

University of Oxford

**The City of London and the Problem
of the Liberties, c1540 – c1640**

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Preface

In the thesis that follows, dates have been left in Old Style, with the year beginning on 25 March. For dates between 1 January and 24 March, double years (e.g. 1546/7) are given to avoid confusion. In quotes from original sources, spelling has been maintained, except where u/v and i/j have been transposed to their modern uses. Abbreviations have been silently expanded and punctuation modernised.

Accurate terminology is exceedingly important when discussing the liberties. For an explanation of the term *liberty* itself, see p. 14 below. The term *precinct*, which referred to one of the administrative units of the City of London, was also used in a more general way by contemporaries, to refer to any defined area (such as a liberty). The difference should be clear contextually. While not all of London's religious foundations were monasteries, the term *post-monastic* has here been used as a catch-all for the dispossessed property of those foundations. Following modern convention, *City* is used as shorthand for the City of London. Although used sparingly, *city* should be taken to refer to the urbanised area more generally.

The intellectual debts I have rung up in the process of producing this thesis are far too numerous and extensive to ever be repaid. First and foremost, I owe thanks to Dr Ian Archer, without whose supervision and friendship I could never have formulated (let alone executed) this study. His help and guidance have made me into an historian, largely in spite of myself. Similar thanks are due to Prof. Tommaso Astarita, who drew me into history in the first instance and has proved tenaciously supportive ever since. Particular gratitude is also due to the Early Modern Britain seminar at Oxford and the Medieval and Tudor London seminar at the Institute of Historical Research, at which earlier versions of parts of this thesis were presented. Their comments and questions provided valuable perspective on the broader historical place of the liberties. Dr Toby Barnard provided welcome guidance on merging distinct case studies into a coherent whole; I can only hope that I have done his advice justice.

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List of Abbreviations

Add.	Additional Manuscripts
APC	Dasent, John R (ed), <i>Acts of the Privy Council</i> (46 vols, London, 1890-1964).
BL	British Library, London
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series.</i>
Folger	Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC
GL	Guildhall Library, London
Harl	Harleian Manuscripts, British Library
JCC	Journals of the Common Council (CLRO)
Lansd	Lansdowne Manuscripts, British Library
Let Bk	Letter Books of the City of London
LM	Loseley Manuscripts, (SHC or Folger)
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives, London
LPFD	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII: Preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and Elsewhere</i>
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004).
Rem	Remembrancia of the City of London (CLRO)
Rep	Repertories of the Court of Aldermen (CLRO)
SHC	Surrey History Centre, Guildford
TNA	The National Archives (formerly the Public Record Office), Kew
<i>Valor</i>	<i>Valor ecclesiasticus temp. Hen. VIII auctoritate regia institutus</i> (6 vols, London, 1810-34).
VCH	<i>The Victoria History of the Counties of England: London</i> , Page, William (ed), (Reprint, London, 1974).
WAM	Westminster Abbey Muniments, London
WAC	Westminster Archive Centre, London

Chapter 1. Introduction

In a 1601 speech to the House of Commons, Stephen Soame, MP for the City of London, spoke in support of a bill that would have extended the City's jurisdiction into the neighbouring liberty of St Katherine by the Tower. The privileges enjoyed by the liberties, he argued, 'are the very sincke of sinne, the nurserye of nawghtie and lewd places, the harbors of thieves, roagues and beggars, and maynteyners of ydle persons, ffor when our shoppes and howses be robbed, thether they ffly ffor releife and sanctuarie, and we cannot helpe our selves.'¹ The prorogation of Parliament a few days later killed his bill, but Soame's characterisation of St Katherine's proved more durable. Such descriptions of the liberties, made by Soame and other contemporaries, have led many modern scholars to assume that the liberties posed a constant threat to metropolitan order. There is, however, reason to believe that the liberties were more complex and less purely problematic than their general historiographical portrayal would suggest.

In 1530 two dozen religious foundations dotted the landscape of the capital. The sixteen religious houses within or immediately adjacent to the City of London² were joined by eight others in Spitalfields, Clerkenwell, Westminster and Southwark.³ By Henry VIII's death in 1546/7, however, London's religious foundations had all but disappeared. The Abbey of St Peter became the cathedral of the short-lived diocese of Westminster, and two hospitals (St Mary Bethlehem and St Katherine by the Tower) limped along with curtailed endowments, but with these few exceptions the long-prominent religious foundations of the capital were gone. The dissolution was not, of course, unique to London. Across England, the Crown's seizure of land previously held by religious orders had profound economic, social and political effects.⁴ London at the time was still in the first decades of its early modern population boom, but it was already well-established as the leading city in England. Its concentration of people, of trade and of wealth was unrivalled by provincial cities, as was the prominence of its abbeys,

¹ *Proceedings in the Parliaments of Elizabeth I*, ed T E Hartley, 3 vols, (Leicester, 1981-5), iii.480.

² Figure 1.1 (p. 22, below) shows those places within and adjacent to the City that were exempt from its authority in 1530. Sixteen of the nineteen areas shown on the map were religious precincts while three (the Tower, the Temple and Bridewell Palace) were secular.

³ St Mary Spital, St Mary Elsing Spital, St Helen Bishopsgate, St Mary Clerkenwell, St John of Jerusalem, St Peter Westminster, St Mary Overies and St Thomas.

⁴ See P A Cunich, 'The Administration and Alienation of Ex-Monastic Lands by the Crown, 1536-1547' (Cambridge Univ PhD thesis, 1990); N S Rushton and W Sigle-Rushton, 'Monastic Poor Relief in Sixteenth-Century England', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 32:2 (2001), pp. 193-216; N S Rushton, 'Monastic Charitable Provision in Tudor England: Quantifying and Qualifying Poor Relief in the Early Sixteenth Century', *Continuity and Change*, 16:1 (2001), pp. 9-44.

monasteries, priories, friaries, nunneries, hospitals, and schools. The loss of these religious foundations was both a challenge and an opportunity for the ancient City of London and its rapidly expanding suburbs.

Norman Brett-James identifies the closure of religious foundations as the most important difference between the medieval and the early modern city: 'London as Elizabeth knew it was little changed from the London of the Edwards and Henrys, with one important exception. The Reformation had banished the monks and friars from the streets and the religious houses had been either turned into palaces for the nobles or pulled down in order to allow streets of houses to be built on their sites.'⁵ The immediate repercussions of the dissolution were accentuated by the survival of the jurisdictional franchises enjoyed by many of the foundations. The areas that claimed these franchises, known as liberties, were literally exceptional places. As Church property they had enjoyed substantial independence from secular authority. When their lands were seized by Henry, the privileges were transferred to the Crown.⁶ Over the following two decades, the distribution of former monastic lands brought privileges into private hands that might otherwise have been absorbed into the jurisdictions of the City or the surrounding counties of Middlesex and Surrey. It should not be imagined that the sites of London's religious houses invariably became liberties in the years after the Reformation. Only ten of the capital's post-monastic sites claimed these residual exemptions. Within the walls there were Blackfriars, St Martin le Grand and Holy Trinity Aldgate. Outside the walls were the two St Bartholomews, Charterhouse, St Mary Clerkenwell, St John of Jerusalem, St Katherine's, the Minories, and St Mary Graces. A twelfth post-Monastic site, the Whitefriars, claimed some exemptions later (in the 1570s and again after the Restoration).

The factors that affected claims to continued exemption deserve further scholarly attention. Such claims were most clearly related to the degree to which the freehold of a precinct was broken up during the process of alienation from the Crown. Where a single person received all or most of a former religious site, the grant was likely to include the residual franchises. This was certainly the case in Blackfriars, the Minories and Holy Trinity Aldgate. St Martin le Grand and St Katherine by the Tower, which remained under the control of religious corporations, benefited from similarly explicit grants. When a precinct was distributed in a series of smaller freeholds, its franchises were more likely to remain with the Crown.⁷ We will also see that stable oversight was fundamental

⁵ N G Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London* (London, 1935), p. 15.

⁶ 31 Hen VIII c. 8; 32 Hen VIII, c. 20.

⁷ In, e.g., Whitefriars.

to the development of administrative structures within the liberties, as in the Minories under John Heydon, in Blackfriars under George More, in St Katherine's under Julius Caesar and in St Martin's under the stewardship of William Cecil.

Although most religious houses held ecclesiastical (in addition to secular) privileges, these proved less durable and therefore less disruptive than their secular franchises. Gareth Owen points out that the difference is not difficult to explain: 'In their opposition to absorption by the city government, the liberties enjoyed the sympathies of the crown. This they lacked in their confrontations with the ecclesiastical authorities.'⁸ It should also be noted that the statute which transferred the secular franchises of religious sites to the Crown did not cover their spiritual privileges. In the same session, however, Parliament enacted legislation that declared previously exempt religious houses should be subjected to the visitation of the ordinary of their local diocese.⁹

The exemptions the liberties enjoyed have attracted casual attention from a variety of scholars, but they have escaped systematic study on their own terms. Confined to passing mention in broader studies, they have been presented primarily as destabilising forces, as havens of debtors, criminals, religious dissidents, aliens engaged in unauthorised crafts and the marginalised players of the theatre. In her 1908 book, *Government Regulation of the Elizabethan Drama*, Virginia Gildersleeve warns her readers not to look to her for a comprehensive analysis of the liberties: 'no attempt at a complete elucidation of all such matters is necessary here; we need only a brief statement of the general situation in the municipality under Elizabeth and the early Stuarts, so far as this affects our immediate subject and so far as it can be definitely ascertained.'¹⁰ E Jeffries Davis raises a similar point in the notes to her 1924 essay on 'The Transformation of London', complaining that the liberties still 'need thorough investigation' since 'each precinct has hitherto been considered in isolation, by writers whose historical equipment was technically inadequate, and who were not concerned with the history of London as a whole.'¹¹ Gareth Owen prefaces his 1965 study of the Minories with a similar warning: 'Although the liberties of post-Reformation London still await systematic investigation, students of its secular history have long been familiar with the broad political issues arising from the existence of a ring or privileged places encircling the city and claiming

⁸ H G Owen, 'The Liberty of the Minories: A Study in Elizabethan Religious Radicalism', *East London Papers*, 8 (1965), p. 82.

⁹ 31 Hen VIII c.13, §18.

¹⁰ V C Gildersleeve, *Government Regulation of the Elizabethan Drama* (Westport, CT, 1975), p. 137.

¹¹ E J Davis, 'The Transformation of London', in R W Seton-Watson (ed), *Tudor Studies Presented to A F Pollard* (London, 1924), p. 312.

immunity from its government.¹² These pleas for a systematic study of London's post-monastic liberties remain nearly as current today as when they were first made. Piecemeal efforts to explain the history of the liberties have failed to advance our understanding of these areas or their place in the early modern metropolis. In the absence of reliable information about the liberties generally, even the most conscientious historians struggle to put individual incidents in context. In their invaluable archaeological study of the site of Holy Trinity Aldgate, John Schofield and Richard Lea claim that its rapid change during the second half of the sixteenth century, 'from noble mansion to something with elements of both an industrial zone and a district favoured by foreign immigrants, is in significant contrast to the fortunes of other former religious precincts elsewhere in the City of London, and especially those on the west side, toward Westminster.'¹³ As we shall see, however, the levelling-down of the social status of residents was a common feature of London's post-monastic liberties, and the occupational and residential shifts that Schofield and Lea identify in the Holy Trinity precinct are similar to those in Blackfriars, St Martin le Grand and Whitefriars, all in the western part of the City.

To begin contextualising the liberties, it is necessary to consider them not only in a metropolitan but also in a national context. Our conception of the state leaves little room for its sharing authority with other institutions; Michael Braddick has suggested that the modern state is defined essentially by its 'centralised differentiated institutions enjoying a monopoly on the means of legitimate violence.'¹⁴ The establishment of that monopoly was the work of centuries. Tim Thornton argues that the modernisation of the English royal government brought it into direct conflict with territorially-defined parts of the British Isles that were divided from England ethnically, culturally, or jurisdictionally.¹⁵ In 1485, the counties palatine and the Marcher lordships of Wales remained beyond the pale of the king's justice, while privileges claimed by the Church from time immemorial were, in a sense, still sacred. Under the early Tudor kings the Crown took important steps to undermine the independence of these anomalies. In practice, the supremacy of the monarchy remained far from absolute; contemporary developments in governance consolidated the power of the monarch and gave rise to an increasingly formal

¹² Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 81.

¹³ J Schofield and R Lea, *Holy Trinity Priory, Aldgate, City of London: An Archaeological Reconstruction and History* (London, 2005), p. 181.

¹⁴ M J Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550-1700* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 14.

¹⁵ T Thornton, 'Nationhood at the Margin: Identity, Regionality and the English Crown in the Seventeenth Century', in L Scales and O Zimmer (eds), *Power and the Nation in European History* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 232. In contrast, Susan Reynolds has argued that medieval rulers and communities were 'remarkably tolerant' of such anomalies. S Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1997).

bureaucratic system of administration. Thus the power of the king as an individual decreased even as that of the monarchy (and, more specifically, the king-in-Parliament) expanded.¹⁶

Under Henry VIII the Church was also brought under royal control. Parliament narrowed the jurisdictional scope of ecclesiastical courts, defined the limits of sanctuary and put strict limits on benefit of clergy.¹⁷ Several historians have suggested that the erosion of these jurisdictional anomalies signified a substantial step in the development of the state. At first glance, the survival of the liberties may seem to indicate a failure in the process of state formation, especially if one accepts the autonomy not infrequently attributed to them.¹⁸ We should remember that even the most ancient franchises enjoyed by the liberties passed through the Crown after the dissolution and were returned to the liberties firmly rooted in royal authority.¹⁹ As late as the fifteenth century, heads of religious houses had successfully rebuffed royal demands, but there is no evidence that any post-monastic liberty attempted to do so, let alone succeeded. The early Tudor kings made notable headway in establishing the fundamental authority of the Crown in England and Wales, but it is important to recognise that the process of state formation was neither smooth nor uniform. The development of the modern state was halting, illogical and messy.²⁰ The liberties are but one reminder that the process of jurisdictional

¹⁶ Professor Elton contends that during the reign of Henry VIII, 'there was created a revised machinery of government whose principle was bureaucratic organization in the place of personal control of the king, and national management rather than management of the king's estate.' G R Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 4. Regardless of whether one agrees with Elton's thesis that the decade after 1530 was especially pivotal in this development, *The Tudor Revolution* remains a seminal work in the study of English state formation. See also *Revolution Reassessed: Revisions in the History of Tudor Government and Administration*, eds C Coleman and D Starkey, (Oxford, 1986), esp. pp 199-208. It is clear in any case that the monarchy, the 'state' and institutions that threatened its primacy all underwent dramatic changes under the early Tudors. T Thornton, 'Fifteenth-Century Durham and the Problem of Provincial Liberties in England and the Wider Territories of the Crown', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser, 11 (2001), pp. 83, 86, 90.

¹⁷ On ecclesiastical courts, see S Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, 1550-1640* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 176-80. On benefit of clergy, see K J Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State* (Cambridge, 2003), pp 45-8.

¹⁸ Edward Tomlinson put the case most forcefully by claiming that the Minories 'was practically a miniature kingdom of its own'. E M Tomlinson, *The History of the Minories* (London, 1907), pp. 165-6.

¹⁹ 32 Henry VIII, c. 20 stated that 'All and singular the same Liberties, Franchises, Privileges, and temporal Jurisdictions...shall be by Virtue of this present Act revived, and be really and actually in the King's Highness, his Heirs and Successors,' but added the qualification that the officers of the liberties 'shall be attendant and obedient to all other the King's Courts, as well as for all Executions and Returns of Writs, Warrants and Precepts, as for their personal Appearances and other Duties of their Offices'.

²⁰ S G Ellis, *Tudor Frontiers and Noble Power: The Making of British State* (Oxford, 1995); K J Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 12. Earlier scholars point to the counties palatine as evidence of the Tudors' success in consolidating the power of the monarchy (see W J Jones, 'Palatine Performance in the Seventeenth Century', in P Clark, A G R Smith and N Tyacke (eds), *The English Commonwealth 1547-1640: Essays in Politics and Society Presented to Joel Hurtsfield* (Leicester, 1979), p. 189), but more recent work by John Cooper has suggested that even there, the struggle for royal supremacy had begun before 1485 and would continue well into the seventeenth century. J P D Cooper, 'Differences

consolidation was complex and fraught with small battles over individual areas and rights. While they were integrated into the system of royal justice, for example, for decades their residents continued to resist contributing to Parliamentary taxation.

Sanctuary—one of the many jurisdictional anomalies attacked by the Tudors—must also be addressed in relation to the liberties. David Loades is not unique in arguing that the liberties were a subcategory of sanctuary. In his assessment, sanctuary ‘had two quite distinct points of origin. On the one hand was the sanctity of consecrated ground...On the other was the jurisdictional franchise or liberty, in which the king has waived his rights in favour of the franchise holder.’²¹ To be sure, sanctuary and the prescriptive franchises of the liberties (post-monastic or otherwise) were similar insofar as both were premodern forms of jurisdictional exemption. To present them as two parts of a single historical phenomenon, however, is unhelpful if not downright misleading, since it forces them into a modern conceptual framework that does not accurately represent the experience of the past. Sanctuary and prescriptive liberties had different origins, operated in distinct ways, had vastly different effects on those touched by their exemptions, and they met separate ends. In short, their pairing fails to convince.

To avoid confusion, I propose a stricter use of the term sanctuary, encompassing only the former of Loades’s definitions: those forms of jurisdictional exemption which were an outgrowth of the sanctity of consecrated ground, ‘in which neither the civil nor the criminal process could be executed’.²² Sanctuary in this stricter sense traditionally protected those suspected of certain crimes from prosecution for forty days.²³ It was claimed most famously at three London religious houses (St Martin le Grand and Westminster Abbey north of the river, and Paris Garden to the south), but it would traditionally have been available on any hallowed ground. Liberties, which fall under Loades’s second definition of sanctuary, held their franchises under prescription from the Crown. They differed from sanctuary in important ways. Tenure of a liberty

between English and Continental Governments in the Early 17th Century’, in J S Bromley and E H Kossmann (eds), *Britain and the Netherlands: Papers Delivered to the Oxford-Netherlands Historical Conference, 1959* (London, 1960); J P D Cooper, *Propaganda and the Tudor State: Political Culture in the West Country* (London, 2003).

²¹ D Loades, ‘The Sanctuary’, in C S Knightson and R Mortimer (eds), *Westminster Abbey Reformed 1540-1640* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 75.

²² *The Dictionary of English Law*, ed E W A Jowitt, (London, 1959), p. 1585.

²³ Debtors, for example, were long denied the right to sanctuary, but in its twilight became one of the few groups for whom the option remained. Persons accused of high treason, meanwhile, seem never to have enjoyed access to sanctuary. Its availability to other accused felons varied according to local custom until 1503, when Parliament began to regulate the institution by statute. For a good, brief overview of developments in the institution through the Tudor period, see Kesserling, *Mercy and Authority*, pp. 48-55 and I D Thornley, ‘The Destruction of Sanctuary’, in R W Seton-Watson (ed), *Tudor Studies Presented to A F Pollard* (London, 1924), pp. 182-207.

conferred specific rights and duties to the franchise-holder, and could exempt the liberty from normal forms of secular or ecclesiastical oversight. It was, in short, ‘public jurisdiction in private hands’.²⁴ As the source of the franchise, the king could in most cases suspend or transfer it to another beneficiary. The right of jurisdiction over liberties was not limited to forty days, but practical barriers did exist to a liberty’s ability to harbour criminals indefinitely. In London, for example, appeals to the Privy Council could and did authorise the City’s officers to pursue causes in the liberties. While some of the capital’s liberties also claimed the privileges of sanctuary,²⁵ the two concepts are not interchangeable.

Battles fought in provincial sees between civic and cathedral officials offer a closer parallel to London’s liberties than do early modern sanctuaries. More than anything, the stories of these conflicts (over the extent of the power of different corporate bodies to regulate) are reminders that jurisdiction was dynamic. All jurisdictional franchises—lay or ecclesiastic, urban or rural, in London or in smaller cities—evolved over time. Much has been written about the Cathedral city of Exeter, where Lorraine Attreed notes that as the civic government developed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, ‘urban officials’ sense of the physical nature of the city came to be in profound disagreement with the cathedral party’s notion.²⁶ Surveying almost three centuries of struggle between the two entities, Attreed concludes that the conflicts between cities and religious precincts were not inherently disruptive, either socially or politically. ‘Whatever resolution was found,’ she writes, ‘everyone recognized that it needed to defuse tensions already apparent and allow for the most peaceful coexistence possible.’²⁷ The cathedral’s dean and the mayor were both elite members of the same small community. While each might seek to maximise his own jurisdictional claims, the disputes between them did not occur in a vacuum. Disputes in one area certainly did not preclude cooperation on other matters, personal or professional, even during periods of acute tension. London was not so small a community, but the owners and residents of

²⁴ G B Adams, ‘Private Jurisdiction in England: A Theoretical Reconstruction’, *American Historical Review*, 23 (1918), p. 1599. Especially after the break from Rome claims of independence from royal authority by religious precincts, even by right of prescriptive grant, proved impracticable.

²⁵ Most famously St Martin le Grand, Paris Garden in Southwark, and Westminster Abbey.

²⁶ L C Attreed, ‘Arbitration and the Growth of Urban Liberties in Late Medieval England’, *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), p. 212. For more information on disputes between city and cathedral authorities in Exeter, see J A Youings, *Early Tudor Exeter: The Founders of the County of the City* (Exeter, 1974); W T MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540-1640: The Growth of an English Country Town*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA, 1975); and especially M E Curtis, *Some Disputes between the City and Cathedral Authorities of Exeter* (Manchester, 1932).

²⁷ Attreed, ‘Arbitration and the Growth of Urban Liberties’, p. 209.

the liberties were inextricably linked to people throughout the metropolis, a fact that has been largely overlooked.

As with any matter in which subtle differences have larger repercussions, the precise use of terminology is exceedingly important when discussing the liberties, which have long been ill-served in this regard. The term *liberty* simply indicates an area of land over which some person or entity had jurisdiction. So, for example, the Liberty of the Tower was under the jurisdiction of the Crown, and the Liberty of the Blackfriars was held (before the dissolution) by the Dominican Order. Allusions to ‘the City and Liberties of London,’ common in early modern documents, refer to that area under the jurisdiction of the Corporation of the City of London. It is not surprising that the ambiguity of the term has caused problems, since even primary documents use it in seemingly contradictory ways. When John Stow described various locations as being within or without the liberties he meant only those of the City.²⁸ On the other hand, royal proclamations restricting the consumption of meat during Lent, issued frequently during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, were directed ‘especially [to] the Citie of London, and the Liberties thereto adioyning’, and demanded action by both the officers of the City and of the ‘seuerall liberties and exempt places’ of the same.²⁹

Historians have had little trouble differentiating between references to the City’s liberties and to those liberties which happened to be in the City. Scholars from other disciplines—most notably literature and sociology—have been more liberal in their interpretations. Janette Dillon, a literary scholar, wonders whether the seemingly contradictory meanings of the word liberty represent ‘an ideological clash between two different conceptions of what it meant to be free.’³⁰ Others make more assertive claims. Steven Mullaney, another literary scholar, confuses the liberties with the extramural wards of the City. He writes that ‘From the walls of London out to the bars located up to a mile beyond them...stretched the marginal and ambivalent domain of London’s liberties’.³¹ The bars he speaks of—Temple Bar being the most famous—marked the limits of the extramural jurisdiction of the lord mayor and aldermen, and the area of which he speaks was governed no differently to the area within the walls. Beyond the

²⁸ J Stow, *A Survey of London, Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, ed C L Kingsford, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1908), i.77, inter alia.

²⁹ See, for example, England and Wales Privy Council, *Orders conceined and set downe by the Lords of her Maiesties Prinie Councell, by her Higbnesse speciall direction, to be put in execution for the restraint of killing and eating of flesh* (London, 1589).

³⁰ J Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 99.

³¹ S Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago, 1988), p. 21.

bars, perhaps, a more ambivalent domain *did* exist, but it was the densely populated Middlesex suburbs, not the demonised liberties. Sociologist John McMullan does little to make things better when he claims that ‘By the mid-sixteenth century, London was ringed by crowded deregulated districts, many of which possessed the character of medieval liberties.’³² In isolation, these musings may seem benign, but they are typical of substantial number scholarly works from recent decades.³³ For those who hope to understand the liberties’ place in early modern London, such careless use of terminology is more than a mild annoyance.

Neither have the liberties benefited particularly from the crisis-order dialectic that has developed among scholars of English urban history. On one side are those historians who, acknowledging contemporary divisions and challenges, identify an underlying stability in the early modern metropolis. This group—among which might be counted the likes of Valerie Pearl, Frank Foster, M J Power, Steve Rappaport and Ian Archer—points to the lack of major public uprisings and the continuity (and flexibility) of local governance as evidence of fundamental order.³⁴ On the other side are those historians who believe that early modern London, like other English towns of the time, was dominated by chaos and strife, divided along lines of wealth, class, occupation, geography and creed. This notion—put forth most prominently by W G Hoskins, Peter Clark, Paul Slack, and A L Beier³⁵—makes an easy target of the liberties. Harold Priestly suggests that they ‘were hotbeds of violence or crime, constituting a perpetual threat to ordered life within the city itself.’³⁶ Literary theory has been especially receptive to these

³² J L McMullan, *The Canting Crew: London's Criminal Underworld, 1550-1700* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1984), p. 53.

³³ In addition to *The Place of the Stage* and *The Canting Crew*, see J-C Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge, 1986); McMullan, *Canting Crew*; G Salgado, *The Elizabethan Underworld* (New York, 1992); L Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge, 1995); Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London*; and J G Turner, *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630-85* (Cambridge, 2002).

³⁴ See, among others, V Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: City Government and National Politics, 1625-43* (Oxford, 1961); F Foster, *The Politics of Stability: A Portrait of the Rulers in Elizabethan London* (London, 1977); M J Power, 'A "Crisis" Reconsidered: Social and Demographic Dislocation in London in the 1590s', *London Journal*, 12:2 (1986), p. 133-45; S Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds: Structures of Life in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1989); and I W Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge, 1991).

³⁵ See, for example, the introductions to *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700: Essays in Urban History*, eds P Clark and P Slack, (London, 1972) and P Clark and P Slack, *English Towns in Transition, 1500-1700* (Oxford, 1976); W G Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early 16th Century', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser, 6 (1956); and A L Beier, *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640* (London, 1986).

³⁶ H Priestly, *London: The Years of Change* (London, 1966), p. 44-5. Even those historians who focus on order occasionally scapegoat the liberties. Steve Rappaport and Valerie Pearl have contrasted the unruly suburbs with the well-governed City. J P Ward, 'Imagining the Metropolis in Elizabethan and Stuart London', in G

historians of urban crisis. Scholars like Agnew, Mullaney, Manley and Turner tie the liberties to contemporary play-going, and attribute to both a degree of (to borrow one of their favoured terms) ‘incontinence’ previously unknown in the metropolis. Operating under an obligation to glorify all things liminal, the temptation to hyper-marginalise the liberties is even greater.³⁷

By treating the liberties as an idea—archetypal unregulated enclaves—rather than as real, individual and well-defined places, scholars bound to the New Historicism and other postmodern critical theories have altered the framework used to assess the liberties. Written from their perspective, the liberties become fuzzy around the edges; it becomes difficult to discern precisely where they end and the City begins. Reducing the liberties to an idea has invited sweeping generalisations about the character of these districts and their meaningfulness within the early modern metropolis. Jean-Christophe Agnew provides a prime example, writing that in the early seventeenth century ‘a new extraterritorial zone of production and exchange sprung up outside London’s ancient marketplaces and thus out of reach of their juridical, ceremonial, and talismanic protections—and restrictions.’³⁸ Agnew links the weakening guild authority and the rise of the liberties to the state’s enforcement of what he saw as a new ‘moral economy.’ Agnew fails, however, to provide evidence to support his rhetoric. Grouping the liberties together and decrying them in vaguely ominous terms, Agnew furthers his own thesis by obscuring the real significance of the liberties. Mullaney does the same by prominently arguing that the liberties ‘stood in a certain sense outside the law, and so could serve as privileged or exempt arenas where the anxieties and insecurities of life in a rigidly organized hierarchical society could be given relatively free reign.’³⁹ We have already witnessed Mullaney’s careless use of terminology. Here, we catch a glimpse of his tendency to privilege the discourse of ideological threat posed by the liberties over serious analysis of their practical implications. Such pseudo-historical work takes the idea of ‘unregulated enclave’ and extrapolates how such spaces may have affected London as

M MacLean, D Landry and J P Ward (eds), *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 24.

