

Whitehall, 7th June, 1921.

The following Addresses were presented to the King on Monday, the 6th instant, on the occasion of the opening by His Majesty of Southwark Bridge:—

CITY OF LONDON.

To
THEIR MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTIES THE
KING AND QUEEN.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTIES,

We, Your Majesties' most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons of the City of London in Common Council assembled, desire to offer to Your Majesties an expression of our devotion to Your Royal House, and our heartfelt gratitude for Your so graciously consenting to attend here to-day to open this Bridge.

The deep interest which Your Majesties have ever taken in all that tends to the improvement of the Metropolis, and the anxious solicitude with which Your Majesties have watched over the prosperity of this City, render Your Majesties' visit amongst us on this occasion especially welcome and appropriate, whilst this day's proceedings furnish yet another example of the historical connection which our City has always had with the Sovereigns of this Realm.

The old Southwark Bridge, which the present Bridge replaces, was built by a private Company, and opened in 1819 under the toll system, and laboured under a handicap of heavy gradients. In the year 1864 the Bridge was opened toll free in return for a money payment made by the Corporation to the Company, and in 1867 the Corporation purchased the Bridge from the Company for the sum of £200,000.

The chief features of the new Bridge are:—

The easier gradient, which on the City Approach has been reduced from an average of about 1 foot in 22 to an average of about 1 foot in 40.

Five arches in place of three, bringing Southwark into alignment with London and Blackfriars Bridges, and so improving the navigation of the River.

The lowering of the crown of the Bridge some 7 feet.

The increase in the width of the Bridge from 42 feet to 55 feet.

The erection of the Bridge has cost the sum of £375,000, the whole of which large amount has been provided by the Bridge House Estates Committee of the Corporation out of the funds under their care and management, and without any cost to the ratepayers.

We trust that this improvement will relieve existing congestion, and that the traffic of the Metropolis will be greatly facilitated by means of the new Bridge.

In conclusion, we devoutly pray that Your Majesties, secure in the affection of Your people, may long be spared to preside over the destinies of this great Empire.

To which Address His Majesty was pleased to return the following gracious answer:—

I thank you very sincerely for your loyal and dutiful Address, and for the hearty welcome with which you have greeted the Queen and myself.

It gives me much pleasure to be here to-day for the purpose of opening the new Southwark Bridge. I set great value upon that historic connection between the Throne and the City to which your Address makes reference, and the welfare and prosperity of the citizens of London are, and always will be, very near to my heart.

The purpose for which we are now met is one which bears very directly upon the welfare of London. It has been said that civilisation is communications, and anyone who helps to render traffic between the City and the rest of the Metropolitan area easier and quicker confers a benefit not only upon his fellow citizens, but upon the trade of the Kingdom and the Empire. Nowhere in the world is there a traffic problem equal in difficulty and importance to that which is presented by the site and construction of the City of London and the necessities of its work.

Every day more than a million of people have to be brought into this famous square mile and taken out of it again, and provision must be made for an immense circulation of goods between warehouses, factories and railway stations. One of the chief difficulties in the smooth working of this huge traffic is the division of London into two parts by the Thames. This would have appeared a strange paradox to our ancestors. For many centuries they could rest content with one bridge because they regarded the river not as a barrier, but as the main highway of the City. The gradual increase in the number of the Thames bridges is the most conspicuous mark of that process of evolution which has changed the complete and self-contained City of former centuries into what it is to-day, the heart and brain of a vast organism extending over hundreds of square miles.

I have heard with interest that the new Southwark Bridge, like the other bridges within the City, has been provided by the Bridge House Estates Committee of the Corporation, and that its whole cost has been met from their funds. The bridge is not only a contribution of high value towards the solution of that traffic problem of which I spoke just now, but also a noteworthy addition to the architectural features of the City. I feel that the City of London and the whole Metropolitan area must recognise a deep and lasting obligation to the generosity and public spirit of the ancient benefactors who laid the foundations of the Bridge House Estates Fund and to the prudent and far-sighted administration which has used the Fund to such good purposes.

June 6th, 1921.

BOROUGH OF SOUTHWARK.

To HIS MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY KING
GEORGE V.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

We, your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects The Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the Metropolitan Borough of Southwark, humbly approach your Majesty with the dutiful homage of ourselves and the community we represent and desire to express the great gratification with which your Majesty's visit to our ancient and historic Borough is regarded by the inhabitants.