



Holy Trinity Bow Church in the 19th Century

A Hub for Mile End's New Urban
Middle Class and Established Elite

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Preface/ Reflection

Very few people who lived through the 19th century were documented in any substantial capacity. Those whose actions were indeed recorded usually led their lives outside of the norm; fighting in distant wars, circumnavigating the globe, influencing their surroundings with their wealth and status, and achieving feats much of the population could never hope to do. Therefore, the bulk of my research on the Holy Trinity Bow Church naturally focuses on the people memorialised in the Church building – a place of esteem and reverence, with spaces on its holy walls saved only for a select few. The memorials offered the most logical and accessible starting point. Those memorialized could, firstly, afford a place on the church walls, and secondly, were deemed worthy of remembrance by their peers and relatives. Among them specifically, the most detailed histories belong to influential upper-class men.

Memorialised women, including the mothers, wives, and daughters

I made a concerted effort to research the memorialised women, including the mothers, wives, and daughters of the deceased, but with comparably less success. I could establish a reliable entryway into a man's history by finding his profession. Applying that same method to the women here yielded fewer results. Many of the women who were married or were from a privileged background adopted a traditional role in the home. With more time, resources, and a wider scope, I would have liked to continue to uncover a deeper women's history.

An, "the exclusiveness associated with being buried in a churchyard"

Those buried outside in the Church grounds fared better in my research. They were not poor or lower class by any means. Their professions and the exclusiveness associated with being buried in a churchyard suggest that most belonged to the middle to upper-middle classes.¹ However, there is a distinct difference in their prosperity in comparison to those who were buried in the crypt and memorialised in the church. The biggest hurdle in researching the churchyard burials was simply deciphering the gravestones, which limited the number of names I could use to branch out on reliable family trees.

Holy Trinity's prominent congregation members and their global and military impact

This work's major strength lies in its insight into the Holy Trinity's prominent congregation members and their global, military, and economic impacts. Among the Holy Trinity's memorialised members are investors, designers, ship captains, ship owners, infantry captains and East India Company men. A handful of these stories are significant to the development of the

surrounding area. Some are extraordinary and sweep us away to China and the East Indies. Others are scandalous and worthy of a page in a modern tabloid newspaper. All shared in the Anglican faith – the established Church, so associated with the powerful class and those who aspired to power: "even its greatest success is sometimes regarded as a failure... the Church of England succeeding in capturing or maintaining the allegiance of the new urban as well as the old rural elites."² The church represented a status symbol, and acted as a hub to share in elite culture. Part of that meant wearing your best clothes to Mass, which excluded the poor from socialising in the same Anglican circles. A class divide is clear to see in those associated with the Church.

The life of the local population repugnant to them

In the words of the rural dean of Kennington, "Working men don't go to church for the same reason that I don't go to the races."³ We get a better idea, too, of the potential cultural separation in what Hugh McLeod writes about religion in East London and nearby Anglican churches: "The Church of England in Bethnal Green was a missionary church, its ministers isolated by the suspicion of the natives and by the differences in language and custom that made the life of the local population repugnant to them."⁴ It runs deeper even, through the evidence of a socioeconomic separation from within the Holy Trinity congregation. Much of the urban middle class was buried outside, while the elite class members were laid to rest in the crypt, along with their recognitions in the church.

A history not felt by ordinary people

This research weaves together middle-to-upper-class narratives – which are by no means inaccurate – but a history not felt by ordinary people. This foundation provides us with a logical next step to unearth a more rounded history across class and gender.

Background

Mile End's greenfield sites were prime areas to be built upon

Mile End Old Town, much like the rest of England, was handicapped by the economic impact of the Napoleonic Wars and consequent demilitarisation at the turn of the 19th century. But by the 1820s, the rapidly increasing population and overflow of industrial development in Central London led to a demand for new housing.⁵ Mile End's greenfield sites were prime areas to be built upon. Its proximity to a strong water supply from the River Lea made it an attractive prospect for those looking to invest. Employees of the East India Company, the major organ of trade and, later, administration of Britain's colonies in the Indian Ocean, also found it to be an ideal location to live, as it was only a short distance from both the East India House on Leadenhall Street or the East India Docks in Blackwall.

