

Chapter 6. St Martin le Grand

St Martin le Grand is the smallest liberty included in this study, encompassing less than 2.4 acres in the heart of the City of London.¹ Its southern gate was barely two hundred feet from St Paul's Cathedral; it abutted Aldersgate to the north, and it stood three hundred yards east of the Guildhall.² Despite its geographical prominence, however, the precinct has been the focus of little modern scholarship, especially compared to London's other religious houses. In part, this is a result of its 1503 appropriation by Westminster Abbey, which bound its history to that of the abbey during the turbulent decades of the sixteenth century.³ Still, considering the historical importance of St Martin's (the *Victoria County History* held it alongside St Paul's and Holy Trinity Aldgate as the most important churches in medieval London) and its general notoriety between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the lack of modern scholarship is noteworthy. St Martin le Grand's location, its well-established alien population and its longstanding claims to sanctuary made it the archetypal London liberty.⁴ In the late medieval period—when other London religious houses enjoyed cordial if not actively cooperative relationships with civic governors—St Martin's established itself as an ongoing nuisance. The reputation it developed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not match post-dissolution reality, but the reputation endured to taint later conceptions of the liberty.

Things had begun to change in St Martin's soon after the collegiate church was absorbed by Westminster Abbey. Its proud history of independence was still within living memory when Thomas More wrote his *History of Richard III*. 'What a rable of theeves, murtherers, and malitious heinous traytors,' complains the power-hungry duke of Buckingham in More's *History*, 'and that in two places specially: The one at the elbowe of the Citie, the tother in the verie bowels. I dare well avowe it, weye the good that they do with the hurt that commeth of them, and yee shall finde it much better to lacke both,

¹ M B Honeybourne, 'The Sanctuary Boundaries and Environs of Westminster Abbey and the College of St Martin-Le-Grand', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 2nd ser, 38 (1932-3), Plate III.

² *The City of London: From Prehistoric Times to c.1520*, ed M D Lobel, (Oxford, 1989).

³ BL Harl MS 1498, fo 52b. Westminster Abbey was suppressed in 1540 and reconstituted as the cathedral church of the new diocese of Westminster, the abbot becoming dean. In 1550, the diocese was dissolved and the former abbey became a collegiate church. Queen Mary did not re-establish an abbey there until 1556, which Elizabeth finally reformed into a collegiate church in 1560. The current foundation dates from the reign of Charles II. For the purpose of consistency (both internal and external), the Church of St Peter in Westminster is regularly referred to as the abbey, regardless of its constitutional arrangement as Abbey, Cathedral, or Collegiate Church.

⁴ For a discussion of sanctuary in general see pp. 12-3, above.

than have both.⁵ As Richard Sylvester points out, there is heavy irony in More's treatment of sanctuary; Buckingham had sold his soul to the devil, but he passionately attests to the sanctity of Richard's motives for violating sanctuary and retrieving his nephews.⁶ By the time John Stow published his *Annales of England* in 1592, St Martin's claims to offer sanctuary had been long-abandoned. In his *Annales*, however, Stow repeats Buckingham's complaints almost word-for-word. Stow therefore makes it seem as if the 1480s abuses of sanctuary—which More had used rhetorically to highlight Buckingham's hypocrisy—continued in force in the late sixteenth century: "Theeves bring thither their stolen goods, and there live thereon. There devise they newe robberies, nightlie they steale out, they robbe and rape, and kill, and come in againe, as though those places gave them not onlie a safeguard for the harme they have done, but a license also to do more."⁷ The inclusion of complaints against St Martin's in the *Annales* gave them new currency, but Stow had less to say about St Martin le Grand in his *Survey of London*.⁸ He noted that 'this colledge claymed great privildges of sanctuary and otherwise',⁹ citing a September 1440 incident involving an escaped soldier.¹⁰ As for its post-reformation history, Stow restricted his comments to a review of its changed topography: 'On the west side of Fauster lane, is the small parrish Church of S Leonardes, for them of S Martins le grand. A number of Tenements being lately builded in place of the great Collegiate Church of S Martin, that parish is mightily increased.'¹¹

St Martin's in the 1590s was a very different place from its 1480s predecessor, against which the duke of Buckingham had railed in More's *History*. Compared to the other liberties examined in this thesis, St Martin's was better-integrated into the fabric of the City. It was a precinct unto itself, but it was also an important route between other parts of the metropolis. Its gates continued to be shut nightly, but by day the highway that ran through St Martin's connected St Paul's to Aldersgate. Sanctuary had gone, but a thriving, crowded district remained. In 1593 the residents of the precinct petitioned

⁵ T More, *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 2: The History of King Richard III*, ed R Sylvester (London, 1963), p. 30.

⁶ Ibid., p. xcvi. Elizabeth Donno offers a similar critique: while sanctuary was a 'burning issue' in fifteenth century England, 'instead of a serious analysis of the issue' More provides Buckingham with a 'fictional legal case... which he handles according to form, by ingenious and sophistical argument.' E S Donno, 'Thomas More and Richard III', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35 (1982), pp. 430-1. cf Cestius's speech against sanctuary in C Tacitus, *Annals of Tacitus*, eds A J Church and W J Brodribb (London, 1869), iii.36.

⁷ J Stow, *The Annales of England, Vntill 1592* (London, 1592), p. 730.

⁸ Stow, *Survey*, i.308, ff.

⁹ Ibid., i.307-8.

¹⁰ See p. 189, below.

¹¹ Stow, *Survey*, i.306.

William Cecil for advice in governing the precinct.¹² In addition to being Lord Treasurer and one of Queen Elizabeth's most trusted advisers, Cecil was also High Steward of Westminster, a position granted to him by the dean and chapter of the abbey that gave him an important role in overseeing the government and defending the privileges of Westminster (and with it St Martin's). In their petition, the residents specifically requested the authority to develop their own systems for maintaining order in the liberty. John Strype, writing in 1720, saw the request in a dark light:

from these regulations...St Martins appears to have been a sanctuary of great disorders, and a shelter for the loosest sort of people: rogues and ruffians, thieves, felons and murtherers. From hence used to rush violent persons, committers of riots, robberies and manslaughters: hither they brought in their preys and stolen goods, and concealed them here, and shared or sold them to those that dwelt here. Here were also harboured picklocks, counterfeiters of keys and seals, [and] forgers of false evidences.¹³

Strype took the desire of St Martin's residents for self-government as confirmation of the liberty's infamy. Stow had recollected abuses of sanctuary in 1592; Strype declared that they were still occurring in 1593. As we shall see, however, the extension of St Martin's bad reputation into the late sixteenth century is anachronistic.

Subsequent depictions of the liberty have used Strype's mischaracterisation as evidence of St Martin's continued incorrigibility. John Noorthouck, who wrote in 1773, claimed that 'the college being surrendered to Edward VI in 1548, the church was pulled down, and houses built in the room of it; which were lett to strangers, who claimed the benefit of the privileges and exemptions the canons formerly enjoyed.'¹⁴ Alfred Kempe, the antiquarian who chronicled the life of the collegiate church there in 1825, certainly accepted Strype's depiction as accurate. Kempe's chronicle trails off abruptly after St Martin's 1503 appropriation to Westminster Abbey. 'The jurisdiction of St Martin's being merged in that of Westminster,' he writes, 'little of historical note after this period remains on record relative to its affairs.'¹⁵ Kempe nevertheless observes that 'numerous fabricators of counterfeit plate and jewels sought immunity for their fraudulent trade within the walls of St Martin's. Long after the dissolution of the religious houses and suppression of sanctuaries, they appear to have kept their stand on this privileged

¹² BL Lansd 74, no. 32.

¹³ Strype, *Survey*, iii.104.

¹⁴ Noorthouck, *New History of London*, p. 545.

¹⁵ A J Kempe, *Historical Notices of the Collegiate Church or Royal Free Chapel and Sanctuary of St Martin-Le-Grand* (London, 1825), p. 159. Ralph Davis called St Martin's 'a sort of "proto-Westminster", founded on a royal site and endowed with royal privileges', R H C Davis, 'The College of St Martin-Le-Grand and the Anarchy, 1135-54', *London Topographical Record*, 23 (1974), p. 25.

ground.¹⁶ Kempe was unimpressed by St Martin's claims to sanctuary, which he called a 'privilege of ill-applied mercy' that grew worse over time: 'As the simplicity of times declined, and the luxuries and crimes of society increased, it is easy to imagine what hordes of profligate offenders took refuge within the limits of privileged places.'¹⁷ He praised Sir Walter Scott's depiction of Jacobean Whitefriars in the 1822 novel *The Fortunes of Nigel* as a 'well imagined picture of one of these receptacles,' and that 'St Martin-le-Grand might have furnished him with an excellent scene for his description.'¹⁸

More, Stow, Strype, Noorthouck and Kempe all agreed on the profligacy of St Martin's, making it easy for modern scholars to dismiss the precinct as a den of criminals. The flagrant abuses of sanctuary there in the fifteenth century provide ample fodder for the assumption that the liberty continued to spiral out of control into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In a 1924 essay that has been called 'the best study of sanctuary in England'¹⁹ Isobel Thornley focuses largely on the fifteenth century history of St Martin le Grand, which 'seems to epitomise in itself the story of the decline and death of the privilege' in England.²⁰ Thornley traces the relationship between the Collegiate Church of St Martin and the Bishops of London, the Crown and the City from the eleventh century through the fifteenth, but she is careful to avoid speculating on the precinct's history after 1540. In an essay published alongside Thornley's, E Jeffries Davis is equally reticent about commenting on post-Reformation St Martin's, saying only that 'in the midst of the dissolutions the collegiate church 'could hardly expect sympathy in London, where its sanctuary and other immunities had caused much strife'.²¹ Later scholars have been more willing to accept the precinct's reputation uncritically. John McMullan calls St Martin's 'an old ecclesiastical sanctuary guaranteed by statute [that] attracted a population of debtors, felons, thieves, murderers and counterfeiters'.²² Citing McMullan, Vanessa Harding writes that in the early seventeenth century St Martin le Grand and other exempt areas 'seem to have become notorious for poor housing, illicit trading, and unchecked crime'.²³ Complaints against the fifteenth century St Martin's, repeated and amplified

¹⁶ Kempe, *Historical Notices*, p. 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ P I Kaufman, 'Henry VII and Sanctuary', *Church History*, 53 (1984), p. 465n.

²⁰ Thornley, 'The Destruction of Sanctuary', p. 184.

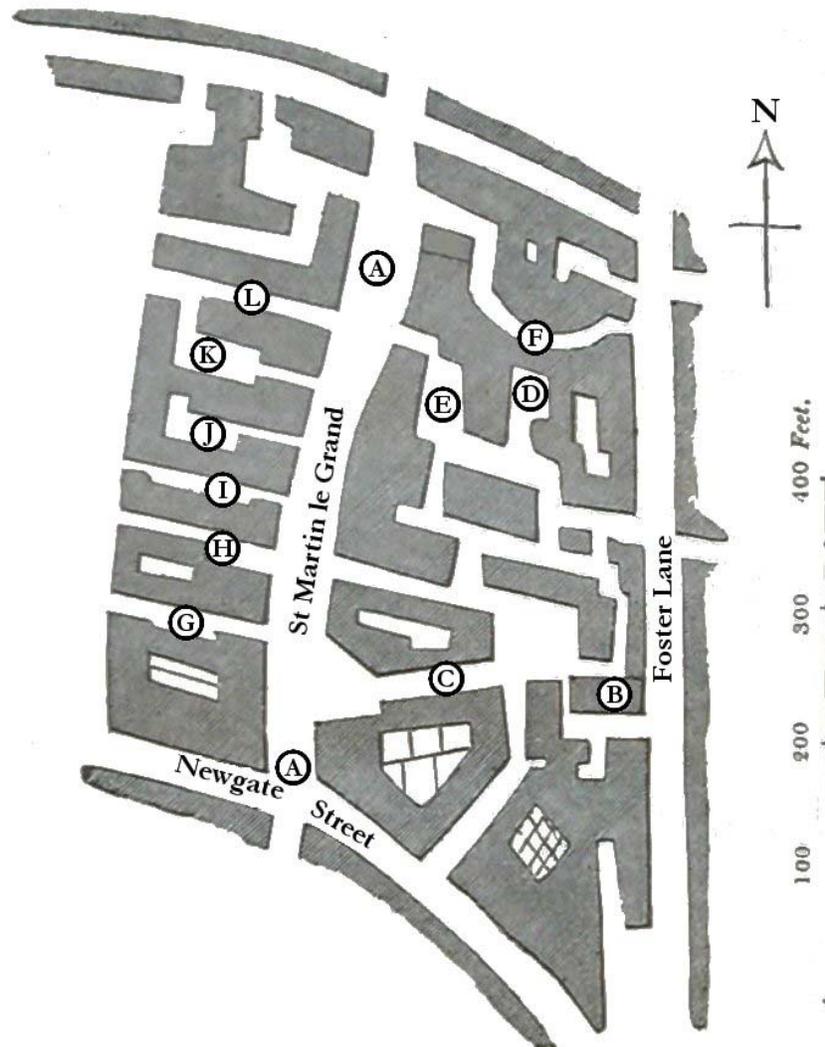
²¹ E J Davis, 'The Transformation of London', *Ibid.*, p. 295.

