

THE CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN
The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

NEW SERIES NO. 34

April 1981

ENFIELD IN THE TIME OF CHARLES LAMB

Graham Dalling

Enfield was the largest parish in Middlesex with 12,653 acres. Its nearest rival was Harrow with 10,027 acres. The population at the 1831 census stood at 8,812, making it one of the most populous parishes in the county. Indeed, of the Middlesex parishes outside the metropolis only one had a population greater than Enfield - Hammersmith with 10,222. Close behind ran Hampstead with 8,588 and Edmonton with 8,192. However, despite these apparently impressive figures Enfield was not in a particularly healthy state. A study of the growth-rate of the population of Enfield from 1801 to 1831 compared with the neighbouring parishes of Tottenham and Edmonton is particularly revealing.

ENFIELD

1801 - 5,881	1831 - 8,812	Growth Rate - 34 per cent
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EDMONTON

1801 - 5,093	1831 - 8,192	Growth Rate - 37½ per cent
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TOTTENHAM

1801 - 3,629	1831 - 6,937	Growth Rate - 48 per cent
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Both Tottenham and Edmonton were growing faster than Enfield. This tendency became even more marked in the traumatic decade from 1841 to 1851.

ENFIELD

1841 - 9,367	1851 - 9,453	Growth Rate - 0.9 per cent
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EDMONTON

1841 - 9,027	1851 - 9,708	Growth Rate - 7 per cent
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TOTTENHAM

1841 - 8,584	1851 - 9,120	Growth Rate - 6½ percent ¹
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By 1851 Edmonton had overtaken Enfield and by 1861 so had Tottenham. Enfield continued to grow at a significantly slower rate than its neighbours and it was not until the final decade of the 19th century that Enfield's population really took off. Thus, at the time of Charles Lamb's residence, Enfield's fortunes were heading for a major slump.

The reasons for this are not entirely clear. The market, which had been active as late as 1798, was defunct. Pigot's Directory of 1826 states that 'the loss of the market has been of considerable injury to the town'. Lamb, writing to Mary Shelley in January 1830, describes the redundant Market Place: 'Clowns stand about what was the Market-place, and spit minutely - to relieve ennui'.² Also, the enclosure of Enfield Chase had not been a great

success. The land, mostly stiff clay, had proved intractable and the new farms, hedged and ditched at great expense, provided little profit for the farmers. There had been little in the way of industrialisation - the Royal Small Arms Factory and Grout and Baylis' Crape factory at Ponders End were the only establishments of any size. Market gardening in the eastern half of the parish had not yet reached significant proportions.

Enfield, as it was in Charles Lamb's time, was certainly green and, in parts, pleasant, but it would be a great mistake to regard it as a rural paradise. In fact, large parts of the parish could better be designated a rural slum. A report to the General Board of Health on sanitary conditions in Enfield, published in 1850, reveals a frightening picture of dirt and disease. Many of the places described are close to Gentlemans Row and Chase Side and must have been known to Lamb.

In Loves Row (now Chapel Street) behind Gentlemans Row, the cottages were drained by an open ditch 4 ft wide, choked with refuse and sewage. In Lavender Hill pigs and donkeys were being kept in the cottages. In Slaughterhouse Lane (now Sydney Road) opposite the Market Place, there was no provision for drainage and slops were thrown into the yard and the roadway. A similar state of affairs prevailed at Meeting House Yard in Baker Street. At Anderson's Cottages, also in Baker Street, one privy built over an open ditch sufficed for eight cottages. The ditch was reported to be choked with offal discarded by a neighbouring butcher. At Gloucester Place, a row of cottages in Chase Side directly opposite Mr Westwood's house, there was only one gulley-hole for disposing of slops and that was sited directly under the pump. Parsonage Lane was served by an open sewer and there had been cases of typhus and rheumatic fever in that locality.

The report includes details of all the deaths that had taken place in the parish during the year 1849. There were 211 deaths out of a population of 9,453 (1851). The number of deaths per 1,000 was 23.4. (In 1972, there were 3,291 deaths in the London Borough of Enfield out of a population of 265,910, a death-rate of just under 11.5 per 1,000.) Causes of death include tuberculosis (in its various forms), erysipelas, smallpox, dysentery, typhus, scarlet fever and measles.³

Of the state of health of Enfield in Lamb's time there is no reliable data. A Vestry meeting held on 6th January 1825 saw fit to comment on the fact that a large increase in disease among 'the labouring poor' had resulted in an increased charge on the poor rate. In a letter dated June 1827 Lamb refers to an outbreak of rabies: 'All the dogs are going mad here if you believe the overseers'.⁴ In a letter to William Hazlitt dated 13th September 1831 he refers to Mrs Westwood's daughter being in a fever and her granddaughter having the measles.⁵ A much more significant piece of evidence is a paper written by Lamb's friend Dr Jacob Vale Asbury of Silver Street. It is entitled 'A Treatise On Epidemic Cholera' and was published in 1833. Asbury had treated at least fifteen cases of this disease in Enfield. His method of treatment included the use of saline solution and opium and also the use of mercury ointment and calomel, a chloride of mercury used as a purgative.

Enfield did not yet have a railway service. It was not until 1840 that the Northern and Eastern Railway opened the first part of its main line from Stratford to Broxbourne with stations at Ponders End and Ordnance Factory (now Enfield Lock). Enfield Town was not served until 1849 when a single track branchline was opened from Edmonton. In the meantime passenger

traffic to and from London was in the hands of the coach proprietors.

The only coach proprietor in Enfield Town was John Glover who operated a service from the Kings Head in the Market Place to the Flower Pot, Bishopsgate and to the Bell, Holborn. Glover was a native of Hackney and was born in 1803 or 1804. He was later joined in the business by his younger brother William born in 1808 or 1809 who became landlord of the Kings Head.⁶ The fare charged was 2/6 each way. Mr Brett, who drove the vehicle, had an unfortunate experience when the horses bolted while descending Brigadier Hill. The coach overturned into a ditch in Chase Side.⁷ Lamb certainly travelled on Glover's coach. A letter to Fanny Kelly dated 25th September 1827 was written on 'the coach from the Bell, Holborn half past three or half past four to the door'.⁸ However, Lamb more frequently walked to Edmonton which, being on the main road to Cambridge, had a coach every half hour to London.⁹ In October 1830 he wrote to Talford 'the Edmonton stages come almost every hour from Snow Hill'.¹⁰

