

ST. GEORGE-IN-THE-EAST AND MINORIES.

HISTORICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

*Given to the Society in the Parish Hall (formerly Holy Trinity Church),
Minories, 27th April, 1918.*

BY

ARTHUR BONNER, F.S.A.

THE western portion of this district, viz., the land immediately east of the City Wall and the Tower of London, and extending from Aldgate and the Bars outside it southward to the Thames, formed the greater part of the land which is said to have been granted by King Edgar to that mysterious body, the English *Cnihtagild*.¹ The land had been "left desolate and forsaken by the inhabitants, by reason of too much servitude"² (or service, or, in modern equivalent, too heavy rental). It afterwards became Portsoken Ward, and, in 1125, the property of the Priory of Holy Trinity (or Christchurch), Aldgate. It included the land now covered by the Minories, East Smithfield, and St. Katherine's Docks. At its lower end, just eastward of the Tower and adjoining

¹ See the valuable paper, "the English Gild of Knights and their socn," by H. C. Coote, F.S.A., in this Society's Transactions, V, 477; and Dr. J. Horace Round's "London under Stephen" ("Commune of London" 102-6, 221). Dr. Round corrects the error made by Stow (Survey, Kingsford ed. i, 122) and repeated by Coote in this paper and also by Loftie ("History of London" i, 163), viz., that the donors of Portsoken to Christchurch Priory became inmates of that monastery; and also Loftie's mistake ("Hist. Towns: London" 30.) in assuming that the "Knightsengild" was "the governing body of London." It may be noted in passing that Loftie was wrong in his assumption that the gate of Aldgate dates from about 1108 (see L. & Mx.A.S. Transactions N.S. iii, 191); and that, generally, he must be read with caution. The Bars outside Aldgate stood where Middlesex Street (Petticoat Lane) branches off from the main road.

² Stow ("Survey," Kingsford ed. i, 120), translating from the MS. Cartulary of Holy Trinity Priory, which was in his possession.

the open space of East Smithfield, there were in the Middle Ages the two well-known Religious Houses, the Cistercian Abbey of St. Mary of Graces and the Augustinian Hospital of St. Katherine by the Tower.

The Monastery of St. Mary de Graciis (also called New Abbey, and Eastminster) was founded by Edward III, in gratitude for his escape from perils by land and sea. It was built at the eastern side of East Smithfield, on land which had been acquired from Holy Trinity Priory, Aldgate, during the Great Plague of 1348, for a burial ground, and called "the new churchyard of Holy Trinity." The deeds recording the transfer of the land to the King for this purpose still exist in the Public Record Office, where they are catalogued as "Ancient Deeds, A. 2645-6-7." They are grants by John Cory, clerk, to King Edward III. The first is dated 18 March, 24 Edward III (1350) and covers "messuages at 'la Tourhulle' adjoining the new churchyard of Holy Trinity by the Tower of London"; the second, which is dated 10 Jan., 26 Edward III (1353), relates to "the toft and plot of ground lately dedicated for a churchyard," and "messuages, etc., at Estsmythefeld and la Tourhulle." The third of these interesting deeds, dated 6 Nov., 39 Edward III (1365), records a later grant to the King by the same owner of "tenements and messuages at Estmethefeld and upon 'la Tourhulle' . . . adjoining the new churchyard of Holy Trinity and the high road called 'Heggestrete'" (now Royal Mint Street). The endowment was for an Abbot and 5 monks; the local property of the Abbey included two water mills ("Crasshe Mills") in East Smithfield—given to it in 1375—and the manors of Poplar and Rotherhithe; and at the Dissolution it had an abbot, a sub-prior, and 8 monks, and its revenue was about £600.³ Henry VIII granted the monastery in 1542 to Sir Arthur Darcie, who, says Stow, "clean pulled downe" the buildings; a Naval Victualling house was built upon their site, and some small tenements

³ Valor Ecclesiasticus, Hy. VIII, i, 398.

upon the adjoining grounds. At the close of the 18th century a large tobacco factory stood here, according to Horwood's fine map; and in 1810-11 the Royal Mint was built upon the site.

The Hospital of St. Katherine by the Tower stood on the south of East Smithfield, near the river. It was founded in 1147-8 by Matilda, wife of Stephen, for a master, brethren and sisters, and 13 poor persons (bedesmen and bedeswomen). An Augustinian House, it was placed in the custody of the influential Priory of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, its site having been purchased from that wealthy monastery. The buildings were destroyed in 1825-6, and the site cleared for the docks which now cover it and which from that fact are called St. Katherine's Docks. The area cleared was about 24 acres, and it contained 1,250 houses and 11,300 inhabitants. A new church and hospital were then built in Regent's Park, where are still maintained a master, brethren, sisters, and poor persons, and where some of the carved woodwork, etc., from the old church may now be seen.⁴

East of St. Katherine's, by the riverside, and on the borders of the parishes of St. Botolph Aldgate and St. John Wapping, was a "Hermitage," now commemorated by "Hermitage" Basin, Bridge, Stairs, Street, and Wharf. The "Basin" supersedes an ancient inlet of the river, Hermitage Dock. In the 14th century this "hermitage" was known as the "Swannesnest"; it is thus named in a deed of 1376 now in the Public Record Office (Anc. Deeds, B. 2314); and bequests were made in Wills of 1371, 1375, and 1380, to Friar John Ingram, its occupant then.⁵ Ingram, by the way, is described in these Wills as "hermit," "recluse," and "anchorite" respectively, from which we gather that the difference in the meanings of these words was not clearly understood. All three signify religious "solitaries," but while the hermit could wander freely, the recluse or anchorite

⁴ See the paper on the Stall Carvings, by G. C. Druce, M.A., F.S.A., in this Society's Transactions, N.S. III, 3.

