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Walthamstow's



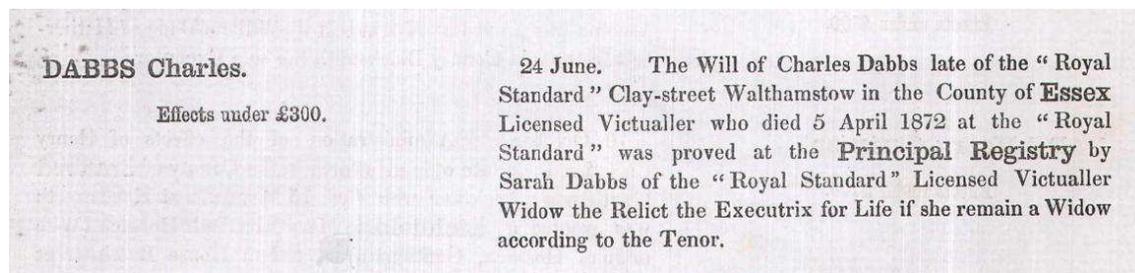
Very Own Royal Standard

## Charles Dabbs, A Former Widower, Horsekeeper And Victualler

The first that we know of the Royal Standard Public House is from the 1861 Census when we learn that thirty four year old *Charles Dabbs* was a Victualler at the Royal Standard, Higham Hill. Charles, originally was from Bethnel Green. Twelve years earlier in 1849, when he was a Horsekeeper and already a widower, he married a minor, sixteen year old *Sarah Nunn*.

In 1861, he and his wife together with their seven children, two sisters in law and a servant, employed as a Ostler, were living at the pub. The fact that the servant was an Ostler, suggests that they kept stables for the convenience of travelers to the pub which was situated at the crossroads of the road from London to Woodford and the road that went from Stratford to Waltham Abbey.

When Charles died in 1872, he left a curious will that was proved at the Principal Registry by his now forty two year old wife, as follows:



I don't know whether Sarah Dabbs was deliberately keeping to the terms of the will but when she died twenty five years later in 1897, she was still named Sarah Dabbs!.

In 1901, four years later, the pub is in the hands of *Charles Downton* from Limehouse together with *Lillian*, his American born wife and eight year old son. They have six

boarders who are all employed in the pub (A female domestic servant and five male barmen. The number of staff suggests that the pub was doing well.



For the next sixty odd years, the Royal Forest was an ordinary Essex pub catering to local people. At weekends, coach day trippers from London stopped off on their way to Epping Forest and there wasn't anything to mark the pub as being different from any of the other local pubs.

Above: A charabanc outing, possibly from Bethnel Green, outside the Royal Standard c.1920

## The Rising Sun at Bow

In 1962, a pub called the *Rising Sun* in Gillender Street, Bromley by Bow was one of the east end's popular live music venues (Others were *The Deuragon* in Hackney, *The Ironbridge Tavern* in Poplar and *The Watermans Arms* on the Isle Of Dogs) The *Rising Sun* ran talent nights that showcased many up and coming singers and comedians. The resident backing band was the *Don Harvey Trio* who were a very talented group of musicians, with *Don Harvey* on keyboard, *Eric Cornish* on drums and *George Watkins* on bass.

## Oh ! My Stars & Garters



Picture left Kathy Kirkby & Tommy Bruce on Stars & Garters

The ITV television company ATV sought to cash in on the pub renaissance music hall scene and created a popular television programme called *Stars & Garters*. This programme was modeled pretty directly on the *Rising Sun's* successful entertainment format. It was written by top class writers that included *Barry Cryer* and *Marty Feldman*. It was set in a fictional pub and featured presenters *Ray Martine*, *Kim Cordell*, *Jill Browne* and *Willie Russell*. The *Don Harvey Trio* were the resident backing group. The series ran from 1963-1966 and made stars of *Vince Hill* and *Kathy Kirby*. *Tommy Bruce*, *Al Saxon* and *Clinton Ford*.

