

## A TICKET TO ATTEND THE LAYING OF THE FIRST STONE OF THE NEW LONDON BRIDGE 1825

Read by John Bird  
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Once upon a time, there was a young man who moved his office from Broad Street Place to King William Street, hard by London Bridge. The year was 1967 and a new Bridge was being constructed. At the time the Court of Common Council was reducing in number by natural wastage so it was not until 1977 that the then not so young, young man was able to contest a BRIDGE WARD by-election in which he managed to get elected by 4 votes to 2! In the intervening period however he had attended the dedication on 16th March 1973 of the present London Bridge by H.M. THE QUEEN in the Mayoralty of Lord Mayor Lord Mais.

The story moves on to 1986 when a relative of my late wife came to stay. Knowing of my involvement with the City she asked if I could find out anything about this invitation (see illustration on the following page) and to whom it was issued. It is an invitation to admit the bearer to witness THE CEREMONY of laying THE FIRST STONE of the NEW LONDON BRIDGE on Wednesday the 15th day of June 1825. It is signed by Henry Woodthorpe junior, Clerk of the Committee, and there is added: NB The Access is from the present Bridge and the time of Admission will be between the hours of twelve and two. It is numbered 89. I would add that this new Bridge was being constructed parallel to the 600 year old Bridge, 180 feet to the West. As a member of the Library Committee I approached Mr. James Sewell, then the Deputy Keeper of the Records, who very kindly promised to ascertain, if possible, the name of the person who had received the invitation. My wife's family knew of a forebear who was a stonemason and lived in Southwell at Bramble Tree Cottage, incidentally alleged to be the origin of the first apple of that name. He was known to have worked as a stonemason on the Cathedral there and was considered likely to have been the recipient of the invitation. A little while later, (on 1st May 1986) I received a letter from James Sewell, also enclosing extracts from a Journal of the Committee, and with acknowledgements to him I will read out extracts from these documents which I found and still find very interesting.

He writes "*Rather to my surprise, I have located the ticket book for this occasion and I find that number 89 was among a block of 5 tickets (Nos. 86-90) allocated to John Thomas Thorp. Thorp was at this time Alderman of Aldgate Ward (having served in the Office of Lord Mayor in 1820-21) and Governor of The Irish Society. In common with all the Aldermen, he was on the Committee for building New London Bridge. He died in office on 6th November 1835.*" Historian Jim goes on to say "*Incidentally the City Engineer informed me some years ago that the foundation stone was not removed when the present Bridge was built. Evidently the estimated cost of its removal was about £10,000 and there was some risk of damage to the stone and it was therefore decided to leave it in situ. Unfortunately I am unable to identify the persons to whom Thorp allocated his allowance of tickets.*"



Admit the Bearer  
to witness **THE CEREMONY** of laying  
**THE FIRST STONE**  
**OF THE**  
**New London Bridge,**  
on Wednesday the 15<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1825.



Wm Woodthorpe Esq  
CLERK OF THE COMMITTEE.

N.B. The Access is from the present Bridge  
and the time of Admission will be  
between the hours of twelve and two.



Now it is appropriate that I read out extracts from the Journal of the New London Bridge Committee covering the ceremony. It commences with a description of Procession to London Bridge starting at Guildhall in the following order:-

**EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF THE LONDON BRIDGE COMMITTEE**

*descriptive of the ceremony of laying the Foundation Stone*

*15 June 1825*

*The Procession to London Bridge was then formed in the following order:-;*

*Constables  
Band of Music  
Marshalsmen  
City Marshal <sup>1</sup>  
Waterbailiffs Watermen  
Assistant Waterbailiff  
Barge Master  
City Watermen bearing Colours  
Remainder of City Watermen  
Bridge Masters and assistant Clerk at the Bridge House  
Contractors for building the Bridge <sup>2</sup>  
Model of the Bridge attended by Artificers  
Engineer  
Officers of the Committee  
Members of the Committee (Commoners)  
Four in each Coach  
Sub Chairman of the Committee  
Visitors and Members of the Committee of the Royal Society  
Bailiff of the Borough of Southwark  
Under Sheriffs  
Clerk of the Peace for the City of London  
City Solicitor  
Remembrancer  
Secondaries  
Comptroller of the Chamber  
Common Pleaders  
Judges of the Sheriffs Court  
Town Clerk  
Common Serjeant  
Chamberlain  
Visitors (Members of Parliament)  
President of the Royal Society  
Sheriffs  
Aldermen below the Chair  
Recorder  
Aldermen past the Chair  
Visitors (Privy Counsellors)  
Speaker of the House of Commons*