The Church, a monument to those who participated in Mile End's expansion.

The Holy Trinity Church capped Mile End's immense development from the end of the post-Napoleonic depression up to the middle of the 19th century. It was completed in 1841 on the precipice of another economic recession in the "Hungry Forties".⁶ Several people memorialised at Holy Trinity invested grand sums into the district infrastructure, housing, and commerce. The Church became a monument to those who participated in Mile End's expansion. While preceding medieval churches paid tribute to their clergymen and nobility, Holy Trinity instead gave reverence to the people who put Mile End on the map – quite literally in some cases. The clergy, parishioners and families of the deceased honoured their distinguished accomplishments and contributions to society.



Daniel and James Gardner Austin

The Morgan estate and the Coborn estate legacy

Most of the early housing in the first developmental push was built on land owned by two families: the Morgan estate and the Coborn estate.⁷ Daniel Austin was living at the Essex House mansion on the Morgan estate as early as 1811, which was eventually demolished in 1937 to be replaced by an art deco Odeon cinema.

Daniel Austin, "credited with designing the Holy Trinity"

The present-day Onyx House has stood in its place since 1985.⁸ Austin, a resident of Mile End prior to the housing boom and a country gentleman born in Suffolk (in housing directories, he labelled himself "esquire"), invested in three terraces on the Mile End Road. He is also credited with designing the Holy Trinity, but it is more likely that his son James Gardner Austin led the project. The official forms note the architect to be J D Austin – the 'D' being a potential error.

The Hammack Family

Hammack was an architect and surveyor, and a magistrate in Middlesex

If father and son duo Daniel and James Austin were the men to lay down the initial stages of Mile End's development, John George Hammack and his family were to see it through into the next century. They were key figures in the continued growth of the Morgan estate. This is first indicated by the 11 acres of land owned by Hammack at the back of Tredegar Square in 1841 along with the Eastern Counties Railway. John George Hammack was an architect and surveyor, and a magistrate in Middlesex – a man with significant judicial and industrial powers. He later became Chair of the Ratcliffe Gas Light Company, which supplied gas to parts of East London from their works in Wapping. After Hammack's death, the Company was absorbed into the larger Commercial Gas Company.⁹

He went on to chair the Board of the City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery, as well as to take up positions as the Returning Officer for elections in the constituency, and Chief Assistant to the Registrar General recorded in the 1861 census. On his son's baptism record, his profession is said to be a timber merchant. This could have allowed him easy access to building materials. His influence reached out to many corners of Mile End activity, from politics to power and deathcare, and from housing to infrastructure.

Hammack and Lambert Architects.

John George had at least three sons with his wife Mary: Henry, Frederick and Arthur. Frederick George Hammack did not follow into the family business, as by the age of 24 and after the early death of his brother Arthur, he had moved to Chile to work as a doctor. There, his wife Magdalen Poett gave birth to three sons and two daughters. Henry took over his father's role as developer. In 1851, Henry is recorded to be a 25-year-old surveyor living with John Hammack. He then took up residency at Clarendon Terrace further up the Bow Road six years later, with the Tredegar estate office listed at the same address run by Hammack and Lambert Architects. The Morgan estate expanded in the 1860s on Alloway, Lichfield Road and Montague Street, and Henry and his firm were at the heart of this planning.



Thomas Onslow and other prominent community members

A Butcher, Paper Hanger, a Proprietor and others buried in the graveyard

Not all investors in Mile End were as firmly upper class as the Hammack family. Buried out on the Church grounds is Thomas Onslow, a butcher who worked at Leadenhall Market. The famous meat, game and poultry market on Gracechurch Street marks the centre of Roman London. It was noisy, active and the ideal place to earn good money in a skilled role. The market gave Londoners several once-familiar terms, such as a 'Leadenhall blade', which meant a knife that would not cut, and a 'Leadenhall Market sportsman', who was a landowner that sold game to poulterers.¹⁰ With his capital, Onslow heavily invested in the Coborn estate alongside a local paper hanger called John Squire, and with the support of builder Joseph Clark. Together, they planned and built houses from nine to 12 on Coborn Road (now 28-31), completed by 1827. Onslow shortly after paid Clark £600 for four houses in Coborn Street, all the while obtaining leases on eight more houses on that street and five on Coborn Road.