²² McMullan, *Canting Crew*, pp. 53, 63. McMullan cites the comments of Isobel Thornley and Alfred Kempe on the precinct's fifteenth century notoriety without acknowledging the different period covered by his study.

²³ V Harding, 'City, Capital and Metropolis: The Changing Shape of Seventeenth-Century London', in J F Merritt (ed), *Imagining Early Modern London: Perceptions and Portrayals of the City from Stow to Strype* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 130.

over hundreds of years, create an overly dark image of life in the liberty between 1540 and 1640. Surviving evidence from the period makes the image seem even darker by contrast.

Map: St Martin le Grand, 18th Century.²⁴



²⁴ Kemp, *Historical Notices*, p. 205. The liberty's boundaries are shown in red. For a map of the precinct around 1500, see Honeybourne, 'Sanctuary Boundaries', plate III. St Martin's was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. In general, however, it was rebuilt following the same general street plan, although it was integrated into the surrounding City to a greater degree. Before the fire, only the gates (A) at either end of St Martin le Grand. Until 1548, the Collegiate Church stood approximately where (C) is shown on the map. Its ancillary buildings extended northwards to the Dean's lodging, which stood roughly where (D) and (E) are shown. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the entire area between those points on the east side of St Martin le Grand was known as the New Rents. All the other streets identified on the map are mentioned in contemporary documents relating to St Martin's. **A** Gate. **B** Parish Church of St Leonard Foster Lane. **C** Round Court. **D** Little Dean's Court. **E** Great Dean's Court. **F** Bell Court. **G** St John's Alley. **H** Cock Alley. **I** Christopher Alley. **J** Four Dove Court. **K** King's Head Court. **L** Angel Alley.

Chronology

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the City and the Collegiate Church of St Martin had developed a long and uniquely contentious relationship, which requires some explanation if the precinct's post-reformation history is to be properly understood. The exact date of its foundation is unknown, but St Martin's was certainly founded under Edward the Confessor, and William the Conqueror reconfirmed its privileges in 1068. Originally under the patronage of the counts of Boulogne, after the death of Count William in 1159 St Martin's (and Boulogne's other possessions) were assumed by Henry II.²⁵ By the thirteenth century, St Martin's had developed a particularly close relationship to the Crown, 'becoming a place of administrative and judicial business and a corporation of officials rather than a religious house.'²⁶ Roger of Wendover recorded that St Martin's was one of three churches ordered to publish the baronial excommunications in 1216, the other two being Holy Trinity Aldgate and St Paul's Cathedral.²⁷ The authors of the *Victoria County History of London* muse that 'These three churches were no doubt selected for this work as the most important in London, but if a further reason for the choice is sought it may perhaps be found in the intimate connexion of the cathedral and priory with the City, and the peculiar position of St. Martin's, especially in relation to the crown.'²⁸ According to J H Denton, Henry III described St Martin's as 'freer than his other chapels in England' in a 1255 letter.²⁹ That unprecedented freedom was, until the late fourteenth century, more bothersome to ecclesiastical authorities than to the City of London. A seemingly endless series of disputes pitted the collegiate church and the Crown against the bishops of London and Rome. Until its ecclesiastical independence was firmly established, St Martin's did not press its secular privileges. Ralph Davis dates its first claims to the status of general sanctuary to the final years of the fourteenth century.³⁰ As the fifteenth century dawned the City of London was 'becoming ever more conscious of itself as a corporate body and more jealous and resentful of exemptions from its dominion within its bounds', a development that coincided with the disintegration of the national political order, when St Martin's is said to have become 'a nest of corruption.'³¹ In 1402 the Lord Mayor and Aldermen petitioned Henry IV to

²⁵ J H Denton, *English Royal Free Chapels, 1100-1300: A Constitutional Study* (Manchester, 1970), p. 33.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40

²⁷ *The Flowers of History, by Roger De Wendover, 1154-1235*, ed H G Hewlett, 3 vols, (London, 1886-9), ii.174.

²⁸ *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: London*, ed W Page, Reprint edn, (London, 1974), p. 558.

²⁹ Qtd in Denton, *English Royal Free Chapels*, p. 40

³⁰ Davis, 'College of St Martin', p. 10.

³¹ *VCH London*, ed Page, p. 561.

grant the City's justices the authority to maintain the peace at St Martin's; the king demurred.³²

The remainder of the fifteenth century witnessed repeated attempts on the part of the City to challenge the privileges of St Martin's. Their attempts, generally precipitated by egregious misuse of sanctuary, were almost entirely ineffective. In 1430 the mayor and sheriffs took it upon themselves to forcibly remove a canon from St Martin's, though royal intervention forced them to back pedal later.³³ In 1439, the alderman for Aldersgate Ward demanded that St Martin's contribute to the protection of Calais. When the dean refused, the alderman proceeded to levy it by distress. The dean complained to the king, who issued a writ commanding that the City make restitution to the dean and chapter.³⁴ Strype recalled a particularly infamous case from September 1442, when a soldier imprisoned at Newgate

as he was led by an Officer towards the Guildhall of London, there came out of Panyer Alley, five of his fellowship, and took him from the officer, brought him into Sanctuary at the west door of St Martins church...But the same day Philip Malpas and Robert Marshall, then sheriffs of London, with many others, entred the said church, and forcibly took out with them the said five men, thither fled, led them fettered to the Compter, and from thence, chained by the necks, to Newgate.³⁵

The dean and chapter of St Martin's sought the protection of Henry VI, who referred the case to his council. When the king's council found in favour of the church, the City reluctantly presented its prisoners to the Lord Chancellor, who returned them to St Martin's, 'there to abide freely.'³⁶

A decade later, however, Henry was himself rebuffed by the privileges he had defended.³⁷ After Cade's rebellion one of the rebels took refuge at St Martin's. When the king demanded that he be delivered up, the dean presented his charters to the king's council, which again concluded that the franchises of the collegiate church should be respected.³⁸ This affront to royal authority resulted in Henry VI's permanent animus against the church. In the years that followed, articles intended to stop recidivism by sanctuary men came to be applied narrowly, to St Martin's alone, and in 1453 an abortive attempt was made to post royal guards at the gates of the sanctuary there.³⁹ The most

³² Thornley, 'The Destruction of Sanctuary', p. 188.

³³ *VCH London*, ed Page, p. 561.

³⁴ Kempe, *Historical Notices*, pp. 114-5

³⁵ Strype, *Survey*, iii.103.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Thornley, 'The Destruction of Sanctuary', p. 191.

³⁸ BL Lansd 170, fo 104r.

³⁹ Kaufman, 'Henry VII and Sanctuary', p. 473.

dramatic move to restrict the franchises of the collegiate church came in 1457, with the publication of ordinances to regulate sanctuary in the precinct.⁴⁰ The ordinances may have provided some assistance in future suits brought against the collegiate church. But Henry was deposed in March 1460/1, cutting short the practical implications of his wrath against St Martin's.

Henry's cousin and successor Edward IV looked more favourably on the franchises of St Martin le Grand. A 1463 act declaring 'Certain merchandises not lawful to be brought ready wrought into this realm' specifically exempted St Martin le Grand and its residents

Provided always, That this Ordinance and Act nor any other Ordinance or Act...shall extend or in any wise be prejudicial or hurtful to Robert Styllington Clerk, Dean of the free Chapel of our Lord the King of Saint Martin le Grand of London, nor to his Successors...nor to any Person or Persons dwelling or inhabiting, or which shall hereafter inhabit and dwell, within the Sanctuary and Precinct of the same Chapel.⁴¹

A statute enacted the following year granted the Cordwainers' Company the right to search within three miles of the City, but it included a similar clause ensuring that 'toutz foitz qe ne cest act ne nul lautre act...en cest present parlement extende a le damage ou prejudice ne en ascun manere foit damageous ou prejudiciall a le Dean pur le temps esteant de la franc chapel du Roy de seint Martyn Graunt de Loundres'.⁴² 1477 restrictions on coinage likewise included exemptions for the liberty.⁴³ Throughout the fifteenth century, successive deans of St Martin le Grand ensured that both its legal victories and its statutory protections were recorded, no doubt to ensure that the precedents would be at hand in case of future challenges to its independence.⁴⁴

In 1503 the independence of the liberty was cut short abruptly. That year, Henry VII appropriated the church of St Martin and nearly the whole of its endowment to Westminster Abbey to support his chapel there. The abbot of Westminster became *ex officio* dean of St Martin's, and the ecclesiastical independence of the precinct was folded

⁴⁰ CLRO Let Bk K, fos 298-9. A contemporary copy of this existed at one point among the Westminster Abbey Muniments, for Stow is said to have used it in preference to the Letter Book copy, but it has since been lost or destroyed. *Calendar of Letter Books*, ed Sharpe, x.392n.

⁴¹ 3 Edw IV, c 4 §VI.

⁴² 4 Edw IV, c 7.

⁴³ 17 Edw IV, c 1.

⁴⁴ The resulting cartulary exists today as WAM Book 5. In 1576 William Fleetwood, then recorder of the City of London, presented a copy of it to the lord mayor as the privileges of St Martin's 'which heretofore have ben most seacretly kept from knowledge of this Citie'. *Liber Fleetwood*, as it is known, can be found at GL MS 85. Two seventeenth-century copies of the cartulary exist, as well. One can be found at the Folger Library (MS V.b. 9) and another at the British Library (Lansd MS 170, no. 11). Finally, an early eighteenth century translation can be found at GL MS 86. Alfred Kempe's account of St Martin's fourteenth and fifteenth century history in his *Historical Notes on the Collegiate Church* is based primarily on this document, either the version held by the City or that held by the British Library.

into that of the abbey. Like St Martin's, Westminster Abbey was an ancient, royally-favoured church with a long history as a place of sanctuary. The subjugation of St Martin's to the abbey protected its franchises from the City for centuries after the destruction of the church itself.⁴⁵ When Edward dissolved the diocese of Westminster in 1550, St Martin le Grand was briefly subjected to the authority of the bishop of London. The Dean and Chapter of Westminster reassumed ecclesiastical authority over the liberty under a private act of Parliament in 1552.⁴⁶

Joined to the abbey, St Martin's still faced its own set of challenges in the sixteenth century. The abbey's future—as that of all English religious houses—was far from secure, but St Martin's faced additional danger since it was surrounded by the hostile and powerful City of London. The early sixteenth century witnessed the end of an important tradition that had long linked St Martin's to the City. Edward III's first charter to the city included a provision that 'all inquisitions from henceforth to be taken by our [royal] justices or ministers of the said city, shall be taken in St Martin's le Grand, in London, and not elsewhere'.⁴⁷ This franchise, intended to protect citizens from being called before royal justices at Westminster or elsewhere was hardly a privilege the aldermen were proud to hold in light of their fifteenth century battles with the liberty. After 1518, royal justices met only at the Guildhall, because their continued presence in St Martin's was 'thought detrimental to the honour of the City'.⁴⁸

The aldermen pushed for a royal review of the jurisdictional status of St Martin's in 1529, but Henry had weightier problems at hand. The king delegated the matter to Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London, asking him to 'diligently viewe, serche, decerne and trye oute the lymytes of the said seynctuary and how farre the same seynctuary doth extend in lengthe & bredeth' by examining 'the grauntes, lycens and confirmacions made to the said Abbott and convent by the kynges noble progenitors'.⁴⁹ In its complaint the City had expressed particular concern about the enforcement of the recently-effected Act Touching Artificers Strangers, which set out 'that no artificer, alien or stranger...being a householder...within the sanctuary of St Martin le Grand within the City of London, shall from henceforth have or retain in there service journeyemen or apprentices, being

⁴⁵ Kempe, *Historical Notices*, p. 159.