## The Blackwall Tunnel Northern Approach Road

Between 1967-1973 the *Greater London Council* built a section of motorway in London called the *Hackney Link*. This substantially enlarged and altered existing roads to create a motorway from Hackney to the Blackwall Tunnel. One of the effects of these major road works was to 'kill' the *Rising Sun* pub as a live music venue as it then became very difficult to access by road other than from a side road off the north bound motorway.

## The Royal Standard At Walthamstow

Sometime, circa 1961 (I would be grateful if any readers can provide the actual date) I believe that the *Don Harvey Trio* and many of the regular entertainers from *the Rising Sun* at Bow moved to the *Royal Standard* at Walthamstow. This is far earlier than some chroniclers have suggested as the date when it became a live music venue.

*Daniel Binns*, the former Waltham Forest Guardian reporter wrote:

*'However The Royal Standard – to use its official name – was a hotel and then a pub for much of the twentieth century and only became a dedicated entertainment venue in 1986.*



*According to the archives, the first ever show that year – which cost £2 for entry - was on Friday August 1, starring 'Satan' and the mysteriously named 'P.D.Q'.*

*Despite the many weirdly-named bands that played in the early years – and continue to perform at The Standard to this day – it started off with a major focus on Britain's burgeoning 1980s alternative comedy scene.*

*Up and coming stars such as Loughton's own Alan Davies, Harry Enfield and Jack Dee, along with more established acts such as Hale and Pace, were attracted to the venue as it gained a growing reputation on the comic circuit.*

*But it was a performance by multi-platinum selling singer Suzi Quatro in April 1990 that cemented The Standard's reputation for live music.*

*This was given a further boost by the country's enthusiasm for the 1990s Britpop music scene, as hundreds of bands wanting to be the next Oasis or Blur fought for slots on the venue's stage.*

*They included bands such as Kula Shaker, who went on to have a number one album and five top-ten hits. '*

## A Dating Controversy

However this dating is contradicted by east London comedian *Jimmy Jones* who in his autobiography *'Now This Is A Very True Story: The Autobiography Of A Comedy Legend'* says that his first professional engagements were back in 1962 at the *Royal Standard* in Walthamstow. In his biography he says that he replaced another comedian named *Charley Smithers*. At that time, *Jimmy's* stage name was *Albert Simmonds* but the compere, *Don Harvey*, kept introducing him as *Albert Smithers*. Apparently, after seven nights of getting his name wrong, *Don Harvey* told him that he was going to change his name from *Albert Simmonds* to *Jimmy Jones*. As I also remember going to the *Royal Standard* in the late

## The Entertainment



The *Royal Standard's* early pub music hall type format changed with the various music fashions. Over the 1960's, I suspect that the dating information cited by reporter *Daniel Binns* probably comes from one of the several re-launches of the pub.years, *The Standard*, booked bands that reflected most of the different musical genres including: pop, rock, punk and heavy metal. In its later years it hosted many cover and tribute bands. The premises were also used as recording studios, as a strippers bar and for celebrations like the birthday party for the successful *McBurger Off* campaign (To stop McDonalds opening a drive through premises at Blackhorse Lane) at which the guest band was *The Chanter* folk/rock band.

## The Performers



A roll call of entertainers who appeared at the Royal Standard includes such names as: Alan Davies, Harry Enfield, Jack Dee, Hale and Pace Suzy Quatro, Deep Machine, The ARK, The Hamsters, Fragile, Dirty DC, Anomie, Grand Slam, Sonic Violence, Stray, Bevis Frond, Chariot, Wishbone Ash, Wonderstuff, OpticTentacles, Thin Lizzy, Mournblade, Huw Lloyd Langton (Hawkwind), Man, Litmus,, Inner City Unit, Wilko Johnson Band, Grand Slam, Deep Machine, Shy, Threshold, The Darling Buds, Threshold, Pink Floyd

Dimension, Elixir-Galahad, April 16<sup>th</sup> Appreciation Society, Tokyo Blade, The Cords, Heavy Metal Thunder, Bootleg Blondie, Stray/Good Thinking, Melting Ice Caps, Akira The Don, Maharajas, Gun Metal Grey, T Rextasy Grasp-Skin Deep, The Others, Praying Mantis, Spin Doctors and many tribute bands to AC/DC, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie, Paul Weller and some Blondie.



