

It is unlikely that a very large number of the present inhabitants of Bromley are aware of funds that exist for the relief of master tradesmen of the town - and of widows of such - who have fallen on evil days.

That there are two such funds known as the Lascoe Charities can be verified by an inspection of inscribed tablets hung in the tower of the Parish Church, or by reference to the pages of the "History of Bromley" published some years ago, and written by E.L.S. Horsburgh, B.A.

The charity came about in this way. At the middle of the last century there were living in Bromley three members of a family named Lascoe, a family which had been established in the town for nearly two hundred years, and had carried on a successful business as saddle and harness makers. They were two brothers and a sister, Thomas, John and Elizabeth, advancing in years, unmarried and apparently without dependents. How should they dispose of some of the little fortune they had accumulated was causing them anxiety when a neighbourly suggestion reached them that as the money had been gained as tradesmen in the town, it would be appropriate to use some of it to make provision for the assistance of Bromley tradesmen who should unfortunately be found to stand in need of such help.

The suggestion met with approval, with the result that when John Lascoe died in 1850 he left a sum of money invested in three per cent. Consolidated Bank Annuities to be held upon trust to pay and apply the dividends arising therefrom to "Four decayed Tradesmen inhabitants of the Parish of Bromley."

In like manner on the death of Elizabeth, the last survivor of the three, in 1853, a sum of money was left by her upon trust to apply the "interest or dividends to the use and benefit of poor widows of such a class of Tradesmen of Bromley in decayed circumstances as are intended to be assisted from the fund provided by the Will of my late Brother John Lascoe subject to regulations similar to those in my late Brother's Will."

Definite conditions are laid down for the administration of the funds which are controlled by four trustees, inhabitants of Bromley. The original trustees were well-known people at the date, 1854, of their appointment: Samuel Poole Acton, John Innous, Robinson Latter and Richard James Payne. These have been since followed as death or other circumstances made it necessary, by equally well-known people, the present trustees include Geoffrey Dunn, Mr. Dunn acting as Hon. Treasurer and Mr. R.S.C. Graham, Hon. Secretary.

The recipients of the charity must have resided in Bromley for at least 10 years and have carried on business therein for at least five years. Regard and preference is to be given to such "decayed tradesmen" who shall have conducted themselves in an honest and industrious manner and who shall have borne and shall bear a fair and respectable character, and who may have been reduced in circumstances by unavoidable means, and whose age and infirmity may claim consideration. Similar conditions apply to the widows, with the exception that it is their husbands who shall have carried on business in the town for at least five years.