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THE WHITE HART INN, BISHOPSGATE STREET WITHOUT

From a drawing in the Soane Collection made by George Shepherd in 1810

THE "WHITE HART" INN, FROM A DRAWING BY
GEORGE SHEPHERD IN 1810.

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THE WHITE HART, BISHOPSGATE.

BY

C. W. F. GOSS, F.S.A.

EXACTLY a hundred years ago on the west side of Bishopsgate, a short distance from the site of the ancient city gate, and in a commanding position at the angle of the narrow thoroughfare then known as Old Bedlam, there stood one of the few remaining ancient specimens of architecture, designated the "White Hart" tavern, bearing upon its antiquated front the date 1480 under the centre bay of the second storey, the sign board carrying the name of William Morris, Proprietor.

The claim is made that the predecessor of the tavern dates back to 1246, coinciding with a promised gift of land for the foundation of the Priory of the Blessed Mary of Bethlehem. Be that as it may, its history as an inn can be of little less antiquity than that of the "Tabard," the lodging house of the feast-loving Chaucer and the Canterbury pilgrims; or that of the "Boar's Head" in Eastcheap, the rendezvous of Prince Henry and his lewd companions.

Could a twentieth century visitor to "thys most aunciente and honorabil citie," standing opposite the entrance to Liverpool Street, be transplanted back to the days of Henry III, at which period this story opens, and behold Bishopsgate without the city wall, with low and scattered houses in its wide, if irregular highway; the rudely constructed parish church with its wooden steeple at the west end, and dwelling-houses between it and the street; the massive city wall skirting the broad city ditch a few yards distant, spanned by a bridge leading to the city; its unpaved street with a gutter or shallow ditch in the centre; or by turning to the open moor on the north, where in the summer the deer

abounded, becoming a vast lake in the winter, could he behold the very few plots of cultivated land that extended to the villages of Shoredych, Hogsden and Yseldon, or the then newly-erected Hospital of St. Mary Spyttell and the earlier founded Augustinian Convent of Halliwell; would this same visitor to this great and opulent city, recognise in that rude scene the Bishopsgate of to-day, with its gigantic railway station and its leviathan business houses?

The dwelling houses, which existed outside the wall during the reign of Henry III, were few and widely apart, and mainly consisted of one storey, faced with plaster whitewashed, each having a projecting "solar" or upper room with unglazed window openings and a gable roof, the ground floor rooms being about 8 or 9 ft. high, with a large undercroft. There may have been in the street four or five shops with permanent open fronts, and perhaps a couple of brewhouses, the dwelling houses being owned or occupied by such men as Robert de Poleter (Poulterer), John de Honilane, father of Alderman Richard de Honilane, Richard Pinchon, Roger Duk (Duci), Richard de Paris, Thomas de Bungeye le Coureyur, or William de Hundesdich, while nearly opposite the Church of St. Botolph, there were the Stonehouse of Alderman Nicholas Bat in 1249, and the great brewhouse, which subsequently became the "Dolphin," successively occupied by Walter and Henry de Lyme Brenner, Colestre of Walethon and Thomas Polle, between the years 1230-64, and a cottage, afterwards bequeathed to the Prior and Brethren of the Bethlehem Hospital, and which in later years became the Staple Hall for the collection of duties. Close by was the "capital mansion" of Geoffrey de Hundesdich or his father, and no doubt, Sir Walter de Essex, who owned several houses in Bishopsgate without the City, lived in a more important house in the same street. Such then was the quaint picture this long street presented in the thirteenth century.

On the site of the White Hart Tavern, with which we propose to deal presently, there probably stood a still more imposing edifice—a mansion of considerable magnitude for the thirteenth century—admirably well situated as the country residence of Sheriff and Alderman Simon Fitz Mary, a man of wealth and influence, both in the city and at court, who not only owned a large estate in Bishopsgate, but also one of considerable extent in Shoreditch. He also owned land in the parish of St. Michael, Queenhithe, for he granted to Alan Balun, his nephew, eight shilling's worth of rent from land, extending from Bread Street, to the corner of Sporunes Lane [Huggin Lane], *circa* 1240.¹

In the year 1246, Lord Godfrey, chaplain to Pope Innocent IV, and Bishop-elect of Bethlehem, with his canons, came to England at the instigation of the Pope, to appeal for funds towards the founding of a monastery for the benefit of the poor, and at the same time to visit the benefice he held near Rugby. The appeal seemingly met with some sympathy in one quarter, for after learning the purpose of Godfrey's presence in England, as well as the terms of the Pope's letter, and because of the "singular and especial devotion" which he had "towards the Church of the glorious Virgin Mary of Bethlehem," Fitz Mary promised to give to Godfrey all his land situate in the parish of St. Botolph without Bishopsgate, for the purpose of building thereon a Priory Church and for instituting a brotherhood, to consist of a prior, canons, brethren and sisters of the order of "S. Mariæ de Bethlehem," to celebrate masses for the souls of himself, of his friends and all Christian dead; to offer shelter to the poor; and especially for the reception and entertainment of the Bishop of St. Mary Bethlehem, the mother Church, whenever he should come to London. The members of the brotherhood were to profess the rule and order of the Church, at all times to wear the badge of the star of Bethlehem

¹ Moore's *History of St. Bartholomew's Hospital*, Vol. I, pp. 464-5.

upon their cloaks and mantles, and be subject to the visitation and correction of the Bishop.

The charter, confirming the gift, sets forth the donor's religious reasons for assigning his estate to an alien church in Palestine, and describes the property as:—

“All that land of mine which I possess in the parish of St. Botolph without Bisshopesgate, London: namely whatsoever I have there, or whatsoever I ought to have there, in houses, gardens, fish ponds, ditches, pits, and all their appurtenances included within the bounds, the which extend in length from the King's way on the east to the ditch on the west called Depediche; and in breadth towards the land which was Radulphi Dunnyng's on the north, to the land of the church of St. Botolph on the south.”

Amongst the score or so of names of those who witnessed the deed of gift in October, 1247, were Peter Fitz Alan, Mayor of London, and Sheriff Nicholas Bat, Alderman for Bishopsgate.