The Osborne Arms

Along with Onslow, Holy Trinity Church is the resting place of several more members of the community who would have been familiar faces for the Mile End locals. **Herbert Golding** was the proprietor at The Coborn Arms, a pub which is still open today. Originally called The Osborne Arms, it was renamed The Coborn Arms in 1842 and simplified to The Coborn this century. Golding had only been in the position a year before his death on 10th June 1856, but this would have given him enough time to establish himself among the local clientele. Pubs in this period developed class distinctions, much like the first-class and second-class systems on trains. Even relatively small pubs were split into separate rooms and bars to cater to different customers.¹¹ This could have provided Golding with the opportunity to interact with people above his own class.



Elizabeth Coverly – A woman of comfortable means

Buried in the Church grounds is fishmonger **Edward Coverly**, who was married at the late age of 54 to Elizabeth Clapton, the daughter of well-off "gentleman" Henry Clapton. After Edward's death, Elizabeth continued as head of the household, living on an annuity whilst also housing Edward's sister-in-law and another relative of Edward who worked as a bonnet maker. Also buried are **Julius Fry Mortieau**, a hay salesman; baker **James Mullett** and his labourer son **William**; another butcher, **Charles Drakeford**, and **Lewis John Woodrow**, a mercantile clerk who would have staffed one of the local shops.

A Monument dedicated to a Taxman

Most intriguingly of the middle-class congregation is church organist **William Charles Lock**, to whom a memorial in the church pays tribute. Lock's memorial is unique. It was not erected because of his wealth or status, but instead for his services. Lock was a taxman who would have led a comfortable life, leaving £1,656 (£272,252 in 2023) in 1885 to his wife Mary – but he was not in the same financial bracket as others memorialised in the church. His inclusion suggests that he was a popular figure amongst the clergy and the influential congregation members, demonstrating an interconnectedness in the cultures of the elite and urban middle class.

William Ephraim Snow

Railway Mania

One man to leave mixed impressions was William Ephraim Snow. Born in Kingsbridge, Devon, Snow was a general practitioner living at 26 Tredegar Square – one of the most expensive housing plots in the area. In 1844, *The Cornwall Royal Gazette* wrote cynically of Snow's connections to both the London & South Western Railway Board and the Cornwall & Devon Central Railway, producing close to an entire broadsheet page on Snow's activities. 'Railway Mania' swept England in the first half of the 1840s, and it followed a common boom and bust pattern recognised in early industrialisation.¹² As railway shares increased, more speculators invested money, and more over-optimistic speculation further hiked the prices until they collapsed. If the *Gazette's* theory is believed to be accurate, Snow would have invested in the railway industry at the opportune moment. On his death, he left up to £40,000 for his family, equating to £6.5 million in 2023.

A Petition to Queen Victoria for the creation of a park

The paper went on to describe Mile End Road as a "poor and low" district beyond Bethnal Green, "notorious for destitution and suffering", and questioned why Snow would move to such a place. It speculated on the young surgeon's hope that the area would develop. It referred to the new Victoria Park's impact on the neighbourhood. A mass petition to the Queen had spurred the creation of the park and it was unofficially opened to the public by 1845, while further features continued to be added. The large green space shared similarities with the already-established Regent's Park. The park stimulated further housebuilding over the next three decades, and encouraged the upper classes to decorate the park, such as Baroness Burdett Coutts and her grandiose drinking fountain.¹³

Although Snow's intentions were challenged by *The Cornwall Royal Gazette*, he clearly tried to assimilate himself into the community. He was appointed Churchwarden for Mile End Old Town in the Easter Parochial Elections in 1859. His elected role involved representation of the parish laity and he would have been tasked with collecting and administering parish funds. While Snow did his best to present himself as an educated and holy gentleman, he imprinted a far more unsavoury impression through his personal life. Written in 1836 in *The Times* newspaper, Journeyman coachmaker Henry Roberts won £100 in compensation from William Snow for the seduction of his wife.



