

# THE LORD MAYOR'S PROCESSION OF 1686: THE CHARIOT OF THE VIRGIN QUEEN

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The Museum of London has recently acquired an unmounted design for a fanleaf of 180°, in pen, ink and wash, on paper, 17.3 × 48.5 cm (Pl. 1).<sup>1</sup>

The drawing was identified as showing the Chariot of the Virgin Queen of the Mercers' Company passing through Stock Market in the City of London, and thus part of an inaugural procession of one of the Lord Mayors of the Mercers' Company. The Chariot of the Virgin Queen of the Mercers' Company passing through Stocks Market in the City of London, and thus part of an with a procession of the Drapers' Company, and again in 1655, 1686 and 1701.<sup>2</sup>

The first two occasions can be excluded on grounds of costume. Fortunately, the contemporary published accounts of both the 1686 and 1701 pageants survive. The former, written by Matthew Taubman,<sup>3</sup> reveals that on this particular occasion the procession continued down Cheapside via Poultry to the Grocers' Hall and would therefore have passed through Stocks Market. Normally the procession turned north from Cheapside to the Guildhall where the Lord Mayor dined. The contemporary account thus provides firm evidence that the design shows the Lord Mayor's procession of Sir John Peake, Mercer in 1686.

Matthew Taubman wrote his first civic triumph for the Lord Mayor's procession in 1685, and he composed the Lord Mayors' shows for the four following years, although in 1688, the perturbed state of politics hindered any exhibition of pageantry.<sup>4</sup>

The 1686 Chariot of the Virgin Queen was probably the largest pageant wagon of the period. Taubman claimed that 'the Magnificence of the Structure, the Elegancy of the Contrivance, and Costliness of the Work, has hardly ever yet been parallel'd'.<sup>5</sup> The chariot

was attended by over one hundred people on foot, and contained twenty-one figures; needless to say they are not all represented in the design.

The chariot was preceded by two other pageants. The first showed Neptune attended by tritons and sirens. The second consisted of Monarchy, surrounded by Principality, Nobility, Honour and Obedience, and in front Mars and Minerva with their offspring, Victory, Science, Conduct and Industry. This may have been a tactful allusion to the recent accession of James II.

Matthew Taubman describes the third pageant as 'an Imperial Triumphant Chariot of Roman form . . . On a lofty Ascent of which, exalted upon an Imperial Throne, sits a magestick Person in great state representing a VIRGIN, which is the Arms of the Right Worshipful the Company of Mercers . . . On her head a long dishevell'd Hair of flaxen colour . . . on which is a Coronet of gold . . . In one hand she holdeth a Scepter; in the other a Shield, with the Arms of the Right Honourable the Company of Mercers.

Above on a golden canopy sits Fame, blowing the Trumpet'.<sup>5</sup>

The design captures the regal stance of the Virgin Queen and includes the Virgin's attributes, Fame, above; Vigilance, Wisdom and Chastity, all 'properly attir'd' at her feet. The symbols of Wisdom and Chastity have not been included in the design, but the bell of Vigilance is clearly visible. Hope, leans on a shield bearing a golden anchor and sits with her back to Faith, who is represented blindfold, and bears a shield and banner. The chariot is led by Triumph, dressed as charioteer with plumed helmet, mantle and sword.

Unfortunately, the design does not capture the resplendent colour of the pageant. The