Some portion of the land so granted formed part of the site of a Roman cemetery or burial ground, and the Depediche, mentioned in the grant, would exactly correspond with the line of the present New Broad Street, while the boundary of Dunnyng's land on the north would be some 330 feet distant from the north side of the present Liverpool Street. The extent of the land from the King's way to Depediche would approximate 480 feet, and the breadth, from the Church to Dunnyng's boundary, varied from 480 to 500 feet, about $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres in all.

That there existed a mansion of some considerable importance at the time of the grant is evident, for had the land been clear of a dwelling house, it is reasonable to assume that the prior and brethren would have erected thereon some part of the monastic buildings, to face the King's Way—Bishopsgate—leading from the city gate to Essex and the north, whereas the prior did not begin to erect any part of the monastic house for some years, for the fraternity, wearing the eight-pointed star surrounding a circle of sky blue, was not fully established at Bishopsgate until about 1257, in which

year the brethren came to England in such numbers, that accommodation could not be found for all of them in Bishopsgate, so that they acquired a house at Cambridge for the remainder.

It is quite conceivable that in his gift, Fitz Mary bequeathed his own mansion for the immediate accommodation of those the foundation charter was designed to benefit, and so soon as Godfrey accepted and entered into possession of the property, it is presumed that the spacious rooms, with their rudely carved rafters, wainscoted walls and ponderous oaken tables, were converted into a guest house, and occupied by the prior and brethren, pending the erection of the Priory building.

No doubt it was shortly put to another use, that of providing accommodation or refreshment for late arrivals in London, when the city gate would be closed at sunset, after the curfew had pealed forth its authoritative clang; or for pilgrims from distant parts, who, following a worthy canon to the reception hall, would greet the assembled brethren with "Good even to ye holy men, we pray your charity to give us shelter for the night," and would be regaled with venison, salmon, lampreys wastel-bread and wastel-cake by the goodly company of canons and brethren in their cassocks.

Public inns were so rare, that it was customary to have such guest houses belonging to, or adjoining, monastic buildings for the entertainment of travellers, and Simon Fitz Mary's mansion was certainly situate close to the spot upon which, at a later date, was built the priory gatehouse, spanning a narrow lane, afterwards denominated Old Bedlam, and immediately opposite the stone cross in the middle of Bishopsgate. At the present day, the centre of Bishopsgate entrance to Liverpool Street marks the spot upon which the ancient gatehouse stood.

The mansion had a frontage of 52 feet or more, extending towards the south from the narrow lane opposite the stone cross, nearly to the alley, known at a

later date as Alderman's Walk, on the north side of St. Botolph's Church, and was, unquestionably, the residence of some opulent merchant. The dimensions of the building as well as the civic arms that formerly appeared on the front of it lends support to the contention that Fitz Mary, who was an influential sheriff of London, had resided there.

It is inconceivable that a structure so large and so elegant was originally erected for any purpose other than that of a country mansion, for it would be difficult to find a record of any thirteenth century tradesman's place of business so large an establishment, and as a tavern it would have been without an equal in those early days. Indeed at the time the mansion was erected, probably before 1233, there would have been no taverns in Bishopsgate, for in the year 1365 there was a "Writ to the Mayor and Sheriffs, to the effect that taverners were to be allowed to sell sweet wines by wholesale, notwithstanding an ordinance by the King and his Council, that all taverns, where sweet wines were sold by retail in the city and suburbs, were to be taken into the hands of the Mayor and Chamberlain, and that there should only be three taverns appointed for such sale, viz. :—one in Chepe,¹ another in Lumbardstrete,² and another in Walbroke³ where the wines were to be sold at a price fixed by the Mayor and Chamberlain . . . and the profits devoted to the repair and cleaning of the walls, ditches, etc. of the city."⁴

On the 26th August in the same year, a lease was granted "to Richard Lyouns, 'vynter' of the three taverns assigned for the sale of sweet wines . . . for a term of ten years at an annual rent of £200."

It does not appear that the prior and brethren of the hospital made much progress with the work of building, beyond erecting a chapel or oratory, which is mentioned in a bull of Clement IV during the last year he occupied

¹ The "Mitre."?

² "Pope's Head."?

³ "King's Head."?

⁴ Cal. Letter Books, G, pp. 192-3.

the papal throne, and a few years later there was erected the priory gateway with a "solar" or room over it, afterwards known as Bedlam Gate. This neglect to develop the estate may have been due to the lack of funds, for the brethren devoted much time in roaming about the country begging alms, for which object they held a licence of protection, and no doubt the fraternity, at a later date, was compelled to sell plots of land to raise money for maintenance of the brethren.

Still later, in August, 1330, the procurator-general of the order—Friar William de Banham—leased and farmed out to Richard de Swanlond for 11 years, a tenement called "de Bethlehem" with the houses, shops, gardens and ponds, de Banham reserving for the use of himself and brethren a stable and 2 rooms, one of them over the gateway. Friar William also leased to Swanlond the Staple Hall,¹ opposite the gate, together with the adjoining land, which the fraternity had acquired most likely as a bequest, but certainly not by purchase.

In 1331 John le Masliner gave his brother James, who was one of the Canons, various rents for the use of the Priory; but the recorded benefactions appear to have been very few, and the brethren were so poor, that in 1346 "at the request of John Matheu, called 'de Norton,' master of the house and order of the Military Brethren of St. Mary of Bethlehem . . . and the brethren of the same, the said house and order were taken under the protection and patronage of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London."² In 1349 John de Foxton gave a tenement to the Prior and Convent. Beyond these the foundation received little support, until in 1361 John Nasyng, brewer, made a bequest "towards the new work of the Church of St. Mary de Bethlem."

On the death of John de Norton in 1350, William de Greyngnam, a serjeant was "ordered to take the house

¹ Cal. Letter Books, E, p. 251. ² Cal. of Letter Books, F, p. 154.

into the city's hands, and to answer to the chamberlain for its issues."¹ This clearly shows that the city enjoyed the patronage of the hospital.

In a letter of the Mayor and Aldermen to Master Roger de Fretone, dated the 10th March, 1366, it is recorded that the Bishop of Bethlehem, who was then abroad, had decided to farm out the lands and the tenements thereon to the highest bidder, to the great prejudice of the hospital, inasmuch as the brethren "had commenced a great work of a chapel there, which work they would be unable to accomplish and to carry out successfully without the charitable assistance of the Mayor and Aldermen."²

This then is conclusive evidence that as late as the year 1366, the building of the chapel had not been completed, nor indeed does it appear that the building of the principal monastic house or hospital had been attempted, for in his will dated 1365, Richard de Walsted left "40s. to the fabric of St. Mary de Bedleem, to be paid when the building is commenced."