A Doctor and a scoundrel

Mrs Roberts became ill, and Snow was called over to treat her. He took advantage of his medical position, and the pair "began an intimacy". She was moved from one lodging to another under the pretense of benefiting her health, but it was, in fact, to distance her from her husband, who could only visit once a week. Snow was a regular attendee, and from the length of his visits and scruffy appearance, it became obvious he was not seeing to her medically. Mr Kinslingbury, the house's host, made a hole through the floor of the workshop above to peek into the room of Mrs Roberts. He discovered that Snow was "not as pure as in nature as his name would suggest". Mr Roberts looked through the hole on the next occasion and caught Snow in the act when he burst into the room. Snow's defence relied on the respectability of his character and the discreditable motives and evidence of Mr Roberts, but the jury ruled in favour of the latter.



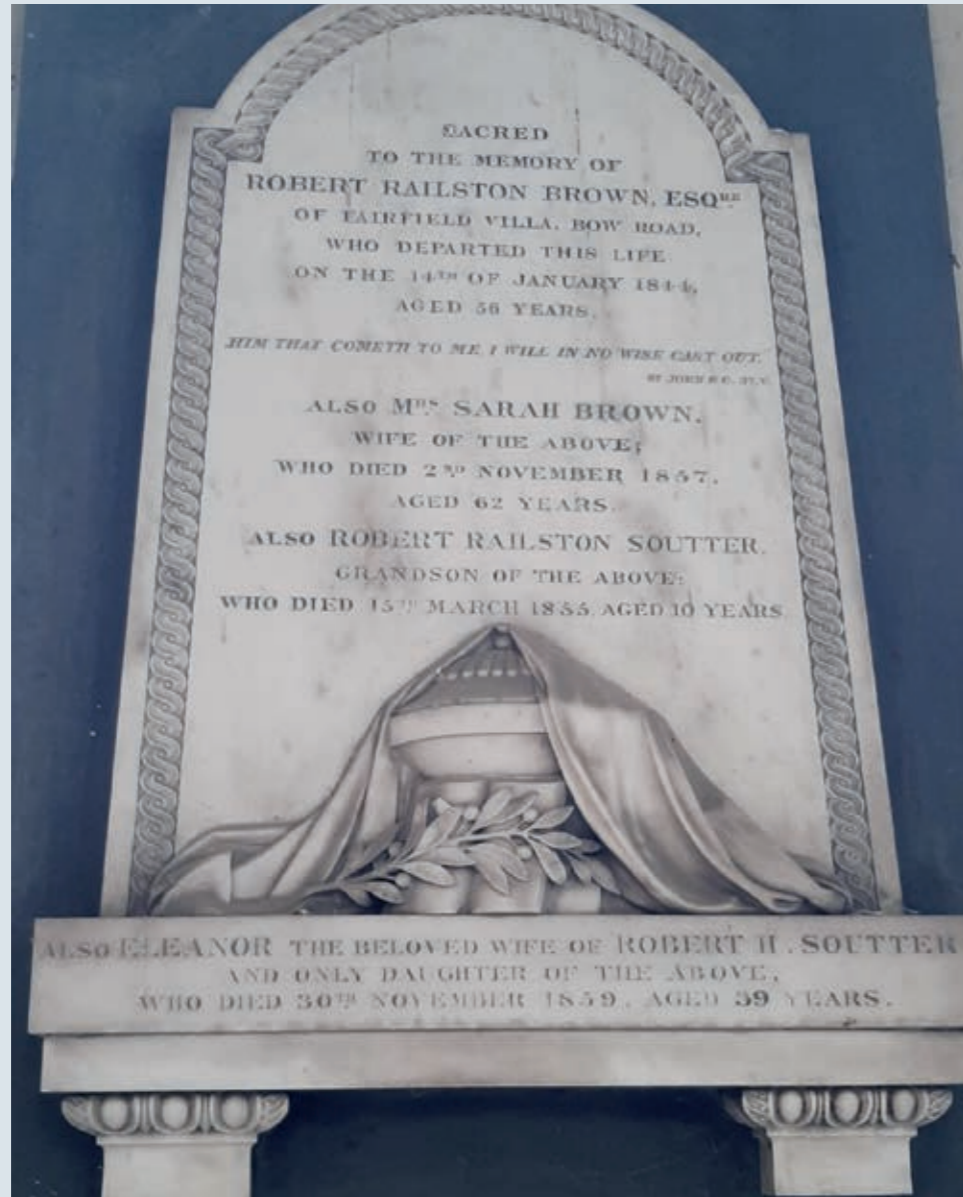
Christopher Russell Brown

A Master mariner from Newcastle

Living around the corner from William Snow in the early 1850s, at 53 Tredegar Square, was master mariner Christopher Russell Brown, originally from Newcastle. Unlike Snow, Brown made his money in merchant seafaring. Master mariners were the equivalent of master craftsmen. They could sail any sized ship, carry any amount of cargo, and sail anywhere in the world. By 1850, ship mates and masters were required to carry a Certificate of Competency.¹⁴ Brown qualified for a Certificate of Service, which was issued to men who had proof of long service prior to 1850. He had worked as both a mate and master seaman under the British Merchant Service in the coaching and foreign trades for 44 years up to receiving his certificate.

£7.8 million left in his will

In his old age, Christopher Brown retired from the profession and continued to live off investments made in the trade, leaving £51,000 (or over £7.8 million) in his will. Whether he was, in fact, self-made or had inherited money from his parents is unclear, as his father worked as an officer in London, suggesting he was involved in law enforcement without a specific rank. By 1867, 100 candidates in the Metropolitan Police consisted of working-class people, including labourers and semi-skilled mechanics and artisans.¹⁵ If this case applied to Brown's father, and assuming his mother did not come from a wealthy family, then he would have made extraordinarily savvy investments and achieved major trade successes to rise through the class ranks.



