

The mid eighteenth century was a time when many charities were set up for genuinely humanitarian reasons, without the ulterior motives of fear of social unrest, or of moralistic self-righteousness seen in the following century.

The Magdalen Hospital was established in London's Goodman's Fields, in 1758, for the rehabilitation of penitent prostitutes, by Robert Dingley, who gave the following eloquent justification for setting up the charity: -

Humanity in its utmost efforts pleads their cause more powerfully than anything I can offer on the subject: and I appeal to every mind, from its own experience, if there can be greater Objects of Compassion, than poor, young, thoughtless Females, plunged into ruin by those temptations to which their very youth and personal advantages expose them, no less than those passions implanted by nature... Surrounded by snares, the most artfully and industriously... laid by those endowed with superior faculties, and all the advantages of Education and fortune, what virtue can be proof against such formidable Seducers, who offer too commonly, and too profusely promise to transport the thoughtless Girls from Want, Confinement, and Restraint of Passions: to Luxury, Liberty, Gaiety, Joy.

Another similarity with Henley, indeed with all upper class parishes, no doubt, was stifling conformity

9 April 1821

MAGDALEN HOSPITAL. APRIL 2, 1821.

PATRONESS—Her R. H. the Duchess of GLOUCESTER.

PRESIDENT—The Right Hon. the Earl of RADNOR.

VICE-PRESIDENTS,

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Right Hon. Earl Grosvenor | Hon. Mr. Justice Park |
| Rt. Hon. the Earl of Liverpool | George Musgrave, Esq. |
| Hon. Philip Pusey | John Julius Angerstein, Esq. |

TREASURER—Edward Irish, Esq.

THE SIXTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY
MEETING of the GOVERNORS of this HOSPITAL will be holden on Wednesday, the 2d of May, at the London Tavern, in Bishopsgate-street, after a SERMON to be preached in the Chapel of the Hospital, by the Right Hon. and Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of London. The Chapel doors will be opened at 12 o'clock, and Divine Service begin precisely at one.

STEWARDS,

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|---|-----------------------------------|
| Most Noble the Marquess of Tavistock | Edward Forster, Esq. |
| Right Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Lindsay | James M ^r Dowall, Esq. |
| Alexander Baring, Esq. M.P. | Rev. Harry Powell |
| Geo. Watson-Taylor, Esq. M.P. | Thomas Poynder, Esq. |
| Rev. H. H. Norris, Prebendary of Landaff | Robert Harry Sparks, Esq. |
| | Claude George Thornton, Esq. |
| | James Ward, Esq. |

Dinner will be on the Table at half-past five o'clock.

Since the institution of this Charity, 4,900 young Women have been admitted; 3,289 of whom have been restored to their friends, or placed in service, or other reputable situations; and it is an invariable rule not to dismiss any Woman unless for misconduct, or at her own request, without some means being provided by which she may obtain a livelihood in an honest manner. A very considerable number of the Women, when discharged from the House, are under twenty years of age.

JOHN PRINCE, Sec.

THE SAVINGS BANK.

This Savings Bank in this parish was instituted on the 1st of January, 1804, and then called the *Charitable Bank*. It was the first district bank for savings publicly set on foot for the benefit of the lower classes; the sole and express object of which was to provide a safe and profitable place of deposit for the savings of the industrious poor, labourers, servants, and others.

This Savings Bank was for many years under the direction and management of Mrs. Powell, of *The Chestnuts*, until the year 1821, at which period Mrs. Powell left the parish. This lady was assisted in her laudable undertaking by a treasurer. All purchases made into the funds were placed in the names of the trustees.

In the year 1818, there was £2,000. stock in the five per cents., besides a balance in the hands of the treasurer. This sum was principally derived from servants and poor people, who either had small sums bequeathed to them, or from the savings of their wages: some of them placed in this bank as small a sum as seven shillings a quarter, and in one instance, shortly after the bank was established, a monthly nurse placed therein £100. of her savings.

The whole of the accounts were under the management of Mrs. Powell, into whose hands the deposits were paid, and who paid the interest the first Monday in every month to such as wished to have it. These accounts, as well as the treasurer's, are audited once a year by the trustees.

The mothers of some of the children deposited two shillings

monthly for each of three or four children. There were, in 1818, about forty names of children on the books, but they were continually changing; and they amounted to some hundreds in number since the first institution of the fund.

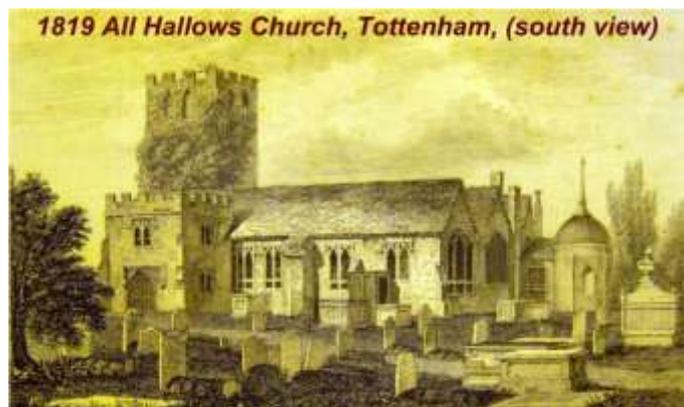
The Charitable Bank was intended solely for the benefit of those whose income did not afford them an opportunity of investing their small savings to advantage elsewhere.

