

QUAKER TRACES IN LONDON



Figure 1. West Ham Park in East London

Dr John Fothergill was a Quaker physician and botanist remembered in West Ham Park simply as a philanthropist. He purchased Upton House estate in 1762, where he established greenhouses and a unique botanical collection. Honoured by Benjamin Franklin and recognised for his pioneering medical work, his name lives on in this part of the park, known as the 'Fothergill Bed'. After his death the estate passed to the Quaker Gurneys, and for a while Elizabeth Fry lived there, and was at one point visited by the King of Prussia. The Park was purchased for the public in the 1870s, with a large proportion of the funds raised by the Gurney family.

Inset: The park notice board records some of this Quaker history.

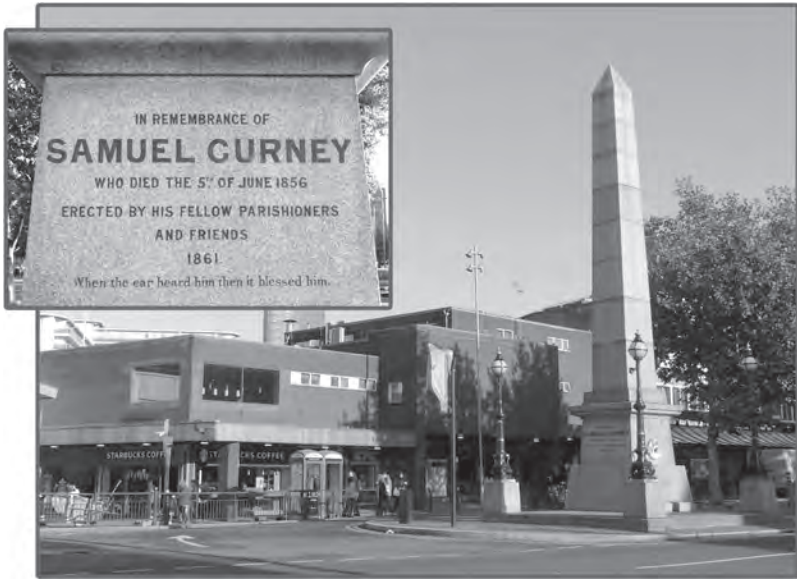


Figure 2. The Gurney Obelisk in Stratford

The Gurney memorial drinking fountain in Stratford, East London, was erected in honour of the Quaker banker and philanthropist Samuel Gurney, brother of prison reformer Elizabeth Fry. Its location just by a branch of Starbucks lends itself to reflecting on another part of Quaker history: the Quaker whaling town of Nantucket in which the Starbuck family were prominent. Herman Melville named the first mate in *Moby-Dick* after this family, and the founders of the coffee chain chose the name for their brand, apparently being greatly fond of the novel.

Inset: The inscription on the memorial.



Figure 3. The Bryant & May Match Factory

Entrance to the Bryant & May match factory in Bow, East London, now apartments. The huge scale of the Victorian brick-built factory is best appreciated from the rail line that runs along its southern perimeter. The factory was built by Quakers but its reputation for introducing the life-saving safety match into Britain is overshadowed by the Matchgirls' Strike of 1888. Some sources praise the exceptional working conditions and efforts gone to by the management in preventing the terrible industrial disease of 'phossy jaw' – a cancer caused by working with white phosphorous – while others condemn the owners for exploitation of the workforce. It was in its time one of the largest producers of matches in the world, and in 1910 its management persuaded the government to ban white phosphorous in match production.

Inset: A blue plaque placed on the factory gatehouse commemorates the role of Annie Besant in leading the Matchgirls' Strike.



Figure 4. Allen & Hanburys in Bethnal Green, East End

The Allen & Hanburys factory in Bethnal Green, now renovated as light industrial units and hemmed in by new apartment blocks. This Quaker company was in its time the largest pharmaceutical company in the world, with a huge range of products and a presence on every high street. Its headquarters was originally in Plough Court, off Lombard Street. 'Allenburys' blackcurrant pastilles were a rival to Rowntree's Pastilles in their day, and the tins remain collectable items.

Inset: The Allen & Hanburys name is still visible from a distance, and from the Bethnal Green train station.



Figure 5. The Kindertransport commemorative sculptures at Liverpool Street station

The Kindertransport commemorative sculpture at the main entrance to Liverpool Street station. It marks the escape from Nazi Germany and Austria of thousands of children, brought to Britain via Harwich. Quakers played a key role in this. The girl standing with the suitcase could have been my mother, in traditional Austrian dress and pigtails, who also brought with her a violin (as shown in the sculpture).

Inset: A second commemorative sculpture on the lower concourse has an inscription on the rear which reads: 'Dedicated to The Religious Society of Friends – The Quakers. For instigating the Kindertransports and their unique role in getting the British Parliament to change legislation in order to accept the children into Great Britain.'



Figure 6. The Truman Brewery, Brick Lane

One of the Truman brewery buildings in Brick Lane, East End. Though only the Truman name survives at present, the Quaker partners in this firm, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton and Sampson Hanbury, helped make this the largest brewery in London in its day. It is mentioned in Dickens' *David Copperfield* as a possible employer for the hapless Mr Micawber. Buxton was famous for his abolitionist role and appears in the background to Elizabeth Fry on the British five pound note; in a typical Quaker arrangement he married Fry's sister, both part of the Norwich Gurney Quaker banking dynasty. Visitors to Brick Lane today know the buildings under the name 'Truman', but adjoining streets record the real history: Buxton Street, Hanbury Street and Quaker Street, so named because of a Quaker Meeting House built there.

