The celebrated Daniel De Foe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, was the son of a butcher, born in London about the year 1668, resided in this parish about the year 1710. His father's name was James Foe, and why the son altered his name does not appear. He received his education at Newington Green, and early displayed his attachment to the cause of liberty and Protestantism, by joining the insurrection under the Duke of Monmouth in the west, and he had the good fortune to escape, and return unnoticed to London. He early imbibed a taste for literature, and wrote a political pamphlet before his twenty-first year. With the business of a writer he joined that of a trader, and was first engaged as a hose-factor, and afterwards as a maker of bricks and pantiles near Tilbury Fort in Essex; but his commercial schemes proved unsuccessful, and he became insolvent. De Foe having been born a writer, he spent those hours with a small society for the cultivation of polite literature, which he ought to have employed in the calculations of the counting-house. It is to his credit that, after having been released from his debts by a composition, he paid most of them in full when his circumstances were amended. The first of his writings which excited the public attention, was *The True-born Englishman*. Its purport was to furnish a reply to those who were continually abusing King William and some of his friends as foreigners, by shewing that the present race of Englishmen was a mixed and heterogeneous breed, scarcely any of which could lay claim to native purity of blood. His *Shortest Way with the Dissenters, or Proposals for the Establishment of the Church*, became a subject of complaint in the House of Commons, and was voted a seditious libel, and burnt by the common hangman, and a prosecution was ordered against the publishers. De Foe at first secreted himself; but upon the apprehension of his printer and bookseller, he came forward in order to secure them, and stood his trial, was convicted, and sentenced to fine, imprisonment, and the pillory. He underwent the infamous punishment with the greatest fortitude, and so far from being ashamed of his fate, that he wrote *A Hymn to the Pillory*. Pope, who thought fit to introduce him in his *Dunciad*, characterizes him in the following line: "Earless on high stood unabash'd Defoe." By this it would seem the barbarous custom of cutting off the ears of libellers was still practised.

It was generally thought he was treated with unreasonable and unmerited severity, and, at last, obtained his liberation from Newgate by the interposition of Harley, afterwards Earl of Oxford; and the Queen herself, compassionating his case, sent money to his wife and family. He continued, after he had regained his liberty, to write upon political subjects, and in 1706 he published, by subscription, his largest piece in verse, which was *Jure Divino*, a satire in 12 books. It was intended to expose the doctrine of the divine right of Kings, and to decry tyrannical government.
He seems at this time, to have enjoyed the favour of Queen Anne, by whom he was employed, according to his own account, in certain honourable though secret services; and, when the Union with Scotland was projected, he was sent by the Ministers into that country, for the purpose of rendering the measure popular.

His knowledge of commerce and revenue caused him to be frequently consulted by the committees of Parliament there, and he endeavoured to conciliate the good will of the nation, by a poem entitled Caledonia, highly complimentary to its inhabitants. After the Union was completed, he wrote the history of it, in a folio volume, 1709; and in the same year he published The History of Addresses. At this time he was living in tranquillity and comfort at Stoke Newington.

The most celebrated of all his works, The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, appeared in 1719, and no work in any language has been more popular. Its editions have been numberless; it has been translated into almost all modern languages, and continues to be a standard library book.

Defoe's success in this performance induced him to write a number of other lives and adventures, which are now published collectively with his other works. He died on the 26th April, 1731, in the parish of St Giles, Cripplegate, London, leaving a wife and six children. One of his daughters married Mr Baker the naturalist. Amongst his publications was a very interesting and affecting account of the great plague in London, and another ingenious and useful book, entitled Religious Courtship.

1 Harl. MSS. No. 7001.
2 In a pamphlet, entitled, ‘The life and strange surprising adventures of Mr D-- de F-, of London, hosier, who has lived above 50 years by himself in the kingdom of North and South Britain. The various shapes he has appeared in, and the discoveries he has made for the benefit of his country.’ The author makes De Foe to say, he always hated the English, and took pleasure in depreciating and vilifying them; witness his True Born Englishman; and that he changed his name merely to make it sound like French. The subject of the tract is a dialogue between De Foe, Robinson Crusoe, and his man Friday. London, 1719.
3 Supposed to have been founded on the story of Alexander Selkirk's being left on the island of Juan Fernandez.