

Chapter 5. St Katherine by the Tower

The Royal Peculiar of the Hospital of St Katherine by the Tower has long suffered a bad reputation. In a 1601 House of Commons debate over its fate, Sir Stephen Soame, a member for London, called the liberty ‘the very sink of Sin, the Nursery of naughty and lewd People, the Harbour of Rogues, Theeves, and Beggars, and maintainer of idle Persons.’¹ In the 1603 edition of his *Survey of London*, John Stow described St Katherine’s only slightly more charitably as ‘pestered with small tenements, and homely cottages, having inhabitants, English and strangers, more in number then in some cities in England.’² Modern scholars have tended to accept Soame and Stow’s characterisations as accurate, and St Katherine’s has generally been treated as typical of London’s early modern liberties. Valerie Pearl uses it as an example of the ‘social ills, bad sanitation, vagrancy and disorder’ that characterised the liberties, and John McMullan describes it as ‘a low haunt of sailors and mariners’ that ‘catered to the whoring craft.’³ St Katherine’s, however, was not a typical liberty. The ancient hospital on which the precinct’s franchises rested was the only religious foundation in the capital to survive unaltered into Mary’s reign.⁴ Still, it is clear that both contemporaries and later writers considered the hospital’s survival little reason to separate St Katherine’s from the other jurisdictional enclaves around London.

The survival of St Katherine’s hospital inspired a series of antiquarian studies between 1782 and 1878. These works provide valuable information about the history of the foundation, but they shed little light on the day-to-day lives of those living in the hospital precinct. Recent historians have made passing suggestions that life in the liberty was not so desperate as Soame and Stow believed it to be. Ian Archer and Michael Berlin point out that authorities in St Katherine’s at the turn of the seventeenth century were both willing and able to address social problems in the precinct.⁵ The accounts of the liberty’s constables, on which Archer and Berlin base their arguments, survive from 1598 and offer invaluable information on the administrative workings of the liberty. Considered alongside other primary source material, the constables’ accounts make it clear that St Katherine’s had a functioning system of government that featured many of the structures that encouraged stability within the

¹ H Townshend, *Historical Collections: An Exact Account of the Last Four Parliaments of Elizabeth* (London, 1680), p. 325. By way of comparison, *Proceedings*, ed Hartley, iii.480 substitutes ‘nawghtie and lewd places’ for ‘naughty and lewd People’.

² Stow, *Survey*, i.324.

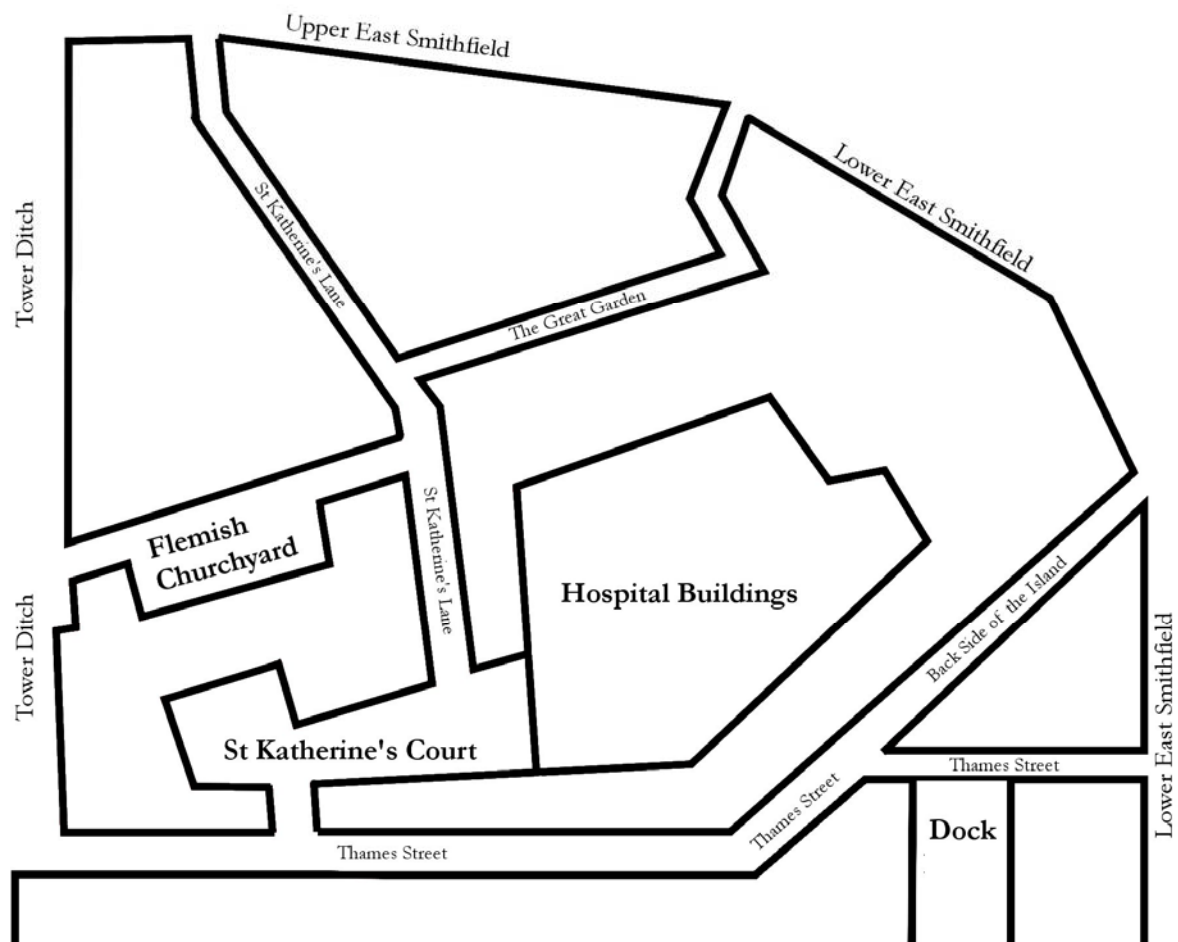
³ Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*, pp. 25-6; McMullan, *Canting Crew*, p. 63.

⁴ It survived at its original location until the whole precinct was razed to make room for docks in the 1820s. The hospital was moved to the Regent’s Park and subsequently to Ratcliff, where it operates to this day.

⁵ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 221-2, 225, 234 and Berlin, ‘Reordering Rituals’, p. 60.

neighbouring City of London. The responses of precinct governors to pressures from local residents on the one hand and outside authorities on the other indicate that St Katherine's was neither ungoverned nor ungovernable. Indeed, all available evidence suggests that it was *well-governed*.

Map: St Katherine by the Tower, 1687⁶



Chronology

The Royal Hospital of St Katherine was one of the oldest religious foundations in London. Founded by Queen Matilda in 1147 'for the salvation of the soul of my lord King Stephen and of mine and also for the salvation of our sons Eustace and William and all our

⁶ Based on GL MS 9774. Dating from 1687, it is the earliest extant map of the liberty, created by order of the hospital and enumerating 868 buildings in the liberty in addition to the buildings of the hospital itself. St Katherine's was untouched by the fire of 1666, but it is clear that the density of buildings there was lower in before 1640 than it was in 1687. It is also worth noting that St Katherine's had no gates to shut it off from the surrounding parts of Middlesex.

Children’, the foundation has benefited from the patronage of English queens up to the present day.⁷ The hospital sat on a twelve acre site that it had originally leased from the Priory of Holy Trinity within Aldgate. In the decades after the dissolutions, the liberty of St Katherine’s was accepted to be coterminous with the hospital precinct, which extended from the Thames northward to East Smithfield in the north, and from the Tower of London eastward to a small dock on its the east. The hospital itself was governed by three men and three women in holy orders, along with a master. Together, they enjoyed an endowment that included property spread across five counties and the City of London.⁸ The primary beneficiaries of the hospital’s charity were ten poor beadswomen, who are almost universally lost to history. Aside from its remarkable survival during the mid-sixteenth century, St Katherine’s was constitutionally notable in that the women of the chapter were of equal standing with the men, so that the master could not carry out hospital business without the consent of both groups.⁹ For centuries the hospital was the only English religious foundation whose head was chosen by the queen consort, which further accentuated the role of women in the community.

Antiquarians marvelled at the hospital’s surviving the Henrician dissolutions, attributing its good fortune to its highly-placed patron. One might reasonably doubt, however, that Henry’s queens, unable to save themselves, had greater success in saving the hospital. Andrew Ducarel, who published the first antiquarian study of the foundation in 1782, supposed that the intercession of Anne Boleyn had spared St Katherine’s from the first round of suppressions.¹⁰ The *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, however, recorded its income at £315/14/2d per annum, well above the £200 threshold below which foundations needed special permission to remain open.¹¹ Later in the 1530s, when the dissolution of wealthier foundations gained pace, Henry was without a queen and St Katherine’s without a patron. Catherine Jamison, the only modern scholar to write a history of the hospital, suggests that the chapter’s willingness to accept doctrinal change (along with its longstanding independence in lay and ecclesiastical matters) helped it avoid dissolution.¹² Jamison,

⁷ Translated in C Jamison, *The History of the Royal Hospital of St Katharine by the Tower of London* (Oxford, 1952), p. 177.

⁸ Ibid., p. xiii claims it covered thirteen acres while S A S Majendie, *The Ancient Hospital of St Katharine: Some Account of It* (London, 1924), p. 19 claims it was eleven. C Spence, *London in the 1690s: A Social Atlas* (London, 2000), pp. 176-7 puts it at 5.7 hectares, or a little over fourteen acres; *Valor*, i.386; BL Harleian MS 5097, fos 24-27.

⁹ The ordinances granted to the hospital by Queen Philippa in 1351—a translation of which can be found in Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 31—state that ‘no letter, concerning any important or prejudicial business, shall be sealed with the common seal of the Hospital, without the assent of the Brothers and Sisters of the Hospital; but from now on, the said seal shall be kept and preserved under three different keys, one of which shall be in the custody of the Master, Keeper, or Warden, the second in that of the Eldest Brother and the third in that of the Eldest Sister.’