⁴⁶ 5&6 Edw VI, c.XI. Stanford Lehmborg notes that 'the division of London into two dioceses did not work well. No successor was appointed when Thirlby was translated to Norwich in 1550, and for six years the diocese of London had two cathedrals,' until Mary refounded the abbey in 1566. S E Lehmborg, 'Henry VIII, the Reformation, and the Cathedrals', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 49 (1986), pp. 266-7.

⁴⁷ 6 March 1326/7. *Historical Charters*, ed Birch, p. 58. See also Strype, *Survey*, iii.103.

⁴⁸ *Historical Charters*, ed Birch, p. xxxiii.

⁴⁹ WAM MS 13195B.

aliens or strangers born, above the number of ten persons at one time.⁵⁰ Since aliens elsewhere in England were limited to two servants by the statute, it was an important concession for St Martin's. Tunstall was given 'full power and auctoritie to cause the house of every stranger and denyzyn artificer inhabitant and dwelling wythin the sayd saynctuary to be serched and vewed howe many servantes he or they kepe.'⁵¹ In performing these charges, Tunstall's commission encountered little resistance, but other parts of the commission required him to question the Abbot of Westminster. John Islip, abbot since 1500, was reluctant to cooperate with the local ordinary, from whom his abbey had enjoyed centuries of independence. Islip had overseen the transferral of St Martin's to the abbey, and it is therefore easy to imagine his eagerness to protect its franchises. In response to an inquiry on the legitimacy of St Martin's sanctuary, Islip tersely answered that

our souveraine lorde the kynge...hathe affirmed the said Sainte Martyns le Graunde to be a sainctuary and hath nott by the same commissione gyven any other auctoritie unto the same commissioners...to here or determyne the truth of the said sainctuary in St Martin le Graunde whiche hath ther ben frome the tyme whereof no mynde of mane ys to the contrary.⁵²

The findings of Tunstall's commission have not survived. There is no indication within civic records that 1529 marked a turning point in its relationship with St Martin's, and if Tunstall did recommend changes to St Martin's status, they were never put into practice. The imminent break with Rome may well have encouraged the bishop (or the City) to back down, in the hopes that subsequent battles with the abbey might easier to win.

Islip's successor as abbot was William Boston, who continued to defend the franchises attached to St Martin le Grand. In July 1538 the City brought suit in Star Chamber, requesting that a writ of *quo warranto* be issued to Boston 'for hys pretendyd sanctuary which he claymethe to have withyn the precynct of Saynt Martyns le Graund, Saynte Martyns lane and other places adjoynng to the same.'⁵³ The abbey's learned counsel concluded that since 'yt appereth in a proviso in the ende of [3 Edw IV, c. 4] that Seynt Martyns lane & all the rest of the precincte of Seynt Martyns le Graund of London ys sentuerye. Therefor so the same statute for I take it to be verye good evidence to prove that Seynt Martyns lane ys sentuerye &c.'⁵⁴ In the midst of Parliament's sustained

⁵⁰ 21 Hen VIII, c. 16 §IX.

⁵¹ WAM MS 13195C.

⁵² WAM MS 13195G.

⁵³ CLRO Jo 14, fo 91. The Abbot's claims are (in Latin) on fo 89. The writ of *quo warranto* is transcribed on fo 92.

⁵⁴ WAM MS 13190.

attack on the institution of sanctuary, the abbey may well have been content to show that St Martin le Grand had legitimate claims to the status without attempting to establish its extent precisely. Westminster Abbey was formally dissolved on 16 January 1539/40 and re-founded as the cathedral church of the new Bishopric of Westminster later that year.⁵⁵ William Boston became dean of the new cathedral, and he would therefore have been instrumental in the surrender of the Collegiate Church of St Martin to the Crown in February 1541/2. On the first of that month, a list of pensions was drawn up ‘upon the dissolution of the dissolution of the college of St Martin in London’.⁵⁶ The surrender of the collegiate church necessarily included turning over the whole site to the Crown. By August 1542, however, the precinct was restored to the new cathedral by the Court of Augmentations.⁵⁷

Surprisingly, neither the decline of the English system of sanctuary nor the demise of the collegiate church induced the City to launch a new challenge against the rights of the precinct. The mayor and aldermen may have hoped to secure either its lands or its franchises directly from the Court of Augmentations—though no record survives of any such offer being made. As it was, the City did not resume its attempts to compromise St Martin’s franchises for almost two decades. In October 1559 the Court of Aldermen ‘agreyd that there should be sute made to the Quenes highnes most honorable counseyll for the liberties belonging to Saint Martens’.⁵⁸ The City quickly abandoned its plan, though. Two weeks later the aldermen sent a delegation ‘to declare unto my lord Treasurer that the Cytie neyther ys hable nor intendeth any further to meddle with the purchasyng of great St Martyns’.⁵⁹ As has already been mentioned, Lord Treasurer William Paulet had close links to the City,⁶⁰ but it is likely the aldermen contacted him to appease then-secretary-of-state William Cecil, a great defender of the Elizabethan Abbey. The City’s rapid withdrawal of its proposal suggests that, even in the

⁵⁵ TNA SP 1/157/59.

⁵⁶ *LFPD* xvii.74. The annual pensions included £20 to one of the prebends, between £4 and ten marks to each of the six vicars, and between 40s and four marks for each of the five clerks.

⁵⁷ *LFPD* xvii.714. It is worth noting that Stow (and Strype in turn) misunderstood the suppression of St Martin’s, dating it at 1548. Stow, *Survey*, i.308-9; Strype, *Survey*, iii.106. To be sure it was not until 1548 that ‘the Colledge church being pulled downe, in the east part thereof a large Wine taverne was builded, and withal downe to the west and throughout the whole precinct of that Colledge many other houses were builded, and highly prised, letten to straungers borne, and other such, as there claymed benefite of priviledges graunted to the Canons, serving God day and night...which may hardly be wrested to artificers, buyers and sellars, otherwise then is mentioned in the 21 of saint Mathewes gospel.’ From the records relating to the suppression of St Martin’s, it seems entirely possible that public services continued to be held there from the time of its surrender until the abbey had it pulled down in 1548.

⁵⁸ CLRO Rep 14, fo 227v.

⁵⁹ CLRO Rep 14, fo 240.

⁶⁰ Ramsay, *City of London in International Politics*, pp. 146-50.

flux of yet another re-foundation, Westminster Abbey remained a formidable presence in the capital, especially with Cecil as an ally. The idea of securing the franchises attached to St Martin le Grand—this time by purchase—was floated again in January 1566/7. Three aldermen were asked to consider ‘all the good ways and meanes they can devise for the obteynge and gettynge of great St Martyns into the governing rule and order of this Cytie and the Mayor and aldermen of this Cytie for the tyme being, either in fee simple or by lease as they can best compase and obteyne the same’.⁶¹ When the abbey showed no interest in selling its franchises at St Martin’s, the City briefly considered a suit in Chancery, but that too proved infeasible.⁶²

In the decades after 1567, the City paid St Martin’s little attention, suggesting that the aldermen recognised the futility of challenging an institution under the direct protection of William Cecil. The abbey had long exercised secular control over Westminster by nominating manorial officials to work alongside the quasi-independent abbot’s court, which was dominated by prominent lay residents of the area.⁶³ Between 1540 and 1560 control over the nomination of officers passed from the abbey to the Crown, then back to the Marian abbey, and finally to the dean and chapter of the Elizabethan collegiate church. In 1561 Gabriel Goodman, the newly-appointed dean, granted the high stewardship to William Cecil. Goodman was Cecil’s personal chaplain and close friend.⁶⁴ The high steward’s mundane responsibilities were carried out by a deputy, but Cecil took an active role in protecting the interests of the abbey. When the residents of Westminster attempted to secure incorporation through Parliament in 1585 Cecil was instrumental in ensuring that the new Court of Burgesses did not trample the ancient rights of the abbey.⁶⁵ Cecil and Goodman both remained in their abbey posts until death, Cecil’s in 1598 and Goodman’s in 1601. Their long, contemporary tenures brought remarkable stability to the abbey (and Westminster generally) after the turbulent decades that had preceded 1560.

The City did not directly challenge St Martin’s privileges until after Cecil’s death in 1598. William Fleetwood, the City of London’s recorder from 1571 to 1591, had presented a copy of St Martin’s fifteenth-century cartulary to the Lord Mayor in 1576. Fleetwood described the collection as containing ‘All such liberties of St Martyns le Graund in London which heretofore have ben most seacretly kept from knowledge of

⁶¹ CLRO Rep 16, fo 154v.

⁶² CLRO Rep 16, fo 307.

⁶³ Merritt, *Social World of Early Modern Westminster*, pp. 71-2.

⁶⁴ C S Knighton, ‘Goodman, Gabriel (1528-1601)’ ODNB; *HMC Hatfield* xi.5, xiii.208-9.

⁶⁵ Merritt, *Social World of Early Modern Westminster*, p. 88.

this Citie'.⁶⁶ Fleetwood (who was MP for London in 1572, 1584, 1586 and 1589) lived near St Martin's in the parish of St Mary Staining, where he was assessed on £40 for the 1582 Parliamentary subsidy,⁶⁷ but it is unknown how he gained access to the original document, which remains among the abbey muniments. The precedents it recorded may have been forgotten by the City, but they could not be fairly described as 'secretly kept' from its knowledge, since the corporation had been party to nearly all the litigation recorded. In any case, the *Liber Fleetwood* did not spur the City to challenge St Martin's franchises anew. In April 1600, the aldermen brought another *quo warranto* proceeding against the liberty, but it proved no more fruitful than similar efforts had been previously.⁶⁸

When the City began to press King James for an extension of its rights over several metropolitan liberties around 1607, the dean and chapter of Westminster began to investigate how St Martin's franchises had fared during the sixteenth century. They drew up an order 'to search out an Act of Parliament of 35 queene Elizabeth, to search out what grantes have byn made by the dean and chapter to the high steward, under steward, bailiff of the liberty or buy other deed or grant of the Royaltye of Westminster and to take the key [of the precinct] from Mr Cobb'.⁶⁹ Robert Cecil had succeeded his father as steward in 1598; while he was neither so influential as his father nor so closely involved in local developments in Westminster, he remained a close ally of the abbey.⁷⁰ If the City had hoped to secure jurisdiction over St Martin's alongside Blackfriars, Whitefriars, and Holy Trinity Aldgate, it must have been disappointed. It did, however, make one final, fruitless attempt to purchase jurisdiction there from the abbey: in February 1623/4 the aldermen ordered the City's recorder and common serjeant to meet with the Lord Keeper 'about purchase of St Martins le Graund'.⁷¹ Its interest, predictably, came to nothing.