*Visitors (Peers)*  
*Great Officers of State*  
*Members of the Royal Family*  
*Music*  
*Colours and Banners of the Lord Mayor's Company (Goldsmiths)*  
*Marshalsmen*  
*Lord Mayor's Servants*  
*City Marshal*  
*Lord Mayor's Household*  
*Lord Mayor in the State Coach* <sup>3</sup>.  
*The Honourable Artillery Company with their Matross Division*  
*and Jagers as the Guard of Honour to the Lord Mayor* <sup>4</sup>

Previous arrangements having been made to prevent interruption the Procession moved from the Guildhall up King Street along Cheapside and the Poultry past the Mansion House up Cornhill and down Gracechurch Street and Fish Street Hill to London Bridge and in its progress was received with acclamations and cheers by a great concourse of people lining the streets the whole way. On arriving at the opening made in the Old Bridge the Company in the Procession were conducted to the bottom of the Coffre Dam the Company previously admitted by Tickets being in the respective seats in the Galleries allotted to them The several Bands of Music played the National Air of "God save the King" from the time of the arrival of the Lord Mayor or at the Bridge until His Lordship had taken his seat on the lower platform at the bottom of the Coffre Dam. The necessary arrangements having been made for the laying of the first Stone in the West end of the first Pier from the Surrey Shore about forty feet below low water mark and forty nine feet from the West end of the first course of Stone, and eighteen feet from the North side of the same, the Lord Mayor with His Royal Highness the Duke of York on his right hand then took his station by the side of the Stone attended by the four Members of the Committee appointed for that purpose, viz. Adam Oldham Esquire, deputy, bearing the Cut glass Bottle to contain the Coins of His present Majesty's Reign, Mr. Charles Bleaden bearing an English Inscription incrusted in Glass, Thomas Price Esquire, deputy, bearing the Mallet, and Mr. Robert Carter bearing the Level <sup>5</sup>. The Sub Chairman of the Committee, Richard Lambert Jones Esquire bearing the Trowel, took his station on the side of the Stone opposite to the Lord Mayor. The Engineer, John Rennie Esquire, then took his station on another side of the Stone, and exhibited to the Lord Mayor the Plans and Drawings of the Bridge. The Clerk of the Committee, Mr. Henry Woodthorpe junior, then took his station opposite to the Engineer with the Brass Plate, on which the Latin Inscription was engraved. The Member of the Committee bearing the Cut Glass Bottle to contain the Coins then held the same to the Lord Mayor, whilst his Lordship placed therein the Coins which his Lordship received from the Chamberlain of the City, Richard Clark Esquire, viz. the double Sovereign, the single Sovereign, and the half Sovereign in Gold, the Crown, the half Crown, the Shilling, the Sixpence, the fourpence, the three pence, and the penny in Silver, All of his present Majesty's reign, the twopence, the penny and the halfpenny of the reign of His late Majesty King George the Third, being the last coinage of that species of money, and the farthing of his present Majesty's reign in copper. The Lord Mayor then deposited the bottle containing the Coins in the Well of the Stone prepared for its reception as also the reception of the inscription incrusted in glass and the brass plate with the Latin inscription which well was twenty one inches long from North to South, fifteen inches wide from East to West and seven inches deep. The Member of the

Committee bearing the English inscription incrustated in Glass then presented the same to the Lord Mayor which being read as follows “The first Stone of this Bridge was laid in June 1825 by John Garratt, Lord Mayor”. His Lordship deposited in the Stone. <sup>6</sup> The Clerk of the Committee then read the Latin Inscription <sup>7</sup> engraved on the brass plate as follows:

*Pontis vetuste  
Quum Propter crebras nimis interiectas Moles  
Impedito cursu fluminis  
Naviculae et Rates  
Non levi saepe iactura et vitae Periculo  
Per Angustas fauces  
Praecipiti aquarum impetu ferri solerent  
Civitas Londinensis  
His incommodis remedium adhibere volens  
et celeberrimi simul in terris Emporii  
utilitatibus consulens  
Regni insuper senatus auctoritate  
ac munificentia adiuta  
Pontem  
situ prorsus novo  
Amplioribus spatiis construendum decrevit  
ea scilicet forma ac magnitudine  
quae regiae urbis Majestati  
Tandem responderet  
neque alio magis tempore  
tantum opus inchoandum duxit  
quam cum pacato ferme toto terrarum orbe  
Imperium Britannicum  
fama opibus multitudine cicum et concordia pollens  
Principe  
item Gauderet  
artium Fautore ac Patrono  
cuius sub Auspiciis  
novus indies aedificiorum splendor urbi accederet*

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*Primum operis lapidem  
posuit  
Joannes Garratt Armiger  
Praetor  
XV die Junii  
Anno Regis Georgii Quarti Sexto  
A.D. 1825*

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*Joanne Rennie F.R.S. Architecto*

*The free Course of the River  
being obstructed by the numerous Piers  
of the Ancient Bridge  
and the passage of Boats and Vessels  
through its narrow Channels  
being often attended with danger and loss of life  
by reason of the force and rapidity of the current  
The City of London  
desirous of providing a remedy for this evil  
and at the same time consulting  
the convenience of Commerce  
In this vast Emporium of all Nations  
under the sanction and with the liberal aid of  
Parliament  
Resolved to Erect a Bridge  
upon a foundation altogether New  
with Arches of wider span  
and of a Character corresponding  
to the dignity and importance  
of this Royal City  
Nor does any other time seem to be more suitable  
for such an undertaking  
then when in a period of Universal Peace  
The British Empire  
Flourishing in Glory, Wealth, Population and Domestic Union  
is governed by a Prince,  
the Patron and encourager of the Arts,  
under whose Auspices  
the Metropolis has been daily advancing in Elegance  
and Splendour*

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*The first Stone of this Work  
was laid  
By John Garratt, Esquire  
Lord Mayor  
on the 15th day of June  
in the sixth year of King George the Fourth  
and in the year of our Lord  
1825<sup>8</sup>.*

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*John Rennie F.R.S. Architect*

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And having delivered the Plate to the Lord Mayor His Lordship deposited it in the Stone upon the four Chrystal Pillars placed there to support it.

The Sub Chairman of the Committee then having presented the Silver Gilt Trowel to the Engineer and received it back, addressed the Lord Mayor to the following effect:

*“My Lord Mayor,  
It is very gratifying to my feelings that the pleasure devolves upon me to communicate to your Lordship that the Committee appointed to build this Bridge have unanimously resolved that Your Lordship as Lord Mayor of this City and Conservator of the River Thames should be requested to lay the first Stone of this great National Work, and the better to enable your Lordship to carry the same into effect I am requested by that Committee to present to you this Trowel.”*

The Lord Mayor then spread the Mortar with the Trowel and the Stone which was of the best Aberdeen Granite measuring five feet and five eighths of an inch in length, Three feet six inches and three eighths in breadth and two feet and ten inches in depth, containing in Cubic Measure fifty feet and seven inches and weighing about four Tons was lowered to its place by the several undermentioned Gentlemen who had volunteered their services for the purpose, viz. Messrs John Walker, Henry Henfrey, Thomas Shadrake, John Stansfield, John Watson, Edward Harvey and Thomas Brokelbank.

The Lord Mayor then addressed the surrounding Multitude to the following effect:

*“It is unnecessary for me to say much upon the purpose for which we are assembled this day, for its importance to this great Commercial City must be evident, but I cannot refrain from offering a few observations feeling as I do more than ordinary interest in the accomplishment of the undertaking of which this day’s ceremony is the primary step. I should not consider the present a favourable moment to enter into the chronology or detailed history of the present venerable structure which is now from the increased commerce of the Country and the rapid strides made by the Sciences in this Kingdom found inadequate to its purposes but would rather advert to the great advantages which will necessarily result from the execution of this national work. Whether there be taken into consideration the rapid and consequently dangerous currents arising from the obstructions occasioned by the defects of this ancient edifice which has proved destructive to human life and to property, or its difficult and incommodious Approaches and acclivity, it must be a matter of sincere congratulation that we are living in times when the resources of this highly favoured Country are competent to a work of such great public utility.*