Enfield Grammar School was in sorry state. In September 1830 Rev. John Milne, the schoolmaster, resigned. Some years earlier there had been a concerted effort by the trustees to eject him. This had resulted in prolonged, expensive and ultimately unsuccessful litigation by the trustees. A Vestry meeting was called for 12th May 1831 to appoint a successor. There were three candidates: Lt John Barker, RN, James Emery and Rev. Robert Leman Page. A poll resulted in 190 votes for Emery, 125 for Barker and 23 for Page. In later years Emery was accused of neglect of his duties. (As well as being master of the Grammar School, he was the Enfield agent for the Alliance Insurance Co.)¹¹ In 1846 he was dismissed by the Vestry. One of the unsuccessful candidates, Lt Barker, figures in a letter Lamb wrote in April 1830 to Jacob Vale Asbury. Lamb had been carried home drunk from Asbury's house in Silver Street and recalled being carried past Lt Barker's coalshed.¹²

Enfield at this time had a large number of private boarding schools. Lamb was on friendly terms with the proprietors of at least two of these. He was certainly acquainted with the staff of the Palace School in Enfield Town. This was run by one Thomas May with the assistance of his wife Mary, three teachers and four servants. There were 31 pupils in residence at the time of the 1841 census. Lamb wrote to Mrs May 3rd July 1828 offering thanks for a pleasant evening spent in the company of her and Mr May.¹³ A Mr Sugden who taught for 12 years at this school married the daughter of Mr Westwood in whose house in Chase Side Lamb lodged. In June 1828 Lamb wrote a testimonial for Sugden who was applying for a job at a school run by a Mrs Morgan.¹⁴

Lamb was also acquainted with a Mrs Mary Gisborne who ran a ladies boarding school in Baker Street. He wrote a verse to a Miss Gray/Grey, a pupil at the school.¹⁵ Charles and Mary Cowden Clark recalled that, during a visit to the Lambs at Enfield, they were taken to play whist at a schoolmistress' house. On introducing Mary Cowden Clark to their hostess, Lamb, who was in a mischievous mood, said, 'She hopes you have sprats for supper this evening'. The schoolmistress was not amused.¹⁶ The lady in question was very probably Mrs Gisborne.

At a slightly less elevated level, Lamb seems to have been well acquainted with the pubs of Enfield. In a letter to William Hone dated 20th June 1827 he writes, 'Can you slip down here and go a Green-dragoning?' This is clearly a reference to the Green Dragon in Green Lanes, Winchmore Hill.

In Pigot's Directory of 1826 the landlord's name was William Boards. A later landlord, William Macdonald, was a specialist in breeding toy dogs and the pub was frequented by dog lovers.

In a letter to Talfourd dated 31st January 1828, after outlining the route to Enfield via Essex Road, Newington Green and Green Lanes, he writes, 'We are known at the Horseshoes and the Rising Sun'.¹⁷ The Horseshoes, now known as the Crown and Horseshoes, stands on the bank of the New River, close to Chase Side. In 1826 the landlord was one Robert Worrall.⁹ He was later succeeded by James Jarvis. It was here one evening in December 1832 that Lamb, having gone to fetch a pint of porter for Edward Moxon who was a guest of the Lambs, fell in with a group of four men playing dominoes. One of these men, a young merchant seaman named Benjamin Danby, recognised Lamb, his father having been a hairdresser at the Temple. (In Pigot's Directory of 1826 one Henry Danby, perfumer and haircutter, is listed at no.117, Drury Lane.) The next day young Danby's body with the throat cut, was found in a ditch on Holtwhites Hill. Lamb found himself summoned before the Rev. Dr Daniel Cresswell, Vicar and chairman of the bench to be questioned about his recollections of the evening.¹⁸ The event gave rise to a lurid broadsheet verse -

'Give ear ye tender Christians all and listen unto me
While I relate a deed of blood and great barbarity,
A murder of the blackest dye I now repeat in rhyme,
Committed on Benjamin Danby, a young man in his prime.

This young man was a sailor, and just returned from sea,
And down to Enfield Chase he went his cousin for to see,
With money in his pocket so jolly and so free,
But little did he dream of such dismal destiny.

Twas on a Wednesday evening he called at the Horse Shoe,
And there he drank so freely, as sailors mostly do,
So ruffians in the company whom he did treat most kind,
To rob and murder him that night most wickedly designed.

They threw him on the ground and stabbed him with a knife,
He cried out 'Don't murder me! - O do not take my life!'
But heedless of his piteous cries, his throat they cut so deep,
And turned the gully in his throat as butchers kill their sheep.

Then in a ditch they threw his corpse, mangled with ghastly wound,
Where early the next morning the body it was found.
Now Cooper, Fare and Johnson are committed for this crime,
And will be tried at Newgate all in a little time.'

The Rising Sun stood on the south side of Church Street. The landlord in 1826 was one William Walker.⁹

Another public house almost certainly known to Lamb was the Rose and Crown in Clay Hill. Charles and Mary Cowden Clark describe a long walk in the company of the Lambs and Fanny Kelly. The company stopped to refresh themselves at a wayside inn. The description - heavily wooded surroundings, the dip in the road, the ford and the footbridge - tallies perfectly with the Rose and Crown.¹⁹ Today, apart from the substitution of a bridge for the ford, the scene has scarcely altered. The stream at this spot was a source of considerable trouble. In May 1825, William Dunkley, landlord of the Rose and Crown, complained to Enfield Vestry about the inadequate size

of the culvert, sited a short distance downstream, carrying the stream under the New River. In times of heavy rain, floodwater was piling up behind the culvert causing flooding at the ford. The Vestry decided to make representations to the New River Company, but it does not appear that any action was taken.²⁰

A letter Lamb wrote to George Dyer dated 20th December 1830 provides the only evidence of Enfield's involvement in the agricultural workers uprising of 1830/31.²¹ (This took the form of a great wave of rick burning which swept across southern and eastern England.) Lamb describes the firing of seven haystacks belonging to a farmer called Graystock. The night before, he could see the flames in the sky about half a mile away. Middlesex was relatively little affected by this great wave of arson, the counties worst affected being Kent, Berkshire and Hampshire. There were several major outbreaks in Essex. However, a few days previously on 15th December, there had been an incident at Wrotham Park, Potters Bar on the far side of Enfield Chase. The two incidents appear to be associated with a great wave of arson that swept down the Essex/Hertfordshire border during December 1830. An analysis of the incidents shows the outbreak of rick burning and other unrest starting in north-east Essex close to the Cambridgeshire border and moving progressively southwards before finally spilling over the border into Middlesex.

