

AN EARLY WALL AT THE HALL OF THE MERCHANT TAYLORS' COMPANY

IN September, 1951, reconstruction work in the Small Kitchen of the Company's Hall in Threadneedle Street revealed an early wall behind a modern facing on the north side of the kitchen, which lies immediately to the east of the Great Kitchen at the end of the corridor, arcaded on one side, which leads to the Great Hall.¹ At the invitation of Mr. Evan James, the Clerk of the Company, I visited the site with Mr. Norman Cook; and Mr. Cook and I acknowledge gratefully the help which we received both from Mr. James and from Mr. D. M. P. Liddle.

The wall in question is a very rough affair, reflecting (as many such walls do in the City) the absence of supplies of good building stone near at hand: the material used appeared to be mainly Kentish ragstone, but the blocks and pieces were of all sizes, with the most rudimentary coursing, with the lavish use of yellowish mortar. The ragged top of the rubble work is capped with about six courses of red brick showing no particular bond, but having the appearance of being later work—presumably 17th or early 18th century.

The dating of such walls is notoriously difficult: they lack all the architectural details and features which are essential. But in addition to the ragstone, other materials, including brick, had been pressed into use for the building. The bricks had been inserted in patches and one such patch was of particular interest because it was composed of a number of yellow bricks approximating in size to the modern brick but a good deal thinner, of a pale colour and looking like a crude hand-made version of the modern London stock brick. There is one securely dated instance of the use of such bricks in medieval London. In 1372, Sir Walter Manny was buried before the high altar of the church of the London Charterhouse, which he himself had founded in 1371. His tomb, recently rediscovered amongst the post-monastic buildings, was built of yellow bricks of the same type as those in the Small Kitchen, and others had been used elsewhere in the building of the monastery, which went on into the 15th century.² On this evidence, therefore, the wall would be of late 14th or early

15th century date, for the brick patch appears to be an original element in the wall and is not the result of later repair.

From the side of the Company, however, comes additional information.³ It had long been known that here or hereabouts had been a wall erected by John Chircheman in 1388 to settle a boundary dispute. Chircheman, a noted benefactor of the Company, had a house in Brade Street (now Threadneedle Street) next door to the Merchant Taylors' Hall. His garden abutted on a piece of garden to the south over which there had long been contention; and an indenture of 24th June, 1388, sets out the dispute and the agreement arrived at. Chircheman was to build a wall to divide the properties; it was to be 49 ft. 10½ in. in length (a measurement which corresponds fairly closely with that of the wall, part of which was recently exposed); and the other parties to the agreement were to have the right to place seven or eight corbels in the wall on which to build. If, then, any value is to be attached to the yellow bricks as evidence of date, the present wall may reasonably be accepted as that built by Chircheman, and thus provides an interesting link with a Londoner who was a person of importance in his day.

I understand that it is the intention of the Company to preserve a small portion of the wall permanently to view.

W. F. GRIMES.

NOTES

1. See Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *London (City)*, plan, p. 35, where the Small Kitchen is shown but not named, the wall in question being given a modern date.
2. This and other discoveries are to be described in due course in a special publication sponsored by the Governors of the Charterhouse.
3. See H. L. Hopkinson, *History of the Site of Merchant Taylors' Hall* (1913), pp. 69-71.

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THE Joint Committee regret to announce that no report of the 1951 excavations will be published at present, but it is hoped to produce a report for 1951 and 1952 in a year's time.