Dagenham, Essex,

whose last Will and Testament was written on 8 September 1781 and proved in London on 20 September 1785, left all his worldly goods to Elizabeth his wife and her heirs, requesting to be interred in his family vault at Stepney if possible. A John Philipps died 19 October 1786 and was interred at St. George-in-the-East in a lead coffin, suggesting the family was not only relatively wealthy, but also well established in Stepney.²⁷

Several baptisms took place at St. George's in which the father was John Philipps, a brewer, and the mother was Katherine. At each baptism they were recorded as living in Wapping: Ann, 21 April 1775, 'Sprusom's Island'; Charles, 11 June 1776, Wapping Street; Henry, 30 May 1778, Wapping Street; and Ann, again, 25 January 1780, 'Sprusom's Island'. Another Erasmus Philipps married Hannah Barrow at St. Mary Bow on 18 July 1816. He was probably a son of John and Katherine because an Erasmus was John's heir at law in March 1836, by which time it is clear that John had died. Erasmus died April 1852 at St. Giles.



Figure 9. The quite exceptional Horwood's map of 1799, with the buildings numbered. 198 Wapping Street was the Anchor and Hope Inn, and Frying-Pan Stairs would have been where Prussian Island (Cinnamon Street and later Hilliard's Court) met the river. 192 Wapping Street was the Tynemouth Castle public house. No. 189 could have been Cornelius Benson's house at the 'Island Head' and No. 193 that of Mr Robinson, a cheesemonger. Reproduced with kind permission of Matthew Sangster, romanticlondon.org, copyright © British Library Board.

We know the date of William Willson's bankruptcy, but we do not know when it was sold to raise funds to pay his creditors. It could have happened at any time between 24 March 1772 and 21 April 1775, because that is the date when Philipp's first child was born at Pruson's Island and when he was referred to as a brewer. He and his wife were still living there on 25 January 1780 when the second Ann was baptised. Seven years later, on 10 April 1787, John was insuring the Star Brewhouse with the Sun Fire office, and continued to do so until Christmas 1792.

The insurance records provide a great deal of information about his business.²⁸ Just how much was the continuation of the business when William was made bankrupt depends on how much of the property, stock and good will was purchased by Philipps and how much it had grown between that time and 1787. In the year leading up to Lady Day 1788 (25 March), he insured the Brewhouse, millhouse, warehouses and lofts 'over adjoining and communicating' (a small part timber being advised) for £3,500. Its utensils and stock was insured for £10,000, and his house (brick) situated at the Star Brewhouse but then in the tenure of Mrs Philipps, widow (presumably his mother) was insured for £1,700. These remained the maximum sums insured for each of the following three years, but by the middle of 1789 John was using the house as his own dwelling, which was probably because his mother had died.

That year he insured additional household goods at Cranbrook House, near Ilford, Essex, for £700, plus printed books £50, clothes £200, plate £150, china and glass £150. This suggests that he and his family had moved there from Wapping. It was stated for the following year (1791-92) that he was a tenant at Cranbrook House,²⁹ where he insured household goods for £1,000, plus similar sums as before for books, clothes, plate, china and glass.

In addition, John insured a number of other properties that joined or were a part of the Brewhouse site at New Crane. A coachhouse and stables on the west side of his yard (brick) £500 and stables on the east side of the yard (brick) £400.

His servant lived in a house near Milk Yard in New Gravel Lane (brick) £400. There was a new storehouse

and vat house 'adjoining and communicating near the above' (brick) £1,200, with utensils and stock £7,000, and a separate coachhouse and stable near (brick and timber) £300. There was also a storehouse nearby called the 'Old Brewhouse' (brick) £300, with utensils and stock £1,000. A brewhouse was shown at Milk Yard on Rocque's map of 1746, and mentioned by Henry Raine when he recited the list of properties he gave over to his charity schools, so it may have been operated together with the Star Brewhouse.

In addition, there was a public house known as the Taphouse 'in the front of Wapping Street' tenanted by a victualler called William Hartley (brick) £900, and Martin in 1791-92. It is not clear if this means it was on the south or north side of the street, but if it was on the south side, and facing the Brewhouse site, it might have preceded a later pub recorded nearby with its rear facing the river. One possibility is that it was 204 Wapping High Street, immediately opposite the entrance to the Brewhouse site in 1799 and six doors west of the Anchor and Hope Inn at 198 Wapping High Street (198 New Crane), which was painted by A.T. Wilson, c.1870 (Fig. 12). Opposite the Taphouse (and therefore on the north side of the street), John insured another house in his own tenure (brick and timber) for £400. This could have been 189 Wapping High Street.