³⁷ The New Historicism’s attempt to tell the story of the liberties is plagued with errors far more fatal than its alignment with these historians of crisis. As Gabrielle Spiegel writes, ‘One can admire and share [the New Historicist] desire to reject a mimetic view of literary discourse, but the question of precisely how literature politically manages reality goes largely unexplained. Until New Historicism, and cultural history more generally, is able to explain the supposed links between literary and social praxis in concrete and persuasive terms that can be generalized in the form of a social theory, the interpretive moves, however dazzling, of which it is capable will remain unconvincing.’ G M Spiegel, ‘History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages’, *Speculum*, 65 (1990), p. 71n43.

³⁸ Agnew, *Worlds Apart*, p. 50.

³⁹ Mullaney, *Place of the Stage*, p. 21-2.

a whole. The projection of modern assumptions onto the past, inherent to such practices, undermines their arguments and betrays the agendas these scholars bring to their research. As A L Beier points out in his critique of the notion of a criminal underworld based on the 'literature of roguery', their perspective 'distorts reality by exclusive use of literary sources; it makes little attempt to distinguish fact from fiction and neglects official records almost entirely'.⁴⁰ Postmodernist claims about the liberties deserve similar censure.

For those inclined to look for disorder in the early modern capital, the liberties stand out, even if one dismisses the more hyperbolic claims made about them. Brett-James, for example, pities the residents of the liberties, which suffered 'problems of overcrowding, disorder and license, and...became, if not carefully watched, refuges for all the dissolute, diseased, and lawless folk who needed, more than any, the comparatively good order of the City's wards.'⁴¹ There is certainly no shortage of evidence to indict the liberties. Civic rhetoric has been well-remembered, and abundant printed material chronicles complaints against them.⁴² More than thirty ballads and tracts about crime in early modern London have been reprinted in the past century, and literary works that reinforce negative images of the liberties are readily available today.⁴³ Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) presents the dangers of the unregulated economic forum provided by its namesake in an entertaining but nonetheless damning way. Robert Dixon's *Canidia, or The Witches* (1683) is the first known reference to Whitefriars as Alsatia—the 'Alsatian knaves and Newgate dogs' offer their hospitality to the witches—but it was Thomas Shadwell's *Squire of Alsatia* (1688) that set the popular image of the Alsatian bully. That image was in turn resurrected and extended back into the early sixteenth century by Sir Walter Scott in *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822).⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Beier, *Masterless Men*, p. xxi.

⁴¹ Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, pp. 215-6.

⁴² See Ward, 'Imagining the Metropolis', pp. 24-6 for a good review of contemporary complaints against the suburbs and liberties, and Ward's analysis of more sympathetic early modern approaches to metropolitan expansion.

⁴³ *The Elizabethan Underworld: A Collection of Tudor and Early Stuart Tracts and Ballads*, ed A V Judges, (London, 1964) reprinted sixteen such works; *Rogues, Vagabonds, & Sturdy Beggars*, ed A F Kinney, (Barre, MA, 1973) reprinted seven; and *Cony-Catchers and Bawdy Baskets: An Anthology of Elizabethan Lowlife*, ed G Salgado, (London, 1972) reprinted ten others.

⁴⁴ These are just a few examples, among many. For more on Whitefriars see John Dunton's *A Voyage Around the World* (1691), Richard Ames's 'Fatal Friendship' (1693) and Thomas Brown's 'Imitation of an Epigram 44'. For Blackfriars, see *The Lamentable and True Tragedie of M. Arden of Feversham in Kent* (1592), Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1616), Thomas Randolph's *The Muses Looking Glass* (1638) and Thomas Baker's *The Humour of the Age* (1701). It should be stressed that the date of publication is only marginally important, since even literary works from later centuries served to reinforce earlier anti-liberty sentiments.

Much of this material presents its attacks in no uncertain terms. In a sermon at Paul's Cross delivered in 1577 and republished in 1923, Thomas White attacked the theatres (and by extension the liberties that harboured them) as 'a continuall monument of Londons prodigalitie and folly' and expressed his disgust with 'the monstrous birds that brede in this nest'.⁴⁵ Maligned in pulpits and in plays, in pamphlets and in Parliament, it is hardly surprising that the liberties have failed to shake their notorious image. There has been little impetus for historians focused on other aspects of early modern London to look beyond this accessible and self-validating body of printed primary material. Archival sources related to the liberties, meanwhile, remain obscure, incomplete and widely scattered. We should therefore remain sceptical when scholars make grand claims about the liberties using only printed materials.

This is not to exculpate the liberties entirely. The jurisdictional exemptions that sustained these precincts would have affected everything from the supply of men and money for national defence to the collection of scavengers' rates and the provision of poor relief. But even if local administration in the liberties was substantially different to that in the City, it is still unreasonable to dismiss them as lawless, or even backwards. As Julia Merritt shows in her study of Westminster parishes, even contiguous areas under a single jurisdiction could differ immensely in the efficiency of their administrations and in their reactions to demands of the central government.⁴⁶ Janette Dillon has suggested that the liberties deserve a more even-handed look than they have yet received, noting that 'Although London's official discourse chose to construct the liberties as places of riot and disorder, the boltholes of those on the run from authority, the liberties need not be read in the city's terms. The official discourse may equally well be read as the city's attempt to purify its own self-conception.'⁴⁷ Indeed, an increasing amount of secondary work offers an alternative view of the liberties, if only in passing. In the past two decades many scholars have moved away from the simplistic use of the liberties as a geographic catch-all for London's ills, preferring more complex explanations of the metropolitan nature of both crime and the theatre.⁴⁸ The resultant works make few grand claims about

⁴⁵ T White, *A Sermon Preached at Pawles Crosse on Sunday the Ninth of December 1576* (London, 1578).

⁴⁶ J F Merritt, 'Religion, Government and Society in Early Modern Westminster, c.1525-1625' (U of London PhD thesis, 1992).

⁴⁷ Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London*, p. 97.

⁴⁸ On crime, see J P Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford, 1997) and P Griffiths, 'Overlapping Circles: Imagining Criminal Communities in Early Modern London, 1545-1645', in A Shepard and P Withington (eds), *Communities in Early Modern England: Networks, Place, Rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 115-33. On the theatre, see A Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage, 1574-1642*, 3rd edn (Cambridge, 1992); L S Marcus, 'Of Mire and Authority', in D L Smith, R Strier and D Bevington (eds), *The Theatrical City: Culture, Theatre and Politics in London, 1576-1649* (Cambridge, 1995); and

the liberties, preferring instead to acknowledge them as anomalous and seeking to explain trends on a broader basis.

Historians of recent decades have used archival material to make unintentional chinks in the illusion that the liberties were anarchic districts dominated by crime and vice. As with so much about the liberties, challenges to their dominant image are widely dispersed and methodologically varied. Gareth Owen's 1965 study of religious developments in the Minories shows that its parish, Holy Trinity, had both a noble presence and an exceptionally munificent, if religiously nonconformist, congregation.⁴⁹ In his overview of the cultural history of London parish life, Michael Berlin shows that before James I's coronation, authorities in the liberty of St Katherine by the Tower 'set about a wholesale moral cleansing of the area involving the rounding up and punishment of all suspicious persons, rogues, beggars, and lewd women...The constables' accounts and memoranda book record yearly payments for the whipping and carting of women as well their punishment by "ducking and cucking".⁵⁰ Ian Archer provides further information about St Katherine's. Checking the names of its constables against indictments at the Middlesex sessions and in King's Bench, he finds that the constables 'were respectable men in the sense that they had not been guilty of serious disorderly conduct.'⁵¹ New Historicist claims about the marginalised status of liberties have been partially rebutted by literary scholars who have examined James Burbage's 1596 attempt to establish a new theatre in Blackfriars, a move vigorously opposed by the liberty's residents. Andrew Gurr reminds his readers that the proposed theatre was 'within the city walls, down Ludgate Hill from St Paul's, on the wealthy west side of the main centre of the City's life',⁵² and Janette Dillon points out that the petition the residents sent to the Privy Council was clearly 'not the collective voice of a vagrant population, but rather the closing of middle- and upper-middle class ranks against the possible invasion of barbarian hordes.'⁵³ Finally, Joseph Ward has countered the longstanding assumption that the livery companies of the City were powerless to enforce their regulations in the

P Lake and M Questier, *The Anticrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and, and Players in Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, CT, 2002).

⁴⁹ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', pp. 81-97. Also on the Minories, see Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*. Ian Archer has pointed out that the bulk of donations went to poor relief outside the parish. Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 180.

⁵⁰ M Berlin, 'Reordering Rituals: Ceremony and the Parish, 1520-1640', in P Griffiths and M Jenner (eds), *Londonopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2000), p. 60.

⁵¹ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 221.

⁵² A Gurr, 'Money or Audiences: The Impact of Shakespeare's Globe', *Theatre Notebook*, 42 (1988), p. 5.

⁵³ Dillon, *Theatre, Court and City, 1595-1610: Drama and Social Space in London*, p. 98. The upper class was involved, as well. Amongst the Blackfriars residents who signed the petition were Lord Ellesmere, the newly appointed Lord Chancellor, and Lord Hunsdon, the patron of Shakespeare's company.

suburbs and liberties. In addition to showing that citizens lived throughout the metropolis, Ward demonstrates that the liberties played a productive role in the metropolitan economy.⁵⁴ Such work undermines the notion that residents of the liberties defied all regulation.

It is clear that the liberties merit study in their own right. Doing so, however, is not an easy task. While ‘the liberties’ are often spoken of as a coherent group, in actuality they varied among themselves as much or more than they differed from other parts of the early modern capital. Even in relation to the City of London, it is difficult to generalise about them accurately. The lord mayor and aldermen, for example, were more concerned with liberties wholly within the City (such as Blackfriars) than with those that only abutted it (such as the Minories). The relationship of a particular liberty with the City was further affected by the particulars of its ownership, the status and occupations of its residents, and its relationship to other authorities in the metropolis. These factors also influenced life within each liberty, as did the stability and complexity of its leadership and administrative structures, its parochial status and its confessional sympathies. It should therefore come as no surprise that despite being linked by claims of jurisdictional franchises, the liberties varied substantially.

In recognition of this fact, the current study has been organised as a group of case-studies prefaced by an overview of the City’s general relationship with the post-monastic liberties. It is not an exhaustive study of the post-monastic liberties. The four precincts studied in-depth (Blackfriars, the Minories, St Katherine’s and St Martin’s) benefit from demonstrating the diversity of the liberties. Blackfriars and St Martin’s were both in the heart of the City, while the Minories and St Katherine’s stood at its edge. They represent different forms of ownership, as well. St Katherine’s remained under the direct control of its medieval hospital and St Martin’s continued to be held by the reformed Westminster Abbey, which had appropriated it in 1503. After a brief period in private ownership, the Minories returned to royal control in 1563. Only Blackfriars remained in private hands throughout the period; it was also the only liberty under study

⁵⁴ Ward, *Metropolitan Communities*, p. 136. Of the thirty-seven taverns fined by the Vintners Company between 1636 and 1646, sixteen had been in suburbs of the City, but none had been located in the liberties. 217 taverns were inspected in the same period, of which sixty-one were in the suburbs or liberties, he notes. Nine taverns in liberties had been inspected over the same period.

here whose jurisdictional franchises were curtailed by the City's second Jacobean charter in 1608.⁵⁵

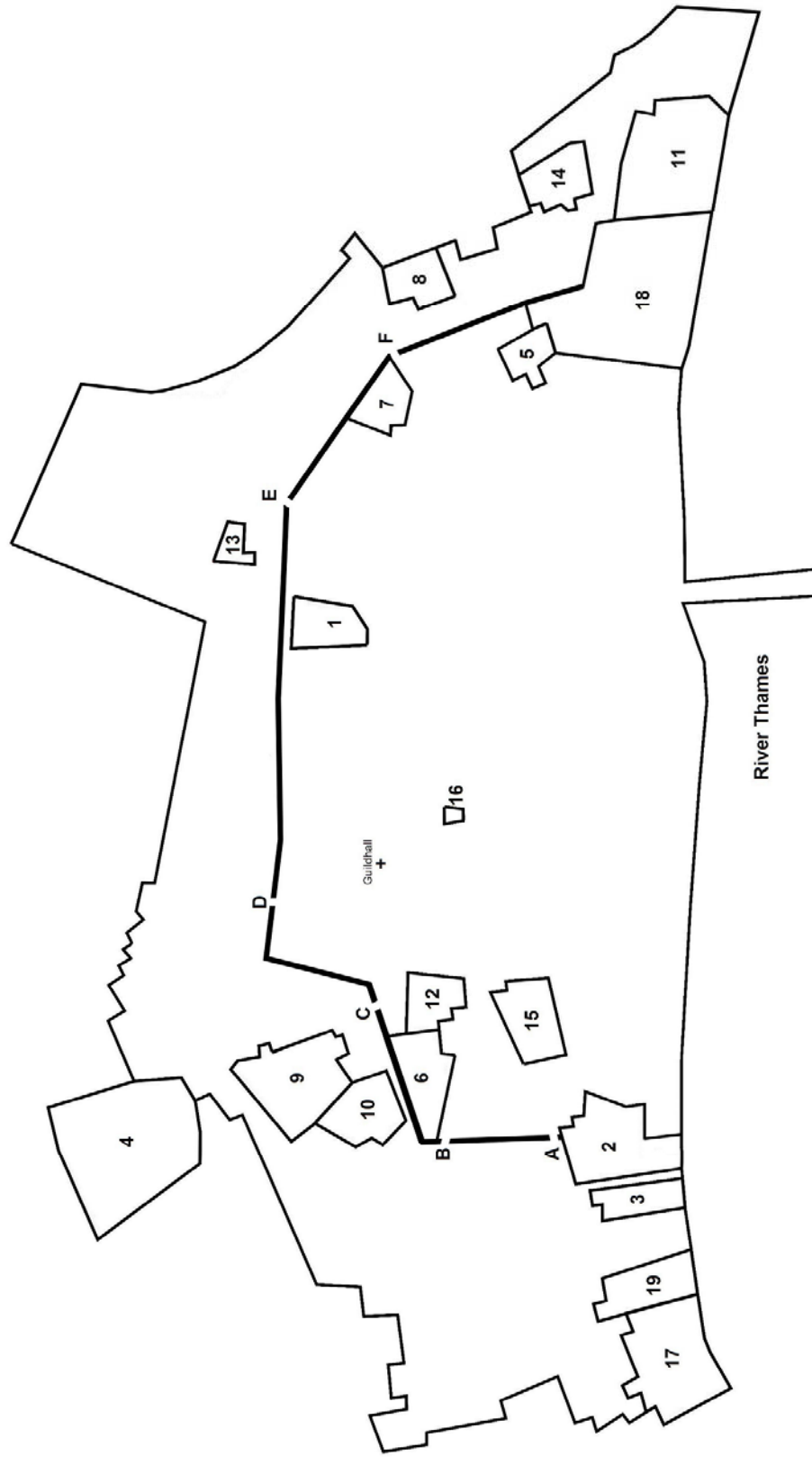
The survival of adequate source material was also a prime consideration in the choice of liberties for individual study. Neither Whitefriars nor Duke's Place, two other liberties situated wholly within the City, has a large extant source base. Of the liberties south of the river only the Clink offers sufficient material for serious study, but its jurisdictional status was complicated by the City's often ambiguous relationship with Southwark, the Clink's location at the border of Southwark and Surrey and its continued ownership by the bishops of Winchester. This study would not have done its unique situation justice. Even so, the availability of primary sources is less than ideal. Because of the differences between these already anomalous areas, the sources available for each liberty vary substantially. Parochial records survive for St Katherine's and the Minories. Local administrative records related to Blackfriars and St Martin's are less comprehensive, but both liberties boast more tenancy information and higher-level administrative records.

Regardless of its limits, this study offers a new perspective on the liberties and their relationship to the broader metropolis. The material presented provides substantial new information about individual liberties. The context provided by the case-studies is long overdue and will make more specialised and intensive studies of these areas possible. In particular, the relationship between individual liberties and ecclesiastical authorities is likely to be a fruitful area for further research. An exploration of the social and economic ties among liberty residents and between them and those living elsewhere in London would also bring their boundaries into sharper focus.⁵⁶ Careful study of the liberties challenges many of the assumptions made about them. More importantly, it reveals them to have been complex, functional and diverse places that were 'in but not of' the City. They had problems, certainly, but by and large those problems were linked to broader metropolitan issues. Contemporaries acknowledged the liberties to be areas of distinct jurisdiction, but they were by no means foreign to early modern Londoners.

⁵⁵ Parochially, the precincts of Blackfriars, the Minories, and St Katherine's were all coterminous with their parish boundaries, but St Martin's was divided unequally among three parishes, each of which also included areas under civic control.

⁵⁶ Of the sort undertaken for Southwark by Jeremy Boulton *Neighbourhood and Society: A London Suburb in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, 1987).

Map: Places Exempt from Civic Jurisdiction, 1530



- | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| A. Ludgate | 7. Holy Trinity Aldgate | 13. St Mary Bethlehem | 18. The Tower |
| B. Newgate | 8. Minorities | 14. St Mary Graces (East
Smithfield) | 19. Whitefriars |
| C. Aldersgate | 9. St Bartholomew the Great | 15. St Paul's | |
| D. Cripplegate | 10. St Bartholomew the Less | 16. St Thomas Acon | |
| E. Bishopsgate | 11. St Katherine by the Tower | 17. The Temple | |
| F. Aldgate | 12. St Martin le Grand | | |
| 1. Austin Friars | | | |
| 2. Blackfriars | | | |
| 3. Bridewell | | | |
| 4. Charterhouse | | | |
| 5. Crutched Friars | | | |
| 6. Greyfriars | | | |

Chapter 2. The Liberties and the City of London

Modern readers can be forgiven for thinking that the liberties posed a constant and perpetual threat to the safety of those living in London. Antagonistic contemporaries recorded their objections to these small, self-contained precincts for a posterity that continued (and even expanded) the tradition of scapegoating them for a wide variety of civic problems, from crime to plague. The Repertories of the Court of Aldermen show clearly enough that other issues (ensuring adequate supplies of grain in times of dearth, responding to outbreaks plague, and enforcing the assize of bread and ale) were treated with greater urgency by the Court of Aldermen. Tensions were bound to arise from the demographic changes that affected early modern London. Civic governors and religious reformers alike complained loudly about the ‘ill-rule’ of the suburbs and the liberties (or exempt places) within the City.⁵⁷ Apart from inflammatory, ideological printed tracts, however, contemporary sources fail to support the notion that post-monastic liberties posed a unique threat to metropolitan order. The civic government, it is true, regularly challenged their franchises. The royal government, though desperately afraid of disorder (and quick to act when it sensed danger) consistently refused to help the City meddle in the liberties.

In the decades after the dissolution the City treated the franchises of exempt places with newfound jealousy. Previously, civic leaders had resisted interfering except in cases of egregious abuse, such as the fifteenth century use of sanctuary in St Martin le Grand. The City’s vehement opposition to the liberties grew from its increasing conception of itself as a geographically coherent authority and the severing of the liberties’ franchises from their religious origins.⁵⁸ The City, whose privileges were granted by the Crown, depended on royal favour to establish its territorial ambitions. It is understandable that the City’s quest for coherence manifested itself in the language of public order: the royal government was more interested in keeping the peace than in augmenting the authority of an already-powerful corporate entity. When the *Acts of the Privy Council* and the State Papers Domestic are considered alongside the Repertories of the Court of Aldermen and the Journals of Common Council, it becomes clear that the post-monastic liberties were a nuisance, but not a serious threat.

⁵⁷ Ian Archer warns against the uncritical acceptance of such complaints, suggesting that aldermanic rhetoric was both self-serving and based on unrealistic expectations of suburban government. I W Archer, ‘The Government of London, 1500-1650’, *London Journal*, 26:1 (2001), p. 25.

⁵⁸ A trend that reflected the ongoing efforts of the royal government to assert the fundamental authority of the English crown throughout the realm (to religious precincts, the counties palatine, and to the Scottish and Welsh marches).

The early modern capital included the City of London, the borough of Southwark, and the ever-expanding suburbs, with liberties scattered throughout.⁵⁹ While the entire area was increasingly urbanised, the City remained the centre of the metropolis, and its structures of government were the standard against which other areas, including the liberties, were judged. The City's interlocking administrative units—precinct, parish and ward—were overseen by the common council and the Court of Aldermen, while the hospitals, livery companies and the bishops of London exercised their particular powers over a broader part of the conurbation. This complex administrative network affected the City's expectations for the government of areas beyond its control, and it provides a background for the battles which civic officials fought against them. Civic governors were hesitant to assume authority over large new tracts of land, but they almost certainly recognised that the most difficult issues they faced were of a metropolitan nature, and that no matter how effectively they governed their square mile, metropolitan issues were bound to effect life there.⁶⁰

The liberties existed within a specific historical context; it was the continuity of their jurisdictional franchises after 1540—not their novelty—that aggravated City fathers. Over the course of centuries, the City had come to an understanding with most (though certainly not all) of the religious foundations situated within or adjacent to its borders. The obstinacy of St Martin le Grand in exercising its privilege of sanctuary had permanently alienated it from the City, but most other religious houses had more cordial relations with the civic government. When fire destroyed several buildings at the Minories in 1518, for example, the City donated £200 toward the cost of rebuilding.⁶¹ By the early sixteenth century, all of London's monastic precincts housed laypersons alongside the religious. In some cases that population included little more than the servants of the foundation, but other precincts were home to much larger communities.⁶² The cooperation that existed between civic and monastic authorities could extend to their lay tenants. An entry in the Repertories concerning the 1533 lay subsidy does not bother with the question of whether lay residents in Blackfriars would contribute alongside the City; the aldermen clearly assumed that they would. Instead, they wondered whether 'the Inhabitantes within the precynct of the sayd freres owght to be chargyd

⁵⁹ From 1550, Southwark constituted the City's new Bridge Ward Without, and from 1585 the City of Westminster extended from Temple Bar along the riverbank to the Palace of Westminster and beyond.

⁶⁰ Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*, p. 17.

⁶¹ CLRO Rep 5, fos 15v, 80; The Royal Government also donated £200. *LPHD*, 3(2), no. 1536.

⁶² Blackfriars was known for its gentry and noble residents, St Martin's for its aliens and St Katherine by the Tower for its sailors, brewers and coopers.

with the inhabitantes of the warde of Faryngdon Within or ellce withyn the warde of Castell Baynard'.⁶³ In the list of subsidy collectors for May 1535, the collector for St 'Anne withyn Black freres' is listed alongside those of the City's other parishes, and there is no evidence that the residents resisted the arrangement, although they would in later decades.⁶⁴

After 1540, the City of London made a concerted effort to secure the post-monastic liberties, either by purchasing their lands itself or by establishing its authority over those lands. The City addressed its advances to both the royal government and the owners of individual liberties, according to its expectations of success. In neither case, however, was success forthcoming. Before the 1590s, the City's only real achievement was preventing the destruction of the medieval hospital system that provided relief to London's ill and incapacitated. The hospitals faced the same fate as other religious foundations. The dissolution of religious houses forced the civic government to consider the needs of the poor displaced 'by the disruption of the traditional alms-distributing system' that they had operated for centuries. It was, however, the loss of the hospitals which posed the most acute threat to urban stability, since it left many of the most vulnerable (and therefore, in the eyes of contemporaries, most dangerous) members of the urban community completely outside the existing networks of support.⁶⁵ By April 1538 London's major hospitals, aside from St Mary Bethlehem, had been surrendered to the Crown. In August lord mayor Richard Gresham wrote to the king to request that the City be given control over three hospitals (St Mary Bishopsgate, St Bartholomew and St Thomas Acon), which, according to Gresham, were 'founded and endowed for the aid of poor and impotent people, not to maintain canons, priests and monks to live in pleasure.'⁶⁶ The request was repeated six months later, when the aldermen sent a petition asking that the three hospitals, together with their endowments, be granted to the City 'onely for the relyeff, comforte and ayde of the poore and indigent people...lying yn the streetes offending every clene person passing by the way with theyre fylthye and nastye

⁶³ CLRO Rep 9, fo 23. 25 September 1533. They settled, incidentally, on Farringdon Ward Within, into which the precinct would be absorbed after its annexation by the City in 1608.

⁶⁴ CLRO Rep 9, fos 157v-167v. 7 May 1535.

⁶⁵ C T Daly, 'The Hospitals of London: Administration, Refoundation and Benefaction, c. 1500-1572' (U of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1993), p. 70. When Professor Woodward claims that it is 'impossible to assess with any certainty how seriously the dissolution aggravated the problem of poverty by depriving the unfortunate of the aid and comfort of the religious houses', he is speaking of England generally. In London, the direct effects of religious foundations on the poor of the metropolis are much clearer. G W O Woodward, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries* (London, 1966), p. 167.

⁶⁶ LPSD, 13(2), p. 194, no. 492.

savors'.⁶⁷ After meeting with several aldermen on 26 February 1538/9, the king gave his consent to part of the proposal, granting the City control over St Bartholomew and St Thomas Acon, and over the patients in St Mary's for the remainder of their lives.⁶⁸ The grant was not a complete success for the City, but in the fifteen years that followed the aldermen oversaw the establishment of two new hospitals, Christ's and Bridewell. Under civic management, the hospitals achieved new standards of medical care and initiated a systematic attempt to meet the challenges they saw in vagrancy, poverty, and moral incontinence.⁶⁹ After securing the hospitals—the motives and effects of which were social rather than jurisdictional—the City spent the next several decades in a fruitless quest to procure other post-monastic precincts.

The liberties existed in an historical context, but they also stood at a single point on a spectrum of jurisdictions that existed in the capital. At one end stood the City itself, where the lord mayor and aldermen exercised their full authority. At the other stood the royal palaces, from which civic authority was wholly excluded.⁷⁰ In between were those places that the City was practically or prescriptively unable or unwilling to exercise complete control. These included the precincts of St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, the suburban parishes that ringed the City, and the townhouses of prominent noblemen and bishops. In the mid sixteenth century, the City's most pressing jurisdictional concern was not the liberties but the borough of Southwark. Southwark had been London's first suburb—evidence of development there dates back to the Roman era.⁷¹ In the intervening centuries, the settlement had thrived by catering to the needs of travelers, pilgrims, and tradesmen entering and leaving London. Aside from the bridgehead itself, however, Southwark had always been independent of the City, standing in the county of Surrey and the diocese of Winchester. London had long taken an active interest in affairs there, but as late as the 1530s it had failed to assert its authority decisively.⁷² When Edward VI took the throne, the City made a new attempt, and in

⁶⁷ CLRO Rep 10, fo 79v; Jo 14, fo 129v.

⁶⁸ CLRO Rep 10, fo 82. The site of St Mary's was granted to Sir Richard Morison in April 1540. *LPFD* xv.613(3).

⁶⁹ Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 154. The survival and expansion of the London hospital system was, as W K Jordan describes it, 'a proud and human accomplishment in which the burghers of London were pioneering, not only for England, but for the western world'. W K Jordan, *The Charities of London, 1480-1660: The Aspirations and the Achievements of the Urban Society* (Hamden, CT, 1960), p. 186.