A little more than a century and a quarter after Fitz Mary's grant for the building of a priory, in which masses were to be said for his soul, such parts of it as had been built were seized by Edward III in 1375 as an alien priory,³ and so it lost its monastic character, Thomas de Thormeston being the prior in that year. Two years later it became a hospital and asylum, in which year mention is made of insane patients being transferred to Bedlam from the "Stonehouse" at Charing Cross. No longer do we hear of prior, canons, brethren and sisters; but simply master of the hospital, few, if any of them being ecclesiastics.

On November 22, 1388, Robert Lincoln, the King's clerk, was granted for life "the custody of the Hospital of St. Mary, Bethdelem, without Bisshopgate."⁴ The

¹ Cal. of Letter Books, F, p. 163.

² Cal. of Letters from the Mayor and Corporation, II, 16.

³ *History of Bethlehem Hospital*, by Rev. E. G. O'Donoghue.

⁴ Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1388.

mayor and citizens, however, refused at first to induct Lincoln, and a "writ *pluries* to the Sheriffs to induct Lyncoln into the office of Keeper of the house or hospital of St. Mary de Bethdelem" elicited a reply to the effect "that the house was full, John Gardiner, clerk, having been appointed Keeper [1381] . . . inasmuch as the patronage thereof appertained to the mayor and citizens"¹; but it would appear the city had to give way, for we find Lincoln acting as master until 1400. In October, 1392, Lincoln was granted "for life without rent, a tenement called the 'Dragoun-on-the-Hope,' in the Parish of St. Botolph-without-Bisshopesgate,"² and upon surrendering that property in the following February, he was granted "all the lands and tenements of which John Popyll died seised in the parish of St. Botolph . . . escheated to the King because the said John Popyll killed one John Birde."³

As master, Lincoln, was succeeded by Robert Dale 1400, Edward Atherton 1437, John Arundel 1457, Thomas Hervy 1459, John Browne 1459, John Smeathe 1471, John Davyson 1480.

In the second year of the fifteenth century, King Henry IV instituted an investigation into the affairs of the Hospital, and he commissioned John Chiterne and John Kyngton to make a visit of inquiry "as the King understands that there are divers defects in the houses and other buildings and the books, vestments and other ornaments, by the negligence of the masters or wardens, and its lands, possessions and goods have been dissipated, and divine services, hospitalities and other charges of piety diminished,"⁴ and further, to enquire as to the extent of the boundaries then existing. The commissioners reported that while there was evidence of the existence in earlier times of certain tenements—a house and buildings, with other possessions—they had been alienated and disposed of, and further,

¹ Cal. Letter Books, H, p. 338.

² Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1392.

³ Cal. Pat. Rolls, 1393.

⁴ Close Rolls, 4 Henry IV.

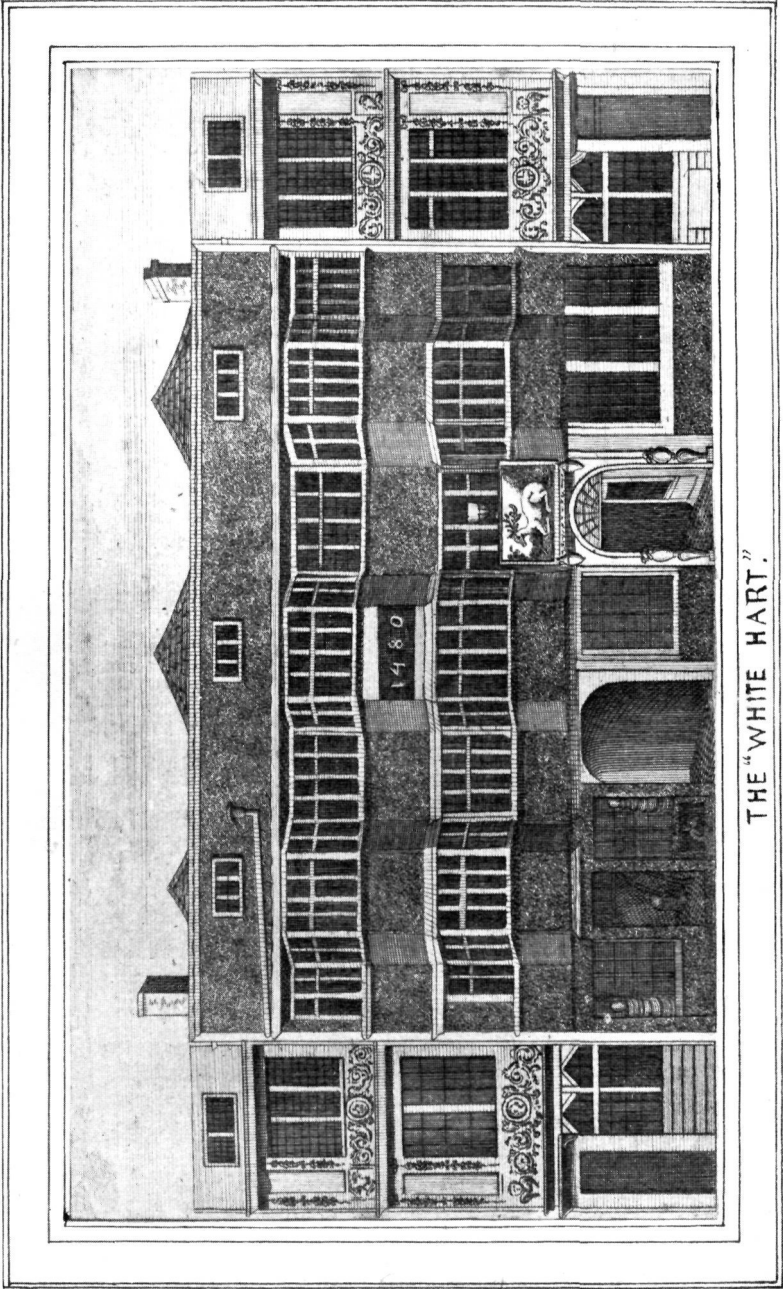
that no brethren or sisters wearing the customary habit of the order of Bethlehem, were then to be found on the land given by Simon Fitz Mary; but that instead of a prior, who, up to the year 1375, managed the affairs of the 1246 foundation, only a master of the reformed hospital was in charge, and he was not wearing the customary mantle, bearing the star, as in former times.¹

In what particular guise the structure appeared—first as mansion and later as hospital guest house—between the years 1246 and 1480, there is no record; but it is highly probable that shortly after the property of the hospital had been seized by Edward III in 1375, the fraternity dispersed, some of the brethren no doubt proceeding to the priory at Clamecy in France, where the Bishop of Bethlehem officially resided, and that during the early years of the reign of Richard II, Fitz Mary's former mansion was acquired and converted into the "fayre inne," so called by Stow in his *Survey* of 1598, the purchaser adopting for his sign a white hart, the favourite badge of King Richard, while the date 1480, which up to the year 1829 appeared upon the front of the house, may have been the date of its rebuilding.