The City's quest for control over St Martin's was uniformly ineffective. From its first attempts to establish jurisdiction there in the 1310s, it failed to achieve even piecemeal reform of the precinct's franchises. That remained the case through 1640, and indeed into the nineteenth century. The meaningfulness of St Martin's liberties did steadily decrease. The role of the City's livery companies in regulating metropolitan trade

⁶⁶ GL MS 85.

⁶⁷ *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessment Rolls*, ed Lang, p. 127 (no. 177).

⁶⁸ WAM MS 40697.

⁶⁹ WAM MS 6570; the act was presumably 35 Eliz., caps. 8-10, which the City had used in the 1590s to claim the right to search the shops of artisans resident in St Martin's. See p. 209, ff, below.

⁷⁰ Merritt, *Social World of Early Modern Westminster*, pp. 79-81.

⁷¹ CLRO Rep 38, fo 41.

declined from the late seventeenth century, and regulation by Crown and Parliament brought it more or less into legal parity with the surrounding metropolis. Still, in 1708 Edward Hatton could observe the durability of St Martin's independence from the City: 'This Place, tho near the Heart of the City of London, is in the Liberty of Westminster, and is govern'd and votes for Parliament Men accordingly; and Persons unfree may here follow their professions or Trades.'⁷² The precinct was finally merged into the City's Aldersgate Ward in 1815.⁷³ Alfred Kempe, who wrote a decade later, was still able to note that 'so strong is prescriptive right, the inhabitants continue to vote for Westminster' candidates in general elections.⁷⁴

Sanctuary and the Royal Government

Sanctuary had its critics, but there were contemporaries who accepted and even embraced the institution. Despite complaints against those who claimed sanctuary unjustly, the neighbours and landlords of sanctuary-seekers were generally thankful for their presence. Peter Kaufman points out that, for example, those living in and near Beaulieu came to rely so heavily on the presence and rents of sanctuary men and their families that citizens petitioned Thomas Cromwell to extend the immunities even after the monastery's dissolution in the 1530s.⁷⁵ Neither should it be imagined that sanctuary was a binary state that either existed fully or not at all. The use and effectiveness of sanctuary were influenced both by circumstances and by the beliefs of potential sanctuary-seekers.⁷⁶ This was as true in St Martin's as it was elsewhere. In June 1537 a man called Feldy, who had been condemned to death for felony, was urged by Sir Piers Dutton, a royal justice, to name his accomplices. Dutton assured Feldy that he would use his favour with the king to secure a pardon, and Feldy, 'trusting to which promises...neglected opportunities for escaping from the custody of Sir Piers, and went many times through divers sanctuaries, as Westminster and St Martin's.'⁷⁷ Sanctuary was not seen as a panacea by the accused; neither was it universally condemned by the innocent.

⁷² Hatton, *View*, i.72.

⁷³ 55 Geo III, c. 91, §71-3, 75.

⁷⁴ Kempe, *Historical Notices*, p. 172n.

⁷⁵ Kaufman, 'Henry VII and Sanctuary', p. 467, quoting More, *History of King Richard III*, p. 30. The lord mayor and aldermen of London clearly did not hold this rosy view of St Martin's, though the sanctuary offered by Westminster Abbey (which did not compete directly with the corporate authority of the City) seems to have had few entrenched opponents.

⁷⁶ Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority*, p. 139.

⁷⁷ *LPSD* xii(2).58ii.

The demise of the English system of sanctuary was part of a larger quest on the part of the early Tudor kings to establish their fundamental authority throughout the realm. Isobel Thornley writes that as ‘the King’s power increased and the reach of the arm of royal justices lengthened and its efficiency strengthened...it was inevitable that conflict must occur with these independent jurisdictions’.⁷⁸ In this way, royal antagonism towards sanctuary was part of a larger quest for the jurisdictional supremacy of the English Crown, which took aim at the lords of the Scottish and Welsh marches, the ambiguous position of Ireland, and the spiritual claims of the pope. Attempts to regulate sanctuary were also motivated by ‘a growing sense among those in power that the indiscriminate mercy [it afforded] no longer constituted an appropriate response to serious felonies’.⁷⁹ The introduction to a 1536 Act of Parliament curtailing the institution reiterated its commonly invoked abuses:

upon trust of saintuaries and the licencious liberties that heretofore have ben and yet dailye ben used in the same, divers personnes have ben the more able to perpetrate and committe many detestable murders, rappes, robberies, thefts and other mischievous, detestable, and abbomynable dedes, for that they have ben always releved ayded and succoured by the saintuaries when so ever and so ofte as they or any of theym have offended.⁸⁰

Parliament expressed other concerns about sanctuary, as well. A 1531 act lamented that ‘the strength and power of this realme ys gretely mynyshed’ by the forced exile of craftsmen who claimed the traditional sanctuary of forty days and ordered that sanctuary men no longer abjure the realm, but ‘proceed from temporary sanctuaries to permanent asylums where they were for life or until needed for military service’.⁸¹ By the 1530s, sanctuary had come to be seen not only as undermining royal authority, but also as strengthening the economies of potentially hostile foreign powers.

Royal opposition to the institution of sanctuary ensured its demise, especially after the break from Rome removed any chance of ecclesiastical protection. In a letter to the mayor of Plymouth in March 1536/7, Thomas Dorset wrote that the king had recently presented a bill to Parliament ‘which he desired them to weigh in conscience, and not to pass it because he gave it in, but to see if it be for the common weal of his subjects.’ The bill provided that ‘sanctuary is not to be allowed for debt, murder, or felony, either at St Martin’s, St Katharine’s, or elsewhere.’⁸² David Loades argues that,

⁷⁸ Thornley, ‘The Destruction of Sanctuary’, p. 185.

⁷⁹ Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority*, p. 24.

⁸⁰ 27 Hen VIII, c 19.

⁸¹ 22 Hen VIII, c. 14; Kaufman, ‘Henry VII and Sanctuary’, p. 476.

⁸² *LPFD* x.462; 27 Hen VIII, c. 19.

notwithstanding this act, 'It was not until April 1538 that a royal proclamation removed the right of sanctuary for the somewhat esoteric offence of causing death by "sudden foins with swords", although it seems by that time opinion in and around London was becoming thoroughly confused about who qualified.'⁸³ Between 1529 and 1540, Parliament passed no fewer than thirteen acts restricting the benefits, length or qualifications for sanctuary.⁸⁴ By 1540, sanctuary was no longer available to those accused of treason or most other felonies, and the privilege of offering sanctuary was restricted to churches, churchyards, and the eight cities of refuge intended to replace the ancient liberties.⁸⁵

This protracted assault limited the scope of sanctuary but failed to destroy it. In part, this was a result of the nature of English law. Thornley points out that 'ordinances represented rather an ideal to be striven for than any accomplishment of improvement, and the ill-doings against which they provided...if they were momentarily checked, soon resumed the even tenor of their way.'⁸⁶ The judges who oversaw the practical application of the law did not necessarily see statute as fundamentally dominant to the common law. Contemporary jurisprudence was, moreover, reluctant to destroy long-standing traditions irrevocably, even in the face of explicit statutory instruments. Even more problematic was the uncertainty caused by the stream of statutes and proclamations that restricted sanctuary during the 1530s. As Peter Kaufman puts it, 'immunities were pared, debated, and pared again until confusion had replaced custom.'⁸⁷ Some places continued to claim the right to offer sanctuary long after Parliament had declared its abolition. Westminster Abbey offered uninterrupted refuge for debtors until the eighteenth century. The London Carmelites never claimed a peculiar right to sanctuary during their existence, but their precinct—known as Whitefriars or Alsatia—became a notorious sanctuary during the late seventeenth century. Charles Knighton and Richard Mortimer suggest that St Martin's claims to sanctuary were saved by a legal technicality: the act that abolished residual ecclesiastical sanctuaries (i.e. those left over after the dissolution of the religious

⁸³ Loades, 'The Sanctuary', p. 80.

⁸⁴ 22 Hen VIII, c 14; 25 Hen VIII, c 22; 26 Hen VII, caps. 4, 5, 6, 13; 27 Hen VIII, caps 13, 17, 19, 24, 26; 28 Hen VIII, c 1; 32 Hen VIII, c 12.

⁸⁵ Westminster, though an ancient liberty, remained a city of refuge after 1540. The provincial cities of refuge were supposed to compensate for the regularisation of jurisdiction in the Counties Palatine and the quasi-independent lordships on the marches of Scotland and Wales.

⁸⁶ Thornley, 'The Destruction of Sanctuary', p. 196.

⁸⁷ Kaufman, 'Henry VII and Sanctuary', p. 467.

foundations that claimed the privilege) was passed before the fall of Westminster Abbey.⁸⁸

Regardless of the legal status of St Martin's claims to sanctuary, there is no evidence that the residents of precinct or those governing the various incarnations of the abbey ever sought to resurrect that privilege. Civic records indicate that the lord mayor and aldermen—nettled by other aspects of St Martin's independence—had no notion that it continued to offer sanctuary to criminals in the century after 1540. Despite the end of sanctuary at St Martin's, its continued independence aggravated the City, especially given the seeming indifference of the royal government. Crown and Parliament cared little for the precise jurisdictional status of the precinct. Henrician statutes had, if nothing else, effectively asserted the right of king and council to interfere in post-monastic liberties; gone were the days when the dean of St Martin's could rebuff a royal demand to relinquish a prisoner. The king, his council and even Parliament were willing to accept the continued independence of St Martin's and other metropolitan liberties from the City of London as long as they acknowledged royal authority and posed no threat to metropolitan order.

In many cases the royal government did find it expedient to lump St Martin's with the City. In such cases resistance (by residents or the abbey) was futile. Early in the sixteenth century, the abbey had some success in differentiating St Martin's from the City. When the king's council named commissioners for the October 1524 search of the metropolis, the mayor and aldermen were given responsibility 'for the City of London and St Martin's,' but a similar commission named the following month included separate searchers for St Martin's separately.⁸⁹ When St Martin's residents objected to contributing to the levies made on the City in 1534 and 1535, the Privy Council acknowledged that 'they should levy by their own officers.'⁹⁰ Even in the 1530s, however, the royal government asserted its right to interfere with the relationship between the abbey and the collegiate church. In 1533 Thomas Cranmer wrote to the abbot of Westminster, 'understanding that the place of a vicar is void within the college of St Martin's, London,

⁸⁸ 32 Hen VIII, c. 12; *Acts of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, 1543-1609*, eds C S Knighton and R Mortimer, 2 vols, (Woodbridge, 1997-9), p. 140n.

⁸⁹ *LPSD* Add. 432, 430.

⁹⁰ TNA SP 16/302/19, SP 16/304/82. The City's objection to that arrangement makes sense when one considers the challenges inherent in the local assessment of early modern taxes. See Braddick, *Parliamentary Taxation*, ch. 3.

of which the Abbot is dean,' requested that the abbot appoint Sir John Smythe to fill the vacancy.⁹¹

After 1540 the abbey's cooperation was seemingly taken for granted by the royal government. In the decades that followed, the institutions of national government often found it easier to include St Martin's in its oversight of the City. The alternative—creating a separate set of bureaucratic structures for the liberties, either individually or collectively—was understandably less appealing. The aliens that made up a large segment of St Martin's population were surveyed together with those in the adjacent Aldersgate Ward throughout Elizabeth's reign. Efforts to restrict metropolitan building laid down after 1581 saw offenders from St Martin's brought before the Privy Council alongside those from the City, rather than with those of Middlesex or those from other metropolitan liberties.⁹² Surveys of aliens and building restrictions were both symptomatic of the royal government's underlying fear of disorder in the metropolis, and it was matters of public order that most frequently provoked its direct interference in St Martin's. In April 1549 the Privy Council wrote to demand the help of the dean of Westminster:

by reason of the naughtie conversacion of John Goodale whome ye do presently appointe to be your Steward in Saint Martyns in London there is great disorder of yll rule there, more then in any other place thereaboutes, we shall require you to loke better to this thinge appointing some [other] man to the same.⁹³

Such interference was exceptional, however. On a day-to-day basis the independence of St Martin le Grand remained practically viable, especially after William Cecil became high steward in 1561. In the five decades that followed, St Martin le Grand is noticeably absent from the *Acts of the Privy Council* and the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*. Both William Cecil and his son Robert, who succeeded him as steward in 1598, took an active interest in the maintenance of order in St Martin's, and in protecting its franchises.