⁷⁰ The battles between the Court of Aldermen and the Lieutenant of the Tower of London illustrate the tension generated by jurisdictional disputes between civic and royal officials. See A Key, *The Elizabethan Tower of London: The Hainward and Gascoyne Plan of 1597* (London, 2001), esp. pp. 1-8.

⁷¹ H Sheldon, 'Roman Southwark', in I Haynes, H Sheldon and L Hannigan (eds), *London under Ground, the Archaeology of a City* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 121-35.

⁷² H Miller, 'London and Parliament in the Reign of Henry VIII', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 35 (1962), p. 145.

March 1550 it paid the king nearly a thousand pounds for the Crown's lands and franchises in Southwark.⁷³

Despite the apparent eagerness of the aldermen, the borough of Southwark was never fully integrated into the City's administrative framework. The aldermen tried and failed to move a bill through Parliament confirming its rights in the newly-created Bridge Ward Without,⁷⁴ but the real problem was the administrative reluctance of the aldermen themselves. Their first priority in establishing a system of governance in the new ward was not thoroughness but expedience. The first alderman for the new ward was chosen by the court in May 1550.⁷⁵ That July the Common Council declared that Southwark's aldermen should be chosen in the same way as in the City's other wards, where the Wardmote nominated a shortlist of four to the aldermen, who made the final choice.⁷⁶ When the seat opened again in 1553, however, it was the aldermen themselves—not the freemen of Southwark—who drew up the short list of nominees. David Johnson demonstrates that the aldermen chosen for Bridge Ward Without were socially and administrative equals to the rest of the court, concluding that 'the Court of Aldermen co-opted Southwark's representative simply because they could not be bothered to make arrangements enabling the people of the ward to nominate their own aldermanic candidates'.⁷⁷ Interference by Surrey officials further muddled the City's jurisdiction in Southwark, but for now it is enough to recognise that the relationship between the governors and the governed that existed in the twenty-five wards north of the river was never implemented in Southwark.

Southwark was not a liberty, of course, but it should remind us that jurisdictional ambiguity and frustration were common features of early modern local government, especially in London. Ambiguity and frustration were likewise caused by the growth of suburban Middlesex and Surrey. Between 1550 and 1650 the population of the metropolis grew from around sixty-five thousand to nearly four hundred thousand. Over the same period, the percentage of the metropolitan population living within the City fell from over seventy percent to around thirty percent.⁷⁸ The change shocked

⁷³ CLRO Rep 12, fo 219; Stow, *Survey*, ii.68. They City paid £647/2/1d for the lands and a further £333/6/8d for jurisdiction there.

⁷⁴ CLRO Rep 12, fo 448v. See also Rep 10, fo 242v and S E Lehmborg, *The Later Parliaments of Henry VIII, 1536-1547* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 162.

⁷⁵ CLRO Rep 12, fo 231v.

⁷⁶ CLRO Jo. 16, fo 82v; D Johnson, *Southwark and the City* (Oxford, 1969), p. 142.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁷⁸ V Harding, 'The Population of London, 1500-1700: A Review of the Published Evidence', *London Journal*, 15:2 (1990), p. 112.

contemporaries.⁷⁹ Elizabeth and her successors attempted to stem the tide of metropolitan growth, but without success. In a 1596 letter to Middlesex JPs, the Privy Council wondered at its failure:

As wee have bin many times informed of the great abuses that grow by the multitude of base tenements and howses of unlawfull and disorderly resort erected in the suburbs and owt places of the city of London, so have wee also from time to time given direccion by our letters...to stay or suppress such buildings...Howbeyt wee have not found such success and effect of our direccions as wee expected?⁸⁰

Suburban government was a cobblework of medieval manorial jurisdictions and parochial administrations, overseen by county justices of the peace. It never approached the administrative complexity of that in the City, and the traditional structures used to govern England's rural counties were ill-suited to the demands of the large, dense and relatively poor population of London's suburbs. The aldermen, however, consistently opposed moves to expand the City's jurisdiction into suburban Middlesex.⁸¹ City officials, though always willing to complain loudly about the suburbs, refused to take responsibility for their governance. As with so many of the issues facing the sixteenth century metropolis, the City's concerns about the suburbs reflected its uneasiness with demographic changes it was powerless to stop.

In comparison to Southwark and the suburbs, the post-monastic liberties represented a fragmented jurisdictional nuisance. Smaller and less populous than either, they were also more intimately linked to the City. Residents of most liberties north of the Thames could not leave their precincts without passing through the lord mayor's jurisdiction. In principle, the City opposed the franchises enjoyed by liberties *en masse*, but the varied history and ownership of the liberties forced the City to challenge the franchises of each separately. In Southwark, aldermanic authority met only the reluctance of individual residents and the intermittent bureaucratic meddling of Surrey JPs. In the liberties each franchise-holder (individual or corporate) had a stake in resisting civic meddling, and the residents of the precincts proved generally knowledgeable about their rights and eager to defend them against unwanted interference. Even if the City had succeeded in its piecemeal challenges to the liberties, the dilemmas that the annexation of

⁷⁹ John Stow lamented that in the suburbs of London 'there hath been of late, in place of Elme trees, many small tenements raysed'. Stow, *Survey*, ii.71. Three decades later, Thomas Dekker wrote wistfully: 'How happy...were cities if they had no suburbs sith wence they serve but as caves where monsters are bred up to devour the cities'. Thomas Dekker, *English Villaines*, 1632, sig. F. 3v.

⁸⁰ *APC*, vol 25, pp 230-1. 23 February 1595/6. For more on building restrictions, see p. 41, below.

⁸¹ Archer, 'Government of London', p. 25; R Ashton, *The City and the Court, 1603-1643* (Cambridge, 1979), pp.165-7.

Southwark had forced on the city (taxation, military service, and integration with civic structures of office-holding) would have to have been answered for each liberty individually.

The City's quest to appropriate the liberties met with royal ambivalence. In January 1545 the aldermen offered to purchase the London Charterhouse from the king, who denied them, only to grant the site to Sir Edward North, the chancellor of the Court of Augmentations, three months later.⁸² In February 1538/9 the king flatly refused to consider the City's request that it might 'please your highnesse to gyve to the sayd mayre and comonalty the churches and scituacions and all the landes and tenementes withyn the precinct of the sayd howses lately called the Grey, Blak, Whyte and Augustyne freers'.⁸³ Henry VIII is famously quoted for responding with an angry outburst: 'Are not we as well able to keep our privileges and liberties as the friars did keep their privileges always beforetime, free from the City?'⁸⁴ Henry's position, however, was more a result of financial necessity than of principle. When the City offered Henry £200 for the same four friaries eighteen months later, the offer evoked his derision.⁸⁵ In a meeting with former mayor Richard Gresham, 'the kinges highnes reported unto hym...that the Citezens of this Citye were pinche pence'.⁸⁶ The Court of Aldermen agreed amongst themselves that the price offered was more than fair, considering 'the charges of the mayntenance of the same howses shalbe so gret'.⁸⁷ To put the City's offer in context, when the Court of Augmentations finally granted away *part* of one of the four friary sites in 1550, it did so to satisfy a royal debt of over £600.⁸⁸

The 1540 act that secured 'all and singular the...liberties, franchises, privileges and temporal jurisdictions' of the late religious houses 'to the possession of the King's Highness' explicitly confirmed the right of royal officials to intervene in formerly religious liberties, but it also allowed the Crown to grant their franchises, privileges and temporal jurisdictions to any person or corporate entity.⁸⁹ By preventing the absorption of religious sites into neighbouring jurisdictions, the king kept a valuable bargaining chip for future negotiations with civic corporations, the City of London in particular. Henry's

⁸² CLRO Rep 11, fo 159; G S Davies, *Charterhouse in London: Monastery, Mansion, Hospital, School* (London, 1921), p. 113.

⁸³ CLRO Jo 14, fo 129. 27 February 1538/9.

⁸⁴ J Stow, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, ed J Strype, 2 vols (6 bks), (London, 1720), iii.184

⁸⁵ CLRO Jo 14, fo 216v. 1 August 1540.

⁸⁶ CLRO Rep 10, fo 200. 17 August 1540.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Folger MSS L.b. 379, 381, 410.

⁸⁹ 32 Hen VIII, c. 20 §§I, IV.

financial needs forced him to sell, barter, or grant away much of his newly-acquired monastic property: two-thirds of monastic estates were disposed of between 1543 and 1547.⁹⁰ In retrospect, it is not surprising that the Court of Augmentations proved unable to extract enough income to satisfy royal demands.⁹¹ Religious houses were, by and large, lax landlords who were unlikely to fully exploit the financial potential of their estates. Whispers of a general dissolution, which grew louder throughout the 1530s, did little to motivate them toward greater vigilance. Neighbours frequently helped religious houses hide moveable property, while friends and relatives of monks joined local populations in securing favourable leases on monastic lands.⁹² The sites of most religious houses, moreover, were ill-suited for immediate lay occupation, requiring substantial modification for residential use. In need of ready money, the king began to sell off his newly-acquired lands at a rapid pace. At the time, the City balked at paying the prices demanded by the king, and so the sites of London's religious houses found their way into other hands.

In response, the City developed a two-pronged approach to the liberties. On the one hand, it tried to purchase individual precincts (or the bulk of the land therein) from their owners. On the other, it challenged the liberties' jurisdictional franchises through statute or litigation. In October 1545 the aldermen encouraged their MP, Edward Hall, to work diligently for the passage of a bill then before Parliament to ensure 'that all exempte places of all Cyties burghes & townes...be under the rule of the governours of the same Cyties burghes & townes'.⁹³ A second bill was introduced in the same session 'that all the inhabitantes of this Cytie may be compelled to be contrybutors to all the charges of the same'.⁹⁴ Neither bill was enacted, but the City's eagerness to support them is itself meaningful.

During Mary's reign, the City was understandably reluctant to challenge the independence of the post-monastic liberties, but Elizabeth's accession gave it new hope. In October 1559 the aldermen asked the Privy Council to demand more coherent government in the liberties and suburbs. In addition to their request that 'the Justices of the peace of the counties of Surrey & Middlesex may be admonished...to loke diligently to the good & quyete ordering and governance of all the inhabitantes within the confynes of these two counties', the aldermen pressed the council to entrust 'the liberties

⁹⁰ Woodward, *Dissolution*, p. 124.

⁹¹ See Cunich, 'The Administration and Alienation of Ex-Monastic Lands by the Crown, 1536-1547', ch. 2.

⁹² 'As the end grew near,' Professor Savine observes, 'the English monks took steps to conceal all that could be concealed'. A Savine, *English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution* (Oxford, 1909), pp. 188-93.

⁹³ CLRO Rep 11, fo 227v. 1 Oct 1545.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

belonging to Saint Martens and...the Blackfryers' to the City.⁹⁵ The council never acted on the latter request. Westminster Abbey (which had controlled St Martin le Grand since 1503) almost certainly objected to the City's proposal. Two weeks later three aldermen were sent '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'.⁹⁶ Lord Treasurer William Paulet had close links to the City—his wife's father had been lord mayor—but it seems likely the aldermen contacted him to appease then-secretary-of-state William Cecil, a great defender of the Elizabethan abbey.⁹⁷ Its dean was his former chaplain, and from 1561 until 1598, he served as steward, escheator, bailiff, and clerk of the abbey's Westminster manor.

By January 1567, however, the aldermen had forgotten their promise, and they ordered the City's learned council to inquire into 'all the good ways and meanes they can devise for the obteyninge and conecctinge of great St Martyns into the governing rule and order of this Cytie...either in fee simple or by lease as they can best compasse and obteyne the same'.⁹⁸ Later in the century, still frustrated in its efforts to purchase St Martins, the City made an abortive attempt to pursue its jurisdictional claims in court.⁹⁹ Under Cecil's protection, the abbey continued to rebuff the City, and St Martin's remained independent until the whole precinct was razed in the 1820s to make room for the General Post Office.¹⁰⁰

The aldermen had agreed to avoid meddling with St Martin's in 1559, but they continued to pursue Blackfriars, which had no protector as powerful as Cecil. The bulk of Blackfriars (including its jurisdictional franchises) had been granted to Sir Thomas Cawarden in 1550.¹⁰¹ When he died in August 1559 it passed to his wife. In October the aldermen made their request to the Privy Council, but in December they approached Lady Cawarden directly 'for the purchasyng of her landes at the late Blackfryers to the Cyties use'.¹⁰² Negotiations continued for two months; on 8 February 1560 the aldermen considered an offer to purchase 'all the landes & lyberties' there 'after the rate of 14 yeres purchase for asmuch thereof as they nowe have in possessyon & after the rate of 7 yeres

⁹⁵ CLRO Rep 14, fo 227v. 16 Oct 1559.

⁹⁶ CLRO Rep 14, fo 240. 1 Nov 1559.

⁹⁷ G D Ramsay, *The City of London in International Politics at the Accession of Elizabeth Tudor* (Manchester, 1975), pp. 146-50.

⁹⁸ CLRO Rep 16, fo 154. 14 Jan 1566/7.

⁹⁹ A 24 November 1586 entry in the Repertories (16, fo 307) recorded that 'yt was this daye ordered by the courte here that Mr Salvyner shall dyne with Mr Walbraham in the matter now depending in sute...wherein the lybertyes of greate St Marytnes are to be putt in tryall &c'.

¹⁰⁰ See 55 Geo III, c. 91, §§71-3, 75.

¹⁰¹ *Cal Pat Rol Edw VI*, iii.336.

¹⁰² CLRO Rep 14, fo 258v. 4 Dec 1559.

purchase of all the resydue whereof they have but only the reversyon'.¹⁰³ The aldermen agreed that they should wait to make a final decision at their next meeting. On 13 February they authorised a committee to close the deal, but Lady Cawarden died the following day.¹⁰⁴

Blackfriars' next owner, Sir George More, was not only unwilling to part with the precinct, but he also worked actively to maximise his franchises there and tenaciously resisted interference by the City. More supported Blackfriars' residents when they refused to cooperate with civic officials, a policy that resulted in a six-year legal battle between More and the City. The aldermen tried to use the lawsuit to challenge the independence of the liberties generally, but the judges involved chose to consider only the franchises of Black- and Whitefriars. In the end, the Privy Council ordered that 'that all matters betwene the Cittie and them concerninge the liberties of the saide Fryers shold remaine in *statu quo prius*, and the Lord Maior of London not to intermeddle in any cawse within the saide liberties'.¹⁰⁵ When several freeholds became available in Blackfriars in the 1590s, the City again failed to capitalise on the opportunity and it (like St Martin's) remained out of reach.¹⁰⁶

While most of the City's attempts to undermine the liberties' franchises were fruitless, it met with notable success in the precinct of Christ Church (or Holy Trinity Priory) at Aldgate. In February 1532 Holy Trinity became the first London religious house to meet its end under Henry VIII.¹⁰⁷ For centuries Holy Trinity's prior had been *ex officio* alderman of the City's Portsoken Ward.¹⁰⁸ When the site passed to Lord Chancellor Thomas Audley in April 1534, the City encountered the stubbornness of post-monastic owners for the first time. Audley claimed the rights of the prior both within the precinct and in the civic government. The aldermen finally paid Audley two hundred marks in 1537 to relinquish his claim to the aldermanship.¹⁰⁹ After Audley's 1544 death, the precinct passed to his daughter Margaret, who in 1558 married Thomas Howard, fourth duke of Norfolk.¹¹⁰ Norfolk made the precinct his London home for a period, from

¹⁰³ CLRO Rep 14, fo 292. 8 Feb 1559/60.

¹⁰⁴ CLRO Rep 14, fo 294. 13 Feb 1559/60; TNA PROB 11/43/4.

¹⁰⁵ *APC*, vol 12, pp. 19, 21. 15 May 1580.

¹⁰⁶ CLRO Rep 24, fo 321v. 16 Nov 1598. For a more detailed account of the suit, see pp. 134-137, below.

¹⁰⁷ E Jeffries Davis suggests its suppression was a convenient way for the royal government gauge public opinion before pursuing a wider policy of dissolution. Whether or not that was Henry's motive, no one raised any great objection to the priory's closure. E J Davis, 'The Beginning of the Dissolution: Christchurch, Aldgate, 1532', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4th ser, 8 (1925), pp. 127-50.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-5; CLRO Rep 9, fos 46, 53v, 146v, 254-7, 262-4, 270.

¹¹⁰ *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense. An Ecclesiastical Parochial History of the Diocese of London*, ed R Newcourt, 2 vols, (London, 1708-10), i.558.

which it earned a third name, Duke's Place. Norfolk also purchased the London Charterhouse from Lord North in 1565 and renamed it Howard House.¹¹¹ After Norfolk's conviction for treason in 1572, his sons were allowed to keep much of the estate. Philip (later earl of Arundel) took Howard House while his brother Thomas (later earl of Suffolk) inherited Duke's Place. Philip was convicted of treason and attainted in April 1589,¹¹² but Thomas survived to become 'one of the most extravagant courtiers at the extravagant Jacobean court.'¹¹³ In January 1586 several aldermen met with him 'towching the sale of Christe Church within Allgate',¹¹⁴ which finally occurred in July 1592. Afterwards, the Corporation of London governed Duke's Place as landlord and as holder of the precincts' franchises, but it had to wait until 1608 for its jurisdiction there to be regularised.¹¹⁵ Duke's Place nevertheless represents a rare success in the City's efforts to compromise the franchises of post-monastic liberties.

When James took the English throne, London's centrality to his new kingdom was obvious. As a centre of wealth and population it was unrivalled by anything in Scotland, and James understood the practicality of keeping its elite among his allies. In 1605 the king responded to confusion over the City's jurisdiction on the River Thames by issuing a new charter that spelled out its maritime authority and established its right to measure certain goods throughout the metropolis.¹¹⁶ The charter did not, however, include the traditional beginning-of-reign confirmation of the City's longstanding privileges. The king soon found himself in need of London's financial resources. James obtained a loan of £63,000 in May 1607 and soon afterwards granted the City a second charter that both confirmed its previous rights and extended its jurisdiction of the Corporation over Duke's Place, St Bartholomew the Greater and Less, Black and White Friars, and Cold Harbour.¹¹⁷ Why did James grant these powers, when his Tudor predecessors had resisted the same for seventy years? London's population continued to swell, defying all efforts at containment, and the royal government was increasingly worried about maintaining order there. After the discovery of the gunpowder plot (whose conspirators had links to crypto-Catholics in Blackfriars), the extension of civic

¹¹¹ L. Hendricks, *The London Charterhouse: Its Monks and Its Martyrs* (London, 1869), p. 248.

¹¹² His execution never took place, but he died attainted in 1595. J. G. Elzinga, 'Howard, Philip [St Philip Howard], thirteenth earl of Arundel (1557-1595)', *ODNB*.

¹¹³ P. Croft, 'Howard, Thomas, first earl of Suffolk (1561-1626)', *ODNB*.

¹¹⁴ CLRO Rep 21, fo 253. 13 Jan 1585/6.

¹¹⁵ CLRO Let Bk AB, fo 106.

¹¹⁶ *The Historical Charters and Constitutional Documents of the City of London*, ed W. D. G. Birch, (London, 1887), pp. 132-8.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*; J. Noorthouck, *A New History of London, Including Westminster and Southwark* (London, 1773), p. 147.

control to the liberties must have seemed to the lesser of two evils to the king and council, especially since it also secured to the Crown a hefty sum of ready money.¹¹⁸

The new charter extended the City's authority over only six liberties. Others in the capital continued unabated. While the charter declared that the residents of the six newly incorporated precincts 'shall be, and every of them is...under the rule, government, jurisdiction, oversight, search, correction, punishment, precepts and arrests of the said mayor...of our city of London', residents of Black- and Whitefriars continued to enjoy certain exemptions.¹¹⁹ They were 'quit and exonerated of and from all taxes, fifteenths, and other burdens of scot, and of watch and ward, through or within the city'.¹²⁰ They were also exempted from the offices of constable and scavenger within the City's system of precincts. Those functions continued to be arranged within each liberty; the charter declared that residents of Blackfriars and Whitefriars were required to serve in locally-orchestrated offices and to pay charges for 'pavements, and cleansing the lanes, ditches, ways, watercourses, and sewers' there. The City, however, gained the right to escheated property in all six of the liberties, and to collect Parliamentary taxes from their residents. The 1608 charter was largely concerned with defining responsibility for keeping order within the formerly exempt places. The City was newly empowered to 'keep, or cause to be kept and executed, all ordinances and statutes of this our realm' within the newly annexed areas, 'and to chastise and punish those who...within the limits, franchises, and places aforesaid, are found to offend'.¹²¹

The charter changed the way the City approached issues in the liberties, but it also affected the how liberty residents resolved problems within their communities. In May 1610 Sir Bernard Whitstone, the owner of several houses in Whitefriars, wrote to the Court of Aldermen to complain 'of greate and intollerable abuses comytted there by the owners of howses adjoining', who had subdivided their buildings so that 'it is like to prove very dangerous in tyme of infeccion'.¹²² In previous instances the aldermen had forwarded similar complaints to the Privy Council, which either took direct action or authorised the City to do so on its behalf. Confident of its newly-established jurisdiction in Whitefriars, the City used its own administrative machinery to address the issue. It

¹¹⁸ Further historical attention to the details surrounding the 1608 charter would be very welcome.

¹¹⁹ *Historical Charters*, ed Birch, p. 144.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹²² CLRO Rep 29, fo 227v. 22 May 1610.

instructed the Wardmote inquest for Farringdon Without to investigate and make ‘such order...for reformation thereof as shalbe thought fytt’.¹²³

A similar trend is apparent in Blackfriars, whose residents had never hesitated to appeal to the Privy Council in cases of unwelcome civic interference. After 1608, however, Blackfriars residents began to look to the aldermen for help when problems arose. In April 1612 the court received a petition from ‘divers inhabitants of Blackfryers’ complaining of ‘the stopping of a watercourse passing from the Glashowse yard toward Brydwell-dock, the which time out of mynde...hath been continued a general watercourse and is nowe stopped upp by one Edward Matthewes a Cutler’.¹²⁴ The aldermen acted promptly, ordering an investigation into the blocking up of what was essentially an open sewer. When a similar complaint arose from a resident of Duke’s Place, the City took the opportunity not only to investigate the problem there, but also to consider ‘the liberties of the Dukes Place and how the same may be reduced to a better forme of governance as the rest of the Cittie is governed’.¹²⁵ Later that year the City began a process that would leave it even more intimately involved in the administration of Duke’s Place.

The City had taken a particular interest in matters in Duke’s Place since the 1580s. In 1584 the aldermen had ordered an inquiry into the City’s rights in (or at least at the periphery of) the liberty. They wanted to know whether the ground ‘by London wall from Bevy’s Markes to Allgate...be thys Cyttyes or not and whether the Lord Maior ought to have jurisdiction there’.¹²⁶ Thomas Howard, who owned the liberty, had complained that one of the precinct’s gates had been walled over by the City, and the aldermen sought to discover whether the gate had been constructed before or after the dissolution of the priory. The following month the lord mayor and Lord Howard appeared before the lord chief justice and the master of the rolls to present their dispute.¹²⁷ Their decision is unknown, but soon afterwards the City made its first offer to buy the liberty from Howard.¹²⁸

In 1614 the residents of the Duke’s Place—by their own count, four or five hundred strong—approached the aldermen for help setting up a new parish. Reminding the City of the vacant ground where a public chapel had stood ‘within the memory of

¹²³ CLRO Rep 29, fo 227v.

¹²⁴ CLRO Rep 30, fo 311. 23 Apr 1612.

¹²⁵ CLRO Rep 31, fo 302v. 4 May 1614.

¹²⁶ CLRO Rep 21, fo 89v. 1 Oct 1584.

¹²⁷ CLRO Rep 21, fo 111. 12 Nov 1584.

¹²⁸ CLRO Rep 21, fo 253. 13 Jan 1586/7.

man’, the inhabitants prayed that the court ‘would graunt unto them the said parcell of ground...and thereon they will at their own chardge edefie a church or chappell’.¹²⁹ The aldermen, ‘always willing to further religious & pyous workes’ forwarded the request to the committee that administered the City’s property and asked them to determine whether such a grant would be feasible.¹³⁰ The committee’s decision has not survived, but seven years later the topic reemerged. By then, the land for the church had been allocated, and the City had reconsidered its role in the new parish. The aldermen—who had previously insisted that the new structure would be built at the charge of the parishioners—were now prepared ‘to consider of *all things* for and concerninge the new erectinge of a Church in the Duke's Place’.¹³¹ According to the 1633 edition of Stow’s Survey, the City came around only after Duke’s Place residents petitioned the archbishop of Canterbury ‘to make their desire and intention known to the King’s most excellent majesty...And the king finding the case so truly honest and religious...not onely gave the Lord Archbishop and the sutors both thankes and commendation, but also under his Hand and broad Seale authorized warrant for their proceeding’.¹³²

In February 1621/2 the aldermen directed the City’s chamberlain to ‘satisfie and pay all such monie as in the bill of charges is contained...for and about the building of the said Church’.¹³³ Over the following year, the chamberlain made three payments of £100 each to the inhabitants of Duke’s Place.¹³⁴ The City also made order for an annual payment of £13/6/8*d* ‘for the endowment of the Church lately built in the Dukes Place’.¹³⁵ Despite civic support, the parish faced early challenges. In the first week of December 1622 the City learned that ‘Mr Doctor Houghe hath sent an appeale to the Lordes Grace of Canterbury and obteyned an inhibicion of consecration of the church’.¹³⁶ Unsure what to do, the aldermen decided that ‘nothinge be further donne therein by this Court untill that appeale be ordered and decreed’.¹³⁷ Houghe’s obstructionism, however, did not significantly delay the consecration of the church. A note in the Repertories on 28 December 1622 indicates that it was to take place the next

¹²⁹ CLRO Rep 32, fo 44v. 26 Jan 1614/5.

¹³⁰ CLRO Rep 32, fo 44v. 26 Jan 1614/5.

¹³¹ CLRO Rep 36, fo 76. 28 Feb 1621/2. See also Noorthouck, *New History of London*, pp. 547-8. *Italics mine*.

¹³² J Stow, *A Survey of London* (London, 1633), p. 147.

¹³³ CLRO Rep 36, fo 76. 28 Feb 1621/2.

¹³⁴ CLRO Rep 36, fos 249, 280v; Rep 37, fo 108.

¹³⁵ CLRO Rep 37, fo 26v. 20 Nov 1622.

¹³⁶ CLRO Rep 37, fo 33. 3 Dec 1622. For more on the ecclesiastical status of the parish, see *Repertorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense. An Ecclesiastical Parochial History of the Diocese of London*, ed Newcourt, i.368.

¹³⁷ CLRO Rep 37, fo 33. 3 Dec 1622.

week, on 2 January, ‘in the presence of the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury’.¹³⁸ The City paid £22/13/4*d* for the consecration.¹³⁹

The City’s central role in the establishment (and funding) of St James Duke’s Place complemented its other roles within the precinct. As landlord and government, it had investigated construction in the precinct and handed down uncontested decisions on various issues.¹⁴⁰ From 1622 the City also became patron of the curacy in the new parish, giving it ongoing influence over the tone of religious life there. In February 1622/3 the aldermen exercised their advowson for the first time, naming Mr Thomas Woode to the rectory, subject to the approval of the common council.¹⁴¹ The City also took an active interest in the functioning of the parish in its first years. An April 1623 inquiry into its finances found that its first quarterly tithe brought in £15/10/3*d*. For a parish of four or five hundred, this was a reasonable sum.¹⁴² After learning the details of the St James’s financial situation, ‘this court well approving, thereof doth think fitt that the said some of money be duly paid every quarter unto the said Mr Wood’.¹⁴³

The following month, however, Hugh Hammersley, the alderman for Aldgate Ward, complained to the court that ‘the officers and inhabitants of the parishe of St James [have] refused to doe suche services and other things as other the inhabitantes within that warde doe performe conceivinge or desiring to have a priviledge and Goverment among themselves’.¹⁴⁴ The assembled aldermen declared that ‘the Inhabitantes of the said parishe of St James, ought att all tymes hereafter, upon any occation to be subject to the rule and commande of the Alderman of the said warde for the performance and execution of all suche things as are by him required of other the inhabitantes in other the parishes’.¹⁴⁵ The City entertained no doubts about its jurisdiction over Duke’s Place and did not bother with an appeal to the Privy Council for confirmation of its authority there. The completion of the parish extended the strength

¹³⁸ CLRO Rep 37, fo 57v. 28 Dec 1622.