¹⁰ A C Ducarel, *The History of the Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of St Katharine, near the Tower of London* (London, 1782), p. 21.

¹¹ *Valor*, i.386.

¹² Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 53.

however, fails to account for the closure of other doctrinally pliant and historically independent foundations elsewhere in the realm.

In London, the only other religious community to survive the 1530s was the famous Westminster Abbey. Recognising this coincidence, Madge Darby asserts that the survival of St Katherine's was 'probably due to its status as a royal peculiar.'¹³ If St Katherine's and Westminster Abbey shared some characteristics, they differed in other more important ways. Despite its lavish endowment and its importance to royal spectacle, Westminster Abbey was reconstituted four times between 1540 and 1560. The abbot (later the dean) and chapter of the abbey exercised broad ecclesiastical and secular authority not only in the precinct immediately surrounding their church, but in Westminster generally.¹⁴ St Katherine's meanwhile, continued to be governed by its medieval charters throughout the period. The only meaningful constitutional change was seemingly unintentional. In 1547 Thomas Seymour was named to the mastership of the hospital. The office had always before been filled by a cleric. In the two centuries that followed, only one cleric would hold the post, and that was Queen Mary's chaplain, Francis Malet. It is difficult to assess the intended effects of this change, but the later history of the hospital and the liberty speaks for itself. The master of St Katherine's enjoyed substantial authority in the liberty, but his power was limited by the small size and relative poverty of the precinct.

Although the hospital survived Henry and Edward's reigns largely unscathed, the middle decades of the sixteenth challenged the hospital in a variety of ways. The hospital remained open in 1545/6, but a substantial portion of its endowment was slated for dispersal by the Court of Augmentations.¹⁵ Two-thirds of monastic estates were disposed of by the Crown between 1543 and 1547, so the scheduled sale of St Katherine's endowment at this time would have been understandable had the hospital been suppressed.¹⁶ The news that its lands were to be alienated came as a shock to the chapter, but efforts to rescue them have been lost to history. It is possible that Catherine Parr—Henry's sixth wife and patron of St Katherine's from 1544 until her death in 1548—was able to intervene on its behalf. We know that Catherine took a personal interest in the hospital. In 1547 she named Thomas Seymour (whom she secretly married later that year) to the mastership. The hospital's close brush with the Court of Augmentations led to a dispute in 1550 over a farm on the Isle of Sheppey which had been sold off by the court late in 1545 without the chapter's knowledge.¹⁷ After a

¹³ M Darby, *The Royal Foundation of St Katharine* (London, 1992), p. 11.

¹⁴ And, after 1503, in the liberty of St Martin le Grand in the City of London. See chapter 6, below.

¹⁵ TNA E 315/408/17.

¹⁶ Woodward, *Dissolution*, p. 124.

¹⁷ Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, pp. 62-3.

protracted lawsuit the hospital was able to reclaim the alienated portions of its endowment, and Mary's accession in 1553 brought some respite from any lingering fears of accidental dissolution.

Elizabeth's reign brought new and different dangers to the hospital. Early in 1560/1, the Privy Council considered a plan for the annexation of St Katherine's to the Tower of London. The lieutenant of the Tower would become master of the precinct, and £200 of the hospital's annual income would be appropriated to support a new garrison.¹⁸ There is no record of an outcry from the hospital itself. Francis Malet, the late Queen Mary's chaplain, did not relinquish the mastership until November 1561; it is unlikely that he could have advocated effectively for the foundation. Instead, the plan's financial infeasibility saved the hospital. F S Lea calculated that after consideration was made for the pensions of the master and chapter, annexation would have increased the annual expenses at the Tower.¹⁹

A few years later, Elizabeth's first master put forth a plan that caused a greater furore, both within and outside the liberty. Dr Thomas Wilson, who has long been painted as one of the villains of St Katherine's history, roused the ire of City authorities and St Katherine's residents alike when he resurrected the hospital's claim to an annual fair and subsequently offered to sell that right to the City. Fairs provided a legitimate market for craftsmen outside the system of guild regulation. The City tolerated long-established fairs, but the aldermen were understandably upset at the prospect of a new fair for three weeks each summer. For their part, the residents of the precinct (and probably the others members of the chapter) suspected that Wilson was using the fair for personal financial benefit, to the detriment of the precinct generally.

Wilson first announced his intention to hold the fair—a never-exercised privilege that had been guaranteed to the hospital in its 1428 charter—in the summer of 1563. After a meeting with the lord mayor, Wilson agreed to 'make no further attempt this yeare for the setting forward of the fayer that he lately went aboute to kepe at St Katherynes & tower hill.'²⁰ The following spring, however, Wilson again announced that he would be holding a fair at St Katherine's. The aldermen asked the City's learned counsel to investigate the City's rights and jurisdictions in St Katherine's, an investigation that ended with the City's suing the hospital to prevent it from holding the fair.²¹ The lawsuit continued into

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 67; *CSPD*, 1547-80, p. 150.

¹⁹ Lea also admitted that 'of the causes which led to the failure or withdrawal of this "devise" nothing is known' from contemporary sources: F S Lea, *The Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of Saint Katharine near the Tower* (London, 1878), p. 65.

²⁰ CLRO Rep 15, fo 270. 20 Jul 1563.

²¹ CLRO Rep 15, fos 339v, 354v, 365. 16 May to 2 July 1564.

autumn 1564,²² but by February 1564/5, the City appears to have lost its case. On 22 February the aldermen sent a delegation to meet with Wilson and propose purchasing the right to the fair.²³ A second delegation was sent a fortnight later, and by April 1565 a tentative agreement had been reached.²⁴ The agreement still required the consent of the queen, as the foundation's patron. But soon after the City approached the Privy Council for that purpose, the residents of St Katherine's made their objections known. They petitioned William Cecil, protesting that the proposed sale was 'a greate losse and hurte to the prerogative of the succession of the queenes of this realme, but also to the utter subversion and extinguishinge of the true foundacion [of the hospitall], and to the utter impoverishinge and undoing of us your saide orators and oure postertyies here after to come.'²⁵

The residents' petition represented an internal battle at St Katherine's in which the previously acquiescent brothers and sisters obliquely challenged Wilson's authority. When Thomas Wilson moved 'to sell the liberties and royalties of the same to the Lord Mayor of London,' the residents petitioned Sir William Cecil, Queen Elizabeth's chief secretary of state.²⁶ The relationship of the chapter (that is to say, the brothers and sisters of the hospital) to the proposed sale and the petition is somewhat obscure. It is difficult to believe that the residents of the precinct had access to precise details of the liberty's chartered rights without the complicity of at least part of the chapter.²⁷ Theoretically, the opposition of the chapter or of the senior brother or sister could have effectively prevented the sale. We do not know precisely who wrote or signed the petition, but it was submitted by the residents. There is no reason to believe that they were not ultimately responsible for its creation. It is, after all, very likely that they felt a stronger interest in maintaining the liberty's chartered rights than did the chapter. The petitioners presented two main arguments to Cecil. The first painted the loss of St Katherine's independence as a direct affront to its patron, the Queen: 'yt shoulde be a hurte to the prerogative of the succession of the queenes of this realme'.²⁸ Simultaneously, they claimed the proposed sale as an offence against the residents themselves, since 'by vertue of the saide greate charter and foundacion thereof do say that we should inhabite [within the] precincte of the saide hospitall as frely enjoyinge and usinge...the

²² CLRO Rep 15, fos 388v, 394. 28 October and 15 November 1564.

²³ CLRO Rep 15, fo 423v. 22 Feb 1564/5.

²⁴ CLRO Rep 15, fos 426v, 435v. 8 March 1564/5 and 1 April 1565.

²⁵ Qtd in Ducarel, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 23.

²⁶ *CSPD*, 1547-1580, p. 150. The full text of the petition can be found in *Ibid.*, pp. 23-7.

²⁷ Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 74.

²⁸ Qtd in Ducarel, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 24.

pryvelges, liberties, tuicions, and defences thereof without any impeachment, molestacion, hurt or grevaunce of any.²⁹

The petitioners framed their privileges as no threat to the City, focusing instead on their ties to the Tower, and the unique burdens which that relationship entailed. They lamented that annexation by the City would impose new financial duties on them without removing those already in place. The petition also highlighted the investment of the petitioners in the infrastructure of the liberty: as leaseholders, they bore the full expense of maintaining their tenements and had paid for the construction of most of the precinct's buildings themselves. As landlord of the precinct, they suggested the master should protect the interests of his tenants. The petition could cynically be dismissed as an attempt to preserve undue privileges, but even then it represents a remarkable degree of self-consciousness on the part of the residents. They knew enough about their status that the threat of losing long-held rights drove them to action. The petition is an impressive, clearly-articulated statement of their conception of themselves and their place in the metropolis. They lived in a liberty, certainly, but not in a vacuum. They acknowledged the precinct's points of contact with the outside world—particularly with the Crown and the Tower. It is unsurprising that they sought to maintain a certain degree of independence, given the system of self-governance that had developed in the liberty.

As a result of the residents' petition, the queen's consent was refused, and for over eighteen months the matter was at an impasse. When conversations resumed in 1567, the aldermen were eager to secure the consent of the brothers and sisters in addition to that of the master.³⁰ By the end of May the chapter had agreed to formally relinquish their right to the fair, for which the City paid them £300.³¹ After 1567, the City was more willing to accept St Katherine's claims to jurisdictional independence: the repertories of the Court of Aldermen contain no mention of St Katherine's for almost fifty years after the matter of the fair was settled, and the hospital emerged from its most turbulent decades relatively unscathed. Dr Wilson did not fare so well. Although he continued as master until his death in 1581, the struggles of the 1560s seem to have permanently undermined his relationship with the chapter and the precinct. Although he was buried in the hospital church, Wilson was the only one of Elizabeth's appointees who left no money to the hospital (or the poor of the precinct) at his death.³²

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ CLRO Rep 16, fo 190. 22 April 1567.

³¹ CLRO Rep 16, fos 207, 209, 210, 15-27 May 1567.

³² Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 70, Lea, *Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of Saint Katharine*, p. 75.

