

ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT.
THE SMITHFIELD GATEWAY AND THE
CLOISTER.

Shown and described at a meeting of the Society, November 28th, 1908,

BY

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I.—THE GATE.

THIS fragment is all that remains of the west façade of the church of the great Augustinian monastery of St. Bartholomew, West Smithfield.

It is a beautiful arch, and dates from the early thirteenth century. It exhibits the mouldings and the dog tooth ornament of the period, together with the corbels from which the arch mouldings spring, but those on the south side are hidden by the shelves of a stationer's shop.*

It is probable that above the arch there arose originally the south-west flanking tower of the west front of the church; for the arch is over six feet in thickness, and it must have been so built to support a considerable superstructure.

The first part of the priory church to be built was

* In 1910 the house over the gateway and a portion of the house on the south side were purchased by public subscription, when the shop front was set back, exposing the remainder of the arch and a portion of the face of the west wall, with the arch head of a mural arcade, as at Dunstable. The plinth of the wall and of a buttress are left exposed.

the choir and Lady Chapel, in the year 1123. On the death of Rahere the founder in 1144, his successor, Prior Thomas, continued the work and added the transepts, the crossing, and one bay of the nave. About the year 1250 the nave was gradually continued westward, until it reached Smithfield, where the present archway stands. It has been supposed by some that the west front of the Priory Church stood where the present churchyard gates now stand, but in July, 1905, the writer, by tunnelling under the pavement, was able to trace the south wall of the nave from the churchyard gates to the Smithfield archway, thus proving that the nave did extend to Smithfield.* The exact date of the completion of the nave is not known.

Smithfield, which still retains its Anglo-Saxon name of "Smethfeld," the Smooth field, was the King's market, and a horse market was held there as early as the year 1174, and probably long before. We may suppose that stray horses and cattle had a way of wandering or bolting into the church through this archway (as being the side entrance, it would have been always open), for a low-walled enclosure was built outside the west front of the church, with an opening in the centre, the opening being protected by a chain. This low protecting wall is well seen in Agas' Map of London, made in the time of Queen Elizabeth. It is also referred to as "le cheyne" in the bounds of the parish, which were minutely described in 1544 in the particulars for the grant by Henry VIII to Sir Richard Rich.

On the suppression of the monastery by the king

* In 1910 the matter was further put beyond question by the uncovering, on the east side of the gateway, of an E.E. shaft and springers of the aisle vault.

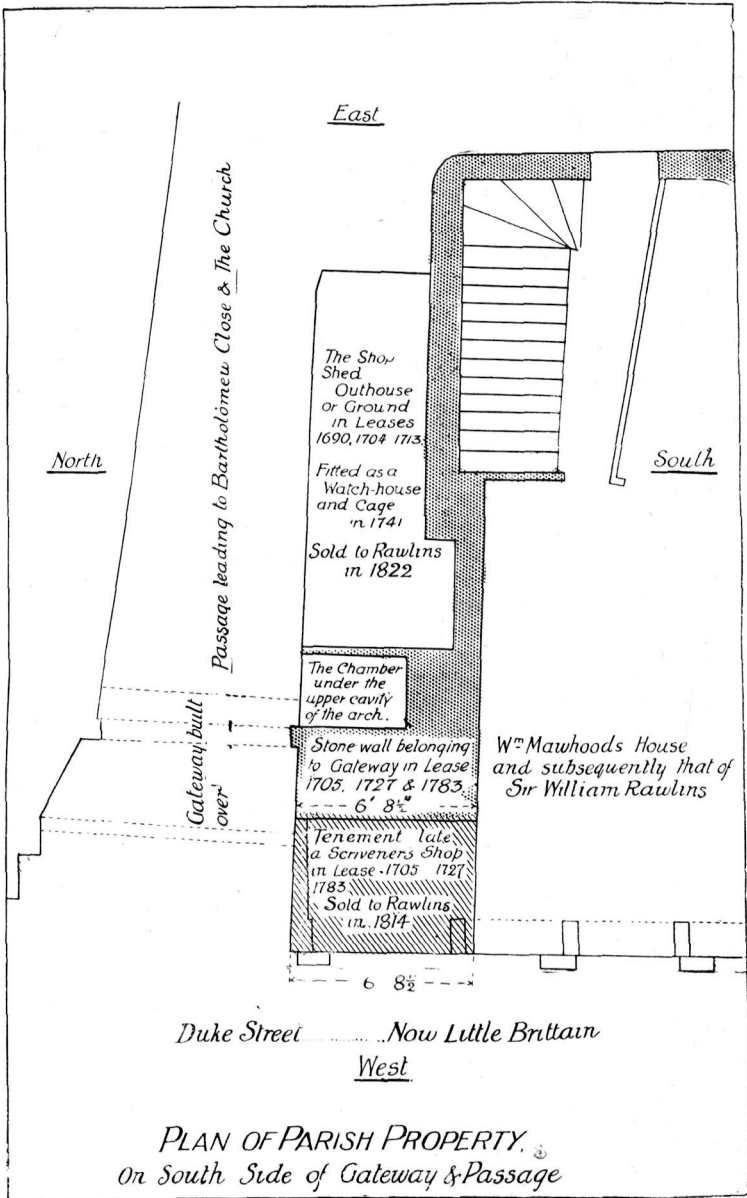
in October, 1539, the nave was entirely destroyed and the stones carted away to some of the many buildings which the king then had on hand. The west front of the nave went with the rest, save this one side portal. The reason for its escape from the general destruction, no doubt, was that it made a convenient gateway to the church, and, by the destruction of the guest house of the monastery, to the priory close still known as Bartholomew Close. Every entrance through the monastic walls, which form the present bounds of the parish of St. Bartholomew the Great, was guarded by gates (and with few exceptions, those gates and their attendant watchmen still remain),* so that this old arched doorway formed a convenient place in which to hang one set of the parochial gates.