⁵ Dr. Sharpe's Calendar of Wills, ii, 147, 189, 228.

(or anchorite; ancre and anker being earlier names) was immured in a cell.⁶ This "hermitage" was apparently a cell, or anker-hold, as Ingram clearly was there for more than 9 years.

Other cells in the neighbourhood were:

(a) The "hermitage" of St. Eustace, behind the chapel at St. Peter at the Tower. Henry III was patron of this, and in 1237 he ordered the payment of 1d. per day to the "inclusus"; later in his reign the ancre, or ancess, there was a woman, Idonia de Boclaund⁸; and the Will of 1371 referred to above bequeaths money to "Sir Robert, a recluse monk near the Tower."

(b) A cell in the turret of the city wall near Aldgate, mentioned in a "Fine" of 1257-8 which concerns "Brother John, inclusus de Alegate" and "a rent of corn." A "garden on the south side of Alegate, called the 'hermitage,' mentioned in 1325 in the Corporation "Letter Book E" (p. 193) may indicate the site of this.

Stow, in his "Survey" (Kingsford ed. ii, 71) mentions the East Smithfield "Hermitage" as in his time "a Brew-

⁶ The entrance to the cell, or anker-hold, was sometimes built up after the entry of the anchorite—whose food in such cases was put in through a window or aperture for ventilation—and it might remain closed up until it became necessary to remove his dead body and admit his successor.

⁷ "Brother William, recluse of St. Peters in the Bailey of the Tower of London," he is styled in the Liberate Roll (Calendar 258). The next page of this Calendar notes a "*Liberate* to the recluse of St. Margaret's Patyn', a mark, of the King's gift." The allowance to Brother William of St. Peters in the Tower is repeated in the following year.

⁸ Close Rolls 37 HY. III, m.2, transcribed in Bayley's Hist. Tower of London, p. 125 note. Another entry in the Liberate Rolls of 1237 records an authority "to the guardian of the bishopric of Durham . . . to find the woman-recluse of Durham necessities for so long as the bishopric shall be in the King's hands, in the same way as R. late Bishop of Durham was wont to find her necessities in his time"; and a similar arrangement is noted concerning the woman-recluse of Gatesheved (Gateshead) (Calendar Liberate Rolls, 272-3, 283). Contemporary women-recluses at Dorking, Iffley, Britford (Wilts.), and Hereford are also mentioned in this Calendar.

house so called of an Hermite sometime being there." In the preceding century it had become a "Bere-house," apparently occupied in 1492 by John Merchant, a Fleming, who was in that year licensed "to export 50 tons of ale called Berre."⁹ It was the public brewhouse, in which the citizen could have his own malt, etc., brewed by payment of a fee to the Government.¹⁰ During the 16th century it was known as the Red Lion brew-house.¹¹ In 1705 and onwards this "Red Lion Brewery" belonged to Humphrey Parsons, who was elected Alderman of Portsoken Ward in 1721, Sheriff in 1722, and Lord Mayor in 1730 and 1740.¹⁰ From him the riverside stairs near by were called "Alderman Parsons' stairs," now "Aldermans Stairs". At the close of the 18th century it was "Goodwyn Skinner and Thornton's Brewhouse"¹²; and since 1802 it has been in the hands of the Hoare family.

Nightingale Lane, East Smithfield, which now, as in Stow's time, "runneth south to the Hermitage," was the scene of the finish of a Royal Stag hunt in 1629, as we learn from the contemporary writers (Anthony Munday and others) who issued in 1633 the enlarged edition of Stow's "Survey" brought up to that date. King Charles I, "having hunted a stagge or hart from Wansted in Essex, killed him" here "in a garden belonging to one who had some damage among his herbes, by reason of the multitude there assembled suddenly" (p. 462). Peter Cunningham, F.S.A., in his *Hand-book to London* (ed. 1850, p. 360) says, boldly and baldly, that this lane "derives its name from the men of the Cnihtena-guild, and was originally Cnichtena-guild-lane"; and the late T. W. Shore, in his paper on "the Anglo-Saxon settlement round London" in this Society's "Transactions" (N.S. i, 313) states that "the name Knighten Guild still survives in that of Nightingale Lane." This is merely conjecture; there is no evidence to connect the name with such an

⁹ Rymer, *Fœdera* xii, 371, cit. in Pennant's "London" 1791, 300.

¹⁰ *Vict. County Hist. of Mx.* ii, 172.

¹¹ *Inq. Post Mortem*, London, iii, 30, 255; ii, 201.

