

Royal British Nurses' Association.

Incorporated by



Royal Charter.

THIS SUPPLEMENT BEING THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE CORPORATION.

SALE OF WORK FOR THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL.

We have much pleasure in announcing that Her Royal Highness the President of the Association, Princess Arthur of Connaught, has graciously promised to open our Sale of Work for the House Beautiful Fund on Thursday, November 26th, at 2.30 p.m. We greatly appreciate this kindness, as the decorations and repairs at our headquarters have, of necessity, been excessive this year.

LECTURE ON LONDON BRIDGE.

By MAJOR RIGG, O.B.E., F.S.A.

Sir Alfred Rice-Oxley took the chair when Major Rigg gave us a most interesting lecture on "London Bridge." Sir Alfred said that Major Rigg required no introduction to the members of the Royal British Nurses' Association. They had received many kindnesses from him and his lectures were always looked forward to with pleasant anticipation.

We can, unfortunately, give but a very condensed report of the lecture. To-day seven bridges span the Thames in the vicinity of the City; but up to the close of the reign of George II there was only one. Until 1749 London Bridge was the only entrance to the City. It is very difficult to ascertain the true facts as to when the first bridge was erected; as in the case of other ancient monuments, an enormous amount of tradition hangs around the subject. John Stow, the historian of London, informs us that a ferryman named Linstead and his wife left money to their daughter who founded a Nunnery. Eventually this was transformed into a College of Priests who built a bridge over the Thames. There are absolutely no authoritative records to support the story, but it is in keeping with the atmosphere and environment of the times.

Dio Cassius, writing 170 years after the invasion of the Roman Emperor Claudius I (A.D. 44), indicates the existence of a bridge at the time of that invasion. The general opinion now is that the bridge mentioned by Dio Cassius was over a tributary of the Thames, because the extensive marshy ground that lay round the neighbourhood of the present situation of London Bridge would appear to place it outside the realm of possibility that a bridge existed here in those days.

Between the time when the Romans left England, early in the fifth century, and the Saxon occupation, there is no authoritative information upon which to build up the history of London Bridge. There is no mention of any bridge until 1014; then we have an account of the Battle of London Bridge, when the wooden bridge then existing was captured by Ethelred the Unready and King Olave of Norway by a clever ruse. The bridge was destroyed but was rebuilt immediately after.

A Charter granted in 1067 by William the Conqueror to the Monks of Westminster Abbey mentions London Bridge. A hurricane and storm destroyed the bridge in 1091, and six hundred houses and churches were laid low.

By forced labour, pushed to extremes by William Rufus, three great imperial works were accomplished—the section of the Old Wall of the Tower of London, London Bridge, and Westminster Hall. In 1122 a Charter was granted to the Monks of Bermondsey Abbey which made them responsible for the upkeep of London Bridge. This was the beginning of the Bridge House Estate, which has now an income of £40,000 a year. In 1136 the bridge was destroyed by one of those disastrous fires which have raged through London at times. In 1163 the wooden bridge was rebuilt by Peter of Colechurch, who was baptised by Thomas à Becket. He was the architect of the last wooden and the first stone bridge, but he died before the latter was completed. It had 20 arches—19 of stone and one of wood—the drawbridge. On the central pier was the chapel of St. Thomas à Becket. Also there was erected close to the bridge a tower on which the heads of traitors were exposed.

We can visualise London Bridge about 1450, with residential houses, shops, central chapel and tower. It was a very important centre of trade and commerce, especially for the haberdashers; ladies came in numbers to buy pins, needles and such like things, and from the shops hung signs to indicate what wares were sold. The heads of traitors were exposed on the tower of the bridge up to 1579, when it was removed, and they were put on the Southern Gate.

In 1305 the head of William Wallace was exposed for three weeks; in 1408 that of the Earl of Northumberland, father of Hotspur, and the heads of Sir Thomas More and Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, were exposed in 1535. Fisher's head was exposed for six weeks, and it is reported that it daily became "more life-like, comely and red, and was never so beautiful before," and the passage over the bridge was blocked by sightseers. When the head of More was to be removed, it was taken surreptitiously by his daughter to Canterbury Cathedral and buried. Major Rigg then gave a history of the bridge's connections with Wat Tyler and, later, Jack Cade, stating in the former connection that the dagger on the City's Coat of Arms is supposed to be that with which Walworth slew Wat Tyler, but this is not the case. It is really a Roman sword of the time of St. Paul, who is the patron saint of the City. Major Rigg gave an interesting account of a number of Royal and other processions as they had passed over the bridge in distant years.

In 1539 Edward Osborne jumped from the bridge and saved the infant daughter of Sir W. Hewitt, whom he afterwards married. Osborne became Lord Mayor in 1582, and his great-grandson in 1594 became Duke of Leeds; the present Duke of Leeds is the direct descendant of Sir Edward Osborne, who rescued his master's daughter from drowning and later married her.

In 1757 the removal of the houses on London Bridge commenced; the last disappeared in 1763. In 1822 a resolution was passed in the House of Commons to build a new bridge; this was designed by John Rennie, a Scotch-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)