When, in 1544, Henry VIII sold the whole parish to Sir Richard Rich, there were two rooms, one over the other, above the archway (no doubt in the tower), and from that time the history of the archway can be fairly well traced.

In the early chancery proceedings in the time of Queen Elizabeth, at the Record Office, the writer was fortunate enough to alight on the pleadings of two cases in chancery in the years 1590 and 1596, whereby the litigious rector of that time, David Dee, sought to show that a certain house in the Close had been granted to the rectors by Sir Richard Rich as a parsonage house, and others as glebe houses, in addition to those which Rich had actually so granted under his settlement with the king. This caused one Philip Scudamore, an inhabitant of the parish, and who is commemorated by a tablet in the north aisle of the church, to give a

* They were removed by the Corporation in 1910.

detailed description of his title to the rooms over the arch. He showed that, in 1544, the two rooms over the Smithfield Gate, "one over the other," were at that time the freehold property of Sir Richard Rich by grant from the king, one John Smith then being the tenant; that on the 28th May in the same year he enfeoffed this John Smith as freeholder. In his will, dated 12th June, 1550, John Smith bequeathed the rooms to Margaret Miller, his sister, for her life, and after her death to her son John Miller. John Miller left the rooms at his death in 1571 to his second son, Richard Miller, who, on the 22nd July, in the 36th year of Queen Elizabeth, enfeoffed Philip Scudamore, *the defendant in the case, who then entered into possession*, and was in possession of the property at the time of the suit. He, in the next year, 1595, proceeded to pull down "the old decayed and ruyned edifices," as he styles them, "one over the other," and to build new ones in their place. But we must be thankful to Scudamore for so carefully reciting his title as he has done, and for leaving us the following description of what he pulled down (it is upon this description and the thickness of the arch that the writer relies for the statement that there was a south-west tower with two rooms in it over the present gateway). Scudamore thus describes the rooms:—"Certaine chambers or rooms one over another, annycently edified, builded, or standinge over and upon the same gate, on an arch of stone and two great mayne pillers of stone beringe upp the saide arche, chambers and rooms, and adjoyninge to the saide messuage (*i.e.*, the house adjoining, which had been part and parcel of the same property) and thereunto annexed." The arch of stone, with one of



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the pillars corbled from the wall, can still be seen* ; the other is hidden by the stationer's shop.

From the above evidence it is clear that the rooms over the arch were never the property of the parish, as some people suppose.