¹² Horwood's map of London, 1799.

origin. Its earliest appearance seems to be in Stow's "Survey," 1598, where it has its present spelling. The name, Nightingale Lane, is rather a favourite one, and is found in various districts. In 1707 there was one at Limehouse, (listed in Hatton's "New View of London"), and at the present day the name is found at Balham, Clapton, and Harlesden among London districts,¹³ and I have met with it elsewhere. "Nightingale" is an old word, from O.E. *nihtegale* (literally "night singer"), the second *n* being excrescent; and in guessing at the origin of the street name we must not overlook three "probabilities" which arise from this, viz. (1) a lane where the nightingale was formerly heard; (2) "so called from such a sign there" as Stow might have written; and (3) from connection with a person named Nightingale.

East Smithfield is the "Smethefelda" of two documents of about 1137-48, concerning Holy Trinity Priory.¹⁴ After its gift (as part of the Portsoken) by the Knights'-Guild to Holy Trinity Priory it was seized by Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex and Constable of the Tower, for a vineyard, and was again confirmed to the Priory c. 1143-48 by the later of the two deeds mentioned above.¹⁵ It was here, according to the monastic chronicler's story, that the Knights' Guild had to perform the last of the exploits which King Edgar set them in order to obtain the land, viz., to run with

¹³ Mr. Hy. Harben (Dictionary of London, 441) notes "Nightingale Place," Middlesex St. to Petticoat Square, as existing prior to 1884; he tells us it was "formerly called Petticoat Square."

¹⁴ (a) Rymer's *Fædera*, i, 17; (b) P.R.O. Anc. Deed A. 6683, also transcribed in Round's "Ancient Charters" (Pipe Roll Soc. xii) p. 48. The earliest documentary appearance of the other (i.e. West) "Smethefeld" is also of date c. 1137, in a grant by Rahere to Hagno still existing at St. Bartholomew's Hospital; a facsimile of the grant is given in Dr. Norman Moore's "History of St. Bartholomew's Hospital" i, 26. The etymology of the name is well known: O.E. *smeth*, *e*, and *feld*, = smooth (or level) field (or plain).

¹⁵ Stow (Survey, Kingsford ed. i, 45) states that the land had been held forcibly by the first 4 Constables of the Tower, Geoffrey being the last of them; but King Stephen's re-confirmation to the priory describes it as "the land of Smethefelde which earl Geoffrey had taken for making his vineyard" (Anc. Deeds A. 6683).

spears against all Comers.² East Smithfield was then of greater area than it was in the 16th century, when it was described by Stow. Its name is now, and has been since the 17th century, applied to the street which runs eastward from the N.E. corner of the Tower ditch towards Shadwell and Ratcliff.¹⁶

Little Tower Hill was an open space adjoining East Smithfield and originally belonging to it.¹⁷ Stow tells us that it was "greatly diminished" by buildings at his time; it further suffered by the building of houses about King Street and Queen Street, between about 1670 and 1707, and later by the construction (about 60 years ago?) of the Public Gardens which adjoin the Tower Ditch, and, finally, the formation of the Tower Bridge Approach completed its curtailment.

St. George's Street, the eastern continuation of the present-day East Smithfield, was until about 60 years back "Ratcliff Highway"—of unenviable notoriety during the 18th and 19th centuries. Its western part was for a time named Parsons Street—doubtless from the Alderman.

Royal Mint Street, which now runs eastwards from Sparrow Corner—the southern end of the Minories—is another ancient street which has suffered changes of name. In 1321 it was "Hoggestrete," as we learn from the City Coroners Rolls; and (although rendered "Heggestrete" in 1365 in the third grant mentioned above in connection with St. Mary Graces) this name appears to have remained until Stow's time. He gives the modern spelling of the first element in the name, Hog, and he tells us that, on the north side of

¹⁶ Now "Upper" East Smithfield (the "Lower" was partly obliterated by the St. Katherine Docks; its southern end survives by the riverside). The limitation of the name to the street seems indicated—or foreshadowed—as early as 1592, in an Inquisition (London I.P.M. iii, 167) which mentions a messuage &c. "in the street of East Smithfield."