Regardless of simmering tensions between the master and others in St Katherine's, after 1567 life there resumed its normal pace. The population of the precinct continued (along with that of the eastern suburbs and the metropolis generally) to grow, but institutional regularity eased many of the concerns of the civic and royal governments. The Privy Council was in frequent contact with the masters between 1570 and 1600, but their communications do not suggest that the liberty was an area of particular concern for the royal government. Most of the communication between the two was focused not on ensuring social stability but on the enforcement of trade regulations. As a centre of the metropolitan brewing trade, the Privy Council was particularly interested in St Katherine's during times of dearth, both to prevent misuse of grain and to guard against price gouging.³³ Counsellors also oversaw the trade of articles imported through the dock at St Katherine's³⁴ and attempted to minimise the disruption caused by the convergence of soldiers pressed for service of the Crown overseas.³⁵ The only instance in which the royal government expressed concern for the maintenance of order—in June 1592—it was part of a larger fear of 'mutinous and fowl disorder' in the metropolis.³⁶ St Katherine's receives no mention at all in the repertories of the Court of Aldermen after 1567. The lack of civic records is exacerbated by poor survival of internally-generated sources. The last three decades of the sixteenth century left few records to help us reconstruct the history of the hospital itself, or that of the precinct. Only fragmentary evidence survives before 1598, when the constables' accounts begin. It is clear that some differences remained between the liberty and the City, as indicated by Stephen Soame's passionate Commons speech in 1601. These tensions apparently endured into the seventeenth century despite the efforts of the hospital's longest serving and most conscientious early modern master, Julius Caesar.

Caesar was granted the reversion of the mastership in 1591 and he took up the office in 1596, but his connection to St Katherine's began a decade earlier and would last until his death in 1636. The length of his tenure as master and his clear commitment to the welfare of the hospital were a great boon to those who lived in the liberty. Julius Caesar was the son of Cesare Adelmare, the Venetian physician who enjoyed the patronage of Queen Mary and later William Cecil. Julius Caesar was educated as a lawyer in France, and entered the Inner Temple in 1580. The same year, he became commissary of St Katherine's ecclesiastical court,

³³ *APC* ix.297-8; xxiii.277.

³⁴ *APC* viii.324.

³⁵ *APC* xvii.59. The practice of sending soldiers overseas from St Katherine's began in 1588, but was common by the turn of the seventeenth century.

³⁶ *APC* xxii.549-51.

likely with the help of his friends at court.³⁷ In February 1581/2 he married the daughter of Alderman (and twice lord mayor) Richard Martin, whose influence no doubt had some role in Caesar's being named Counsel of the City later that year. With his links to a previously troublesome liberty and at Court, the aldermen may have thought Caesar would make a useful ally for the City.

Caesar appears to have taken a liking to St Katherine's soon after he became commissary there. Nineteenth century antiquary Edmund Lodge wrote that Caesar was soon 'very desirous of obtaining' its mastership.³⁸ We know for certain that he went on to pay the Scottish ambassador £500 to press his suit to the queen: 'which som I would never have given for such a reversion,' Caesar later wrote to Cecil, 'if Mr Secretary Walsyngham had not drawn into the cause before that time with a promise of greater matters.'³⁹ He was granted reversion of the office in 1591. The growing list of offices at Caesar's disposal, however, did not diminish his interest in the mastership.⁴⁰ When he took up the office in 1596 he moved his family to the precinct, and his fifth son was baptised there the following year. For almost two decades, Caesar was a feature of daily life in the precinct, notably active in his capacity as master of the hospital and as a justice of the peace for Middlesex. In 1614, with growing responsibilities at Court, Caesar decided to leave St Katherine's and move farther west. Even after he left his official residence in the hospital, however, it is clear that he maintained a keen interest in the liberty. He undertook the repair of many of its buildings at his own expense, and his sons in their turn took up offices in the precinct. Thomas Caesar was chief surveyor of St Katherine's from 1608 to 1610, and his brother Charles was commissary of the ecclesiastical court from 1630 to 1643.⁴¹ At his death in 1636, Julius Caesar left £48 to the precinct.⁴² Under his stewardship, St Katherine's established its post-reformation identity. The stability of the liberty in the early seventeenth century was made possible by Caesar's conscientiousness as master. His period at the helm of the hospital—though almost entirely ignored by the secondary literature on St Katherine's—is therefore ripe for further exploration.⁴³

³⁷ Julia Merritt calls him 'a member of the Cecil inner circle' and his godparents included the queen, the earl of Arundel and marquess of Winchester. Merritt, *Social World of Early Modern Westminster*, p. 80.

³⁸ E Lodge, *The Life of Sir Julius Caesar* (London, 1827), p. 20.

³⁹ BL Lansdowne MS 157, fo 374.

⁴⁰ Caesar became, for example, Judge of the Admiralty Court in 1584, Master of Requests in 1590, a JP for Middlesex in 1592, MP for Westminster in 1603, Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1606, and Master of the Rolls in 1614. *Analytical Index to the Remembrancia*, eds Overall and Overall, p. 60n. For more information on Caesar see L M Hill, *Bench and Bureaucracy: The Public Career of Sir Julius Caesar, 1580-1636* (Cambridge, 1988), *The House of Commons, 1558-1603*, ed P W Hasler, (London, 1981), 1.526-8 and A Wijffels, 'Caesar, Sir Julius (*hap.* 1558, *d.* 1636)', *ODNB*.

⁴¹ Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, pp. 200, 205.

⁴² Lodge, *The Life of Sir Julius Caesar*, p. 35.

⁴³ Ducarel dedicates barely a page to the period between 1567 and 1650. J B Nichols, *An Account of the Royal Hospital and Collegiate Church of Saint Katharine near the Tower of London* (London, 1824)—written in anticipation of the precinct's

St Katherine's Community

Underlying the structures of local governance in St Katherine's was a sense that it was a single, coherent community—a town, even. Historians long defined early modern towns primarily according to their degree of administrative independence.⁴⁴ This formalistic approach to township has since 1960 been supplanted by a social definition. Westminster had certainly been a town long before it received the courtesy title of 'city' with the creation of the new diocese there in 1541. Its residents had defied their administrative subordination to the abbey and developed 'collaborative means of ordering their physical and social environment.'⁴⁵ Under the formalistic definition, St Katherine's identity as a town would depend on the chartered rights of the hospital. As in Westminster, the cooperative efforts of its residents did more to contribute to St Katherine's sense of township than did the constitutional position of its officers. It is clear, in fact, that the officers of the liberty (if not the residents) thought of themselves as living in a town distinct from London and its eastern suburbs. The constables were far more likely to describe their setting as a town than a precinct or a liberty, a trend that increased as the seventeenth century progressed.⁴⁶ By the late 1630s, surpluses which had previously been used to reimburse officers for out-of-pocket expenses became earmarked 'for & towarde the new building of a Towne house'.⁴⁷ The building of a town hall, Robert Tittler argues, was a manifestation not only of 'autonomous civic administration', but also of the coherence of local community and, often, the development of an oligarchy within that community. But the construction of their town hall was not the only community-centred project funded by the residents of St Katherine's. Upkeep of the town clock was a clear priority, and repairs to precinct infrastructure were also a regular expense. The town mill, one of the hospital's most ancient franchises, was kept in good repair, and constables (and individual residents) made frequent contributions to building projects at the hospital. In short, local officers did not work only to maintain the

destruction to make room for docks—discusses the hospital under Elizabeth generally, but is more concerned with the architecture and memorials of the church. C F Lowder, *St Katharine's Hospital, Its History and Revenues and Their Application to Missionary Purposes in the East of London* (London, 1867) and F S Lea both skip Caesar's mastership almost entirely. Majendie is more concerned with proving the foundation's usefulness in the twentieth century than on its institutional developments in the seventeenth, and Darby skips from 1598 to 1660 with nary a backward glance. Catherine Jamison is slightly more generous to Caesar. The six pages on his mastership, though, still pale in comparison to the eighteen Jamison dedicated to Wilson's period as master.

⁴⁴ This definition of township was largely formulated by C Gross, *The Guild Merchant*, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1890), esp. i.1-35, and F W Maitland, *Township and Borough* (Cambridge, 1898), esp. pp 18-36.

⁴⁵ G Rosser, *Medieval Westminster, 1200-1540* (Oxford, 1989), p. 228. See also R Tittler, *Architecture and Power: The Town Hall and the English Urban Community, c.1500-1640* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 75-97.

⁴⁶ GL MS 9680, fos 1-135 Constables refer to St Katherine's as a precinct 53 times and as a town on 113 occasions.

⁴⁷ GL MS 9680, fos 124, 129.

precinct as they found it. They also sought actively to improve their built environment. In the process, they claimed the town as their own.⁴⁸

Julius Caesar and the masters who came before and after him were the lynchpins of St Katherine's administration. The master was not only the final authority within the liberty; he was also responsible for naming the officers associated with the hospital and the precinct. One of the first challenges to understanding St Katherine's is distinguishing the boundaries between what could be called the local or parochial system of administration and that of the hospital. There was, of course, no clear line of division. Just as the hospital chapel doubled as the parish church, many officers had responsibilities linked to both the hospital and parish.⁴⁹ It is often possible to associate certain offices more with one or the other. In 1867 C F Lowder suggested that the hospital chapel 'assumed a more and more parochial character' between the reigns of Elizabeth and Charles II.⁵⁰ In reality, the parochial character of the precinct had been developing since the middle of the fifteenth century, the result of a centuries-old battle between the hospital and the Priory of Holy Trinity Aldgate, on whose land the hospital had been built and to which its original charter had 'committed the custody of the hospital'.⁵¹

Documents from Caesar's mastership offer the first sustained look at the structures of government in St Katherine's, their relationship to one another, and their practical operation, but it would be foolish to assume that the structures only began to exist in 1596, when the Caesar took office, or in 1598, when the earliest surviving records were made. The records from the early years start abruptly, unlike early records of the inquest at St Martin le Grand, in which the officers are clearly trying to find their administrative feet. The officers of the Minories seem similarly unsure of themselves in their early records.⁵² By the time Caesar became master, the administrative structures in St Katherine's were well-established.