In the *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, Dean Stanley writes: "The great northern entrance known as Solomon's Porch, was rebuilt in Richard's time, and once contained his well-known badge of the White Hart. From the popularity of Richard II, the badge was adopted by his followers with singular tenacity." The badge of Richard was not only worn by all his courtiers and adherents, but even the livery of the servants attached to the King's household was embroidered with a white hart with the golden chain or collar, probably to commemorate the killing of one of the fabulous white harts or hinds by an ancestor of his mother, Joan of Kent, whose cognizance was a white hind.

On the other hand, the proximity of the White Hart

¹ *Monasticon Anglicanum*, Vol. VI, pt. ii.



THE "WHITE HART."

THE "WHITE HART" INN AS IT APPEARED IN 1787.

Inn to the gate of Bedlam, which had become a hospital for keeping and curing lunatics, suggests the possibility of the sign of the hart having been chosen for its supposed magic virtues, for in a little book on magic charms by Ludovico Dolce, published at Venice in 1565, it is stated that the figure of a hart incised or sculptured on stone, has the virtue of healing and freeing lunatics and frenzied people.

In the early years of the sixteenth century, there were erected two very ornate dwelling houses—one on the north side of the Inn, abutting on the Priory Gate, and another on the south of it, adjoining the alley on the north of the Church, both houses having a frontage of nearly 19 feet. They were probably built by William Marowe or Marrow, who, as it appears from his will, possessed three messuages without Bishopsgate, and, as will be presently shown, one of them was called by the sign of the "White Hart." These messuages, at the death of William Marowe, passed to his son Thomas. The latter died on the 2nd September, 1538, and in an inquisition taken at Guildhall on the 21st August, 1539, the said Thomas "was seised in fee-tail of . . . 3 messuages without Busshoppysgate, in the parish of St. Botolph,"¹ which property passed to his son Thomas, who, at that date was 22 years of age. This second Thomas married Alice, the daughter of Richard Harriyounge, Provost of the Mint, in the Tower of London, and shortly after the marriage, Harriyounge purchased from his son-in-law, Thomas Marrow, the same three messuages, for the sum of £140, with a condition that such sum of money should be laid out for the education of their son Samuel, "to bring him up in good lernynge to be bred up in one of the Inns or Courts of Laws."

Richard Harriyounge was at this time residing in a "great house" in Hoxton, and when he died in September, 1545, he left two of the tenements to his grandson, as is shown by the terms of his will dated the 26th

¹ Inq. p.m. 31 Henry VIII, No. 110.

August, 1545, and witnessed by Sir Griffith Williams, Vicar of Shoreditch, and others. The probate of the will bears date 5th September, 1545:—

“I Richard Harriyounge of Hogsden in the parish of St. Leonard Shorediche . . . give to Samuel Marrowe the sonne of my daughter Alice Marrowe, my two tenements with the lands adjoining, situate without Bishopsgate, one known by the signe of the white Hart and in possession of John Gath, citizen and cloth-worker, and the other tenement adjoining in possession of Agnes Shor, widow”;

but in the will it is not stated whether the adjoining tenement was on the south of the Inn or that abutting on the gatehouse on the north.

The Inn was subsequently purchased by one James Batte of Burton, Lonsdale, Yorkshire. The purchase had been effected before 1570, for in that year, Batte and Jane his wife, daughter and sole heiress of Gilbert Yate, leased the property to Roger Robynson for 80 years at £3 6s. 8d. per annum:—

“All that theire capitall or Mancion house or Inne set lyinge and beinge in the parishe of sainte Buttolphe withowte Busshopp Gate of London comenly called or knowne by the name or signe of Whyte harte withowte Bushoppgate. And also on gardyne to the same belonginge and also all yardes and other edifyces and buildinges with all and singular thappurtenaunces what so ever to the seyd Mancyon house or Inne belonginge or in any wise apperteaninge.”¹

It would appear that Roger Robynson shortly afterwards purchased the freehold, and considerably added to the estate, for it will be seen that in Robynson's will set out below, there is mention of property reaching westward as far as the “ditch of la more,” and up to the garden of Bethlehem. This is the first mention of the extension of the estate, for previous records refer only to the mansion or inn and one garden.

According to the *Inquisitiones post mortem*, 20th September, 1583,

“Roger Robynson was seised in his demesne as of fee of all that capital house or mansion or Inn called by the name of the White Hart now in the tenure of Matthew Park . . . lying in the parish

¹ Anc. Deeds, A 5746.

of St. Botolph without Bisshoppes Gate, London, with all the stables, yards, rooms, etc., to the said mansion house belonging, also one garden to the said mansion adjoining, which said premises lie between the cemetery of the said parish Church of St. Botolph on the south, the gate or entry of the late house of the Blessed Mary of *Bethlehem* on the north and extend from the High Street towards the east up to the garden of *Bethlehem*, and the ditch of *la more* towards the west, all which premises the said Roger Robynson lately purchased to him and his heirs of James Batte of Burton."

This extension towards "*la more*" ditch in the west would imply that the White Hart property was now considerable, for while Fitz Mary's grant extended only to *Depediche*--480 ft. from Bishopsgate Street front--which is clearly defined on Ralph Agas' map, *circa* 1560-70, and corresponds with the northern arm of New Broad Street of to-day, the boundary of the estate in Robynson's time, 1582, appears to have reached to a line corresponding with the existing Blomfield Street, along which formerly flowed the eastern branch of the Walbrook, entering under the city wall postern, afterwards called "*Little Moorgate*" and beneath Carpenters' Hall, with the moor on the western side of the then sluggish watercourse, giving a depth of 850 ft. from Bishopsgate Street.