Several respectable inhabitants engaged for themselves and their heirs to be answerable for all money deposited in the bank, with *five per cent. per annum* interest upon every twenty shillings which should have remained in the bank for twelve calendar months; and any sum from one shilling and upwards was received from servants, labourers, and others, which was to be returned to them on demand, and the interest to be paid yearly. The trustees reserved to themselves the power of refusing to receive any sums from the rich, for by allowing them *five per cent.* interest, the trustees might be considerable losers.

The following were the trustees—The Rev. Thomas Roberts, (the then vicar) Henry Piper Sperling, John Dickenson, Henry Thompson, Edward Rowe Mores, Richard Mountford, Edmund Larken (the treasurer), William Wright, and Robert Harry Sparks, Esqs., who had the uncontrolled management of the concerns of this bank, and who managed the affairs with so much attention and assiduity that the stock invested in the fund amounted to a large sum; and after payment of monies drawn out by the depositors, and interest, annually, there always remained a balance in the hands of the treasurer, which was carried to the next year's account.

The History of Tottenham

and self-righteous piety. As with Henley, we also see that the church pews in Tottenham were specifically allocated. Note the sign placed next to the new gallery, (below), stating bluntly that those seats were private property. I wonder if anyone ever noticed the irony of such restrictions, in a house supposedly of Christian communion.



The first child of Robert and Ann Sparks was John William Thomas Sparks, born in 1795. Of the five other children who survived, three were married at Tottenham.

The Rev. the Roberts Vicar reported that the Churchwardens had stated to the Vestry held in August last that this Parish Church was

April 13th 1819
broken into by forcing the Belfry Door that the Iron Chest in the Vestry was forced open and the Communion Plate sacrilegiously taken from thence and all attempts to recover the same having proved ineffectual. Some of the Inhabitants taking into consideration the loss sustained by the Parish gratuitously gave the following Articles to replace in part those that were stolen. Viz

Robert Harry Sparks Esq. gave one Silver Chalice gilt inside and Engraved

Lewis Andrew De la Chaumette Esq. gave one Silver Chalice gilt inside and Engraved

James Budgin Esq. gave one Silver Plate

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All Hallows Church, Tottenham
Minutes of the Vestry Meeting, 13th April, 1819

All Hallows Church, Tottenham

In the year 1821, the church was shut up for the purpose of erecting a gallery against the north wall, which was built by subscription, and was re-opened for Divine service on the 3rd of June in the same year. After the gallery was finished and ready for occupation, a meeting of the subscribers was called in order to appropriate the pews to each individual, who drew for numbers, which were fixed against their respective names, as appears by an inscription on a marble tablet against the north wall immediately at the back of the gallery, viz.

- No.
1. William Robinson.
 2. Louis Andrew De la Chaumette.
 3. Samuel Prugene Wright.
 4. Charles Hibbert.
 5. Robert Harry Sparks.
 6. Thomas Bodfield.
 7. Edward William Windus.
 8. Francis May Simmons.
 9. George Augustus Nash.

There is a communication from this gallery into that on the west side of the church, for the accommodation of the proprietors of the pews to pass into the body of the church on those days when the holy sacrament is administered.

On a Portland stone tablet, fixed in the wall over the porch entrance to this gallery, is the following inscription:—

THIS GALLERY IS PRIVATE PROPERTY, BY VIRTUE OF A FACULTY GRANTED FROM THE ECCLESIASTICAL COURT, BEARING DATE A.D. 1821.

Ann Sparks died in February, 1818 and fifteen months later, Robert Harry, who as we see, had immersed himself in Tottenham Parish business, carried that involvement to its extreme, by taking as his second wife, Fanny Roberts: the thirty six year-old daughter of the parish priest.

RH and Fanny had just one daughter, Frances Mary Sparks, born in January, 1821.

In 1822, we see that at a meeting of the Aldermen of London, Robert Harry Sparks was nominated to serve in the role of Sheriff of London, for the usual term of one year.

The ancient role of Sheriff has changed over the years and is now mainly ceremonial. In 1822, Robert's duties, as one of the two sheriffs would have also been largely ceremonial, in serving under the Lord Mayor in the running of the city.

Although a sheriff would probably have only been nominated from amongst the aldermen of the city, we cannot find any record of Robert being thus elected. This is probably just a problem of records that have been lost.

Morning Post - Wednesday 12 June 1822

ROBERT HARRY SPARKS, Esq., nominated at the last Court of Aldermen to serve the office of Sheriff for the year ensuing, has paid his fine into the Chamber to be excused serving the said office.



We see from the newspaper cutting, that he declined to take up that position and paid the usual fine for refusing the job. This was a common occurrence, particularly as most aldermen would have been businessmen, to whom the role of sheriff would have placed unwelcome restrictions on their time.

When Thomas Sparks died in November, 1821, besides the provisions mentioned above, he also left £500 to his grandson J.W.T.Sparks and £100 to each of the other four grandchildren from Robert Harry's first marriage. As I mentioned, Thomas's will had been written some time before his death, so Frances Mary Sparks, from Robert Harry's second marriage, was not included.

This youngest daughter of RH Sparks senior, was married, at thirty years of age, to a lieutenant in the army in India, As you will see on Chart C2, she died a year later, in India, after the birth of a daughter.

We do not know exactly when, but most likely between 1830 and 1837, Robert Harry senior also retired, moving with his wife and daughter, to Boulogne, on the French Atlantic coast, where they spent the rest of their lives. Fanny died there in November 1841 and Robert died just nine months later.