Regardless of the liberty's relationship to the Cecils, the royal government fully expected residents of St Martin's to accept their financial and military responsibilities. There seems to have been no attempt to avoid the payment of Parliamentary subsidies. The assessment and collection of subsidies occurred by ward within the City of London,

⁹¹ *LPHD*, vi.439.

⁹² See TNA SP 16/359/21.

⁹³ WAM MS 13242. According to Knighton and Mortimer, as a result of this complaint 'a new commission was sealed for jurisdiction' in St Martin's. They go on to claim that commission's records exist for the period from 1550 to 1559, but the cited manuscript [WAC Reg Wyks, fos. 163-75] is a register of the commissary court of the collegiate church, which heard testamentary cases related to St Martin's. *Acts*, eds Knighton and Mortimer, p. xix.

and St Martin's was assessed as part of the adjacent Aldersgate Ward.⁹⁴ If either the residents or the dean and chapter of Westminster objected to this practise, their complaints have not survived. It is clear that the collection of the subsidy in the liberty was subject to the oversight of the London subsidy commissioners. Within each ward, assessments were recorded by parish. The residents of St Martin's, which included parts of three different City parishes, were not accounted for in any consistent way.⁹⁵ The liberty was nearly coterminous with the parish of St Leonard Foster lane. St Leonard's also contained a substantial minority of City residents, and St Martin's also included parts of the parishes of St Anne and Agnes and of St John Zachary.

In 1541—when the inhabitants of St Martin's were listed all together—five English residents of the liberty were assessed alongside eighty aliens, while a further 134 aliens paid the subsidy per poll. All of the English subsidy-payers were assessed on £20 or more; the wealthiest English resident was Emma Tyseman, assessed at £100, the English widow of Dutchman Gabriel Tyseman.⁹⁶ Eighteen aliens were assessed on wealth of £20 or more, including the wealthiest residents of St Martin's. Peter Peterson, a Dutch shoemaker, was assessed at £300 while Leonard Peterson was assessed at £200. Henry Wese paid the subsidy on an assessment of £120, and John Bystow was assessed at £100.⁹⁷ Of these four men, only the Peter Peterson can be traced beyond 1541: he was still living in the precinct in 1568, when a survey of strangers listed him as a denizen and member of the Dutch church.⁹⁸ The subsidy of 1582 is more difficult to interpret since St Martin's inhabitants were listed under their individual parishes. The 1582 returns do, however, indicate that in certain contexts parochial boundaries were more salient than those that separated City from liberty.⁹⁹ This is less obvious in liberties like Blackfriars, the Minories, or St Katherine's, which were wholly coterminous with their respective parishes. In Whitefriars, which formed part of the parish of St Dunstan in the West, it is clear that the residents of the liberty were better integrated into their parish than into other nearby parts of the City.¹⁰⁰

Despite their cooperation in paying subsidies, the residents of St Martin's actively resisted contributing men and money for inclusion with the military levies imposed on

⁹⁴ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 83.

⁹⁵ *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessment Rolls*, ed Lang, pp. 5-9, 117-22.

⁹⁶ Tyseman had himself been assessed in the 1537 subsidy. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-9; *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, i.17.

⁹⁷ *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessment Rolls*, ed Lang, pp. 5-9.

⁹⁸ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, iii.434.

⁹⁹ *Two Tudor Subsidy Assessment Rolls*, ed Lang, pp. 117-22.

¹⁰⁰ Whitefriars residents participated actively in parochial administration, but actively resisted participation in the City's ward or precinct offices. See *APC* x.429, xxxiii.165-6; *CLRO* Rep 22, fo 202; Rep 27, fo 170.

the City of London. The royal government refused to humour such pretence to independence. In March 1587/8, the council wrote ‘to the cheefe officers of and others inhabiting in the Lybertyes of St Martyn’s’ and other exempt places in and around the City, ordering that they ‘contribute unto the chardge of tenn thowsand men appointed to be levied within the said Cytie’.¹⁰¹ When a further thousand men were required, the following year, the council again wrote to the officers of the liberties. In this instance it was more specific in its demands; they were ‘to take up the severall nombres hereunto annexed of hable men, sorted with armour and weapon fytt for the purpose...to be parte of that nomber which are to be levied in and about the said Cittie’. Each liberty was required to contribute a specific number of men; St Martin’s was responsible for providing twelve.¹⁰² Similar quotas were imposed on the precinct when its residents refused to cooperate with the City in 1592/3 and again in 1601.¹⁰³ By the time Charles I initiated the regular collection of ship money in 1634, the responsibility of St Martin’s to contribute to military levies should have been well established.

In 1635, however, the ‘magistrates, officers, and inhabitants of the precinct of St Martin le Grand, within but not of the city of London’ petitioned the Privy Council: not to avoid payment altogether, but rather to contribute with Westminster instead of with London, praying that the council would issue a ‘writ to their own officers to assess them and they will have the money ready to pay over in one week.’¹⁰⁴ This request may, at first sight, seem reasonable, but the Privy Council refused to allow the change. In part, the council objected on principle: ‘forasmuch as the said liberty...is scituate within the sherivelty of London and that by his majesties writt the money for the buisnesse of shipping is to be assessed & levied in all corporations and privileged places by the sherives of the counties wherein the same doe lie.’ There was a practical concern as well, since ‘the inhabitants of such [exempt] places doe neglect to asseesse the same by their own officers’.¹⁰⁵ St Martin’s residents finally paid £100 toward the City’s contribution. The following year, the residents again petitioned the council, objecting to the £150 the City had demanded toward its contribution, ‘not notwithstanding there are but 140 houses in the liberty, and 50 of them have been recently visited by the plague, whereof 45 were relieved of the liberty.’¹⁰⁶ The Privy Council’s repeated insistence on the liberty’s

¹⁰¹ *APC* xv.428.

¹⁰² *APC* xvii.118.

¹⁰³ *APC* xxiv.30-1; CLRO Rep 25, fo 253.

¹⁰⁴ TNA SP 16/306/75.

¹⁰⁵ CLRO Rem 8, fos 105-105v; See also TNA SP 16/367/20.

¹⁰⁶ *CSPD 1636-7*, p. 290; TNA SP 16/341/54.

contributing alongside the City only makes sense if one understands London's unique method of contributing to Charles's scheme. Instead of paying the Crown directly, the City provided ships in kind. While it had a significant price advantage in building the ships demanded by the royal government, the rating (set by the City itself) was exceptionally heavy.¹⁰⁷ As it had done under Elizabeth, the Caroline council required St Martin's to contribute equitably in the City's military liabilities.

Westminster Abbey and St Martin's

Westminster Abbey's consistent oversight prevented a return to old abuses in the decades that followed the secularisation of St Martin le Grand. This was true even though the abbey itself was in flux. When it was reformed as the cathedral church of the new diocese of Westminster in 1540 the former abbot became dean. He was left with essentially the same temporal powers he had enjoyed before the abbey's dissolution. Despite the 1550 reconstitution of the cathedral as a collegiate church and the resumption of its original role as abbey under Mary, the institution continued to wield broad authorities over Westminster and St Martin's. After Elizabeth's accession the abbey experienced a prolonged period of stability, which was reflected in its administration of St Martin's. Gabriel Goodman, the abbey's Elizabethan dean, was remarkably conscientious. Goodman vigorously defended the rights of the liberty, but he was also active in his *ex officio* role as a Middlesex justice of the peace.¹⁰⁸ He was also a close friend and ally of William Cecil. In 1561 the dean and chapter named Cecil high steward of the abbey's estates, which included St Martin le Grand. Though his daily responsibilities were carried out by deputies, Cecil made himself a prominent figure in local government, and he took an active interest in defending the abbey's privileges. As Julia Merritt points out, power in Elizabethan Westminster was so monopolized by the Crown and the Cecils that 'it can be difficult to disentangle Crown influence from Cecil family influence...and it may well be that contemporaries did not always make this distinction.'¹⁰⁹ Since the dean and chapter saw St Martin's as an immediate extension of their Westminster possessions, Cecil patronage naturally included the abbey's jurisdictional enclave within the City of London. The proximity of St Martin's to the

¹⁰⁷ M D Gordon, 'The Collection of Ship Money in the Reign of Charles I', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3rd ser., 4 (1910), p. 150.

¹⁰⁸ Merritt, *Social World of Early Modern Westminster*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 76

abbey and its precarious position vis-à-vis the City naturally increased both the interest and the influence the abbey had in the liberty.

The abbey's role in St Martin's encompassed both ecclesiastical and secular matters. Until its dissolution in 1542, the Collegiate Church of St Martin le Grand had technically been a royal free chapel. Practically, however, this had not been the case after its appropriation to Westminster Abbey in 1503. In the intervening years, the liberty remained exempt from its local ordinary (the bishop of London), but its independence was subordinated to that of the abbey rather than existing its own right. St Martin's retained its own commissary court until June 1560, when it was merged into the jurisdiction of the Archdeacon of Westminster.¹¹⁰ The abbey also had a direct link to the religious life of the precinct. Although the liberty was split among three parishes, about three quarters of its area (and probably a similar proportion of its inhabitants after the redevelopment of the church site in 1548) fell under the parish of St Leonard Foster Lane. St Leonard's stood at the south-eastern corner of the liberty, though the site of the church itself was within the City's Aldersgate ward. The bulk of the precinct fell under this parish, which also contained areas under City jurisdiction to the south and on the eastern side of Foster Lane. The northern edge of the liberty of St Martin le Grand was split between the parishes of St Anne & Agnes in the west and St John Zachary in the east, but the majority of the parishioners in these latter two parishes lived within the City of London's Aldersgate Ward. St Leonard's had been created in 1236 for the lay residents of the neighbourhood, 'who before that date were using for their services the altar of St Leonard in the collegiate church.'¹¹¹ Founded by the collegiate church, the advowson remained in the hands of its dean until 1503, when it passed to the abbot (and later to the dean) of Westminster. As both patron of the living under which the majority of St Martin's residents lived and final ecclesiastical authority throughout the liberty, the dean remained an important authority figure in the liberty even after the collegiate church there was dissolved in 1542.

The dean's authority was enhanced by his extensive secular responsibilities in St Martin's. The deans of Westminster (and their predecessors the abbots) were no strangers to secular authority. They had been lords of the manor in Westminster for centuries, and the 1585 act for the 'good government' of Westminster confirmed and

¹¹⁰ *Acts*, eds Knighton and Mortimer, p. xxxvi, n79.

¹¹¹ Honeybourne, 'The Sanctuary Boundaries and Environs of Westminster Abbey and the College of St Martin-Le-Grand', p. 327.

even expanded the abbey's role in governing the community.¹¹² In 1607 the abbey foiled an attempt by the town's residents to secure the formal incorporation of the town.¹¹³ Neither was St Martin's the only source of jurisdictional friction for the abbey. In May 1593 Raphe Dobbinson, the deputy bailiff of Westminster, appealed to William Cecil for protection. The under sheriff of Middlesex had brought suit against Dobbinson in Common Pleas for refusing to appear before him 'to heare and answeare his objections, which I can not doe, without your Lordships pleasure therein knowne.' Dobbinson begged Cecil 'to direct your honorable lettres to the said Undersherife that he maie cease his suite at his parill'.¹¹⁴ Cecil's response has not survived, but it is clear that lower-level officials believed that his place in the heart of the Elizabethan state afforded them some protection from attacks made by neighbouring jurisdictions.

