

Chapter 4. Blackfriars

When Holy Roman Emperor Charles V visited London in 1522, he stayed not at one of the five royal residences around the capital, but in the guest house of the Dominican friary at Ludgate. His entourage was housed immediately across the River Fleet, at Henry's new Bridewell Palace, and a private gallery was built over the river to ease passage between the two.¹ It is, perhaps, surprising that after four days together at Henry's palace at Greenwich, the king chose to entrust Charles to the hospitality of a house of mendicant friars. The emperor, however, is said to have been 'lodged in great royltie' there.² There is no reason to doubt it. The priory's riverside location allowed him to visit much of London and Westminster without braving the streets, and he made use of the nearby tennis courts on several occasions.³ Nor should we doubt that the Blackfriars were equal to the honour of hosting one of Christendom's most powerful men. They had previously hosted one of the king's grand fêtes, spread over three days and requiring the construction of a forest—with 'hawthorns oaks, maples, hazels, birches, fern, broom and furze, with beasts and birds embossed of sundry fashion, with foresters sitting and going on top of the same, and a castle on the said forest, with a maiden sitting thereby with a garland, and a lion'—in one of their cloisters, with four gilded pavilions in another.⁴

Within two decades of Charles's visit the priory had been disbanded. Within three decades, Edward VI had distributed the site piecemeal to the great and the good. In the process, he created the best known of London's post-dissolution liberties. St Martin le Grand had annoyed the City with its claims to offer sanctuary throughout the fifteenth century, and the former site of the Whitefriars would behave similarly after the Restoration. But Blackfriars—with its unique mix of Puritans and crypto-Catholics, its famous playhouses, its large immigrant population and its aristocratic residents—was the liberty that most concerned London's Elizabethan and early Stuart governors. The playhouses that stood in the liberty almost continuously from 1576 until 1642 have

¹ S Thurlay, *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England: Architecture and Court Life, 1460-1547* (New Haven, CT, 1993), pp. 40-1, 53, 69. Contemporary royal residences included the palaces of Bridewell, St James and Westminster, along with Baynards Castle and the Tower. The gallery seems to have been destroyed with the rest of the precinct in the Great Fire of 1666. It was replaced by a stone bridge in 1672, which remained in place until the Fleet was covered in 1765. P M Handover, *The History from 1276 to 1956 of the Site in Blackfriars Consisting of Printing House Square with Later Accretions* (London, 1956), p. 3.

² Stow, *Annales*, p. 868.

³ E Hall, *Henry VIII with an Introduction by C Whibley*, ed C Whibley, 2 vols, (London, 1904), i.265.

⁴ LPFD ii.1494. The supplies for construction of the forest alone cost £55/13/11d, and the pavilions required almost seven hundred yards of fabric from the adjacent Royal Wardrobe.

received considerable scholarly attention, but other aspects of life in Blackfriars contributed to its notoriety as well. While other London religious houses were converted for residential use by individual noblemen, Blackfriars was the only liberty to become a fashionable neighbourhood, one of London's first. Perhaps because of the stature of many local residents or the lack of any consistent secular authority figure within the precinct, groups of Blackfriars inhabitants regularly petitioned outside authorities for assistance in the administration of their liberty. This, as much as anything else, characterised the liberty in the century after the dissolution.

The Blackfriars built their first English priory at Holborn in 1224. Fifty years later, they moved within the walls of the City. London's medieval wall was rerouted to unite the five acre site given to them in 1276 by Gregory de Rokesley, then mayor of London.⁵ Friaries, it should be remembered, were not as wealthy as monastic religious houses. Their rules generally required that they subsist on alms alone. Their endowments were therefore small, consisting of little more than their own church and house, and its attached gardens.⁶ That said, by the sixteenth century many English friaries had accumulated high status (if not substantial wealth) from centuries of praying for the souls of generous almsgivers. In 1478 the rule governing Dominicans was altered to allow their foundations to possess lands and rents in common; at about the same time, the London friary began to rent houses in their precinct to lay tenants.⁷ Some were servants, but many noble families also rented tenements there. This latter group was no doubt drawn by the Blackfriars' reputation for 'intimacy with Courts and princes'.⁸

Edward I and his wife Eleanor were strong supporters of the friary in its first years at the Ludgate site, and Stow records the burial there of Margaret, queen of Scots and countess of Kent, alongside generations of lords and ladies and prominent citizens of London.⁹ Catherine of Aragon's confessor, Geoffrey d'Athequa, was a Dominican. Before its suppression, the priory had hosted numerous events of national importance. After 1383, it was a common location of the consecration of English bishops.¹⁰ Parliament met there in 1450 and again in 1524. Most famously, in 1529 Blackfriars was

⁵ Stow, *Survey*, i.339.

⁶ G Baskerville, *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries* (London, 2002), p. 227.

⁷ R Palmer, 'The Black Friars of London', *Merry England*, 13 (1889), p. 279.

⁸ Handover, *History from 1276*, p. 2; C F R Palmer, 'The Friar-Preachers or Blackfriars, of Holborn, London', *The Reliquary*, 17 (1876-7), p. 79.

⁹ Stow, *Survey*, i.339-41, C F R Palmer, 'Burials at the Priories of the Blackfriars', *The Antiquary*, 23 (1891), pp. 28-30, 76-9, 117-9, 265-9.

¹⁰ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 277.

the site of Henry's doomed divorce proceedings and the subsequent Parliament that condemned the disgraced Cardinal Wolsey.¹¹

Blackfriars shared more prosaic links with Henry VIII, as well. His governess, Dame Elizabeth Denton, moved to Blackfriars after she left Henry's household in the first decade of the sixteenth century. She temporarily returned to royal service during Catherine of Aragon's pregnancies.¹² When Denton died in 1519, she left thirty shillings to the prior and chapter.¹³ Soon thereafter her tenement was taken up by Sir William Kingston, a gentleman of the king's privy chamber. Kingston's wife remained a resident of Blackfriars until her death in the 1550s.¹⁴ Both of Henry's surviving wives also had links to the liberty. A contemporary of Denton's in the precinct had been Sir Thomas Parr, an early favourite of Henry's. Parr's daughter Katherine, Henry's sixth and final queen, was born at Blackfriars in 1512 and lived there until 1517.¹⁵ Her brother William, later Marquess of Northampton, kept a residence in Blackfriars throughout his life. Lady Anne of Cleves, to whom Henry was briefly married in 1540, chose to move to Blackfriars in January 1555/6. In preparation for her arrival her landlord spent £73/11/5½d setting up her household. Purchases included 126 gallons of beer, 378 gallons of wine, three pounds of cinnamon and three dozen earthen pots.¹⁶ Further details of Anne's residence in Blackfriars have not survived; she died barely eighteen months after taking the house there.

For all the turbulence in the decade that followed, the period between the end of the divorce trial and Blackfriars' dissolution was a quiet one for the precinct. Prior Robert Stroddle accepted royal supremacy on behalf of the community in April 1534. He was soon thereafter deprived in preference of John Hilsey, a favourite of Thomas Cromwell.¹⁷ Stroddle attempted unsuccessfully to recover the priorship with the help of friends at Court, particularly Sir William Kingston, a Blackfriars resident.¹⁸ It was Hilsey, however, who signed the deed of surrender on 12 November 1538, quite late for a

¹¹ See, among others, D Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* (London, 2004), p. 197-256, H A Kelly, *The Matrimonial Trials of Henry VIII* (Stanford, 1976) and *Records of the Reformation: The Divorce, 1527-1533*, ed N Pocock, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1870).

¹² Starkey, *Six Wives*, p. 121.

¹³ GL MS 9171/15 fo 108v.

¹⁴ Folger MS L.b. 384; TNA PROB 11/32/17.

¹⁵ S E James, 'Catherine [Catherine Parr] (1512-1548)', ODNB..

¹⁶ Folger MS L.b. 30. Anne's landlord was Thomas Cawarden.

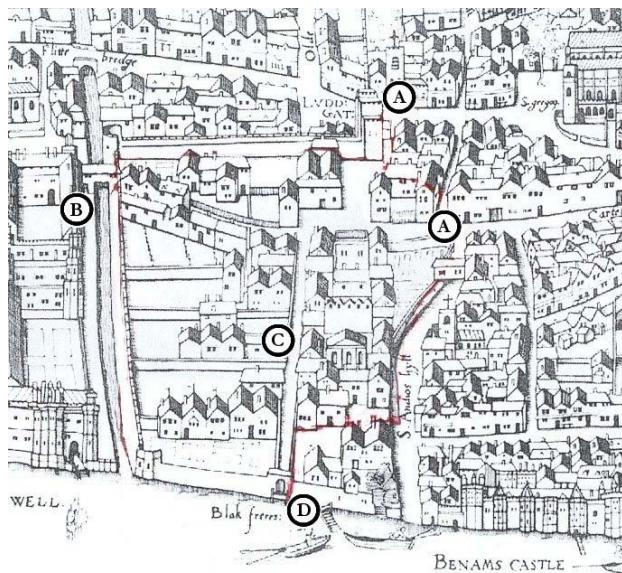
¹⁷ I Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* (London, 1966), p. 26.

¹⁸ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 281. Kingston seems to have been on good terms with Stroddle's predecessor and successor, as well. Around 1521 he secured the lease of three tenements and their appurtenances owned by the priory for the annual rent of a red rose, and despite his support for Stroddle, he was able to renew the lease of his residence in Blackfriars in 1536 from John Hilsey. S Lehmburg, 'Kingston, Sir William (c.1476-1540)', ODNB; Handover, *History from 1276*, p. 71.

foundation with an annual value of only £104/15/4d.¹⁹ The close relationship between Henry and the Blackfriars likely helped the friary escape the suppression of poorer religious foundations that began in 1535. When the end did come the friars departed quietly. The site passed to the Crown, which would hold the bulk of it intact for more almost twelve years.

The decades that followed brought many topographic and demographic changes to the liberty. By 1608, when James I expanded the City of London's jurisdiction to include the liberty, Blackfriars would have been almost unrecognisable to those who had known it seventy years earlier. The neighbourhood became more crowded as people set up houses and shops, but it continued to hold the fashionable status it had enjoyed before the dissolution. Blackfriars—a small district with no formal method of government during its seven decades of jurisdictional independence—flourished. Its interlocking communities centred on the class, creed, or craft helped keep the liberty stable despite an unconventional system of administration. Blackfriars therefore stands in contrast to the claims typically made about the unruliness of London's liberties.

Map: Blackfriars in the 1550s²⁰



¹⁹ *Valor*, i.78.

²⁰ From the 1550s Copperplate Map. Copyright The Museum of London. The boundaries of the liberty are shown in red. **A** Gate. **B** Bridge to Bridewell. **C** Water Lane. **D** Stairs to River Thames.

Chronology

In the first years after the priory's suppression, Blackfriars changed only slowly. William Wellhead, the layman employed by the priory to collect rents from tenants in the precinct, continued on after its dissolution.²¹ The keys to the precinct, likewise, remained in the hands of long-time porter John Portinary.²² Tenants remained as well; for many of them, retrenchment had begun years before. The widow of the late alderman Stephen Peacock continued to reside in the liberty after his death in 1536.²³ She secured an extension of the lease in her own name from Prior Hilsey in 1538, and there is record of a Lady Peacock residing in Blackfriars as late as 1580.²⁴ Mary Udall, likewise, had lived in Blackfriars since at least 1522 and extended her lease for a further forty years in May 1538, less than six months before the surrender of the priory.²⁵ Leases to new tenants increased during the 1530s, and their terms lengthened. While earlier leases in Blackfriars had typically been for twenty-one years, John Growte secured a forty year lease in June 1534, and in the spring of 1538 William Hennyng did the same.²⁶

With the establishment of the Court of Augmentations in 1536 rumours of a general dissolution became harder to ignore, and many religious houses began to safeguard (or exploit) their wealth by selling moveable goods or granting favourable leases to friends or relatives. Alarmed commissioners warned Thomas Cromwell that the best of the monastic forests were being harvested at 'a greate pace'.²⁷ Could this explain the glut of grants in the last years of the London Dominicans? It seems unlikely. Many of the liberty's 1540 residents had been tenants of the priory for a decade or more before its dissolution, while only a few are known to have had any sort of personal relationship with the prior.²⁸ Hilsey died within a year of the priory's suppression; his house remained unoccupied in 1540, when the Court of Augmentations completed its first survey of

²¹ Folger Library (later Folger), MS L.b. 359.

²² Sir John Portinary, the keeper of the keys, was a person of some stature in the precinct. In 1541 he was assessed on pensions in fee valued at £48, and in 1547/8 he is known to have lived adjacent to Lord Cobham, Sir Thomas Cheyne and Lady Mary Kingston. Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars*, p. 27; *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessment Rolls for the City of London: 1541 and 1582*, ed R G Lang, (London, 1993), p. 74; Folger MS L.b. 374.

²³ Peacock's is the earliest surviving lease to a lay tenant in Blackfriars. Dating from March 1509/10, it indicates that his tenement had previously been in the occupation of another citizen and haberdasher called Richard Snowe. Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 279; Folger MS L.b. 361; *Aldermen*, ed Beaven, pp. 146, 156, 191.

²⁴ Folger MS L.b. 366. It seems doubtful that Lady Peacock could have survived her husband by 44 years, but the location of the garden held by a Lady Peacock in 1580 suggests that they were of the same family.

²⁵ Folger MS L.b. 361; Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 282.

²⁶ Folger MSS L.b. 360, 361.

²⁷ qtd. in W C Richardson, *History of the Court of Augmentations, 1536-1554* (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 34.

²⁸ Compare the list found at LPFD iii.1053 with that in Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 285.

residents there.²⁹ It is more likely that the leases made in the mid-1530s were initiated by individual tenants. Perhaps suspecting that the Crown would respect the terms of priory leases, they sought to establish the terms of tenancy before a change in ownership with its potential for increased rents. They may also have hoped to put themselves in a favourable position to buy land in Blackfriars from the Crown.