In Agas' map, however, Moorfields is indicated as reaching to *Depediche*, so that it would appear that the moor had been encroached upon about the time at which the map was prepared, and *Depediche* filled in, for in 1569, the Mayor, Sir Thomas Roe, caused to be enclosed, part of the former Moorfields for a burial ground, called "*New Churchyard near Bethelam*," and it is quite probable that Robynson also acquired the plot as indicated in the Inquisition referred to, unless "*the ditch of la more towards the west*" was another name for *Depediche*, which is not borne out by any records the writer has consulted.

Robynson had by will dated the 30 March, 1582, bequeathed the said mansion house and other, the premises to his wife Alice and his nephew Mark Sutton,

executor, with the expressed wish that his wife "will be good and natural to her children," the eldest son Polus Robynson being then only 9 years of age.

Some few years later Alice Robynson married again, and while the freehold of the inn still remained with her, that of the house adjoining it on the north had passed to her daughter, who had become the wife of Francis Merryll or Merrell, and the house on the south of the inn had been previously acquired by Arthur Lee, tallow chandler:—

In 1595, Arthur Lee—

'long before and at the time of his death was seised in his demesne as of fee of one tenement, with all the houses buildings and gardens thereto belonging lying in the parish of St. Botolph without Bishoppesgate and abutting upon the cemetery there towards the south; the tenement called the White Hart on the north, formerly in the tenure of Thomas Armestronge and now or late in that of John Strawe."

In his will dated the 30 April, 1594, he gave to Cuthbert Lee his son "for ever my tenement in the parish of St. Botolphe without Bishopsgate now or late in the tenure of John Strawe."¹

Three years after the date of Lee's will, in 1597, "William Gule of Hadley, Suffolk, and Alice his wife, widow of Roger Robynson, late goldsmith," granted a lease of the Inn to Thomas Graye, cordwainer, for a term of 21 years, he already having obtained a lease of the house adjoining it on the north from Francis Merrell for a similar period.

John Stow, the historian, who at one time resided close by, and who may frequently have visited the inn, writes of it in the year 1598:—

"next vnto the parish church of S. Buttolph, is a fayre Inne, for the receipt of traouellers; then a Hospitall of S. Mary of Bethlehem founded by Simon Fitz Mary one of the Sheriffes of London in the yeare 1246."

By the year 1614, Merrell and his wife had become the freeholders of the inn for we find that:—

¹ Inq.p.m., Vol. III, p. 220.

“Frauncis Merryll, draper, and Alice his wife, daughter of Roger Robinson, goldsmith, leased to Robert Valence, innholder, the Inn called the White Hart, for the term of 51 years.”¹

Three years later there is a record, 20th October, 15 James I (1617), of a general release from Francis Merrell to Robert Valence; and it would appear that the latter then leased the premises to Dominic Turner, during whose tenancy the inn was merged into a tavern, for it is recorded that on the 15th July, 1644, it was ordered that “Dominic Turner to have £10 a year abated on the rent of £50 for the White Hart Tavern, Bishopsgate, held of Robert Valence of Bishopsgate Ward and to pay his arrears forthwith.”²

Dominic Turner died 30th July, 1652, and the next occupant of the tavern, as it had now become, is shown by an inscription, which appears on a token:—

Ob.—AT. THE. WHITE. HART—A hart lodged
Rev.—AT. BEDLAM. GATE. 1657—E. E. K.³

but the writer has not been able to identify the issuer of the token.

It was probably during the period that E. E. K. occupied the premises in June, 1663, that “some desperate persons encouraged by a vision appearing to one of the disaffected, plotted to kill the King and Royal family within a month.” Peter Crabb, writing to Secretary Bennet, begged that the King would be “very careful and especially to beware of Scotland,” and hoped “that some faithful man may meet him on Thursday at the White Hart Tavern without Bishopsgate to hear more.” Next we find an inscription on an undated token—

Ob.—WILL. BENET. AT. Y^e WHITE = A hart lodged
Rev.—WITHOVT. BISHOPS. GATE = HIS HALF PENY.⁴

By the kindness of Dr. Kenneth Rogers, who has made

¹ Hustings Roll, 291/46.

² Cal. Com^{te} for Advance of Money, 1642-56.

³ Williamson's *Trade Tokens*.

⁴ *Idem*.

an extensive study of the inns and taverns of London, we are enabled to arrive at the approximate date at which Benet occupied the "White Hart," for he informs the writer that in the Hearth or Chimney Tax list of 1668,¹ William Bennet was assessed on the considerable number of 18 hearths, and that his name occurs near the end of the list devoted to the parish of St. Botolph, without Bishopsgate. Since the names are arranged to run up the east side of the street, beginning at the gate, and to return down the west side, it is presumptive evidence that the assessment was made in respect of the "White Hart," of which Bennet was the tenant or proprietor.

A careful search has failed to discover the name of any person occupying the tavern for the next eighty years.

Seemingly much of the property had been disposed of previous to the year 1614, for although Merrell's lease to Robert Valence would not expire until 1665, Faithorne's Map of London, prepared before 1650, shows that several houses and other buildings had been erected on the gardens at the rear of the tavern, while Depediche had disappeared entirely. In 1677, as may be seen upon an examination of Ogilby and Morgan's map, nearly the whole of the former estate, up to the present Blomfield Street, had been covered with tenements, showing only a narrow alley, leading from the court yard to a small garden plot at the rear.

Bishopsgate Street was ever famous for its inns and taverns in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and, although few in number, they were both large and respectable, and frequented by many of the nobility of the period. For the better government of the city it was decreed in the middle of the sixteenth century that the number of taverns in London should be limited to 40; but the ever-growing population of the city called for an increase in the number of houses of refreshment

¹ *P.R.O. Subsidies 147/617.*

in the following century. So rapidly did they spring up, that in a letter from the Lords of the Council, dated the 10th July, 1612, it was stated "that there is almost no house of receipt, or that hath a back door, but when it cometh to be let, it is taken for a tavern. . . . It was the more scandalous, since the best houses, and such as were fit for the receipt of ambassadors or persons of the best quality, were caught up, to be converted into taverns."¹ It was shown that between 1612 and 1633, 61 taverns had been erected in the city, and a further letter dated 1633, "with respect to the abuses, owing to the excessive number of taverns, and the immoderate prices of provisions in hostleries,"² elicited the information that in that year there were 211 taverns in the City and Liberties, of which number there were eleven in the ward of Bishopsgate, all kept by freemen.