Given its ancient and continuing place in the government of Westminster, the abbey was perfectly comfortable assuming similar responsibilities in St Martin's. In some respects, that simply meant the inclusion of the liberty in the responsibilities of abbey-granted offices. A 1620 memorandum detailing the responsibilities of abbey officers specifically includes St Martin's within their ambit.¹¹⁵ The network of officers provided the abbey with an ongoing chance to monitor St Martin le Grand's relationship with the City. In October 1565 the dean and chapter recorded paying 1/6*d* for boat hire when John Thomas 'went to the speker of the parlyment howse concerning the sanctuary' on the 'day that the matter of the sanctuary was deferred to the master of the Rolles'.¹¹⁶

The following February a further 3/8*d* was spent on boat hire and dinner when the dean 'kept court' in St Martin's.¹¹⁷ During Elizabeth's reign, William Cecil proved extremely useful in rebuffing the advances of the city. In October 1580 he wrote to Martin Calthorpe, the alderman for Aldersgate Ward who was then serving as sheriff. Cecil complained that Calthorpe's deputy

hath without any knowledge of me pressed certain persones to serve with others of the Citie. The place being as you knowe or as at lease I thincke your deputie is not ignorant of to be previledged and not any part of the liberties of the City and thereby not to be intereddled with either by your self or your deputie in right as officers of the citie.¹¹⁸

¹¹² 27 Eliz I, c. XVII.

¹¹³ Merritt, *Social World of Early Modern Westminster*, p. 94

¹¹⁴ BL Lansd 74, no 30.

¹¹⁵ WAM MS 9896.

¹¹⁶ WAM MS 38407.

¹¹⁷ WAM MS 38407.

¹¹⁸ CLRO Rem 1, no. 143 (fo 63v).

Cecil goes on to express his hope that Calthorpe's deputy will not retaliate against the officers of St Martin's with 'any injurie, wrong or molestation, having done herein to my understanding none otherwise than may standeth with the liberties of the place'. Cecil's direct intervention was a powerful reminder to civic officer's of the abbey's continued ability to guard its interests, even in the heart of the City.

In addition to protecting the liberty's franchises, the reformed abbey remained the primary freeholder of property in St Martin's. This, in itself, should not be taken as evidence that the dean and chapter had any particular concern for the maintenance of order there, but it reminds us that they were involved in the precinct at yet another level. The abbey certainly worked to maximise the rental value of its properties there. A September 1537 survey by the Court of Augmentations found that the abbey's possessions in St Martin's were worth £160/10/8*d* annually.¹¹⁹ Although the collegiate church of St Martin le Grand was surrendered to the Crown in 1542, Stow and Strype were right in claiming that it was only pulled down in 1548. A year under Protector Somerset may have been enough to end any hope for the reconstitution of St Martin's harboured by the dean and chapter of what was then Westminster Cathedral. During the forty-five weeks between 11 February 1547/8 and 22 December 1548, the dean and chapter spent at least £93/16/3*d* clearing the rubble of the old collegiate church and constructing tenements on its site.¹²⁰ This was a sizable expense, especially since it did not significantly increase the annual rental value of the precinct to the abbey. In 1577 its receiver of rents recorded the annual value of its properties there as £168/15/10*d*.¹²¹

The abbey muniments also provide qualitative details of its role as landlord. Its proximity helped in its oversight, which intensified as the period progressed, a trend apparent in the evolution of its relationship with its rent collectors. In the first decades after the abbey took over St Martin's, it named a collector of rents for St Martin's separately from its collector for Westminster and its collector for other parts of the metropolis. In his 1557 grant of the office, Henry Johns entered a bond promising to present 'all and singular the rentes, assines, profetes and revenues growinge and comminge of all thes their messuages, tenements and heredimente lieing and being in

¹¹⁹ Kempe, *Historical Notices*, pp. 205-9.

¹²⁰ WAM MSS 37175, 37177-37238. The payments were made over forty-five consecutive Saturdays, with only the payment slips for 31 March (Holy Saturday) 29 September (Michaelmas) missing. Considering that the demolition of the church is not included in this cost, that work may not have continued after 20 December, and though the average weekly expenditure was £2/11/3*d*, the full cost to the may have been significantly higher.

¹²¹ WAM MS 39613.

St Martens le Graund.¹²² Johns, who was appointed for life, was remunerated only informally by the abbey. It was not until 1600 that the collector for St Martin's was granted an annual salary of £8/13/4d.¹²³ At about the same time, the abbey began assigning a single collector for all of its properties in the capital; the collector therefore also received an additional £10 p.a. as collector for Westminster.¹²⁴ Abbey records suggest that by the turn of the seventeenth century the appointed collector generally paid a deputy to carry out his responsibilities.

As landlord the dean and chapter of Westminster encountered some difficulties in St Martin's. In 1570 the deputy collector there disappeared after collecting half a year's rent. The dean and chapter moved to prevent further misappropriation of abbey income. They wrote to their tenants in St Martin le Grand that

forasmuche as Robert Allett late one of our collectors of our Rentes in St Martynes le Graund...as we are very crediblye enformed flede and departed away with no small somm and sommes of money of owres in his handes...theis are therefore to require yow that not onely you forbear from hensforth to paye the sayd Robert Allett enye more rentes, but also that in the meane season tyll we shall appoynte an other officer for the charge you will paye to this bearer...all suche your rentes as be dewe by yow unto us for the year ended at Michallmass.¹²⁵

After this incident, grants of office issued by the abbey included clauses requiring that the officeholder seek the approval of the dean and chapter before allowing a deputy to assume his responsibilities.¹²⁶ Even this, however, did not prevent future difficulties with the rent collectors. In 1632 the abbey spent £4/1/11d on subpoenas, copies of bills and answers and legal opinions in a lawsuit to force payment by an unscrupulous deputy rent collector in St Martin's.¹²⁷ Abbey records are by no means conclusive, but they seem to indicate that the officers appointed by the dean and chapter gave the abbey more trouble than the actual residents of St Martin's.

The abbey was landlord and protector of St Martin's franchises, but it also played an important role in maintaining order in the liberty. The dean was a justice of the peace in his own right and helped arbitrate disputes within St Martin's, and the abbey's officers regularly reported concerns in the liberty, allowing the dean and chapter to respond in a timely fashion. During James's reign, the abbey drew up a memorandum detailing statutes relevant to St Martin le Grand. In it, the abbey noted that 'the indentures of

¹²² WAM MS 13207.

¹²³ WAM MSS 13212, 13216.

¹²⁴ WAM MS 41042.

¹²⁵ WAM MS 5510.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ WAM MS 41746.

apprentices are inrolled by the steward of St Martines and order also made from tyme to tyme for reformation of inmates.¹²⁸ This was not the high stewardship held by the Cecils, but a local officer who answered to the dean and chapter. From the beginning of the seventeenth century, the residents of St Martin's took increasing responsibility for the government of their precinct, but the abbey and its steward remained important figures there. The abbey retained certain powers, but it was also the conduit of authority that legitimised governing efforts at the local level. The royal government counted on the abbey to ensure the stability of St Martin's during potential periods of disquiet. When the Privy Council's fears of civil unrest in the capital peaked near midsummer 1592, for example, the Bailiff of Westminster received the Council's letters encouraging extraordinary vigilance in St Martin le Grand.¹²⁹

The dean's close ties to the precinct made him—in some cases at least—available for the informal arbitration of disputes there. This role certainly existed from the early sixteenth century, and probably existed within Westminster long before 1503. Practically, it was an outgrowth of the dean's dual ecclesiastical and secular authority. In 1524 Dr Nicholas Myles—a member of the collegiate church of St Martin le Grand—was murdered in his bed. Among his personal belongings was a trunk that his nephew William Myles, a citizen and grocer of London, claimed to have lent the murdered canon. Despite being Nicholas's 'next kynnsman', William was unable to secure either letters of administration or the trunk from the commissary court. Offering 'sureties to put in for the due administration of the same goodes' Myles beseeched the abbot of Westminster to order his commissary to 'make out and delyver to your said supplicant letres of administration of all the goodes whiche were evere of the said doctor the time of his deth, wherby your said supplicant may have power to execute accordingly'.¹³⁰ The abbot's reply has not survived, but the details of the case are less important than the reality it highlights: the abbot played a central role in the resolution of conflicts originating in St Martin le Grand.

A dispute during the 1590s confirms that the deans who succeeded the abbots of Westminster continued to enjoy a similar role. In November 1592, an argument between two victuallers from St Martin's (Robert Dobbinson and Nathan Dugdale) came before

¹²⁸ WAM MS 13284. The memorandum ends with a list of statutes which mention St Martin's. The purpose of this manuscript is unclear. It was contemporary to the City's second Jacobean charter, which suggests it might have been drawn up to protect St Martin's from annexation by the City.

¹²⁹ *APC*, ed Dasent, xxii.549-51. Lord Cobham was contacted for the maintenance of peace in Blackfriars; Sir Thomas Shirley for Whitefriars, and the Lieutenant of the Tower and the Master of St Katherine's were jointly charged with keeping order in both the precinct of St Katherine's and in East Smithfield.

¹³⁰ WAM MS 13293.

Dean Goodman for arbitration. Only Dobbinson's account of the dispute survives, but it is clear that he considered the dean to be the natural, if informal, arbiter of the dispute. From his appeal, it seems that Dugdale and Dobbinson had already appeared at the Middlesex quarter sessions in an effort to resolve their differences. Dobbinson claims to have told the justices 'that yf I had taken 12*d* or the value thereof of any man within the liberty of Westminster indirectly without good warrant I will render up 20*s* for every 12*d* and pay them £40 for their informacion.'¹³¹ When the Middlesex JPs were unable to help the two men settle their differences, Dobbinson wrote to Dean Goodman. His appeal was personal in tone: 'I would be very sorry that your worship should conceive hardlie of me, upon their informacions, but I wilbe more sorry that their informacions should be true, for then you should have just cause.' Dobbinson claims that Dugdale had cost him five hundred marks (£333/6/8*d*), and asks for a fair hearing of his case: 'I refer myself to your worships consideracion. If they say true, then shall I be overthrowne in my owne suite. And not onlie paie them damages, but utterly overthrowe my name.'¹³² Such disputes must have come before the dean occasionally. The residents of Westminster—who were more numerous and more proximal to the abbey—certainly appealed to the dean and chapter with their complaints, and although there is no further evidence of appeals originating from St Martin's, they surely did occur.

Local Administration

The abbey's influence at St Martin's continued to be fundamental during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but the participation of local residents in the liberty's government increased sharply. This shift toward local governance took two forms: inhabitants showed themselves to be increasingly willing to request help when existing structures proved insufficient, and the system of local office-holding was restructured to include more residents of the liberty. The former trend was helped along by St Martin le Grand's relationship to Westminster Abbey. As in Blackfriars—where a more socially-elevated set of residents frequently appealed to outside authorities—the link to the abbey gave residents of St Martin's privileged access to the royal government.¹³³ In 1593, the residents of St Martin's wrote to William Cecil complaining 'of certayne disorders and inconvenciens in the said precincte, which by your

¹³¹ WAM MS 13293

¹³² WAM MS 13292.

¹³³ Blackfriars residents, who lacked the ready-made authority provided in St Martin's by a powerful corporate overseer, never developed extraparochial structures of government, which may help to explain their more frequent recourse to external authorities.