TABLE OF INCIDENTS 1-19 DECEMBER 1830

1/12	Ridgewell, Essex (near Haverhill)	Wage riots
2/12	Birdbrook, Essex (near Haverhill)	" "
3/12	Ickleford, Herts (near Hitchin)	Arson
4/12	Bishops Stortford, Herts	"
5/12	Standon, Herts	"
6/12	Sheering, Essex	Demanding money with menaces, breaking of threshing machines
	Steeple Bumpsstead, Essex	Wage riots
7/12	Chesterford, Essex	Arson
9/12	Dunmow, Essex	Destruction of machines
10/12	Arkesden, Essex (near Saffron Walden)	Wage riots
	Henham, Essex (near Bishops Stortford)	" "
	Steeple Bumpsstead, Essex	" "
11/12	Clavering, Essex	" "
13/12	Bishops Stortford, Herts	Arson
14/12	Leyton, Essex	"
15/12	Wrotham Park, Middlesex	"
19/12	Enfield	" 22

Sadly, Lamb seems to have had little sympathy for the desperate plight of the agricultural labourers that drove them to resort to rick burning: 'It was never good times in England since the poor began to speculate upon their condition. Formerly they jogged along with as little reflection as horses: the whistling ploughman went cheek by jowl with his brother that neighed. Now the biped carries a box of phosphorus in his leather breeches, and in the dead of night the half-illuminated beast steals his magic potion into a cleft in a barn, and half a country is grinning with new fires'. He was clearly of the opinion that Farmer Graystock's ricks had been fired by a disaffected labourer. 'Farmer Graystock says something to the touchy rustic that he did not relish, and he writes his distaste in flames'.

Another event in Enfield to which Lamb refers in a letter is the election in June 1833 of a Lecturer for St Andrew's Church, Enfield. (The duties of the Lecturer approximated to those of a curate and included preaching a sermon on Sunday afternoons and reading prayers at the service.) The vacancy had been caused by the resignation of Rev. Dr Brass who had been appointed in January 1829. On 5th May, 1833 Lamb, who was by now living in Edmonton, wrote to Rev. James Gillman, the son of Coleridge's physician at Highgate and a candidate for the post of Lecturer. According to Lamb, his friend Dr Asbury had offered to get Gillman a mover and seconder.²³ The election took place at a Vestry meeting on 27th June 1833. There were three candidates - Gillman, Rev. Martin Cramp Tolputt and Rev. Charles William Bollaerts. The result of the meeting was the election of Bollaerts with 36 votes with Gillman and Tolputt trailing very badly with 10 votes each. Gillman's supporters included Edward Harman, a wealthy banker living at Claysmore, Clay Hill, John Glover the coach proprietor and Jasper Guiver, the landlord of the White Lion, Enfield Highway. There is one significant absentee from the list. Asbury, far from working on Gillman's behalf, did not even bother to attend the meeting. His sister-in-law, Mary Jacomb, who was at the meeting, voted for Bollaerts. Lamb appears to have badly misjudged Asbury.

In the event Bollaerts did not occupy the position for long. In 1835 he was appointed curate-in-charge of the newly-built Jesus Church, Forty Hill where he remained until his death in 1863.²⁴ He was born in the year 1801 in Demarara, later British Guiana. His unusual surname, combined with the fact that Demarara had been a Dutch colony until seized by Britain during the Napoleonic War, strongly suggests that Bollaerts was of Dutch extraction. As might be expected, his churchmanship was strongly evangelical. A lifelong bachelor, at the time of the 1851 census he was living at Forty Hill Vicarage with a widowed aunt and two servants.

Of the more important people with whom Lamb came into contact in Enfield three are of outstanding importance: Jacob Vale Asbury, Dr Daniel Cresswell, the Vicar and John Tuff who was a pharmacist with a shop in Enfield Town next to the George. To these must be added Rev. John Fuller Russell, who, although he came into contact with Lamb during his last days at Edmonton, was later to play a major part in the history of Enfield as Vicar of St James' Church, Enfield Highway.

John Tuff figures only once in Lamb's letters. He wrote to Tuff from Edmonton in 1833 concerning tickets for a performance at Covent Garden.²⁵ He was born c.1801 and so would have been in his early thirties when Lamb knew him. He was born in the village of Stilton, Huntingdonshire. He was living in Enfield by 1826. He was a pharmacist with a shop in Enfield Town. He was married with two daughters, both of whom became school teachers. His chief claim to fame is his book *Historical Notices of Enfield* published in 1859. It is badly-written and badly-arranged, but is nevertheless one of the most useful sources of information on 19th century Enfield.

Daniel Cresswell, the Vicar, is one of Lamb's few Enfield acquaintances whom he specifically describes as a friend. He was appointed to Enfield in 1823 and remained until his death at the age of 68 in the spring of 1844. He was an accomplished classical scholar and a mathematician of some repute. He published a considerable number of books on mathematics. He took an active interest in parish affairs, taking the chair at Vestry meetings. Among the achievements of his incumbency were the rebuilding of the south aisle of the church in 1826, improvements at the workhouse and the

establishment of the National School in Enfield Town in 1839. During his time three chapels of ease were constructed - St James, Enfield Highway, 1831, Jesus Church, Forty Hill in 1835 and Christ Church, Cockfosters in 1839. He was rather old-fashioned evangelical and in his last years was to have trouble from High Church supporters in the parish.²⁶

John Fuller Russell was a young man of twenty, a student at Peterhouse, when he visited Lamb at Edmonton on 5th August 1834. The purpose of his visit was to seek Lamb's opinion on a narrative poem he had written entitled *Emily De Wilton*. Although Lamb's comments were reasonably favourable the poem was never published.²⁷ In 1847 he published a biography of Dr Samuel Johnson. However, literature was not to be Russell's main interest in life. He was ordained deacon in 1838 and priest in 1839. While at Cambridge he was caught up in the High Church movement and later became secretary of the influential Camden Society. After serving as curate at St Peter, Walworth, he was appointed in 1841 as curate-in-charge of St James, Enfield Highway.²⁸

Despite his obvious ability, Russell was not an outstanding success as a parish priest. He was a lively and highly contentious man. His relations with Daniel Cresswell were strained. In fact, the two men were not on speaking terms and they communicated via an intermediary, Archdeacon Lonsdale.²⁹ However, he worked quite happily with Cresswell's successor, John Moore Heath, whose churchmanship approximated more closely to his own.