At this time, the population of Bishopsgate had reached such proportions, that it was difficult to find accommodation for the invaders, and not only were many of the houses divided into tenements; but a large number of small tenements were erected on the available land. The growth was largely due to the number of foreigners who favoured the district, and although it was 50 years before the Edict of Nantes, yet in the year 1635, there were no less than 873 foreigners living in Bishopsgate parish, most of whom were weavers, who shortly formed a colony in the neighbourhood of Spitalfields.

The number of taverns continued to grow to such an extent that in the eighteenth century the highway from the Borough to Norton Folgate, and particularly Bishopsgate Street, outside the gate, was literally lined with houses of call, while between Lombard Street and Bishopsgate, including Threadneedle Street, there were no less than 33 inns, taverns, coaching houses and coffee houses, which not only lodged travellers, but were the

¹ *Remembrancia*, 1579-1664, p. 540-1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 547.

rendezvous of city merchants and their friends after business hours.

The "White Hart" was not only noted as a coaching house; but it also well maintained its popularity as a tavern, and no doubt, for quantity and quality of sweet wines consumed, it compared very favourably with the "Crown" in Threadneedle Street, where, according to Timbs' *Club Life*, it was not unusual to draw a butt or pipe of mountain wine containing 120 gallons, in gills during the morning. These gills of wine were taken with wormwood bitters to stimulate appetite and "dumplings" or "dampers" to repress it. In Pepys' Diary under date 25 February, 1663, there is an entry "Up and drinking a draft of wormwood wine with Sir W. Batten at the Steelyard."

Vast numbers of stage coaches, waggons, chaises and carriages passed through Bishopsgate Street at this period. Travellers and carriers arriving near the city after the gates had been closed, or those who for other reasons desired to remain outside the city wall until the morning, would naturally put up at one of the galleried inns, or taverns near the city gate, and the "White Hart" was esteemed to be one of the most important taverns at that time, in the eastern part of the city. While those who travelled from Kent would put up for the night at the "Tabard" in the Borough or other adjacent inn, so persons coming from the north and from the eastern counties would most likely favour the "White Hart" for hospitality, and to those arriving in the city by coach, the house would, by virtue of its proximity to the gate, have great attraction.

Here would be found small private rooms, where the visitors not only took their meals, but transacted all manner of business, and if the food dispensed was good and savoury, the wine strong, the feather beds deep and heavily curtained, the bedrooms were certainly cold and draughty, for the doors opened on unprotected galleries; but apparently they were comfortable enough

for travellers in former days, who found within its otherwise homely walls the social intercourse they needed after their travels, and "mine host" would become the personal friend of many of the visitors.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the "White Hart" tavern was at the height of its prosperity. It was the general meeting place of literary men of the neighbourhood and the rendezvous of politicians and traders, and even noblemen visited it.

Dr. Johnson, who lorded it in Fleet Street, had a high appreciation of the benefits of the tavern. "There is nothing," he said, "which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern."

The "White Hart" was the local club house of the time and, whatever the disadvantages may have been, there was a degree of cosiness and cheerfulness about it. It was the busy man's recreation, the melancholy man's sanctuary and the stranger's welcome. To sit every evening among a group of men who seemed never sad, never oppressed, attracted all men alike.

Here men came to make merry and to make friends. Here too professors of law, medicine, art, literature and commerce met their clients—the architect to submit his plans and estimates, the lawyer to execute conveyances, the doctor to prescribe for ailing persons—and over a bottle of sweet wine, accounts were settled and bargains concluded, while publishers either refused or accepted material for publication. Not only was almost every kind of business transacted here, but it was the rendezvous of the rollicking and choice spirits of the city and youths of gifts and graces—

"Learned in the arts of riding, fencing, gunnery,

And how to scale a fortress, or a nunnery."

It should be remembered that in those early days, the taverns were resorts far superior to the public houses that have taken their place, and the taverners, in many cases, were men of some social standing and repute.

Pepys must have visited most of the London taverns of his day, and although it is not recorded that he actually paid a visit to the "White Hart" to sample a glass of wormwood, yet one might hazard a guess that he did so. In any event, he most certainly made calls at the "Dolphin" immediately opposite, for in his Diary, 14th September, 1663, Vol. III, p. 278, we find: "After setting everything at my office and at home in order, by coach to Bishop's Gate, it being a very promising fair day. There at the Dolphin we met my uncle Thomas."

It is conceivable that the inn was also visited by two 16th-17th century dramatists—Thomas Dekker, remarkable for his fertility, and John Webster, full of gloomy dramatic power, but who on occasions was capable of touches of profound sentiment, and for whom Bedlam may have provided material for some of his writings. In a joint work published in 1607, entitled *North-Ward Hoe*, these two dramatists give a picture of gentlemen in riding dress and booted, about to journey to Ware, passing through Bishopsgate to fetch their horses, which they had left at the "Dolphin" Inn, immediately opposite the "White Hart":—

"ACT IV, SCENE III

BELLAMONT. 'Shall's to horse? here's a tickler: heigh, to horse!'

MAYBERRY. 'Come, switch, and spurs! let's mount our chevals: merry, quoth a.'

BELLAMONT. 'Stay, yonder's the Dolphin without Bishop's-gate where our horses are at rack and manger, and we are going past it. Come, cross over: and what place is this?'

MAYBERRY. 'Bedlam, is't not?'

BELLAMONT. 'Where the madmen are. I never was amongst them: as you love me, gentlemen, let's see what Greeks are within.'

SCENE IV.

The Madhouse. Enter Bellamont and the rest.

MAYBERRY. 'Save you, Sir: may we see some of your mad folks? do you keep 'em?'

FULLMOON. 'Yes!'

BELLAMONT. 'Pray bestow your name, sir, upon us.'

FULLMOON. 'My name is Fullmoon.'

BELLAMONT. 'You well deserve this office, good master Fullmoon: and what madcaps have you in your house?'