¹³⁹ CLRO Rep 37, fo 85v. 23 Jan 1622/3.

¹⁴⁰ CLRO Rep 32, fo 356v; Rep 37, fo 26; Rep 42, fo 46.

¹⁴¹ CLRO Rep 37, fo 69. 1 Feb 1622/3.

¹⁴² Dr Archer’s summary of tithing in sixteenth-century London shows that small City parishes like St Helen Bishopsgate and St Mary Colechurch had annual tithe income in 1535 amounting to £19/9/6*d* and £26/7/11*d* respectively. That increased several times over (to £66/13*s* and £44, respectively) by 1638. This does not compare unfavourably with the equivalent annual tithe collected in St James Duke’s Place in 1623: £62/1*s*. I W Archer, ‘The Burden of Taxation on Sixteenth Century London’, *Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), p. 602.

¹⁴³ CLRO Rep 37, fo 144v. 8 April 1623.

¹⁴⁴ CLRO Rep 37, fo 169v. 15 May 1623; *The Aldermen of the City of London, temp. Henry III-1908*, ed A B Beaven, (London, 1908), p. 18.

¹⁴⁵ CLRO Rep 37, fo 169v. 15 May 1623.

of its case from primary freeholder and civic governor to ecclesiastical patron: a solid position by any measure.

Taxation

From almost the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, one of the greatest sources of friction between the City and the liberties centred on the responsibility of the latter to contribute to Parliamentary subsidies and military levies demanded of the former by the central government. While liberty residents and City leaders alike took other issues seriously, these contributions had an immediacy that other disputes lacked. They also had a tangible impact on those living in both jurisdictions. In the case of military levies, the Privy Council normally set the City's contribution at a certain level, the meeting of which would be made considerably easier by the inclusion of men and money from the exempt places. Inhabitants of those precincts, meanwhile, were eager to avoid such charges if at all possible. Despite unsympathetic responses from the royal government and a lack of any real precedent for their claims, liberty residents tenaciously argued that their jurisdictional franchises exempted them from liability to taxation by the royal government.

Before the dissolution, lay residents within religious precincts had contributed to the financial demands of the royal government. The residents of Blackfriars contributed to the 1522 loan to the king,¹⁴⁶ and a May 1535 list of parish subsidy collectors preserved in the Repertories of the Court of Aldermen includes collectors for the lay populations in Blackfriars and Bartholomew the Less.¹⁴⁷ A decade later, the City put forth a bill in Parliament 'that all the inhabitantes of this Cytie may be compelled to be contrybutors to all the charges of the same'.¹⁴⁸ It is clear that the City's intent was to reduce the freedoms enjoyed by liberty residents. The bill never passed into law, but that did not mean that the City was wholly unable to collect taxes from the exempt places. In 1587 the aldermen, concerned that the fifteenth was not being properly collected at St Bartholomew's, ordered that residents there would be assessed by 'the assessors of the same 15th in the ward of Farringdon without'.¹⁴⁹ There is no evidence that the residents resisted the new assessment procedures: the matter is not mentioned again by the aldermen, and the City certainly did not petition the Privy Council for further help.

¹⁴⁶ *LPHD*, 3(2), p. 1053, no. 2486.

¹⁴⁷ *CLRO Rep* 9, fos 157v-167v. 7 May 1535.

¹⁴⁸ *CLRO Rep* 11, fo 227v. 1 Oct 1545.

¹⁴⁹ *CLRO Rep* 21, fo 472v. 3 Oct 1587.

Things did not always go so smoothly, and the City relied on the support of the Privy Council to induce compliance among the residents of the liberties. When the royal government demanded the impress of ten thousand men from London in March 1587/8, the liberties refused to contribute. The City appealed to the council for support, and it duly sent letters to ‘the cheefe officers and others inhabitinge the Lybertyes of St Martyn’s, Great and Lyttle St Barthollomewes, Black Fryers, White Fryers, the Mynoryes and Chryst Church [Duke’s Place], within the Cytie of London,’ requiring them ‘to contribute unto the chardge’.¹⁵⁰ The following year, when another thousand men were required of the City, the Privy Council headed off a similar problem by laying the contributions it expected from the each exempt place: ‘St Martin le Grand 12, Black Fryers 10, Whyte Fryers 6, Chryst’s Church [Duke’s Place] 8, St Bartholemewes 6, St Katherine’s 10.’¹⁵¹ Such specificity was necessary; in its absence, liberty residents were likely to resist any assessment made at the discretion of the City. In 1591, the Privy Council addressed the liberties’ continued reluctance. They wrote to the lord mayor asking him to inform the officers of the exempt places that

by her Majesty’s comandement...they will cause, not onlie at this tyme but hereafter whensoever their shalbe any imprestes, such convenient numbers to be leavyed within the said privedged places as upon conference with you shalbe thought conveniente to make up the whole nomber allotted to the Cittie, and likewise to cause such somes of money to be collected on the inhabitantes in the said precincts as shalbe propcionable to that which is leavyed in other places of the Cittie.¹⁵²

The council went even further, ordering that ‘any persons at the tyme of imprestes, not ordinarily dwellers in the said exempt and priveledged places, shall retire themselves into those places, thereby to avoyde the service [were to be] severely punished for their lewd behaviour’.¹⁵³ The Privy Council continued to admonish the liberties to cooperate with the City on matters of taxation throughout the 1590s.¹⁵⁴ Their orders supporting the lord mayor, frequent as they were, did not represent a fundamental change in the relationship between the City and the liberties. The royal government was primarily concerned with maximising tax income. Its support therefore hinged on self-interest, and it did not expand the City’s inherent authority over the liberties. Indeed, the frequency with which the Privy Council intervened suggests that the City could not consistently exercise even the limited administrative responsibility granted to it by the council.

¹⁵⁰ *APC*, vol 15, p 428. 24 Mar 1587/8.

¹⁵¹ *APC*, vol 17, p 118. 28 Mar 1589.

¹⁵² *APC*, vol 21, pp 269-71. 11 July 1591.

¹⁵³ *APC*, vol 21, pp 269-71. 11 July 1591.

¹⁵⁴ *APC*, vol 24, pp 30-1 (28 Jan 1592/3); vol 29, pp 414-5 (29 December 1599).

The residents of Blackfriars, for example, refused to make payments to help in equipping three hundred men in 1599/1600.¹⁵⁵ The aldermen and the Privy Council together nominated three men ‘to take some indifferent reasonable course for the indifferent and equall assessmentes to be imposed upon the inhabitantes of the Blackfriars to contribute ratably with the citizens of this Cittie in all paymentes’.¹⁵⁶ The men were authorised to charge the residents of Blackfriars ‘for the arrearages by them heretofore owing for the like service’, and were charged to certify their doings to both the Court of Aldermen and the Privy Council.¹⁵⁷ The City encountered similar resistance from St Martin le Grand in July 1601. Unlike in previous cases, the City did not appeal to the Privy Council. Instead, the aldermen named a committee of prominent City merchants and aldermen to consider the matter in conference with the principal residents of the precinct.¹⁵⁸ Westminster Abbey’s close ties at court had previously helped St Martin’s rebuff civic appeals to the Privy Council, so the City may have hoped for greater success by approaching the liberty’s residents directly.

The City’s 1608 charter did not necessarily convince the residents of the annexed liberties to contribute to Parliamentary taxes levied on the City. In response to general resistance from those precincts in 1615, the lord mayor complained to the Privy Council. The council authorised him to confer with ‘some discreet persons from every libertie...for the settling of some order howe the inhabitants of the sayd liberties may be assessed for those occasions of publique service at all tymes hereafter, as shall be required’.¹⁵⁹ The meetings must have proven fruitful. When the residents of several liberties refused to contribute again in 1624/5, the City had a ready answer:

Forasmuch as the inhabitantes of the precinct of the Blacke Friars, and of Great and Little Bartholomewes do denie to paie or contribute to any assessment or taxation made by this Cittie for the publique good of the same, [seven aldermen were assigned to] consider of what they shall find in the Cittie Charter, and of what hath bin heretofore declared by the lordes of his Majesties Privie Councell and of some Judges touching priviledged places. And thereupon to advise what is fitt to bee done to bringe those places clayminge priviledge under rule, and government of this Cittie.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ I W Archer, *Gazetteer of Military Levies from the City of London, 1509-1603*, no 101, <<http://senior.keble.ox.ac.uk/fellows/extrapages/iarcher/levies.htm>>.

¹⁵⁶ CLRO Rep 25, fo 60. 13 Mar 1599/1600.

¹⁵⁷ CLRO Rep 25, fo 60. 13 Mar 1599/1600.

¹⁵⁸ CLRO Rep 25, fo 253. 16 Jul 1601.

¹⁵⁹ *APC*, vol 34, pp 153-4. 14 May 1615.

¹⁶⁰ CLRO Rep 38, fo 89. 1 Feb 1624/5.

The decision of the aldermen to investigate the constitutional and legal bases of its relationship with the liberties was a significant development. By shifting away from its traditional reliance on the Privy Council to provide relief on an *ad hoc* basis, the City assumed a more central role in the disputes. It was, in many ways, the practical application of the principles set forth in the City's 1608 charter. By the time Charles I began to exact ship money from the metropolis in 1634 the responsibility of the liberties to contribute to public charges alongside the City was well-established.¹⁶¹ When the residents of St Martin le Grand asked to be assessed for ship money with Middlesex instead of London, even the advocacy of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster failed to affect the resolve of the Privy Council.¹⁶²

Building Control and Environmental Regulation

As in the case of taxation, the City could often count on the backing of the royal government when it attempted to regulate construction in the liberties. In order to secure the support of king or council, the City cited the detrimental effects of unwanted development on social order. The City's involvement in regulating construction should also remind us that London's religious houses did not all give way to liberties after the dissolution. Only ten of the seventeen religious foundations within or adjacent to the City in 1530 continued to claim privileges in the decades that followed. Five of those were annexed by the City in 1608 (Blackfriars, Whitefriars, St Bartholomew the Greater, St Bartholomew the Less, and Holy Trinity Aldgate), the privileges of two others were never asserted coherently (Charterhouse and Crutched Friars). Only those liberties whose franchises were protected by a corporate entity with ties to the royal government continued to enjoy their franchises after 1608. The hospital of St Katherine was able to protect that liberty until its development as docks in the 1810s. St Martin le Grand remained under the protection of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster until the 1820s, and the Minories continued as part of the liberties of the Tower of London until its jurisdictional privileges were ended by the Local Government Act, 1888.

In 1548 the City became concerned about a wall under construction in Greyfriars, which had been turned over to the City two years earlier as the site of Christ's Hospital. The aldermen sent the lord mayor to 'veve the grounde at Christchurge [Greyfriars] for the which the varyance ys nowe arrysen'.¹⁶³ A week later, the aldermen

¹⁶¹ CLRO Rep 53, fo 309v.

¹⁶² TNA SP 16: 306/75-6, 320/68, 341/54, 367/20, 428/54, 433/9.

¹⁶³ CLRO Rep 11, fo 499v. 2 Oct 1548.

agreed that ‘the Chamberlenn shall cause the walle lately erected...to be caste down to morrowe erlye in the morninge by 2 good & honest strong laborers’ and that he should have ‘some constables secretly in a redynes to see the kinges peace kepte yf nede shall requyre’.¹⁶⁴ The lord mayor asserted his authority in Greyfriars early on; in the century that followed, there is no evidence that residents there ever resisted the City or its officers.

The relationship between new building and social order was a frequent source of concern for the royal government. After 1580 Elizabeth and her successors attempted to regulate the growth of the capital through a series of royal proclamations. These regulations prohibited both construction on new foundations and the subdivision of existing dwellings into smaller tenements. Although the geographical scope of the proclamations varied—restricting building within as few as three or as much as ten miles of the City of London—there was no system of supervision ‘sufficiently rigid to ensure obedience even in the smallest of these areas’.¹⁶⁵

The first proclamation was addressed to ‘the Lord Mayor of the city of London, and all other officers having authority in the same, and also all justices of the peace, lords and bailiffs of liberties not being within the jurisdiction of the said Lord Mayor’ in July 1580, but the vigilance of local authorities was relatively futile, since only the attorney general could prosecute offenders, and then only before Star Chamber.¹⁶⁶ The second Elizabethan proclamation, which was also addressed to both the City and local officers in suburbs and liberties, created an automatic mechanism for referring offenders to the Privy Council: ‘And if any shall henceforth offend [they] shall be committed to prison until they find sufficient sureties for their appearance in the Start Chamber to answer their contempts there, and for their good behavior in the mean season.’¹⁶⁷

Although strictly worded, the proclamations were applied flexibly. It was clear from the beginning that no amount of regulation would stop new construction in London, and so enforcement focused on slowing growth and prosecuting particularly egregious transgressions. By James’s accession it was already becoming evident that if prosecution of violators did not stop new construction, it could at least bring some revenue to the Crown. The first Jacobean proclamation, issued in 1605, included building

¹⁶⁴ CLRO Rep 11, fo 503. 9 Oct 1548.

¹⁶⁵ Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, p. 91.

¹⁶⁶ *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, eds P L Hughes and J F Larkin, 3 vols, (London, 1969), ii.466-8, Proclamation 649 (7 Jul 1580).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, iii.245-8, Proclamation 815 (22 Jun 1602).

standards for new development in addition to reiterating previous restrictions.¹⁶⁸ James went on to issue eleven further building proclamations. It was not until April 1615—in advance of James’s eighth proclamation—that the Privy Council named a standing body of men to act as commissioners for building, part of a self-conscious effort to combat the inconsistent enforcement of the proclamations.¹⁶⁹ In November 1619 the commissioners for building made a concerted effort to enlist the help of constables in Middlesex and Surrey, and they asked the lord mayor to do the same for the constables within the City.¹⁷⁰ By the time Charles I took the throne, the proclamations had become little more than a revenue tool.¹⁷¹

In the end, government action was totally unable to stem the influx of ‘foreigners’ (as English-born non-Londoners were known) into the capital. William Baer argues that Tudor and Stuart attempts to limit the growth of the capital neither stemmed the flow of immigrants nor improved conditions in the metropolis. Instead they actually worsened the problems, since they resulted in housing shortages, over-crowding and increased rents.¹⁷² In 1565/6 the Court of Aldermen attempted to ban foreign beggars from the streets of London.¹⁷³ Local authorities also tried to use the poor laws enacted by Parliament in 1597 and 1601 in conjunction with anti-vagrancy statutes to force poor migrants back to their parishes of origin for relief, turning ‘honest immigrants into vagrants by denying them residence rights’.¹⁷⁴ In retrospect all these restrictions—reasonable responses to the dramatic increase in metropolitan population by the standards of the day—were doomed to failure. Despite the February 1595/6 complaints of the Privy Council to Middlesex JPs, building restrictions were not totally irrelevant.¹⁷⁵ For all their strong words, the Privy Council was pragmatic in its application of proclamations and statutes barring new construction. In August 1591 a Blackfriars

¹⁶⁸ T G Barnes, ‘The Prerogative and Environmental Control of Building in the Early Seventeenth Century: The Lost Opportunity’, *California Law Review*, 58 (1970), p. 1545.

¹⁶⁹ APC 1615-6, pp. 121-2. The commission included ‘the whole body of the Privie Counsell, the Lord Maior, the Lord Hobbard, the Lord Cheife Baron, the three other learned Barons, the Attorney Generall, the King’s two Sargeantes, the Solicitor General, Sir Henry Wotton, Sir George More, the two Chamberlains of the Exchequer, Sir Thomas Benet, Sir William Craven, Sir John Swinarton Sir Lionel Cranfield, Sir Arthur Ingram, Mr John Dacombe, Mr John Calvert, Mr Francis Cottingham, Mr Francis Mingay, Mr Henry Spillar, Mr Edmund Dobleday, Mr Thomas Fanshaw, Mr Thomas Watson, Mr John Mayle and Mr George Lowe, or any five of them, and in case of discharge Mr Secretary Winwood, Mr Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Master of the Rolls, Sir Thomas Lake, the foure Barons and the Kinge’s Counsell or any two of them to be two.’

¹⁷⁰ *Rememb. Index*, p. 47.

¹⁷¹ Barnes, ‘Prerogative and Environmental Control of Building’, p. 1350.

¹⁷² W C Baer, ‘Housing the Poor and Mechanick Class in Seventeenth Century London’, *London Journal*, 25:2 (2000), p. 13.

¹⁷³ CLRO Rep 16, fo 1.

¹⁷⁴ Beier, *Masterless Men*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁵ See p. 28, above.

goldsmith applied to the council for a dispensation from the regulations. In granting his request, the council observed that the land on parcel of land had ‘greate heapes of soil and filth laid there, which in hot weather is very daungerous to breed infection’ and to order him ‘to inhibit such common cariadge of soile and rubbish to the place’.¹⁷⁶ Occasional, regulated development posed less of a threat to public order than the accumulated filth posed to public health.

There is no evidence that the City seized on the new regulations to interfere in the liberties. When the first proclamation was issued in July 1580, the City had just been reprimanded by the Privy Council for attempting to assert authority over the Blackfriars. So when Henry Naylor erected a set of small tenements and a narrow road through the old cloister at Blackfriars in July 1581, the City did not move to challenge him—his neighbours did so themselves. Worried that the development would pester their neighbourhood with ‘sundry poore people’ and increase the danger of disease there, they appealed to the Privy Council. The council set up an inquiry, suggesting not only that ‘the cottages maie be put downe and the highe waye barred uppe, but also [that] Nailour or any other pretendinge title in any part of the said Cloister maie be bounde hereafter not to erecte or practise anything to the offence of the inhabitauntes’.¹⁷⁷ Naylor was an ongoing nuisance in Blackfriars, but the inhabitants of that liberty had a long history of inviting outside authorities to arbitrate matters of concern there. Even in the absence of a formalised system of government, the communities within liberties could press for compliance within their borders

The City became more confident in its ability to control illegal building after it received its 1608 charter. Even then, however, the aldermen tended to act through appeals to the Privy Council rather than on its own initiative. In July 1613 the ‘Recorder and divers Aldermen of the cittie of London’ complained to the council that a man by the name of Sturgis had recently leased a large house in Whitefriars, only to subdivide it into three or four small tenements, ‘to the great pesteringe and inconvenience of that place’.¹⁷⁸ The Privy Council immediately authorised the aldermen to ‘take present order, aswell for the stay of anie newe buildinge to bee there erected, as alsoe for devydinge of the house into anie more tennementes then hath ben heretofore used there’ and to refer Sturgis and other future offenders to the council to ‘aunswere their contempt’.¹⁷⁹ The

¹⁷⁶ *APC*, vol 21, pp 367-8. 7 August 1591.

¹⁷⁷ *APC*, vol 13, pp 76-7. 14 Jun 1581.

¹⁷⁸ *APC*, vol 33, pp 165-6. 29 Jul 1613.

¹⁷⁹ *APC*, vol 33, pp 165-6. 29 Jul 1613.

City even began to report development in areas that remained outside its jurisdiction. In 1618 it submitted to the council a ‘list of such principall buildinges as have ben erected contrary to his Majesty’s proclamacions’ which included two tenements under construction in the Minories.¹⁸⁰ After investigating, the council declared that on account of the new development ‘the passage for carrages necessarylie required for the Office of his Majesty’s Ordinance is stopped and hindred’.¹⁸¹ We should not, however, assume that the decision to raze the illegally-built structures in the Minories represented a recognition of the City’s role in enforcement there. The Ordnance Office in the Minories had recently suffered under a corrupt administrator, and the Privy Council spent the latter part of the 1610s attempting to re-establish regularity there. The council ordered that ‘the foresaid building be forthwith pulled downe to the ground and utterly demolished so as the example thereof...may deterr others from presumeing to offend in the like kinde hereafter’.¹⁸²

When the Privy Council intervened to halt Henry Naylor’s 1581 development in the Blackfriars, it cited two motivations. One was the fear that it would bring in ‘verie lowde personnes, to the breache of all good order and peril unto the dwellers within the said Fryers’; the other was the ‘danger that may followe if the infection of the Plage or other disease might come amongeste them’.¹⁸³ The aldermen harboured similar fears. In the eyes of civic and royal governors alike, the incessant growth of the capital posed a threat to public order in itself, but it also increased the likelihood of destabilising pandemic disease. The two concerns were united by what Thomas Barnes describes as ‘an almost pathological fear of rebellion’ among the elite.¹⁸⁴ It is important to understand that the regulation of building in the capital was underpinned by these fears.

While historians disagree on the stability of London (and England generally) during the early modern period, most scholars acknowledge that the rapid social and economic changes of the sixteenth century accentuated tensions and (especially in the eyes of governors) threatened the traditional order in new ways. The fear was particularly well-developed in London, where ‘a few could raise many, rumour turn to action, and

¹⁸⁰ *APC*, vol 36, p 245. 15 Aug 1618.

¹⁸¹ The Ordnance Office had relocated to the Minories under Elizabeth, and its operations coexisted there alongside a thriving lay community.

¹⁸² *APC*, vol 36, p 458. 23 May 1619.

¹⁸³ *APC*, vol 13, pp 76-7.

¹⁸⁴ Barnes, ‘Prerogative and Environmental Control of Building’, p. 1341.

threats to violence'.¹⁸⁵ Wat Tyler's 1381 Peasants' Revolt and the apprentices' uprising on May Day 1517 continued to haunt the capital. The 1601 Essex Rebellion and the later events of the Civil War underlined London's potential as a tinderbox, but the century after the dissolutions is remarkable for the absence of violent unrest in the face of the rising population and prices, religious tensions and social dislocation. If the Repertories and the *Acts of the Privy Council* offer any surprising evidence in such matters, it is that the liberties were a relatively minor source of worry in the context of metropolitan order generally. The regular supply of food—the assize of bread and preparation for and reaction to grain shortages—receives, by multiples, more attention between 1540 and 1640 than do the exempt places.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, these sources make it clear that fears about order in the liberties were almost always linked to similar fears for the metropolis as a whole, including the City of London itself. Especially in the view of the royal government, the liberties were no more likely to be the source of unrest than any other part of the capital. Occasional incidents were a minor nuisance to the aldermen, but major concerns were rare. When they did surface, the Privy Council was more than willing to intervene. This required administrative cooperation, and it may even have pricked the City's pride, but it had, at most, a marginal effect on the quest for order in the metropolis.

The City was trapped in a difficult position. Its leaders were sincerely committed to maintaining a safe and orderly community, but where their authority was questioned, in the liberties and the suburbs, they relied almost entirely on the cooperation of franchise-holders and local residents. This was particularly true when the City was dealing with liberties that continued to be controlled by religious organisations. When the aldermen became aware of a series of offences within the cathedral precinct, for example, they authorised a representative to 'goe to the deane of Powles, and to gyve him notyce of that dysorder, and to praye him to gyve suche remedye therein...as he shall see meete, for Christian religion and good order'.¹⁸⁷ Without the cooperation of the dean, however, the lord mayor was powerless. Appeals to the Privy Council were unpredictable when liberties maintained ties to the Church. The dean and chapter of St Paul's cathedral—like those of the collegiate church at Westminster and the directors of St Katherine's hospital—jealously protected their franchises.

¹⁸⁵ S Brigden, *New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603*. (London, 2000), p. 174.

¹⁸⁶ CLRO Repts 9-56, *passim*.

¹⁸⁷ CLRO Rep 19, fo 18v. Nov 1575.

Southwark offered further complications to the City, since its authority there was challenged not only by residents of liberties like Paris Garden and the Clink, but also by the Surrey authorities. In 1587 the residents of Southwark complained to the Privy Council—not the City—that the playhouses on the south bank of the Thames, ‘especiallie within the Libertie of the Clincke’, were ignoring the ban on Sunday playing.¹⁸⁸ The council ordered the Surrey JPs to ‘take such stricte order for the staying of the said disorder as is allreadie taken by the Lord Maiour within the Liberties of the Citie’.¹⁸⁹ A similar order was sent to the justices for Middlesex, but it did not name specific areas of concern. Although the moral opposition of City fathers to playing is well-documented, we should also remember that the crowds assembled in playhouses spurred the authorities’ very real concerns about crime and public health. As David Johnson points out, City authorities ‘were against playhouses because playhouses attracted what, in the absence of a police force, was most difficult to control—an excited crowd’.¹⁹⁰ Civic authorities and Surrey justices vied for precedence in keeping peace in the borough. While battles were largely spurred by the jealousy with which officials guarded their spheres of jurisdiction, there were also financial incentives to claim such a time-consuming responsibility.¹⁹¹ When public order was at stake, however, the City was often willing to compromise. In January 1604/5 the lord mayor and his justices for Southwark met with the Surrey JPs ‘to conferre together for reformation of certaine abuses in the said boroughe’.¹⁹² Such cooperation may not have prevented future tensions, but it was a necessary expedient for keeping order in the short term.

The City’s position was strengthened when concerns about unrest ran high. In such circumstances, the Privy Council relied on civic officials to spearhead efforts to keep the peace throughout the capital. In April 1570 the aldermen appealed to the council for ‘there ayde and assistance for th’executing of politique orders and policies, as they have use to do for keepinge the people in good order within this Citie’.¹⁹³ In other instances, the Privy Council took the initiative. Fearing that ‘certaine apprentices and other idle persons’ planned to ‘renew their lewd assemble together...for some bad and miceivous intencion’ at Midsummer 1592, the council sent letters to the lord mayor and

¹⁸⁸ *APC*, vol 15, pp 271-2.

¹⁸⁹ *APC*, vol 15, pp 271-2. 29 October 1587. A similar letter was sent to the Middlesex JPs, though it did not mention any specific playhouse.

¹⁹⁰ Johnson, *Southwark and the City*, p. 224.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 234-46.

¹⁹² CLRO Rep 26, fo 497v. 15 Jan 1604/5.

¹⁹³ CLRO Rep 17, fo 10. 27 Apr 1570.

to representatives in seven liberties and a number of suburban areas.¹⁹⁴ The letters' recipients were charged to 'send for the constables and some of the chiefest and discreetest inhabitautes...that there maye be a stronge and substancyall watche kepte'.¹⁹⁵ Through its action in this case the Privy Council identified those in positions of authority in each liberty. Several of the recipients held no office in their precincts; they were merely men of stature there. The council's charge reinforced their personal authority and made clear their responsibility for maintaining order in their respective neighbourhoods.

The City was in a more authoritative position after 1608. After successfully carrying out an arrest in Duke's Place in 1611, the aldermen contemplated its importance as precedent. Conscious of its expanding authority within the liberties, the City sought to articulate that authority in a coherent way. They asked the City's 'learned counsell' to formulate a policy explaining the City's recently-established rights in such cases. Specifically, the aldermen asked the counsellors to 'consider what direcions are fitt to be given to the said Inhabitantes for orderinge & demeanynge of themselves in matters of arrest made within the said place & in other thinges concernynge the privileges of this Citty'.¹⁹⁶

Concerns about sanitation and its effects on public health were central to the City's relationship with the exempt places in its midst. They reflected not only the desire to avoid pandemic disease, but also a fear that outbreaks could push social tensions to the breaking point.¹⁹⁷ While contemporaries did not understand the precise causes of disease, they understood that epidemics took no account of jurisdictional boundaries, and that an outbreak anywhere threatened the entire conurbation. They were also aware of the severity with which plague struck impoverished, overcrowded and dirty parts of the capital. Paul Slack demonstrates that the intensity of plague outbreaks in alleys compared to main streets 'in some of the inner city parishes can be plotted; and the same picture of social and hence topographical polarization in the incidence of plague can be seen in variations in mortality between parishes'.¹⁹⁸ The approach to dealing with plague

¹⁹⁴ *APC*, vol 22, p 549.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.* The letter regarding the Clink and Paris Garden were addressed to Mr Gardiner, Mr Bowier and Mr Parker; those for St Katherine's and East Smithfield were addressed to the Lieutenant of the Tower and the Master of St Katherine's; Blackfriars' letters were sent to Lord Cobham; those for Whitefriars were sent to Sir Thomas Sherley; and the Bailiff of Westminster was charged with organising the watch for St Martin le Grand, along with Westminster and the Strand.