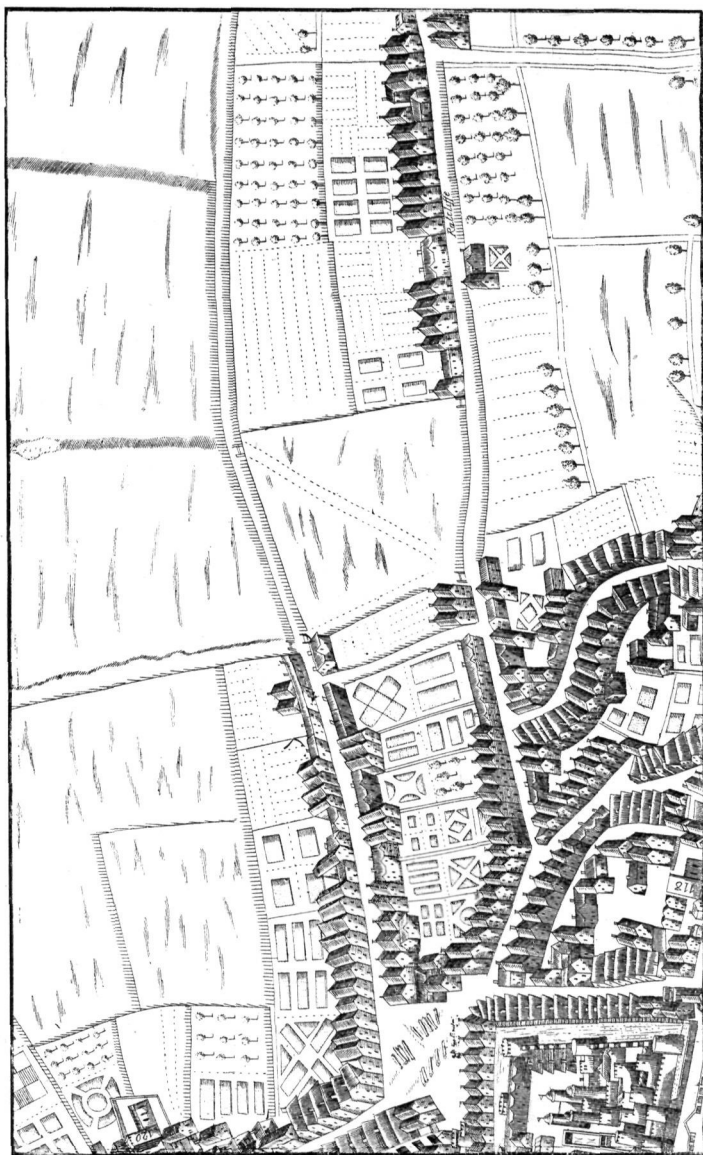
¹⁷ A deed of 1368 concerns "tenements and gardens on Tourhille in Estsmethefeld in the parish of St. Botolph without Algate" (P.R.O., Anc. Deeds A 7377). "Great" and "Little" Tower Hill are noted on Wyngaerde's Panorama of 1543; although 50 years later Stow calls both these spaces "Tower Hill."

Tower Hill and the west end of "Hogstreete," stood "certaine faire Almes houses, strongly builded of Bricke and timber, and covered with slate for the poore, by the Marchant Taylers of London, in place of some small cottages, giuen to them by Richard Hills some time a master of that companie. . . . In these Almes houses 14 charitable brethren of the said Marchant taylers yet liuing, have placed 14 poor sole women which receyve each of them of their founder sixteene pence, or better, weekly, beside 8*l.* 15*s.* yearly, paid out of the common Treasurie of the same corporation for fewell."¹⁸ The position of these Almshouses is shown exactly on Rocque's plan of 1746, viz., opposite the northern end of Queen Street, the site being now covered by the railway Goods Depot. "Hogstreete" became "Rosemary Lane" early in the 17th century, and remained thus until 1850-60, when it received its present name. Its eastern continuation, Cable Street, was oddly named "Knockfergus" during the 17th and 18th centuries, and portions of it had other names such as "New Road" and "Back Lane," at various dates; the extension of the present name so far east is of comparatively recent date.

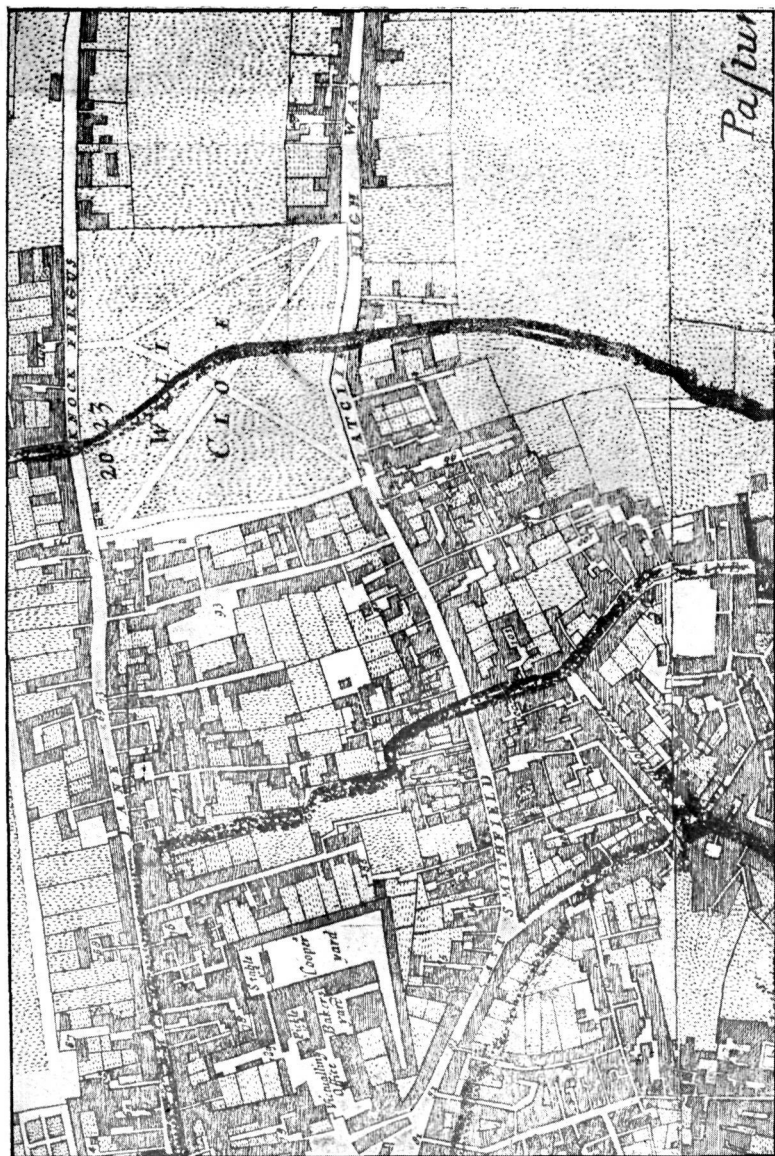
The growth of this inner eastern suburb of London has naturally been along these two main traffic arteries, and between and about them; and to it is due the formation of the parish of St. George-in-the-East. Originally a hamlet ("Wapping Stepney") of the great parish of St. Dunstan Stepney, this new parish was formed by an Act of Parliament in 1727. The progress of the extension is well seen by a comparison of the Maps, such as Newcourt and Faithorne 1658, Morden and Lea 1682 and later editions, those in the editions of Stow's Survey of 1720 and 1754, Rocque 1741-6, and Horwood 1799.