FULLMOON. 'Divers . . . a mad musician, a bawd,' etc."

During its occupancy by Richard and Hannah Munday between the years 1750 and 1769, the tavern was still quite a picturesque three-gabled rambling half-timber structure, with a dwelling house both on the north and the south. It consisted of three storeys above the ground floor, with a quaint range of window-lights in the form of three broad bays on the first and second, stretching the whole length of the building, the central one bearing the date 1480. The overhanging or over-sailing attic floor had a window in three divisions immediately over each of the bays, and in style it was similar to the houses of Staple Inn, Holborn.

The under part of the windows on the first and second storeys of the two adjoining houses was richly ornamented in stucco, centred with the city arms in shields, with grotesques and profiles in medallions on either side, and long panels surrounded by clusters of fruit at the side of the windows on both storeys. The house on the north extended as far as the Gatehouse, which formerly stood in the centre of the entrance to Liverpool Street out of Bishopsgate Street, and that on the south extended as far as Alderman's Walk, giving a total frontage of about 90 ft. Alderman's Walk led to a large mansion and garden belonging to Francis Dashwood, a Turkey merchant, and Alderman of Walbrook Ward in 1658.

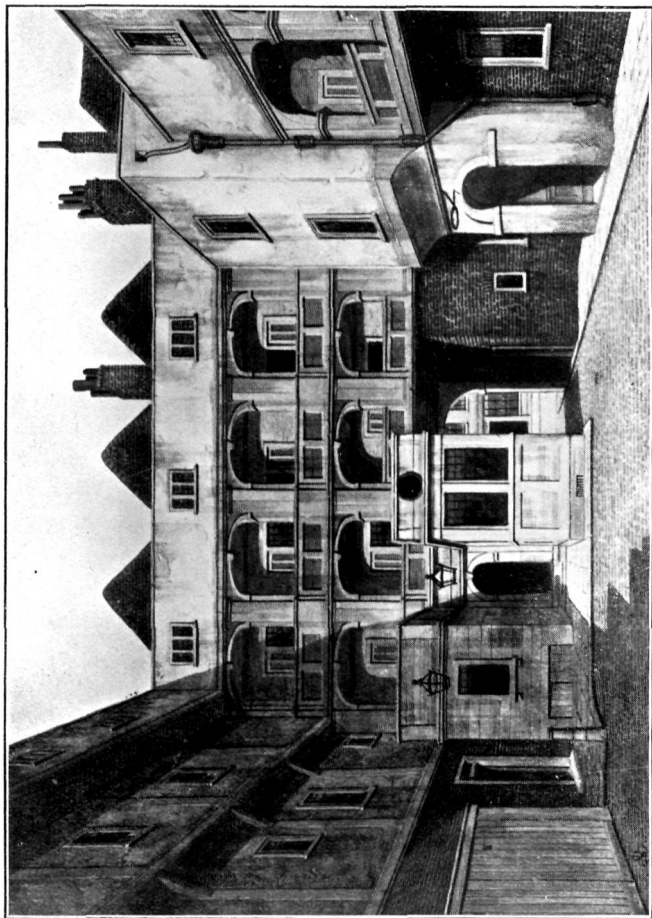
The fine projecting doorway of the tavern, which existed until the latter part of the eighteenth century, had two large pillars, profusely adorned with carved grapes, supporting a canopy, and was situated between the second and third bays towards the north, while between the first and second bays towards the south

was the archway, the principal and carriage entrance to the court yard, which in part was taken for the layout of what is now known as White Hart Court.

In common with similar inns, the cobbled-stone open court yard, approached through the low archway referred to, was surrounded on three sides with balconies or galleries, fenced with wooden balustrades, and lined with guests' rooms. These balustraded galleries served two purposes—one being for access to the rooms, the other as a convenient place for spectators to witness the merry masques or plays by our early dramatists, at a time when the stage was in its infancy, such as those performed at the "*Bull*" and "*Four Swans*" close by.

Would that the writer possessed that magic pen, to give in bright and vivid colouring, the gay and lively scenes that might have been witnessed in the bustling court yard of the "*fayre Inne*." Would it, however, be difficult to picture the beautiful women leaning over the antique open woodwork galleries of the open court yard, or those seated on the roomy landing, peeping through the old bannisters, to view the strolling players, the loading and unloading of the broad-wheeled waggons, which had arrived from the country on their way to market, or those just about to leave for the country; the arrival of the post chaises of the better-class travellers; the high gig of the bagman, the stage coach, or the saddling and mounting of the horses? Can we not visualise the interesting folk who had slept under this three-gabled roof, and the staggering jolly gentleman, who, when in his cups, went up the wide exterior stair-case?

Can we not picture in earlier times some fair damsel of surpassing beauty, with glancing bright eyes and rose-tinted cheek, just arriving from the country. Intent upon taking the veil, she is staring about her in wonderment for a few minutes, waiting for the lay sister, in her plain black hood and mantle, from the then adjacent nunnery of St. Helens, to escort her out



COURTYARD OF THE 'WHITE HART' INN.

From a drawing by J. L. Stewart.

of the inn yard, across the wide city ditch, and through the open gate—above which was the effigy of St. Erkenwald with hands raised, as if in the act of bestowing a blessing on the passenger—into the cobbled causeway of Bishopsgate within the wall, and under projecting plaster house fronts, adorned with quaint and fanciful devices, towards the priory with its wicket-gate, which would be quietly opened by the portress and quickly closed and bolted, there to be welcomed by the prioress, perhaps never more to see the friends of her childhood, nor the green country she loved, and from which she had wisely or unwisely journeyed?

On entering the galleried court yard, and turning immediately to the right, a staircase conducted the visitor to the upper apartments, while on the left and towards the west of the court yard there stood a mansion of most beautiful design, probably constructed by Inigo Jones or by one of his imitators. This mansion was at one time occupied by William Veager, a wealthy city merchant, as may be gathered from an entry in the 1677 *Directory of Merchants and Bankers*, which, as the title states, was "a collection of the names of merchants living in and about the city of London . . . for the benefit of dealers . . . directing them at first sight of their name to the place of their abode." And here Veager may also have transacted his business. The mansion, which had two storeys above the ground floor, was subsequently divided into a row of four houses, numbered 2, 3, 4 and 5, White Hart Yard. These four houses, together with the tavern, exchanged hands in the year 1819; but the houses were not taken down until the latter half of the century, though the name White Hart Yard was changed to White Hart Court.