Four houses adjoining the Brewhouse site in Green Dragon Alley were insured for £150 each, and tenanted by Charles Reed and other watermen. A house on the corner of the alley (brick) £200 was tenanted by someone whose name was not recorded that year, but in 1791-92 he was Mr Robinson, a cheesemonger. Another house 'adjoining' was tenanted by a victualler and was probably an unnamed pub judging by the insurance value (brick and timber) £700. In 1791-92 it was identified as the Tynemouth Castle and in the tenure of a Mr Morgan. It seems this was 192 Wapping High Street (also 192 New Crane) and on the north side. It was demolished in 1856. Another address is given as 193 New Crane,³⁰ thus also 'adjoining' the Star Brewhouse. In the same year, a more explicit reference was made to a house 'opposite his Yard on the South Side of Wapping Street with a backhouse adjoining & communicating' which was in the tenure of his servant (brick and timber) £450. It is possible this was 204 Wapping High Street or 205 adjacent to Frying-Pan Alley, both of which were in St. George's.



Figure 10. *The riverside near Wapping Old Stairs* by James McNeil Whistler (etching, 1859), one of a set of 16 he made when he stayed at a pub in Wapping. Reproduced with kind permission, copyright © Museum of London.

There were two houses (brick) opposite Shadwell Stairs in Lower Shadwell. One was the Waterman Arms at No. 2 Lower Shadwell tenanted by John Gregan, a victualler (£500), and William Jacks in 1791-92. The other was No. 1 Lower Shadwell, tenanted by a shoemaker (£300). Both were on the north side of Lower Shadwell, opposite the stairs and Shadwell Dock. Another pub insured was the Union Arms on the corner of Panton Street in the Haymarket (brick) £600, No. 36 Panton Street, tenanted by Duncan in 1791-92. It was rebuilt in 1878 and re-named the Tom Cribb in 1960 in honour of the boxing champion and landlord 1825-1834.³¹

In 1791-92, several new properties were added for insurance purposes: a house and offices adjoining the Black Swan in Bermondsey Street (No. 71 until about 1851, then No. 54), south of the river, tenanted by a victualler, Charles Stewart (brick and timber) £400. The Red Lion in Love Lane was tenanted by William Camper, victualler (brick and timber) £400. Later the address was given as 488-490 Cable Street, where it

intersected Love Lane. The Windmill in Great Windmill Street in the West End was tenanted by John Vose, victualler (brick and tiles) £400. There were two pubs in Great Windmill Street by 1739, the Ham and the Windmill. By the 1880s they had merged and the name was changed to the Lyric Tavern in 1890. In 1906 it was rebuilt, but closed in 2007.³² And lastly the Star on the corner of Old Street in City Road, tenanted by John Gardener, victualler, (brick and tiles) £500. This was demolished when Old Street roundabout was constructed in the 1960s.³³ Philipps also insured the household goods in trust for a Mr Page in a house in Finsbury Terrace (brick) for £200, clothes £50, plate £100 and china and glass £50 in 1792-93.

The total value of Philipps' insured properties and goods in 1787-88 was £30,500. In 1789-90 it rose to £34,700, and in 1791-92 it was £35,800. These are lower than the valuation made in 1748, which was £43,323. This could be explained by a number of factors, but most probably it was because Philipps did not purchase all the assets



Figure 11. 'Wapping on Thames' by James McNeill Whistler (oil on canvas, 1860-1864). This was doubtless a scene from any of the public houses overlooking the Thames at the time, possibly even the Anchor and Hope Inn, or the Prospect of Whitby. Reproduced with kind permission of National Gallery of Art, Washington.

held by the business when it was sold. Also, trading conditions had changed for the worse. The increases in value between 1787-88 and 1791-92 seem to have resulted from the acquisition of new pubs and properties rather than any rise in the value of stock and equipment. This might indicate that it was difficult to increase its turnover and profitability without expanding the number of tied houses selling the Star's porter, ale and twopenny (or amber). However, it is certainly clear that Philipps wanted to emulate other merchants and businessmen by moving to a more handsome home away from the slums in Wapping. In his case it was Cranbrook House, which he leased rather than purchased.