¹⁹⁶ CLRO Rep 30, fo 114. 7 May 1611.

¹⁹⁷ P Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1985), pp. 303-10.

¹⁹⁸ P Slack, 'Metropolitan Government in Crisis: The Response to Plague', in A L Beier and R Finlay (eds), *London 1500-1700: The Making of the Metropolis* (London, 1986), p. 62.

became more formalised over time. Before 1540, the focus of the civic government was on *ad hoc* responses to outbreaks of epidemic disease.¹⁹⁹ The bills of mortality—first introduced in 1532 and expanded under Elizabeth—helped the City and later the royal government to understand the progression of infection in the capital. By the 1580s the Royal College of Physicians successfully pushed the Privy Council to adopt regulations for responding to epidemics.²⁰⁰ Although some of the regulations—particularly those related to the quarantine of infected houses—encountered popular resistance, they at least helped local officers approach outbreaks more coherently.

There was nevertheless considerable flexibility built in to the system for responding to plague. In 1603, plague struck the eastern edge of the City with particular force. Seventy-seven Minories residents died that year, more than five times the annual average during the preceding decade.²⁰¹ By June, the seriousness of the problem was clear, and the Court of Aldermen decided to pay £1/10s weekly to the parish of St Botolph Aldgate ‘during the tyme of this present infeccion of the plague, to be disturbuted...amongest such poore people within the same whose howses are or shalbe within that tyme infected with the plague’.²⁰² Such generosity on the part of the aldermen, contingent though it was upon the effective quarantining of the sick, was unique to the summer of 1603. It suggests both the poverty of the residents of St Botolph Aldgate and the severity of the outbreak in the parish, which abutted the Minories. By the 1630s responses to plague were clearly more advanced than they had been a century before. In 1631 the king’s physician Theodore de Mayerne proposed the creation of a standing committee of civic authorities, Privy Councillors and bishops that ‘could deal both with epidemics and with the conditions which produced them—vagrancy, overcrowding, bad hygiene and inadequate food supplies.’²⁰³ Mayerne’s suggestion went unheeded, but it suggests that contemporary professionals understood more of the factors that contributed to the spread of disease than their predecessors had a century before.

A more mundane concern was the public nuisance caused by the improper disposal of waste. The sewers of early modern London—advanced for their day—were little more than the central gutters of the streets. Householders were responsible for cleaning the street in their immediate vicinity, sweeping filth into piles. Parish authorities generally arranged for a raker to collect the piles of waste into a laystall at the edge of the

¹⁹⁹ See for example, CLRO Jo 14, fo 106.

²⁰⁰ Slack, ‘Metropolitan Government in Crisis’, p. 65.

²⁰¹ GL MS 9238.

²⁰² CLRO Rep 26, fo 157v.

²⁰³ Slack, *Impact of Plague*, p. 219.

parish. Ideally, these laystalls were emptied regularly by nightsoilmen, the unenvied labourers who carried the filth farther afield—often to the nearest waterway. In places where refuse collected—at the banks of the Rivers Fleet and Thames or in any neighbourhood laystall emptied irregularly—the stench can easily be imagined. Mark Jenner suggests that the one theme connects early modern efforts to regulate the disposal of waste: the preservation of the flow of water: ‘whether it was animal guts, mud, building rubbish, human, equine or porcine excrement that was being discharged into the streams and channels, mattered far less than that these were blocking water flow.’ Time and time again offences were described as being to the great obstruction of the current, as preventing the free passage of water or as clogging the sewers.²⁰⁴

The modern system for disposing of waste developed only slowly. Although commissions for sewers were appointed sporadically periodically from 1427, the first sewer commissions for the metropolis as a whole were not named until Elizabeth’s reign, and they were not established permanently until 1667. The over-arching of sewers did not occur on any large scale until the late seventeenth century.²⁰⁵ Concerns about the state of the River Fleet, however, meant that commissioners for that waterway and its tributaries were named regularly from the late fifteenth century onwards.²⁰⁶ By the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign, the state of the Fleet was so bad that the Court of Common council instituted more frequent civic taxes to pay for its cleansing.²⁰⁷ The spike in mayoral precepts governing the disposal of waste in the later sixteenth century also had its roots in the particularly virulent outbreak of plague that had struck the capital in 1563.²⁰⁸ The frequency with which the sewers were to be cleaned increased over the period as well. Civic regulations called for them to be cleaned two or three times weekly in the 1540s, but by the turn of the seventeenth century that had increased to once or twice daily.²⁰⁹

It should be remembered that problems of sanitation were not confined to the liberties. In January 1609/10, the aldermen were asked to intervene when the scavengers living in Aldersgate Ward refused to pay parishioners’ rates.²¹⁰ Waste disposal was a challenge for the entire metropolis, as it would continue to be into the nineteenth

²⁰⁴ M S R Jenner, 'Early Modern English Conceptions of Cleanliness and Dirt as Reflected in the Environmental Regulations of London, c.1530-c.1700' (U of Oxford DPhil thesis, 1991), p. 375.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 366, 381.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 111, 367-8.

²⁰⁷ CLRO Jo 20, fo 64v.

²⁰⁸ Jenner, 'Early Modern English Conceptions of Cleanliness', p. 114.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 117; CLRO Rep 26, fo 332.

²¹⁰ CLRO Rep 29, fo 154. 9 Jan 1609/10.

century. The churchwardens in the nearby Minories, on the other hand, were particularly conscientious about their waste disposal system. They had the liberty's laystall repaired in 1575. When the repairs proved unsuitable, they had it rebuilt entirely in 1579, and they kept close watch over the raker they hired to clear it.²¹¹ That waste accumulated in or near other liberties was an unfortunate accident of geography. Whitefriars, St Katherine's, the Clink and Paris Garden all stood at or near the banks of the Thames, and Blackfriars had the misfortune to stand at the confluence of the Fleet and the Thames. When problems occurred, we can be sure that no one regretted them as much as those in adjacent neighbourhoods, whether liberties or not.

The records of the Court of Aldermen and the Privy Council suggest that those who complained about improperly removed sewage were often liberty residents. In 1600 a laystall was constructed in Bridewell, on the bank of the Fleet opposite the Blackfriars residence of Lord Henry Seymour. Seymour petitioned the Privy Council for relief. In conjunction with the City—which had jurisdiction over Bridewell—the council shut down the waterside sewage dump. The following spring, however, it was being used again. The council asked lord mayor to intervene immediately to dismantle the laystall, 'so neare and directly under the windowes of his Lordship's principall lodgings: Besides the loathsome prospect thereof the savour is like to breede infection amongst his familie and make his house altogether unfitted to inhabit, which wee hould too great a wronge to be offered to any, and much more to a nobleman of his quallitie'.²¹² Mistaken in connecting its foul odour to disease, the Privy Council still had legitimate reasons to order the destruction of the unauthorised laystall.

In February 1610/11 five men living in Whitefriars (a brewer and four woodmongers) asked the aldermen to investigate a laystall interfering with passage through Water Lane to the Whitefriars Dock: 'the lane is so insufficiencyntly paved and the docke so stopped with soile & filth that the landinge there is very much hindered'.²¹³ The City investigated the matter and ordered the removal of the waste. In 1631, the residents of Black and Whitefriars joined together to complain that, contrary to their wishes, waste was continually dumped 'at the Blackfriars and Whitefriars staires', both of which led down into the River Thames. In this case, their complaint was not to the Privy Council but to the City. The aldermen assigned three of their own to 'view the annoyances...and

²¹¹ LPL MS 3390, fos 48, 54, 86, 89.

²¹² *APC*, vol 31, pp 268-9. 9 April 1601.

²¹³ CLRO Rep 30, fo 69. 21 Feb 1610/11.

consider how the same may be moved and reformed'.²¹⁴ Such complaint was not unprecedented among the residents of Whitefriars. Two years before the City assumed jurisdiction over the precinct in 1608, residents there asked the aldermen to intervene on their behalf. John Taylor, a resident of the City, was dumping 'ordure and dong' in Whitefriars, 'to the annoyance of the inhabitants thereabouts'. The court enjoined him to carry the waste 'away from thence out of the liberties of this Cittye'.²¹⁵ Another laystall dispute earned Whitefriars the first civic attention after the annexations by the Jacobean charter; residents there did not resist the City's intervention.

On other occasions, the aldermen took initiative, investigating and resolving waste problems in or near exempt places. Most jurisdictions (parishes and liberties alike) were eager to remove waste quickly and efficiently. When eagerness resulted in the disposal of filth into bordering areas, tensions understandably rose. The Court of Aldermen was the natural adjudicator of many such disputes. In 1604, for example, they ordered Stephen Soame to inspect a sewer running out of the Minories to ensure it was not illicitly dumping waste into the City.²¹⁶ In 1622 the aldermen ordered an inspection of the common sewer that ran along one edge of Duke's place, and asked the inspectors to determine 'to whom the same ditche belonges and by whome of right the same ought to be cleansed and consider what the charge thereof may bee'.²¹⁷ Likewise, when a dispute emerged in 1636 between Whitefriars and the neighbouring parish of St Bride over Water Lane and the Whitefriars Dock, the aldermen stepped in.²¹⁸ After investigating, they decided that the parishioners of St Bride, who 'for the space of one and twenty years had quietly and peaceably enjoyed from the Lord Maior a lease of water lane & the docke', were responsible for the expense of cleaning the dock and paving the lane.²¹⁹ It naturally followed, according to the aldermen, that they should also have the right to deposit their soil at the laystall there, to which the residents of Whitefriars had objected.

Aliens

Over the course of the sixteenth century, some of London's liberties became well-known for housing large numbers immigrants. Of course, not all liberties attracted aliens. Neither Duke's Place nor Whitefriars ever became a centre of immigrant

²¹⁴ CLRO Rep 45, fo 491. 10 Sept 1631.

²¹⁵ CLRO Rep 27, fo 170. 6 Mar 1605/6.

²¹⁶ CLRO Rep 26, fo 332v. 24 Apr 1604.

²¹⁷ CLRO Rep 36, fo 177v. 25 Jun 1622.

²¹⁸ CLRO Rep 50, fo 159v. 27 Mar 1636.

²¹⁹ CLRO Rep 50, fo 189-190v. Apr 1636.

settlement, while some parts of the City did, strongly suggesting that factors other than jurisdictional status influenced the settlement choices of strangers.²²⁰ For many contemporaries, however, the visibility of the stranger populations in places like Blackfriars and St Martin's was enough to make the liberties suspect. Understanding the role of immigrants in the early modern metropolis is therefore central to understanding the liberties. To do so requires familiarity with both the published *Returns of Aliens* and the extensive body of secondary work that has been published on aliens in the metropolis.

London's population grew at an alarming rate between 1500 and 1700, but each year more people died there than were born. The imbalance was overwhelmed, however, by the number of people moving into London annually. Most of these new Londoners came from within the realm. Work by scholars such as E A Wrigley documents the process that brought tens of thousands of migrants from the English provinces to early modern London.²²¹ Lien Luu, however, argues that Wrigley overestimated the economic importance of these 'foreigners', as English migrants to the capital were known. Instead, Luu stresses the new skills and technical expertise that continental immigrants—known at the time as 'strangers' or 'aliens'—brought with them.²²² For many native Londoners, neither new skills nor an increased customer base could outweigh the competition posed by these newcomers. Since aliens were more easily identified than English-born foreigners, they faced more acute hostility. Irene Scouloudi, who analysed returns from 1583 to 1639, concludes that the fear of strangers in the liberties 'was but a dreadful chimera', but that does not mean it was not a powerful force at the time.²²³

If one characteristic tied together the experience of aliens in early modern London, it was the variability of their reception by their English hosts. Joseph Ward and others have pointed out that feelings toward aliens ran the gamut from antipathy to sympathy, with a heavy dose of ambivalence between the two. These feelings varied from group to group within the metropolis, but they also varied over time. Nigel Goose suggests that the polarization in English urban society goes a long way toward explaining

²²⁰ See figure 6.1, p. 216 below for a comparison of the alien populations in the liberties and in the four City wards most popular among immigrants.

²²¹ E A Wrigley, 'A Simple Model of London's Importance in Changing English Society and Economy 1650-1750', *Past and Present*, 37 (1967), pp. 44-70.

²²² L B Luu, *Immigrants and the Industries of London, 1500-1700* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 3. According to Luu, the periods of greatest opportunity followed the exodus of religious refugees from the continent in 1567 and again in the late 1580s.

²²³ I Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers in the Metropolis, 1593, 1627, 1635, 1639: A Study of an Active Minority* (London, 1985), p. 80.

the restrictive regulations forced on foreign immigrants.²²⁴ In theory, the economic activities of aliens were substantially restricted, and their behaviour was closely monitored. In practice, however, the policies followed by the civic and royal governments were far from systematic. As Irene Scouloudi writes, strangers, 'if circumspect, or useful to the City or central government, or when disturbances were not stirred up by trouble-makers, were left to their own devices.'²²⁵

Both early modern Londoners and modern-day historians have assumed that the aliens who took up residence in liberties did so primarily to avoid governmental oversight. According to Luu, 'besides offering accommodation in central, prized districts of the city, these liberties and exempted places also provided extensive immunities, making them the favourite resort for both non-freemen and religious dissidents.'²²⁶ There is some truth in this assertion, but it belies the complex considerations that drew strangers to the liberties (and indeed the complexity of the liberties themselves).

There was, of course, a variety of opinions on aliens in London, but it is difficult to deny that intense displays of xenophobia, rare though they were, tainted the city as a whole. The most notorious of these displays was the 'Evil May Day' of 1517. According to Hall's *Chronicle*, 1,300 Londoners gathered at St Martin le Grand to protest the supposed special treatment of aliens by the royal government. The aliens living in St Martin's began hurling projectiles into the crowd from there windows while

Sir Thomas More, perswading the rebellious persons to cease: insomuch as at length, one Nicholas Dennis, a serjeant at armes, being therefore hurt, in a furie cried downe with them, and then all the misruled persons ran to the doores and the windowes of the houses within St Martins, and spoiled all that they found.²²⁷

May Day 1517 was the most violent eruption of anti-alien sentiment in early modern London. It was certainly not the only manifestation of such sentiments, but it had significant effects in its own right.²²⁸ Changes in European trade and politics during the late fifteenth century had already begun to erode the historically prominent position of

²²⁴ N Goose, 'Introduction', in N Goose and L B Luu (eds), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Brighton, 2005), p. 14.

²²⁵ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 45.

²²⁶ L B Luu, 'Natural-Born Versus Stranger-Born Subjects: Aliens and Their Status in Elizabethan London', in N Goose and L B Luu (eds), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Brighton, 2005), pp. 69-70.

²²⁷ E Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & Yorke* (London, 1548), Hen VIII, fo 61v. Hall also included a poignant statement of contemporary xenophobia. He quotes one of the chaplains of St Mary Spital as saying 'the straungers compass all the cytye rounde aboute, in Southwarke, in Westmynster, Temple Barre, Holborne, Sayncte Martynes...and Sayncte Kathyerynes, and forstall the market, so that no good thyng for them commeth to the market; which is the cause that Englishmen want and starve'; *Ibid.*, fo 60.

²²⁸ M J Holmes, 'Evil May-Day 1517: The Story of a Riot', *History Today*, 15 (1965), pp. 642-8.

Italians in London. The May Day riots, which targeted Italians particularly, accelerated that process. Lien Luu notes a sharp drop in the number of Italian immigrants in the decades that followed.²²⁹

In the two centuries after Evil May Day the nature of immigration to England changed drastically. Soon after Henry's break from Rome, England began to attract religious refugees, who quickly began to outnumber the older group of immigrants that had arrived in London for primarily economic reasons. As the English Reformation progressed, and especially after Elizabeth's accession, the issue of religion further complicated relations between aliens and their neighbours. Nigel Goose points out that 'their reception was shaped by the very fact of their Protestantism, but also by the perception of the economic benefits they could bring on the one hand, and the economic competition that they posed within the context of an increasingly polarized society on the other.'²³⁰ The stranger churches founded under Edward and revived by Elizabeth helped to remind Londoners of the confessional bonds they shared with immigrants, but they had unanticipated consequences as well. When strangers congregated to attend services at the French or Dutch churches—both in Broad Street Ward—Englishmen were made aware just how many strangers were in the City. The effect was to stimulate a wave of hostile rumours about the vast numbers of strangers in the city, who made easy scapegoats for high prices and food shortages.²³¹

Hostility ran particularly high when periods of economic or social stress coincided with a large influx of continental migrants. In the 1580s, such a coincidence culminated 'in harassment by informers and prosecution by guilds, threats of violence, increasing curtailments of aliens' economic activities and financial exactions.'²³² Even during such periods of tension, however, some immigrants fared better than others. Irene Scouloudi points out that long residence did much to make a stranger acceptable in the eyes of his neighbours.²³³ But even if immigrants to early modern London only rarely experienced overt hostility, they suffered a variety of practical legal disabilities. These disadvantages had only been formalised in the latter half of the fifteenth century, but they strictly limited the conditions under which immigrants could work.²³⁴ Their ability to retail their goods was restricted and new requirements were made for their relationship to

²²⁹ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 58.

²³⁰ Goose, 'Introduction', p. 29.

²³¹ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 123.

²³² L B Luu, 'Alien Communities in Transition, 1570-1650', in N Goose and L B Luu (eds), *Immigrants in Tudor and Early Stuart England* (Brighton, 2005), p. 206.

²³³ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 2.

²³⁴ A Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford, 1986), p. 14.

stranger apprentices and journeymen. They were also subject to higher taxes and dues, severe limitations on their ability to buy or inherit real property, and some restrictions related to lawsuits.²³⁵ Many of these legal disabilities were enforced only falteringly, but for those who intended to settle in England permanently, they were vexing.

The regulations imposed on alien activity were accompanied by a set of exemptions which gave immigrants the opportunity to participate more fully in English society. The most far-reaching of these was the development of a system for legally integrating foreign-born immigrants. Two routes were available: the costly naturalization by act of Parliament and the more popular denization by letters patent. While the former route conferred all the benefits of being English-born on the new subject, it was a cumbersome process that could cost a hundred pounds or more. Less than half a dozen aliens were naturalized during Elizabeth's reign.²³⁶ Denization through letters patent was significantly less expensive. The cost of a patent of denization varied (and rose as the period progressed), but it generally ranged from fifty shillings to five pounds. This would still have represented a significant expense for the early modern artisan since, as Andrew Pettegree points out, 'it was possible to have a reasonable living and be assessed on a subsidy on as little as £2, and that well-to-do gentry were assessed at £20 on land.'²³⁷ Denizens remained the subjects of foreign princes, so they (and their children) continued to suffer some legal disabilities. Most prominently, their ability to own, bequeath or inherit real property remained uncertain. Under a 1483 statute, however, denizens were the only aliens permitted to practice handicrafts, and Henrician statutes allowed denizens to keep shops and lease property.²³⁸ Other rights associated with denization depended on the wording of the particular patent.²³⁹ While it is therefore difficult to precisely define the benefits of denization, it is clear that it allowed its holder to circumvent many of the legal hurdles that confronted them.

Despite its advantages, denization did not appeal to every immigrant. It was only useful to householders. For their wives and children, servants and apprentices, the exemptions that denization afforded would have changed their lives minimally, if at all. Even householders (or prospective householders) were not uniformly interested in securing a patent. For those who intended to remain in England for only a few years, the

²³⁵ See, for example, CLRO Rep 16, fo 80v on the City's July 1566 efforts to reinvigorate enforcement of restrictions on alien craftsmen.

²³⁶ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 3.

²³⁷ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 81.

²³⁸ 1 Ric III, c. 9; 14/15 Hen VIII, c. 2; 21 Hen VIII, c. 16.

²³⁹ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 143.

expense of a patent would likely have seemed unnecessary. For those who intended to stay longer, the lax enforcement of restrictions discouraged interest in denization. As Irene Scouloudi explains, ‘it was the self-contained family unit that was paramount. On this basis few strangers would have been interested in denization or the freedom of the City...They worked hard and independently within their own circles. Except in times of economic or social stress, or when molested by informers or busy-body government such as found in the Stuart period, they were permitted to pursue their activities with little interference.’²⁴⁰

For a variety of reasons, then, only a small proportion of London’s immigrants secured patents of denization. In 1568, only 13% of metropolitan aliens were denizens.²⁴¹ That proportion declined as the century progressed.²⁴² The number of new patents issued fell precipitously after the first half of Elizabeth’s reign:

2.1 Patents of Denization Issued, 1558 – 1640.²⁴³

<u>Years</u>	<u>No. of Patents Issued</u>
1558-78	1669
1578-1602/3	293
1602/3-1625	530
1625-40	286

The cost of a patent rose steadily during Elizabeth’s reign, which may have contributed to their decline in popularity.²⁴⁴ As the number of immigrants resident in the capital increased, furthermore, enforcement of economic restrictions became less systematic. Simultaneously, the immigrant communities matured, providing regular customers for alien craftsmen who chose to operate outside the denization system.

Aspects of the alien communities in individual liberties will be presented in the appropriate chapters, but the concept of denization allows us to correct one mistaken assumption about the liberties immediately. The immigrant population of many liberties grew rapidly during Elizabeth’s reign, often outstripping the rate of growth in the metropolis as a whole. While the protection that these precincts offered immigrants were not so complete as some historians have implied, there were some advantages to be gained by settling there. The aliens of St Martin le Grand were specifically exempted from statutory limits on the number of foreign-born servants that aliens could keep, and its officers attempted (unsuccessfully) to exclude City inspectors from entering the

²⁴⁰ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 12.

²⁴¹ *Returns of Aliens Dwelling in the City and Suburbs of London: From the Reign of Henry VIII to That of James I*, eds R E G Kirk and E P Kirk, 4 vols, (London, 1900-08), iii.400, ff.

²⁴² Lien Luu records that the proportion had dropped to 9% in 1573 and 7% in 1593. Luu, 'Natural-Born Versus Stranger-Born Subjects', p. 61.

²⁴³ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 5.

²⁴⁴ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 144.

liberty.²⁴⁵ The residents of Blackfriars had marginally greater success in denying entry to civic officials,²⁴⁶ and many of the immigrants who settled at St Katherine by the Tower enjoyed exemptions as brewers and coopers. Indeed, it should be noted that those migrants whose skills were valued by the civic or royal government (brewers and goldsmiths foremost among them) settled in London more permanently and were more integrated with their English co-practitioners.²⁴⁷

But did immigrants choose to settle in these liberties primarily to avoid economic oversight? According to Lien Luu, ‘the possibility of working freely in the exempted places precluded the need to acquire a letter of denization, and this may explain why the number of denizens fell. There was a close link between non-denizen status and settlement in exempted places. A survey of the alien population in exempted places in 1583 shows that of the 1,604 aliens settled there, only 316 were denizens (19.7 per cent): non denizens, in other words, made up 80 per cent of the population.’²⁴⁸ Luu, unfortunately, misses the forest for the trees. According to her own statistics, the percentage of strangers (throughout the metropolis) who held patents of denization fell from 9% in 1573 to 7% in 1593.²⁴⁹ The full statistics from the 1583 returns of strangers confirms that the proportion of denizens in the liberties and suburbs was higher than that in the City of London:

2.2 The Percentage of Strangers Holding Patents of Denization, May 1583.²⁵⁰

Place	Denizens	Strangers	Percentage
City of London	243	2537	9.6%
Suburbs and Liberties	316	1604	19.7%
Metropolis (sum)	559	4141	14%

Clearly there were other factors that drew immigrants to the liberties, since the residents of suburbs and liberties were *more* likely than immigrants in the City to secure patents of denization. Seeking out a patent of denization did not help an alien householder fly below official radar; it did much the reverse.

²⁴⁵ 21 Hen VIII, c. 16, §IX; BL Lansd 74, no 32. Nevertheless, a large number of goldsmiths, both citizens and strangers, settled in St Martin’s. See L B Luu, ‘Aliens and Their Impact on the Goldsmiths’ Craft in London in the Sixteenth Century’, in D Mitchell (ed), *Goldsmiths, Silversmiths and Bankers: Innovation and the Transfer of Skill, 1550 to 1750* (Stroud, 1995), p. 48.

²⁴⁶ BL Lansd 155, fos 79-81v.

²⁴⁷ L B Luu, ‘Assimilation or Segregation: Colonies of Alien Craftsmen in Elizabethan London’, *Proceedings of the Huguenot Society*, 26 (1995), p. 170.

²⁴⁸ Luu, ‘Natural-Born Versus Stranger-Born Subjects’, p. 70.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁵⁰ From *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.342-57. It should, however, be noted that ‘Suburbs and Liberties’ included Westminster and Southwark along with unincorporated Middlesex and the exempt places within the City.

If legal privileges drew some aliens to the liberties, it is clear that many others came for unrelated reasons. The immigrant communities in St Martin's and St Katherine's, for example, predated the flurry of late fifteenth and early sixteenth century regulations that restricted immigrants' economic activities.²⁵¹ Geography played a role, with St Martin's near the Goldsmiths' Row at Cheapside and St Katherine's location on the River Thames. Among the City's wards, the largest numbers of aliens in the fifteenth century seem to have settled near the river.²⁵² With their international links, religious houses may also have been seen as more sympathetic landlords by new immigrants, and as gated precincts they offered greater protection when hostility toward immigrants ran high.²⁵³ As time progressed, the advantages themselves were joined (and perhaps eclipsed) by the appeal of the strangers themselves. As Lien Luu points out, the process 'was cumulative, and areas with a long-established immigrant community would further attract newcomers, reinforcing their concentration in particular sites.'²⁵⁴ Especially in the years before the stranger churches, the appeal of living near one's countrymen should not be underestimated.

In addition to the legal disabilities that affected immigrants throughout England, those who settled in and around London faced an additional level of regulation in the form of the City's livery companies. While the franchises of liberties could often be used to rebuff advances made by the City itself, liberty residents had less luck in convincing the Privy Council that they should be exempt from the supervision of the companies, which were generally chartered to exercise authority over their trades both within the City and within two or more miles of its borders. As was the case with other levels of government, the intensity with which the companies enforced regulations varied. Many companies were more interested in accommodating than in alienating stranger craftsmen, who enjoyed a reputation for unrivalled skill in many fields.²⁵⁵ It was these skills that inspired the royal government to actively welcome many aliens into the realm, a policy that was first employed by Edward III in 1331. The tradition continued through the sixteenth century. Fourteen projects were launched between 1540 and 1580 to tempt immigrants from the continent in trades as diverse as iron founding, dyeing, and the making of precision instruments.²⁵⁶ While the occupational breakdown of aliens had long

²⁵¹ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 17. See also pp. 179, 215 below.

²⁵² Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 121.

²⁵³ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 127.

²⁵⁴ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 126.

²⁵⁵ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 12.

