



THE PUZZLE OF St JOHN'S CHURCHYARD HORSELYDOWN.

Originally known as 'Horselydown' a field where horses lie down - the pastures near the Thames provided ideal grazing for traders' horses. As the population grew, houses were built around the open green space. In the late 1500s, a fair was held, and it is believed that this is how Fair Street derived its name.

In the early 1600s, an Artillery Hall was built nearby and part of Horselydown was used by the Southwark Trainbands (a group of local militia men), who practised archery and exercised arms. The Artillery Hall later became a workhouse for the parish of St. John's.

St. John's Church was also granted the lease of the remaining land as a parish burial ground.

Nicholas Hawksmoor designed the new church, St John's Horselydown, with John James in the late 1720s and it was completed in 1733. Its most distinctive feature was the spire in the form of a tapering column, topped by a weathervane depicting a comet.

Much of the church was destroyed by bombs during World War II; by 1956 it had closed, and the land transferred to the then Borough of Bermondsey. The plinth of the Hawksmoor church can still be seen beneath the London City Mission's 1970s building.

In the early 2000s, Southwark Council renovated the Park and commissioned a public artwork from Gary Breeze. The work consists of historical passages inlaid around the Park; when pieced together, it provides an interesting puzzle of the Park's history.

Planting and Wildlife

Over the years, there have been many improvements made to support biodiversity and encourage more species to flourish. The 2020 renovations created new wildlife and wetlands beds, planted with a variety of plants designed to attract a wide range of nesting and foraging wildlife.

With its children's play area and recreational facilities, St. John's Churchyard remains at the heart of its community. It is run by Potters Fields Park Management Trust, a not-for-profit organisation managed by a Board of Directors representing local stakeholders. The Trust also runs Potters Fields Park (across the road on Tooley Street).

Text taken from noticeboard