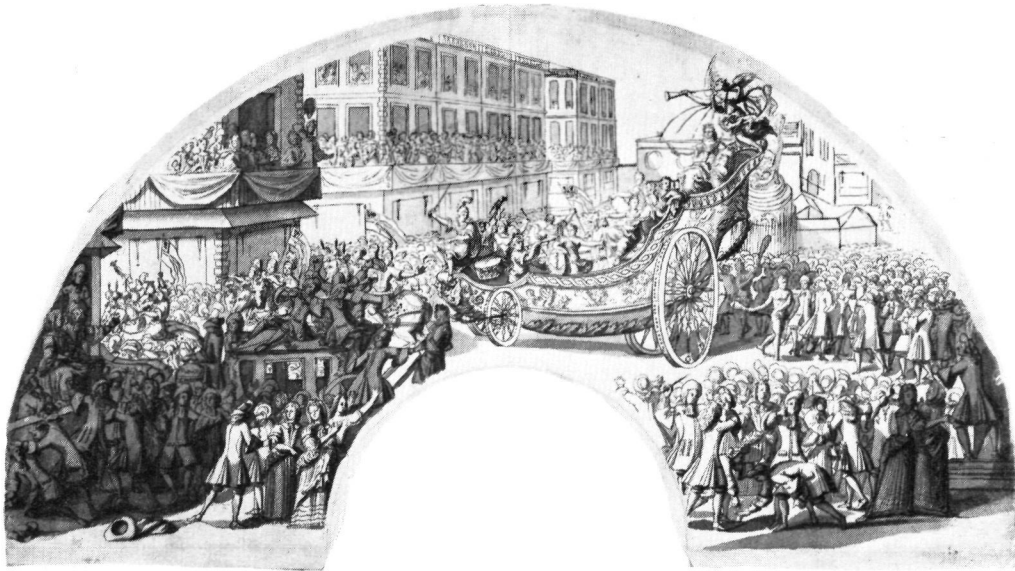


Plate 1 The Chariot of the Virgin Queen, 1686. Anonymous drawing  
(Museum of London)

Virgin Queen and Faith were appropriately dressed in white, in contrast to Vigilance in green and yellow; Wisdom in crimson and blue; Chastity in blue and silver, and Triumph in scarlet. As shown in the design, the chariot was drawn by nine 'white *Flanders* Horses, three in a breast, in rich silver Trappings and white Feathers'. The first three horses carried figures representing Victory, Loyalty and Fame; the second three, Peace and Plenty with Europe in the centre; the last three consisted of Africa, Asia and America, 'representing Merchandize; Traffick, and other Dealings, both at home and abroad, appertaining to the Right Worshipful the Company of Mercers'.<sup>6</sup>

The 'Roman' character of the pageant wagon may have been inspired by a direct classical prototype, or even by Mantegna's 'Triumphs of Caesar' which had been in the Royal Collection at Hampton Court since about 1630; moreover, the classical idiom was the appropriate contemporary tribute to a hero. The form of the chariot closely resembles that illustrating the account published by

Elkanah Settle of the Lord Mayor's procession of Sir Francis Child, Goldsmith in 1698.<sup>7</sup>

Having been sworn in by oath at Westminster before the Barons of the Exchequer (a tradition which dates back to 1251), Sir John Peake would have returned by barge to Blackfriars, and would have joined the procession of pageants at St. Paul's Cathedral. On this occasion the procession continued down Cheapside via Poultry to the Grocers' Company Hall.

Grocers' Hall had been enlarged in 1682 by Sir John Moore, the then Lord Mayor 'so as to make it the most commodious seat for the chief magistrate of the city or a *mansion house*'.<sup>8</sup> Sir John Moore used it as his own Mansion House; paying the Grocers' Company £200 in rent. It remained the official residence of the Lord Mayor until 1694, when it was let to the newly formed Bank of England. The large courtyard in front of the Hall was particularly well-suited for the reception of the Lord Mayor's procession.

The Chariot of the Virgin Queen is shown

here at the end of its route before turning north via Princes Street to the Grocers' Hall. The dome of St. Stephen's Walbrook, a church rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren from 1672–1679 can be seen in the background. Just behind the figure of Fame on the chariot, a part of the curious equestrian statue of Charles II vanquishing Oliver Cromwell is visible (Pl. 2). The statue, placed on the eighteen foot high conduit in Stocks Market, was erected at the expense of Sir Robert Vyner, and was publicly unveiled on Oak Apple Day, 29 May 1672; the anniversary of Charles II's birth and his Restoration to the throne. The conduit is said to have run with claret when Sir Robert Vyner was sworn Lord Mayor two years later in 1674.<sup>9</sup>

The statue was first commissioned in Rome by the Polish Ambassador of the Court of St. James, to represent John Sobieski, King of

Poland, overcoming the Turk. It was then acquired by Sir Robert Vyner, who commissioned Jasper Latham, one of Wren's sculptor-masons, to transform the head of King Sobieski into that of Charles II, and the Turk's head into a portrait of Cromwell. Unfortunately, the turban on the Turk's head was overlooked and remained as proof of the conversion. The statue was moved to make way for the present Mansion House in 1737, and is now at Newby Hall, York.