The old court yard also led to Salvador House, situated at the extreme west end of the yard. Joseph Salvador, who built it in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, occupied the premises as late as 1763. It had a large hall, a fine staircase and rooms of good size,

some of them with enriched cornices, and ornate doorways of the style of Louis XIV; but it was not so rich in external appearance as that of the mansion previously referred to. About the year 1770, the house was converted into a merchant's office and counting house, and from 1790 to 1817 it was occupied by Edward Simeon, after which latter date it was let as a series of offices. It was at Salvador House that Sir Gilbert Scott, when a youth of 16, spent four years' apprenticeship, for the profession of architect, with James Edmeston, between the years 1827-31. The house was demolished in the year, 1876-7.

During the excavations for Salvador House, a Samian embossed vase, $8\frac{1}{2}$ in. in diameter and 6 in. in height, was discovered, together with some Roman remains.

Near to the tavern formerly stood the stocks, which in the early years of the eighteenth century were stolen during the night. The theft somewhat reflected on the care of the watchman, for the watch house was but a few yards distant on the south-east corner of the churchyard.

The stocks, however, were rebuilt and a whipping post added:—

“They stole St. Botolph's stocks 'tis true,
But soon he built them up anew;
And that the felons might not boast,
He added a stout whipping post.”

At the end of the eighteenth century, few parishes in the metropolis contained so many relics of old-time London as that of St. Botolph, Bishopsgate, due to the fact that while the greater part of the city was partially, if not wholly, destroyed in the Great Fire, Bishopsgate fortunately escaped the terrible devastation, owing to there springing up in the early morning a favourable north-east wind, which drove back the threatening flames towards the south-west; but during the period the “White Hart” was occupied by Samuel and Richard

Nelme, between the years 1770 and 1786, Robert Ashton in 1787, and by John Pretymann for the early part of 1788, the tavern was showing signs of neglect and serious decay, and in June, 1788, the whole of the furniture, plate, linen and effects were offered for sale by auction. In the advertisement announcing the sale, the building was described as "the White Hart Tavern of eminent resort for upwards of three centuries."

In the following year, William Ankers obtained possession, and he held the licence for the next 26 years. About the year 1790, the tavern underwent considerable alterations and repairs. The ground floor, which originally had above it projecting upper storeys, was brought forward flush with the former overhanging bays, and at this time, the entrance to the court yard was heightened and improved, but the large framed "White Hart" sign, which had existed over the entrance for three centuries, was removed and no doubt destroyed.

The 16th century dwelling houses, north and south of the tavern, were taken down shortly afterwards, and the ground floor portion of the tavern, south of the courtyard entrance, was separated from the main premises and fitted up as a shop, which arrangement has existed to this day; but the appearance of the upper part of the building remained unaltered, insomuch that it retained its curious range of casements running the entire length of the building.

Upon the site formerly occupied by the dwelling house on the south, there shortly sprang up a three-storey building, which is shown in a print engraved in 1812, and which site is now occupied by Smith's Restaurant, while the land on the north, upon which stood the dwelling house adjoining the ancient Bedlam Gate, was acquired for the widening of "Old Bedlam."

The tavern was again repaired and improved in the year 1811, and, according to the *Epicures Almanack* of 1815, William Ankers "was too good a judge of the blood of the grape to offer his guests any of that impure,

sophisticated, adulterated, deleterious, abominable mixture for which foreigners so often reproach the tavern keepers of this metropolis."

At the death of Ankers in that year, the property passed to William Melton, and four years later, on February 17th, 1819, the freehold of the tavern and coffee house, with the four houses, Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5, White Hart Court, then producing the leasehold rent of £540 per annum, were announced for sale by auction at Garraways. In the hands of Melton and William Morris, who succeeded him in 1824, the ancient appearance of the building was well preserved for a further period of 10 years. Although during the three and a half centuries that had elapsed since Simon Fitz Mary's mansion had been rebuilt, presumably in the year 1480, it had undergone various internal alterations, and had been denuded of much of the fine old timber, the exterior remained much as it appeared at the end of the fifteenth century, until the year, 1829, when it was taken down and rebuilt by William Morris; but apparently after the rebuilding, it did not flourish. William Morris, however, held the licence until his death in 1845, and for the next 18 years, it was held by Grace Morris, her son Marcus, and James and Thomas Chubb.

When the tavern was taken down it was found to be built on cellars constructed in the early centuries. These were not destroyed; but were again used in the construction of the present house. In the immediate vicinity of the tavern many evidences of Roman occupation have been found, and adjacent to it was the Roman burial ground.

The present building, which supplanted the most quaint many-windowed structure in London, is a severely plain stuccoed edifice, presenting on the pediment, in large incised figures, the date 1246, perpetuating the date of the foundation of Bethlehem priory, and although its exterior does not in any degree correspond with the taste and elegance of the earlier building, yet it must be

regarded as a well-proportioned edifice, having a frontage of over 50 ft. and a depth of about 60 ft., which would agree with the dimensions of Fitz Mary's mansion, after making allowance for the setting back of the new building about 3 ft. At the time of the rebuilding in 1829 the entrance into Old Bedlam, formerly Bedlam Gate, was again widened, the street being renamed Liverpool Street.

After the Morris family, Henry Clifford Green became the proprietor in 1863, and, except for some unimportant alterations in that year, the present house is substantially the same as it had been erected a century ago; but the old sign—a white hart—had been discarded in favour of the designation "199" by which the house has for long been popularly known. After Green, the tavern was occupied by John Startin for 4 years, 1873-76, and for the next 20 years, 1876-95, by Septimus Gillatt, since which time, the property has been uninterruptedly in the possession of the family of George Whitehead. Although the house received the number 121 when the distinction between the terms "within" and "without" Bishopsgate was abolished and the two thoroughfares were fused under the title of Bishopsgate, yet it still retains on the windows and the lamp, in large figures, "199," completely overshadowing the new number allotted it when the street was renumbered in 1911.

This tavern, which claims to be endowed with the oldest licence in London, is still popular, for its various compartments appear always to be well patronised during the legal hours they are open for refreshment, and there can be none of London's present-day inns which can trace its history so far back as that of the "White Hart," Bishopsgate.