As early as 1843 Russell was using candles on the altar. On St James' Day the same year Russell led a procession from the church to the schoolroom in South Street. Banners were carried and the clergy were wearing surplices. News of this event reached the ears of Bishop Blomfield, probably via Cresswell. Blomfield wrote a tartly-worded letter to Russell. 'The whole affair seems to have been contrived so as to make the nearest possible approach to the Romish Church without subjecting yourself to ecclesiastical censure.'²⁹ Cresswell did his best to obstruct Russell's activities. A Vestry held 29th June 1843 refused to pass a bill for candles for use on the altar at St James'. On 27th April 1844, a matter of days after Cresswell's death, Russell wrote to Bishop Blomfield asking for St James' to be formed into a separate parish. This was done a year later in 1845. Russell stayed at Enfield until 1854 when he left to become Vicar of Greenhithe in Kent.

It is due to Russell that we know something of life styles of Enfield's small body of industrial workers. He visited the homes of the workers at Messrs Grout and Baylis' crape factory in South Street, Ponders End and noted down his impressions. Here are some typical extracts:

Betsy Nicholls

Married - employed in making up packets of crape at 8/- per week. No allowance in sickness. Has a little girl supposed to be illegitimate. 4 years old. Does not attend school. Has an infant since marriage. Never attends church or meeting house. Lives nearly opposite the White Hart. Has been employed in the factory since a child. Her mother lives with her - character doubtful.

Ann Carrington

Married. Many years at factory. Turns a reel to dry crape. 9/- per week. No allowance in sickness. Slovenly, ignorant woman. Never attends church.

Has three daughters - married - all badly conducted persons before marriage. Little hope of amendment. Lives in Goat Lane.

David Conyard

Black dyer. Good servant. Civil man. 20/- per week. His wife at piecework - average 7/- per week. He attends the meeting, but not very regularly. His children attend the meeting school. Perseverance here might do some good.³⁰

Russell's chief claim to fame is as a writer of sermons, tracts and other theological works. He died aged seventy in 1884. His standing as a theologian was sufficient to earn him a place in the Dictionary of National Biography.

Apart from Cresswell, Jacob Vale Asbury was Lamb's principal friend in Enfield. He has already been mentioned in connection with the outbreak of cholera and with Rev. James Gillman's candidature for the Lectureship.

His name is mentioned several times in Lamb's letters. In December 1828, writing to Louisa Holcroft, whose family was afflicted with measles, Lamb feigned a fear of catching the disease: 'I will send for Mr Asbury'.³¹ In April 1830 Lamb's ward, Emma Isola, was ill at Enfield. Some bottles of medicine prescribed by Asbury were delivered. The bottles were labelled 'Miss Isola Lamb', doubtless a mistake made by some half-witted dispensary assistant. Lamb was highly amused by the incident.³² Writing to Edward Moxon in March 1833 Lamb reported that he had burnt his leg and was being attended by Asbury.³³ That Lamb mixed socially with Asbury is clear from another letter in which he apologises for having drunk too much at Asbury's house.¹²

Asbury was born c. 1792. He was a native of Staffordshire.⁶ There is no precise evidence of when he came to Enfield, but on 4th May 1820 he was married in St Andrew's Church to Dorothy Jacomb. (The Jacomb family had owned property in Enfield since 1791. They were of Huguenot origin. They were possibly related to William Jacomb, a civil engineer who was assistant to Brunel during the construction and launching of his ship the Great Eastern at Millwall.) Mrs Asbury was a full two years older than her husband and was born in Basinghall Street in the City of London. The Asbury's had three sons and two daughters. They lived in White Lodge, a large clapboard house still standing in Silver Street.⁶ At the time of the 1851 census he was employing two medical assistants, a coachman, a cook and two housemaids. In 1837 he bought a coach house adjoining his premises for the sum of £50.³⁴

Asbury was the parish surgeon for Enfield, but it is not clear from the Vestry minutes when he was appointed. In January 1831 he was accused of negligence concerning the case of a pauper called Burgess.³⁵ The charge was rejected by the Vestry. In 1850 there was another complaint about him. A man had an accident on a Friday and Asbury did not turn up until the following Monday morning.³⁶ In 1837 he was appointed as medical officer to Enfield Workhouse, then used for housing the parish children. Asbury carried out his duties conscientiously and was particularly concerned with attempts to eradicate skin diseases such as ringworm and scabies which were endemic in the workhouse.³⁷

He was also greatly involved in efforts to solve public health problems in Enfield. Much of the data contained in the 1850 G B H Report on Enfield was supplied by Asbury.³ In 1850 a Local Board of Health was set up in

Enfield as a direct result of the aforementioned report. Asbury was one of the candidates who stood in the first Local Board election. Sadly for Enfield, he was not elected.

Asbury died in June 1871³⁸ and was buried in St Andrew's Churchyard. His daughter, Mary Susannah Asbury, lived on in Enfield until her death in April 1908 at the age of eighty-two.³⁹

In conclusion, it cannot be said that Lamb made any significant impression on Enfield. However, his letters written during his stay are a useful source of information on the state of the town at that time. In particular, he provides valuable accounts of the Danby murder and the firing of Farmer Graystock's hay ricks. Also, in his reference to the election of the Lecturer in 1833, Lamb provides hard evidence of the dubious machinations that accompanied the appointment of parish officers. The Vestry minutes understandably make no mention of these activities behind the scenes. He also provides valuable information on important local figures such as Cresswell, Asbury, Russell and, to a lesser extent, the May family. Lastly, his description of the Market Place provides ample evidence of the rundown state of Enfield at this time. Had Lamb lived a few years longer, he might have left an equally valuable record of Edmonton, but this was not to be.

Based on a talk given to the Charles Lamb Society on 12 April 1980

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 33 " " 938
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Abbreviations

V C H Victoria County History
 E P L Enfield Public Library
 E V M Enfield Vestry Minutes
 D N B Dictionary of National Biography

All references to Lamb's letters are from the three volume edition (edited by E V Lucas) published by J M Dent in 1935.

The Author

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THE CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

This year the Birthday Luncheon was held on 14 February, 1981, at the Ivanhoe Hotel, Bloomsbury Street, London, where a large gathering of members and guests celebrated this, our special occasion. We were very happy to have with us our new President, Professor John Stevens, in the Chair for the first time. Our Guest of Honour this year was Professor Brian Morris, lately of Sheffield University and now Principal of St David's University College, Lampeter. His delightful talk, leading up to the toast to the Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb, was much appreciated and we are very grateful that Professor Morris allowed himself to be persuaded to let us print it here.

Miss Stella Pigrome charmingly proposed the toast to Provincial and Overseas Members and Guests, confessing that, as she has recently moved to the country herself, *she* has become a "provincial member" and must consequently drink "to us". Miss Helen Aderin, a pupil of Christ's Hospital, Hertford, replied in a short speech that entranced us all with its knowledgeable and perceptive tribute to Charles Lamb. Our Chairman, Dr Wilson, summed up our pleasure in the occasion and our thanks to the distinguished participants.