Lordshipp's favorable assistance and direction praye may be reformed'.¹³⁴ Cecil passed the petition on to two royal justices for their opinions on the best course of action. Strype, as has been mentioned, took the petition as evidence of the continued unruliness of St Martin's.¹³⁵ But no part of the petition suggests that St Martin's was more prone to disorder than other parts of the metropolis, or even neighbouring parts of the City. Their complaints instead suggest that they lacked the administrative structures that were taken for granted in neighbouring jurisdictions. Their final request—that Cecil might 'graunt to your supplicants such good ordynaunces for redress of the said disorders and sufficient authoritye for the execucion of the same for the good governaunce of the said Lybertye'—suggests that they felt they lacked the authority to implement new administrative structures unilaterally.¹³⁶

The 1593 petition expressed three of the residents' concerns: firstly, they objected to the City's oblique attempts to assert authority within the liberty. A 1592 statute had authorised the lord mayor and his officers to 'serche and viewe of all wares of shoe-makers and cordwayners within the Citie of London and three miles of the same'.¹³⁷ St Martin's residents complained that the City's officers 'enter into this liberty at their leisure, and there searche and viewe their wares, never callinge the officer of the Libertye or making him pryvie thereunto, and being reprovved for same, sayeth he will come and searche there without calling the officer'.¹³⁸ Cecil's advisors concluded that although the City's officers had the right to search for illicit wares alone, 'we thinke it convenient that the Lord's [i.e. Cecil's] officer shulde be with them' since goods found there were forfeited to the liberty, not to the City or to the Cordwainers' Company. This, of course, removed any immediate financial incentive for the City or the company to pursue searches there, since illicit handicrafts seized elsewhere in the metropolis continued to go to the use of the City.

The second and third complaints were more directly concerned with the internal government of St Martin's. In response to the news that a few inhabitants of the liberty 'refuse to watche or warde upon occasion, or to contribute to such taxations and payments as for her Majesty's service and the good of the common wealth is sett or imposed upon them,' Cecil was advised that 'for all matters which concerne the service of the Queene, the inhabitants are compellable to perform the same, but for other

¹³⁴ BL Lansd 74, no 32.

¹³⁵ Strype, *Survey*, iii.112.

¹³⁶ BL Lansd 74, no 32.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*; the act was 35 Eliz, caps. 8-10.

¹³⁸ BL Lansd 74, no 32.

matters they must make some bylaws and orders among themselves to bynde themselves to the performance thereof.¹³⁹ The complaint no doubt indicated the failure of locally-established regulations to force the participation of recalcitrant neighbours; whether Cecil-sanctioned bylaws would prove more effective is open to question, especially in the absence of any regularised system of presentation in the liberty. Owen and Lewis's response to the third part of the petition addresses this more general problem as well: the petitioners complained that in times of plague some residents of infected houses would not 'keepe shutt their doores and windowes, or keepe themselves in their houses, but commonly make fourthe, and the red crosse set on their doores at night is stricken out by morninge...and some of them repayre to the courte with their wares, a thing most dangerous for her Majestie and the nobilitye, most nedefull of presente reformation.'¹⁴⁰ This was a problem throughout the metropolis.¹⁴¹ Cecil concluded that 'such disordered persons may be punished by amprysenment', but this decision led them to a further problem:

there is noe preson in the said Libertye to comytt suche as shal be troublesome and offensive, but the gate-house [in Westminster] is the place whither they have accustomed to carye suche as are comytted, being in another shire and out of the libertye, they therefore commonly bring acion againste suche as comytt them, and soe put them to greate trouble and losse.¹⁴²

It is hardly surprising then, that 'divers honest men, and of the best sorte within the lybertye, humbly desire to have a prison for punition of offenders and executor of justice established within the precincte of the liberty.'¹⁴³ The judges suggested that Cecil 'send comaundment by letter unto the constable and heaboroughe of the place for such purpose, and to asseesse the inhabitants of the Lybertye in reasonable sorte to contribute to the charge thereof.'¹⁴⁴ The need for a prison—and for more regular access to justices of the peace—underpinned problems with those who refused to watch and ward as well as with the sick refusing to obey orders during times of plague. Unfortunately, no effort was made to establish either a court house or a prison in St Martin's until the 1610s.

The solutions offered to the 1593 petition may not have satisfied the residents of St Martin le Grand, either because they seemed impractical or because they did not grant the degree of authority necessary to implement them fully. They did little to accentuate

¹³⁹ BL Lansd 74, no 32.

¹⁴⁰ BL Lansd 74, no 32.

¹⁴¹ Slack, *Impact of Plague*, pp. 217-9.

¹⁴² BL Lansd 74, no 32.

¹⁴³ BL Lansd 74, no 32.

¹⁴⁴ BL Lansd 74, no 32.

the inhabitants' feelings of independence. In March 1599 they found themselves in the difficult position of looking to the City for advice. William Cecil had died the previous year, and his son and successor as steward may not have taken an immediate interest in the liberty. For whatever reason, when the residents complained that four stalls had been set up by residents of the City within St Martin's lane 'do straighten the street and ...keepe the cartes from coming neare theire shoppes', Robert Cecil referred the dispute to the City's Court of Aldermen. Considering the long-standing efforts of abbey and residents alike to exclude the City from the liberty, it is rather surprising that they agreed to seek aldermanic arbitration. Acquiesce they did, however, agreeing that if the City saw to the removal of its residents' stalls, they would remove those set up by residents of the liberty themselves.¹⁴⁵

While the abbey actively fought moves by residents of Westminster to develop a secular system of government, it was happy to see those living in St Martin's take on more responsibility in the administration of the liberty. The difference between the two was of kind rather than degree. While the townspeople of Westminster attempted (but failed) to establish a government independent of abbey influence, those in St Martin's had more humble aspirations. The development of a system of local administration in St Martin's was therefore never seen as a threat to the abbey's franchises there. Around 1615, the dean and chapter set out new guidelines designed to improve the system of government in St Martin's.¹⁴⁶ Observing that the liberty had 'of late grown into much disorder', the abbey laid out two new policies 'for the better ordering of the same'.¹⁴⁷ The first problem was geographical: 'the cheifest cause thereof to be the want of a courte house where the ministers of Justice within that libertie may meete for the government of the Inhabitanes & of a prison for the punishment of offenders within the same'. This was a concern that had been raised in the 1593 petition to William Cecil, but in this instance the dean asked Mr Daniell Hille, 'in his love to the libertie beinge the place where he was borne havinge the permanent interest of a messuage fitt to be converted to those uses hathe granted his interest therein to divers of the inhabitants to be employed for those purposes.' A secondary problem was operational: the dean and chapter were 'informed by divers of the best sort of the libertie that if the constableshippe were a Triannall office & not perpetuall as nowe it is, it would be more easily drawe the

¹⁴⁵ CLRO Rep 24, fo 386v.

¹⁴⁶ GL MS 50, fo 4v.

¹⁴⁷ WAM MS 13307.

Inhabitantes to conformity in government.’ Two practical difficulties had to be overcome before the collegiate church could modify the constabulary. Morgan Price, the constable at the time, held his post for life. At the dean’s request Price ‘was content to resign the same constableness upon payment of £30 to him by the libertie which he paid for the same’. Some method then had to be devised for the regular triennial selection of a constable. In setting forth the process by which constables were to be named, the memorandum provides an invaluable glimpse into the administrative workings of the liberty.

The new process was set up ‘for the future good of the said libertie’ through the ‘mediacion of Mr Doctor Graunt,’ a canon of the abbey and parson of St Leonard’s Foster Lane (‘wherein the greatest part of the libertie standeth’).¹⁴⁸ Graunt linked the residents of St Martin’s to the dean and chapter who ultimately governed them. Under the process Graunt established, the precinct’s court leet was given responsibility for the triennial election of constables. The court leet met each year on 21 December, like its counterparts elsewhere in England and wardmotes of the City.¹⁴⁹ From the court leet, at which all householders were welcome, two smaller bodies were formed. The first was the jury, ‘sworne & charged to enquire of the midemenors within the said libertie.’ Its size is not specified, but two of its members were nominated annually by the dean (or his steward). The other group is not given a name, but its thirteen members were chosen by a representative of the dean from among the householders present at every third court leet. The unnamed group was responsible for choosing the precinct’s two headboroughs, one of whom would serve as constable. In the memorandum, the ‘deane and chapter doe hereby promise’ that they ‘will from tyme to tyme hereafter be pleased to graunte the same office by patent at their next Chapter then to be holden to suche person soe to be elected’.¹⁵⁰ Residents of the liberty therefore had a voice in the selection of their constable, even if it continued to be closely supervised by the abbey.

Prior to this change in policy, the constabulary had been granted by the dean and chapter directly, with no formal input from residents of St Martin’s. Earlier constables had had little direct involvement in the liberty, relying on local deputies to perform the duties of office. There are hints that long before the policy change, the dean and chapter had begun to think the arrangement was less than ideal. Morgan Price, the last constable named for life, had been preceded in the office by a man called Thomas Billett, who was

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ To the best of my knowledge, the court leet in St Martin’s has hitherto been an unknown entity.

¹⁵⁰ WAM MS 13307.

named constable of St Martin's in May 1589.¹⁵¹ Price was Billett's third deputy in the precinct from 1598, and when Billett died two years later, Price was elevated to the constabulary. His grant of office specifically praised him as an inhabitant of the liberty.¹⁵² Throughout the late sixteenth century, the offices of escheator, coroner and clerk of the market in St Martin's had been united with those of Westminster under the high steward of Westminster. The high stewardship, of course, continued to be filled with eminent men. Robert Carr, royal favourite and later earl of Somerset, succeeded Robert Cecil after the latter's death in 1612. Carr was himself succeeded by George Villiers in 1618. Neither Carr nor Villiers shared the Cecils' personal interest in Westminster and largely abandoned their predecessors' habit of tapping local residents to participate in the higher levels of manorial administration.¹⁵³ It is hardly surprising, then, that the specifically local administration of St Martin's was expanded and formalised around the same time. When Thomas Harris was named constable of St Martin's in May 1618, he also became escheator, coroner and clerk of the markets for the precinct.¹⁵⁴ Henceforward, those offices in St Martin's were permanently separated from those for Westminster. Whether this represented any real change in the methods by which the liberty was governed.

A contemporary manuscript held by the Guildhall Library suggests that the new method of selecting triennial constables occurred within the context of a more general formalisation of government in St Martin's—a formalisation that was embraced by at least the principal inhabitants of the liberty. In the 'first quest which sate there after the sayd court howse was purchased' in 1615, the members of the inquest gave a substantial set of 'necessaries...to remayne for ever to the use of the Liberty', including the inquest book itself, two carpets 'of stripet stuff being seven yards long,' twelve cushions, wainscoted tables 'with drawers at each end,' and six wainscoted stools.¹⁵⁵ The gifts represented a substantial outlay on the part of the fourteen inquestmen, costing £6/5/6d altogether. The following year the inquest undertook the improvement of their new courthouse at a further cost of £4/18s.¹⁵⁶ The inquest book does not include minutes of the group's business, but the inquestmen were careful to set down their names and offices. While it is therefore of limited use in understanding the way St Martin's local administration functioned, it does indicate the increasing local identity of the liberty

¹⁵¹ WAM MS 13223.

¹⁵² WAM MSS 13223, 13200.

¹⁵³ J M Merritt, "'Under the shadowe of the church?'" The abbey and the town of Westminster, 1530-1640', in *Westminster Abbey Reformed 1540-1640*, eds C S Knighton and R Mortimer, (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 159-61.

¹⁵⁴ WAM MS 13235.

¹⁵⁵ GL MS 50, year 1615.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, year 1616.

during the 1610s. Generated internally, it proceeded with the approval of the dean and chapter.

Aliens

St Martin's had long been known for its stranger population. Since the fifteenth century aliens had made their homes in the liberty, which offered them relative safety from the xenophobia that periodically flared in London. Immigrants continued to congregate in St Martin's after the dissolution. Andrew Pettegree estimates that strangers made up half the population of St Martin's in the late sixteenth century.¹⁵⁷ John Stow, for his part, reported that the houses there were 'highly prized, letten to straungers borne, and other such, as there claymed benefite of priviledges graunted to the Canons, serving God day and night...which may hardly be wrested to artificers, buyers and sellars.'¹⁵⁸ This prevalence of immigrants has long been seen as contributing to instability in the liberty. On close inspection, however, this community—so often and so easily maligned—was remarkably stable. With few exceptions, the aliens resident in St Martin's appear to have deliberately avoided abusing the franchises attached to the precinct. All available evidence suggests that they were remarkably well-integrated into the social and economic life of the capital.