*If ever there was a period more suitable than another for embarking in National improvements it must be the present governed as we are by a Sovereign patron of the Arts under whose mild and paternal sway (by the blessing of divine Providence) we now enjoy profound peace, living under a government by whose enlightened and liberal policy our trade and manufactures are in a flourishing state, represented by a Parliament whose acts of munificence shed a lustre upon their proceedings; thus happily situated it is impossible to hail such advantages with other feelings than those of gratitude and delight. I cannot conclude these*

*remarks without acknowledging how highly complimentary I feel it to the honourable office I now fill to view such an auditory as surrounds me, among whom are His Majesty's Ministers, several distinguished Nobles of the land, the Magistrates and Commonalty of this Ancient and Loyal City and above all (that which must ever enlighten and give splendour to any scene) a brilliant assembly of the other sex all of whom I feel assured, will concur with me in expressing an earnest wish that the New London Bridge, when completed, may reflect credit upon the Architects, prove an ornament to the Metropolis, and redound to the honour of its Corporation. I offer up a sincere and fervent prayer that in executing this great work, there may occur no calamity, that in performing that which is most particularly intended as a prevention of future danger, no mischief may occur with the general admiration of the undertaking*

The Members of the Committee bearing the Level and the Mallet then presented the same to the Lord Mayor to enable His Lordship to adjust and set the stone which being done His Lordship struck the stone with the Mallet three times and immediately loud acclamations and cheers burst from the Company.

The State Sword and Mace of the City were then placed crossways upon the Stone and the children belonging to the Charity School of the Ward of Bridge, of which Ward the Lord Mayor is the Alderman, sang the National Anthem of "God save the King" the Company assembled joining therein.

Immediately after upon a signal given from the end of the Coffre Dam the Matross Division of the Honourable Artillery Company fired a Royal Salute from the Wharf of Messrs. Calvert and Company, Brewers, on the London side of the River and contiguous to the site of the proposed New Bridge.

The Lord Mayor and the Company then proceeded to their carriages which had been drawn up in regular order and were waiting for them on the present Bridge and returned in Procession (the order being reversed, the Lord Mayor going first) to the Mansion House where His Lordship entertained at Dinner in a most sumptuous manner the whole of the Corporation of the City, the several Visitors who had been severally invited to join in the procession and to witness the Ceremony of laying the first Stone of the New London Bridge, and the Members of the Honourable Artillery Company. During the day the bells of the churches within the City and in the Borough of Southwark were ringing, and in the evening the Mansion House and the Monument were brilliantly illuminated, the Mansion House with variegated lamps and the Monument with Oil gas by the Portable Oil gas Company.

As a footnote to this paper some of you may be wondering why I have this ticket and papers. The lady who owned them moved to South Wales several years ago but had a bad fall in 2003. At the end of that year I had a call from her only close relatives, living in Montreal and was asked if I would hold Power of Attorney. She was moved to a Care Home and about a year ago I had to sell her house which involved me in the unpleasant task of "clearing the house" and whilst doing so I found these papers. She actually died last October and as an Executor I am now winding up her Estate.

I believe my allotted time has been expended, but I hope you have found my paper of interest. However I would add that there are many books of the several Thames bridges, in particular Peter de Colechurch's London Bridge which lasted 600 years.

I would also like to thank Historian Jim for his great help in supplying the material for this paper albeit some 20 years ago.

## **NOTES**

1. Junior City Marshal
2. The contractors were the Reverend William J. Joliffe and Sir Edward Banks
3. With Frederick Augustus, Duke of York and brother of George IV 1820-30
4. *Matross* - A soldier next in rank below the gunner in a train of artillery, who acted as a kind of assistant or mate. *Jager* - A rifleman
5. It is interesting that the Deputys are described as Esquires.
6. Incidentally John Garrett, the Lord Mayor was the Alderman for the Ward of Bridge Within, which seems a happy coincidence but perhaps he was preferred because of the momentous occasion?
7. Now I am going to disappoint you. My Latin was a very long time ago but luckily there is an English translation.
8. It is interesting that this ceremony took place precisely 10 years after the Battle of Waterloo. The reason is perhaps the Duke of Wellington, who was actively involved in pushing ahead with the preparations for the new Bridge but did not take part in the ceremony as it was feared that his well known anti-reform stance would lead to a disturbance.