The parish was the owner of the arch itself and the east side of the passage, for on the 18th September, 1690, we find William Crosfeild, churchwarden of the parish, granting by direction of the parishioners a lease for 13 years to George Webb, a citizen and merchant taylor, of "all that shop or shed lying on the east side of the passage (south side must be intended, as the passage had no east side), together with the room or chamber lying over the gateway leading to the parish church of St. Bartholomew the Great, in or near West Smithfield," for the consideration of 20s. paid down and a yearly rent of 30s. for the use of the poor.

And on the 20th June, 1704, the two Churchwardens, with consent of the Vestry, granted a lease for six years to John Mitchell, citizen and pewterer, of "all that outhouse or stable, together with the vault thereunto adjoining, situate and being on the south side of Webb's Coffee House, at the side of the passage or breeke leading from West Smithfield to Bartholomew Close, as also the room or closet over the said passage," at a yearly rent of £3.

On the 25th March, 1713, the two Churchwardens, by order of the vestry, granted a lease of 20 years to William Mawhood of "all that piece of ground lying and being in a passage leading from the church into

* In 1910 this shaft was found to be made of Roman cement, probably in imitation of such a shaft existing before the fire which burnt out the premises on the north side in the year 1856.

Smithfield near Duck Lane end [now Little Britain], and adjoining to the house wherein the said William Mawhood now liveth, containing in length from east to west 22 ft. 8in., and in breadth 4 ft. 4 in., upon which there now standeth a deal shed, and was late in the occupation of John Mitchell, deceased, and also all that room or chamber which is now built under the upper cavity of the arch of the old gate or arch of the entring into the said passage from Smithfield," at a yearly rent of 40s.

And further, the churchwardens leased to Mawhood "all that piece of ground, nine inches in breadth and fifteen feet in length, the same being parish ground, whereon the wall on the north side of the house, wherein the said Wm. Mawhood now liveth, standeth, the same adjoining the shed hereinbefore described," for twenty years at a yearly rent of 20s.

The "room and chamber over the gateway" in the lease of 1690, and the "room or closet over the passage" in the lease of 1704, cannot be either of Scudamore's rooms over the arch, as they were never parish property. The description in the lease of 1713 is probably the correct one, a "room or chamber which is now built under the upper cavity of the arch of the old gate," which fairly describes the closet or cupboard which is still in the passage and entered by the first door shown on the engraving.*

The lease of 1713 expired in 1733, but Mawhood continued in possession as an annual tenant until 1741, when the Vestry ordered that the shed be fitted up as a watch-house and cage.

* This cupboard was removed in 1910 to expose the E.E. shaft and vaulting already referred to.

On the 10th July, 1822, it was resolved by the Vestry to sell the shed to Sir William Rawlins for £50, and with the proceeds to defray the cost of a special plan of the parish then nearly completed.

The parish also owned the tenement which is now that portion of the stationer's shop which blocks the south side of the arch.* We first hear of it in 1705, when by order of the Vestry, on June 12th, the churchwardens, in consideration of £10, demised to Ralph Living "all that shed or tenement which was lately a scrivener's shop, situate at the end of Duck Lane, adjoining the 'Cock' public-house, containing 6 ft. 9 in. north towards the gateway and 4 ft. 1½ in. east to a stone wall belonging to the said gateway, and south to a tenement in possession of the said Ralph Living, for 15 years at the yearly rent of £2 10 0," Living covenanting to divide the premises from his own with a substantial partition and door. The lease expired in 1720, and in 1725 the Vestry ordered "that Mr. Wm. Mawhood (who was then the proprietor of Living's house) be obliged to take a lease of that part fronting Smithfield which he holds of the parish, or quit the same at Midsummer next." In 1727 Mawhood took a lease for 15 years on the same terms as Ralph Living in 1705.

On the expiration of this lease in 1742, Mawhood continued to hold as an annual tenant until 1783, when, on the 10th March, the Churchwardens, by order of the Vestry, granted him another lease for 30 years at a yearly rental of £3, otherwise the terms were the same as before.

* Set back in 1910, as already stated in a previous footnote.