Although it was not mentioned in the insurance records that Philipps was in a partnership, he was joined by Samuel Miall in July 1801.³⁵ On 4 September 1804, notice was given in *The London Gazette* that the copartnership of John Philipps and Samuel Miall, both of New Crane and St. Paul's Shadwell, brewers, trading as Philipps and Miall, was dissolved by mutual consent.

Miall had previously been in a partnership as common brewers with Crotcherode Whiffing of Queen Street in the Hamlet of Ratcliff and parish of St. Dunstan Stepney, and this had been dissolved on 10 July 1801.

On 1 November 1805, an indenture was made between

John Philipps the elder of the first part, John Philipps the younger and Samuel Miall of the second part, Thomas Taylor of the third part, and Thomas Stanley and John Cass of the fourth part, in which all the stock in trade, goods, effects and everything belonging to the said trade, together with the said trade or business of the said John Philipps and Samuel Miall, were to be assigned, transferred and set over to the said Thomas Stanley and John Cass.

By another indenture of the same date and between the same parties, all the estate and interest of Philipps and Miall in the public houses of which they were landlords were also assigned to Stanley and Cass. On 5 November, the *Gazette* published a request for all the creditors of



Figure 12. A view of the Anchor and Hope Inn at New Crane Stairs by J.T. Wilson (watercolour on paper; c.1870). Like the Prospect of Whitby further east (to the right), this pub was squeezed in between the wharves and close to stairs leading to the river. Frying-Pan Stairs would have been slightly further west (to the left). The address of the Anchor and Hope was originally 198 Wapping High Street, which placed it nearly opposite the Star Brewhouse (No. 204 was directly opposite). Reproduced with kind permission of the London Metropolitan Archives.

John and Samuel, brewers and copartners, to submit their demands to Mr Vines at No. 9 New Square, Lincoln's Inn, prior to liquidation.

After six months, Stanley and Cass entered into an agreement with Charles Calvert on behalf of Felix Calvert and Company that they would

deliver possession to the said Felix Calvert and company all the brewery plant, stock, and business, stables, messuages and premises, and all the leases of the victualling houses belonging to the said trade, as well as the debts due and owing to the said trade.

It was also agreed that Stanley and Cass, upon the request of Felix Calvert and Company, assign and set over to Robert Calvert and Charles Calvert, two of the partners in the said house, everything they had received.³⁵

In the *Gazette*, dated 15 August 1807, it was reported that John Philipps had been made a Bankrupt and was already a prisoner in King's Bench Prison. The Commissioners were calling for creditors to prove their debts at the Guildhall on 22 and 29 August, and 26 September, where John was to make a full discovery and disclosure of his estate and effects. At the second sitting the creditors were to choose assignees, and at the final sitting John was to complete his examination and the creditors were to assent or dissent from the allowance of his Certificate.

By April 1809, John Philipps, brewer, dealer and chapman, had died, and according to the *Gazette*, the original bankruptcy and a renewed bankruptcy dated 11 February 1831 were both superseded by a writ of *supersedeas* (a stay of proceeding) upon a petition dated 11 March 1836 by Erasmus Philipps, who was stated to be his heir at law. This is the last mention of John Philipps in the records. Miall, too, was made a Bankrupt in 1809.³⁶



Figure 13. New Crane Stairs and the hard causeway in 1951. The site of the Anchor and Hope must have been purchased by Barclay Perkins & Co., a brewery which was established in 1616 in Southwark. Barclay Perkins merged with Courage in 1955. The area behind the signage appears to have been used as an outside drinking area. Reproduced with kind permission of Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives.



Figure 14. Stanford's 1872 Library map of Wapping showing Wapping gasworks occupying the site of the Star Brewery but now extending to Ship Street in the west and further north. Note the two gasholders and St. George Workhouse.³⁸ Charles Booth's maps show three gasholders a few years later. Reproduced with kind permission of london1872.com.

In 1821, Felix Calvert and Company moved the Star Brewery to their Hour Glass Brewery in Upper Thames Street. George Calvert, the grandson of Felix Calvert who married Henry Raine's niece, Mary Haddock, died that year, which suggests the Calvert family had long taken a family interest in the Star. After moving it to Upper Thames Street, the Star's history became that of the Hour Glass Brewery.