Insets: A blue plaque commemorates Buxton's role in the anti-slavery campaign, while the defunct company office at 91 Brick Lane still records the name of the company as 'Truman Hanbury Buxton & Co Ltd'.



Figure 7. Lombard Street, City of London

View along Lombard Street towards the unfinished 'Walkie Talkie' building. Lombard Street was London's early financial centre, a name synonymous with banking and the title of Walter Bagehot's famous book on the subject. It was also a key Quaker location in that both the modern Barclays and Lloyds banks were founded there by Quakers. Several traditional signs still hang in Lombard Street; visible here is that of the Trustee Savings Bank, now merged with Lloyds. Birmingham Quakers founded Lloyds Bank and adopted the sign of the black horse in their London branch. Further along on the left is a modern block that has displaced the old headquarters of Barclays, which was founded by Quakers under the sign of the black spread eagle. On the right, opposite a church building, is Plough Court.

Insets: Street signs. Plough Court is important in Quaker history because Allen & Hanburys was founded there as a pharmaceutical company (and retained its company offices in Lombard Street well into the twentieth century). It became not only a centre for scientific work in medicine but also a centre for the anti-slavery movement.

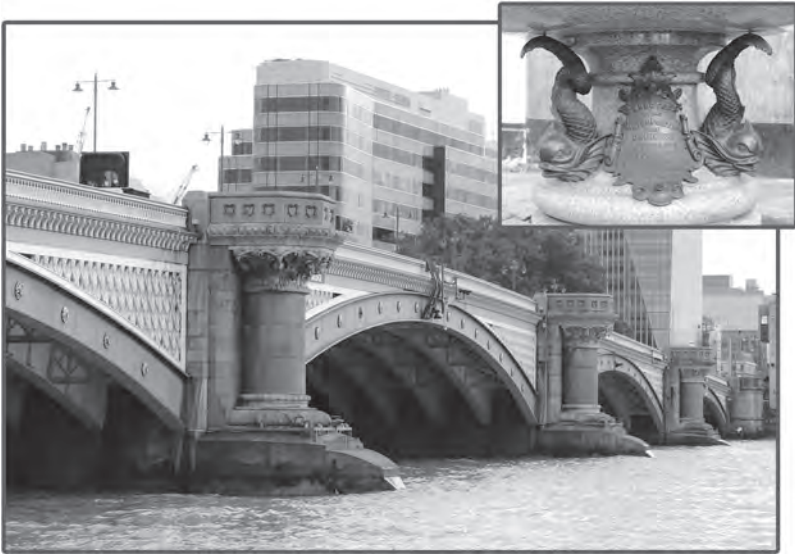


Figure 8. Blackfriars Bridge

A view of Blackfriars Bridge on the river Thames. The ironworks for the bridge were manufactured by the Quaker firm Lloyds, Fosters & Company, a move which unfortunately bankrupted it. This did not prevent the bridge being opened by Queen Victoria in 1869. The firm was one of the first in the country to adopt the Bessemer process for steel production.

Inset: On the northern approach to the bridge an ornate drinking fountain can be found bearing an inscription mentioning Samuel Gurney, MP, as the chairman of the Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountains Association.



Figure 9. Plaque commemorating the Anchor Brewery

This plaque commemorating the Anchor Brewery stands in Park Street, Southwark, close to the site of the original Globe Theatre. The plaque records the ownership of the brewery between 1781 to 1955 by the Quaker firm Barclay, Perkins & Co. The Quakers bought it at an auction overseen by Samuel Johnson, installed a steam engine that lasted a hundred years, and expanded its operations to make it the largest brewery in the world. Mentioned by Dickens in several of his novels, it was visited in its heyday by dignitaries such as the Prince of Wales, Napoleon III, Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Otto von Bismarck. Dr Johnson failed to make much money from his role in the sale, but was rewarded in another way: an upright figure of a jovial Dr Johnson clutching a pint pot became the brewery's emblem.



Figure 10. The Coalbrookdale Gates, Kensington

The Coalbrookdale Gates are located by Kensington Gardens in Hyde Park. As one of many small cast plaques at the base records, it was 'Designed and Cast by the Coalbrookdale Company for the Great Exhibition of 1851'. After the exhibition the gates were moved to their current location. The Coalbrookdale Company was founded in 1700 by the Bristol Quaker Abraham Darby I. Five generations of this Quaker family ran the ironworks, at one time the largest of its kind in the world. More than that, Darby invented the smelting of iron with coal and coke, and the sand casting of iron, two innovations which kick-started the Industrial Revolution. It was his grandson Abraham Darby III who designed and built the Iron Bridge, considered iconic of the Industrial Revolution, the first iron bridge in the world.

Inset: One of the small plaques near the ground, recording the origins and subsequent renovations of the gates.



Figure 11. Natural History Museum, Kensington

The Natural History Museum was designed by the Quaker architect Alfred Waterhouse. He was famous for Neo-Gothic, Renaissance, and Romanesque revival styles and was perhaps one of the most financially successful of Victorian architects. He also designed Manchester's town hall and a country home that was the summer residence of the young Beatrix Potter.

One of his brothers, Edwin, co-founded the accountancy practice Price Waterhouse, now part of PricewaterhouseCoopers, and another brother, Theodore, founded the law firm Waterhouse & Co., which is now part of Field Fisher Waterhouse LLP.