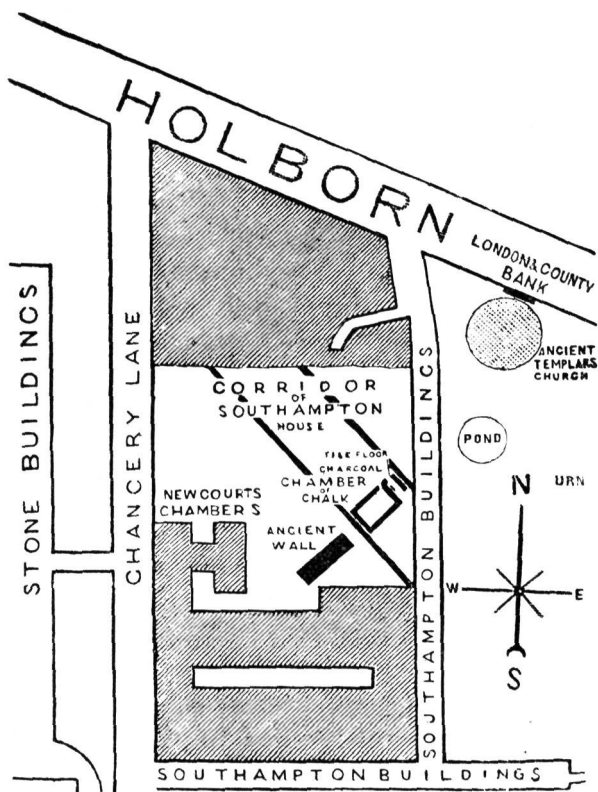


DISCOVERIES MADE DURING THE
EXCAVATION FOR THE FOUNDATION
OF THE SAFE DEPOSIT BANK,
CHANCERY LANE.

BY
JOHN SACHS, Esq.

DEEP excavations were necessary in order to secure a firm foundation for the premises of the Safe Deposit Bank, and I had ample opportunity for making and engraving a plan of the site, which yielded various interesting archæological discoveries. After the houses of the Queen Anne period had been removed, the foundations of the old Southampton House were exposed. This building deserves note as having been the residence of the Rt. Hon. Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, to whom Shakespeare dedicated his "Rape of Lucrece." The mansion appears to have stood in a diagonal line between the south-east of the present Southampton Buildings, and the north-west or Holborn end of Chancery Lane. The walls were of red brick and stoutly built. On the south end (marked "ancient wall") was a concrete foundation of great strength which cost some labour to reduce. Inside the red-brick wall lay heaps of bones of goats, boars' tusks and other animal remains, with fragments of mediæval pottery. Adjacent to this spot were brought to light a clean chalk chamber and portion of a cess-pool. Cart-loads of chalk were removed from all parts of the foundation area.

When the *débris* was cleared away the curious fact was ascertained that the builders of Southampton House had utilised white stones of considerable size