In 1860, The City of London Brewery Company was formed to acquire Messrs Calvert and Co.³⁸ After its purchase of the Swan Brewery in Fulham in 1919 all brewing was transferred there in 1922, and in 1932 the company's name was changed to The City of London Brewery and Investment Trust Limited. The Hour Glass in Upper Thames Street was used as a warehouse until it was destroyed during a German air raid in 1941. In 1936 brewing ended in Fulham when its pubs were sold to Messrs Hoare & Co. (the same bankers who had owned the Red Lion Brewery in Lower East

Smithfield).³⁹ Hoare & Co. itself was bought by Charrington & Co. in 1933, a company that was founded at the same time as Henry Raine was operating the Star, and only a short distance away in Mile End Road.

Wapping Gasworks

And what happened to the site of the Star Brewery on Pruson's Island after the Calverts moved the brewery? For a few years it may have been unoccupied or used for storage by the Hour Glass, but in November 1824 William Ellwand, acting for the Ratcliff Gas Light and Coke Company, took out a 50-year lease on the premises, which was then known as the Old Star Brewery, at 200 guineas per annum.⁴⁰

The Ratcliff Gas Act had been passed the previous year on 16 June 1823:



Figure 15. The Ordnance Survey map of 1895, scale 1:1,056. Now the gasworks extends as far as New Gravel Lane in the east, although some houses remain at the northeast corner. P.H. marks the Anchor and Hope Inn, and there is a wide access to the new jetty opposite the gasworks (note the dotted lines indicating the parish boundaries at the riverfront). Reproduced with kind permission of the National Library of Scotland, maps.nls.uk.

An Act for lighting with Gas the several parishes of St. Botolph Aldgate, St. Paul Shadwell, and certain parts of the parishes of St. George in the East o'wise St. George Middlesex St. John Wapping and of the Hamlets of Mile-end and Old Town & Ratcliff, in the County of Middlesex.

The new company was actively looking for suitable sites to establish 'stations' to produce the gas for the Wapping area, especially one that had easy access to the river for coal supplies. It agreed to take over the Old Star Brewery lease at 'New Crane' from Ellwand and spend £5,000 over the next three years to erect a station.

Meanwhile, another company called The East London Gas Light and Coke Company was set up to compete with the Ratcliff company and in 1829 constructed its own gas works directly adjacent to theirs on Pruson's Island. However, it did not survive long. When the Ratcliff

company was about to lose its inland site at Sun Tavern Fields (north of Ratcliff Highway, Upper Shadwell) to the Blackwall Railway, it purchased its competitor's site in 1835 and later amalgamated the two to create its main gasworks in Wapping. In 1875, the Ratcliff amalgamated with the Commercial Gas Light and Coke Company, a competitor based at Harford Street in Stepney. That year, Ordnance Survey published a detailed 1:1,056 map of London and these were followed by similar maps in 1895, 1922, 1948 and 1966. Each show changes as Pruson's Island was developed and more of the adjacent land was taken over by the Wapping Works (Figs. 13 and 14).

In 1875, the OS map showed the Ratcliff Gas Works with three gasholders and a single large retort house. The parish boundary between St. George's and St. Paul's bisected the site and on the St. Paul's side there was already a conveyor over Wapping High Street that

terminated at a ‘Service Lift’ a short way out into the river, possibly a mechanical jetty to offload coal from barges direct to the gasworks. Immediately to the west of New Crane Stairs a small building called New Crane Wharf was recorded, and next to it a public house. This was the Anchor and Hope Inn painted in 1870 and reproduced in Figure 12. The building that was to become New Crane Wharf to the east of the stairs had not yet been constructed, although further to the east was New Crane Dock, which was used by shipbuilders. Where Cinnamon Street extended to the river in 1746, warehouses had been built and Frying-Pan Stairs was no longer recorded. Between these warehouses and King Edward Stairs another jetty had been built adjacent to what was then called St. Bride’s Sufferance Wharf.

A gas works in the midst of a highly populated area clearly presented dangers. Although there is no record that the public was harmed, an explosion one evening in early September 1883 was heard several miles away, and violently rattled windows in the near vicinity. ‘A large and excited crowd soon gathered around the works’, but they were given no information by the company.