Until the dissolution of Holy Trinity Aldgate, its prior served *ex officio* as alderman of the City's Portsoken Ward. In the 1420s the City used this connection to claim control over the hospital precinct, which it purported had been, 'time out of mind, in and of the liberty of the City, and part of the Ward of Portsoken without Aldgate'.⁵³ As it had done in response to

⁴⁸ Tittler, *Architecture and Power*, p. 9. See also pp. 15-22, 98-102; GL MS 9680, fos 15, 55, 59, 72, 79, 80, 85, 88, 109, 114, 116, 118, 124, 129.

⁴⁹ Throughout this chapter, the descriptive term 'parochial' is a necessary approximation, since the local church and its administrative relationship to the residents of the precinct was entirely typical of contemporary parishes.

⁵⁰ Lowder, *St Katharine's Hospital*, p. 7.

⁵¹ Qtd in Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 7.

⁵² For more on the inquest at St Martin le Grand, see p. 213, below; for more on the Minories see p. 97, ff, above.

⁵³ *Calendar of Letter Books of the City of London*, ed R R Sharpe, 11 vols, (London, 1899-1912), K.81. For further information on disputes between Holy Trinity and St Katherine's, see Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, pp. 6-19. For more on the role of Holy Trinity in the City, see Davis, 'Beginning of the Dissolution', pp. 127-50.

thirteenth century disputes over its status, the hospital responded to the City's claims by securing a new charter for itself, which substantially expanded its rights in no uncertain terms.⁵⁴ The 1428 charter clearly established the precinct as a liberty, declaring it immune 'from all jurisdiction secular and ecclesiastical except that of the lord chancellor of England.'⁵⁵ The secular franchises it bestowed included the previously mentioned fair, the view of frankpledge and the right to a court leet (along with the fines and profits from pleas heard there), the right to enforce assize, exemption from all taxation, the right to the chattels of felons and fugitives and responsibility for maintaining the peace within the liberty. Ecclesiastically, the new charter severed the residents' links to their long-time parish of St Botolph without Aldgate.⁵⁶ It also removed St Katherine's from the jurisdiction of the diocese of London and its courts, granting the liberty its own ecclesiastical commissary court.

The commissary court, though a manifestation of the hospital's chartered independence from the Diocese of London, was not administratively connected to the hospital. The first mention of the court in operation comes from 1441/2, and the court notably survived a failed 1550 attempt to reunify St Katherine's to the diocese of London.⁵⁷ Even after the reformation, English church courts continued to enjoy wide jurisdiction. They heard cases that ranged from religious and social offences to questions of legitimate descent. Heresy, absence from church, witchcraft, defamation, drunkenness, and fornication were part of the long list of offences under the purview of the ecclesiastical courts. But their most fundamental and relevant responsibilities related to marital disputes and the probation of wills.⁵⁸ The hierarchy of ecclesiastical courts was headed by the huge provincial courts at Canterbury and York and extended through the diocesan courts of bishops and archdeacons to small commissary courts in peculiar jurisdictions. D M Owen has shown that these 'small, all purpose courts' were generally unlike 'the larger and better organised archidiaconal and episcopal consistory courts'.⁵⁹ Commissary courts were particularly efficient and informal, and they were therefore a frequent resort of their local communities.

Unfortunately, scant evidence has survived concerning the commissary court at St Katherine's, making it impossible to assess whether it followed the pattern that Owen identifies. Richard Wunderli uses a 1490 description of John Milet as 'officialem domini

⁵⁴ The full text of the charter can be found in Ducarel, *History of the Royal Hospital*, pp. 54-67.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁶ The residents of the Minorities had been similarly severed from St Botolph's parish in 1294. See p. 77, above.

⁵⁷ In fact, the commissary court appears to have survived well into the eighteenth century. Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 47.

⁵⁸ M Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570-1640* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁹ D M Owen, 'Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction in England 1300-1550: The Records and Their Interpretation', in D Baker (ed), *The Materials, Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History* (Oxford, 1975), p. 203.

archidiaconi Londonensis ac Commissarium generalem jurisdictiones Sancte Katherine iuxta Turrim Londonensis' to argue that the court operated under the auspices of London's archidiaconal court.⁶⁰ It is more likely, however, that Milet held the two posts—the archdeacon of London and the commissary of St Katherine's—simultaneously but independently. Between 1630 and 1642, Sir Charles Caesar was both commissary of St Katherine's and judge of the Archbishop of Canterbury's court of audience.⁶¹ Biographers of Sir Julius Caesar have suggested that the post exercised both civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the liberty.⁶² There is, however, no extant evidence suggesting that this was the case. The only surviving records from the court are a collection of depositions from two cases in 1583-4. Both related to the probation of disputed wills that were, on the whole, unremarkable.⁶³ The close cooperation of St Katherine's parochial officers with the Middlesex JPs further suggests that the commissary court exercised no secular powers. Regardless of the frequency with which it met or the breadth of cases it heard, the commissary court of St Katherine's added to the depth and complexity of the liberty's government, and to its sense of itself as a place distinct from both London and unincorporated Middlesex.

A small group of hospital officers not directly involved in its charitable or religious work carried out various duties throughout the liberty. Their presence augmented and reinforced the authority of the precinct's parochial officers. The receiver of rents was paid £6 annually to oversee the ninety-eight properties in the liberty that the hospital leased to residents. Annual rents, mostly on forty year leases, ranged from 2s to £9/10/8d. Some of the larger tenements were on leases of up to ninety-nine years, and those who leased them from the hospital easily sublet them piecemeal at a substantial profit.⁶⁴ The role of chief surveyor appears to have been a sinecure, but we know very little about the role. It was accompanied by a £10 salary, and surveyors under Caesar included two esquires of the Inner Temple and Thomas Sackville (later Lord Buckhurst and the earl of Dorset). The hospital also made annual payments to a steward and to the bailiff of the court leet, who received £2 each.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ R M Wunderli, *London Church Courts and Society on the Eve of the Reformation* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), p. 18.

⁶¹ Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 205; L M Hill, 'Caesar, Sir Charles (1590–1642)', *ODNB*.

⁶² Lodge, *The Life of Sir Julius Caesar*, p. 11 called the position 'Chancellor to the Master of the royal peculiar', from which Hill, *Bench and Bureaucracy*, p. 9 concluded that as commissary Caesar 'kept order and dispensed the Master's justice to residents and alien merchants alike.'

⁶³ GL MS 9740A.

⁶⁴ BL Harleian MS 5097, fos 4-24.

⁶⁵ BL Harleian MS 5097, fos 4-24.

The 1428 charter gave St Katherine's the freedom and the impetus to develop a system of administration with both secular and ecclesiastical aspects. Offices closely linked to the hospital developed before those more orientated toward the needs of its tenants. Hospital officers also held their posts for long terms, if not for life, while 'parochial' officers generally served one year terms. Contact between the two was frequent, which provided an element of stability to the rapidly changing roster of local officers. In other suburbs of London, government relied on the loose cooperation between parish officers and county JPs. In St Katherine's, the hospital exercised exclusive authority over a relatively small area, and its officers could often count on the support of an active JP living in or near the liberty. All of the Elizabethan and later masters maintained an active interest in the state of the liberty. Even the supposedly monstrous Dr Wilson organised the repair of many of the houses in the precinct. In the late 1560s, after the fair debacle, Wilson also secured for the precinct a new guarantee of the precinct's freedom from ecclesiastical taxation.⁶⁶ His immediate successor, David Lewes, lived at the hospital throughout his short mastership, and Sir Ralph Rokeby, who was master between Lewes and Caesar, bequeathed £20 to the poor of the liberty, the income from which was still being distributed fifteen years after his death.⁶⁷ While the master of the hospital was invariably a layman after 1561, the brothers of the chapter continued to be clerics. Until the late eighteenth century they 'never ceased to be responsible for the parochial duties of the precinct.'⁶⁸ The role of the sisters (or of the beadswomen) after the reformation is less clear. The posts certainly continued to exist, but their institutional function is unclear. By the eighteenth century, the positions became stipendiary refuges for widows of small means from well-connected families.

The survival of constables' accounts from 1598 onward permits a richer exploration of the administrative structures of St Katherine's during the early seventeenth century.⁶⁹ Among the local officers of St Katherine's, the constables deserve special attention. Not only did they leave the most extensive records, but they were also the most active officers in the daily life of the precinct. Despite (or perhaps on account of) their wide responsibilities, early modern constables enjoy a lacklustre reputation. In 1607 assize judges were warned to be wary of constables, who 'for the moste parte are the simpleste &

⁶⁶ Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 77.

⁶⁷ GL MS 9680, fo 37.

⁶⁸ Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 89. The increasingly parochial nature of the liberty would later wreak havoc when the Diocese of London sought to claim for itself the wealth of the hospital. Lowder, *St Katharine's Hospital*, pp. 7-11.

⁶⁹ They were clearly a continuation of administrative structures in the precinct that preceded Caesar's mastership.

meaneste of the people, a greate Faulte'.⁷⁰ Historians have struggled to reconcile such contemporary condescension with evidence showing that constables 'were ordinary members of their communities, subject to the prejudices, the strengths and weaknesses of their society'.⁷¹ Joan Kent's nuanced study of early modern English constabulary has greatly advanced the understanding of constables and their role in community life.⁷² Ian Archer specifically praises St Katherine's constables as 'respectable men', at least insofar as 'they had not been guilty of serious disorderly conduct', though he does note the difficulty that faced them in the form of overcrowding. The sheer number of households which St Katherine's constables were expected to supervise may well have meant they were overburdened.⁷³

Between 1598 and 1642, eighty-five men served as constable, five of them twice. In the same interval, only seventeen men avoided the office, either through payment of a fine (ranging from 30s to £7) or by arranging for a deputy to serve in their stead. The use of deputies is often seen as an indicator of low-quality constables in an area. Two of the three men who served as deputy constables in St Katherine's also served as constable in their own right, suggesting that in the liberty, at least, deputies did represent an uncommitted constabulary.⁷⁴ Dr Archer found only one indictment of a St Katherine's constable in the Middlesex sessions or at King's Bench, and that for a relatively minor licensing offence.⁷⁵ The offender, John Soper, served as constable twice. He was among the handful of householders assessed at above £3 in the 1599 lay subsidy, and he went on to serve as foreman of the precinct inquest.⁷⁶ To Soper we might add the names of three other constables accused of misbehaviour. Thomas Green was cited for disturbing the peace two years before he became constable.⁷⁷ Robert Richmond, who also served the office twice, was cited for breaking the assize in 1615,⁷⁸ and Robert Vokins (who was a citizen of London and a member of the Haberdashers' Company) appeared before the Middlesex JPs in 1616 to answer for unlawfully demolishing a house in East Smithfield.⁷⁹ The incident did not prevent him from

⁷⁰ Qtd in H Langeluddecke, 'Secular Policy Enforcement During the Personal Rule of Charles I: The Administrative Work of Parish Officers in the 1630s' (U of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1995), p. 29.