On the expiration of this lease in 1812, Chas. Mawhood, the then lessee, was offered a new 30 years' lease at a rental of £8. On his refusal he was called upon to separate the tenement from the dwelling-house; but this was not easy to do, for during the lease Mawhood's dwelling-house had been apparently brought forward and built above the tenement. A lease of it at £10 a year was next offered to Sir William Rawlins, who was then the owner of Mawhood's dwelling-house, and on his refusal the Vestry decided to submit for counsel's opinion the question as to the best way to preserve the interests of the parish in the tenement. Counsel advised that the tenement be sold, and as Sir Wm. Rawlins, the owner of the rest of the house, had offered £180 for it, this was accepted, and the conveyance signed 11th October, 1814.

At that time the church clock had been made to strike the quarters, and a larger bell had been provided for the purpose, at a cost of £189. The Vestry, in February, 1815, thereupon decided that as the clock and bell were not only for the present, but also for the future inhabitants of the parish, the money received for the tenement should be appropriated for the payment of the clock and bell.

It is to be regretted that the parish thus sold both the shed and corner shop or tenement on the south side of the arch, but they seem to have acted with deliberation, and to the best of their knowledge at the time in the interest of the parish.

The archway had more than one narrow escape of being itself removed. Thus on 5th August, 1741, the question was put to the Vestry "whether a convenient coachway be made at the church gate leading from

Smithfield to the Close": it is to the credit of the Vestry that they unanimously decided in the negative. Again, in 1814, counsel's opinion was taken as to whether, "in the event of its being found necessary to remove the arch because of decay or for any other reason," the liability to support the building above would fall upon the parishioners. Fortunately Mr. J. A. Park's opinion was that the parishioners would be liable, to which opinion we may perhaps attribute the retention of the arch.

II.—THE CLOISTER.

The cloister of a monastery was next in importance to the church itself. It was the dwelling-place of the monks during the day, and we may therefore assume that the construction of the cloister was commenced if not late in Rahere's life then very shortly after his death.

The Norman arched entrance, the Norman capitals to the shafts of the door, and the Norman plinth at the base of the east wall make it clear that the east cloister was begun some time in the twelfth century; the base mouldings of the shaft on the east side indicate a date of about the middle of the century.

It is also certain that the cloister was rebuilt by Prior John Waford between 1404 and 1409, for Pope Alexander V, when making a grant of indulgences in September, 1409, to all those who visited and gave alms for the repairs of the church on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and the Feast of the Assumption, mentions, as one of the reasons, that he had learned that the Prior had rebuilt, among other things, the cloister and the chapter house. As

John Watford was elected Prior in 1404, the date of the work must be between that and the date of the grant. Prior John also added a gallery above the east cloister, access probably being had from the dormitories.

After the suppression of the Monastery by Henry VIII, the entrance to the east cloister from the church was built up with stones from the nave, then being demolished for the King. A beautiful fragment of worked stone of the Early English period, with the colours of its decoration still quite fresh, was found when the arch was opened in 1905, and may now be seen in the cloister.

In 1555 Sir Richard, then Lord Rich, included the cloister in his grant of the monastery to Queen Mary, whereby it came into the possession of the Dominicans or Black Friars.

The Dominicans, in re-opening the cloister of the church, did not apparently open up the entire doorway, for a wooden lintel and the jambs of a smaller doorway were visible in the rubble masonry, the cause probably being that the cloister doors had been requisitioned as west doors for the truncated church in 1544.

The north alley of the cloister was probably walled off at this time, thus accounting for the door jambs of the Tudor period inserted in the wall seen on the right on entering.

In 1560 the Dominicans were suppressed, and the cloister once more, with the rest of the monastery, sold by Queen Elizabeth to Lord Rich, and the entrance doorway again built up.

From that time the cloister was given over to secular occupation, and it appears no more in history until, in 1742, we read of its being used as stables for horses.

In 1830 the south transept was destroyed by fire, and the vaulting of the cloister fell with the rooms over some time later. The cloister was then filled with earth to the level of the ground outside and again used as stables.

About the year 1886 the southern bays of the east cloister were pulled down and new stables erected on the site.

Only three of the eight bays which adjoined the church are now left, and they were in a sadly ruinous condition, but still there was a considerable amount of Norman and Perpendicular work remaining visible in the stable, and as there was a prospect of lofty warehouses being built on their site and against the tower of the church, negotiations were opened in the year 1900, first for the purchase of the freehold and then for the head leasehold and sub-leasehold interests. The matter was complicated and many beneficiaries had to be satisfied, so that possession was not obtained until Michaelmas, 1904, and then not of the entire piece of ground of which the freehold had been bought; but excavation was commenced at once and the actual work of restoration in 1905. The remaining strip of land will not be available until June, 1926. Not as much original work was found below the ground level as was anticipated, but all that was found has been carefully retained.