Rents did rise in the first decades after the dissolution. In 1544 Morris Griffith, a former associate of Hilsey's at Rochester, was granted the lease of 'Ankers House', adjacent to the priory church, at an annual rent of £2. He was still living in the tenement in 1549.³⁰ A decade later, Thomas Cawarden leased Ankers House to John Dartenier for an increased rent of £4 p.a., and by 1580 William More was charging Richard Leyes £5 annually for it.³¹ Rents throughout the liberty increased under the ownership of More. Drastic increases over the 1540s rents were not common until the last years of the 1590s.³²

The confirmation and renewal of leases continued under the Crown, but within months of the priory's surrender, the Court of Augmentations began to grant away the freehold interest of parts of the newly acquired friary. That process took over a decade to complete. Sir Thomas Cheyne, the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, who had lived in Blackfriars since 1522, was granted the freehold of his residence there in February 1538/9, and he received further grants there the following year.³³ Throughout the realm, the early 1540s were a busy time for the Court of Augmentations, as it began to alienate the Crown's recently-acquired properties at a rapid rate. This was true in London as elsewhere, as the Blackfriars grants of the period attest. In 1541 the Court granted two houses and their attached gardens, worth £3/4s p.a., to Philip Parris, who had lived in the neighbourhood for two decades.³⁴ In 1543 Richard Tate, William Chetherow, William Taylor and Francis Pitcher all received property in Blackfriars, and the following year John Dogget, Henry Chetherow, Thomas Bouchier, Paul Gresham, Francis Boldero and Morris Griffith joined the ranks of freeholders in the liberty.³⁵ In 1545 Francis Bryan, John Gates and Thomas Thorogood paid £1263/10/4d for the reversion over diverse properties formerly in the possession of thirty-eight different religious houses, including

²⁹ Folger MS L.b. 362; S Thompson, 'Hilsey, John (d. 1539)', DNB ; Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 286.

³⁰ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 286; Folger MSS L.b. 464, 376.

³¹ Folger MSS L.b. 416, 454; Guildhall Library, MSS 9168/13, fo 206v, 9171/17, fo 382v.

³² The rent adjustments found in Folger MS L.b. 318, are particularly illustrative of this.

³³ LPFD iii.1053; Folger MS L.b. 386. At his death in 1558, Cheyne owned properties in Blackfriars valued at £15 p.a.

³⁴ Folger MS L.b. 364.

³⁵ Folger MSS L.b. 367, 368, 369, 371, 376, 425, 426, 462, 464, 472; TNA LR 2/108.

three tenements and gardens in Blackfriars.³⁶ Collectively, these grants included property worth over £65 annually, a substantial amount when one considers that at Michaelmas 1540 Hugh Losse, the collector of the King's rents in Blackfriars, recorded the annual value of Crown property there at £93/3/4d.³⁷ It is clear, however, that the Court of Augmentations failed to realise the full value of the Blackfriars property.

The City of London took a keen interest in the Blackfriars site from early on. When the aldermen proposed a civic takeover of several of London's defunct hospitals in February 1538/9, they included Blackfriars and three other friary sites in their request to the king.³⁸ On 26 February Henry agreed to transfer two of the hospitals to the City, but ignored the request for the friaries.³⁹ The next day, the aldermen sent another letter to the king, asking that it might 'please your highnesse to gyve to the sayd mayre and comonalty the churches and scituacions and all the landes and tenemantes withyn the precinct of the sayd howses lately called the Grey, Blak, Whyte and Augustyne freers'.⁴⁰ Henry VIII is famously quoted for responding with an angry outburst: 'Are not we as well able to keep our privileges and liberties as the friars did keep their privileges always beforetime, free from the City?'⁴¹ When the City offered to buy the four friaries from the king for £200 eighteen months later, the offer evoked Henry's derision.⁴² In a meeting with former mayor Richard Gresham, 'the kinges highnes reported unto hym...that the Citezens of this Citye were pinche pence'.⁴³ The Court of Aldermen agreed amongst themselves, however, that the price offered was more than fair, considering 'the charges of the mayntenance of the same howses shalbe so gret'.⁴⁴ Over the next decade, the City stood by while other men received tracts of land in Blackfriars.

The residue of the liberty was granted to Sir Thomas Cawarden on 12 March 1549/50.⁴⁵ The grant included the 'Churche, Chruchyarde and cloyster together with all the houses, edifices, buyldinges, gardyns and grownd being of the possessions...within the compasse, circuite and precincte of the said friars' along with the lead and timber of the priory church and the rights, franchises and liberties attached thereunto.⁴⁶ Thus the rights asserted by residents of the liberty in the decades after the dissolution fell primarily

³⁶ Folger MS L.b. 388.

³⁷ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 285.

³⁸ LPFD, 13:2, p. 194, no. 492; CLRO Rep 10, fo 79v; CLRO Jo 14, fo 129v.

³⁹ CLRO Rep 10, fo 82. 26 February 1538/9.

⁴⁰ CLRO Jo 14, fo 129. 27 February 1538/9.

⁴¹ Stow, *Strype's Survey*, iii.184

⁴² CLRO Jo 14, fo 216v. 1 August 1540.

⁴³ CLRO Rep 10, fo 200. 17 August 1540.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ CPR Edw VI, iii.336. See also Stow, *Survey*, ii.350.

⁴⁶ Folger MS L.b. 381; TNA C 66/831/63.

to Cawarden and his successors. Cawarden's involvement in Blackfriars began years before he received his grant. He had been named keeper of the tents and master of the revels by Henry VIII in 1544, and soon thereafter he began using vacant properties in Blackfriars to store the Revels materials. Available space and proximity to the fabric stores of the royal wardrobe and to the new Whitehall Palace must have made Blackfriars an appealing location. Cawarden certainly thought so. Not only did he relocate the Revels' primary office to the liberty, but in 1546 he made his London residence in Blackfriars, as well. In October 1547 Cawarden received a letter from his 'loving friend' Protector Somerset, who asked Cawarden to allow Sir George Brook, Lord Cobham, the use of 'the hall of his lodging at the Blache Frears...during his abode here at this instant parlement'.⁴⁷ Cobham had lived in Blackfriars since at least 1522, but his residence there, worth £5/6/8d p.a., frequently proved too small for his family's needs.⁴⁸ Cawarden, however, seems to have been a less than ideal neighbour. In the mid-1540s he began using Sir Thomas Cheyne's house in Blackfriars as Revels storage, though he refused to pay Cheyne. Cheyne complained to the Court of Augmentations, from which he had received three grants of property in Blackfriars worth £15 annually.⁴⁹ In March 1549/50 Duke Osbourne, the court's treasurer, ordered that Cawarden pay Cheyne £5 p.a.⁵⁰

It was not until after Osborne made his decision that Cawarden petitioned the Privy Council for a grant of the remaining property at 'the syte of the late Black Friers in London with all edifeces groundes & buildinges belonging to the same within the precincte thereof'.⁵¹ Cawarden reminded them that he had laid out £620/5/4d providing armoured 'horsemen & fotemen' to the king's service at Richmond, Winchester, Kingston and Norfolk...for the which promice was made of Recompens'.⁵² The Court of Augmentations finalised his grant on 12 March 1550/1, but fragmentary records make it difficult to determine the value of the property given to Cawarden. A 1552 survey, clearly incomplete, shows annual rentals of £43.⁵³ Another survey dated 1555 records an annual rental value of £103/13/4d, and in 1557 Cawarden's properties in the Blackfriars

⁴⁷ Folger MS L.b. 273.

⁴⁸ Folger MSS L.b. 370, 451.

⁴⁹ Folger MS L.b. 386.

⁵⁰ Folger MSS L.b. 14, 307.

⁵¹ Folger MSS L.b. 377, 379.

⁵² Folger MS L.b. 379. It is clear, however that a grant had been under consideration for some time, for in March 1547/8 Edward Lord North, Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations requested that Hugh Losse draw up a survey of Blackfriars properties in Cawarden's tenure, and more Crown property was leased to him the next month. Folger MSS L.b. 372, 346.

⁵³ Folger MS L.b. 185.

brought in £159/16s.⁵⁴ Secondary literature generally presents post-monastic Blackfriars as in the sole domain of Thomas Cawarden and, later, of William More. As has already been shown, this was not the case: Cawarden's grant was only a part of the Blackfriars precinct, though Cawarden was eager to exploit his privileged role in the liberty fully. In addition to the prosaic duties of a landlord—the collection of rents and the development of property to maximise his income—Cawarden claimed possession of the liberty's longstanding franchises, and he took it upon himself to protect the precinct's independence.⁵⁵

As landlord, however, Cawarden had limited opportunities to increase his rental income at Blackfriars. None of the leases there was made for fewer than twenty-one years; even the shortest leases made in the years following the dissolution could not be renegotiated until the early 1560s, by which time Cawarden had died. Indeed, of two dozen-odd tenants listed in a Cawarden rental survey of 1555, only one was paying higher rent by 1560.⁵⁶

Cawarden was able to increase his income by letting unoccupied rooms to new tenants, which he accordingly did.⁵⁷ When Thomas Thirlby, bishop of Ely, pressed Cawarden to sell him a piece of void ground in 1554, Cawarden happily did so for £6/13/4d.⁵⁸ The following year Cawarden made a survey of void ground in the liberty.⁵⁹ The survey was the result of a contemporary battle with the precinct's residents over the need for a church, but Cawarden may also have intended to increase his income through exploitation of these undeveloped bits of land. There must still have been substantial open space within the walls of the old priory. The survey identifies four plots of open ground encompassing over sixteen thousand square feet.⁶⁰ Even as late as 1596 it was still possible for Lord Hunsdon to buy three houses with gardens and three orchards in the liberty.⁶¹ Gains from the sale of open land in the precinct would have been particularly

⁵⁴ Folger MSS L.b. 393, 410. It is highly likely, however, that the rental value of Cawarden's Blackfriars property would have been substantially lower in 1550, before Cawarden could have developed or subdivided habitable structures there.

⁵⁵ There are some peculiarities worth noting during Cawarden's ownership of the liberty Elizabeth Foster, for example, was a tenant of Cawarden from 1555 to 1560 'for the terme of her lyffe by the yearly rente of 3 odoriferous Flowers', while her contemporaries John and George Warren paid £30 per annum for the liberty's two tennis courts. Folger MSS L.b. 393, 414, 410.

⁵⁶ Folger MSS L.b. 393, 410.

⁵⁷ New tenants accounted for more than two-thirds of the increase in Cawarden's income from the liberty. Folger MS L.b. 410.

⁵⁸ Folger MSS L.b. 391, 395.

⁵⁹ Folger MS L.b. 399.

⁶⁰ Folger MSS L.b. 399. The 16,366 square feet identified as void by the survey represents about a quarter of the land included in Cawarden's 1550/1 grant, TNA C 66/831/63.

⁶¹ Handover, *History from 1276*, p. 73; Folger MS L.b. 374.

welcome to Cawarden that year. On 4 May 1555, he agreed to settle a £120 debt to a man called Mellys by giving him the rent from the liberty's two tennis courts for the following four years.⁶² He simultaneously cracked down on reckless tenants: another 1555 document reviews damage caused to a Blackfriars property by one of Cawarden's tenants.⁶³

From almost the moment Cawarden took control of his property in Blackfriars, he was locked in a battle with his neighbours and tenants over the parochial status of the liberty. Cawarden's grant had given him control over the church and churchyard along with

all the stones, tiles, slates, glass, iron, timber, lead roofing, and lead of the said late house formerly of the Friars Preachers aforesaid of London, or of, in or upon the church, cloister, dormitory, frater, chapel and chancel, and other the premises or any parcel thereof.⁶⁴

Stow and other antiquarians report that the steeple of the church had been pulled down by 1544, but surviving primary sources are silent on the matter.⁶⁵ We know that Cawarden bricked the residents out of the church soon after Henry VIII's death, but it seems that he did not begin demolition until his grant from Edward VI.⁶⁶ After that grant, Cawarden purportedly told the parishioners that 'if they wolde not take downe the sacramentes which dyd then hange over the alter in the said parisshe churche that he woulde pull it down'.⁶⁷ He vehemently denied having 'spake any thoes oppobryus words', but he nevertheless stripped the church and used it to store 'his majestieys pavylyans tentes maskes and revels'.⁶⁸

The post-monastic residents of Blackfriars proved remarkably willing to advocate for themselves to outside authorities. Cawarden's appropriation of their church provided them with an early opportunity to do so. Robert Harris, a Blackfriars resident who had leased his house from the last Dominican prior, led the way. In July 1554 he filed a 'byll of indytment' that included twenty-six complaints against Cawarden.⁶⁹ Harris's bill has not survived, but Cawarden's point-by-point response has.⁷⁰ Harris's fundamental contention was that Cawarden should provide a new parish church for the inhabitants. In his history of the precinct, P M Handover writes that 'whether there was a parish church

⁶² Folger MS L.b. 397. The debt was worth £120.

⁶³ Folger MS L.b. 471. Printed in A G Feuillerat, *Blackfriars Records* (Oxford, 1914), p. 121.

⁶⁴ TNA C 66/831/63.

⁶⁵ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 358.

⁶⁶ Folger MS L.b. 394.

⁶⁷ TNA C 1/1330/39.

⁶⁸ Folger MS L.b. 394; TNA C 1/1330/39.

⁶⁹ The bill is mentioned in a document produced by William More around 1560; Folger MS L.b. 425.

⁷⁰ Folger MS L.b. 394.

of St Ann before the Dissolution is not certain'.⁷¹ The bulk of contemporary evidence (Cawarden's protestations aside) suggests that there *had* been a parish of St Anne in the liberty before the departure of the friars. When Henry demanded a 'loan' from the people of London in 1522 to finance his war with France, a list was made detailing wealthy residents of the capital by parish. Those living within the Dominican precinct were listed under 'St Anne's within the Blacke Freers'.⁷² The lay residents of Blackfriars did not necessarily have a parish church *per se*. Like the residents of other religious precincts, they were more likely to use the priory church or one of its side chapels.