⁷¹ K Wrightson, 'Two Concepts of Order: Justices, Constables, and Jurymen in Seventeenth-Century England', in J Brewer and J Styles (eds), *An Ungovernable People: The English and Their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1980), p. 26.

⁷² J Kent, *The English Village Constable 1580-1642: A Social and Administrative Study* (Oxford, 1986), esp pp. 80-151.

⁷³ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, pp. 221, 225. Dr Archer estimated that the two constables of St Katherine's served 490 households (a ratio of 1:245). At the other end of the spectrum were the parish of St Margaret Westminster (1:63) and the City's Cornhill Ward (1:65), where each constable represented far fewer households.

⁷⁴ GL MS 9680, fos 9, 13, 38, 47.

⁷⁵ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 222.

⁷⁶ TNA E179/142/234; GL MS 9680, fos 25, 42.

⁷⁷ GL MS 9680, fo 61, and *Calendar to the Sessions Records*, ed Le Hardy, iv.139.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, iii.141-2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, iii.178; GL MS 9680, fo 83.

being named constable several years later. While Vokins's offence was more serious than any of the others', none of these men was a reprobate.

The constables' records were reviewed annually by the precinct inquest, to which they answered for any discrepancies. Such discrepancies were not unknown,⁸⁰ but the network of officers in which the constables operated largely succeeded in ensuring a high level of consistency despite the regular turnover of individual officeholders.

As elsewhere, the constables in St Katherine's were the most important local officers throughout the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁸¹ Their accounts, which generally itemise quarterly sources of income and expenditures, are remarkably consistent from year to year. This continuity suggests the level of supervision built in to St Katherine's system of government. The master of the hospital was responsible for appointing parochial officers of the liberty, which he seems to have done on the advice of the precinct court leet. The court leet—which doubled as the precinct inquest—was therefore able to restrict access to parochial offices. By the turn of the seventeenth century the court leet was meeting several times annually, and it increasingly resembled a parish vestry in both form and function.⁸²

Courts leet were units of manorial administration. Functionally, they were similar to London's Wardmotes, which had administrative and electoral functions within the civic government. The court leet at St Katherine's, however, was a selective body. In the City, Wardmotes were complemented by smaller ward inquests, responsible for overseeing the performance of ward officers. St Katherine's court leet seems to have doubled as its inquest.⁸³ It assisted in the selection of precinct officers and reviewed their performance. In the City, the selection of ward and precinct officers had been largely usurped by parish vestries by the end of Elizabeth's reign.⁸⁴ No mention has been found of a vestry in St Katherine's, perhaps because of its ambiguous status as a parish. Under the Tudors, parishes were increasingly treated as the fundamental unit of local government, and it appears that the residents of St Katherine's moved internally to create offices and structures that would allow the liberty to adapt to such changes. The office of churchwarden—held elsewhere by senior vestrymen responsible for parochial administration—is mentioned only in the first year's

⁸⁰ While no dispute over the constables' accounts is evident, there was some controversy over the misappropriation of funds by a scavenger in 1608, suggesting that the inquest was willing to follow up on discrepancies in the record. GL MS 9680, fo 28.

⁸¹ Kent, *English Village Constable*, p. 24.

⁸² A E McCambell, 'The London Parish and the London Precinct', *Guildhall Studies in London History*, 3 (1979), pp. 107-24. For more on jurisdictional structures in London, see also V Pearl, 'Change and Stability in Seventeenth-Century London', *London Journal*, 5:1 (1979), pp. 3-34.

⁸³ The officers listed for the court leet by Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital* frequently coincide with, and never contradict, the inquest lists found in the constables accounts.

⁸⁴ Foster, *Politics of Stability*, p. 39, ff and Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 68.

constable accounts, but many of the functions of churchwardens were carried out by the constables in St Katherine's.⁸⁵

This raises an important difference between local administration in the City and in St Katherine's. In the former, wards (and the precincts into which they were subdivided) existed alongside parishes. Each had a role in local administration. The borders of precincts, wards and parishes rarely matched precisely, creating logistical problems with the collection of rates and the provision of local services. It also increased the number of communities with which individuals could identify.⁸⁶ No such overlapping existed in St Katherine's. Offices that were differentiated by ward, precinct or parish in the City shared one set of physical boundaries in St Katherine's, and they all answered to a single person—the master of the hospital.

Considering the role of the court leet, it is hardly surprising that a *cursus honorum* developed in St Katherine's. Half of the constables who served between 1598 and 1642 are known to have previously held local office as inquestmen, scavengers or both.⁸⁷ There is no doubt that the actual percentage was much higher. No record is made of officeholders before 1598, and even after that the names of lower officers were only recorded less than a quarter of the time. Lists of inquestmen are similarly sporadic before 1620.

Because of the limits of the constables' accounts, our knowledge of several parochial officers is largely tangential or inferred. The headborough assisted the constables with their less appealing responsibilities.⁸⁸ His precise duties were not recorded, but we can tell that it was office most frequently avoided by payment of a fine. The bailiff, meanwhile, seems to have been responsible for the liberty's prison, in addition to serving on the precinct inquest or court.⁸⁹ The role of the beadle is less clear. In the City, beadles oversaw the precinct constables and set the watch for an entire ward.⁹⁰ In St Katherine's, where the constables served the whole liberty, such a role for the beadle would have been a redundancy, and a costly one since it was one of the few positions whose salary was paid directly by the residents of the precinct. Whatever the beadle's function, his position within the hierarchy of local officers was clearly in flux during the early seventeenth century; until 1606 the beadle was paid £4 p.a., reduced to £3 from 1607 to 1610, and to £2 from 1611 onward.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Or, for that matter, between churchwardens and the commissary. Martin Ingram notes that functioning of ecclesiastical courts depended on presentments from churchwardens, whose performance was monitored through visitations from diocesan authorities. With its own commissary, such visitations would have been redundant in St Katherine's. Ingram, *Church Courts*, p. 44.

⁸⁶ Alice McCambell noted that 'although vestry and precinct meetings were separated, obviously the membership often overlapped.' McCambell, 'London Parish', p. 124.

⁸⁷ GL MS 9680.

⁸⁸ Kent, *English Village Constable*, p. 20.

⁸⁹ APC xxi.52, xxiii.121-2.

⁹⁰ Foster, *Politics of Stability*, pp. 31-2.

⁹¹ GL MS 9680.

We know more about the scavengers, who were probably the most visible officers in St Katherine's after the constables. The scavengers' primary responsibility was to collect the rates which paid for the removal and disposal of the precinct's refuse. It was 'a lowly, time consuming position which gave the officer little prestige, and which could leave him out of pocket',⁹² but it was necessary work. And if the office accorded little status in itself, it was a low rung on the *cursus honorum* and therefore an accessible introduction to local office holding. In most years, the constables' accounts include substantial information about the scavengers' work. The account book lists the names of ninety-five men who held the office between 1598 and 1642 and fifteen men who excused themselves from service by payment of a fine of between 14s and £4. Like constables, the scavengers were chosen by the master on the advice of the court leet. Their accounts record the division of the liberty into an upper (Lane) ward and a lower (Thames Street) ward, with two scavengers serving annually in each ward. It is unknown whether the wards served any other purpose; they are neither mentioned in any other source nor marked on any map of the liberty.

The scavengers in each ward collected a rate for the payment of the raker and oversaw his work. The rakers who actually cleared filth from the streets were indispensable, but as common labourers they had no claim to aspire even to the office of scavenger. Scavengers also ensured that householders paved in front of their houses and kept their immediate vicinity clear of filth and referred them to the constables if they refused to cooperate. Performed conscientiously, the office of scavenger could alienate a man from his neighbours. In the City, between thirty and forty percent of householders paid the scavengers' rates—a significantly higher proportion than contributed to the poor rates.⁹³ Similar comparisons are not possible for St Katherine's, but it is clear that the sums collected by scavengers there compared favourably with those collected in the City. In 1641-2, they collected £54/7/10d, and the sums collected rose consistently from year to year.⁹⁴ At £9/10/8d per hectare, the collections made by St Katherine's scavengers was higher than that collected in seven of the City's twenty-five wards.⁹⁵ In short, all evidence indicates that the scavengers, like the constables, performed their offices dutifully.

⁹² Jenner, 'Early Modern English Conceptions of Cleanliness', p. 57.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁹⁴ GL MS 9680, fo 126 and Spence, *London in the 1690s*, pp. 176-7. In the decade before 1641-2 alone, the sum had risen from £40 13s 11d to £54 7s 10d.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* and Jenner, 'Early Modern English Conceptions of Cleanliness', p. 66. The part of Aldersgate Ward within the walls collected £7/10s; Castle Baynard: £6/3/10d; Coleman Street: £9/1/5d; Dowgate: £7/10s; Queenhithe: £6/18/2d; Vintry: £6/16/8d; Walbrook: £9/4/7d. It should be noted that the City data are from 1682-3, and four decades of separation between the two sets of data makes this comparison a rough one at best, as St Katherine's collections were likely much higher by 1682. But even if the rates in St Katherine's remained static for four decades—which this calculation assumes they did—collections there were not abnormally low.