The records of the Mercers' Company throw interesting light on the work involved in preparing the pageant.<sup>10</sup> Many of the Company's trophies were 'very old & most of them past use', for 1655 was the 'last time any Publick show was made by this Compy. upon a Lord Mayor's Day.' The herald painters Richard Wallis and a Mr. Johnson were asked to remake the necessary trophies and banners



Plate 2 Stocks Market, the site of the present Mansion House, with the dome of St. Stephen's Walbrook in the background showing the equestrian statue of King John Sobieski overcoming the Turk which was converted into a Charles II vanquishing Oliver Cromwell. Engraving by Sutton Nicholls, 1738 (*Museum of London*)

and Mr. Horne, the painter, was ordered to wash, varnish and refresh the Company's barge.

Celia Fiennes, who witnessed one of the Mercers' Company pageants, possibly that of Sir William Gore in 1701, commented that 'After being drawn through ye Citty, the Virgin Queen 'is invited by ye Lord Major to a dinner provided on purpose for her, and soe many Rich Batchelors are appointed to Entertaine her'.<sup>11</sup> In 1686, because of 'the present Low Condition of the Company', eighty 'Rich Batchelors' were elected from the young freemen of the Mercers' Company and were asked to provide 'a Triumphall Chariott with a Virgin to ride thereon'.<sup>12</sup> It seems that the Batchelors were also responsible for selecting the Virgin Queen, who was, according to the description of the 1701 pageant, 'a young beautiful Gentlewoman, of Good Parentage, Religious Education and Unblemisht Reputation'.<sup>13</sup>

In return for their trouble the Mercers' Company paid for the Lord Mayor's Dinner and provided the Batchelors with the additional luxury of wine and cakes. The Company also gave the Batchelors a contribution of £100 towards their costs, on condition that the chariot and trophies were returned to the Company for use at the next Lord Mayor's show. The Company also met the costs of the musicians, providing six drums and twenty-four trumpets, and six 'musicians to waite on the company', although it was decided that 'no songs or other poetry' were necessary.<sup>14</sup>

For some contemporary witnesses the pomp and circumstance of the pageants was considered rather indigestible, and the crowd of spectators provided the main interest.<sup>15</sup> As the spectators thronging the route became somewhat unruly, it was necessary to employ 'twenty Savages or Green men with Squibs and Fireworks to sweep the streets, and keep off the Crowd'.<sup>16</sup> Two of these 'Green men' are shown in action behind the chariot in the drawing. The foreground reveals a brawl on the extreme left; and some enterprising citizens have decided to make use of an empty coach on the right in order to get a better view of the proceedings.

Views of 17th-century Lord Mayors'

pageants are rare. A painting, probably by a Dutch artist, in the Royal Collection, shows the procession of Sir Henry Tulse, Grocer and Lord Mayor in 1683, by water to Westminster to be sworn before the Barons of the Exchequer (Pl. 3).<sup>17</sup> The procession consisted of the barges of the City Companies (those of the Fishmongers', Goldsmiths', Grocers', Mercers', Skinners', Vintners', and Weavers' are clearly visible).

In the background a royal party watches the procession from the roof of Whitehall Palace, which was, with the exception of the Banqueting House, destroyed by fire fifteen years later. Each barge has a band of trumpeters at the stern. In 1686, the water procession was further enlivened by the firing of cannon from the south bank of the Thames.<sup>18</sup>

A series of drawings in the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge, some of which have been attributed to Marcellus Lauron (1653–1702) record isolated elements of the Lord Mayors' Pageants of 1676, 1678 and 1692.<sup>19</sup> The most evocative is the 'City Musick' which shows a band of musicians playing three hautboys and a sackbut. The others show the Lord Mayor in his barge with the Court of Aldermen; the Sword bearer, with his Cap of Maintenance; the new and late Lord Mayors proceeding in their Cavalcade through the City and four men carrying a banner. It is perhaps significant that in 1680, Lauron, the artist, lived in Bow Street, Covent Garden, near Thomas Jordan, the poet, who devised the pageants for the Lord Mayors' shows of 1671–1681, 1683 and 1684.<sup>20</sup>