In support of his contention that Cawarden was responsible for the provision of a parish church, Robert Harris made claims about both the history of St Anne's and about Cawarden's behaviour toward the church and residents of the precinct. According to Harris, the residents of Blackfriars had enjoyed access to a chapel of St Anne within the friary church long before the dissolution. The friary provided a regular vicar for the pastoral care of the residents and to administer the sacraments; the Dominicans had even gone so far as to provide an open area to the north of the church to serve as a burial ground for lay residents of the precinct. Cawarden, according to Harris, ignored the masses that continued to be held in the old friary church after the dissolution and instead walled up the parish churchyard, pulled down the church walls and used the remaining structure as a stable. Cawarden vehemently denied Harris's allegations, but made no effort to provide an alternative explanation for the destruction of the old friary church.⁷³

The following year, 1555, the residents of Blackfriars made a more general complaint to Stephen Gardiner, then bishop of Winchester and Lord Chancellor. The residents claimed that they had always had 'free recourse to the said parische church aswell for the Receyvinge of the due administration of sacramentes and sacramentalles as also for the hearing of devyne servyse'.⁷⁴ They also indicated that their concerns were as much with the ongoing cost of the parish as the provision of a place for worship, since 'the said late house of the said late Blackfryers, dyd contynually funde at his owne proper costes and charges, A sufficiente curate to serve the said parishioners in the parisse Churche.' According to this 1555 petition, Cawarden had begun to use the church 'to lay in his majesteyes pavlyans, tentes, maskes and revels' in the 1540s. Only after his 1550 grant did he begin to demolish the church itself, using part of the site as a tennis court, 'to the

⁷¹ Handover, *History from 1276*, p. 5.

⁷² LPFD iii.1053.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ TNA C 1/1330/39.

greate greff, trowble and hevynes of your said Oraters.⁷⁵ A final, similar petition was made in 1556 to Nicholas Heath, archbishop of York and Gardiner's successor as Lord Chancellor.⁷⁶ Cawarden was finally ordered not only to provide local residents with a suitable place to worship (a garret above a flight of stairs that would collapse by the 1590s), but also held him responsible, as successor to the Dominican prior, for the payment of the parish vicar.⁷⁷

When Cawarden died in August 1559, he left debts and annuities worth more than his estate, and his will included specific instructions to his executors—his wife Elizabeth and William More—regarding the disposal of his property.⁷⁸ The City of London, whose attempts to purchase Blackfriars and the other London friaries had been dismissed by Henry, was eager to purchase the precinct from Cawarden's widow. In December 1559, William Boxe and Anthony Cage were appointed by the Court of Aldermen to meet with Elizabeth Cawarden 'for the purchasyng of her landes at the late Blackfryers to the Cyties use'.⁷⁹ They made some progress with her, apparently, as the following February another delegation was sent to 'conclud with the Lady Carden & her coexecutors for the purchase of all the landes & liberties' Cawarden held in Blackfriars.⁸⁰ The price was tentatively set at fourteen years purchase for tenements in possession and seven years purchase for 'all the residue whereof they have but only the reversyon'.⁸¹ A week later the delegation reported that Lady Cawarden was 'contentyd to sell the sayd landes' at the proposed rates, and the aldermen authorised them to 'conclude and go through with her' and to come to an agreement for purchasing other, void ground in the liberty 'as good cheape as they can'.⁸² Elizabeth Cawarden's death, however, pre-empted the sale and upset the City's carefully laid plans.

In her will, Lady Cawarden left her executors (William More and Thomas Harris) 'Full power and Auctoryty to bargayne sell & alienate all those my Landes rentes & Tenementes lying within the precynt of the Late black Fryers'.⁸³ William More chose to purchase the Blackfriars himself; the City could hardly expect to compete. Indeed, the

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ TNA C 1/1405/39-41.

⁷⁷ Folger MS L.b. 399.

⁷⁸ TNA PROB 11/43/4.

⁷⁹ CLRO Rep 14, fo 258v. 4 December 1559. Neither was an alderman at the time, though Boxe would become alderman of Billingsgate Ward in 1570.

⁸⁰ CLRO Rep 14, fo 292. 8 February 1559/60. The aldermen were mistaken; Lady Cawarden's only coexecutor was William More.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² CLRO Rep 14 fo 294. 13 February 1559/60.

⁸³ TNA PROB 11/43/382; Folger MS L.b. 417.

repertories of the Court of Aldermen record no attempt by the City to purchase the liberty after Elizabeth Cawarden's death. In any case, More was willing to pay substantially more than the City. He paid £2,000 for the Cawarden property in Blackfriars, which was still valued at between £104 and £160 p.a.⁸⁴ He began to sell leases in Blackfriars in June 1560.⁸⁵ As an executor of Thomas Cawarden's estate, More may have had some familiarity with the state of the Blackfriars properties even before Lady Cawarden's death. After buying the liberty, however, he began a full-scale investigation into his title. He examined the grants and sales made by the Court of Augmentations in the precinct and recorded his observations on the extent of his property there.⁸⁶ Under his control, the rental value of Blackfriars grew substantially. In the 1590s his annual income from the liberty was £282/1/8d, which increased to £309/13/8d by Michaelmas 1601.⁸⁷ More brought stable oversight to the liberty, and he kept it more or less intact until his death in July 1600.

Residents

Blackfriars has never suffered a bad reputation; for all the complaints about its playhouses, no one ever claimed that the area offered homes to rogues or thieves. The antiquarian J M Plumstead suggested that Thomas Cawarden was responsible for transforming the enclave into 'a fashionable area, renting accommodation to the aristocracy'.⁸⁸ As we have already seen, Blackfriars had been popular among noble and gentry families long before Cawarden arrived there. Prominent courtiers and other wealthy laymen had made their homes in Blackfriars since the end of the fifteenth century. No substantial list of Blackfriars' lay residents survives before 1522, when the Lords Zouche and Cobham were listed alongside seven knights and six gentlemen wealthy enough to contribute to Henry's forced loan. There had been more humble residents before the dissolution, as well. Servants of the friars had been housed in small tenements along the River Fleet, but it is impossible to identify many of them individually. We do know that in November 1484 John Alforde, a shoemaker living in

⁸⁴ Folger MS L.b. 414. The City's offer to Lady Cawarden would therefore have been somewhere between £728 and £2240 for the property, but likely would have been toward the below £1500, since leases had been sold for most of the Cawarden property.

⁸⁵ Folger MS L.b. 310.

⁸⁶ Folger MSS L.b. 425, 426. He also drew up a memorandum detailing the traditional rights claimed by St Anne's parishioners. MS L.b. 442.

⁸⁷ Folger MSS L.b. 456, 318.

⁸⁸ J M Plumstead, *Portrait of Blackfriars, A Liberty in Royal Tenure, and the Ward of Castle Baynard* (London, 1881), p. 10.

Blackfriars, was arrested, convicted and executed.⁸⁹ The surrender of the friary to the Crown in 1538 brought a rapid increase in the population of the liberty, as laymen took up residence in former friary buildings.

In the midst of the 1550s battle over the precinct church, Cawarden claimed he had fewer than eighty tenants in his Blackfriars properties.⁹⁰ Contemporary depositions suggest otherwise. The pastor of the adjacent parish of St Andrew Wardrobe testified in the mid-1550s ‘that ther be people...unto the number of 800 inhabiting in the blak fryers, And the most part of them tenantes unto Sir Thomas Cawardane’.⁹¹ William Staples, a former Blackfriars resident then living in the nearby St Sepulchre Parish, likewise testified ‘thar be at this day 600 people enhabiteth within the blak fryers’.⁹² Cawarden had good reason to exaggerate the role of other freeholders and to minimise his own place as a landlord in Blackfriars since he was trying to avoid financial responsibility for the provision of a church there. It is more difficult to imagine why both Hope and Staples would deliberately overestimate the liberty’s population. Neither stood to gain materially from the matter at hand. Even if we accept Staples’ more conservative estimate of six hundred residents around 1555, it is obvious that Blackfriars had grown rapidly since 1538 and that is was not inhabited solely by noble or gentry households.⁹³ The upper classes did feature prominently in the life of the precinct into the early seventeenth century and their actions there are relatively well-recorded.

Confusion over the tenure of property existed alongside uncertainty about the extent of Blackfriars’ franchises. And like the latter, the former had to be addressed on an ad hoc basis. In 1566 the Court of Exchequer announced that that William Brooke, Lord Cobham, owed William More £98/3/4d for nineteen years rent on his house and garden in the precinct.⁹⁴ The Court of Augmentations in 1545 had confirmed the lease of a tenement to George Brooke (William’s father) worth £5/6/8d annually. The grant, in Latin, also includes a note in English that the tenement was rated at nine years purchase, or £48.⁹⁵ Both Thomas Cawarden and Lord Cobham apparently assumed that the English addendum indicated that the previous Lord Cobham had bought the property

⁸⁹ SHC MS LM/1438; G Anstruther, ‘The Last Days of the London Blackfriars’, *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, 45 (1975), p. 214. The prior won the subsequent battle with the sheriff of London over the property Alforde forfeited as a felon.

⁹⁰ Folger MS L.b. 402.

⁹¹ Folger MS L.b. 385.

⁹² Folger MSS L.b. 385, 442.

⁹³ Staples’ estimate is not unreasonable. I have personally identified more than 1,100 residents of Blackfriars between 1520 and 1620, a number that does not include names found only in the parish registers.

⁹⁴ Folger MS L.b. 433.

⁹⁵ Folger MS L.b. 370.

freehold. Cawarden certainly included Cobham in a list of freeholders drawn up in 1559.⁹⁶ It is likely that the error regarding the nature of Cobham's tenure was discovered when William More began to research the precise extent of his possessions, and that he asked the Court of Exchequer to investigate further. The debt did not overly strain Cobham's relationship with More. A few years later More agreed to lease Cobham further rooms in the precinct for £10 p.a.⁹⁷ He even allowed Cobham to use his own mansion in the precinct during the marriage of Cobham's daughter. Cobham had written to More complaining that 'my romes are so scante, as I cannott well doo it with owt the helpe of my good neyghbors (spetially of yow)'.⁹⁸

Soon after taking possession of his Blackfriars property, William More realised that the concentration of noble and gentry households in the neighbourhood had its drawbacks. For those who lived in early modern London (and in all pre-industrial cities) water was a powerful marker of status.⁹⁹ The swelling population of the capital—and the waste it produced—compromised water from both local wells and the River Thames.¹⁰⁰ Water was first piped into London around 1245, but it was not until the late fifteenth century that private supplies of piped water became feasible.¹⁰¹ Even in Elizabeth's reign, private water supplies were too expensive for all but the wealthiest families.¹⁰² Londoners instead got their water from water carriers or the civic fountains that were increasingly common by the late sixteenth century.¹⁰³ For almost two decades after the dissolution, Blackfriars residents relied solely on the water carriers, or they drew their own water from the nearby, polluted river, 'for in the Cyty yf they goo to use enye [of the civic fountains], thaye are forbydden so to do by cause they be exempt from the Cytye'.¹⁰⁴ In 1556 Thomas Cawarden paid for the construction of a conduit to supply water to his house in the precinct.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁶ Folger MS L.b. 462.

⁹⁷ Folger MS L.b. 311.

⁹⁸ Folger MS L.b. 451.

⁹⁹ M S R Jenner, 'From Conduit Community to Commercial Network? Water in London, 1500-1725', in P Griffiths and M S R Jenner (eds), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2000), p. 250.

¹⁰⁰ Wells were expensive, and by 1400 if not earlier, the demand on the water table made unpumped wells all but useless; D Keene, 'Issues of Water in Medieval London to c. 1300', *Urban History*, 28 (2001), p. 173.

¹⁰¹ Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 256.

¹⁰² H W Dickinson, *Water Supply of Greater London* (London, 1954), pp. 14-16.

¹⁰³ Conduits and standards, from which all could collect water, stood in many of the major thoroughfares of the Tudor City of London—there were twelve by the 1630s; Jenner, 'From Conduit Community', p. 252.

¹⁰⁴ Folger MS L.b. 423.

¹⁰⁵ Folger MS L.b. 405.

After Cawarden's death in 1559, his widow permitted Sir Henry Nevill to take a quill, or small pipe, from her water main for the house he was building next to hers. At the same time, she gave the surplus water from her conduit for the 'the use of the por inhabitauntes within the prycinct'.¹⁰⁶ This was a great boon to the community; the public water fountain was prominent enough to be included in William Cecil's 1579 notes on the 'order of the presente goverment nowe used in the blacke friers'.¹⁰⁷ Such a water supply was both a convenience and a matter of pride.¹⁰⁸ When Henry Brooke, Lord Cobham, bought Nevill's house in 1600/1, his right to a quill of water from the Cawarden conduit (now belonging to the More family) featured prominently in the deed of sale.¹⁰⁹

Cawarden must have been among the first in that part of London to have his own supply of water. Soon after its completion, Cawarden received a letter from his 'loving frend' William Herbert, earl of Pembroke, asking him to investigate the possibility of extending the pipe to Pembroke's home at the nearby Castle Baynard.¹¹⁰ Cawarden must have been amenable to the idea, for Pembroke installed pipes within his house in anticipation of a quill of water from Blackfriars. Four years later, when William More purchased the precinct, the water supply still had not arrived. Pembroke asked More to honour Cawarden's commitment.¹¹¹ More protested that it would not be possible to spare water from his supply, as he himself at 'sondrye tymes had no water at all'.¹¹² According to his plumber, More wrote, increasing the supply to accommodate Pembroke's needs would require the replacement of the whole system, at a cost of £500, 'more than my por abylyty ys able to retche'.¹¹³ Still, Pembroke insisted that he be satisfied, and More worried that the earl might secretly tap the pipe. Noble and gentry households were frequently chastised for overtaxing piped water systems. In 1561—about the time Pembroke insisted on a quill of water from More—a water riot nearly broke out after Lord Paget's overuse of water compromised the public conduit in Fleet Street¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ Folger MS L.b. 421.