## Maybe The End

In May 2011, a local paper, the *Waltham Forest Guardian* reported that the *Royal Standard* Music venue and the next door pub (Now called *the Tryst*) was to be sold and closed. This news was a shock to many live music fans as it was one of the few dedicated live music venues in Waltham Forest. At the end of 2011, *Punch Taverns*, the pub's owners closed *the Royal Standard*. It was bought by TFC Supermarkets, a Turkish supermarket chain and the site was boarded up in Mid January 2012 and nearly a year later still remains boarded.

But this may not be the end of the story.

## Perhaps A New Beginning ?

The Blackhorse Action Group, a local community group, reported in January 2012,

'The retention of The Standard was a key part of the recently unveiled Master-plan for the Blackhorse Lane area and as such Council leader Cllr Chris Robbins' is hopefully aware of the venue's importance to the community. In a note to his colleagues he had some surprising news regarding discussions with the venues new owners.

Cllr Chris Robbins on the "Royal Standard Pub" / Standard Music Venue:

*"Many of you will know the Royal Standard Pub near Blackhorse Road Station in Walthamstow. This venue although not the prettiest in the borough, has long been a place used by local musicians.*

*A few months ago the pub and surrounding buildings was bought by a family run supermarket (TFC Supermarkets). Their initial plan was to knock the pub down. Being aware of its music history I contacted the new owners and asked them to meet with me with a view to alerting them to how important the Standard Pub is to us as a borough. I informed the new owners that we would expect the pub to be physically retained and that it should continue to be a venue providing local entertainment. I am pleased to tell you that their initial response was very positive and that we are now in discussions with this company with a view to restoring the building and its function".'*

## The Blackhorse Road & Walthamstow Wetlands Development

The *Royal Standard* Music Venue and the *Tryst* Pub stand on the crossroads of an exciting proposed Waltham Forest 'core' massive multi million pound development of the area between Blackhouse Lane and the High Maynard Reservoir and River Lea that forms the Walthamstow/Tottenham boundary. Much of this area is run-down and semi derelict and the Council have been acquiring some of the industrial property in the area.

This is a long term development that will create hundreds of new housing units, college accommodation shops, new industrial factory units, school and recreational land. As part of this process *the Standard* corner would be redeveloped.

This development which will be part funded by private developers, government grants and *Waltham Forest Council* is to also linked to the development of the Walthamstow wetlands. These are formed by the Lockwood Reservoirs and Maynard Reservoirs, north of Forest Road, and West Warwick Reservoir to the West, the Walthamstow Reservoirs and the adjoining Marshes constitute what are known as the 'Walthamstow Wetlands'



The Wetlands, the River Lea and the reservoirs are run by *Waltham Forest Council* and by *Thames Water* and which will provide improved access to the Wetlands. The effect of this development will be to create a huge River Lea water park area extending the Olympic Park to Forest Road.

It is this situation that lies at the heart of the negotiations between *TFC*, the new owners of the *Royal Standard site* and *Waltham Forest Council*. The Council is keen to retain the *Royal Standard* and a few other older buildings as the the heart of the new development. Presumably, *TFC* are keen to maximize the profitability of the site. In any event, *TFC*, will have to take into account the fact that the new development is going to make substantial alterations to the *Standard* corner that possibly will impact on their plans.

Bill Bayliss,

December 2013.



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