The most impressive of the pictorial records of a 17th-century Lord Mayor's Pageant must be the series of coloured drawings of the pageants devised by Anthony Munday for the procession of Sir John Leman, Fishmonger in 1616. The drawings provide a fascinating visual record of the sequence of the procession, which started with the amphibious 'Fishing Busse' that accompanied both the water and land procession. It consisted of three men 'seriously at labour, drawing up their nets laden with living fish and bestowing them liberally among the people'.<sup>21</sup> This was followed by a crowned dolphin, from the Company's coat of arms; the King of the



Plate 3 The Lord Mayor's Procession by water to Westminster, 1683. Photogravure produced by the London Topographical Society, 1909, based on the oil painting in the Royal Collection. (*Museum of London*)

Moors; the effigy of Sir William Walworth, Lord Mayor in 1381 who slew the rebel Wat Tyler (Walworth rose from the dead during the course of the procession to make a speech to Sir John Leman); standard bearers, wild men, beadles, and a great pageant drawn by two mermen and two mermaids, surmounted by an Angel, which supported Richard II, the King who was saved by Walworth's noble deed, flanked by the appropriate virtues beating down Treason and Mutiny. The central feature of the pageant was based on the Lord Mayor's own crest, a large 'Lemon Tree', with, in its shade, a pelican feeding her young with her blood, to symbolize the cherishing love borne by the Mayor for his citizens.

Although the drawings of the Fishmongers' Pageant of 1616 record most effectively the character of the display, they do not indicate the reaction of the crowds. Whereas, in the Museum of London's fan design, the as yet unidentified artist has captured the enthusiasm of the crowd and a very strong sense of the occasion. In this capacity the drawing anticipates William Hogarth's imaginative repre-

sentation of the 'Industrious Apprentice' as Lord Mayor of London, some sixty years later.<sup>22</sup>

However, as far as is known, no fans were made from this design, and no other 17th-century fans depicting contemporary London events are recorded. The founding of the Fanmakers' Company in 1709, coincides with a marked increase in the production of fans in this country. A mounted fan in a private collection shows Queen Anne at Court, flanked by her Ladies-in-Waiting and Peers-of-the-Realm.<sup>23</sup> An engraved design for a fan showing St. Bartholomew's Fair, Smithfield is based on a drawing of c. 1728 in the British Museum (Pl. 4). The fair was renowned for its theatricals, and the design shows in the background, Lee and Harpers, where the 'Tragedy of Holofermus' is being performed. The figure in the right middle ground is supposed to represent Sir Robert Walpole, then Prime Minister; Mr. Faux, a famous conjuror, is also in evidence in the background. Other entertainments were a 'peepshow', the Siege of Gibraltar, (which actually occurred in 1727, although there was an attempted coup in

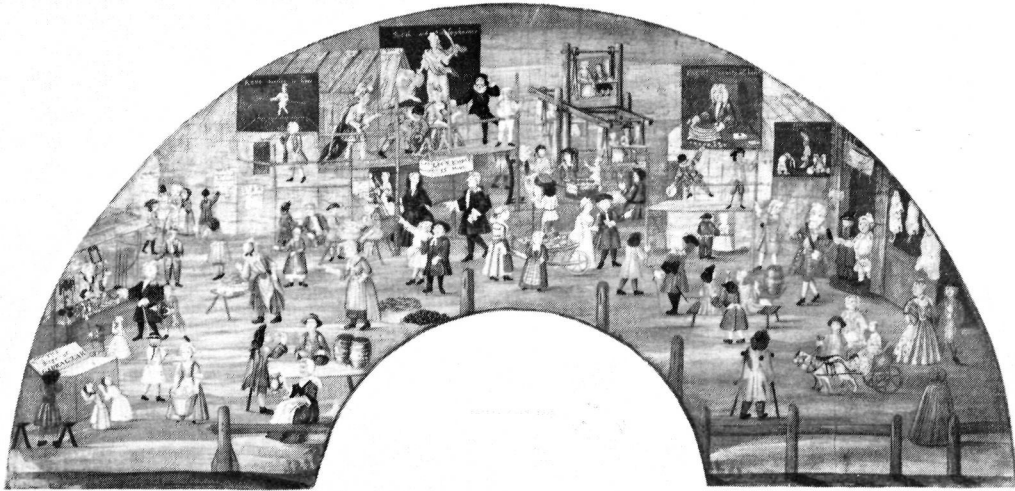


Plate 4 St Bartholomew's Fair, Smithfield, c. 1728. Watercolour  
(British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings)