²⁵⁶ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 53.

mirrored that of other Londoners, by 1561 more and more aliens were engaged in new and luxury crafts.²⁵⁷ The royal and civic governments and the livery companies were all eager to see the newly-imported skills shared with English artisans, and during periods when anti-immigrant feeling ran high, strangers were ‘advised by those in government to employ English servants to pacify resentment and foster goodwill’. Many aliens continued to resist teaching their skills to English artisans, fearing that they would later be prohibited from employing the same as unwanted competitors.²⁵⁸

Although, strictly speaking, immigrants were required to gain both a patent of denization and the freedom of the City to openly practice a trade in or near London, few livery companies attempted strict enforcement. By tolerating illicit economic activity (if not too flagrant), officials hoped to convince craftsmen to share their skills, but they also hoped to line the company coffers. Early modern ordinances ‘required all strangers, including denizens, to pay quarterage and other fees and fines to companies “as our sovereign Lord’s subjects of like craft and mystery do always pay”, and if any refuse, then they “shall no longer occupy any handicraft”’.²⁵⁹ Ian Archer points out that the payment of quarterage was often closely related to a company’s commitment to carrying out thorough searches.²⁶⁰ In conjunction, the systems of search and quarterage allowed livery companies to assert their authority over the non-free without alienating them entirely. Quality could be maintained, immigrant craftsmen could be monitored, and dues could be collected without opening company membership to men who had not served their apprenticeship in London.

The use of quarterage and search varied from company to company, but they were not the only tools available to deal with aliens. Some livery companies, for obvious reasons, had more regular contact with aliens than others. The cloth-weaving industry was the backbone of London’s international trade, and more than forty percent of the alien artisans living in London in the late sixteenth century were involved in it.²⁶¹ It is hardly surprising, then, that the Weavers’ Company was ‘exceptional in both the number of alien members (73 masters and 80 journeymen) and also in the detail of their records’

²⁵⁷ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, pp. 47-9. It is possible that participation in new and luxury crafts was over-reported by aliens who recognised that such occupations were less likely to draw scrutiny from officials or English neighbours. For further details, see Luu, *Immigrants*, pp. 115-6, 313-5.

²⁵⁸ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 128.

²⁵⁹ Rappaport, *Worlds within Worlds*, p. 46.

²⁶⁰ ‘Thus the more vigorous search conducted by the Coopers’ Company...in the later 1560s resulted in much higher levels of quarterage payments by the non-free’; Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 139.

²⁶¹ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 119. Among Londoners generally, only twenty percent of artisans were involved in clothing trades.

relating to immigrants.²⁶² The weavers fell at one end of the spectrum.²⁶³ Only twenty-seven companies (of more than a hundred) reported having alien members, and of those no other company boasted more than six.²⁶⁴ Even the Weavers' Company needed time to develop a regular system for accommodating immigrants. Andrew Pettegree examined the company's records from Edward's reign and found that between 1547 and 1551 strangers paid fees that varied between twenty and forty shillings for admission to the company. From 1552, however, the company standardised the entry fee for aliens at twenty-five shillings.²⁶⁵ According to Pettegree's assessment, 'the enrolment of foreigners in the Company was not the result of an aggressive drive against unauthorized competition, but rather indicated a desire to harness the skills of the foreigners by accommodating them within the Company.'²⁶⁶

English weavers were particularly eager to develop a domestic silk industry. Although continental silk workers enjoyed company support, they largely made their homes in the liberties. John Strype recorded that in addition to the immigrant silk weavers at St Martin le Grand during the first half of Elizabeth's reign, there 'lived also two silk-twisters, who I suppose were the first silk-throwers in London, and brought the trade into England.'²⁶⁷ In March 1624/5, the king granted a Frenchman called Bonnal two gardens and a shed in the Minories 'for keeping and breeding of silkworms for his majesty'.²⁶⁸ The creation of a domestic silk industry was a slow process. It is often asserted that by the early eighteenth century the silk industry employed between 40,000 and 50,000 people in the metropolis.²⁶⁹ Even if those numbers are remotely accurate, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we should remember that the quality of English silk weaving was significantly lower than Italian or even Dutch silks. Domestic products therefore complemented rather than replaced imports.²⁷⁰ The nascent silk industry nevertheless provides a good example of the eagerness of English officials to use immigrants to help develop new industries in London.

While immigrant weavers were welcomed by their company, immigrant brewers (and the coopers who made their barrels) received favourable treatment from the civic

²⁶² Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 44.

²⁶³ See F Consitt, *The London Weavers' Company: From the Twelfth Century to the Close of the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1933).

²⁶⁴ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 43.

²⁶⁵ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 96-7.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97-8.

²⁶⁷ J Strype, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, 2 vols (6 bks), (London, 1720), iii.111-2. See also p. 102, below.

²⁶⁸ *CSPD*, 1623-5, p. 497.

²⁶⁹ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 3.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

government. Beer was a staple for Londoners, whose water was often dirty or contaminated. Its availability was so important that in 1549 ‘the Common Council was prepared to advance the brewers £700 to ensure that they had sufficient stocks of malt to last a month, and the Council showed a concern for the maintenance of supplies of beer second only to their anxiety for the provision of wheat.’²⁷¹ A 1556 order in Common Council that prohibited the employment of foreigners specifically excepted brewers.²⁷² Brewers clustered largely in suburban areas near the river, and coopers set up close at hand. Continental brewers had been instrumental in introducing modern brewing techniques to England in the fifteenth century; large numbers of immigrants continued to be involved in both brewing and coopering. Many became prominent members of their local communities in places like St Katherine’s, where they were more likely than other aliens to forego membership in the stranger churches in preference of joining their neighbours in the local parish. The centrality of aliens to the brewing industry waned toward the end of the sixteenth century. In comparison to other immigrants, brewers were particularly wealthy and well-integrated into their communities.²⁷³

Like brewers and silkweavers, alien gold- and silversmiths were openly welcomed to London by virtue of their highly desirable skills. But unlike other ‘desirable’ immigrant groups, luxury metalworkers were dominated by the English members of the Goldsmiths’ Company from the beginning of the sixteenth century, if not before.²⁷⁴ One of the most important ways that European and English goldsmiths interacted was through short terms of itinerate journeymen, a practice that was encouraged among continental metalworkers but that left little evidence in London.²⁷⁵ By reviewing local records, however, Lien Luu determined that up to a quarter of Antwerp goldsmiths worked with English artisans at some point during their careers.²⁷⁶ English goldsmiths depended on immigrant artisans as ‘the conduit through which awareness of new waves of ornament flowed across the Channel.’²⁷⁷ Unlike other industries, however, the cooperation between aliens and citizens was not that of equals. The largest employment market for alien goldsmiths was through the subcontracting by their English counterparts to ‘produce goods of high quality to meet the demand of their most fashionable

²⁷¹ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 101.

²⁷² CLRO Rep 13(1), fo 126v, 127v. Let Bk R, fo 93v.

²⁷³ Luu, *Immigrants*, pp. 278-82.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 219; see also C M Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People, 1200-1500* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 70-3.

²⁷⁵ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 219.

²⁷⁶ Luu, 'Aliens and Their Impact', p. 50.

²⁷⁷ P Glanville, *Silver in Tudor and Early Stuart England: A Social History and Catalogue of the National Collection 1480-1660* (London, 1990), p. 86.

clientele.²⁷⁸ Luu points out that alien goldsmiths should not be treated as a monolithic group. Their experience of the trade in London depended on where they came from, the nature of their skill, their motives for coming to England and their length of residence in the metropolis.²⁷⁹ English gold and silver workers relied on the expertise and cachet of immigrants, but toward the end of the sixteenth century the interest in exploiting their knowledge gave way to increasing hostility. By the early seventeenth century, the Goldsmiths' Company began to experience acute periods of hostility to immigrant workers. The scepticism of the company reflected a slowdown in their trade (after the heady decades that followed the dissolution) as much as it reflected the competition posed by the immigrant goldsmiths.²⁸⁰

The prevalence of denization in the liberties and suburbs contradicts the common assumption that alien craftsmen in early modern London went to great lengths to avoid the supervision of livery companies and the civic and royal governments. Latent in such an assumption is the idea that immigrants were not entirely trustworthy, but evidence concerning the enforcement of city and company policy provides a more nuanced view of their motives. Alien craftsmen, to be sure, frequently flouted the more burdensome restrictions on their behaviour, but it is likely that their disobedience was grounded in practical necessity rather than any ideological opposition to regulation. According to City regulations, only freemen were permitted to practice their trades independently, and apprentices could only be bound to freemen. In practice, unsurprisingly, 'the policy followed by the City authorities appears...to have been far from systematic'.²⁸¹ When companies set out to enforce economic regulations, they often found immigrants ready to cooperate. Lien Luu recounts the story of a Frenchman who in March 1574 'told the Goldsmiths Company there were "diverse strangers goldsmith working some within shoemakers, some within tailors, some within saddlers and others within others"' in various parts London.²⁸²

Companies that made efforts to accommodate immigrants found their cooperation useful in securing the compliance of other aliens. The Coopers' Company accounts for 1531 contain an item for entertaining certain Dutch coopers to breakfast when they came to bear witness against some of their countrymen for setting up shop

²⁷⁸ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 239.

²⁷⁹ Luu, 'Aliens and Their Impact', p. 44

²⁸⁰ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 249.

²⁸¹ Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, p. 45.

²⁸² Luu, 'Natural-Born Versus Stranger-Born Subjects', p. 64.

without authorization.²⁸³ The company made immigrant coopers a regular part of their enforcement drives. Their statutes 'laid down that one substantial alien of the craft [coopers] should be present at any search of alien premises, and it was probably as a result of this provision that the Coopers' Company established a separate warden for the alien coopers. Many of the Dutch householders took a turn in this office and are marked as such in the quarterage accounts.'²⁸⁴ Segments of London's immigrant population showed a clear inclination to work under (and assist in the process of) company supervision. It seems likely that, had other companies sought to accommodate alien craftsmen, they would have found them eager to participate more openly in the London economy.

The religion of continental immigrants generally endeared them to their neighbours, balancing (at least in part) the suspicion that often met their economic endeavours. The godly minority certainly welcomed the religious refugees, many of whom brought strong Calvinist sensibilities embraced by London's first Puritans. According to Nigel Goose, 'whatever the true religious persuasion of the mass of the London populace, there is little to indicate that the stranger churches were widely resented on religious grounds.'²⁸⁵ The stranger churches—originally established under Edward VI—were primarily meant to provide immigrants with a place to worship in their own language and according to their own customs. Particularly after their revival in Elizabeth's reign, though, the stranger churches took on other functions as well. In many ways, their responsibilities mirrored those of London's parishes, but the aid they distributed and the discipline they enforced were not geographically confined. In addition to 'allowing their members to forge, sustain and resuscitate informal networks, and maintain links with their homeland', the stranger churches helped the royal government monitor and communicate with a formalised community of metropolitan aliens.²⁸⁶

The stranger churches did not appeal to all of London's immigrants, however. Frenchmen working in the print trades showed little interest in any church, French *or* English.²⁸⁷ Other aliens actively resisted interaction with the stranger churches. Some were like Reyner Wolf (from 1547 the King's Printer in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew), who 'balked at subjecting himself to the discipline of the stranger [Dutch] church, although

²⁸³ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 103.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²⁸⁵ Goose, 'Introduction', p. 5.

²⁸⁶ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 15.

²⁸⁷ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.13-7, iii.411.

he seems to have been a firm Protestant.²⁸⁸ Andrew Pettegree identifies a strong correlation between occupation and commitment to the reformed churches. Aliens practising new trades or trades where technical innovation was highly-valued (such as weaving) were significantly more likely to join the stranger churches than their compatriots in more traditional trades (such as cooperage).²⁸⁹

Immigrants who had settled in England even a few years before the foundation of the stranger churches were much less likely to attend services there than those who entered England later. This, in part, may have been related to a change in the religious sentiments of immigrants, but other factors seem to have had an effect as well. Later-arriving immigrants who settled in areas like St Martin le Grand and St Katherine by the Tower attended their local English parish churches in significantly greater numbers than those who settled in areas with small or relatively new stranger populations.²⁹⁰ Counter-intuitively, perhaps, it appears that the aliens who chose to settle in the liberties were by all measures better integrated into the social and economic life of the capital than others.

After the late 1580s, no great wave of continental immigrants arrived in England until the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. Small numbers of aliens continued to come to England, but other immigrants returned to the continent. As time passed, the earlier waves of aliens assimilated into London society. The process started earlier in some places than others. A 1561 petition from French church members 'noted that most of the long-term residents from the precincts of St Martin's and St Katherine's had English wives.'²⁹¹ As decades passed, aliens across London invariably developed links with their English neighbours. As Londoners grew used to the immigrants, hostility decreased. The intensity of efforts to regulate their economic behaviour declined as well. These trends may help explain the steady decline in the popularity of denization. As the seventeenth century progressed, the same trends probably contributed to the reduced size of the stranger churches' congregations. Nigel Goose warns against assuming that smaller stranger churches necessarily meant fewer strangers in the capital: 'Numbers in London...may have fallen somewhat by the 1630s, but they had clearly not collapsed, particularly if allowance is made for those who by now had assimilated into the English population and had joined the English church, not to mention the "papists" with which, Bulteel claimed, the London suburbs were now swarming.'²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 93.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

²⁹⁰ See p. 216, below.

²⁹¹ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, p. 304, Scouloudi, *Returns of Strangers*, i.288.

²⁹² Goose, 'Introduction', p. 17.

Concerns about strangers were clearly tied up with the City's role in regulating London's economy. London's livery companies were generally authorised to complete searches for illegally made and sold goods not only within the City also within a certain distance of its walls.²⁹³ As Joseph Ward writes, 'their members exerted influence in the suburbs and liberties'.²⁹⁴ Ward records numerous instances of the London companies exercising their authority beyond the borders of the City.²⁹⁵ While such forays into the suburbs and liberties confirm the livery companies' rights, it was practically impossible to regulate the suburbs and liberties to the same level as the City.

In the 1630s, the Caroline royal government began to consider ways to extend the order exemplified within the precincts of the City of London to the ever-growing, ever-menacing disorder of the suburbs outside.²⁹⁶ They had every reason to believe that they would have the City's support. In November 1632 the aldermen petitioned the Privy Council, complaining 'of great injury to the city by reason of the extraordinary enlargement of the suburbs, and [stating] the results to be, that the freedom of London was grown to be of little worth [and] that the multitudes of people of the meaner sort were drawn to London by the new erected buildings.'²⁹⁷ When the government moved to create a new corporation for the suburbs, however, civic support was elusive. The new corporation was officially created by letters patent in April 1636.²⁹⁸ Those living or working in the suburbs were required to join, paying fines of between 4s and £2 to the Crown. This revenue stream does as much as the need for economic reform to explain the timing of the initiative.²⁹⁹

By its very nature, the new corporation was easier to create than to sustain. A royal proclamation from November 1637 suggests that mandatory enrolment had failed to attract large numbers of members for the new corporation: 'therefore the king doth now declare his pleasure, That the Governor, Wardens, and Assistants shall, and may proceed without delay to admit into the said Freedom all sorts of Tradesmen and Artificers, as well Brewers, Weavers, Brickmakers, as others &c.'³⁰⁰ For those who

²⁹³ CLRO Rep 25, fo 260.

²⁹⁴ Ward, *Metropolitan Communities*, p. 28.

²⁹⁵ Ward, 'Imagining the Metropolis', pp. 32, 35-6.

²⁹⁶ K Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, CT, 1992), p. 406.

²⁹⁷ TNA SP 16/225/71.

²⁹⁸ *CSPD* 1635-6, p. 359-60.

²⁹⁹ Ward, 'Imagining the Metropolis', p. 31.

³⁰⁰ J Rushworth, *Historical Collections II* (London, 1680), pp. 452-3.

neglected to seek the freedom of the new corporation, enforcement was difficult. Many foreigners continued to trade outside its auspices with little fear of punishment.³⁰¹

In addition to its inherent impracticality, however, the new corporation also, unfortunately, truncated the chartered rights of the livery companies and invited the resentment of the civic elite. While the corporation was ostensibly created to help enforce professional standards throughout the capital, citizens of London saw it as a threat to their livelihoods. Ward notes that the officers of the 'Tylers and Bricklayers' Company 'defended the apprentice of one of their freemen who was arrested in Southwark for violating the charter of the new corporation.'³⁰² The new corporation was not even a month old when the aldermen began to attack those of its responsibilities which were at odds with the chartered rights of the City. From April 1636 onward, the Repertories contain frequent mention of 'causes in difference betweene the City and the new Incorporation'.³⁰³ By the end of the 1630s, it was clear that the new corporation could not survive without the constant support of the royal government. The deterioration of the relationship between king and Parliament at the end of the decade increased the City's power within the metropolis and guaranteed the demise of the new corporation.³⁰⁴ When Charles II resumed the throne 'the new Incorporation of the Suburbs was in abeyance if not actually moribund'. It seems to have passed away entirely after March 1660/1, when it is mentioned for the last time in the Journals of Common Council.³⁰⁵ Norman Brett-James suggests that the Caroline new corporation was 'the veritable precursor of the LCC', created by Parliament in 1888 to unify London's fractured system of government.³⁰⁶ The new corporation, however, had no administrative framework, and it enjoyed only nominal economic jurisdiction. The patchwork of county and parochial governing structures remained unchanged.

Conclusions

The rapid growth of the capital between 1500 and 1700 posed new problems for contemporary governors. The rate of expansion in the suburbs and liberties outpaced that of the City. This was in large part because of City's previous density of settlement restricted growth and made it less noticeable. Although the ancient City of London

³⁰¹ Sharpe, *Personal Rule*, p. 407.

³⁰² Ward, 'Imagining the Metropolis', p. 34.

³⁰³ CLRO Rep 50, fos 191v, 205v; Rep 52, fo 159; Rep 53, fo 143; Rep 54, fo 322.

³⁰⁴ Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*, pp. 31-37.

³⁰⁵ Brett-James, *The Growth of Stuart London*, p. 244.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

remained at the centre of a growing metropolis, it had little interest in expanding its borders to include newly urbanised areas. Even Southwark, which the City annexed in March 1549/50, was never fully integrated into the City's administrative system. David Johnson points out that in spite of the City fathers' initial enthusiasm to make Southwark a full ward of the city, they quickly became indifferent:

They were naturally conservative, being reluctant to create new responsibilities for themselves, especially in an area which was always much poorer than most city parishes, and unwilling to jeopardize any of their own privileges by extending them to include possibly irresponsible elements in the suburbs. They therefore avoided as too radical the obvious solution of making Southwark a full ward but relied instead on piecemeal expedients.³⁰⁷

As distinct geographic units within or adjacent to the City, the liberties made more appealing targets for annexation. The City also used its franchises with broader geographical limits—its rights over the tidal waters of the Thames, the livery companies' rights to regulate trade, and the aldermen's role in regulating metropolitan building and sanitation—to affect life in the larger metropolis. It nevertheless relied extensively on the royal government to help in regulating the liberties and suburbs. Within this context, the post-monastic liberties were just one of the City's many jurisdictional concerns in the century after 1540. As we have seen, it tried to undermine the liberties franchises directly, but it also pursued *ad hoc* remedies to specific concerns related to taxation, development, the maintenance of order and economic regulation. Now let us turn to the liberties themselves, to see matters from their perspective.

³⁰⁷ Johnson, *Southwark and the City*, p. 174.

Chapter 3. The Minories

The Minories had stood at the eastern edge of the City, just beyond Aldgate, since the Abbey of St Clare was founded there in 1293. The spiritual independence of the nunnery was assured by kings and popes from the 1290s onward, but its secular franchises were not guaranteed until a 1401 charter from Henry IV.¹ From around 1350 the nuns lived alongside a small population of lay families—many of them servants or patrons of the abbey—who occupied the north-western corner of the precinct; after the mid-fifteenth century, the Abbey became home to a series of noble dowagers. From the outset, however, the sixteenth century proved difficult. Stow records that in 1515 there ‘was a death of the pestilence in England, especially about London, so that in...the Minories without Aldgate, there died of nun professed, to the number of 27, besides others that were laye people and servants in that house.’² It was a substantial loss when one considers that at its dissolution in 1538, the abbey boasted only thirty-one women religious.³ Tragedy struck again within a few years, when many of the conventual buildings were destroyed by fire. The City donated £200 to the cost of rebuilding, as did the king.⁴ Still, the abbey did not fully recover from the costs of reconstruction until the 1530s. Stow put the value of the Minories’ house at £418/8/5*d* p.a. in its final years, though *Valor* lists its annual income as £342/5/10½*d*.⁵ In either case, it easily cleared the £200 threshold below which it would have been subject to the first wave of dissolutions. When suppression did come in 1538 the abbess and convent left without incident. The Minories spent much of the century that followed as a stronghold—for the weapons stores of the Ordnance Office and, at least briefly, for London’s nascent Puritan movement.

With its links to the Ordnance Office and to the early nonconformist movement the Minories has attracted the attention of antiquarians and historians for centuries. Stow, recalling the idyllic setting of the Minories during his youth, lamented that ‘In place of this house of Nunnes, is now builded diverse faire and large storehouses, for armour, and habiliments of warre, with diverse worke-houses serving to the same purpose’.⁶ The ordnance depot was abandoned in the late seventeenth century, but the parish of Holy

¹ CPR, 1399-1401, p. 34.

² J Stow, *The Annales of England, Untill 1592* (London, 1601), p. 830.

³ TNA E 315/233, fos. 227-31; *VCH* London, i.519.

⁴ CLRO Rep 5, fos 15v, 80; *LPFD* 3(2), no. 1536.

⁵ Stow, *Strype's Survey*, ii.14; *Valor Ecclesiasticus* p. i.398.

⁶ Stow, *Survey*, i.126.

Trinity, which was formed in the decades after the dissolution, survived until 1899. Its nineteenth century curates were particularly eager to publish accounts of the precinct's history. Henry Fly led the way, publishing 'Some Account of an Abbey of Nuns Formerly Situated in the Street Now Called the Minories' in the antiquarian journal *Archaeologia* in 1806. In it he offers a brief account of the precinct's post-monastic history along with notes on excavations made there in 1793.⁷ He was followed in 1851 by Thomas Hill, who largely reprinted Fly's account, 'together with the addition of several documents, not at the time attainable, and a continuation of its history up to the present time.'⁸ Just months after his installation as curate in 1889, Samuel Kinns published a third history of the parish—the first work to focus extensively on the Minories after the dissolution of the abbey.⁹ One last curate, Edward Tomlinson, published the *History of the Minories* in 1907; it remains the authoritative study of the liberty. Each of these works offers valuable insights on the development of the Minories and its place in the London's history, but their authors' personal interest in the parish makes them less than objective histories of the precinct.

There are plentiful examples of the dangers posed by such proximity between author and subject. Tomlinson's comprehensive study of the Minories is characterised by his willingness to unquestioningly accept any evidence of the liberty's independence. Inclined to exaggerate the significance of the Minories' franchises, Tomlinson interprets isolated incidents and incomplete accounts as indicative of well-developed, practicable rights. It should not be surprising, then, that he occasionally makes grandiose claims about the extent of the Minories' privileges:

The parish was practically a miniature kingdom of its own, acknowledging no allegiance to any authority whatever except the Crown. The parishioners appointed their own minister, and, when appointed, he claimed freedom from any jurisdiction of bishop or archbishop; marriages were solemnised without banns or licence; they had their own magistrate, and licensed their own publican; persons dwelling in the precinct were free from arrest by outside authorities, and they paid no public taxes, except such as were especially levied upon Royal liberties.¹⁰

Some of these claims were true in part, or were true for short periods of time, but they were certainly never contemplated so comprehensively by contemporaries. Neither residents of the Minories nor outside authorities like the City, the diocese of London or

⁷ H Fly, 'Some Account of an Abbey of Nuns Formerly Situated in the Street Now Called the Minories', *Archaeologia*, 15 (1806), p. 112.

⁸ T Hill, *The History of the Parish of Holy Trinity, Minories, Commencing from the Earliest Period of Its Establishment, and Continued to the Present Day* (London, 1851), p. 2.

⁹ S Kinns, *Holy Trinity, Minories, Its Past and Present History* (London, 1889).

¹⁰ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, pp. 165-6.

the Crown, would have considered the parish a ‘miniature kingdom of its own.’ In fairness, Tomlinson does acknowledge that such privileges were successfully challenged from time to time. Such challenges, however, have no effect on the way he conceives of the parish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Tomlinson insists that the residents of the Minories were fully independent in the century between the reformation and the Civil War.

More recently, Gareth Owen and Martha Carlin have worked to create a more objective picture of the Minories. Owen—who writes extensively about the Minories’ place in the Elizabethan religious landscape—faults Tomlinson for his ‘failure to recognise the (strident enough) puritan undertones in the turbulent history of the parish.’¹¹ Owen, however, may overcompensate for Tomlinson’s failure by himself exaggerating the strength of the Minories’ claims to jurisdictional independence. In Owen’s work, the Minories exists mainly as ‘that luxuriant nursery of the Elizabethan movement.’¹² And even he (mistakenly) suggests that the residents of the Minories enjoyed extensive secular privileges that included ‘exemption from acts of the common council, from the trading regulations of the City, and from the levies of men and money imposed on London.’¹³ Martha Carlin’s unpublished *Gazetteer* of the Minories and the adjacent parish of St Botolph Aldgate is not a narrative history of the precinct or its franchises, but its topographical data are an invaluable addition to our knowledge about the Minories, especially when read in conjunction with other sources.¹⁴

Lying just beyond the ditch that flanked the City wall, the Minories was by no means a large precinct. Owen describes it as ‘little more than a five acre, enclosed site, situated within Portsoken ward’.¹⁵ Evidence from both the fourteenth and eighteenth century sources, however, suggests that it was much smaller, just under 2.5 acres.¹⁶ In 1708 Edward Hatton counted 120 houses in the Minories, while the 1851 census recorded sixty-five ‘inhabitable houses’ there, in which 572 people lived.¹⁷ Especially at

¹¹ H G Owen, ‘A Nursery of Elizabethan Nonconformity’, *Journal Of Ecclesiastical History*, 17 (1966), p. 65.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹³ Owen, ‘Liberty of the Minories’, p. 81.

¹⁴ It remains available in typescript at the Institute of Historical Research Library at Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1.

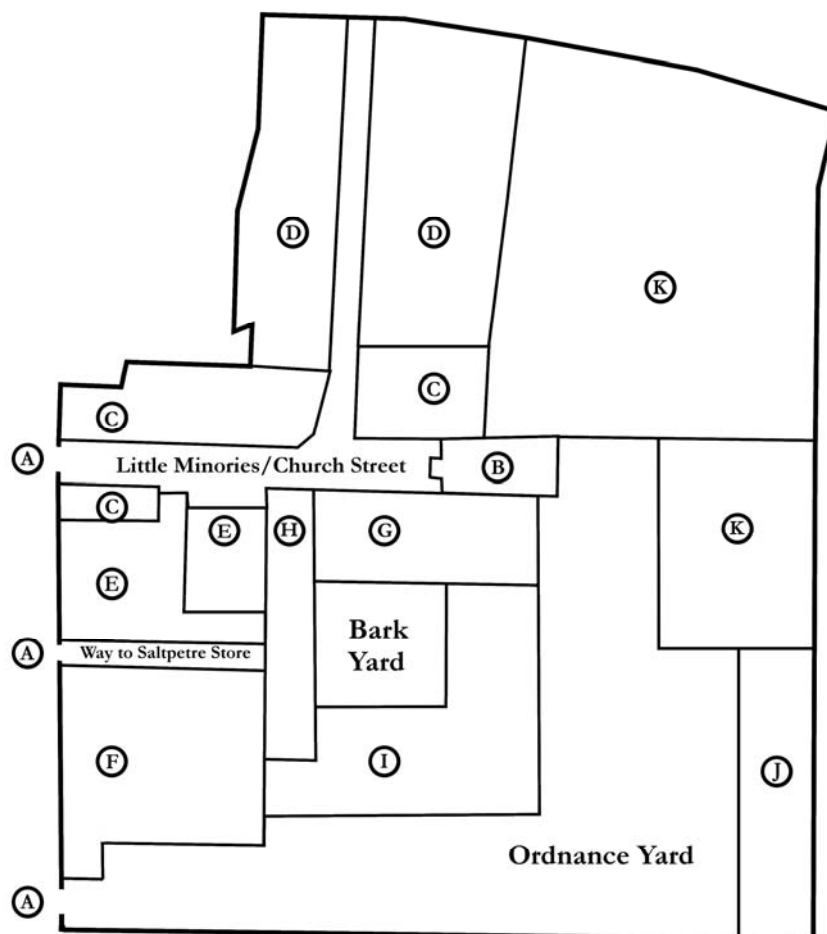
¹⁵ Owen, ‘Liberty of the Minories’, p. 84.