Robert Railston Brown

A captain of the Moffat EIC ship

With the East India Company (EIC) being such a large employer in East London and Mile End being a short journey away from its headquarters, it is unsurprising that we find several employees involved at Holy Trinity Church. Robert Railston Brown (of no relation to Christopher Brown) was a captain of the Moffat EIC ship – potentially named after Winchelsea MP and EIC ship owner William Moffat. Previously named the Boyne and built in Calcutta in 1804, by the mid-19th century it had become a convict ship transporting criminals to Australia. Brown captained the Moffat on three occasions. First, he set sail for China, stopping at Whampoa and then Canton (present day Guangzhou) to purchase up to 800 barrels of tea and spices. For much of the journey, the Moffat sailed alongside a smaller ship called the Juliana.

A journey to Saugor, a region of British India

The pair split around Java and journeyed to the EIC-controlled Cape of Good Hope in South Africa, and then on to St Helena. They arrived in Quebec within hours of each other. A local newspaper noted how they were the first vessels of their description to have ever come to this port direct from the East-Indies. Again in June 1826, Brown set sail for Whampoa Island and took a similar route back to Blackwall by May of the following year. His final journey took him to Saugor, which was a region of British India and then Burrabazar in central north Kolkata.

William and Alfred Parmenter Simons

An assistant clerk to the Committee of Warehouse

The East India House in Leadenhall Street was the central headquarters of the EIC, and where many of the affairs of British India were governed until the British government dissolved the Company and took its assets following the catastrophic failure at the siege of Lucknow.

William Simons was based at the East India House, working as an assistant clerk to the Committee of Warehouse in 1813. In his role, he awarded contracts to suppliers and arranged the delivery of their export goods to the Company warehouse in London. He rose through the ranks to become head clerk and oversee all export operations.

