

## THE IRONMONGERS' ALMSHOUSES, KINGSLAND ROAD.

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AT the meeting of the Society held under the presidency of E. Hadham Nicholl, Esq., Vice-President, a Past Master of the Ironmongers' Company, at the Almshouses, on October 19th, 1910, the following account was given to the members:

The proposed sale of the Almshouses by the Ironmongers' Company, and their transfer to another locality with more favourable surroundings, has aroused some public interest. An inquiry has been held by the Charity Commissioners, who have approved of the proposal, and the property has been purchased by the London County Council for public purposes. It is proposed to utilise the buildings as a Museum and Library of Furniture and Cabinet-making industries, which are largely carried on in Shoreditch and vicinity.

The Almshouses are known as Sir Robert Geffery's Charity. Sir Robert Geffery, Lord Mayor of London and Master of the Ironmongers' Company, 1667 and 1685, by his will, dated February 10th, 1703, left a large portion of his property to the Company for the purchase of a piece of land whereon to erect Almshouses for so many poor people as his property would extend, to pay to each £6 per annum, and fifteen shillings yearly for a gown, and to invest the remainder in land in or near the City of London, and apply the rents to the support of the poor people, and the upkeep of the buildings. This was duly carried out by the purchase of a site of about two acres in the Kingsland Road, Shoreditch,

whereon fourteen houses, accommodating forty-two almsfolk, and a large room used as a chapel, were erected, into possession of which the Company entered in the year 1712.

A portrait of Sir Robert Geffery hangs in the banquetting hall at Ironmongers' Hall. In the year 1673 he served as sheriff, being knighted by King Charles the Second at the Guildhall, while in office; and three years later he was elected the alderman of Cordwainer Ward. At his death he bequeathed money for the benefit of the poor of Landrake and St. Erney, in Cornwall. He also left money for the tuition of the school children there to read and write and learn the Church Catechism.

His gifts to the Ironmongers' Company comprised "£200 in lawful money," and a pair of silver flagons, costing £30. On dying, at the age of 91, he left money for the benefit of the Church of St. Dionis Backchurch, in which he was interred, the register recording the fact that he "was buried within the communion rails between the two doares." Lady Priscilla, his wife, too, was "buried in the chancel, close to her husband's pew." On the Church of St. Dionis being demolished, the coffins containing the ashes of Sir Robert Geffery and the Lady Priscilla were removed and reburied in the little burial ground of the Almshouses he founded. The inscription is as follows:

"Beneath this stone are interred the remains of Sir Robert and Lady Geffery, which, together with their monument in the Chapel of the Almshouses, were removed from St. Dionis Backchurch, Lime Street, City, when that Church was taken down under an Act of Parliament, 8th July, 1878."

The chapel of the Almshouses contains a stone monument to the memory of the benevolent founder and his wife, the civic insignia of the City being at the top, while below is the following inscription :

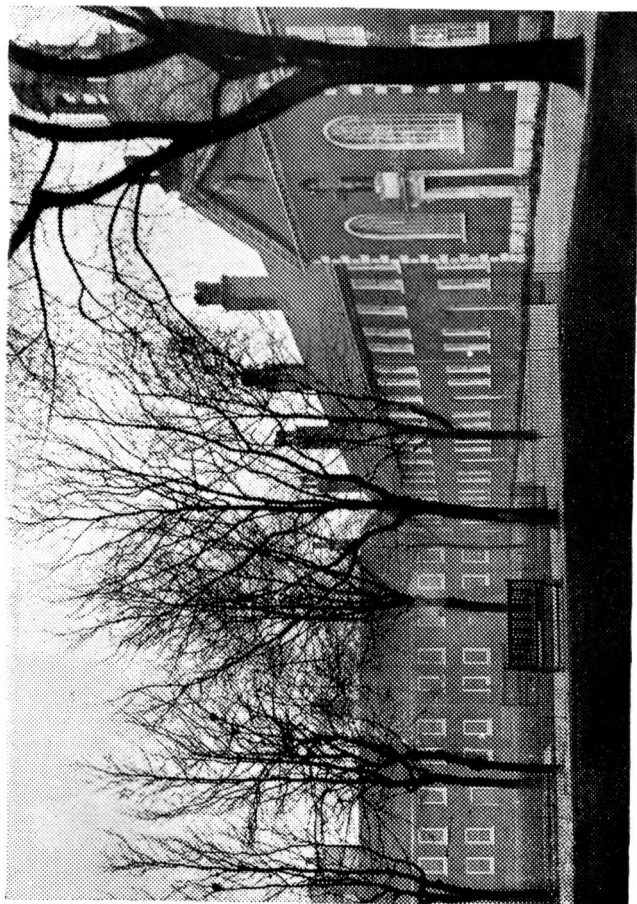
In the Chancell  
is interred ye body of  
Sir Robert Geffery, Knt, and  
Alderman. Sometime since  
Lord Mayor of this City of London,  
President of ye Hospitalls  
of Bridewell and Bethlem. An  
excellent Magistrate and  
of exemplary Charity, Virtue  
and Goodness

Who departed this Life  
on the 26th day of February, 1703  
and in the 91st year of his age.

And also  
the body of Dame Priscilla  
his wife, daughter of  
Luke Crossley, Esqr.,  
who deceased ye 26th of October, 1676,  
in the 43rd year of her age.

Underneath is a brass plate with the following :

“ This monument was removed from St. Dionis Backchurch, Lime Street, when that church was taken down, under Act of Parliament. The remains of Sir Robert and Lady Geffery were also brought from St. Dionis, and were re-interred in the burying-ground attached to these Almshouses, on the 8th July, 1878. Hall Rokeby Price, Master; James T. Horner, Stephen W. Silver, Wardens.”



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(BY PERMISSION OF THE PROPRIETORS OF THE "DAILY GRAPHIC.")

In the disused burying-ground of the Almshouses there is also a handsome tomb of another of the Company's chief benefactors, Thomas Betton, who died in 1724. It is not intended to remove either this or that of Sir Robert Geffery.

Owing to the great changes brought about by time, and the deterioration of the neighbourhood, the buildings have become quite unsuitable for the pensioners, and the Company has been compelled to sell the site and erect new Almshouses, with improved accommodation, at Mottingham, near Eltham, Kent, where it is hoped the pensioners may be able to pass the evening of life amidst more congenial surroundings.

The statue of Sir Robert Geffery which stands in the niche over the chapel door will be removed to the new buildings and replaced by a replica, presented by the Company. The tablet from the chapel will also go to Mottingham.

The pensioners of the Charity are elected at the Courts of the Ironmongers' Company. The benefits are not confined to persons free of the Company. All non-free persons must have an income of five shillings a week, either possessed or guaranteed; and such inmates cannot be admitted under the age of 60. Any pensioner marrying after becoming an inmate ceases to be entitled to an annuity.