The west doors of the church had been taken down in 1893, when the new porch was built, and stored in the south triforium. These, when the arch was once more opened up in 1905, were found to exactly fit the

entrance doorway to the cloister; they were in consequence rehung, and now undoubtedly swing in the position they originally occupied before the suppression by Henry VIII.

THE EXISTING REMAINS OF THE CLOISTER.

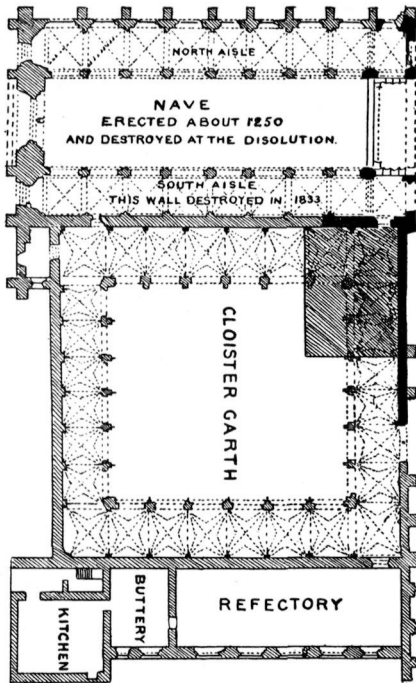
NORTH END.—The circular-headed Norman doorway is seen leading into the church, with the original fifteenth century doors refixed. Two portions of Norman shafts with caps and bases and plinth complete the work of this date. The transverse rib above the doorway dates from the fifteenth century.

WEST SIDE.—In the first bay on the right is a perfect fifteenth century shaft and base; on the left a cluster of three mutilated shafts with their caps and bases. In the centre are the remains of the Tudor door jambs, probably inserted by the Dominicans, now set back a foot to expose the fifteenth century work just mentioned, as well as a portion of the original tiled floor.

In the centre bay are mutilated portions of the window jambs and their junctions with the sill. Outside the window to the right the greater portion of the angle buttress and plinth, and to the left the first buttress of the east cloister, can be seen.

In the third bay the mutilated window jambs and springer of the vaulting and the stonework below the window sill are original work.

SOUTH END.—The right-hand half of the transverse rib is visible, with remains of the springers on either side. The east alley formerly continued for a further five bays southward, but it was pulled down in 1866.



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PLAN OF CLOISTER.

NOTE. The Western End of the Nave extended to Smithfield.

EAST SIDE.—In the third bay the ashlarling for three or four feet above the ground is original.

In the centre bay small portions of the vaulting shafts and the springer of the vaulting ribs remain; on the top of the latter the original mason's marks, showing the setting out of the ribs, were found. The fifteenth century ashlarling in the lower portion of the wall remains.

In the first bay is a fifteenth century shaft cap and base, with a portion of the face of the Norman wall and the Norman plinth.

VAULTING.—Wherever possible, the portions of the original ribs that were found during the necessary excavations have been used again, and portions can be seen in each bay.

The few original bosses have been refixed, and one found in the triforium re-used. Two can be seen in the north bay and three in the south.*

The new bosses bear shields with the following coats:—In the centre of the north bay the Royal arms (the site being a Royal grant), followed by those of the diocese of London. In the centre of the central bay the arms of the priory, surrounded, in the smaller bosses, by the emblems of the four Evangelists, followed by the arms of the late Rector, the Rev. Sir Borradaile Savory, with the arms of the City of London in the centre of the south bay.

* In the present year (1911) three of the original bosses of the cloister have been restored to the church by the kindness of Mr. Paul Thomas White, who had inherited them from his father, Mr. Alfred White, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians.

GLASS CASE.—The glass case at the end of the cloister contains the original seal of the priory, struck by Prior Perrin during the Marian occupation, also a MS. book of Meditations by the same Prior. A portion of the leather sandal and wooden coffin of Prior Rahere, the founder, and an interesting finger chafer, with some finely worked stones found during the restoration of 1865 and dating from the third quarter of the twelfth century.