Simons is another example of a professional who ascended from their born class through his workplace. When he began at the EIC as an assistant to then-head clerk Robert Wissett, he was not noted to be an 'esquire' unlike his senior. Simons' position was one of considerable power, and one that thrust him into the public spotlight. On the 10th December, 1831, *The Times* newspaper commented on an accusation that the EIC was trying to influence the result of the general election in Finsbury, requiring their 47 Finsbury residents working in the warehouse to vote for Sergeant Robert Spankie.

He served as Advocate-General in Bengal

The Scot was a standing council member for the EIC and married the daughter of EIC director John Inglis. He had also served as Advocate-General in Bengal. Simons was one of a select few people who had access to all employee records, including their addresses. Simons assured Peter Auber, Secretary of the East India Company, that he had never interfered with the electoral choices. When a voter asked him about anything on the subject, he told him to do just as he liked.

The Sutlej Campaign, later known as the First Sikh War

William's son Alfred originally followed in his father's footsteps, joining the East India House staff as a child. At 15, Alfred was nominated by his grandfather to train as a cadet for the Bengal Artillery. He attended the Military Seminary in Addiscombe from 1839 to 1841 and was commissioned 2nd lieutenant before setting sail to India. He shortly joined a detachment in the Upper Provinces, and in February 1843, under orders from the Benares Division, commanded the 'post guns and artillery detail' at Goruckpore. Alfred continued to climb the ranks and, in 1844, transitioned to the Horse Artillery, serving in the Sutlej Campaign, later known as the First Sikh War. He was present with the 2nd Troop at the bloody battle of Sohraon. In 1851 he was appointed adjutant to a detachment of recruits at Dum Dum; a role in which he would have managed human resources and organised the regiment from an administrative position.

The 32nd Regiment and Bengal Native Infantry

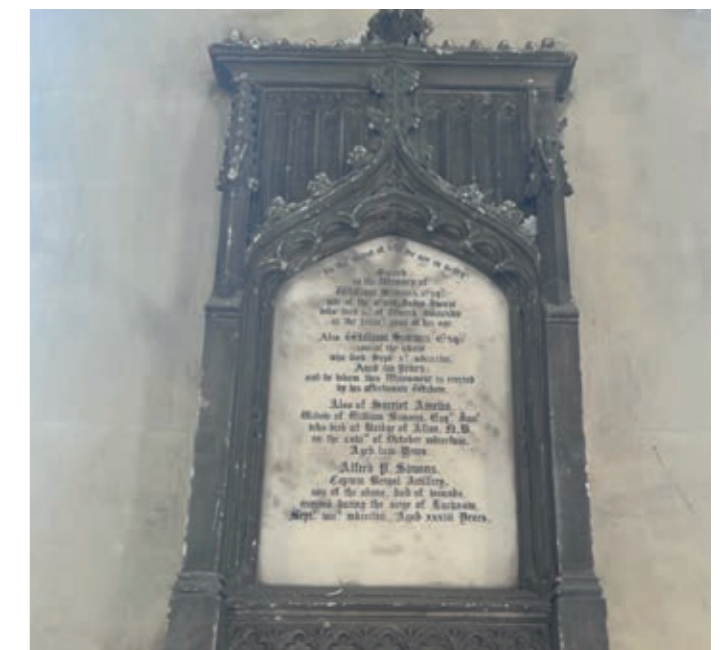
Promoted to captain in 1854, Simons was given command of the 2/4th Field Battery. He returned to England to marry Catharine Munro and she gave birth to their son Ernest on returning to Lucknow.