Particular gratitude is due to our Hon. Secretary, Mrs Huxstep, not only for all the admirable arrangements but also, when our Grecians from Christ's Hospital were held up by transport difficulties, for speaking the

first Grace for us from her own schooldays memory. Fortunately, the delay was not too great before the Christ's Hospital contingent arrived and the rest of the proceedings went according to plan. The Grecians who were with us on this occasion were Robert F Hester and Carlton Paul Evans.

Professor Morris has entitled his talk, for the benefit of the *Bulletin*,

TENDER LAMB

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen - for how else can I address and enfold so egregious a gathering as this, in his beloved London, of the students, the admirers, and even the readers of Charles Lamb. The prospect put me upon reflection. How, I meditated, might Elia himself have encompassed such a metaphysical ménage? What collective noun is magnetic enough to attract, and comprehend, such an august assembly? With his love of language and his penchant for puns, Charles Lamb might have contemplated "a rampage of mes and ewes" or "a flock of fleecemen". His little Latin and less Greek might have encouraged him to label us the Amniotics, or The Honorable Company of Agnotasters; he would at least have recognised us as a "nest of friendly harpies" such as plagued his Wednesday evenings and drained his gin and water to the dregs when he lived so hospitably in The Temple. I myself have been unable to decide whether to call you the Eliophilists, or, with simpler Saxon directness "the Lamb fancy". And, regretfully, as we meet in the Ivanhoe Hotel, I've no better suggestion to offer.

Of one thing I am certain. He would have approved of our meeting to take luncheon together. You will recall his words in *Grace Before Meat*: "I am no Quaker at my food. I confess I am not indifferent to the kinds of it. Those unctuous morsels of deer's flesh were not made to be received with dispassionate services. I hate a man who swallows it, affecting not to know what he is eating; I suspect his taste in higher matters...C.- holds that a man cannot have a pure mind who refuses apple-dumplings. I am not certain but he is right." And he would have permitted drinking. You will recall his words in a letter to Manning: "My habits are changing, I think: i.e. from drunk to sober", though in his day his mind would have been serenely untroubled by worries about cholesterol, cirrhosis, breathalysers, and all the other ills that flesh is heir to. And so, Sir, thank you for my dinner, and I must address myself to my task.

When you first did me the honour of asking me to address this company I felt, subdued by the sense of occasion, that I should direct my thoughts to some great subject "unattempted yet in prose or rhyme", and I resolved to invite you to lift up your eyes unto the hills, and think about Charles Lamb and the Mountains - "great floundering bears and monsters" as he described them enveloping Coleridge's house at Keswick, since, at the invitation of the Editor of the *Bulletin*, I was writing an UnElia essay on the subject /she is a hard taskmaster, and for nearly a year she has had my head firmly tucked under her arm in a sort of Mary Wedlock/. But mountains are a solemn subject, and as I read the *Essays* and the *Letters* yet again, cheerfulness kept breaking in, and I suddenly remembered that this year we would be meeting on February 14th, which, according to the calendar of Holy Church, is the Feast Day of St Valentine, patron Saint of Lovers, and the traditional excuse for many a more secular feast of the fancy, not to say a proper opportunity for an improper proposition. And I recalled the words of the master in the *Essay on Valentine's Day*:

Hail to thy returning festival, old Bishop Valentine! Great is thy name

in the rubric, thou venerable Arch-flamen of Hymen! Immortal Go-between! who, and what manner of person art thou? Art thou but a *name*, typifying the restless principle which impels poor humans to seek perfection in union? Or wert thou indeed a mortal prelate, with thy tippet and thy rochet, thy apron on, and decent lawn sleeves? Mysterious personage! Like unto thee, assuredly, there is no other mitred figure in the calendar.

Perfect, immaculate Lamb, and all the more so for being quietly right. My hagiographical researches, Mr Chairman, extending no deeper than the Penquin book of Saints, assure me that Valentine was probably an early Roman Christian martyr, of whom absolutely nothing is known, and who has been relentlessly confused with a French Bishop of later date of whom very little more has been discovered. One thing is clear. Neither had the slightest claim to proficiency as an amorist, and informed opinion currently holds that February 14th has been kept from primeval and pagan times as the day on which the birds salute the Spring, and set about their amatory business. As Robert Herrick wrote: "Oft have I heard both youth and virgins say / Birds choose their mates, and couple too this day: / But by their flight I never can devine / When I shall couple with my Valentine." Sadly, Sir, I have to report, that this morning the pigeons in Trafalgar Square seemed sadly ill-informed of the date, and they, like us, seemed vastly more interested in food than in - anything else. But amongst humans, the pretty custom of Valentines has for centuries now garnished the sordid meat of biology with a sweet sauce of elegant sophistication. They emphasise the fancies rather than the facts of life, they stimulate the passions more than the parts, and they introduce into the acerbities of our quotidian experience an element of softness and delicate aspiration which briefly recalls us to the central hopes and fears of civilised humanity. In a word, they display Tenderness.

And it is this "tenderness", this delicacy and discrimination of affection, which, as much as anything else, characterises the life and the work of Charles Lamb. It is a quality impossible to define. Among the too-many things that I do, Sir, I am one of the Trustees of the new National Heritage Memorial Fund, set up by HMG to aid the preservation of the British National Heritage. Under Lord Charteris of Amisfield we decided at our first meeting that the one thing we would NOT do would be to offer a definition of what the British Heritage *is*. We all know what it is, because none of us could *say* what it is. And by the same token I shall not attempt to encapsulate what Charles Lamb exemplifies as "Tenderness". I shall follow his own example, for you may have noticed that in the Essays he never pins down his nominal subject by any definition. "Definitions" said Blake, "is a fool's game", and Charles Lamb and I agree with him. Rather does Mr Lamb expatiate about his subject, garlanding it with great swags of phraseology, allusion, anecdote, illustration, and reverie. And I shall follow him, afar off, with faltering steps and slow, assembling from his life and work a few illustrations of what I take to be one of his essential qualities.

In the spirit of St Valentine, Mr Lamb himself seems to have been a tender, but sensitive and fugitive lover. From the Letters and Essays we gather that his first love was a lady called Alice W----n, and let us not enquire brutally into her name and nature. We know that she had "fair hair, and mild, pale blue eyes" and in one of the early sonnets we see clearly the tender quality of his youthful affection.