¹⁰⁷ BL Lansd 155 fo 80v.

¹⁰⁸ Mark Jenner points out that 'Private sources, even ones shared between the inhabitants of a lane or alley, were by no means universal. They were normally closely guarded'; Jenner, 'From Conduit Community', p. 251.

¹⁰⁹ Folger MS L.b. 312.

¹¹⁰ Folger MS L.b. 405.

¹¹¹ Folger MS L.b. 422.

¹¹² Folger MSS L.b. 421, 423.

¹¹³ Folger MSS L.b. 421, 423.

¹¹⁴ Jenner, 'From Conduit Community', pp. 253-4.

Fearing Pembroke's reaction to continued refusal, More drew up a memorandum of the relevant statutes regarding the stealing of water from conduits.¹¹⁵ Such behaviour was not uncommon.¹¹⁶ During Lady Cawarden's brief period of ownership, she had learned that her conduit had been tapped as it made its way through West Smithfield, a problem that More addressed soon after buying the liberty.¹¹⁷ Despite his posturing, Pembroke dropped that matter after More insisted that it was financially impossible. In 1562 Pembroke was understandably angry to learn that Sir Humphrey Brown had recently begun to use water from More's conduit. More protested that Brown, one of the Justices of the Common Pleas, had tapped the pipe unlawfully and without permission, but that he hesitated to bring suit against 'a father of the lawe and a Judge' for fear of being soundly defeated.¹¹⁸

Playing in Blackfriars

The advent of playhouses at Blackfriars raised tensions between the genteel residents of the liberty and their neighbours. The story of the theatres situated in Blackfriars has been told many times. Scholars like Edmund Chambers, Irwin Smith and Andrew Gurr have illuminated not only the technical aspects of theatrical performance but also the social conditions that surrounded dramatic enterprise in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Although Blackfriars had been connected to the Revels office since the 1540s, the first proper theatre in Blackfriars was not built until 1576. After several months of negotiations, William More agreed to lease six contiguous rooms (in what had been priory frater) to Richard Farrant for £14 per year. Farrant was master of the choristers of the Chapel Royal, and he ostensibly rented the space to accommodate and teach the choristers when the queen was resident in the capital.¹¹⁹ Flaunting More's disapproval, however, Farrant pulled down the partitions between the rooms and began to offer public access to the boys' performances there in 1576.¹²⁰ In 1579 the City constables entered the theatre to eject the players but failed to permanently

¹¹⁵ Folger MSS L.b. 424, 430.

¹¹⁶ J Getzler, *A History of Water Rights at Common Law* (Oxford, 2004), p. 118; Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 257-8.

¹¹⁷ Folger MS L.b. 421.

¹¹⁸ Folger MS L.b. 431.

¹¹⁹ Folger MSS L.b. 446, 447, 350; R Bowers, 'Farrant, Richard (c.1528-1580)', ODNB; Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, p. 155.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 242.

close the playhouse.¹²¹ After Farrant's death in 1580 the property passed from his widow to his former partner William Hunnis, then quickly to Edward de Vere, earl of Oxford, and finally to Oxford's protégé John Lyly. Conditions in Farrant's lease had prohibited its transfer, and More repossessed the building in 1584, returning it to the use of the eminent fencing instructor Rocco Bonetti, who had occupied it before Farrant.¹²²

In 1596, with the lease of his Shoreditch playhouse (the Theatre) set to expire, James Burbage set his sights on Farrant's former venue, in what Irwin Smith describes as 'one of the most fashionable districts in London, close at hand for the courtly playgoer and far from the suburbs with their odious stews'.¹²³ The City had prohibited playing in inns in 1595, giving the Blackfriars location further appeal; its centrality afforded it a local population recently deprived of dramatic fare. With the support of Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon (a Blackfriars freeholder) Burbage purchased the building from William More for £600, and immediately invested £400 in its refurbishment.¹²⁴ Both Burbage's experience in Shoreditch and Farrant's in Blackfriars suggested that running a playhouse on leased property led to unnecessary complications. Burbage's chosen location for the new playhouse was not as simple as he had hoped, though. The City did not repeat its 1579 meddling, but the inhabitants of the precinct, never hesitant to fend for themselves, petitioned the Privy Council in November 1596 to prevent their new neighbour from continuing with his plans. A playhouse, they warned, would

grow to be a very great annoyance and trouble, not only to all the noblemen and gentlemen thereabout inhabiting but also a generall inconvenience to all the inhabitants of the same precinct, both by reason of the great resort and gathering togeather of all manner of vagrant and lewde persons that, under cullor of resorting to the playes, will come thither and worke all manner of mischeefe...and besides, that the same playhouse is so neere the Church that the noyse of the drummes and trumpetts will greatly disturbe and hinder both the minisers and parishioners in tyme of devine service and sermons¹²⁵

Among the petitioners were many of Blackfriars' most prominent inhabitants, including Lady Elizabeth Russell; George Carey, Lord Hunsdon; Puritan vicar Stephen Egerton; eminent physician William Delaune and Italian bookseller Ascanius de Renialme. The signature of the Lord Cobham (Lord Chamberlain and patron of the Chamberlain's men)

¹²¹ R H Harrison, 'A Brief Account of Some of the Places of Interest in Blackfriars, London', *Journal of the London Society*, 343 (1958), p. 34. It is worth noting that the City was simultaneously in the last throes of a legal battle over its role in Blackfriars that had dominated the 1570s. See pp. 133-7, below.

¹²² Folger MSS L.b. 350, 446, 352; Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars*, pp. 149-51. For more on Bonettie, see p. 148, below.

¹²³ Ibid., pp. 161-2.

¹²⁴ Folger MS L.b. 356; E K Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols, (Oxford, 1923), ii.86.

¹²⁵ TNA SP 12/260/116.

is notably absent. Lord Hunsdon, meanwhile, did not oppose playing generally; he succeeded Cobham as Lord Chamberlain (and accepted the associated patronage of the troupe) the following spring.¹²⁶ By then the council had already blocked further development of Burbage's property, and Burbage himself died a few months later.

In 1600 Burbage's sons Richard and Cuthbert leased the property to Henry Evans for £140 p.a, and the following year they purchased an adjacent tenement for £95 from William More's son and heir George.¹²⁷ Evans had managed Farrant's playhouse in the Blackfriars; he ignored local the threat of local objections and began to use the property as a playhouse for a new boys' troupe as early as 1601.¹²⁸ The Children of Blackfriars received a royal patent that specifically authorised performing in the liberty in January 1603/4, a patent which was revoked in March 1607/8, when the company was disbanded by the Privy Council 'for lewd words'.¹²⁹ Despite its brief life, Evans's company had a lasting effect on the precinct. Just weeks after Evans surrendered his lease, the City received a new charter extending its authority over Blackfriars. Neither the residents of the precinct nor the City tried to prevent the conversion of the Blackfriars playhouse for the use of a men's company, though both groups had clearly established their opposition to such endeavours.

The King's Men, who took over the Blackfriars Theatre in 1608, enjoyed royal patronage, which may have discouraged potential opponents. An outbreak of plague and the need for structural repairs delayed the opening of the new theatre until the winter of 1610/11.¹³⁰ London's last remaining boys' company, the Children of the Queen's Revels, was at that point performing in Whitefriars, a few hundred yards to the east of Blackfriars. When its lease there ended in 1614 its directors secured a royal patent to build a new playhouse in Blackfriars. The City, which controlled the precinct after 1608, objected to a second theatre there. In September 1615 the Privy Council sided with the City on a technicality—the patent had mistakenly described Blackfriars as lying 'within the suburbs of the Citie'. The council's decision was initially ignored; construction there continued, but in January 1616/7, the council ordered the lord mayor to have the new playhouse pulled down.¹³¹

¹²⁶ W T MacCaffrey, 'Carey, Henry, first Baron Hunsdon (1526-1596)', ODNB; J Lock, 'Brooke, William, tenth Baron Cobham (1527-1597)', ODNB.

¹²⁷ Folger MS L.b. 357.

¹²⁸ For further details on the different receptions of children and adult players, see Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, pp. 46, 53.

¹²⁹ CSPD, James I, 1603-1610, p 413. TNA SP 14/31/73.

¹³⁰ Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars*, p. 247; Slack, *Impact of Plague*, p. 146.

¹³¹ APC, vol 35 (1616-7), p. 123.

Perhaps encouraged by the City's success in stopping the relocation of a children's troupe, Blackfriars residents took aim at the already operational Blackfriars playhouse. With their precinct's historical independence extinguished, the residents abandoned direct appeals to the Privy Council. In January 1618/9, they submitted two petitions to the lord mayor, one from the officers and clergy of the precinct, the other from two dozen residents.¹³² Unlike the 1596 petition, the signatories of 1618/9 included neither peers nor knights. It was, nevertheless, more successful; at their behest, the Court of Common Council ordered the closure of the theatre on 21 January 1618/9.¹³³ Two months later, however, King James issued the troupe a new license authorising them to continue playing at the Blackfriars playhouse.¹³⁴ The theatre continued unmolested until 1631, when the churchwardens and constables of the precinct drew up another petition, this time to the bishop of London, William Laud. Laud, a privy counsellor, forwarded the petition to the full council, which took no action until 1633.¹³⁵ In October of that year, the council drafted a plan to buy the playhouse from the group of men who owned it. The plan was scrapped when the proprietors demanded an exorbitant sum. The council instead issued regulations restricting the access of wheeled traffic to the playhouse.¹³⁶ Almost three decades after the residents had petitioned to protest the entry of the meaner sort under cover of attending plays, the true nuisance of the playhouse proved to be the disruption caused by the carriages of the great and the good attending the theatre.

By the end of the 1630s, the rift between King Charles and his critics was increasingly apparent. The Privy Council and the Caroline bishops were increasingly at odds with the 'godly' members of the House of Commons. Puritans in Blackfriars had a long history of hostility toward the playhouse there. After the 1620s, local opposition took on an increasingly evangelical tone.¹³⁷ In 1640/1 the residents of the precinct drew up a final anti-theatre petition, this time to Parliament. In due course, Parliament took up

¹³² CLRO Rem v.28, 29. The petition from the officers and clergy of the precinct (v.28) includes as signatories its churchwardens, sidemen, constables, collectors for the poor, and scavengers, who state that they find the theatre to inhibit the church, the keeping of the peace, the assistance of the poor and the cleaning of the streets.

¹³³ TNA SP 14/105/61.

¹³⁴ Qtd in Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars*, pp. 495-6.

¹³⁵ The 1631 petition was first printed by the infamous forger J P Collier, *The History of English Dramatic Poetry to the Time of Shakespeare; and Annals of the Stage to the Restoration*, 1st edn, 3 vols, (London, 1831), i.31-29 (sic) and subsequently by J Q Adams, *Shakespearean Playhouses: A History of English Theatres from the Beginnings to the Restoration* (Boston, MA, 1917), pp. 228-30. Arthur and Janet Freeman, unable to determine whether it was among Collier's many forged documents, include it as 'questioned data'; A Freeman and J I Freeman, *John Payne Collier: Scholarship and Forgery in the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols, (London, 2004), ii.1097.

¹³⁶ *Privy Council Registers, Charles I*, ix.267, 343, 355, 417; CLRO Rem vii.101.

¹³⁷ A Pritchard, 'Puritans and the Blackfriars Theatre: The Cases of Mistresses Duck and Drake', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 45 (1994), pp. 92-5; Gurr, *Shakespearean Stage*, p. 12.

the cause. On 2 September 1642, the House of Commons declared the closure of all playhouses and ordered the dispersal of the players.¹³⁸ The theatre itself was pulled down on 6 August 1655, and tenements were built in its place.¹³⁹ The series of petitions through which Blackfriars residents attempted to affect the playhouse in their midst does not simply indicate that they were aware of the different centres of authority in early modern London. It also suggests that they were aware of the dynamic balance of power between those centres, and they consistently appealed to the authority they hoped would be both sympathetic to their pleas and powerful enough to enforce its decisions.

Governance

The government of Blackfriars was never formalised between 1538 and 1608. There were certainly administrative structures in place, as we shall see, but Blackfriars lacked the formal hierarchy of local offices found in the other liberties included in this study. Jurisdiction over the precinct passed from the friary to the Crown, which granted jurisdiction to Sir Thomas Cawarden in 1550.¹⁴⁰ On his death in 1559, it passed to his widow Elizabeth and then to William More when he bought the Cawarden's Blackfriars holdings *en masse* in 1560.¹⁴¹ His son George More, who received Blackfriars after William's death in 1600, retained his family's rights in the liberty until the City of London's 1608 charter established its control there. The Cawardens and the Mores (and before them, the Crown) were primarily interested in Blackfriars as landlords. While both Cawarden and More made their homes there and dedicated themselves to defending the liberty's privileges against the City, their responsibilities as governors were clearly secondary to the financial benefits of owning a great deal of land in the heart of London. Neither Cawarden nor William More showed any interest in the creation of a coherent administrative system to oversee the precinct. After battling his neighbours over the liberty's parochial arrangements, Cawarden may have actually opposed further organisational structures within Blackfriars.

¹³⁸ Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars*, pp. 282-3; S D'Ewes, *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'ewes, from the First Recess of the Long Parliament to the Withdrawal of King Charles from London*, ed W H Coates (London, 1942), pp. 412.

¹³⁹ Folger V.b. 275.

¹⁴⁰ CPR *Edw. VI*, iii.336.