On the last day of June 1857, the native Indian infantry at the small village of Chinhat mutinied and immediately inflicted heavy casualties on the British, who were caught unaware and outnumbered. The 32nd Regiment and Bengal Native Infantry fled to safety within the city of Lucknow. Simons' heavy guns were the last to arrive, holding off the attackers on a bridge outside the walls to give separation between them and the retreating soldiers.¹⁸ Simons was wounded twice, but managed to get back to the residency before it was surrounded. He was engaged in the siege until he died of his fatal wounds on 7th September. The 87-day siege of Lucknow represented the final days of the East India Company's independence, as the British Crown replaced the board of directors as the rulers of British India.¹⁹

Colonel T. Inglis commended Simons' bravery in *The London Gazette* the following year. Three medals were commissioned to commemorate the distinguished soldiers. Alfred Simons was posthumously awarded the Defence of Lucknow clasp, which sold at auction in 2005 for £3200.²⁰

Captain of the HMS Pomone

While posted in India, Catharine became pregnant with the couple's second child. However, Alfred would not return to learn of his infant daughter's premature death in Niani Tal later in 1857. Catharine remarried shortly after returning to England. Once of age, their son Ernest joined the British Navy and served on the HMS Excellent. He reached the rank of his father, captaining the HMS Pomone at the turn of the 20th century.



James Carroll & George Scatcherd

The East India Company in the Napoleonic Wars

The Scatcherds were a family of military men. Their terraced house on Mile End Road was ideally located for James Smith to settle after 10 years of active service at sea for the East India Company in the Napoleonic Wars. Under the command of Admiral William O'Bryen Drury, Scatcherd joined an expedition to occupy and defend the Portuguese colony of Macao in 1808, which had allied with the British against the French armies in Asia.²¹ The Chinese objected to the disrespectful British intervention, as French occupation of the region posed no threat to the Macao people.²² The Cantonese imperial viceroy threatened to stop trading with the EIC and so it hastily withdrew – but James Scatcherd's incarceration suggests there could have been some struggle on land, resulting in his incarceration and loss of £3000 in wages.

The undefended city of Batavia (present day Jakarta)

Once released, James sailed on the Preston ship, captained by Henry Sturrock. It was commandeered by the British Navy to aid as a transport ship in the invasion of Isle de France (present day Mauritius) on the 22nd November, 1810. A force consisting of around 6000 Royal Naval soldiers landed at Grand Baie.²³ Scatcherd then transported marines on the Preston in a larger invasion of the island of Java in 1811. The British military took the undefended city of Batavia (present day Jakarta) within five days of landing.²⁴ In the following years, Scatcherd rose to captain his own ship.

James returned to England by 1831, where he retreated to his home county of Devon. The veteran sailor failed to find work despite his friends' efforts to help in his search for employment. Four years later, a petition had been drawn up by several EIC servicemen who were excluded from compensation, James being one to sign. Even with his dedicated record, a committee hearing rejected his personal compensation claim.

British, Gurkhas and Bengali regiments

Both of James' children joined the EIC military stationed in India. His youngest son, Carroll, trained to be a lieutenant in the East India Company's 41st Bengal Native Infantry. He fought and died in the decisive battle of Sobraon on the 10th of February, 1846, against the Sikh Empire at just 19 years old. The British cannons fired upon the entrenched Sikh position. British, Gurkhas and Bengali regiments fighting under the same banner, charged the breach, causing the Sikhs to retreat across a bridge over the Sutlej River.²⁵ The bridge collapsed, according to some reports under the weight of the soldiers and, in others, as a result of fire from the Sikh guns, leaving thousands



exposed to a direct attack.²⁶ The Sikh army suffered approximately 10,000 casualties, handing the EIC an overwhelming victory. Carroll was one of the 2300 EIC soldiers killed.²⁷

Captain in the 24th regiment of the Bombay native infantry army

Eldest son George reached the rank of captain in the 24th regiment of the Bombay native infantry army. It is not known whether he died in India or England in 1854, but with no major battles being fought by the Bombay Army in that year, it is unlikely he was killed in action. Also taking into consideration that the memorial details his younger brother's death in Sobraon and does not with his own, he could have succumbed to another fate, with a 19th century Indian cholera epidemic linked to British military campaigns.

Significant Plaques featured in Holy Trinity Church



Significant Gravestones featured in Holy Trinity Church



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