The subsidy assessment of 1599 suggests that there were relatively few ratepayers for the size of the precinct; from a population estimated at 490 households, only 137 were assessed, most at the lowest available level.⁹⁶ The relative poverty of the liberty would have made relief of the poor exceedingly difficult. In the City, Christ's hospital redistributed poor rate collections to equalise relief across different parishes, but no similar structure existed in the liberties or suburbs. St Katherine's hospital certainly provided some relief, but it was intermittent and increasingly rare as time progressed.⁹⁷ There is evidence that many St Katherine's residents benefited from the abundant poor relief available at the nearby parish of Holy Trinity Minories during its nonconformist heyday in the 1560s and 70s.⁹⁸ That source of relief dwindled and eventually disappeared, leaving the burden of poor relief squarely on the parochial structures of St Katherine's. It was a daunting task, but the residents of the liberty did not shy from it. In their 1565 petition to Cecil, the residents noted that 'we gyve also a cherytie to the pore of the same presincte which is 5s at the lest every weeke throughout the whole yere, which we have contynued for this 41 yeres'.⁹⁹ It was not until 1572 that Parliament instituted a nationwide system of poor relief, funded by compulsory poor rates in each parish. If the residents of St Katherine's are to be believed, they had been rating themselves for relief of the poor since 1524, anticipating Parliament by almost fifty years.

Elizabethan poor law divided the indigent into two groups: the impotent (or respectable) poor and the sturdy (or dangerous) poor. Distinct remedies were prescribed for each group, so that 'poor rates, outdoor relief, compulsory apprenticeship of poor children, and savage punishment of vagrants' became characteristic of English social policy by 1600.¹⁰⁰ In St Katherine's the constables only inconsistently recorded efforts to relieve the liberty's respectable poor, but it is apparent that structures existed in the precinct for executing the poor law. We know, for example, that payments were made for the care of maimed soldiers throughout the period.¹⁰¹ The lack of a strong ratepayer base, however, meant that regardless of the constables' competence, demand for relief far exceeded supply. St Katherine's relative poverty, however, should not be held against it. The constables carried out the poor law as best they could, and would be unwise to confuse the liberty's want of financial resources with

⁹⁶ TNA E179/142/234.

⁹⁷ E M Leonard, *The Early History of English Poor Relief* (Cambridge, 1900), pp. 27-31.

⁹⁸ LPL MS 3390 shows that during Holy Trinity Minories' period as a central dissenting parish, the bulk of its poor relief went to people resident in eastern suburbs other than the Minories, including residents of St Katherine's. See p. 87, above.

⁹⁹ Qtd in Ducarel, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰ P Slack, *Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England* (Essex, 1988), p. 1.

¹⁰¹ GLMS 9680, fos 3-127, passim.

a lack of order. Poor laws demanded the less expensive but more time-consuming punishment of vagrancy. Vagrancy could encompass anything from taking up residence in a parish full of strangers to aggressive begging, and in early modern England it became ‘the classic crime of status, the social crime *par excellence*.’¹⁰² Some constables were clearly more vigilant in their prosecution of vagrants than others. In 1602, the constables ejected forty-eight vagrants from the liberty, but even in lax years, twenty or more vagrants were generally sent away.¹⁰³

Maintaining Order

The constables of St Katherine’s were remarkably successful in meeting the intermittent demands of plague. Before the turn of the seventeenth century, the liberty had developed a consistent response to outbreaks of plague. In plague years, collectors for the poor doubled as collectors for the sick. Overseen by the constables, they distributed the collection directly to the ‘visited poor’, who were confined to their houses and guarded by neighbours paid to prevent the breaking of quarantine. In 1610, relief was offered to fifteen poor residents ‘visited with the sicknesse’ at a cost of £5/18s—more than forty percent of the money disbursed under the constables that year.¹⁰⁴ Householders were given a fixed sum for each day of illness, with supplements for particularly long quarantines and for large households. Quarantine was strictly enforced: in 1607 the constables recorded payments for ‘bills to be set upon the doors of them yt where vysyted’.¹⁰⁵ In most plague years, more money was spent on the men enforcing the quarantine (who were each paid 5d per day) than on the sick. The procedures for quarantine in St Katherine’s may have benefited from a certain degree of flexibility. In 1608, several women were paid ‘for releefe’, their families ‘beinge viseted’, and in 1611 John Thomas, one of the liberty’s wealthier residents, took in a woman whose family was sick.¹⁰⁶ Popular opposition to the quarantine was common in the City of London, where ‘people refused to be shut up, or broke out of their houses when they were, hurling abuse at constables and aldermen as they did so’. Paul Slack notes that ‘local and central government was unable to prevent...displays of social solidarity and collective defiance’ of restrictions on public gatherings during times of plague.¹⁰⁷ St Katherine’s never experienced such large scale problems, or, if it did, they went unreported.

¹⁰² Beier, *Masterless Men*, p. xxii.

¹⁰³ GL MS 9680, fos 1-35.

¹⁰⁴ GL MS 9680, fos 33-35.

¹⁰⁵ GL MS 9680, fo 20.

¹⁰⁶ GL MS 9680, fos 28, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Slack, *Impact of Plague*, p. 298 and Slack, ‘Metropolitan Government in Crisis’, p. 75.

The liberty was included in the London Bills of Mortality from 1603, though the Privy Council had asked for returns of plague deaths from the liberty a decade earlier.¹⁰⁸ Whether in response to increased pressure following its inclusion in the Bills (which from 1606 were submitted to the king and the lord chancellor in addition to the lord mayor¹⁰⁹) or because of the initiative of its own officers, quarantine and other anti-plague measures were more frequently mentioned in the constables' accounts as the seventeenth century progressed. Simultaneously, the effects of plague in St Katherine's dropped precipitously. Plague mortality there dropped quickly relative to the metropolis as a whole. Paul Slack suggests that comparing the number of burials in a given parish during a known plague year to the average number of burials in the five preceding years can provide a rough impression of the effects of plague on mortality rates in different parts of different areas. The ratios are necessarily approximate, and a variety of factors could affect both the mortality rates themselves and the accuracy of the numbers reported to authorities. The results are nevertheless intriguing. Using St Katherine's parish registers, it is possible to compare the mortality rates in the liberty to those across London in 1593, 1625 and 1636.

**5.1 London Plague Mortality: The Ratio of Burials
in Plague Years to that in Preceding Years¹¹⁰**

<u>Year</u>	<u>City Centre</u>	<u>West</u>	<u>Northeast</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>St Katherine's</u>
1593	3.2	3.4	6.0	3.8	6.9
1625	3.8	3.7	6.6	6.7	3.8
1636	1.2	1.8	3.7	3.1	1.7

These data are by no means conclusive. They do, however, suggest that relative to other suburbs of the City, St Katherine's plague mortality dropped rapidly in the seventeenth century. Donations for the afflicted were also increasingly generous; in 1636, the liberty's constables recorded that £227/-/9d was collected and distributed to the visited poor.¹¹¹ Distribution of those funds was contingent upon cooperation in quarantine measures, which no doubt aided in securing local cooperation with that and other measures designed to combat the spread of infectious disease.

¹⁰⁸ F P Wilson, *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (Oxford, 1927), p. 195 and *APC* xxiv.442.

¹⁰⁹ N G Brett-James, 'The London Bills of Mortality in the 17th Century', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 6 (1927-31), p. 288.

¹¹⁰ This table shows the ratio of burials during plague years to the average of aggregate burials in each year of the five years immediately preceding a plague year. The non-St Katherine's data are from Slack, 'Metropolitan Government in Crisis', p. 63. The data for the final column are from *The Registers of St Katharine by the Tower, London*, eds C Hughes, A W D'Elboux and R H D'Elboux, 3 vols, (London, 1945), volumes i and ii and Wilson, *Plague*, pp. 185-8. St Katherine's registers do not begin until 1583, and the parish lacked a clerk from 1601 to 1603, making the records from that period are unreliable. The records for 1665 are also noticeably unreliable, and are thus not included.

¹¹¹ GL MS 9680, fo 103.

Responses to crime in the liberty provided a prominent point of contact between its officers and residents and the outside metropolis. On beginning his year in office, a constable interacted with a number of other men, many of whom held their offices for years or even decades. The expectations of these officials helped smooth the annual transition between constables and may explain much of the consistency in their accounts. Those accounts record frequent attendance at the Middlesex sessions, which is confirmed by the records of the sessions between 1612 and 1618, which have been published in full. It is notable that the constables of St Katherine's brought residents before the sessions of the peace at all, since civic rhetoric implied that residents of the liberties answered to no one outside their own borders. As Robert Shoemaker points out, the presence of an active JP significantly increased access to the legal system and helped defuse local tensions.¹¹² Several justices of the peace had close connections to the liberty, which encouraged its constables to take their responsibilities seriously.¹¹³ It should, however, be remembered that even sessions records are not an exhaustive account of contemporary crime. The indictment of a large number of residents could suggest a high crime rate, the vigilance of its constables or the litigiousness of St Katherine's residents. Conversely, low levels of prosecution could indicate low crime, lazy officers, or residents' willingness to resolve problems informally. The published records cover a short interval, but they span the tenure of sixteen different St Katherine's constables and countless other local officers, and they indicate the more common breaches of the peace in the liberty.

The grand majority of citations were for alehouse offences. This seems to have remained the case well into the seventeenth century. In the six years of sessions records, almost half of the residents who appeared before the JPs did so for victualling offences. Sixty-five men were cited for breaking assize, and another seven were fined for selling ale without proper licences. The prevalence of the victualling trades in St Katherine's has already been mentioned, but it deserves reiteration. John Strype noted that St Katherine's was 'famous for Brewhouses in ancient Times.'¹¹⁴ The records of the Brewers' Company concur. In April 1593, St Katherine's residents accounted for eight of the seventy-nine brewers assessed by the company, or 10.1%. Those eight men, however, accounted for 28.1% of the

¹¹² R B Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex, 1660-1725* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 282-4

¹¹³ In the beginning of the period, resident JPs included both Caesar and 'the more active' Henry Thoresby. By the 1630s, only one JP, Richard Lange, is known to have resided in the precinct, but he was actively involved in both the local administration of St Katherine's and in the commission of the peace. Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 234 and GL MS 9680, fos 84, 97, 123.