¹⁶ The measurements given on a map of the precinct from the 1760s (TNA MPE 1/479) show the Minories to have been around 2.47 acres, a figure that agrees with measurements of the abbey recorded as early as 1303 and recounted in M Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire. St. Botolph Aldgate: Minories, East Side; the Abbey of St Clare; Holy Trinity Minories*, ed D Keene (Institute of Historical Research Library, London, 1987), ii(2).12.

¹⁷ E Hatton, *A New View of London*, 2 vols, (London, 1708), ii(2).575; Hill, *History*, p. 16. The 1538 tithe survey did not include the Minories, probably because 37 Hen VIII, c. 12, which had defined tithing requirements, had specifically exempted post-monastic liberties. Neither St Anne Blackfriars nor St

the beginning of the period under consideration, the residential area was only a small portion of the precinct. This part of the Minories, which had originally housed the abbey's lay tenants, included no more than a dozen houses when the abbey was suppressed.¹⁸ Most of them dated to the fourteenth century, but in the decades that followed the departure of the nuns, each of them was subdivided into smaller tenements. The remainder of the Minories was occupied in turn by the bishops of Bath, the Grey family, and the Ordnance Office. Especially after 1600, new tenements were built to augment the original buildings, expanding the residential portion of the precinct into adjacent buildings and gardens previously controlled by the Ordnance Office.

Map: The Minories, c. 1640¹⁹



Katherine's is included though St Leonard Foster lane (of which St Martin le Grand formed a large part) was. T C Dale, *The Inhabitants of London, 1638* (London, 1931), pp. v, 90-1.

¹⁸ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, part two.

¹⁹ Adapted from TNA MPE 1/479 and Carlin *Historical Gazetteer*, Fig. 2. **A** Gates. **B** Holy Trinity Parish Church. **C** Tenements existing in 1540. **D** Gardens converted to tenements by 1640. **E** Abbey (later Ordnance) buildings converted to residential use under Dallison. **F** Ordnance Buildings. **G** Storage (former Abbey church). **H** Saltpetre Storage. **I** Official Residence of Lieutenant-General. **J** Stables. **K** Gardens.

Chronology

After the dissolution of the Abbey of St Clare, Henry convinced the Bishop of Bath and Wells to accept the Minories site in exchange for the bishopric's inn. Two bishops later, in 1548, it passed to the Grey family, which controlled the Minories until 1562. The following year the Crown resumed direct control of the liberty, transferring the Ordnance Office and its stores—which had outgrown their old home in the Tower—to the Minories. These manifold changes almost exclusively affected the conventual part of the Minories; the historically residential portion of the liberty remained intact, its population growing slowly. Each period of ownership brought the residents of the Minories into close association with powerful individuals. The period from 1562 through 1642—during which the bulk of the liberty was occupied by the Ordnance Office—made the Minories unique among London's post-monastic liberties. The Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance was the Crown's representative in the precinct and its leading personage, but he was neither officially nor personally responsible for the administration of the residential portions of the precinct. Less is known about the relationship between the Minories' residents and its earlier proprietors, the bishops of Bath and Wells and the Grey family.

The Minoresses formally surrendered their abbey on 30 November 1538. The following year, after the precinct had been confirmed to the king by an act of Parliament it was, by another act, granted to the Bishop of Bath and Wells in exchange for the episcopal residence on the Strand near Temple Bar.²⁰ The grant of the Minories included 'all such rights, title, [or] interest' of the king in the precinct, which included the residual secular and ecclesiastical privileges of the former abbey.²¹ These franchises were sustained through subsequent transfers, giving later residents of the Minories the opportunity to claim their protection. Very little is known about the decade the Minories spent under the bishopric. The new 'Bath Place' was a great deal farther from court than the bishop's previous palace in the Strand; John Clerk, who had been bishop since 1523, had a tense relationship with Thomas Cromwell and was a marginal figure during much of the 1530s. Clerk, in any case, had little time to enjoy his new residence. In 1540 he was given the important but unenviable task of informing the duke of Cleves of the

²⁰ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 80; TNA SP 16/230/17. This 'Act for the assurance of Bath Place to thele of Sutht.' transferred the Bath Place in the Strand to William, earl of Southampton, a close friend of both the king and John Clerk, then bishop of Bath and Wells: W B Robison, 'Fitzwilliam, William, earl of Southampton (c.1490-1542)', *ODNB*.

²¹ 31 Hen VIII, c. xxv.

annulment of his sister's marriage to Henry VIII. Clerk fell ill during his journey back to England and died soon thereafter.²² His successor as bishop was William Knight, who was consecrated in the church at the Minories, though little else is known about his relationship to the precinct. He apparently spent much of his time in his diocese.²³ After his death in 1547, he was succeeded by William Barlow. Barlow was a favourite of protector Somerset, to whom he sold seven of the bishopric's manors and the bishopric's palace in Wells in May 1548.²⁴ At the same time, Barlow surrendered Bath Place and the Minories to King Edward VI in exchange for several other properties, and the Minories passed permanently out of religious ownership.

Edward did not immediately part with the Minories, but instead demised the precinct to Henry Grey, marquis of Dorset (duke of Suffolk from October 1551), in a series of discreet grants between 1548 and 1552/3. Tomlinson offers convincing evidence that Grey had occupied the great house in the Minories since the death of Bishop William Knight in 1547.²⁵ Grey's final grant, dated 13 January 1552/3, included a description of all his lands in the Minories and established his responsibility to pay the stipends of both 'the chaplain to celebrate and minister the sacraments to the inhabitants' and the 'collector of rents and auditor' of the precinct.²⁶ The grant also suggests that the value of the residential property in the Minories had increased significantly in the years since the dissolution. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* records the abbey as having received £24/13/4d from rents within the precinct in the mid-1530s, a figure in close agreement with the 1539 Augmentations' income from the precinct (£25/1s).²⁷ In Grey's 1552/3 grant, the value of rents in the precinct is recorded as £37/11/5½ d p.a.²⁸ If the growth in rental value resulted from increased housing capacity, it occurred entirely within the residential part of the Minories. Both Grey and his successors left the old conventual buildings intact, which was rare among new owners of monastic sites. According to Tomlinson,

The similarity of description of the various tenements in the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII and Edward VI points conclusively to the fact that the outward aspect of the monastic buildings remained practically

²² R Rex, 'Clerk, John (1481/2?-1541)', *ODNB*.

²³ Kinns, *Holy Trinity, Minories*, p. 11-2; R Clark, 'Knight, William (1475/6-1547)', *ODNB*.

²⁴ G Williams, 'Barlow, William (d. 1568)', *ODNB*.

²⁵ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 109-10.

²⁶ TNA C 66/849/10.

²⁷ *Valor* i.398.

²⁸ *CPR Ed. VI*, iv.406; TNA C 66/849/10. Martha Carlin's analysis of rents in the residential portion of the precinct shows that, though a few houses seem to have been subdivided into smaller tenements in the first years after the dissolution, the increase in the rental value of the precinct was primarily the result of changes in the terms of leases as they expired: Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, ii.32-3.

unchanged for years, and it is probable that it continued much the same until the latter years of the reign of Queen Anne.²⁹

In May 1553, a few months after his final grant of property in the Minories, Grey paid the king £3/-/8d for the right to alienate his Minories property to his brothers Lord Thomas Grey and Lord John Grey, his half-brother George Medley, and John Harrington. Suffolk subsequently received £400 from the four men.³⁰ The Grey family did not fare well during Mary's reign; Henry was executed for treason in February 1553/4. Thomas and John Grey both forfeited their shares in the Minories by attainder for their part in Wyatt's rebellion.³¹

On her accession Elizabeth restored both in blood, and soon thereafter John Grey bought both his brother Thomas and Harrington's interests in the Minories. It was not until February 1561/2 that Grey and Medley—who held the freehold in common—formally partitioned the precinct between them. By June 1562 both Grey and Henry Medley (George's son and heir) had sold their portions of the Minories to Lord Treasurer William Paulet, Marquess of Winchester.³² Paulet bought the precinct with the explicit intention of converting it to the use of the Ordnance Office.³³ He paid dearly for it. Just ten years earlier Henry Grey had sold the Minories for £400; Paulet bought it for £1580.³⁴ Queen Elizabeth did not officially purchase the precinct from Paulet until September 1563, but it is clear that Paulet's plans for the liberty were underway by autumn of 1562, when the privy council named the first porter and gatekeeper of the Minories, 'now intended to hold munitions belonging to the Ordnance Office'.³⁵ The Crown held (and the ordnance occupied) the liberty of the Minories until 1673, after which it returned to private hands.

The Minories was unique among London's liberties in that it asserted ecclesiastical privileges more vociferously and more consistently than it did secular rights. There is, in fact, very little evidence that the residents of the Minories claimed any particular secular franchises in the century before 1640. They maintained their longstanding separation from the City's Portsoken Ward, but the City never actively pressed for reunification. Residents did resist the City's 1623 attempt to interfere on behalf of the Cutlers' Company, but they acquiesced after the Privy Council became

²⁹ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 86.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

³¹ 1 Philip & 2 Mary, c. 30.

³² *CSPD* 1601-3 (Add 1547-65), p. 541.

³³ See TNA SP 12/15/71, SP 12/21/58, SP 12/22/15 and SP 12/30/4.

³⁴ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 118.

³⁵ *CSPD* 1601-3 (Add 1547-65), pp. 377, 541.

involved.³⁶ Similarly, the residents of the Minories never resisted the authority of the Middlesex justices of the peace.³⁷ More problematic were claims of ecclesiastical independence made during the latter half of the sixteenth century. Few post-monastic liberties had much reason to press their theoretical religious privileges, which therefore fell out of use rather quickly.³⁸ Tomlinson praises the residents' noble resistance:

The inhabitants of the Minories on their part considered that the privileges of a peculiar were far too valuable to be lightly relinquished, and therefore for generations they stoutly maintained their rights, and, though occasionally giving way on minor points under extreme pressure, on the whole they resisted successfully for very many years all the attempts of either the ecclesiastical or civil authorities to dispossess them of their heritage.³⁹

Unsurprisingly, Tomlinson overstates the strength of the Minories' claims to independence. Owen reminds his readers that the ecclesiastical privileges rested 'on the dubious assumption that the parish was a royal peculiar exempt from ordinary ecclesiastical jurisdiction.' They therefore failed to withstand the determined assaults of the Elizabethan bishops of London.⁴⁰ The bishops of London, it should be remembered, had the backing of the Privy Council, which after the Elizabethan settlement saw religious nonconformity as prime threat to political stability.⁴¹

The Parish of Holy Trinity

In the past century, historians have thought of the Minories primarily as one of the incubating chambers for London's early Puritan movement. In a 1965 paper on the precinct, Gareth Owen contends that 'The Minories...can stake a fair claim to the title of the mother parish of Elizabethan nonconformity.'⁴² The heavy focus on the Minories' confessional tendencies is understandable since its claims to exemptions were primarily of an ecclesiastical nature. Furthermore, extant sources from the parish church are more common than secular sources for the post-Reformation period. Registers of baptisms, marriages and burials for Holy Trinity Minories survive from 1563.⁴³ A manuscript volume that begins as churchwardens' accounts in 1566 shifts to minutes from meetings

³⁶ *Analytical Index to the Series of Records Known as the Remembrancia, 1579-1664*, eds W H Overall and H C Overall, (London, 1878), pp. 261-2.

³⁷ From the 1590s onward, the Privy Council regularly asked the Middlesex JPs to assess illegal building in the liberty, and it is clear that the Minories officers regularly presented suspects at the Middlesex sessions of the peace.

³⁸ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 82.

³⁹ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 165.

⁴⁰ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 92.

⁴¹ Owen, 'Nursery', p. 75.

⁴² Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 84.

⁴³ GL MS 9238.

of the parish vestry around 1600.⁴⁴ Together, these sources offer invaluable information about the liberty and its residents. They present the Minories as a consistently-governed parish, but they also provide evidence of the dramatic changes that resulted from its effective loss of ecclesiastical independence in the early 1570s—a process underappreciated by Gareth Owen.

The parish church stood at the junction of the residential and conventual sides of the precinct. It had been a side chapel in the northwest part of the conventual church. Martha Carlin identifies it as the ‘parishe chapel’ that in 1507 contained an image of the Holy Trinity.⁴⁵ Like many other London religious houses, a small lay population had long lived within the precinct of the Abbey of St Clare. Care for the souls of these lay residents was entrusted to the abbess by papal bull in 1294, which severed the lands of the abbey from the adjacent parish of St Botolph Aldgate.⁴⁶ The bull also exempted the precinct from the jurisdictions of the bishop of London and the archbishop of Canterbury.⁴⁷ The pastoral needs of lay tenants were met by the abbey’s priests in one of their church’s side chapels. Strictly speaking, the area was extra-parochial: there is no evidence of lay involvement in religious matters before the dissolution. Still, the sacraments had been provided to residents within the precinct for almost 250 years when the abbey was suppressed in 1538. The main part of the conventual church was not pulled down after the dissolution. After 1563 it was used by the Ordnance Office for the storage of saltpetre, the chief ingredient in gunpowder.⁴⁸ The old side chapel of the Holy Trinity was properly separated from the rest of the church to become the parish of Holy Trinity Minories. In the plentiful years of the late 1560s and 70s, lime was purchased to whitewash the church every year or two.⁴⁹ The churchyard was also whitewashed, and scripture verses adorned the church walls alongside a Tudor rose, the queen’s name, and a tablet listing the ten commandments.⁵⁰ In autumn 1567 major repairs were made throughout the church.⁵¹ In the decades that followed, however, the building suffered

⁴⁴ LPL MS 3390.

⁴⁵ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, iii.3.

⁴⁶ The same thing happened later at St Katherine by the Tower. See p. 164, below.

⁴⁷ Fly, ‘Some Account of an Abbey’, pp. 95-6. A bull issued the following year also conferred upon the abbey the unusual right to celebrate the mass even if England were to be placed under a general interdict by the Pope. Hill, *History*, p. 5.

⁴⁸ TNA MPE 1/479.

⁴⁹ LPL MS 3390, fos 6v, 8v, 31, 44, 48, 55v.

⁵⁰ LPL MS 3390, fos. 44, 45v; Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, iii.6.

⁵¹ LPL MS 3390, fos. 8-15v.

neglect for want of funds. By 1706 it had fallen into such disrepair that the vestry decided to raze all but the north wall and rebuild it from the ground.⁵²

In the decade that followed the dissolution of the abbey, the Minories' parochial status was unclear. In theory, the area could have reverted to its historic parish of St Botolph Aldgate.⁵³ That was the contention of William Grene. A citizen of London, merchant tailor and official of the Court of Augmentations, Grene took a twenty-one year lease on the rectory of Botolph Aldgate in 1543. Three years later he complained to the Court of Augmentations that

the bishop of Bath and Wells, William Knight...told his servants and the inhabitants of the precinct to attend services at St Botolph Aldgate, but had allowed John More...then keeper of the Minories, to set up an altar and font in the recently-defaced church there. Grene claimed that this had so reduced his income that he was unable to pay the farm of the rectory of St Botolph Aldgate.⁵⁴

The court named a commission to look into the matter, but its findings have not survived. Whatever their decision, Grene was never able to reclaim the Minories' residents to his parish. When William Barlow, the subsequent Bishop of Bath and Wells, returned the precinct to King Edward on 21 May 1548, it was said to be within the county of Middlesex, but its parochial links are not mentioned.⁵⁵

Tomlinson claims that the earliest known reference to a parish in the Minories came in the 1557 will of Julian Morgan.⁵⁶ Robert Olyver, however, identified himself as a gentleman of the parish of St Trinity in the Minories in his 1550 will.⁵⁷ This seven year difference is not insignificant. The nonconformity that later thrived in the Minories is more comprehensible in a parish established under the firmly Protestant Edward than Mary. Henry Grey, third marquess of Dorset (later duke of Suffolk), received the precinct from Edward VI in 1548. Suffolk was the father of Lady Jane Grey—claimant to the throne after Edward's death—and a committed Protestant whose household clergy included such nonconformists as John Aylmer, John Willock and James Haddon.⁵⁸ There is every reason to believe that the constitution and patronage a parish formed

⁵² F J Collins, 'Notes on the Church of Holy Trinity Minories', *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 20 (1962), p. 160.

⁵³ Whitefriars, for example, reverted to St Dunstan in the West.

⁵⁴ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, ii(3).1. For further information, see M C Rosenfield, 'The Disposal of the Property of London Monastic Houses, with a Special Study of Holy Trinity, Aldgate' (U of London PhD thesis, 1961), pp. 187-8.

⁵⁵ Rosenfield, 'Disposal', p. 188.

⁵⁶ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 161.

⁵⁷ TNA PROB 11/33/4.

⁵⁸ R C Braddock, 'Grey, Henry, duke of Suffolk (1517-1554)', *ODNB*; Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 86.

under the supervision of a man such as Suffolk would have been affected by his confessional stance. Suffolk's brother John Grey remained in the Minories until 1562, and his half brother George Medley was still there in late 1567, when he was easily the highest ratepayer in the parish.⁵⁹ The presence of members of this prominent Protestant family must, over the course of two decades, have fostered the nonconformity for which the liberty became renowned.

Owen also suggests that the liberty's sizeable alien population helps explain the 'extraordinary position of the Minories, a five-acre parish in an insalubrious quarter of London, as a subversive influence within the Established Church'.⁶⁰ According to Owen, many of the liberty's aliens worshipped at the parish church, which contributed to its reformist tendencies. In 1568, however, only eight of the seventy aliens living in the Minories reported membership in the English church—a mere 11.4%.⁶¹ In St Martin le Grand, 48.7% of aliens attended the English church; in St Katherine by the Tower, it was 62.1%.⁶² The alien community in the Minories was smaller and of more recent origin than those in the other liberties. A higher proportion of the aliens there would have come to England as religious refugees, but there is no evidence that they influenced the confessional stance of the parish in any significant way.

Patronage of the parish curacy was not formally established until the Restoration. In his 1708 *New View of London*, Edward Hatton recorded that 'the Living is a Rectory in the Gift of the Lord Chancellor or Keeper, for the time being; the present incumbent, Dr King, Value £2/13s per Annum, paid by the Master of the Ordnance'.⁶³ There is no evidence that the Lord Chancellor had any role in the parish before the Civil War, but the £2/13s paid by the Ordnance Office had its origins in the first years of the parish.⁶⁴ Suffolk's final grant secured to him all reversions of land within the precinct on condition that he pay £2/13/4d annually 'for a stipend or sustentation of a Chaplain to perform divine service and administer the sacraments and sacramental things to the inhabitants' with another '£5 allowed for the fee of the warden of the said capital house and the collector of rents and auditor of the premises'.⁶⁵ This was not an unusual

⁵⁹ Ibid.; LPL MS 3390, fo 2v.

⁶⁰ Owen, 'Nursery', p. 73.

⁶¹ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, iii.422-3. Sixty of the remaining 62 strangers claimed membership in the metropolitan stranger churches.

⁶² Ibid., iii.425-39.

⁶³ Hatton, *View*, ii.575.

⁶⁴ Robert Seymour, writing in 1733, claims that by then the sum had been 'lost for want of being claimed'. R Seymour, *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, and Parts Adjacent*, 2 vols, (London, 1733-5), i.271.

⁶⁵ TNA C 66/849/10.

arrangement for parishes formed in post-monastic precincts. In Blackfriars—where the parish of St Anne was set up about the same time—financial responsibility for the parochial clergy was assigned to Thomas Cawarden, the major freeholder of the precinct.⁶⁶

If Cawarden's experience in Blackfriars was mirrored by Suffolk's in the Minories, then his financial obligation to the curate of the Minories was likely accompanied by patronage of the living. Documentary evidence related to the parish is almost nonexistent until the 1560s. By 1566, when the churchwardens' accounts begin, the parish vestry had claimed the right to name its own curate, a right that was respected well into the seventeenth century. Suffolk's reformist ideals may have inspired him to give the advowson over to the fledgling parish. The right of a religious community to choose its own minister was, after all, 'a form of barely-disguised parochial congregationalism treasured by the best reforming churches on the continent but deeply incongruous within the Anglican system.'⁶⁷ Suffolk or his successors may well have made the gift after the parish demonstrated its nonconformist tendencies, or the parishioners may have claimed the advowson during the power vacuum that was left after the fall of the Grey family during Mary's reign. It seems somewhat less likely that the parishioners had always enjoyed the autonomy of naming their own minister, since it would imply that the payment made by Suffolk was based solely on his having freehold of the whole parish.⁶⁸ When the precinct came under the control of the Ordnance Office in 1563, the Master of the Ordnance became responsible for funding the curacy. The Lieutenants-General of the Ordnance—who oversaw the daily functioning of the office and whose official residence was in the Minories—did not claim special authority over the parish until the 1630s.

The vestry's right to choose its own minister had a significant impact on the Minories' Elizabethan history. Gareth Owen argues that 'in the face of the opposition of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the puritan movement within the Elizabethan church could be truly effective on the parish level only in circumstances that allowed for a harmony of interests between local laity and clergy.'⁶⁹ The patronage system that characterised the English church therefore served as a damper on the development of more radical reformist sentiments. In Holy Trinity Minories, confessional harmony between

⁶⁶ See p. 122, below.

⁶⁷ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 88.

⁶⁸ E Finnie, 'The House of Hamilton: Patronage, Politics, and the Church in the Reformation Period', *Innes Review*, 36 (1985), pp. 3-8.

⁶⁹ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 88.

parishioners and clergy was aided not only by internal patronage but also by the ecclesiastical privileges claimed by the parish. Tomlinson asserts that the possession of these privileges ‘affords what is perhaps a unique example of the blessings of home rule.’⁷⁰ That may be true, but both Owen and Tomlinson overstate the scope, strength and durability of the ecclesiastical franchises claimed by the Minories. Noting the absence of the parish from the records of the bishop of London’s 1561 visitation, for example, Owen claims that ‘in the early days of [Elizabeth’s] reign, parishioners could effectively boycott an episcopal visitation’.⁷¹ Holy Trinity was one of thirteen parishes that failed to respond to the bishop’s request for information in 1561.⁷² The Minories was a young and very small parish—it had only two baptisms in each 1563 and 1564, the first years for which records exist—so its omission was unlikely to cause any sort of backlash.⁷³ While the parish clearly cooperated in subsequent Elizabethan visitations Tomlinson notes that the absence of visitation payments from parish records between 1607 and 1730 as evidence that the parish successfully reasserted its independence.⁷⁴ The Minories retained its nonconformist tendencies into the seventeenth century, and the parish is indeed missing from the episcopal visitation records, but so too are any hints of ecclesiastical battles like the ones that involved Holy Trinity in the 1560s and 70s,⁷⁵ and the parish participated in the episcopal tithing survey in 1635.⁷⁶ The parish reasserted its ecclesiastical privileges after the Restoration, when the Minories became (along with Fleet Street) a centre for the clandestine marriages that were outlawed under the 1753 Marriage Reform Act.⁷⁷

Without the protection of the abbess, the ecclesiastical freedoms enjoyed in the Minories hinged on the claim of its curacy to be a donative. Unlike a presentative living, against which a vigilant bishop could effectively veto the ministry of unorthodox clergymen, a donative was a benefice that the patron could bestow without presentation to or investment by the ordinary.⁷⁸ The parish claim to the privilege was based on the

⁷⁰ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 165.

⁷¹ Owen, ‘Liberty of the Minories’, p. 92. GL MS 9537/2, fo 107v.

⁷² GL MS 9537/2, fos 64-66v, 77v, 79v, 101, 105v, 106v, 108.

⁷³ GL MS 9238, fo 3.

⁷⁴ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 167.

⁷⁵ See GL MS 9531/14 and 15; cf. GL MS 9531/13, fos 152v, 192-3v.

⁷⁶ LPL CM VIII/37.

⁷⁷ 26 Geo II, c. 33; before the passage of the act, marriage in England was governed by the Church of England and its courts, and the prevalence of clandestine marriages in the Minories after the Restoration was therefore a reassertion of its independence from ecclesiastical oversight.

⁷⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, (Oxford, 1989). For more detailed information on donatives, see R Phillimore, *The Ecclesiastical Law of the Church of England*, ed W G F Phillimore, 2nd edn, 2 vols, (London, 1895), i.252-9.

independence guaranteed to the Abbey of St Clare in the 1290s by King Edward I and Pope Boniface VIII. Upon the dissolution of the abbey, its rights were transferred to the Crown under a 1533 statute. The statute specifically provided for the continuation and transfer of ecclesiastical privileges, declaring

that all manner of provocations and appeals, hereafter to be had, made or taken from the jurisdiction of any abbots, priors, or other heads and governors of monasteries, abbeys, priories and other houses and places exempt, in such cases as they were wont or might afore the making of this Act...to have or make immediately any appeal or provocation to the Bishop of Rome...shall and may take and make their appeals and provocations immediately to the King's Majesty of this Realm...so that no Archbishop or Bishop of this Realm shall intermit or meddle with any such appeals, otherwise or in any other manner than they might have done afore the making of this Act.⁷⁹

Papal peculiars thus became royal peculiars. On 1 April 1550, however, Edward VI issued a patent that declared all exempt jurisdictions in and around London to be 'part and parcel of the diocese of London and within the care jurisdiction and visitation of the Bishop of London & his successors Bishops of London forever.'⁸⁰ When Mary succeeded her brother, she confirmed the bishop of London's rights over royal peculiars in his diocese, though she made a special exemption for the chapel of the Tower. Since they directly contravened the Henrician statute, Tomlinson insists that the Edwardian and Marian patents were *ultra vires*.⁸¹ Legitimate or otherwise, they proved helpful in ensuring orthodoxy in the Minories, where a nascent puritan community was openly challenging the middle path of the Elizabethan church.

Concerns about unchecked Protestantism in the Minories can be traced back to the first months of Queen Mary's reign. By Mary's accession, Suffolk had sold his freehold in the Minories, but he maintained strong links with the precinct, as his brothers and his half-brother were among the four new freeholders. Suffolk survived the downfall of his daughter Jane, who claimed the throne at the death of Edward VI in July 1553, but the following winter he was enmeshed in another conspiracy against the queen. When he fled London in response to a 25 January 1553/4 summons from the Privy Council, Stephen Gardiner (then bishop of Winchester) was sent to the Minories to investigate.⁸² Searching George Medley's house, Gardiner found documents concerning Suffolk's plan

⁷⁹ 25 Hen VIII, c. 19, §6.

⁸⁰ *Foedera, conventiones, litterae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica inter reges Angliae et alios quosvis imperatores, reges, pontifices, principes, vel communitates (1101-1654)*, eds T Rymer and R Sanderson, 20 vols, (London, 1704-35), 15.222 as trans in Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 164.

⁸¹ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 165.

⁸² R C Braddock, 'Grey, Henry, duke of Suffolk (1517-1554)', *ODNB*.

to lead an uprising against the queen.⁸³ One of Suffolk's co-conspirators escaped to Italy, but the duke was executed for treason on 23 February 1553/4. Seven days later, Mary issued letters patent confirming the authority of the bishop of London in places such as the Minories. Faced with the increasing brutality of the Marian persecutions, those with mild reformist sentiments lay low while more prominent Protestants disappeared to the continent.