A cab was, however, brought to the place within a very short time of the explosion, and two men placed in it and driven off to the London Hospital, and a few minutes later a third man was also sent off to the same institution, all three being evidently very seriously injured.⁴¹

In 1895 there was just one gasholder and a new jetty replaced the previous ‘Service Lift’. The Foundry Wharf, built in 1886 for Innes Bros, sugar importers, with a warehouse in nearby Clegg Street, took the place of one of the unnamed warehouses backing onto the river in 1875. The warehouse known as New Crane Wharf had recently been built by Thomas Cubitt and was used by coal merchants, including Cory Associated Wharves.⁴² The Anchor and Hope Inn was still squeezed in between the wharves. Green Dragon Alley, an unmarked alley into the gasworks’ site in 1875, was still there in 1895, although the entrance had moved a few feet west. The Anchor and Hope was to disappear by 1922, as well as the last vestiges of Green Dragon Alley.

By 1931 the Wapping Works site had grown to 2¾ acres (1.11ha) with the acquisition of over 40 separate pur-

chases of small plots of land. This was just less than the 3 to 4 acres of the entire Pruson’s Island described in 1684. The coal gas engine room had previously been a rice mill. The two retort houses could generate 3.25 million cubic feet (90,030m³) of coal gas per day. It was also possible to produce 1.25 million cubic feet of carburetted water gas per day, but the plant was closed in 1927. The site was small and meant that the gas the Works produced could not be stored in its single, small, 220,000 cubic feet capacity gasholder. Instead it was piped to the Commercial’s Stepney Works at Harford Street via a special mains pipe, where it was purified and distributed from the gasholders there.⁴³

Like the original Brewhouse, what made the Wapping Works important was its access to the river. Its frontage was about 175 feet and the jetty projected into the river a distance of approximately 55 feet. On the jetty were two 2½ ton hydraulic cranes, together with receiving hoppers and crushers. It was here that the Commercial’s two ships, the SS *Stepney* and the SS *Mile End*, unloaded their coal. They also used Messrs Cory’s ships to bring coal from the north of the country, which was transferred to barges and carried to the jetty. The conveyor belts carried it over Wapping High Street to the



Figure 16. The Foundry Wharf in 1937 (to the right and just below the Wapping Works gasholder behind it). The left of the building marked the western parish boundary between St. John’s Wapping and St. George’s, as shown in the 1895 OS map; Frying-Pan Stairs would have been located below the left-hand wall of the building. Reproduced with kind permission, copyright © Museum of London.

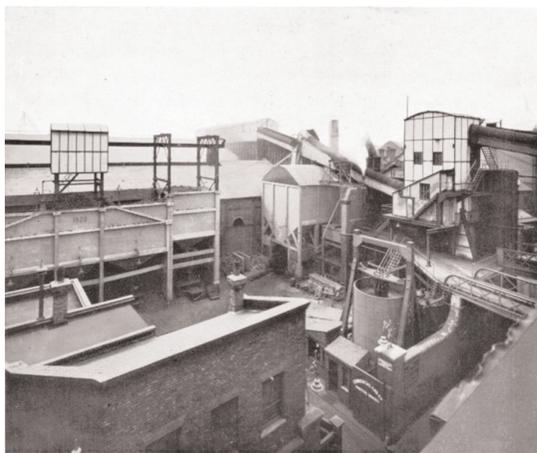


Figure 17. Wapping Works in 1931, looking from one of the riverside wharfs on the south of Wapping High Street. To the right is the conveyor from the jetty.⁴⁴

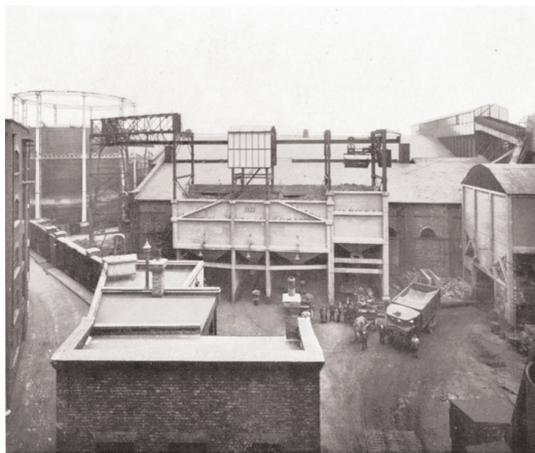


Figure 18. The road to the left was Pruson's Island (now Hilliard's Court) and the entrance was in Wapping High Street. Note the parked steam lorry.⁴⁵



Figure 19. This photograph shows the conveyor crossing Wapping High Street to the river and jetty, with the cranes visible on the right. It also shows just how crowded the site was.⁴⁶



Figure 20. A Garrett six-wheeled undertype steam wagon in use in Portsmouth in 1931, similar to those used by the Commercial Gas Company to transport coal from Wapping to Stepney. Reproduced with kind permission of wikipedia.org.