¹¹⁴ Strype, *Survey* ii.8. GL MS 5445/9, 12 Apr 1593 recorded that at least eight of the most substantial brewers in the liberty were members of the Brewers' Company.

money collected by the company.¹¹⁵ Such high levels of participation should remind us that those living in St Katherine's did not categorically resist the authority of the Middlesex JPs *or* of the City companies.

More serious offences appear in the sessions records, as well. Thirty-two residents were accused of felony property crimes (breaking and entering, robbery, purse-cutting, etc.) during the period. Half of them were convicted. Of those sixteen, six were sentenced to death by hanging, four were whipped for their crime and the remaining six were branded under benefit of clergy. The low proportion sent to the gallows is important;¹¹⁶ the mitigation of sentences by the use of whipping or benefit of clergy often indicated a JP's belief that the guilty party was not a hardened criminal.¹¹⁷ Indictments were also made for five moral offences (one for defamation and two instances each of fornication and adultery) and three assaults (including one rape).

St Katherine's constables clearly had closer ties to Middlesex JPs than those in other liberties on the edge of the City. Resident of the Minorities and western liberties like St John's and Charterhouse appear less frequently in the records, even as witnesses, victims, or sureties. In the context of Middlesex as a whole, crime in St Katherine's was not abnormally high.¹¹⁸ Crime, we must remember, was a city-wide problem that defied attempts to differentiate City from liberty or criminal from lawful subject on a strictly binary scale.¹¹⁹ St Katherine's never attempted to exempt itself from the normal system of justice in Middlesex, and evidence from both within and without the liberty suggests that its officers conscientiously carried out their duty to keep the peace.

There is also evidence that the bailiff of St Katherine's looked after some prisoners for the royal government. John Watson, bailiff from 1580, paid for the upkeep of such prisoners out of pocket, for which he was only sporadically compensated. In 1591, we know he oversaw a man brought from Calais 'as a prisoner and committed to the prison at St Katherine's'.¹²⁰ After he died in 1592, the Privy Council issued a warrant for the payment of £106 to his heirs, a sum owed to him for expenses incurred in keeping 'persons that have bene by our order formerlie close prisoners for matters of state'.¹²¹ No further mention of St

¹¹⁵ £62/15s out of the total £223/2s. GL MS 9445/9.

¹¹⁶ Although it is difficult to draw strict conclusions by comparing data across jurisdictions, the numbers for St Katherine's suggest its residents were no more likely to be reprobates than those in eastern Sussex; cf C B Herrup, *The Common Peace: Participation and the Criminal Law in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 1987).

¹¹⁷ Kesslering, *Mercy and Authority*, pp. 25-6, 45-55.

¹¹⁸ *Middlesex County Records*, ed J C Jeaffreson, 4 vols, (London, 1886-92), which confirms this impression, are broader in scope but not an exhaustive calendar of sessions records.

¹¹⁹ Griffiths, 'Overlapping Circles', pp. 121-5.

¹²⁰ *APC* xxi.52.

¹²¹ *APC* xxiii.122.

Katherine's prison has been found, however, suggesting it was either unimportant or short-lived.

The royal government expected liberties to contribute equitably to Parliamentary subsidies and military levies. In the case of the latter, proximity to the Tower involved additional responsibilities for St Katherine's and encouraged local officers to perform to a consistent standard. In most years, payments were made to the lieutenant of the Tower for keeping the town's armour and for exercising its trained band.¹²² Perhaps more importantly, the constables interacted frequently with the high constable, who oversaw the work of constables in several contiguous Middlesex parishes. While eighty-five men served as constables in St Katherine's between 1598 and 1641, the office of high constable was filled by only three men.¹²³ The high constable collected money for maimed soldiers and composition to the crown, took responsibility for the payment of the beadle's wages, and oversaw the military duties of the precinct.

From Elizabeth's reign until the Civil War, parochial authorities throughout England and Wales were responsible for the supply and maintenance of trained bands. The mustering of these bands 'was the foundation of the militia.'¹²⁴ Despite its theoretical exemption from all taxation 'secular and ecclesiastic', the Elizabethan Privy Council made it clear that both St Katherine's and Westminster were expected to contribute to the levies of men and money demanded of the City.¹²⁵ London itself had only lost its freedom from providing men for service outside the City under Henry VIII.¹²⁶ After 1577, men were entitled to 8*d* per day during their training, an expense which fell to local authorities. Whether because of their expense, their inconvenience, or their perceived inconsequence, the trained bands became 'matters of form' only in the reign of James I.¹²⁷ In St Katherine's, however, the trained band continued to muster regularly in the first years of the century. Constables made payments for the exercising of the trained men in eighteen of the twenty-seven years between 1598 and 1625.¹²⁸ Proximity to the Tower involved additional military responsibilities for St Katherine's. The liberty had a long-standing responsibility to assist there in times of crisis. The residents' 1565 petition to Cecil noted 'that we be burthened at all callings and

¹²² GL MS 9680, fos 1, 6, 7, 11, 33.

¹²³ GL MS 9680; A Mr Gowge until the early 1610s. Paul Smith until the late 1620s, and Hugh Edmunds throughout the 1630s.

¹²⁴ L Boynton, *The Elizabethan Militia, 1558-1638* (London, 1967), pp. 11, 93.

¹²⁵ *APC* xvii.118, xxxi.120-1, xli.358-9. The Privy Council made the same demands of Westminster, which claimed exemptions similar to those of St Katherine's.

¹²⁶ Archer, 'Burden of Taxation', p. 614.

¹²⁷ K Sharp, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT, 1992), p. 487.

¹²⁸ GL MS 9680, fos 1, 11, 14, 16, 19, 20, 25, 27, 34, 39, 44, 52, 59, 60, 67-8, 72, 75, 77.

commaundments to the Tower of London about the quenes majesties business as in watchinge.¹²⁹ This responsibility can be seen in practice during the Essex rebellion. Between 8 February and 8 March 1600/1, the constables paid £6/16s for 127 man-nights of guarding at the Tower.¹³⁰ St Katherine's setting on the Thames below London bridge was an additional liability. Men pressed for military service elsewhere in Middlesex, Essex and other areas near London often departed from St Katherine's for service beyond the seas. This posed a very real threat to order in the liberty. Its officers were powerless to avoid the responsibility, and its residents were expected to quarter troops at their own expense. In 1588, three hundred soldiers were sent to St Katherine's by order of the Privy Council, and in 1626/7 the liberty was the site of a veritable invasion of 1,150 soldiers bound for Denmark.¹³¹

During his personal rule, Charles I's attempts at administrative reform greatly increased the burdens on local government throughout the realm.¹³² The detail with which St Katherine's constables recorded their duties in the 1620s and 30s is unique among the records of London's early modern liberties, allowing us to assess the effects of Caroline reforms on these areas with theoretically substandard systems of government. Whatever the challenges posed by administrative reforms, it is clear that the burdens which 'finally caused the collapse of English local government in the late 1630s' did not have such disastrous effects on the administration in St Katherine's.¹³³ Books of orders required JPs to take on greater responsibility in their counties, renewed stress on the execution of poor laws increased the workload of parochial officers, and the financial burdens of national defence were increased and shifted to local areas. In the capital, Charles attempted to stem the growth of the metropolis, or at least to enrich himself by collecting fines from offending developers.¹³⁴ The St Katherine's hospital account book makes it clear that new construction and subdivision of old tenements was largely ignored.¹³⁵ The constables reported a single violation to the Privy Council in 1637.¹³⁶ The books of orders—whose primary goal was the

¹²⁹ Ducarel, *History of the Royal Hospital*, pp. 25-6.

¹³⁰ GL MS 9680, fos 11-2.

¹³¹ *APC* xvii.59, xlii.147.

¹³² For more on the personal rule and its effects on local administration, see Sharp, *Personal Rule*, P Slack, 'Books of Orders: The Making of English Social Policy, 1577-1631', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser, 30 (1981), H Langeluddecke, 'Law and Order in Seventeenth Century England: The Organization of Local Administration During the Personal Rule of Charles I', *Law and History Review*, 15 (1997), Langeluddecke, 'Secular Policy Enforcement'

¹³³ Langeluddecke, 'Law and Order', p. 76.

¹³⁴ The best overview of building restrictions in pre-fire London is that of Barnes, 'Prerogative and Environmental Control of Building', pp. 1332-63.

¹³⁵ BL Harleian MS 5097, fos 4-24. The account book is unfortunately rather limited in scope. Although it describes eighty-two leases made between 1600 and 1638, including details about the tenements, the tenants, and the covenants governing each lease, it does so briefly and without adding further information regarding the internal workings of the hospital in making or enforcing the leases.

¹³⁶ *CSPD* 1637, p. 505.

implementation of petty sessions to augment the generally quarterly sessions of the peace—were largely redundant in Middlesex, where JPs had long met several times or more monthly. There are hints that St Katherine's constables increased the frequency with which they attended sessions of the peace in the 1630s.¹³⁷ It is unclear whether this reflected greater diligence on the part of the constables or an outward show of compliance. While spending on the trained bands doubled during the 1630s, to about £6 p.a., significant variations in expenditure remained from year to year, and there is no indication that the officers or residents found the increased spending particularly burdensome.

The success of attempts to reinvigorate the poor laws is less clear. There is reason to believe that the decade saw an increase in the liberty's stewardship for its poorer residents. The constables' accounts stop enumerating the rates collected for the poor in the mid 1620s. It is clear that the collectors continued to operate in the precinct and that they gained a new degree of independence from the constables. The introduction of ship money caused a more noticeable change at St Katherine's, where separate officers were appointed annually for its collection. As elsewhere, the initial success of ship money as a source of revenue could not be sustained in later years. In the mid 1630s, ship money collected in St Katherine's ran to £50 or more.¹³⁸ By 1639, the sum had dropped to £15/13s, and the following year only £6/8/6d was collected.¹³⁹

The willingness of Charles's government to interfere in local affairs was also felt in the liberty. In 1629, the Privy Council sent a letter to JPs near the Tower and St Katherine's asking them to inquire into whether Edward Parsons, the town constable, was obstinately lax in enforcing the peace.¹⁴⁰ Parsons' performance as a parochial officer had caused problems before. Parsons had been fined £20 during an earlier term as scavenger for failing to help a previous constable keep the peace on Shrove Tuesday in 1617.¹⁴¹ The council's interference might not have been entirely unwelcome to the other officers of the liberty. The 1630s witnessed a remarkable surge in the confidence of St Katherine's officers. Early in the decade, surpluses from scavengers' collections began to be given to the collectors for the poor.¹⁴² When a dispute developed after Caesar's 1636 death between the new master and Caesar's heirs over the necessity and cost of repairs to hospital buildings, the liberty's parochial administration rose to the challenge, dedicating money to maintenance of the

¹³⁷ GL MS 9680, fos 85-117.