Was it some sweet device of Faëry

That mocked my steps with many a lonely glade,
 And fancied wanderings with a fair-haired maid?
 Have these things been? Or what rare witchery
 Impregning with delights the charmed air,
 Enlightened up the semblance of a smile
 In those fine eyes? methought they spake the while
 Soft soothing things, which might enforce despair
 To drop the murdering knife, and let go by
 His foul resolve. And does the lonely glade
 Still court the footsteps of the fair-haired maid?
 Still in her locks the gales of summer sigh?
 While I forlorn do wander, reckless where,
 And 'mid my wanderings meet no Anna there.

But neither with Alice, nor in his later love for Hester Savery, was Mr Lamb to experience the mutuality of tenderness that a love-relationship can provide. Circumstances decreed otherwise. Duty, what Wordsworth called "stern daughter of the voice of God", called him to give all his love and tenderness to his sister Mary. We all know that sad but heroic story. Her affliction of mind called forth all his care, his patience, his sensitivity, and his delicacy of living. And at a sacrificial cost. As Valentine was a martyr for Christ, so Charles Lamb was a martyr to Mary. And like most martyrs he cheerfully and delightedly embraced his fate. I think of them, together, in their last years, at Edmonton, when Charles expresses his happiness that Emma Isola's wedding has restored Mary to full possession of her senses, albeit briefly: "It restored me from that moment" writes Mary, "as if by an electrical stroke...I never felt so calm and quiet after a similar illness as I do now." And perhaps one of the most deeply moving moments in the whole history of English literary figures is that recorded by a friend relating to their early days together when he tells how on one occasion he met the brother and sister, walking hand in hand, across the fields to the old asylum, both bathed in tears. This is a tenderness which has no taint of sentimentality in it, because its overt emotion freely expressed, is underwritten and guaranteed by a stern, expensive, sacrificial and fully-realised sense of moral duty.

If the life exemplifies tenderness, then the writings examine and explore and exploit it. Consider what is generally agreed to be a portrait of his father in the character of Lovel in *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple*:

I knew this Lovel. He was a man of an incorrigible and losing honesty. A good fellow withal, and 'would strike'. In the cause of the oppressed he never considered inequalities, or calculated the number of his opponents. He once wrested a sword out of the hand of a man of quality that had drawn upon him; and pommelled him severely with the hilt of it. The swordsman had offered insult to a female - an occasion upon which no odds against him could have prevented the interference of Lovel. He would stand next day bare-headed to the same person, modestly to excuse his interference - for L. never forgot rank, where something better was not concerned. L. was the liveliest little fellow breathing, had a face as gay as Garrick's, whom he was said greatly to resemble (I have a portrait of him which confirms it), possessed a fine turn for humorous poetry - next to Swift and Prior - moulded heads in clay or plaster of Paris to admiration, by the dint of natural genius merely; turned cribbage boards, and such small cabinet toys, to

perfection; took a hand at quadrille or bowls with equal facility; made punch better than any man of his degree in England; had the merriest quips and conceits, and was altogether as brimful of rogueries and inventions as you could desire. He was a brother of the angle, moreover, and just such a free, hearty, honest companion as Mr. Isaac Walton would have chosen to go a fishing with. I saw him in his old age and the decay of his faculties, palsy-smitten, in the last sad stage of human weakness - 'a remnant most forlorn of what he was,' - yet even then his eye would light up upon the mention of his favourite Garrick. He was greatest, he would say, in Bayes - 'was upon the stage nearly throughout the whole performance, and as busy as a bee.' At intervals, too, he would speak of his former life, and how he came up a little boy from Lincoln to go to service, and how his mother cried at parting with him, and how he returned, after some few years' absence, in his smart new livery to see her, and she blessed herself at the change, and could hardly be brought to believe that it was 'her own bairn.' And then, the excitement subsiding, he would weep, till I have wished that sad second-childhood might have a mother still to lay its head upon her lap. But the common mother of us all in no long time after received him gently into hers.

What we salute is the marvellous balance, the poise of it, matching wit against feeling, controlling exuberance with sentiment, facing appraisal with affection. The controlling tone, the point of the balance, can only be described as "a tenderness of judgement". "Lord, make me coy, and tender to offend" is a text which will do as an analytic tool for literary evaluation of the Essays.

Tenderness is a quality which surfaces everywhere in the writings, especially where Mr Lamb is talking to or about his many friends. In the Dedication to Coleridge, prefixed to the Collected Works of 1818 we read this:

Some of the Sonnets, which shall be carelessly turned over by the general reader, may happily awaken in you remembrances, which I should be sorry should be ever totally extinct - the memory

Of summer days and of delightful years -

even so far back as to those old suppers at our old Salutation and Cat Inn, - when life was fresh, and topics exhaustless, - and you first kindled in me, if not the power, yet the love of poetry, and beauty, and kindness. -

What words have I heard
Spoke at the Mermaid!

The world has given you many a shrewd nip and gird since that time, but either my eyes are grown dimmer, or my old friend is the *same*, who stood before me three and twenty years ago - his hair a little confessing the hand of time, but still shrouding the same capacious brain, - his heart not altered, scarcely where it "alteration finds".

There, in a seemingly quite casual way, reminiscence, even nostalgia, is controlled by the gentle humour typically displayed in the periphrastic, roundabout use of allusion and the resources of language. What we have here is the Art of Tenderness.

And in one seldom quoted poem Mr Lamb shows how the temptations of an emotionally difficult subject can be avoided by expressing emotion through

the medium of a classically-designed form. A boy has been drowned in a river, and Mr Lamb chooses to address not the incident, nor the boy, but the river itself:

TO A RIVER IN WHICH A CHILD WAS DROWNED

Smiling river, smiling river,
On thy bosom sun-beams play;
Though they're fleeting and retreating,
Thou has more deceit than they.

In thy channel, in thy channel,
Choak'd with ooze and grav'ly stones,
Deep immersed and unheard,
Lies young Edward's corse: his bones

Ever whitening, ever whitening,
As thy waves against them dash;
What thy torrent, in the current,
Swallow'd, now it helps to wash.

As if senseless, as if senseless
Things had feeling in this case;
What so blindly, and unkindly,
It destroy'd, it now does grace.

It's a poem which is *clever* about Tenderness, it *plays* with the technical trick of the pathetic fallacy, but the Art is deployed in the service of a real and true compassion.

One final example, if I may. In Chapter 12 of *Rosamond Gray* we read how Allan "feeling himself disengaged from every personal tie, but not alienated from human sympathies" spent much of his time "in hospitals and lazar-houses"

He had found a *wayward pleasure*, he refused to name it a virtue, in tending a description of people, who had long ceased to expect kindness or friendliness from mankind, but were content to accept the reluctant services, which the often-times unfeeling instruments and servants of the well-meant institutions deal out to the poor sick people under their care.

