OLD ENGLISH CUSTOMS

1 This is no hatchet burial scene. It is the 1937 renewal of a 700-year-old English custom—just one of the many traditions that form an important, if sentimental, strain in the warp and woof of the empire. The bewigged gentleman is a court official called the king’s remembrancer. Traditionally he reminds various of the king’s officials of their duties. He is receiving a hatchet from the alderman of the City of London corporation, representing a traditional payment of two knives, ten horse-shoes, and sixty-one horse-shoe nails to the crown for use of certain lands. The payment is called quit-rents. Quirks were abolished in 1825, but the tradition lingers on.

(Photo from Tribune London bureau.)

2 Even farther back in English history goes this custom—"beating the bounds." In Anglo-Saxon times parish priests on Ascension day would lead a group of boys beating willow wands on a walk around the parish boundaries, beating the boundary stones to designate the official property line. Sometimes the boys were switched or bashed upon the wrists to remember this. That’s why the choir boy is being up-ended during this year’s observance at a London church.

(Another photo.)

3 London elects a mayor. Sir Harry Twyford, third from the left, with glasses, appears in his new robes of office as London’s lord mayor. An honorary position, but important in England’s ceremonial setup, the mayorality is awarded on a basis of seniority in an "election" by members of traditional guilds and city companies.

(Another photo.)

4 At left: Another mayor. Councillor A. J. Gibb, new mayor of High Wycombe, goes through an age-old weighing-in ceremony.

(Another photo.)

5 More modern than the others is the annual old-England basket-carrying race for market porters.