In 1642-3 one of the Parliament's forts was erected on the southern side of Ratcliff Highway, on a little hill near the

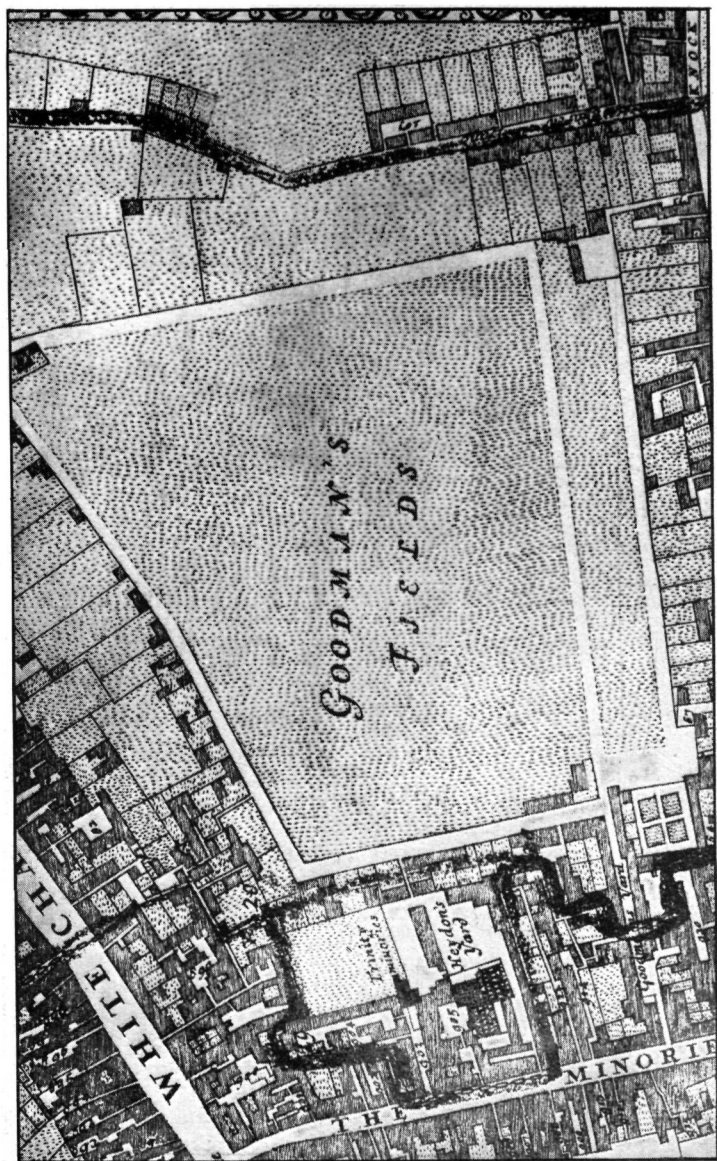
¹⁸ Stow "Survey" (Kingsford ed.) i, 125.