¹⁴¹ More made close study of the precinct after his 1560 purchase. In addition to writing out the specifics of all the Blackfriars grants that had preceded Cawarden's, More assessed the details of Cawarden's grant. After a detailed analysis of the use of the Latin term *domus* and its English translation *house* in Parliamentary statute and in the records of the Friars Preachers and the Court of Augmentations, he concluded that the grant's stipulation 'that the patentee shall have and enjoye all lyberies preveleges and frachesses infra scitu &c que aliquis prior sine gubernator, & fratres imper dicte domus' had transferred the jurisdictional rights over the precinct, which the priory had ceded to the Crown in 1538, to Cawarden. Folger MS L.b. 425.

The lack of formal governmental structures did not prevent Blackfriars residents from acting in an organised way. In a particularly interesting case in 1580, a group of ten householders prepared a written declaration concerning the behaviour of two of their neighbours recently evicted by William More ‘through default of payment of rent and for not doinge suche other dueties and covenantes as to the same Sir William was due’.¹⁴² Their motivation, they wrote, was ‘the duetie of every Christian to testifie and declare a trueth’. One of the evicted men, William Stone, was held by his neighbours to be a bad seed:

we knowe that he was accused for takinge money to his owne use out of the basin wherein was gathered money for the power, he beinge then collector, since which tyme he hathe so lewdly behaved himself that being filthely burned by wicked wemen and by serjantes serched and so found, and thereupon punished in Bridwell, yet not withstandinge of that ill conversacion of life he is no whit ashamed, neither hath made any shewe of repentance nor reconciliacion neither before our preacher or parishenors.¹⁴³

In contrast, the householders declared their support for the other evicted tenant, George Bowden. ‘As far as wee could at any tyme perceive,’ they wrote, ‘he hathe governed himself civilly and honestly, beinge a poore man and charged with wief and children.’¹⁴⁴ In a period when one’s social credit was a precious commodity, such a testament from previous neighbours was an invaluable boon to someone looking for a new home. Taken as a whole, the declaration is a good reminder of the informal ways in which liberty residents were able to act communally.

It is clear that Blackfriars’ inhabitants had a clear notion of the principles that organised life there. At the heart of that notion was a jealously guarded set of rights inherited from the friary. These included freedom from arrest within the liberty by officers of the City; freedom from searches, except by the constables of the liberty at the request of a JP; freedom from serving in City office; the right of artisans to practice their trades and exemption from taxes levied specifically on the City.¹⁴⁵ It is worth noting that these rights, claimed by Blackfriars residents after a protracted battle with the City of London, do not imply a wholesale rejection of outside authority. They questioned the City’s right to interfere in the liberty, but they did not claim exemption from the authority of the Crown, Parliament, or the bishops of London.

¹⁴² Folger MS L.b. 453.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ BL Lansd 155, fo 79v-80; TNA SP 12/137/74; SHC LM/1438.

In the 1560s the City made a series of small incursions in Blackfriars, to the annoyance of residents there. Most firsthand evidence of these minor conflicts has been lost. The City intermittently appointed its ‘lerned counsellors...to follow the Cities cause concernyng their right & interest to & in the soile and precincte of the late Blakfriers’.¹⁴⁶ By the end of the 1560s, More and the other Blackfriars freeholders had accumulated a list of grievances against the City. In a letter to the lord mayor in autumn 1570, William More protested the City’s abuse of the bridge that connected Blackfriars and the City-owned Bridewell Hospital, along with the interference of the City’s coroner in the liberty and the harassment of Blackfriars’ bakers by civic officers. He reminded the lord mayor of the ‘the priveliges & lybertyes of the precynct’ and entreated him to ‘stryve herafter’ to cease meddling.¹⁴⁷ Probably about the same time, the liberty’s other freeholders asked the Privy Council to intervene, citing the ‘losse & pregidyce of the Quenes Majesties rightes & royall jurisdictions’.¹⁴⁸ They complained that, under pretence of orders from the Privy Council for the containment of plague and enumeration of strangers, the City had ‘of late of their own auctoritie wrongfully entered into the seid exempt place & precinct pretendynge the same to be within their liberties of the seid Citie’, imprisoning inhabitants and claiming the right to set rates and prices for victuallers.¹⁴⁹

The City responded by questioning the rights claimed by the inhabitants of Blackfriars. In a counterclaim to the Privy Council, the lord mayor argued that the City had long maintained a role in the Blackfriars. Directly contradicting the freeholders’ claims, the City asserted that felonies had ‘bene enquired of, presented and tried within the Cytte’; that householders in the liberty had traditionally ‘participated in the City’s annual wardmotes, and served in offices such as scavenger’; and that they had ‘allways paide fifteenths and subsidies with the inhabitantes of the warde of Farrindon within.’ The City also claimed that its sheriff had the authority to execute arrests within the liberty and that the lord mayor could set market prices there.¹⁵⁰ The City, however, did not provide the council with evidence of its claims. The City’s contentions suggest that its interest in Blackfriars was financial as well as jurisdictional. London’s chartered control over commerce was undermined by the rapid growth of the liberties and suburbs which, though technically within the ambit of the livery companies, were practically difficult to monitor and regulate. Likewise, the exclusion of Blackfriars householders—

¹⁴⁶ CLRO Rep 15, fo 78v; Jo 19, fo 37.

¹⁴⁷ Folger MS L.b. 460.

¹⁴⁸ Folger MS L.b. 469.

¹⁴⁹ Folger MS L.b. 469.

¹⁵⁰ Folger, MS L.b.470.

many of them well-off—from London’s contributions to lay subsidies and military levies made it more difficult for the City to raise the required sums. The precise response of the Privy Council is unknown; whatever it was, it failed to prevent further conflict between Blackfriars and the City.

London’s aldermen were notably reluctant to take new duties on themselves. The City annexed Southwark in 1550, but it never fully integrated it into the system of civic government.¹⁵¹ The rights claimed by the City in Blackfriars should not, therefore, be accepted as evidence that the City was solely (or even primarily) concerned with its jurisdictional rights in the liberty. Each of the rights asserted by the lord mayor offered a direct financial benefit to the City. If upheld, the City’s purported authority in Blackfriars would have increased the City’s tax base and the pool of potential local office-holders and would have lined the City’s coffers with fines and the escheated property of felons caught in Blackfriars. When William More rebutted the City’s claims, he pointed out that they threatened the queen’s interests in Blackfriars as much as More’s.¹⁵² More was the first person to explicitly link Blackfriars to the royal verge—the area extending twelve miles from the monarch’s person, within which royal officials had privileged jurisdiction.¹⁵³ Doing so certainly served his needs—it was enough to convince the Privy Council to take his side against the City—but it also shows that he recognised clear-cut limits to the liberty’s independence from outside authority.

After 1570, tensions between Blackfriars and the City continued to mount, and confrontations became more frequent and more intense. In July 1571—ignoring the increasing sympathy shown to Blackfriars’ franchises by the Privy Council—the City sent two aldermen to view a recently built turret that encroached on the City wall between Blackfriars and the River Fleet.¹⁵⁴ When a baker’s apprentice attempted to expel them, they committed him to ward, ‘for that the same [precinct] ys within the liberties of the Cytie and ought to be under the obedience and government of the lorde maior as other

¹⁵¹ See pp. 26-7, above.

¹⁵² Folger MS L.b. 469; SHC MS LM/1438.

¹⁵³ The jurisdiction of the medieval court of Marshalsea—which heard cases involving members of the king’s household—were coterminous with the boundary of the verge. A 1540 Act (32 Hen VIII, c.20, §7) rescinded the exemption of previously monastic sites from the authority of the court of Marshalsea. The court of the Verge was not established until 1611 (to ‘determine all causes arriving within the verge in which neither party was of the royal household’), but other offices linked with the verge (the clerk of the markets and the coroner, most prominently) had existed for centuries. Johnson, *Southwark and the City*, pp. 266-8; W R Jones, ‘The Court of the Verge: The Jurisdiction of the Steward and Marshall of the Household in Later Medieval England’, *The Journal of British Studies*, 10 (1970), pp. 1-29; D G Greene, ‘The Court of the Marshalsea in Late Tudor and Stuart England’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 20 (1976), pp. 276-9.

¹⁵⁴ CLRO Rep 17, fo 34.

places of the Cytie.¹⁵⁵ The liberty's officers ignored the aldermen's order. Six months later, the aldermen again asserted the right to interfere in Blackfriars, sending one group to inspect the site of a proposed set of stairs into the river and another to post the City's market regulations in the liberty. Both were rebuffed.¹⁵⁶ For almost two years thereafter, a stalemate existed between the two sides. Then, in February 1573/4, when the City's recorder William Fleetwood attempted to enter Blackfriars, he was met with the 'very lewde and evell behavior' of William Frean, who 'very much abused and railed' Fleetwood for presuming to enter without the permission of a local officer. With the help of two City constables, Frean was committed to the prison at Newgate.¹⁵⁷ The aldermen were irate. They sent a delegation to complain in person to the Privy Council and initiated a suit in the Court of Common Pleas. With interim permission from the justices of that court, Fleetwood re-entered Blackfriars a fortnight later to assist in the ejection of a squatter from a tenement in the liberty.¹⁵⁸

While it is clear that friction with Blackfriars had spurred the aldermen to action, the City made a conscious effort to broaden the scope of its complaints to include the liberties more generally. In a May 1574 memorandum to the Privy Council, the aldermen complained of disorders in 'certen places' claiming exemption from the jurisdiction of the lord mayor and aldermen. The City's specific allegations—which unfortunately do not survive—were forwarded to the Court of Common Pleas together with 'an other Supplication of divers noble men and gentill men inhabiting the Black Friers', who refuted the City's claims.¹⁵⁹ By all indications, late sixteenth century Blackfriars counted among its residents more powerful and respectable men than any other liberty; they were naturally in the best position to respond to the City's suit. Neither the repertories nor the *Acts of the Privy Council* name the specific areas involved in the suit, but both consistently refer to the 'exempt places' in the plural. At the conclusion of the suit the court ruled only on the franchises of two liberties, but the City had others in mind as well. In a contemporary petition to the Privy Council, the residents of Blackfriars asked the counsellors to 'examine whither suche disorders as are pretended in the Cities bill have been committed in the said places and in which of them'.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ CLRO Let Bk X, fo 71.

¹⁵⁶ CLRO Let Bk X, fos 122v, 128; Rep 17, fos 267, 271.

¹⁵⁷ CLRO Let Bk X, fo 287v.

¹⁵⁸ CLRO Let Bx X, fo 288; Rep 18, fos 163, 169.

¹⁵⁹ *APC*, vol 8, p 240. 16 May 1574.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

The court's term came to a close at the end of June, but the judges had not yet reached a conclusion. The Privy Council wrote to the lord mayor, asking him to 'give order that none of th'officers shold intermeddle to the impechement of such liberties and privildges as hitherto they have injoyed, till by their Lordships other order were taken'.¹⁶¹ Such an interim order could hardly have encouraged the City, especially as there was no further word from the justices for almost eighteen months. Then, in January 1575/6, the aldermen assembled the City's 'learned Councell' to reconsider the matter.¹⁶² On 20 January the City's representatives finally presented the case to Sir Christopher Wray at Sergeant's Inn.¹⁶³ They returned to Fleet Street in July to present further evidence to Lord Chief Justice Wray.¹⁶⁴ By February 1576/7, the City's patience must have been wearing thin: five aldermen were sent back to Fleet Street to 'move their Lordshippes to make their reportes unto the right honourable prystie councell of their opynions concerninge exempte places'.¹⁶⁵ A similar plea was repeated the following November,¹⁶⁶ but it too seems to have had little effect on the progress of the suit.

In December 1578 the Privy Council renewed its involvement in the case. It asked the two judges handling the matter to call before them representatives of each side and to 'ende the same accordinge to lawe and justice'.¹⁶⁷ The resulting notes on the liberties of the Black and Whitefriars and the 'well goverment of the same' are the only surviving evidence in the case in defense of the liberties.¹⁶⁸ In its December 1578 letter to the lords chief justice, the Privy Council expressed concern about the injury to the queen that might result from the expansion of the City's jurisdiction in the liberties. By virtue of its charter, the City of London enjoyed rights within its boundaries that were normally reserved to the Crown, to escheated property or that of convicted felons, for example. The council therefore requested that the justices 'call unto them her Majesties learned Councell to heare what they alledge for her Majesties interest and right in the weefes, fellones goodes, &c., and other escheats which the citie, under pretence of such Liberties, seeke to take awaye'.¹⁶⁹ The scepticism of the royal government could not have helped the City's case, especially since the justices' were only responsible for presenting their opinion to the Privy Council, which intended to make the final ruling itself. Nevertheless,

¹⁶¹ *APC*, vol 8, p 257. 28 June 1574.

¹⁶² CLRO Rep 19, fo 23v. Jan 1575/6.

¹⁶³ CLRO Rep 19, fo 24. 17 Jan 1575/6.

¹⁶⁴ CLRO Rep 19, fo 95. 10 Jul 1576. In this instance, the City seems to have sent six men to represent it.

¹⁶⁵ CLRO Rep 19, fo 172. 12 Feb 1576/7.

¹⁶⁶ CLRO Rep 19, fo 266. 25 Nov 1577.

¹⁶⁷ *APC*, vol 10, p. 429. 18 Dec 1578.

¹⁶⁸ BL Lansd MS 155, fos 79v, ff.