Goldsmiths and cordwainers were particularly prominent among the immigrants who settled in St Martin's. Both groups were well-established in the liberty—dating from the fifteenth century—and both were prominent within their trades. We have already seen that the Cordwainers' Company was concerned about St Martin's cordwainers in the 1580s and 90s, when about a tenth of the liberty's alien householders pursued the trade.¹⁵⁹ Goldsmiths were even more prominent.¹⁶⁰ The hall of the Goldsmiths' Company stood on Foster Lane opposite St Martin's. In 1448 the dean of St Martin's allowed the company to view the shops of the liberty's resident goldsmiths, on condition that it set no precedent for further searches.¹⁶¹ The company was also one of the most welcoming to stranger craftsmen in Elizabethan London.¹⁶² Despite the institutional tolerance of

¹⁵⁷ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 18.

¹⁵⁸ Stow, *Survey*, i.308-9.

¹⁵⁹ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.347-53.

¹⁶⁰ See pp. 62-3, above.

¹⁶¹ GL MS 86, fo. 58.

¹⁶² Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 226.

immigrant goldsmiths, enough social pressure remained to dissuade them from opening shops in Goldsmiths' Row. Some aliens chose to pursue their trade as subcontracted labourers for prominent English goldsmiths, but others joined the immigrant goldsmith community in St Martin's.¹⁶³ The community there thrived into the mid-seventeenth century, despite the increasing antagonism of native goldsmiths.¹⁶⁴

In the years after the Elizabethan religious settlement, continental Protestants poured into England at an unprecedented rate. New immigrants who settled in areas with no historic alien community clung tenaciously to the metropolitan stranger churches. Those who made their way to St Martin le Grand, however, found a ready-made group of non-English neighbours, colleagues and customers. The alien community at St Martin's predated the stranger churches by decades. Before their establishment aliens in St Martin's had worshipped alongside their English neighbours in the local parishes; even after 1560 a plurality of the strangers there, old and new alike, continued to claim membership in the English church. Among centres of alien settlement in 1568, St Martin's was behind only St Katherine by the Tower in terms of English church membership:

6.1 English Church Membership among Aliens in Select Areas of London, 1568¹⁶⁵

Place	Aliens	English Ch. Members	Percentage
Aldgate Ward	259	19	7.3%
Bishopsgate Ward	233	2	0.9%
Blackfriars	230	29	12.6%
Langborne Ward	256	92	35.9%
Minories	70	8	11.4%
St Katherine's	425	254	59.8%
St Martin's	273	130	47.6%
Tower Ward	449	64	14.3%

Andrew Pettegree has argued that the stranger churches helped newcomers adapt and did not permanently sever aliens from English society.¹⁶⁶ His own account of the 1560s immigrant community, however, indicates that those who settled in areas like St Martin's—with long-standing immigrant communities and weaker links to the

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 238-40; In 1583, nine of the sixty-five alien householders included in the return of strangers were listed as goldsmiths; eight of them were also members of the Goldsmiths' Company. *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.347-53.

¹⁶⁴ Luu, *Immigrants*, pp. 249-50; TNA SP 16/290/74.

¹⁶⁵ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, iii.330-431. Compare this to figures 4.1 and 4.2, p. 147, above. Church membership data is not available for City wards from 1583, so this table compares areas within the City with liberties in 1568.

¹⁶⁶ A Pettegree, "'Thirty Years on': Progress Towards the Integration Amongst the Immigrant Population of Elizabethan London.' in J Chartres and D Hey (eds), *English Rural Society, 1500-1800: Essays in Honour of Joan Thirsk* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 311.

metropolitan stranger churches—were, on average, wealthier and better-assimilated than those elsewhere in the metropolis.¹⁶⁷

The integration of St Martin's aliens into the English community of London took other forms, as well. A 1561 petition to the Privy Council claims that most of the long-term aliens resident in the liberty had married English women.¹⁶⁸ Intermarriage seems to have declined in the later sixteenth century, but St Martins never lost its cadre of long-term alien residents. A remarkable number of them had been settled there for two decades or more.

Even among the immigrants settled in St Martin's for shorter periods, there are signs that they were interested in assimilating into the general population of the metropolis. Aliens in England endured significant legal disabilities regardless of where they lived. Beginning in 1483 a series of statutes were enacted to restrict the conditions under which aliens could legally pursue trades; they were forbidden from employing other aliens as servants or apprentices, from keeping shops that opened onto the street or from selling their wares retail, and older restrictions on their ability to own or inherit property were reiterated. While some of the statutes offered exemptions for aliens living in St Martin le Grand, they were not useful to most immigrants.¹⁶⁹ Parliament did, however, establish a system through which aliens could mitigate their disadvantages by purchasing a patent of denization from the Crown. A high level of denization, however, does not necessarily indicate the willingness of the aliens in St Martin's to integrate themselves into the London economy. There were practical benefits to securing a patent, and aliens who lived in England before Elizabeth's accession faced more rampant xenophobia and the more acute suspicions of the royal government. Henry VIII demanded the denization or emigration of his enemies' subjects. In 1544 nearly three thousand new patents of denization were issued, most of them to residents of the metropolis, but this 'owed more to security considerations than any strong economic motive on the part of the strangers involved.'¹⁷⁰

According to a May 1583 survey of London strangers, the proportion of strangers holding patents of denization was higher in the liberties and the suburbs than

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 302.

¹⁶⁸ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, i.288.

¹⁶⁹ See 1 Ric III, c. 9. 14/15 Hen VIII, c. 2 §XI limited non-English artisans throughout the realm to no more than two stranger journeymen, exempting only 'the Inhabitants, Strangers that now be, or hereafter shall be, in the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge, or within the Sanctuary of St Martins le Grand within the said City of London.' Seven years later, however, 21 Hen VIII, c. 16 §IX restricted non-English artisans in the previously exempt places to ten alien servants or apprentices.

¹⁷⁰ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 15.

among those living within the City.¹⁷¹ Among the Lansdowne Manuscripts is a table with more detailed results of a similar survey ten years later, in May 1593. While the number of strangers found in St Martin's at the time is notable, it is dwarfed by the populations in the nearby liberty of the Blackfriars (and in the City's wards of Langborne, Aldgate and Bishopsgate). More interesting, however, is the relative likelihood of strangers in St Martin le Grand to have gone to the trouble and expense of securing patents of denization. At seventy-six percent of stranger householders, it was the highest in the metropolis.

6.2 The Percentage of Stranger Householders Holding Patents of Denization, May 1593¹⁷²

Place	Denizens	Strangers	Percentage	Stranger Householders	Percentage
St Martin le Grand	45	286	15.7%	59	76.3%
Farringdon Ward Within and Blackfriars	42	508	8.3%	138	30.4%
Aldgate Ward	20	504	4%	196	10.2%
Bishopsgate Ward	n/a	577	n/a	269	n/a
Langborne Ward	20	370	5.4%	137	14.6%
Tower Ward	19	330	5.8%	135	14.1%

Although the level of denization in St Martin's may seem suspiciously high, it is consistent with other data from the precinct during the period. A return from April 1583 lists 55 of 67 stranger householders in the precinct as denizens (82.1%), and in October 1585, 51 of the 62 stranger householders (or 82.3%) were listed as denizens. In the latter case, the dates of the relevant patents of denization are included in the return.¹⁷³ It seems unlikely that selective reporting could achieve such consistency, especially since both of the returns from the 1580s also include less palatable information about the economic and religious activities of some residents there. The proportion of denizens in St Martin's is unique among the centres of stranger population. Despite the legal protections offered to its residents, immigrants in St Martin's were eager to participate legitimately in the metropolitan economy.

In addition to the restrictions that affected immigrants throughout England, those who settled in London faced further challenges in pursuing their trades. The livery companies were responsible for the regulation of their trades in both the City and its suburbs, though the degree of control they exercised outside the City seems to have varied according to the initiative of a company's leaders.¹⁷⁴ Under Henrician statutes, immigrants settled within two miles of the City were 'subject to company jurisdiction,

¹⁷¹ See figure 2.2, p. 58, above.

¹⁷² BL Lansd 74, no 31.

¹⁷³ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.347-53, 390-5.

¹⁷⁴ See Ward, *Metropolitan Communities*, pp. 86-92.

which they were to acknowledge in regular searches and through payment of quarterage.¹⁷⁵ As with the enforcement of trade regulations in the suburbs, the collection of quarterage from stranger craftsmen was more conscientiously pursued by some livery companies than by others. The April 1583 return of strangers suggests that quarterage was collected only from denizens: not surprising, since ‘mere aliens’ were not technically permitted to pursue a trade. Of the sixty-seven stranger householders reported in St Martin’s in 1583, fifty-five were denizens. Forty-five of them are recorded as paying tribute to a variety of City livery companies, most commonly the Merchant Tailors (13), the Goldsmiths (9) and the Cordwainers (7).¹⁷⁶

We should be cautious in assuming that the high level of quarterage participation was solely based on the eagerness of the strangers themselves. It may indicate that the companies involved had pushed for compliance in the precinct, which was known to house large numbers of strangers. This, however, does not necessarily imply hostility on the part of the companies. Andrew Pettegree suggests that the active participation of strangers in the Weavers’ Company ‘indicated a desire to harness the skills of the foreigners by accommodating them within the Company’; one-sixth of the alien weavers who joined the company resided in St Martin’s.¹⁷⁷ A similar interest may have motivated other companies to court stranger artisans, as well, especially where they might bring new skills and techniques to their London counterparts. John Strype wrote that among the ‘French, Germans, Dutch, and Scots’, and among the cordwainers, button-makers, ‘goldsmiths, purse-makers, linen-drapers, some stationers’ and merchants of St Martin’s lived ‘two silk-twisters, who I suppose were the first silk-throwers in London, and brought the trade into England.’¹⁷⁸ Cooperation with livery companies struck a balance between the desire of aliens to participate fully in the economic life of the metropolis on the one hand and the interests of the companies themselves on the other. Participation was high across the trades practiced by St Martin’s aliens, an unlikely coincidence if the initiative for payment of quarterage came from the companies alone.

The large and stable stranger population within St Martin’s gave new immigrants who settled in the liberty access to a support network that existed outside the stranger churches. The presence of this network no doubt contributed to the higher rate of membership to the English parishes in St Martin’s than was the case elsewhere in the

¹⁷⁵ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 134.

¹⁷⁶ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.347-53.

¹⁷⁷ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, pp. 97-8.

¹⁷⁸ Strype, *Survey*, iii.111-2.

metropolis. Making up around half of the population of the precinct, however, strangers are conspicuously absent from the lists of local officers drawn up from 1620 onwards. In this, St Martin's differed markedly from St Katherine's, where strangers took an active role in local administrative structures.¹⁷⁹

Conclusions

Despite its reputation as sanctuary, haven for criminals, foreign settlement, etc., in the century following the English Reformation St Martin's was not the dark, mysterious, detached place of its traditional reputation. It had its problems, to be sure—its back alleys and passages were no less dirty or poor than those of the surrounding City. But a community thrived in the liberty as well. That community was not only familiar and accessible to other early modern Londoners, it was also integrated within the religious, administrative and economic networks of the metropolis.

No part of London was immune from the stresses of the early modern period. The socioeconomic and demographic changes that characterised the period posed significant challenges to contemporary governors. Despite these challenges and its bad reputation, St Martin's remained remarkably stable in the century after 1540, with its patchwork of local and abbey-based government. Abandoning earlier claims to sanctuary in the first years of the sixteenth century, St Martin's changed rapidly. Even the immigrant population, which caused so much friction in 1517 was among the most stable and cooperative in the metropolis by the middle of Elizabeth's reign. Problems were bound to occur, but they never noticeably destabilised the precinct or nearby parts of the City. Nor was St Martin's—so notorious in the fifteenth century—ever seen as a threat to metropolitan order by civic or royal officials of the sixteenth or seventeenth.

¹⁷⁹ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 109; GL MSS 50, 9680.