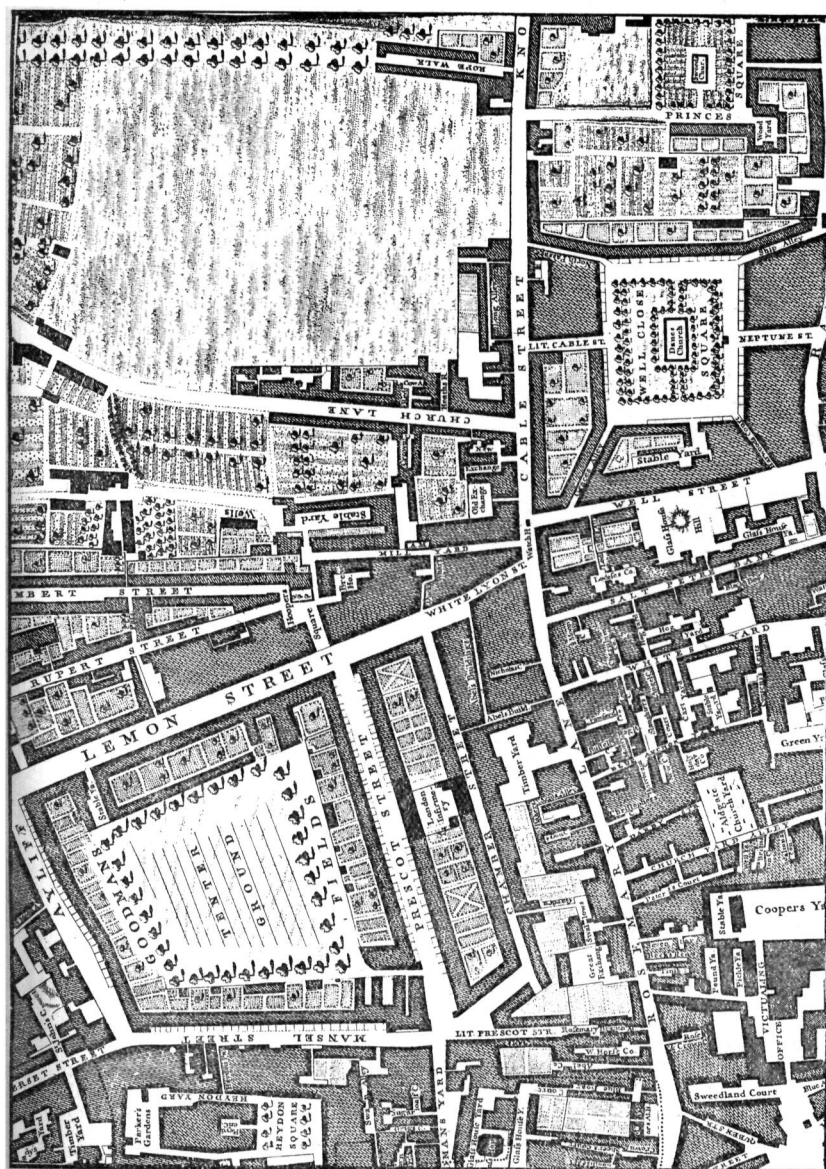
GOODMAN'S FIELDS, E. SMITHFIELD, WELL CLOSE, AND VICINITY, 1658. FROM NEWCOURT AND FAITHORNE



EAST SMITHFIELD, WELL CLOSE, AND VICINITY, 1682. FROM MORDEN AND LEA'S MAP.



PRECINCTS OF THE MINORIES AND GOODMAN'S FIELDS, 1682. FROM MORDEN AND LEA'S MAP.



GOODMAN'S FIELDS, WELL CLOSE, ETC., circa 1740. FROM ROCQUE'S PLAN OF LONDON.

corner of Old Gravel Lane; its site is marked by the short street called Chigwell Hill, which connects St. George Street and Pennington Street. About a mile to the north was placed the next fort, at Whitechapel Mount, on the south side of Whitechapel Road, by the western end of the London Hospital; it is commemorated by Mount Place and Mount Street.¹⁹ About 1740-60 a road was laid between these points, of which the northern portion still retains the name "New Road," and the southern is Cannon Street Road, which passes the churchyard gate of the parish church of St. George. This road must have followed the line of the Parliamentary's trench.

Pennington Street, mentioned above, which runs parallel to and a few yards to the south of St. George Street and near the church, retains quite a number of the houses originally built there. They date from about 1685-90, and they are the oldest houses now existing in the vicinity. The street is shown on Morden and Lea's map of *c.* 1692 (*temp.* Wm. and Mary), but not on their earlier issue (1682).

Princes Square, between St. George Street and Cable Street, dates from about 1725. In 1728-9 the Swedish Lutherans built their church on its centre. Its first minister was Jacob Serenius, D.D., Bishop of Strengnes, "a man of considerable learning, and author of a dictionary of his own language." Lysons (*Environs*) tells us Emmanuel Swedenborg was long connected with it; he was buried there in 1772, and his body was taken thence to Sweden a few years ago. This

¹⁹ The Whitechapel Fort was described in 1673 as "a mud wall called the Fort," and as standing at the western end of a parcel of land called Westheath, through which the great road leads from Aldgate to Mile-end." (License to build upon Westheath, issued to Lady Wentworth by "Chr. Wren Surveyor General"; Lyson's "*Environs*" iii, 447). Lyson's (*ib.* 474) gives the dimensions of this Fortress, which existed when he wrote (1794), as "329 feet in length at the base and 182 in breadth. The height above the level of the ground is about 25 feet." He adds "The east end remains very perfect; on the west side some houses have been built. The surface on the top, except where it has been dug away, is perfectly level."

building, a good brick structure, typical of the period, is now used for business purposes, and has been allowed to get into bad repair. The London Society have been making a very praiseworthy effort to secure the building and the surrounding garden for the public, but the generous benefactors whose sympathies they desired to enlist for this most excellent object have so far not come forward to the necessary extent.