¹⁶⁹ *APC*, vol 10, p. 429. 18 Dec 1578.

the aldermen continued sending agents to hurry the judges along.¹⁷⁰ They even enlisted the assistance of the Master of the Rolls, Sir William Cordell, asking him ‘to be a meanes unto the Lordes Cheefe Justices to make their favorable reporte touchinge the Cityes interest in exempte places’.¹⁷¹

This appeal to the Master of the Rolls is the last time the suit is mentioned in the City’s records. Four months later, in May 1580, the Privy Council issued its decision in the case. Restricted to Blackfriars and Whitefriars, the ruling was a stinging defeat for the City:

Whereas there hathe longe depended betwene the inhabitauntes of the White and Blache Fryers within the Cittie of London and the Lord Maior and Corporacion of the said Cittie a controversie concerninge the liberties of the saide Fryers, the inhabitauntes clayming an exemption from the jurisdiccion of the saide Maior to be helde imediatlie from the Quenes Majestie, the Lords of the Privie Counsell having heretofore committed th'examination of the said controversie unto the two Lords Cheef Justices and the rest of her Highnes' learned Counsell...[it is] ordered that all matters betwene the Cittie and them concerninge the liberties of the saide Fryers shold remaine *in statu quo prius*, and the Lord Maior of London not to intermeddle in any cawse within the saide liberties, savinge onlie for the punishment of felons as heretofore he hath don'.¹⁷²

Whether to protect the erosion of the Crown’s rights in these heavily populated precincts, or simply in recognition of their centuries of independence, the Privy Council’s decision was a sharp blow to the City. The ruling did not permanently secure their independence, however. In 1608 both liberties, together with a handful of others, were annexed by the City of London. The liberties faltered not because of further litigation, but because of astute political manoeuvring on the part of the City.

In midst of the City’s drawn-out litigation with Blackfriars, the royal government moved to augment the internal mechanisms for maintaining order in the liberty. A patent from 1570 or 1571 authorised William More to hold a court in Blackfriars, to hear all manner of causes within the liberty, and to apprehend criminals and outlaws there for commitment to Newgate Prison.¹⁷³ The patent was likely intended to answer the City’s claim that its courts could try crimes from the liberty. Later in the 1570s, a list of

¹⁷⁰ CLRO Rep 19, fo 411 (22 Jan 1578/9), fo 415 (29 Jan 1578/9), fo 421 (10 Feb 1578/9), fo 518v (28 Oct 1579).

¹⁷¹ CLRO Rep 20, fo 33v. 20 Jan 1579/80. Cordell, speaker of the House of Commons from 1559, was a close friend of Sir Thomas White, lord mayor in 1553 and founder of St John’s College, Oxford. Cordell was the college’s first visitor and served as White’s executor. TNA PROB 11/49, fo 35.

¹⁷² APC, vol 12, pp. 19, 21. 15 May 1580.

¹⁷³ Folger MS L.b. 438.

gentlemen was submitted to Lord Keeper Sir Nicholas Bacon, ‘to apoynte such to be comitioners for the peace within the precincte of the saide disseolved Howse of the Blackfriars...as shal seme unto your Lordship good’.¹⁷⁴ The list included nine prominent residents of the liberty and several judges who lived nearby. The council’s plans for a court and an internal justice of the peace, however, both came to naught. If the court operated at all, there is no record of it in the More family’s records, nor is it mentioned in the City’s 1608 charter or in any other source. Likewise, if a JP was ever named for Blackfriars he was no longer serving in that role in 1592. Responding to rumours of a May Day riot by apprentices the Privy Council wrote to the lord mayor, ordering him to assemble ‘a stronge and substancyall watche’ over the holiday.¹⁷⁵ Recognising that the constables of the City could not be expected to keep peace throughout the metropolis, the council also sent copies of the letter to various prominent men in the outparishes around and exempt places within the City. In Blackfriars, they addressed their letter to Lord Cobham. Cobham had been a member of the Privy Council since 1586. Had a justice of the peace assigned to Blackfriars at the time, the letter would have been addressed to him rather than Cobham. A few years later, in January 1596/7, while considering a petition from the residents of Blackfriars concerning their parish church, the Privy Council expressed its concern that ‘the government of the said libertie...which being grown more populus then heretofore and without any certaine and knownen officer to keepe good orders there, needeth to be reformed in that behalfe.’¹⁷⁶

Even in the absence of a formal system of government, the maintenance of order at Blackfriars did not depend on a proactive Privy Council. Residents’ concerns—as has already been seen in other cases—frequently took the form of a petition to an outside authority. In 1579, their court battle with the City still unresolved, an unnamed group of residents (apparently on behalf of the precinct) filed a complaint with Nicholas Bacon and William Cecil, two of the most influential privy counsellors. Henry Naylor, a resident of the City, was accused of setting up ‘three common bowling Aleys...a dicing howse or for both...Contrary to the Quenes majesties lawes and the Statutes made agaynst’.¹⁷⁷ Naylor had long made a nuisance of himself in Blackfriars.¹⁷⁸ The petition, however, says much about the way in which the residents approached the question of

¹⁷⁴ Folger MS L.b. 382. Considering the names found on the undated list, it almost certainly was drawn up between 1572 and 1576.

¹⁷⁵ *Acts of the Privy Council*, ed J R Dasent, 46 vols, (London, 1890-1964), xxii.549-51.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., xxvi.448-9.

¹⁷⁷ TNA SP 46/15/42-3.

¹⁷⁸ See Folger MSS L.b. 366, 435, 436.

keeping the peace. According to their complaint, the precinct was kept and maintained ‘by the care and Industrie of such as be of the better sort of calling and do inhabite there, and wyt the good consent and deligence of the rest of the seid inhabitantes not wythout contribucion or chardge’.¹⁷⁹ Their proposed solution to Henry Naylor’s ‘poysnyng the whole neyghborhood’ specifically excluded interference by the City. Instead, they asked Bacon and Cecil to appoint ‘gentlemen of the seyd precincte or nere adjoyninge’ to call Naylor before them to inquire into his breach of the peace.¹⁸⁰ This incident may have inspired the council to draft its list of potential JPs for the liberty.

In support of their position, the inhabitants submitted to Cecil notes on ‘Th’order of the presente goverment nowe used in the blacke friers’.¹⁸¹ They pointed out that their church and churchyard, its minister and his were ‘maintained by the benevolence of th’inhabitantes’.¹⁸² The precinct paid a scavenger to clean the streets and a porter to see that its gates were ‘shutte everye evening and opened againe in the morninge’. They collectively saw to the upkeep of the stairs into the Thames and the bridge over the River Fleet. Lantern and light were kept ‘as in the Cittie’, and during times of plague infected houses were quarantined and a collection was taken to support the sick. Collections were also ‘monthlie made for the poore, at every Comunion’.¹⁸³ The idle poor were ‘punished by Carte, and sent to Bridewell and presented to the ordinarie by the Churchwardens’. Disorder, meanwhile, was the responsibility of the precinct constable, ‘sworne and appointed by the Justices of the Verge’. The justices of the verge were likewise responsible for binding over the victuallers in the liberty ‘for their good order’.¹⁸⁴ William More’s 1570 assertion of a link between Blackfriars and the Justices of the Verge is repeated here in 1579, and recorded without comment in William Cecil’s records. Unfortunately, no source offers details on the relationship between the liberty’s officers and those of the verge. Neither is any mention made of any justice of the peace or court in the precinct. It is nevertheless clear that the petitioners felt there were adequate systems in place to maintain peace and order there.

The Privy Council’s final decision to side with the residents of Blackfriars in the 1570s lawsuit was an unequivocal rebuke to the City. For almost three decades afterwards, the aldermen were understandably hesitant to attempt further meddling there.

¹⁷⁹ TNA SP 46/15/41.

¹⁸⁰ TNA SP 46/15/41.

¹⁸¹ BL Lansd 155 ff 80v-81.

¹⁸² BL Lansd 155 fo 80v.

¹⁸³ BL Lansd 155 fo 81.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.; see note 154, p. 134, above.

References to the liberty in the repertories drop off suddenly after 1580. Until 1608, Blackfriars is mentioned infrequently. In December 1584 the Court of Aldermen considered whether the City should contribute to the cost of repairing the bridge that connected the Corporation-owned Bridewell to Blackfriars over the River Fleet.¹⁸⁵ And in March 1599/1600 they complained to the Privy Council about the continued recalcitrance of Blackfriars residents in contributing to military levies.¹⁸⁶ Otherwise, however, the City left the liberty and its residents to their own devices. This period of relative independence coincided with the advent of playing at Blackfriars. While the residents themselves worked at limiting the expansion of the theatre in the neighbourhood, by the time the City's 1608 charter extended its authority over the former liberty, there was a long history of dramatic enterprise.

The 1608 charter allowed the City to interfere in Blackfriars in ways unrelated to playing. The aldermen extended the civic system of building inspections to the newly-annexed liberty in the 1610s¹⁸⁷ and asserted their authority to regulate the thoroughfares within the liberty.¹⁸⁸ As has already been shown in the discussion of drama in the liberty after 1608, the City's annexation of Blackfriars also changed the way the inhabitants related to authorities beyond their borders. The Privy Council lost its default primacy as arbiter of disputes. Instead, residents chose to present their concerns to others from whom they expected both sympathy and action. At the same time, the City's newly-expanded role in the liberty did little to arrest general trends that had been established during its jurisdictional independence. In the first decades of the seventeenth century George More sold off large tracts of his freehold interest in Blackfriars.¹⁸⁹ Noble and gentry families continued to leave the liberty, preferring to live in the increasingly fashionable parishes of Westminster. Troupes of actors continued to play there for decades, and the Puritan strains of the parish if anything increased after the annexation. Life in Blackfriars did change as a result of the City's 1608 charter, in small ways.

The system of government in Blackfriars was significantly less complex than that of the surrounding City. The overlapping and interlocking government of the City—ward, precinct and parish overlaid by the authority of the livery companies, the courts of

¹⁸⁵ CLRO Rep 21, fo 126v.

¹⁸⁶ CLRO Rep 24, fo 321v.

¹⁸⁷ CLRO Rep 32, fo 118 (6 Jun 1615), fo 128v (16 Jun 1615). See also *London Viewers and Their Certificates, 1508-1558: Certificates of the Sworn Viewers of the City of London*, ed J S Loengard, (London, 1989), pp. xi-xiii.

¹⁸⁸ CLRO Rep 47, fo 221v. 9 May 1633.

¹⁸⁹ GL MSS 16957, 21378.

aldermen and common council, the bishop of London and Christ's hospital—did not extend into Blackfriars. Non-civic entities (such as the bishopric of London and the royal government) still had authority in Blackfriars, as in other liberties and suburbs, but without the City's other layers of government, exerting that authority was fraught with ambiguity. It is important to remember that, in the absence of a formal system of government, Blackfriars residents acknowledged Cawarden (and, later, More) as the primary authority within their neighbourhood, particularly when it suited their interests to do so. During the battle over the precinct church in the 1550s, the residents told the Privy Council that Cawarden 'hadd the order rule and govermente of the said scite and other the premisses'.¹⁹⁰ Both William More and Blackfriars residents acknowledged the right of the justices of the verge to regulate victuallers in the liberty, but More himself also played an important regulatory role. Soon after taking possession of Blackfriars, More bound over John Waters and two sureties for £5 each on condition that Waters, a tenant of More's would not 'kepe suffer use or maynteyne...eny evell rule, nyght watche, dysinge [dicing], carding or eny other unlawfull game' in the alehouse he had set up in the liberty.¹⁹¹ A decade later, More brought suit against a tenant, James Charter, for breaking the terms of his lease. Charter leased eight houses from More with a commitment not to 'permytt or suffer any typlynge ale sellinge or vytualynge to be used or kept' by any of his tenants.¹⁹² Charter had sublet houses to Robert Ashton and John Walters, both of whom 'dyd kepe alehowses in and upon the same, and John Waters dothe contynewe the same...without the Lycence of the said Wyllm More'.¹⁹³ Waters, of course, did have a license to keep a public house, but Charter did not have permission to rent it to him.¹⁹⁴ As 'governor' of Blackfriars, or simply as landlord, More took care to maintain order in Blackfriars.

William More was assisted in the government of Blackfriars by the parish of St Anne, which was the only formal organisation of residents in the liberty. Before its dissolution, the Dominican priory had answered to the pope rather than to the king or the bishop of London, but afterwards the precinct never claimed to enjoy independence from ecclesiastical oversight. Brian Burch, who reviewed the bishop's registers and

¹⁹⁰ TNA C 1/1330/39.

¹⁹¹ Folger MS L.b. 429. 4 July 1561.

¹⁹² Folger MS L.b. 419. See also TNA C 24/120.

¹⁹³ Folger MS L.b. 419.

¹⁹⁴ Neither Ashton nor Waters suffered particular infamy for breaking the terms of Charter's lease. In 1580 Ashton was one of the 'respectable' residents of the precinct who signed a certificate explaining the eviction of two of More's tenants, and Waters continued as a tenant of More's until the 1580s, ultimately renting a tenement known as the Red Cross worth £6 annually. Folger MSS L.b. 453, 454, 318.

episcopal visitation books from 1550 to 1660, claims that St Anne's received little attention from diocesan officials.¹⁹⁵ The parish was overlooked completely in the 1554 and 1561 visitations, and Burch found no reference to a permanent church in the precinct before 1597.¹⁹⁶ The parish registers—which survive for baptisms, marriages and burials from 1563 onwards—are the only surviving records from the parish.¹⁹⁷ They are helpful in identifying Blackfriars residents, but they provide no information about the administrative workings of the parish. In the absence of vestry minutes, churchwardens' accounts or the like, only oblique references in contemporary sources elucidate the administrative network in St Anne's. Information is therefore limited. It is impossible to assess patterns of office-holding or specifics of poor relief, as is possible in other parishes. Nevertheless, surviving documents indicate that the parish was active in the life of the precinct. William Cecil noted that the responsibilities of the churchwardens included presenting vagrants at Bridewell and that the parish organised financial support for the poor and those infected with plague.¹⁹⁸

Much of what we know about the parish of St Anne is a result of disputes—between the parish and Cawarden or between the liberty and the City of London. Claims made about its structures should therefore be viewed critically. In the 1550s the parishioners contended that their priest had always been provided by the prior. As the prior's successor, they argued, Cawarden was responsible for paying their minister.¹⁹⁹ It was part of their larger argument that sought to minimise Cawarden's authority over the parish whilst maximising his responsibility for its upkeep. Whether they succeeded in pinning financial responsibility on Cawarden is difficult to tell. In his 1579 notes on the order of the precinct, Cecil recorded that the preacher at St Anne's was maintained 'by the benevolence of th'inhabitantes', but he says nothing of the parish vicar.²⁰⁰ Cawarden certainly retained the advowson to the post, which later passed to the More family, and he clearly had other rights and responsibilities in the parish. After stripping the old priory church Stow recorded that Cawarden, 'being forced to find a church to the inhabitants, allowed them a lodging chamber above a staire'.²⁰¹ When that lodging chamber reached

¹⁹⁵ B Burch, 'The Parish of St Anne's, Blackfriars, London to 1665 with a List of the Clergy: Some Explorations in Ecclesiastical Records', *Guildhall Miscellany*, 3 (1969), pp. 5-6; GL MSS 9531/13-15, 9537/1-51.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 11. Burch confuses the church with the parish. A permanent church structure was not built in Blackfriars until 1597, but the parish had existed long before, as we have seen.