It is not medicine, it is not broths and coarse meats, served up at a stated hour with all the hard formalities of a prison, - it is not the scanty dole of a bed to die on which dying man requires from his species.

Looks, attentions, consolations, - in a word, *sympathies*, are what a man most needs in this awful close of mortal sufferings. A kind look, a smile, a drop of cold water to the parched lip - for these things a man shall bless you in death.

This is the highest and purest form of Tenderness, and it is significant that *Rosamond Gray* is an early work, foreshadowing the lifelong devotion that Charles was to give to his sister, Mary. From the very outset, it seems, he was marvellously clear about the full cost of Compassion.

Mr Lamb ends his Essay on Valentine's Day with these words:

Good morrow to my Valentine, sings poor Ophelia: and no better wish, but with better auspices, we wish to all faithful lovers, who are not

too wise to despise old legends, but are content to rank themselves humble diocesans of old Bishop Valentine and his true church.

So as we today celebrate the Bishop Valentine whom History does not know, but whom our collective Imaginations have created, let us remember too Mr Charles Lamb, the lover, the brother, the frolic and the gentle, and perhaps above all, the Poet of the Tender Heart.

NOTES FROM MEMBERS

A Very Special Lady

"The old year being dead and the New Year coming of age..."

Before the New Year came of age, on 31st December 1980, Elians celebrated the 90th Birthday of a member who has been uniquely involved in the Charles Lamb Society since its inception in 1935. We refer to Mrs Alice Bishop.

While never seeking office herself, she has been successively the support and stay of

- her husband - Arthur Bishop - Vice-Chairman and Chairman
- her son-in-law - Stanley Huxstep - Treasurer 1945-55
- her daughter - Madeline Huxstep - Secretary 1979- ?

Alice Bishop's "surprise" 90th Birthday Party attracted more than 50 guests, reflecting her widespread interests in her family, the Liberal Party, the United Reform Church, the locality, and the Charles Lamb Society. Among representatives of the Society on this happy occasion were Frank Ledwith, our Vice-Chairman, Florence Reeves, our Membership Secretary, and Angus and Muriel Cheyne.

This event took place only a few weeks after she had graciously welcomed members to a pre-Christmas Buffet Luncheon held at her home. We look forward to similar happy occasions as Alice Bishop moves forward into the coming decade.

From Mr France dated: Canberra - 29th September 1980

The July *Charles Lamb Bulletin* reached me today. As usual it is intensely interesting and I noted particularly Mr Kenneth Jones's query on Henry Carington Bowles. I wondered if a note on this point might not be acceptable to him or perhaps to other readers. Since *Bulletins* take about three months to reach Australia by surface mail I expect others will have answered the query by now, but if not you may like to see what I know on the subject, although I fear it is rather inconclusive.

There were at least five members of the Bowles family named Henry Carington Bowles (not Carrington as Lamb spells it). Three of them could have known Lamb. The first lived from 1724-1793 and Lamb referred to him in his letter to Manning in September or October 1801 (Marrs II.25), when he mentions "Carrington Bowles's *Survey of England*." (Probably his *Poste Chaise Companion*)

The second lived from 1763-1830 and is the most likely to have known Lamb. Both were print sellers of 69 St Paul's Churchyard, although the later one tried to disassociate himself from the business after he married Anne Garnault in 1799. The third was born in 1801 and lived until 1852.

In his essay "On the Artificial Comedy of the last Century" which appeared

in the *London Magazine* in April 1822, Lamb refers to "my old friend Carrington Bowles." This could mean that they knew one another well, or it might imply merely that Lamb loved gazing in the print shop windows on his way from the Temple to Leadenhall Street; he might even have gone inside the shop to browse or buy prints.

In his "Recollections of a late Royal Academician" which appeared in *Moxon's Englishman's Magazine* in September 1831 he states that the shop still "exists for the poorer sort of caricatures." Perhaps it sold the sketch of Elia by Brook Pulham to which Procter objected. Lamb adds that George Dawe's father worked for Bowles.

Lamb also added a footnote to his poem "To Bernard Barton. With a Coloured Print" which read "From the venerable and ancient Manufactory of Carrington Bowles: some of my readers may recognize it." Lamb sent the poem to Barton in 1827 and the footnote was added when it was reprinted in *Album Verses* in 1830.

The second Carrington Bowles acquired, through his wife, a property in Enfield connected with the New River and she held shares in the New River Company. After her death he pulled down the Elizabethan house in which they lived and built on the site a house which he named Myddleton House. Here no doubt he entertained and possibly Charles Lamb was a guest.

Elia lived in Enfield from 1827-1833 and must often have been near Myddleton House in his walks. It will be remembered that even as a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital he made excursions from Newgate Street to the New River, so the neighbourhood was well known to him early in his life.

Possibly *Records of the Bowles Family* by William Henry Bowles 1918 may throw more light on this query, but I do not have access to the book at present. Edward Augustus Bowles (1865-1954) was, of course, the dedicated gardener, entomologist and botanist, who made famous the gardens of Myddleton House.

I do hope all this is of interest to someone. I seem very far now from the Charles Lamb Society, but much enjoy hearing of all its activities. My books are now all round me and the National Library of Australia is on my doorstep, but I have not yet had time to explore its resources. Neither do I know of any other lovers of Charles Lamb in Australia, but no doubt I shall come across some in time.

From D R Wickham - 'In the Footsteps of Charles Lamb'

A well-illustrated four-page article with the above title appeared in the Spring issue of the quarterly 'This England'.

'A reasonable number' of copies remain available from 'This England', PO Box 52, Cheltenham, Glos. The price including postage was £1.45 in November 1980 and will now probably be higher. Extortionate or not, no Elia bibliographical collection can be regarded as complete without it.

Alfoxton Park

Following Mr Ledwith's comment on a visit to Alfoxden, Mrs Berta Lawrence, author of *Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset*, sends us the disturbing news that "There is an official proposal to permit the felling of at least 300 trees, including the splendid oaks, when about 60 acres of land are put up for sale". She urges anyone who cares about this place "for its scenic

beauty and for the Coleridge - Wordsworth associations" to write to The Chairman, Planning Committee, Somerset County Council, Taunton, or to the County Planning Officer.

It will not be necessary to remind members of the Society that, apart from all its associations in Wordsworth's poetry and Dorothy's Journal, this is the scene of Coleridge's imaginative journey with Lamb and the Wordsworths while he had to stay behind in 'This Lime-tree Bower my Prison'. We understand that the trees are, in the main, not needing to be felled because they are past their best - they are not - but that they would fetch a good sum as timber.