The adjoining square, Well Close Square, was in formation about 1693-4. Previously it was "Well Close," an open green or space extending from Knockfergus (Cable Street) to Ratcliff Highway (St. George Street), and Morden and Lea's map of 1682 shows it thus with footpaths crossing from the one road to the other. In our State Papers is an entry under 1694 of the issue of a "warrant to the Solicitor or Attorney General to grant a license to Martin Lionfeld and Theocar Wegersloff, Norwegian merchants resident here, to erect a Danish church in a certain square or piece of ground formerly called Well Close, but now known by the name of Marine Square, within the liberty of the Tower of London." This "Danish church" was built in 1696 by Caius Gabriel Cibber, the sculptor. Lysons (*Environs*, ii, 427) describes it as an "oblong square" structure of brick, with a turret at its west end, and an inscription over the entrance: "*Templum Dano-Norwegicum intercessionem et munificentiam serenissimi Danorum Regis Christiani quinti erectum MDCXCVI.*" This church was recently displaced by the schools which now stand in the centre of the square. Hatton ("*New View*"), in 1707, includes the square in his list of streets, etc., as "Well Close square (by some called Marine square)" and describes it as "very near a Geometrical Square, whose Area is about $2\frac{3}{4}$ acres." "Marine Square" appears as an alternative name for some time after that, but it ultimately dropped out of use. Apparently there was a well here, and the adjacent "Well Street" helps to note its former existence. The Company of Parish Clerks, in their "*New Remarks of London*" (1732)

mention a pump in "Well Close" as then standing, as a boundary mark of the parishes of St. John Wapping and St. Mary, Whitechapel.²⁰ The curious reliefs on the fronts of some houses at the northern end of the eastern side of this square apparently date from c. 1750-80. At the southern end of this terrace, and set back from it, is a house of partly timber and plaster which may be a century older than these, possibly predating the formation of the square and of Well Street, which runs just beyond it.

Almost opposite the junction of Well Street and Cable Street is Leman Street—formed about 1690 and named from a man named Lemon or Lemmon. Its near end was, until about 1850, "White Lion Street."²¹ In the 18th century some "New Wells" of medicinal repute were discovered on its eastern side about 100 to 200 yards north of Cable Street; Well Yard marked their site long afterwards, and the railway sidings obliterated it. On the left hand (western) side of the street is Great Prescott²² Street, noted by Hatton in 1707-8 as "Prescot street, a spacious and regular built street on the S. side of the Tenter Ground in Goodmans fields. . . . Instead of signs, the houses here are distinguished by numbers, as the Stair Cases in the Inns of Court and Chancery."²³ Here resided Sir Cloudesley Shovel, Queen Anne's admiral, before his removal to Soho Square, and here, in 1758, "the first Magdalen Hospital was opened with eight inmates, all that

²⁰ The pump in Well Close is similarly mentioned in the Act of 5-6 William & Mary which made Wapping a separate parish—quoted in Newcourt's "Repertorium," 1708, i, 672.

²¹ Hatton, however, gives "Lemon" Street, as extending to Rosemary Lane (Cable Street), so the White Lion Street naming was a later innovation. To Hatton it was "a very spacious street," in 1707. Dr. Norman Moore (*Hist. St. Bartholomew's Hospital* ii, 231) suggests that the street may have been named from Sir John Leman, who bequeathed £100 to the hospital in 1632. Sir J. Leman was sheriff in 1606-7 and Mayor 1616-17.

²² Originally Prescott, or Pescod, Street.

²³ "New View of London," i, 65.

the Institute could then shelter.”²⁴ Few if any of the original houses now remain.

The name “Goodman’s Fields” dates back to the 16th century, and Stow gives a contemporary account of its origin : “Near adioyning to this Abbey (i.e. the Minories) on the South side thereof, was sometime a Farme belonging to the said Nunrie, at the which Farme I my selfe in my youth have fetched many a halfe pennie worth of Milke, and neuer had lesse than three Ale pints for a halfe-pennie in the Sommer, nor lesse then one Ale quart for a halfe pennie in the Winter, alwayes hote from the Kine, as the same was milked and strained. One Trolop, and afterwards Goodman, were the Farmers there, and had thirtie or fortie Kine to the paile. Goodmans sonne being heyre to his fathers purchase, let out the ground first for grazing of horse, and then for garden plots, and liued like a Gentleman thereby.”²⁵ The farmer, Goodman, must be the Rowland Goodman who, as Mr. Kingsford has pointed out, seems to have been a considerable farmer in the eastern suburbs temp. Hy. VIII, holding, in addition to this land, property in St. Botolph without Bishopsgate.²⁶ He died in 1544, when John Stow was 19. His fields here lay at the back (eastern side) of the Minories, and the present Goodman’s Yard probably marks the site of the farm and the cartway to the fields. They extended southwards across the site of Great Prescot Street to Chambers Street, eastward to Leman Street, northward to Gt. Alie²⁷ Street, and westward to Mansell Street, these five

²⁴ Peter Cunningham, F.S.A., “Handbook to London,” 1850, 409.

²⁵ “Survey” (Kingsford. ed.) i, 126.

²⁶ *ib.* ii, 288; and *Inq. Post Mortem*, London, i, 95-6. Later Goodmans of the Minories are described in the Registers of St. Botolph Aldgate, as “gentleman” and “Esquior” (Atkinson’s “St. Botolph, Aldgate,” p. 54).