¹⁹⁷ GL MSS 4508/1 (bap); 4509/1 (mar); 4510/1 and 3831 (bur).

¹⁹⁸ BL Lansd 155 fo 81.

¹⁹⁹ TNA C 1/1330/39.

²⁰⁰ BL Lansd 155 fo 80v.

²⁰¹ Stow, *Survey*, i.341.

an unacceptable state of decay, the parishioners reached another impasse. In a new petition to the Privy Council, they argued that Sir William More should bear the cost of its replacement, ‘as being lord of the scite and soyle of the late dissolved House of the Blacke Fryers, alledging the former custome in that behalfe.’ For his part, More supposed ‘the burthen to appertaine unto the inhabitants, as haveinge the most ordinarie and proper use of the saide church’²⁰² The council was less sympathetic to the residents in 1596 than it had been forty years earlier. When their makeshift church collapsed in 1597, More donated land, but the parishioners bore the cost of building a proper church for themselves.²⁰³

Although the vestry in St Anne Blackfriars remained open, Cawarden’s retention of the advowson, along with his and William More’s active role in the parish, limited the ambitions of that body. When William More succeeded the Cawardens as primary freeholder, he brought his reformist tendencies to Blackfriars. More was deputy lieutenant for his home county of Surrey, where he supervised the examination and punishment of recusants. While there is some evidence of recusancy in Blackfriars—anchored by both gentry households and the chapels of continental ambassadors who frequently made their homes in Blackfriars—More never showed himself to be interested in pursuing recusants there.²⁰⁴ Of the 1,898 recusants prosecuted in London and Middlesex between 1581-1629, only sixteen (0.84%) were in Blackfriars, although the presence of prominent crypto-Catholic families there and the heavy concentration of recusants in neighbouring parishes suggests that this was an artificially low prosecution rate.²⁰⁵ More did help push the parish toward Puritanism, appointing the first radical clergymen to the parish. He appointed Thomas Sperin minister in 1576; in July 1578 bishop Aylmer placed the parish under interdict for Sperin’s refusal to use the Book of Common Prayer in Blackfriars service. Future radical ministers were more compliant. More went on to appoint Stephen Egerton to preach there in 1585. Egerton was a close associate of John Field and one of the leading radical preachers in late Elizabethan London. He held the post of parish lecturer until 1611 and he continued to live in the precinct until his death in May 1622.²⁰⁶ David Englishe, another godly minister who was

²⁰² *APC* xxvi.448.

²⁰³ The new church was dedicated on 11 December 1597.

²⁰⁴ *Jacobean Recusant Rolls for Middlesex*, ed J LaRocca, (London, 1997), p. 93; Folger MS L.b. 100.

²⁰⁵ Thirty-six recusants (1.9%) were prosecuted from other liberties, compared to 110 (5.8%) from St Dunstan in the West, set among the Inns of Court and composed in part of the liberty of Whitefriars; A Dures, ‘The Distribution of Catholic Recusants in London and Middlesex, c. 1580-1629’, *Essex Recusant*, 10 (1968), pp. 77-8.

²⁰⁶ B Usher, ‘Egerton, Stephen (c.1555–1622)’, ODNB; GL MSS 3831; 4510/1.

curate of St Anne's for five years in the 1590s remained in the parish until his death, in 1618. These early Puritans set the tone of things to come.

The parish took on a more godly tone after 1607, when George More granted to Thomas Vavasor and twelve others the site and building 'then used as a Church Chapel or Place of Public Prayer and Divine service' along with the minister's residence, the churchyard, and the advowson to have and keep on behalf of the parish, for which they paid the surprisingly small sum of £120.²⁰⁷ As Brian Burch points out, 'The significance of the parishioners' right to elect their minister is...very great; if all the inhabitants really participated, the presence of so well-known a reformer as Gouge in the parish argues for widespread puritan sentiments.'²⁰⁸

Although St Anne's vestry was open, we should remember that it was still restricted to householders, whose confessional sympathies cannot be assumed to represent those of more humble Blackfriars residents. In any case, the parishioners soon took advantage of their newly-acquired right by inviting William Gouge to be their minister. In the years that followed the liberty became a byword for Puritanism. In Ben Jonson's 1616 play *The Alchemist*, one of his characters alludes to the godliness of the precinct:

Who shall take your word?
A whore-sonne, upstart, apocryphall captayne,
Whom not a puritane, in black-friers, will trust
So much, as for a feather!²⁰⁹

Jonson had lived in Blackfriars for five years when he wrote the play, and he had first-hand experience of its religious sentiments, particularly as they affected dramatic enterprise there.²¹⁰ Gouge helped guide St Anne's through the turbulent years that preceded the outbreak of civil war in 1642. It is a testament to Gouge's leadership that the parish received very little episcopal interference, even 'during the pre-war part of the seventeenth century, when the parish was well-known for its Puritanism'.²¹¹ Gouge refused offers of incumbency at richer or more prominent parishes 'of saying that the height of his ambition was to go from Black-Friers to heaven'.²¹² Under Gouge's leadership, the parish continued to grow, even though the liberty lost much of its noble

²⁰⁷ Parliament, *Endowed Charities (County of London). Return Comprising Reports Made to the Charity Commissioners on the City Parochial Foundation and Charities Connected Therewith*. (London, 1904), pp. 95-7.

²⁰⁸ Burch, 'Parish of St Anne's', p. 12.

²⁰⁹ B Jonson, *The Alchemist*, ed E Cook (London, 2004), Act I, scene i.

²¹⁰ For another dramatic depiction of Blackfriars' Puritanism, see T Randolph, *The Muses Looking Glasse* (London, 1643), which was first performed in 1638, although Randolph died in 1635.

²¹¹ Burch, 'Parish of St Anne's', p. 6.

²¹² S Clarke, *General Martyrologie*, 3rd edn (London, 1677), p. 238; B Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (London, 1813), iii.165.

and gentry population. In 1613 the parish bought land adjacent to the church to accommodate its expansion, supporting Julia Merritt's assertion that Jacobean Puritans were more likely to invest in church-building than historians have traditionally believed.²¹³

Despite its reputation as a godly enclave, Blackfriars was home to Papists as well as Puritans. Surprisingly, these two groups seem to have tolerated (and perhaps even grudgingly respected) one another in the liberty. As Alan Dures points out, recusancy in London was more malleable and less established than in the provinces. Still, a large portion of metropolitan recusants settled in the western wards of the City and in the western suburbs. Many of them had links to the Inns of Court, and embassy chapels in the western part of the metropolis (which drew mass-goers from a wide range of classes) gave recusants an additional reason to settle in that part of the town.²¹⁴ After the discovery of the gunpowder plot, John Gerard and Robert Catesby's links to Blackfriars, though slight, brought the recusant population there under new governmental scrutiny.

Two decades later, another event would put Blackfriars at the centre of debate over the place of Catholics in England. On 23 November 1623, during a mass in an upper chamber of the French ambassador's residence in Blackfriars, the floor gave way. Ninety-one of the two hundred or so in attendance fell to their deaths, including the preaching Jesuit, John Drury. The Fatal Vesper, as the tragedy came to be known, was widely reported and discussed by contemporaries at all social levels; Alexandra Walsham has called Londoners' 'fiercely emotional reaction' to the catastrophe 'a window into urban public opinion in the 1620s'.²¹⁵ The accident became a regular feature in English almanacs, among 'accounts of England's special deliverances from the papal antichrist'.²¹⁶ While Puritan pamphleteers claimed the catastrophe as divine punishment on the ungodly (one warned that 'not to acknowledge such to be judged by the Lord is to wink against clear light'²¹⁷) it was difficult even for them to sidestep the sympathetic reaction of William Gouge. Gouge's godly credentials were beyond reproach, but in his tract on 'The Extent of God's Providence', he not only points out that 'very many, Protestants as well as Papists, Schollers as well as others' had assembled to hear the devout Jesuit

²¹³ J F Merritt, 'Puritans, Laudians, and the Phenomenon of Church-Building in Jacobean London', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), p. 952.

²¹⁴ Dures, 'Distribution of Catholic Recusants', pp. 70-3.

²¹⁵ A Walsham, 'The Fatal Vespers: Providentialism and Anti-Papery in Late Jacobean London', *Past and Present*, 144 (1994), p. 39.

²¹⁶ B J Kaplan, 'Diplomacy and Domestic Devotion: Embassy Chapels and the Toleration of Religious Dissent in Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Early Modern History*, 6 (2002), p. 354.

²¹⁷ S Clark, *The Fatal Vespers: A True and Full Narrative of That Signal Judgement of God Upon the Papists, by the Fall of the House in Black Friers, London, Upon Their Fifth of November, 1623* (London, 1817/1657), p. 11.

preach on the ‘debt we owe God, God’s mercy in forgiving it, and man’s unmercifulness to his brother’, but also explains that it was good and right to treat the dead with at least limited respect.²¹⁸

Aliens

The franchises that drew unfree English artisans to Blackfriars had similar appeal to immigrants. At the turn of the seventeenth century, the population of aliens in the liberty was as large (and as densely settled) as any in London. The liberty must have had broad appeal to draw such a large number of immigrants. Because it had never been home to many strangers before the dissolution, Blackfriars’ reputation had not been tainted by a history of anti-alien violence, as was the case in the nearby liberty of St Martin le Grand. For the producers of luxury goods, Blackfriars offered a central location, a considerable gentry population, and a major customer in the form of Thomas Cawarden’s Revels office. Similar factors may also have appealed to the foreign-born members of the royal household who settled in the neighbourhood. By the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, the alien community in Blackfriars was well-established, despite its short history. As the reign progressed, many of London’s most prominent strangers—famously skilled artisans and those with links to court—made their homes in Blackfriars. They were joined, of course, by scores of more humble immigrants. This mix of aliens left a distinctive mark on life in the liberty.

When the Blackfriars’ priory was dissolved in 1538, there was no alien presence there worth mentioning. Liberties like St Martin’s and St Katherine’s had housed substantial immigrant communities since the fifteenth century.²¹⁹ It is therefore unsurprising to see that they housed large alien populations through the end of Elizabeth’s reign. In the decades after the Reformation, the number of aliens in Blackfriars grew rapidly, so that by the 1560s the population there was one of the largest in the metropolis. The recent origins of the Blackfriars’ stranger community are apparent when it is compared to the communities in St Katherine’s and St Martin’s. On the surface, the Elizabethan returns of aliens suggest the similarity of the groups settled in the three liberties:

²¹⁸ W Gouge, ‘The Extent of God’s Providence’, in W Gouge (ed), *God’s Three Arrows* (London, 1631), p. 393.

²¹⁹ See pp. 179 and 215, below.

4.1 Reported Numbers of Aliens in the Liberties, 1567-1583²²⁰

Place	1567	1568	1571	1581	1583
Minories	n/a	44	69	n/a	n/a
Blackfriars	102	230	136	247	275
St Katherine's	n/a	425	210	265	267
St Martin's	303	269	222	109	151

Although this table illustrates the inconsistency with which returns of strangers were carried out, it also provides a rough estimate of the stranger populations in each liberty under consideration. The numbers for the Minories reflect its small overall population, but by the 1580s Blackfriars stood alongside St Martin's and St Katherine's, despite their much longer histories of alien settlement. Around 1550, Blackfriars was reportedly home to eight hundred people.²²¹ That number continued to grow through the latter half of the sixteenth century, but it is clear that immigrants made up a substantial portion of the total population there.

On closer inspection, it appears that the aliens living in Blackfriars were less stably settled and less assimilated into English culture than those in St Katherine's or St Martin's.

4.2 Denization and English Church Membership in Blackfriars, St Katherine's and St Martin's, 1568 and 1583²²²

Place	1568			1583		
	Pop.	Den. (%)	Eng. Ch. (%)	Pop.	Den. (%)	Eng. Ch. (%)
Blackfriars	230	32 (14%)	29 (13%)	275	49 (18%)	25 (9%)
St Katherine's	425	83 (20%)	264 (62%)	267	65 (24%)	144 (54%)
St Martin's	269	96 (36%)	131 (49%)	151	51 (34%)	48 (32%)

It is clear from this table that the rate of denization was significantly lower in Blackfriars than in either St Katherine's or St Martin's, but it was still higher than the average rate in the City. Denization levels in Blackfriars rose over the period, while those in the City fell from 13% in 1568 to 7% in 1593.²²³ Despite this trend, the immigrants living in Blackfriars continued to lag behind their counterparts in St Katherine's and St Martin's. Among 1583 denizens, those in Blackfriars had received their patents of denization significantly later than those in the other two liberties. The median length of denization among the 49 denizens in Blackfriars was eight years, compared to twelve years in St Katherine's and fifteen in St Martin le Grand.²²⁴

²²⁰ See also figure 6.1, p. 216, below. *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, i.383, 413-7; ii. 13-7, 42-9, 127-30, 140-4, 217, 347-57, 390-5, 422-3; iii.411, 425-39. n/a = no data available.