The Dove Cottage Trust

Work is continuing on the building works associated with Dove Cottage and members in the USA may like to know that an American Appeal for funds to help complete this has now been launched. Anyone wishing to contribute can get in touch with the American Committee Secretary, Stephen Parrish at Cornell University or the Treasurer, Michael Jaye, at Rutgers University.

Wordsworth Summer Conference at Dove Cottage

Some members of the Charles Lamb Society are already familiar with and regular attenders at the annual Wordsworth Summer Conference, which Richard Wordsworth has for ten years organized in the Lake District. This year, for the first time, the Conference will be presented as one of the major projects of the Dove Cottage Trust, and any proceeds will go to the Wordsworth Heritage Appeal. Regulars at the Conference agree that Mr and Mrs Richard Wordsworth have given this particular Conference over the years a rare magic, which is not often met with in such academic gatherings. International scholars of the highest repute lecture at it and an atmosphere of totally unsnobbish friendliness prevails. In addition to the delight of sharing common interests in literature, there are exhilarating days of fell-walking, which, one sometimes feels, bring one closer to Wordsworth, Coleridge and, yes, even to Lamb, than "years of toiling reason". Anyone wishing to avail themselves during the first fortnight of August of the privilege of attending this Conference should write to

Richard Wordsworth Conference Director,
Wordsworth Summer Conference at Dove Cottage,
Dove Cottage,
Grasmere,
Ambleside,
Cumbria LA22 9SG
UK

Checklist of the Southey Collection in the Fitz Park Museum, Keswick, Cumbria

Our member, Professor Mary Ellen Priestley of Elon College, North Carolina, has had many enquiries about the holdings concerning Southey at Keswick. Members who are interested will find Professor Priestley's article and catalogue in the Winter 1980 number of *The Wordsworth Circle*, obtainable from Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122, USA.

FROM THE PRESS

The following correspondence in The Guardian in October-November 1980 may be of interest to Members.

Sir, - The line, "If filthy fingers were trumps, what a splendid hand you'd have" - quoted by Derek Malcolm (Weekend Guardian, October 5) as an example of the wit in Vivian Stanshall's *Sir Henry at Rawlinson End*, is not original. I first heard it nearly fifty years ago at school, when we were reading Mrs Battle's *Opinion on Whist*. Our English teacher attributed it to Charles Lamb himself.

Unlike old friends, old times, old manners, old books and old wines (*She Stoops to Conquer*), old jokes are not always the best. - Yours

E. France - Manchester

Witticism comes up trumped

Sir, - Charles Lamb's witticism was rather more succinct than the versions in *Weekend Guardian* (October 5) and E. France's letter (November 7).

"If dirt were trumps, what a hand you would have!" is ascribed to Lamb, referring to Martin Burney (nephew of Fanny Burney), one of the frequenters of Lamb's whist parties at 4 Inner Temple Lane.

According to W. Carew Hazlitt - William Hazlitt's grandson - the parentage of this joke has been wrongly assigned. He wrote: "It was made by a gentleman who never uttered a second witticism in the whole course of his life..." - Yours faithfully,

Madeline Huxstep
The Charles Lamb Society, London SW13

Sir, - E. France is mistaken about the origin of the lines, "If filthy fingers were trumps why what a splendid hand you'd have" from Vivian Stanshall's *Sir Henry at Rawlinson End*.

I clearly recollect my grandfather reciting these lines atop a table at Christmas for many years. It was an Ode to Hop and Vine attributed to Herrick. It also contained the lines, "If I had all the money I'd spent on drink...I'd spend it on drink" which also appear in the film.

Either Mr Stanshall is extremely well read or is a clairvoyant.

Stan Robbins Wivenhoe, Essex

By DOUGLAS DAVIS and printed in the Cable & Wireless Staff Newspaper.

Tragic Spot

As one who holds Charles Lamb in high esteem I decided the other day to have a look around Holy Trinity Church in Kingsway, just across the road from Head Office.

This church's connection with the essayist lies in the fact that it stands on the site of No.7 Little Queen Street, the house in which Lamb's sister Mary stabbed her mother to death during a bout of insanity on September 23, 1796.

Great Queen Street still stands, a little further up the Kingsway, but Little Queen Street disappeared around 1905, when the old tram subway, at the top of Theobalds Road, was first excavated.

The original Holy Trinity, then in Little Queen Street, had been built in 1831; but the work on the subway caused the nave floor to collapse and the roof to cave in. So a new church was built, and the present Holy Trinity was completed in 1911.

It was something of an odd experience to stand in this rather bare church (the author Augustine Birrell described it as an "exceedingly ugly" church) and to reflect that on this spot, 181 years ago, a fearful scene was enacted.

As Lamb wrote to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, shortly after the tragedy: "My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp ..."

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Charles Lamb Society will take place on Saturday, 9 May 1981, at the Mary Ward Centre, 9 Tavistock Place, London WC1, beginning at 2.45. Nominations are invited for the vacancies on the Council arising from those members retiring in accordance with the Society's rules. Nominations should be sent to the Hon. Secretary as soon as possible, after ensuring that the nominees are prepared to stand.

SUMMER PROGRAMME - Saturday 13th June 1981

Miss E M Tucker, MA, the Headmistress of Christ's Hospital, Hertford has kindly invited members of the Society to visit the school on Saturday 13th June. The school incorporates the oldest buildings owned by the foundation, and this should prove a most rewarding afternoon.

We meet at 2.30 pm at the school for a tour of the buildings and grounds, followed by tea as guests of the school.

Please let me know by 25th April if you wish to take part.

Transport Arrangements

By Car: members going by car will no doubt kindly offer any spare places to other members.

By Greenline: 735 from Oxford Circus to Hertford Bus Station.

By British Rail: Liverpool Street to Hertford East

Cost (excluding fares): Members are asked to make a contribution of £1 per head towards a suitable donation to school funds.

Madeline Huxstep

(01-741 2598 - please note temporary change of telephone number)

BOOK MARKET

FOR SALE (To be collected at a meeting or postage extra.)

Lamb's *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*: 2 vols No.10 of the Dent Temple Library edition of 1893 limited to 150 copies in large paper (because I have since bought No.25 with autograph inscription by the editor, Israel Gollancz). £7.50

Percy Fitzgerald's *Charles Lamb; his Friends, his Haunts, and his Books*, 1866; slightly used and with the label and 1898 Fire Salvage label of the Norfolk and Norwich Library (because I have since bought what amounts to the Mentmore copy, containing Hannah (Rothschild), Countess of Rosebery's leather book label). £7.50

Mr D E Wickham, 116 Parsonage Manorway, Belvedere, Kent, (Daytime Tel: 01-623 7041)