²⁷ “Alie” is shortened and simplified from the original Ayliff or Ayloff—an obvious personal name.

streets being laid out on the respective edges of the fields, about 1680-90. After their formation, the land between them remained as a Tenter Ground,²⁸ and was finally covered by the present streets and houses—which include “Tenter St.” South, North, East and West—about 60 years ago. Goodman’s Fields had its theatre from 1729 into the 19th century, and in it, in 1741, David Garrick is said to have made his first appearance on a London stage.

THE ABBEY OF THE MINORIES.—The Franciscans, Friars Minor, Minorites, Begging Friars or Gray Friars, were founded about 1208 by Francis of Assisi; and they came to England 1219-20.

The Nuns of the order, or Minoresses, were instituted in 1212 by Francis for religious women; St. Clare of Assisi was the first admitted, and hence the names Claresses and Poor Clares. They were introduced into England 1291-3²⁹ by Blanche, Queen of Navarre, wife of Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, who was brother of Edward I. They were formally established in London by 1293, under which date the Patent Rolls record a “License for the alienation in mortmain by Edmund the King’s brother to the nuns of the order of Minors—who are being brought into England by his consort, Blanche, Queen of Navarre—of a plot of land in the parish of St. Botolph without Aldgate which he has by the gift of Master Thomas de Bredstrete.” The Convent was governed by an Abbess, and had the status of an Abbey.

The London Minoresses were not Poor Clares, because they were fairly well endowed with lands, tenements, and

²⁸ Tenter=a frame for stretching cloth. “Tenter Grounds,” or cloth workers’ places, were numerous about London in the 18th century, and the name survives in several districts.

²⁹ The date is usually given as 1293, but the Return “*Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliæ et Walliæ*,” authorised by Pope Nicholas IV, and made 1288-92, registers the new convent in connection with several properties.

rents in London and elsewhere, and several advowsons, and important privileges were granted them—e.g., in 1294-5 Pope Boniface VIII acquitted them of payments of Papal tithes and from fees for consecration, for sacred oil and sacraments, etc.; other concessions were granted by the King; and by the middle of the fourteenth century they were freed from all tallages and from both lay and clerical subsidies. Edward II's Queen Isabella was a friend and benefactor, and the Convent was much favoured by ladies of high rank with gifts and bequests, and by residence—for instance, Margaret Beauchamp, after the death of her husband, the Earl of Warwick, had authority from the Pope in 1398 to reside there with three matrons as long as she pleased. Thomas de Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, was a benefactor; his house adjoined the conventual church, and he was allowed to make a door between the two buildings so that he and his family could enter the church as they pleased; and one of his daughters became abbess.

About 1516 the convent buildings were destroyed by fire. The mayor, aldermen, and citizens of London contributed 200 marks besides the benefactions of private persons, but at the special request of Cardinal Wolsey to the Court of Common Council, it was decided in 1520 to give 100 marks to complete the building. The King also gave £200 at this time.

The Abbey was surrendered in 1538. The abbess received a pension of £40 per annum, 26 nuns from £1 6s. 8d. to £3 6s. 8d. per annum, and eight others (six of them lay sisters) were apparently unremunerated; the number of the sisterhood was then 35, and the net income £318. Its possessions included rents and farms in the London parishes of St. Mary-le-Bow, Allhallows Thames Street, St. Michael Crooked Lane, St. Botolph without Aldgate, St. Magnus, St. Martin Vintry, St. Nicholas Shambles, and St. Andrew Undershaft; messuages and shops in Whitechapel, co. Middlesex; the manor of Appuldurcomb in the Isle of

Wight; the manor of Woodley, co. Berks; lands called "Brekenox" in Cheshunt, co. Herts; and other properties.³⁰

The Convent buildings and precincts were granted to the Bishop of Bath and Wells in exchange for his house by the Strand, and for a few years the "great house," if not the whole precincts, was known as Bath Place. In 1548 the property returned to the Crown, and after several changes in tenancy, Ordnance Stores and workshops, etc., were installed about 1563. These were in operation when Stow wrote his Survey. The Crown ownership ended about 1673, when the property was sold into private hands.

Stow remarks that "there is a small parrish Church for inhabitants of the close, called S. Trinities." (i, 126). The parish, which is first mentioned in a will proved in 1557,³¹ represents the precincts of the Abbey, and the "close," I take it, was the open ground which became Haydon Square,³² and which has been nearly covered by the railway buildings and sidings. The church, which seems to have been the abbey church, Hatton tells us ("New View," ii, 53), after being "repaired at the charge of the Parish several times" during the 17th century, "and being very old, was in the year 1706 taken down and rebuilt from the Ground," and he gives a description and the dimensions of the new building, which we now know as the parish room of St. Botolph Aldgate. Some of the masonry of the older church, however, was preserved in the rebuilding.

³⁰ A fuller account of the Abbey is given in Rev. E. M. Tomlinson's "History of the Minories, London" (Smith, Elder and Co. 1907); and in the Victoria County History of London, i, 516-20. The latter also deals with Eastminster and the Hospital of St. Katherine.

³¹ See "Hist. of the Minories," p. 161. Mr. Tomlinson deals with the estate as a Royal "peculiar" and its privileges as a Liberty and their final extinction in 1894, and gives the history of the church (p. 241).

³² Named from Captain, afterwards Sir John Heydon, Lt.-Gen. of the Ordnance and Munitions 1627-42.