1720); a skittle ground and rope dancing. Refreshments included 'Redstreak Cyder', 'Punch', 'Light Holland', 'Geneva' and 'Aniseed'.<sup>24</sup>

Like the St. Bartholomew Fair fan design, the chariot of the Virgin Queen was chosen by the artist as a suitable subject for a fan due to its saleability as a souvenir of a popular annual event. As such the topical fan provided a feminine alternative to the broadsides and engravings which survive in greater quantities today.

#### NOTES

- The design was found at a dealer's in Brussels by Alistair Laing of the Heim Gallery who brought it to the Museum's attention.
- L. J. Morrissey 'English Pageant-Wagons' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 9 No. 3 (1976) 353–374, 360; F. W. Fairholt *Lord Mayors' Pageants Part II*, Percy Society (1844) 75.
- Matthew Taubman *London's Yearly Jubilee perform'd For the Entertainment of . . . Sir John Peake, Lord Mayor. All set forth at the proper Costs and Charges of the Right Worshipful the Company of MERCERS*, London (1686) 16pp. Copies in British and Guildhall Libraries.
- Robert Withington *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline 2* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1918) 62; F. W. Fairholt *op. cit.* in note 2, I (1843) 105.
- Taubman *op. cit.* 3, 9.
- Taubman *ibid.* 12.
- L. J. Morrissey *op. cit.* in note 2, Fig. 3.
- W. Herbert *The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London I* (1837) 347.
- Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660–1851* (1951) 234; George Vertue 'Note Books I' *Walpole Society* 18 (1930) 129; Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain, 1530–1830* (1964) 251–2.
- Mercers' Company, *Acts of Court, 1681–1687*, fols 135v, 136r, 151r, 152r.
- Quoted by Withington *op. cit.* in note 4, 66–7; taken from Celia Fiennes *Through England on a Side-Saddle in the Time of William and Mary* (1888) 242.
- Mercers' Company *op. cit.* in note 10, f. 140r.
- Elkanah Settle, *The Triumphs of London for the Inauguration of Sir William Gore Kt, Lord Mayor, Containing A Description of the PAGEANTS . . . All set forth at the proper Cost and Charge of the Honourable Company of MERCERS* (London, 1701) 3. Copy in Guildhall Library.
- Mercers' Company *op. cit.* in note 10, ff. 136r, 152v, 154 r & v, 155r & v.
- Samuel Pepys wrote on 29 October 1660 'had a very good place to see the pageants; which were many, and I believe good for such kind of things, but in themselves but poor and absurd'. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews I (1970) 277.
- Taubman *op. cit.* in note 3, 13.
- The painting was reproduced by the London Topographical Society in 1909; Oliver Millar *The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen* (1963) 160 no. 441 Pl. 170.
- Mercers' Company *op. cit.* in note 10, f. 135v.
- Robert Raines, Drawings by Marcellus Lauron 'Old Laroon' in the Pepysian Library, *Apollo* 82 (October 1965) Supplement, Notes on British Art 4, pp. 2–4.
- J. T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, ed. W. Whitten 2 (1829) 192.
- Chrysanaleia or the Golden Fishing* devised by Anthony Munday citizen and draper represented in twelve plates by Henry Shaw F. S. A. with an historical introduction by John Gough Nichols, F.S.A. (1859) 13, quoting Anthony Munday's contemporary account
- Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth's Graphic Works I* (1970) 201–2; Vol. II, 191.
- Maciver Percival *The Fan Book* (1920) 91.
- The Museum of London has two copies of the engraved version of this fan design, one of which is coloured; Sybil Rosenfeld, *The Theatre of the London Fairs in the 18th Century* (1960) 26, Pl. 1.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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