Figure 21. The SS Mile End, built 1911, could carry up to 1,100 tons of coal and supplied the Wapping Works.⁴⁷



Figure 22. The SS Stepney, built 1916, could carry 1,030 tons. Cory colliers also supplied the Poplar Works.⁴⁸



Figure 23. St. Peter's London Docks Church of England primary school in Garnet Street (previously New Gravel Lane). Saint Hilda's Wharf (previously Middleton's and St. Bride's wharves), the new building at the end of the street, backs onto the river and is separated from New Crane Wharf to the left by New Crane Stairs (see Fig. 24).



Figure 25. New Crane Stairs from Garnet Street. On the left is New Crane Wharf and on the right the newly built Saint Hilda's Wharf.

Frying-Pan Stairs were approximately 128 feet to the west (right) of New Crane Stairs and marked the boundary between the parishes of St. George's and St. Paul's Shadwell.



Figure 24. The boundary which separated the parishes of St. John's Wapping and St. George's extends from the middle of Hilliard's Court (the road in the forefront) to where the two buildings in Saint Hilda's Wharf meet, just to the right of the double doors doors at ground level. This would have been the west wall of the Foundry Wharf in Fig. 16.

The boundary which separated the parishes of St. George's and St. Paul's Shadwell is 53 feet to the east (left). The river frontage of the Wapping Works extended a further 92 feet east (making a total of 145 feet), which would have been in the parish of St. Paul's Shadwell.

two retort houses where it was burned. The resulting coke was discharged into reinforced concrete hoppers. All the coal for the Stepney Works was unloaded at the jetty and carried there by steam-driven lorries.⁴⁹

A major fire occurred at the Wapping Works on Saturday 26 January 1935. A tower 'scrubber' collapsed and broke a gas main and the gas ignited. 'It was necessary to open up and cut off four mains in the streets surrounding the Works before the fire could be extinguished'.⁵⁰ Gas-making was suspended and the directors later issued a notice stating that 'The facilities for the discharging and storing of coal there will, however, continue to be used, and the plant for gas manufacture will

be maintained in working order so that it will be possible to resume operations whenever a return to the gas demand of two or three years ago shows this can be done with advantage'.⁵¹

Evidently the company chose not to reopen the Wapping Works because after the Second World War they were marked on OS maps as 'Disused' and in 'Ruins', like the warehouse facing it on the south side of Wapping High Street in 1948. The whole site was being used as a transport depot by 1966. Facing it and backing onto the river was the Hopper Works, with a large Hopper built close to New Crane Stairs.

Sometime before the 1980s a large concrete slab was constructed to seal off what remained of the old gas works. It was on top of this that St. Peter's Church of England primary school was built, which still necessitates periodic checks to make sure no contamination is leaking from below that could affect the health of children or nearby residents.

New Crane Wharf and the surrounding warehouses have now been converted to residential apartments and studios. The river can still be accessed from New Crane Stairs, but, like Frying-Pan Stairs, all the jetties have vanished. What is left of the hard causeway that led into the river from New Crane Stairs remains visible at low tide. Further to the east, on Wapping Wall, The Prospect of Whitby public house is open and thriving, adjacent to another access to the river provided by Pelican Stairs.

Some of the streets have disappeared or been renamed, but the footprints of many of the old wharfs have survived in the new blocks of apartments and flats. Most of the nineteenth-century high-level bridges between the old warehouses have been dismantled, but it is still possible to identify many of the wharfs because their names remain as part of the brickwork facades, or the developers have retained their names for their new buildings or conversions.

Although so much has changed in this tiny area of Wapping, the oldest building in the Borough of Tower Hamlets is still Henry Raine's original charity school at Fawden Fields (Farthing Fields), just a short walk from the Star Brewhouse site.

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