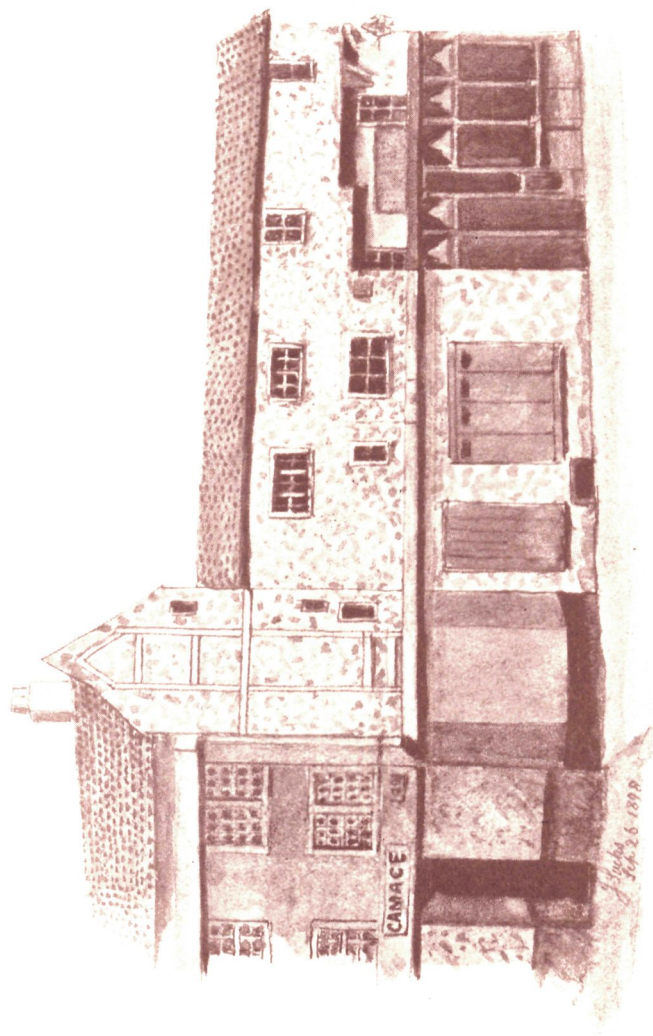


for the foundation of their brickwork. One stone I examined appeared to be the key-stone from a semi-circular arch. These stones may have been abstracted from Roman edifices, as their organic formation was similar to those taken from a Roman bastion and preserved in the Guildhall Museum.

When the excavations were made for the London and County Bank, the circular foundations of the Old

Knight Templars' Church were revealed and sketched by our former secretary, G. A. Birch, A.R.I.B.A. On reference to Ralph Aggas's Map, this church is delineated, which shows that the edifice still existed early in Elizabeth's reign, when this map was made; it had probably been retained for chapter and other offices in connection with the Temple Church, which was dedicated in A.D. 1185.

Further excavations have been recently made for the erection and extension of the Birkbeck Bank. After the removal of the houses in Southampton Buildings, the ground appeared to have been garden ground, as shown by Aggas. One could imagine oneself treading on the very ground on which the Earl of Southampton and his friend William Shakespeare walked together. In this ground the workmen came upon an excavation which had been filled with chalk, a material which was much used in this district for absorbing damp. This cavity had been most likely a pond or stew for keeping a supply of fish for the Knight Templars. Further east a cinerary urn, containing bones, was found. As soon as I saw it I reported the find to the Secretary of this Society, and also to Mr. Ravenscroft, junior, of the Birkbeck, who saved the fragments (for the workmen had broken it) and had them put together, and is now preserved in their Council Room. A more perfect urn, of exactly the same pattern and size is in the Guildhall Museum. On reference to the portion of Aggas's Map in the accompanying illustration, the building in the shape of the letter L is probably intended to indicate Southampton House, and what is interesting at the present time, and will shortly disappear, is the house at the corner of Leather Lane (spelt Liver Lane).



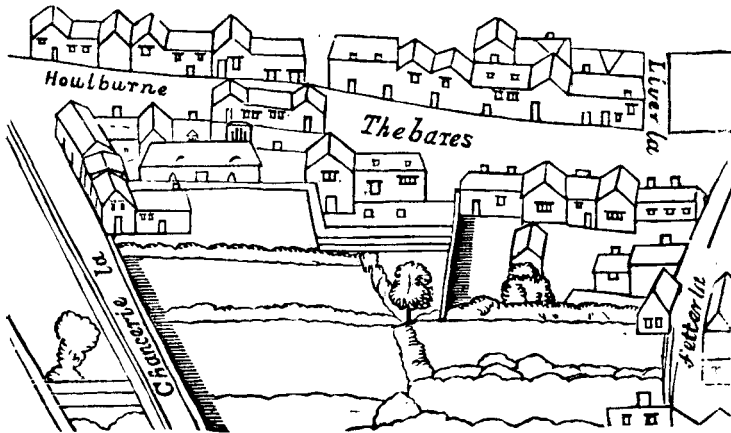
OLD HOUSE AT THE HOLBORN WEST CORNER OF LEATHER LANE,

Probably the House indicated in Aggas's Map. The right hand portion was used as the "Horse and Groom" Tavern.

From a drawing by John Sachs, made when the buildings were being pulled down, 26th September, 1898.



PARISH BOUNDARY
MARK OF ST.
ANDREW, HOLBORN.



Part of the building has been utilized for the "Horse and Groom" beer-house. This house extended to Holborn, and had a superstructure of later date, the old part of the building dating from about the period of Henry VII. The illustration facing this page was taken in November, 1898.