¹³⁸ *CSPD* 1634-5, p. 243; 1635-6, p. 419.

¹³⁹ GL MS 9680, fos 116, 119.

¹⁴⁰ *APC* xlv.33.

¹⁴¹ *Calendar to the Sessions Records*, ed Le Hardy, iv.146.

¹⁴² GL MS 9680, fos 82-92.

hospital chapel and structural improvements there.¹⁴³ When the new master finally accepted financial responsibility for the hospital buildings, the precinct officers proceeded with plans for the construction of a town hall.¹⁴⁴ In a variety of ways, the local government of St Katherine's demonstrated its greatest strengths in the 1630s.

Aliens

In 1567 the density of aliens in St Katherine's was more than four times greater than that in the City of London.¹⁴⁵ Various explanations have been offered for this concentration. A large number of the liberty's aliens were employed in brewing and the related coopering trade (and, to a lesser extent, in tipling). Continental migrants had settled in St Katherine's to pursue those trades alongside Englishmen since the late fifteenth century. By the 1530s, an immigrant community was well established there, which no doubt drew aliens of other trades to the neighbourhood. Irene Scouloudi notes that the liberty 'was conveniently situated on the riverside and so was an area potentially attractive to strangers, who were presumably only subjected to the general laws affecting strangers and the good will of the Master'.¹⁴⁶ While Scouloudi oversimplifies the legal status of the precinct, it is true that the citizens of London were generally suspicious of economic activity in the liberties. The City's elite were, after all, a mercantile elite. The aldermen of the City were high-ranking members of the livery companies, and those companies saw in the exempt places an ongoing threat to the occupations of citizens. Joseph Ward, however, has shown that the livery companies were not powerless to confront the perceived threat of alien craftsmen, particularly in times of economic crisis.¹⁴⁷

In the fifteenth century geography and the relative availability of space drew brewers, both English and alien, to St Katherine's. By Elizabeth's reign, it was the most prominent concentration of breweries in the capital. When corn was in short supply in the spring of 1577, the Privy Council's ordered brewers to 'forbeare to use any wheatecorne or meale in their brewinges of beare or ale, except such wheate as they have already and missed with otes and other graine'.¹⁴⁸ The council's letters were sent to the justices of the peace in the counties of southeast England; while the orders weren't sent to London, a special letter was dispatched to St Katherine's for the large number of brewers there. K G T McDonnell

¹⁴³ Jamison, *History of the Royal Hospital*, p. 88; *CSPD* 1640, pp. 283, 295, 402, 455.

¹⁴⁴ See p. 162, above.

¹⁴⁵ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, , i.377-481 and Spence, *London in the 1690s*, pp. 176-7: St Katherine's was home to 46.7 aliens per hectare, as compared to the City's 11.5.

¹⁴⁶ I Scouloudi, 'Notes on Strangers in the Precinct of St Katherine-by-the-Tower, c.1500-1687, and on the "Flemish Cemetery"', *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 25 (1989), pp. 75-8.

¹⁴⁷ See Ward, *Metropolitan Communities*, esp pp. 10-28.

¹⁴⁸ *APC* ix.297-8. 3 March 1576/7

points out that while many brewers settled in the eastern part of the metropolis, ‘there was a marked localisation of the richer men around St Katharine’s and Whitechapel...the City, the new suburbs, and the ships were close at hand.’¹⁴⁹ Brewing was a vitally important industry in early modern London. Andrew Pettegree has pointed out that ‘the Common Council was prepared to advance the brewers £700 to ensure that they had sufficient stocks of malt to last a month, and the Council showed a concern for the maintenance of supplies of beer second only to their anxiety for the provision of wheat.’¹⁵⁰ Because of its importance, and because of the importance of immigrants to the brewing trade, alien brewers were specifically exempted from City regulations that prohibited the employment of strangers.¹⁵¹

The coopers who made the barrels in which beer and ale were stored clustered near to the brewers. Concentrations of coopers could therefore be found in Southwark, East Smithfield and St Katherine’s. As with brewers, many of the alien coopers had been settled in England for several decades by the time of the dissolutions. In 1539 the Coopers’ Company searched the workshops of East Smithfield and St Katherine’s to discover how many of the aliens there were denizens.¹⁵² In enforcing their trade regulations, however, the company relied heavily on the aliens themselves, a number of whom enjoyed its freedom. In 1524 the company set forth regulations requiring that ‘one substantial alien of the craft should be present at any search of alien premises, and it was probably as a result of this provision that the Coopers’ Company established a separate warden for the alien coopers.’¹⁵³ Comparing the wills of coopers to other aliens living in London’s eastern suburbs, Andrew Pettegree concludes that foreigners in St Katherine’s and the neighbouring East Smithfield ‘enjoyed a separate community life to a much greater extent than they did elsewhere around London.’¹⁵⁴

With its long history, the alien community of St Katherine’s was better assimilated into local English society than immigrants in many other parts of the metropolis. The process could only have been reinforced by the mastership of Julius Caesar between 1596 and 1636, since he was himself the son of Italian immigrants. Lien Luu has identified several indicators of assimilation—intermarriage, local attitudes towards aliens, church attendance, the ability to speak English, and the employment of

¹⁴⁹ K G T McDonnell, *Medieval London Suburbs* (London, 1978), pp. 117-8.

¹⁵⁰ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, 101.

¹⁵¹ CLRO Rep 13(1), fos 126v, 127v; Let Bk R, fo 93v; on the centrality of aliens to the brewing trade, see Luu, *Immigrants*, pp. 259-71.

¹⁵² GL MS 6506/1, fo. 61v.

¹⁵³ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, 104. GL MS 6506/1, fo 22.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

English servants.¹⁵⁵ Available data suggest that in many of these areas, the aliens of St Katherine's fell toward the assimilated side of the spectrum. In a 1561 petition, members of the French church noted that 'most of the long-term residents from the precincts of St Martin's and St Katherine's had English wives.'¹⁵⁶ The petitioners would probably have been unaware of many cases of intermarriage, since relatively few immigrants resident in St Katherine's attended the French church. A much larger proportion attended services at the local English church. Sixty-two percent of the 425 strangers named in the 1568 return claimed membership in the English church; in 1581 the proportion dropped slightly to 55.8%.¹⁵⁷ Throughout London, however, only 24% of strangers attended their parish churches.

Other evidence suggests there were limits to the integration between the immigrant and English populations in St Katherine's. Irene Scouloudi shows that immigrants in St Katherine's were on about the same financial level as those living in the City, a claim that could not be made for the English population of the precinct, which was significantly poorer than most parts of the City.¹⁵⁸ Compared to Blackfriars and St Martin le Grand (other liberties with large alien populations), the aliens of St Katherine's were less likely to secure patents of denization, a limited form of naturalisation within reach of even modestly successful craftsmen. In 1571, 15.5% of St Katherine's 425 strangers had patents of denization. That is only marginally higher than the 14% denization rate across the metropolis in 1583.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, while most of the aliens lived in the northern (Lane) portion of St Katherine's, much of the English population lived in the southern (Thames Street) part of the liberty. Nevertheless, the cost of maintaining the Flemish Churchyard—where a large number of Dutch and French residents were buried—was paid for not by the aliens but by the precinct as a whole. Only a handful of strangers held local office during the early seventeenth century, which suggests some ambivalence toward aliens within the precinct. But aliens there were generally eager to participate when they could. In 1613 Francis Allerd, a victualler from St Katherine's, served as translator at the Middlesex sessions of the peace during the indictment of a Dutch man who from a western suburb.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Luu, 'Assimilation or Segregation', p. 161.

¹⁵⁶ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, i.288.

¹⁵⁷ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.217, iii.425-33.

¹⁵⁸ Scouloudi, 'Notes on Strangers', p. 78.

¹⁵⁹ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.383.

¹⁶⁰ *Calendar to the Sessions Records*, ed Le Hardy, i.294.

Conclusions

In an appendix to his 1977 study of stability in Elizabethan London, Frank Foster laments that ‘government in the liberties themselves was ineffectual because the backing of any strong authority was lacking.’¹⁶¹ St Katherine’s defies this simplistic claim. Its administrative structures did not suffer from the fragmentation that characterised those in the City, but the officers of the liberty still faced substantial challenges. The survival of the hospital did not save St Katherine’s from harsh attacks made on the liberties. In fact, the most incendiary of contemporary claims—made by Sir Stephen Soame before the Commons in 1601—was levelled against St Katherine’s specifically. As we have seen, however, St Katherine’s was no more a ‘very sink of Sin’ than was London’s Cheap Ward, of which Soame was alderman until his death in 1619.

This is not to say that St Katherine’s was utopic. The difficulties caused by its relative poverty were numerous, but largely superficial. Dearth and plague, the great exaggerators of social tensions, were taken in stride by St Katherine’s strong and flexible administrative network. The hospital’s survival allowed the system of local government that had grown up in the precinct since 1441/2 to continue maturing. By the turn of the seventeenth century, that system had existed ‘time out of mind.’ The constables’ accounts, which survive from 1598, portray a remarkably stable, consistently-governed community. When the demands of Charles I’s personal rule pushed many local governments to the breaking point, St Katherine’s flourished. Its administration became more coherent and more intense, a trend that continued into the 1640s. Clearly, it was not a community at the brink of disorder.

¹⁶¹ Foster, *Politics of Stability*, p. 187.