²²¹ Folger MS L.b. 385.

²²² Compare to figure 6.1, p. 216, below, which shows English church membership in 1568 in the three liberties here alongside that in the wards of the City with the greatest concentrations of strangers. *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.342-57; iii.411, 425-39.

²²³ Luu, 'Natural-Born Versus Stranger-Born Subjects', p. 70. No data on denization was collected from aliens resident in the City in 1583: *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.335-45.

²²⁴ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.342-57.

English Church membership, likewise, was lower in Blackfriars than in the two liberties that had boasted large stranger communities long before the 1530s. Blackfriars' aliens were less likely than metropolitan immigrants generally to attend services in the English church.²²⁵ As any given immigrant community assimilated into English culture, more and more immigrants abandoned the stranger churches in preference of their neighbourhood parish.²²⁶ Many of the strangers in Blackfriars were religious refugees, and a high proportion of them worshipped with their compatriots in the stranger churches that had been set up in London. Some, like the eminent physician William Delaune, even served as ministers in their community churches. Brian Burch discovered that 'numbers of ministers, preachers, "French ministers" and other non-conforming elements chose to be buried or have their children baptised at St Anne's, for this seems to be confirmation that the precinct, if not the parish church, attracted numbers of free-lance or unofficial clergy'.²²⁷ French Huguenots in particular formed a tightly-knit sub community within the liberty, which fractured parochial life and exposed English residents to the more reformed religiosity of London's stranger churches.

If the stranger community in Blackfriars was not so established as those in St Katherine's or St Martin's, it did include more prominent individual aliens than other liberties. Many aliens with ties to court made their homes in the liberty. As often as not, it was these aliens who caused the most trouble for their neighbours. In the early 1580s, the eminent Italian fencing instructor Rocco Bonetti built tenements on land he had leased from William More without permission. More threatened to cancel his lease and appropriate the new structures, preventing Bonetti from satisfying debts from the building process. In 1584/5 Sir Walter Raleigh wrote to beg More's forbearance, calling Bonetti 'a pore stranger...whose honest behaviour and singular good qualities deservethe great comendacion'.²²⁸ Describing Bonetti as a poor stranger may have been a stretch; a contemporary (and rival) claimed that Bonetti was 'the onely famous Maister of the Art of Armes in the whole world', who 'taught none commonly under twentie, fortie, fifty or an hundred pounds'.²²⁹ As later historians have pointed out Bonetti was the most prominent victim of the festering antagonism that existed between rival schools of

²²⁵ In 1568, English church membership among immigrants in the metropolis stood at 27%. *Ibid.*, i.393.

²²⁶ Luu, 'Assimilation or Segregation', p. 161.

²²⁷ Burch, 'Parish of St Anne's', p. 4.

²²⁸ Folger MS L.b. 37.

²²⁹ G Silver, *Paradoxes of Defence, Wherein Is Proved the True Grounds of Fight to Be in the Short Ancient Weapons* (London, 1599), pp. 64-5; Silver's tale culminates with his English technique of fighting humiliating the fearful Italians Ieonimo and Vincentio, Bonetti's successors. It was therefore in his interest to build Bonetti up as much as possible, to make his victory more meaningful.

defence in Elizabethan England.²³⁰ In any case, Raleigh's letter won William More's acquiescence, and he renewed Bonetti's lease on 20 March 1584/5.²³¹

A few years later, a dispute developed between Richard Alford, a French-born royal servant, and the Vintners' Company over a tenement in Blackfriars that Alford had mortgaged. When the Vintners ejected him in January 1590/1, Alford complained to the Privy Council. In a letter to the lord mayor, the council asked him, 'to cal before you such of the Companie of Vintners as you shal thincke meet to deale with them verie ernestlie...to yeld unto her Majesty's servant such good measure in his lawful right as becometh them both in respect of their duties and their consciencies'.²³² When the Vintners continued to resist, the council wrote to the lord mayor again, ordering him to 'make such final end betwixt them as shalbe agreeable to equitie and justice'.²³³ To a certain degree, then, the immigrant community in Blackfriars mirrored the English population there in its ability to invoke powerful allies during periods of tension.

In general, however, Blackfriars' aliens—like those throughout early modern London—practiced a wide variety of trades. Returns of strangers from the liberty list occupations ranging from merchant to drunkard,²³⁴ and everything in between: leatherdressers and locksmiths joined self-described gentlemen and crossbow makers. There were, however, some notable concentrations of craftsmen in the liberty.²³⁵ Between the 1568 and 1571 returns, twenty-nine aliens reported working at clothing-related crafts. There is, of course, some overlap between the two years, but they nevertheless represented over one-quarter of the 101 aliens who listed an occupation. They represented both standard clothing-related crafts (such as hatmakers, tailors, and shoemakers), but they also included a number of specialty or luxury crafts related to clothing: featherdressers and silkworkers. To these might be added the twenty-one strangers who reported working in luxury trades, mostly goldsmiths and perfumers.

Blackfriars was home to a number of stationers, printers, binders and booksellers, whose products also catered to nobles, gentry and wealthier merchants. P M Handover dismisses the printing trade in Blackfriars as having never 'rivalled the

²³⁰ H Berry, *The Noble Science: A Study and Transcription of Sloane Ms. 2530, Papers of the Masters of Defence of London, temp. Henry VIII to 1590*. (London, 1991), p. 12n; J P Anglin, 'The Schools of Defense in Elizabethan London', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 37 (1984), p. 109.

²³¹ Folger MS L.b. 352. Bonetti was only the most famous of Blackfriars' alien fencing masters; see Berry, *Noble Science*, pp. 3-6.

²³² *APC*, vol 20, p 245. 30 Jan 1590/1.

²³³ *APC*, vol 20, pp 283-4. 10 Feb 1590/1.

²³⁴ The 1568 returns include an entry for "James Garrytt, Douchman, and Collett his wif, of no churche, but dronkardes"; *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, iii.411.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, iii.411, ii.13-7.

environs of Fleet Street or St Paul's Churchyard', but the representatives of the print trade who settled in the liberty during the sixteenth century can only be described as substantial.²³⁶ They were remarkable not only for their numbers or their stature within the trade, but also for the interconnectedness of the community they formed in the liberty, a community that was succeeded by Blackfriars print trade that lasted well into the twentieth century. John Growte, a bookbinder and stationer, was the first to take up residence in Blackfriars, when he signed a forty year lease with the priory in 1534. The freehold of his tenement was granted to Francis Pitcher by the Court of Augmentations in 1543, but Growte continued living there until at least 1557.²³⁷ Thomas Gemini, the court-favoured Flemish printer and instrument maker, rented a house in Water Lane from 1552 to 1559 for £6/13/4d per annum.²³⁸ Gemini lived until 1562, but his tenement went to the French printer Gyles Godet in 1559. Godet had been a denizen since 1551 and a brother of the Stationers' Company since 1555, and he published from Blackfriars until his death 1568.²³⁹

A second wave of printers moved to Blackfriars in the following decade. At the centre of this new wave of immigrant publishers was the French printer Thomas Vautrollier. Reputedly one of Elizabethan England's best printers, he published 150 books between his arrival at Blackfriars in 1573 and his 1587 death.²⁴⁰ After his death, his former apprentice Richard Field took over Vautrollier's printing house in Blackfriars and, a year later, married his widow.²⁴¹ The executor of Vautrollier's will was Francis Bonnier, another French-born Blackfriars printer. The Venetian bookseller Ascanius de Renialme, Bonnier's brother-in-law and a witness to Vautrollier's will, was given wide latitude by Elizabeth's Privy Council, which authorised him to 'import popish books' from 1586.²⁴² Edward Arber does not include a Blackfriars entry in the index to his transcriptions of the stationers company.²⁴³ He does, however, include entries for other liberties (St Katherine's, both St Bartholomews, and St Martin's) as well as entries for stationers who

²³⁶ Handover, *History from 1276*, p. 10.

²³⁷ Folger MSS L.b. 360, 384, 462; TNA LR 2/108/271.

²³⁸ Folger MSS L.b. 392, 413, 415, 185 fo 5; G L Turner, *Elizabethan Instrument Makers: The Origins of the London Trade in Precision* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 16-8; M A Crawford, 'Instrument Makers in the London Guilds', *Annals of Science*, 44 (1987), p. 329.

²³⁹ Folger MS L.b. 416; GL MS 9171/16 fo 54; S O'Connell, 'Godet, Gyles (fl. c.1547-1568)', ODNB.

²⁴⁰ Folger MS L.b. 355; A Pettegree, 'Vautrollier, Thomas (d. 1587)', ODNB; *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessment Rolls*, ed Lang, p. 233.

²⁴¹ GL MS 9171/17, fo 99v; Folger MS L.b. 349. Field later became Shakespeare's printer.

²⁴² J C Whitebrook, 'Huguenots of Blackfriars, and Its Neighbourhood, in Shakespearean Days', *Notes and Queries*, 181 (1941), p. 255.

²⁴³ *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London: 1554-1640*, ed E Arber, 5 vols, (London, 1875-94).

are known to have lived and worked in Blackfriars—Bonnier, Bonham, Field, Gemini, Godet, Growte, Hicks, Renialme and Vautrollier. This omission on Arber's part has no doubt made it easier for subsequent scholars to discount the role of Blackfriars in the development of the print trade in London.

Like the printers who preceded them, the English apothecary trade that grew up in Blackfriars in the seventeenth century owed its existence to the earlier settlement there of prominent alien craftsmen. William Delaune, a Huguenot minister and physician, settled in Blackfriars around 1575 and received a license from the College of Physicians in 1582. He practiced medicine from Blackfriars until his death in 1611.²⁴⁴ In 1593 he paid William More £360 for the tenement called the Square Tower or Church Porch, formerly occupied by the eminent printer Thomas Vautrollier.²⁴⁵ Delaune's eldest son Gideon established himself as an apothecary by 1590, and proceeded to become one of the most influential strangers of his day. Early in the reign of James I, Gideon Delaune was appointed apothecary to Queen Anne. Given his intimacy with the royal household, Delaune has long been considered a major player in the secession of the apothecaries from the Grocers' Company, finally achieved in 1617 when they received a separate charter from the king.²⁴⁶ Gideon Delaune certainly secured the Blackfriars site that became the Apothecaries' Hall.²⁴⁷ Beyond his professional influence, Delaune was one of the most prominent strangers in early Stuart London. In January 1625/6 he was elected alderman of Dowgate Ward, an office he refused on account of his foreign birth.²⁴⁸

Conclusions

Blackfriars is interesting precisely because it does not conform to the standard description of London's early modern liberties. It cannot be taken as representative of other liberties, certainly, but it reminds us that the exempt places in and around London were unique. The liberties were united only by their shared exemptions from civic control. The ways in which such exemptions were played out, however, was a function of each precinct's history, ownership, geography and social make-up. Blackfriars had been a centre of fashionable society long before the dissolution. It had attracted courtiers and administrators from the beginning of Henry VIII's reign, if not before. In the years after

²⁴⁴ A Spicer, 'Delaune, William (c.1530-1611)', ODNB.

²⁴⁵ Folger MS L.b. 349.

²⁴⁶ L.G. Matthews, *The Royal Apothecaries* (London, 1967), p. 98; P. Wallis, 'Medicines for London: The Trade, Regulation and Lifecycles of London Apothecaries. c. 1610-c.1670' (U of Oxford D.Phil thesis, 2002), p. 37.

²⁴⁷ P. Hunting, *A History of the Society of Apothecaries* (London, 1998), p. 81.

²⁴⁸ CLRO Rem VI, fo 81; *Analytical Index to the Remembrancia*, eds Overall and Overall, p. 7n.

the departure of the Dominicans, nobility and gentry were granted small freeholds in the liberty. Its links to the Revels office during the 1540s and 50s was a prelude to its future role in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre.

The levelling down of the social status of Blackfriars residents began early in James's reign, and it was nearly complete by his son's accession. A variety of factors contributed to the departure of noble and gentry inhabitants. The westward pull of the Court is frequently cited for pulling fashionable society out of the City of London and into Westminster.²⁴⁹ In Blackfriars, rapid development changed the garden-filled, genteel enclave of 1540 to a crowded and closely-built precinct by the end of the sixteenth century.²⁵⁰ At the same time, the growth of Holborn and other areas immediately west of the City wall turned the River Fleet into little more than an open sewer; after 1608 the aldermen occasionally received complaints from well-to-do Blackfriars residents about the state of the river.²⁵¹ In his scatological poem 'On the Famous Voyage', published in 1616, Ben Jonson (a former Blackfriars resident) leads his readers up the filthy river from its confluence with the Thames. In the process he reminds us that in the early modern metropolis even the most ancient sources of water tended 'to collapse troublingly into flows of filth'.²⁵²

Norman Brett-James reminds his readers not to assume that genteel residents of the liberty were the victims of circumstances wholly beyond their control; some may have left because the neighbourhood got worse, but the neighbourhood got worse because they left.²⁵³ Above all, it is clear that noble and gentry residents were not driven away by a breakdown of order in the liberty. The annexation of the liberty by the City in 1608 did nothing to slow their departure. If anything, it meant that genteel residents were supplanted by citizens of London.²⁵⁴ By 1640, the liberty had changed significantly, but it had done so at a slow and steady pace, guided by the interests of those who made their homes there.

²⁴⁹ J F Merritt, *The Social World of Early Modern Westminster: Abbey, Court and Community, 1525-1640* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 178-81.

²⁵⁰ Burch, 'Parish of St Anne's', p. 14.

²⁵¹ CLRO Rep 45, fo 491; Rep 47, fo 221v.

²⁵² A McRae, 'On the Famous Voyage: Ben Jonson and Civic Space', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, Special Issue 3 (1998), p. 16.

²⁵³ Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, p. 38.

²⁵⁴ GL MSS 16957, 21378.