After Elizabeth's accession, the 1559 Act of Uniformity required the use of the new *Book of Common Prayer* throughout England and Wales. The 1559 prayer book alienated many of the committed Protestants, who had returned from continental exile at the end of Mary's reign with great hopes for a more fully reformed English church. The vestments prescribed for clergymen under the 1559 prayer book sparked an eight-year battle of wills between Elizabeth and her bishops on the one side and the group of radical reformers who would soon earn the epithet Puritan on the other.⁸⁴ The vestiarian controversy, as it became known, reached its zenith between 1564 and 1566, as the Archbishop of Canterbury attempted to force universal adherence to the prayer book.⁸⁵ The crisis 'crystallised the opposition of young reform-minded clergy against the Elizabethan settlement.'⁸⁶ Clergymen and laymen whose consciences severed them from their home parishes flocked to the Minories.⁸⁷ It thus became a focal point for nonconformity in the Elizabethan church. Displays of Puritan sentiment there peaked during the height of the vestiarian controversy in the mid-1560s, after which they faded for a few years, only to resume in the following decade.

For almost twenty years, the Minories was the home of leading Protestant families, independence in selection of clergy and a practicable if tenuous claim to ecclesiastical independence. It was, truly, a tinderbox of religious radicalism. A single spark—provided by the influx of radical clergy driven from their benefices—was enough to set the Minories ablaze. Katherine Bertie, the widow of Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, took up residence in the liberty soon after her return from continental exile.⁸⁸ During Edward's reign 'Katherine's encouragement and inexhaustible purse helped to

⁸³ 28 January 1553/4 letter from Gardiner to Sir William Petre. TNA SP 11/2/20.

⁸⁴ L J Trinterud, 'The Origins of Puritanism', *Church History*, 20 (1951), pp. 46-7.

⁸⁵ B Usher, 'The Deanery of Bocking and the Demise of the Vestiarian Controversy', *Journal Of Ecclesiastical History*, 52 (2001), p. 434.

⁸⁶ Owen, 'Nursery', p. 68.

⁸⁷ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 82.

⁸⁸ Katherine (*née* Willoughby) was the fourth wife of Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk. Brandon's third marriage—to Mary Tudor, the younger sister of Henry VIII and widow of Louis XII of France—produced a daughter, Frances, who in 1533 was married to Henry Grey. Grey became duke of Suffolk after the death of both of Brandon's sons in July 1551.

shape a new protestant culture.⁸⁹ Her patronage was instrumental in bringing influential puritans to the parish. Miles Coverdale, the godly Edwardian bishop of Exeter who tutored her children, preached at Holy Trinity Minories thirteen times between November 1567 and October 1568.⁹⁰ Three of Katherine's other *protégés*—John Field, Michael Pattenson and Robert Brown—all preached in the church there in the latter years of the 1560s.⁹¹ John Field, a noted separatist and friend of John Foxe, moved to the nearby parish of St Giles Cripplegate around 1569, but remained a frequent visitor to the Holy Trinity pulpit.⁹² Field preached there no fewer than twelve times between March 1567/8 and November 1570.⁹³ Katherine moved to Lincolnshire more or less permanently in the early 1570s. 'Subsequently,' Owen writes, 'the Suffolk association with the parish faded, but there can be few doubts about the crucial contribution made by the family to the initial cause of radical Puritanism in the area.'⁹⁴ Even during her residence in the parish, the duchess of Suffolk was not the orchestrating force behind all Puritanism in the Minories. The only record that directly connects her to the parish was a donation of ten shillings on 7 December 1567. Bertie, like so many other nonconformists, may have been drawn to the precinct by its reputation; her presence, in turn helped to draw prominent preachers to the parish.

The churchwardens' records detail the practical effects that nonconformity had on the parish.⁹⁵ Over the three years from 1568 through 1570 parishioners' tithes amounted to only £25/4/9*d*. By comparison, £38/-/3*d* was collected from those attending sermons in 1569 alone. This suggests that the crowds which gathered in the liberty to hear godly preachers were sizeable and that most of them lived outside the parish.⁹⁶ The precinct's reputation for fiery preaching attracted the notice of bishop of London Edmund Grindal, who had reluctantly begun enforcing conformity in his large diocese in 1565.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ S Wabuda, 'Bertie, Katherine, duchess of Suffolk (1519-1580)', *ODNB*.

⁹⁰ LPL MS 3390, fos 5, 5v, 19, 19v. Collections taken during his sermons totalled £5/10/4*d ob*.

⁹¹ S Wabuda, 'Bertie, Katherine, duchess of Suffolk (1519-1580)', *ODNB*.

⁹² P Collinson, 'Field, John (1544/5?-1588)', *ODNB*.

⁹³ LPL MS 3390, fos 19, 29, 37v, 43v. Collections made during the sermons of popular preachers brought substantial sums of money to the parish. See p. 87, below.

⁹⁴ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 86.

⁹⁵ LPL MS 3390, fos 17-40.

⁹⁶ London was still small enough that godly people throughout the metropolis could easily attend the services and sermons led by prominent Puritan clergy. See P Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford, 1982), ch. 6; C Haigh, 'The Taming of Reformation: Preachers, Pastors and Parishioners in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England', *History*, 85 (2000), p. 573.

⁹⁷ P Collinson, 'Grindal, Edmund (1516x20-1583)', *ODNB*.

There is no evidence that the ecclesiastical independence claimed by the Minories deterred Bishop Grindal from demanding orthodoxy there. William Bonham, the parish lecturer, was imprisoned by Grindal in December 1570 for ‘disturbance of good order’.⁹⁸ Alongside him in prison was Nicholas Crane, who had distributed communion in the Minories on 31 July 1569 but never seems to have preached in the parish.⁹⁹ Bonham and Crane were close associates: they had been arrested together in June 1567 at the Plumbers’ Hall, and they would later found a conference of nonconformist clergy that began meeting secretly in London in the 1570s.¹⁰⁰ The churchwardens recorded payments in January 1569/70 to the imprisoned Bonham and Crane.¹⁰¹ Edwin Sandys succeeded Grindal as bishop of London from 13 July 1570. Ten days later, Bonham returned to the pulpit of the Minories, where he continued preaching through the autumn at least, despite his poor health.¹⁰² Crane may have remained in prison as late as November 1570. He did not reappear in the Minories again until 1577, when he shared oversight of poor relief there with the godly preacher Thomas Wilcox.¹⁰³

Tomlinson argues that Edwardian and Marian regulation did not effectively enable ‘the bishops to assert their authority in any of those cases where it was disputed.’¹⁰⁴ An assessment of battles between the Minories and the bishopric of London, however, shows that the bishop generally had the upper hand. If the Minories was ever able to assert spiritual independence, it was only for short periods of time. Seth Jackson—who was curate during William Bonham’s term as parish lecturer—discovered as much soon after Bonham’s arrest. Jackson was not so prominent in Puritan circles as Coverdale, Field or Crane; there is no evidence linking him directly to any of London’s private conventicles. But considering his role at Holy Trinity Minories and the godly preachers and congregations the parish attracted, ‘there can be no doubt about his intimate contacts with members of such assemblies’.¹⁰⁵ Between 18 and 21 December 1569, the churchwardens’ accounts record five shillings ‘Geven to Mr Jacson when he

⁹⁸ W Nicholson, *The Remains of Edmund Grindal Successively Bishop of London and Archbishop of York and Canterbury* (Cambridge, 1843), p. 318; Bonham and Seth Jackson were the most frequent preachers during the period, and Bonham received regular payments from the churchwardens, unlike other preachers. LPL MS 3390, fos 35, 35v, 36v, 39v.

⁹⁹ LPL MS 3390, fo 25v.

¹⁰⁰ B Usher, ‘Crane, Nicholas (c.1522-1588)’, *ODNB*.

¹⁰¹ LPL MS 3390, fo 35v. Crane received 9/4d while Bonham received only 6/8d, though he continued to receive payments as parish lecturer, as well.

¹⁰² LPL MS 3390, fo 39v.

¹⁰³ B Usher, ‘Crane, Nicholas (c.1522-1588)’, *ODNB*; P Collinson, ‘Wilcox, Thomas (c.1549-1608)’, *ODNB*; LPL MS 3390, fo 50v.

¹⁰⁴ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 165.

¹⁰⁵ Owen, ‘Nursery’, p. 71.

was in prison'.¹⁰⁶ If Jackson was detained in the latter half of 1569, it cannot have been for long. Between 17 July 1569 and 15 January 1569/70, Jackson ministered to the parish every Sunday but one, according to the churchwardens' accounts.¹⁰⁷ Jackson was certainly imprisoned by bishop Grindal in January, however, and he did not return to the Minories until 28 May 1570.¹⁰⁸ He died later that summer. In his will Jackson left all his goods to the 'congregation of Christ', and he named Crane and Bonham as his overseers.¹⁰⁹

If Edwardian and Marian letters patent were not strictly legal instruments for the enforcement of religious conformity, they were relatively effective at the time. Confronted by the Minories' claims to ecclesiastical independence, Bishop Grindal felt empowered to demand the compliance of its clergy. There is no evidence that any minister or preacher of the parish successfully rebuffed such a request without imprisonment, as we have seen was the case with Jackson, Bonham and Crane. Grindal's interference, however, invited the resistance of Holy Trinity's congregation, who did not turn their backs on their imprisoned clergymen. Crane and Bonham both received money from the churchwardens while imprisoned in January 1569/70, and Bonham continued to collect regular payments as parish lecturer despite being unable to carry out his duties. In the months after Bonham's release, parish officers distributed poor relief to non-parishioners on his advice.¹¹⁰ During his four-month imprisonment, Seth Jackson was given the rather substantial sum of £1/8s in addition to his salary as curate (£2/5s per quarter).¹¹¹ The parish paid a further £1/15s to ministers serving in Jackson's stead. Tomlinson is probably correct in claiming that such payments were evidence of the parishioners' active resistance to the bishop of London, but Owen acknowledges that 'parochial defiance was crumbling under the weight of official pressure'.¹¹² It could hardly do otherwise. The queen and her privy council were openly hostile to nonconformity. Had the Minories chosen to press secular privileges, it could at least have hoped for ambivalence from the royal government, which was never eager to bolster the franchises of the City of London. There was no similar interest behind which religious privileges could take shelter.

¹⁰⁶ LPL MS 3390, fo 34.

¹⁰⁷ John Field filled in for Jackson on 9 October 1569.

¹⁰⁸ LPL MS 3390, fo 28v.

¹⁰⁹ GL MS 9051/3, fo 253v. The will was dated 2 July and proved 6 August 1570.

¹¹⁰ LPL MS 3390, fo 38, among the recipients recommended by Bonham was his aunt, who received four shillings on 22 October 1570.

¹¹¹ LPL MS 3390, fo 28.

¹¹² Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 93; Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 166.

The gradual establishment of the bishop of London's authority over the Minories caused noticeable changes in the administration of the parish. Radicalism did not disappear from the precinct suddenly or completely, of course, but it became less pronounced over the course of the 1570s. Parish finances fell dramatically. The varying specificity of records kept by successive churchwardens makes it difficult to draw precise conclusions, but trends are identifiable, especially by considering the churchwardens' accounts in the context of events in the parish. From 1567 to 1571, radicalism was ascendant in the Minories. The resultant largesse was the result of collections taken at the church door during sermons, as evidenced by the detailed records kept during the period.¹¹³ Holy Trinity was, after all, among London's relatively impoverished parishes.¹¹⁴ The curate's salary increased as parish coffers swelled. In 1567, Walter Haynes received £1/5s quarterly; three years later his successor Seth Jackson was receiving £2/5s quarterly. No data survive on the salary of the parish lecturer before 1570, when William Bonham received £2/10s each quarter. The discrepancy suggests the relative importance of the two positions in parish life.

Poor relief offered by the parish also benefited from the substantial contributions made by those who came to hear the godly preach. In 1569, £25/11/2½d was distributed to the poor by the churchwardens. Sixty-four percent of it (£16/9/1d) went to people noted as living outside the Minories, coming primarily from the neighbouring parishes of St Botolph Aldgate, St Katherine Creechurch and Whitechapel and from the nearby liberty of St Katherine by the Tower. Even the £9/2/1½d distributed within the parish included £2/3/2½d that went to all-comers at the church door, some of whom no doubt came from outside the parish, as well. The wide dispersal of Holy Trinity's poor relief is unsurprising if one considers the small population of the parish and the large crowds attracted there for sermons. Data from 1570 omit three months of the year, but they are strikingly similar to the previous year. Of £20/6/4d distributed to the poor, fifty-six percent (£11/9/5½d) went directly to people living in other parishes. Of the remaining £8/16/10½d, almost a quarter (£2/5/4d) was distributed at the church door.¹¹⁵

The records for the following two years (1571-2), consisting primarily of non-itemised biennial sums, are too general to be of much use. Active suppression of nonconformity in the precinct seems to have ended with the elevation of bishop Grindal

¹¹³ LPL MS 3390, fos 5-29v. It is possible to identify both the men who preached on any given Sunday and the amount collected from the congregation during his sermon.

¹¹⁴ Jordan, *Charities of London*, p. 41n.

¹¹⁵ See figure 3.3, p. 110, below.

to the archbishopric of York in July 1570. There is no evidence of any confrontation between the parish and Edwin Sandys, the subsequent bishop of London.¹¹⁶ Sandys was more sympathetic to evangelical causes than his predecessor, and his elevation to the bishopric coincided with a decrease in Puritan activity in the Minories. Expenditure on poor relief, funded primarily by the voluntary collections made at sermons, stood at £50/15/6*d* for the two year span of 1571-2 but declined to £12/-/2*d* over the two years 1573-4.¹¹⁷ Payments to clergy also fell, the salary of the preacher dropping more rapidly than that of the curate. In 1573 the incumbent and the lecturer each received £2/10*s* quarterly. By the 1575-6 biennium, the curate's pay had been reduced to £1/10*s* per quarter, while the lecturer was receiving only fifteen shillings.¹¹⁸

Recovery was already underway, though. The two years of 1575-6 witnessed a spike in collections made during sermons. Over the same period, poor relief approached previous levels: £42/1/1*d* was disbursed during the biennium.¹¹⁹ The curate's salary remained stable (at £1/10*s* quarterly) through the end of the decade and dropped slightly (to £1/2/6*d*) during the 1580s, but expenditure on preachers rose steadily. In the 1577-8 biennium, the parish lecturer received £2/3/4*d* quarterly, increasing to £2/13/4*d* in 1582 and £3 in 1583, finally topping out at £4/10*s* per quarter in 1585. Thereafter, the preacher's salary declined through the end of the century, but it always remained higher than that of the curate.

The reestablishment of the Minories as a centre of godly preaching came about under the leadership of committed Puritans Robert Heas (curate from 1574) and George Cheston (lecturer after 1575).¹²⁰ Sandys's departure for the archbishopric of York in March 1576/7 signalled the end of easy relations between the Minories and the diocese of London. His successor as bishop there was John Aylmer, whose effective primacy after Archbishop of Canterbury Edmund Grindal's suspension in May 1577 made him particularly keen to enforce uniformity in his own diocese.¹²¹ Aylmer's first episcopal visitation ended poorly for the parish. After appearing before the bishop in June, Cheston was imprisoned on 10 August 1577.¹²² A year later, Heas also ran afoul of Aylmer's push for orthodoxy. Heas consistently failed to observe the prescribed order in administration of sacraments and refused to don the required vestments during services,

¹¹⁶ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 90.

¹¹⁷ LPL MS 3390, fos 41v, 45v. See figure, 3.2, p. 109, below.

¹¹⁸ See figure 3.1, p. 108, below.

¹¹⁹ LPL MS 3390, fo 48v.

¹²⁰ LPL MS 3390, fos 45, 48.

¹²¹ B Usher, 'Aylmer, John (1520/21-1594)', *ODNB*.

¹²² LPL MS 3390, fo 53.

for which Aylmer placed the parish under interdict.¹²³ Extremely rare after the break with Rome, the interdict achieved its desired result. A few days later, 31 August 1578, Heas capitulated and put forth sureties for good behaviour.¹²⁴

Forced to curb overtly Puritan preaching and public displays of nonconformity, parish finances suffered substantially. Clergy who had been imprisoned under Bishop Grindal in 1570 had continued to enjoy the support of the parish, or at least of the parish vestry. Those confronting Bishop Aylmer in 1577-8 were less sure of themselves. The parish, certainly, had fewer financial resources available to it. The 1577-8 biennium witnessed the total collapse of poor relief at Holy Trinity Minories.¹²⁵ In 1578 the vestry drew up clear guidelines to govern relief, suggesting that the problems of the previous biennium had been caused by maladministration or corruption. Previously among the churchwardens' many duties, the vestry entrusted poor relief to a board of eight men that included the two churchwardens.¹²⁶ The regulations stipulated that each week two of the overseers for the poor would 'receave at the church dore...such almes and reliefe, as charitable & well disposed persons shall give towards the mayntenance of the pore'. The sum collected was to be verified by the board after each service, and no relief was to be distributed 'without the consent & appointment of the persons above named or the greatest part of them'.¹²⁷ In any case, the assistance offered to the poor by the parish never returned to earlier levels. In 1581 £4/14/10*d* was distributed. Seventy-eight percent (£3/13/5½*d*) of it went to parishioners, with the remainder representing the last time assistance was extended to those outside the precinct.¹²⁸ Data for 1582 and 1588 suggest that the decrease in donations was permanent; less than one pound was disbursed each year.¹²⁹ Sums expended on relief rose in the 1590s to around two or three pounds annually, but they were increasingly dedicated to the care of fewer individuals over longer periods.¹³⁰

John Aylmer's confrontations with the Minories did not eradicate Puritan sentiment there. It did force a degree of outward conformity on the parish, which drove

¹²³ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 90. It should be noted that Heas was simultaneously the incumbent of Holy Trinity Minories and the neighbouring St Botolph Aldgate, but the Minories alone was placed under interdict, probably in consideration of its long-standing reputation for radicalism.

¹²⁴ LPL MS 3390, fo 53.

¹²⁵ LPL MS 3390, fo 50v.

¹²⁶ See p. 97, below.

¹²⁷ LPL MS 3390, fo 50v.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, fos 58v-59.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, fos 59v-60, 75. See figure 3.2, p. 109, below.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, fos 82v, 83v, 92v. In 1595 and 1596, money spent 'for the nursinge of the childe that is kept at the charge of the parishe' was the only expenditure recorded under poor relief, costing the parish a total of £5/4/9*d*.

away the visiting preachers whose sermons had drawn coreligionists from around London and filled the parish coffers. In 1580 the Privy Council closed a loophole that had allowed preachers to avoid the administration of Holy Communion, after which there is no evidence of further conflict between diocese and parish.¹³¹ Moderate Puritan preachers Humphrey Wildblood and John Nicholson continued to preach there during the 1590s, inspiring Owen to claim that ‘a Minories lectureship never lost its appeal to ardent nonconformists’.¹³² Even in the 1620s, godly churchmen made their homes in the Minories. ‘Staunch puritan and effective preacher’ John Randall died at his house there in May 1622.¹³³ Five years later Josias Nicholls, one of the leading nonconformists of late Elizabethan Kent, appears in Minories records for the first time. He witnessed a churchwarden’s will and almost immediately established himself in the parish.¹³⁴ Brett Usher writes that

From November 1627 until May 1635 he was evidently the senior member of its ruling vestry. Unless a minister was present he always signed the minutes first, but there is no evidence that he himself acted as minister or preacher. Perhaps, as a venerable relic of the campaigns of the 1580s, he was now regarded as a quasi-Presbyterian elder.¹³⁵

Usher may overstate Nicholls’s status, however. From May 1630 Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance John Heydon took pride of place in the vestry, appropriating even the right to patronage of the parish living.¹³⁶ It is doubtful that Heydon, who went on to become a royalist officer in the Civil War, embraced the godly strains of parish life in the Minories. By the 1630s, they were certainly subdued. Despite the continued presence of old guard Puritans, the centre of London nonconformity passed permanently out of the Minories after 1580. Another liberty—the Blackfriars—succeeded it in the decades before the Civil War.

The Ordnance Office and the Secular Status of the Minories

The lack of a central, non-parochial authority figure in the Minories does much to explain why the liberty never claimed secular privileges in the same way as it did ecclesiastical franchises. In liberties like Blackfriars or Paris Garden, the major freeholder of the liberty inherited and protected its rights and privileges, and St Katherine’s and St

¹³¹ LPL MS 3390, fos 65v and 68v record payments to a constable who was arrested on three occasions in 1584 and 1585, but there is no evidence that his imprisonment was related to a confessional dispute.

¹³² Owen, ‘Liberty of the Minories’, p. 94.

¹³³ S Wright, ‘Randall, John (1570-1622)’, *ODNB*.

¹³⁴ LPL MS 3390, fo 116; GL MS 9052/10.

¹³⁵ P Collinson, ‘Nicholls, Josias (c.1553-1639/40)’, rev. B Usher, *ODNB*.

¹³⁶ LPL MS 3390, fo 117v. TNA SP 16/435/17, 3 Dec 1639.

Martin le Grand continued to be held by religious corporations that actively resisted any loss of their chartered rights. After 1563, however, the Minories belonged to the Crown. Apart from strictly religious issues, outside authorities found it expedient to address concerns about the Minories to the Lieutenants-General of the Ordnance. Unlike his counterparts in other liberties, the lieutenant-general was not directly affected by the Minories' status as a liberty. His immediate responsibility was not to the precinct but to the Ordnance Office. The Ordnance Office was itself an extension of the Tower, whose franchises caused substantially more friction with the City than those of the Minories ever did.

The topography of the liberty limited contact between the Ordnance Office and residents. Separate gates connected each part of the liberty directly to the highway that ran parallel to London wall (which is now called the Minories), and each part of the liberty employed its own porters. A small door in the wall of the parish church was for decades the only direct route between the two sides of the Minories, but parish records suggest it was used extremely rarely.¹³⁷ The lieutenant-general was nevertheless the main point of contact between the Minories and other secular authorities. In March 1587/8 the Privy Council contacted lieutenant-general Sir Robert Constable (and the 'principal inhabitantes' of six other liberties) ordering them 'to contribute unto the charge of tenn thousand men appointed to be levied within the said Cytie' of London.¹³⁸ In the midst of war with Spain—and under the watchful eye of a military officer—the residents of the Minories could hardly avoid contributing their share. A few years later, the Privy Council again contacted the lieutenant-general, now Sir George Carew. Reminding him of the proclamations banning the consumption of meat during lent, the council expressed its concern that 'notwithstanding such strict orders as have bin and are every yeare published by her Majesty's proclamacion' certain butchers continued to 'utter great quantity of flesh during the time of Lent'.¹³⁹ The City had few concerns with the Minories. During the only known period of tension, the aldermen addressed their complaints to the Privy Council, which in turn contacted the Ordnance Office.

While contemporaries grouped the Minories with London's other liberties and exempt places, it was for the Minories a distinction more honoured in the breach than the observance. Evidence of the relationship between the precinct and outside authorities (the City, the county of Middlesex and the royal government) shows that, in practice, the

¹³⁷ LPL MS 3390, fo 22v.

¹³⁸ *APC* 1587-8, p. 428.

¹³⁹ *APC* 1592-3, p. 61.

residents of the liberty enjoyed few concrete privileges. Acquiescence to the Privy Council was the only feasible option for dealing with such a powerful authority, but the relationship between the Minories and other centres of authority was less straightforward. In August 1584, for example, the master of St Katherine's hospital certified to the council a list of houses he had searched for signs of recusancy in Tower Hill and the Minories.¹⁴⁰ His search suggests both the complex confessional makeup of early modern London (even of famously Puritan parishes like Holy Trinity), but also the ways in which authority was exercised over the liberties. Recusancy was treated as a civil matter as much as a religious one. While local JPs reported known recusants to the county's deputy lieutenant, the liberties seem to have had a separate system. In this case an official from one liberty carried out searches in other nearby liberties, though in other matters both St Katherine's and the Minories integrated themselves into the governance structures of Middlesex. Minories residents were particularly likely to participate in the sessions of the peace. In 1573, the churchwardens recorded a payment of 6/4d 'for making of a supplication to my lord treasurer to obtayne Mr Fisher to be our Justice & for our charges travelinge aboute it', but there is no other evidence that there was ever a JP named specifically for the Minories.¹⁴¹ Almost five decades later, when the Privy Council ordered the demolition of illicit tenements in the Liberty, it directed its letters not to a special justice for the Minories but to the sheriffs of London and Middlesex jointly.¹⁴² Sessions records for Middlesex confirm that the liberty's officers regularly presented suspects before the county justices.¹⁴³

The ability of the City to correct the behaviour of Minories residents was less clearly established. The enforcement of building regulations—one of the few times the issue arose—was inconclusive, since their interference was a direct result of Privy Council action. Another incident dates from April 1639, when Edward Cludd, a citizen and mercer of London wrote to Sir John Heydon. Cludd had stood as surety for a Minories resident called Morton in an action being pursued in the City of London. When Morton failed to appear, Cludd stood to lose £100. He asked Heydon to give him a 'warrant for the apprehension of Morton if he should find him in any way of your liberties within the Minories.'¹⁴⁴ Heydon accordingly issued a 'warrant to the Constable

¹⁴⁰ *CSPD* 1581-90, p. 198.

¹⁴¹ LPL MS 3390, fo 43v. Based on records from Bridewell Hospital, Ian Archer declared that Jasper Fisher was a particularly diligent JP. Archer, *Pursuit of Stability*, p. 228.

¹⁴² *APC* 1618-9, p. 458.

¹⁴³ *Calendar to the [Middlesex] Sessions Records 1612-1618*, ed W H C Le Hardy, 4 vols, (London, 1935-42)

¹⁴⁴ TNA SP 16/418/73.

and Headborough of the precinct of the Trinity, Minories, to assist Edward Cludd in the execution of any writ or other legal warrant upon John Morton within the precinct of the Minories.¹⁴⁵ In isolation it is difficult to assess the importance of this incident. Tomlinson argues that it ‘proves conclusively that no writ could be executed within the parish without the consent of the parish, or of someone supposed to represent it.’¹⁴⁶ Given Heydon’s well-documented interest in the Minories and his prominence within the royal government at the time, however, it seems more likely that Cludd’s deference to Heydon’s ‘liberties within the Minories’ was unusual, though necessary. There is no evidence to suggest that the Minories ever attempted to shelter suspected criminals. Indeed, the request for a special justice and Heydon’s willingness to issue a warrant highlight the generally unimpressive state of the Minories’ secular privileges. On the whole, the primary effect of the Minories’ status as a liberty seems to have been a claim to be addressed separate from Middlesex or London in matters of general concern. It may have been more than a parish, but it was certainly less than ‘a miniature kingdom of its own.’¹⁴⁷

Only two of the ten men who held the lieutenantancy-general between 1563 and 1642 showed any sustained interest in the residential portions of the Minories. Sir Roger Dallison, who served as lieutenant-general from 1608 to 1616, left a decidedly negative mark on the liberty; he was the only early modern lieutenant-general deprived of his office.¹⁴⁸ Both the Minories and the Ordnance Office suffered from his greed and neglect. In 1612 Dallison secured from King James a sixty year lease on a significant part of the Minories.¹⁴⁹ The lease, which was made to Dallison personally (i.e. not in his official capacity), included tenements on the residential side of the precinct and undeveloped lands on the Ordnance side. Had it been made in good faith, the arrangement would have been agreeable to both parties, the king receiving ready money and Dallison enjoying the ongoing income from subtenants of the properties he leased.¹⁵⁰ Dallison, however, almost immediately converted many of the buildings on the Ordnance side of the Minories to residential uses, renting the new dwellings at a

¹⁴⁵ TNA SP 16/418/74.

¹⁴⁶ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

¹⁴⁸ Sir Walter Earle MP, who ran the ordnance for Parliament during the Civil War, was deprived by Cromwell in 1652, and the office was not filled again until the Restoration. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-6.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁰ TNA C 66/1956/21.

substantial profit.¹⁵¹ Demand certainly existed for new housing in the Minories (as it did throughout the metropolis), but such speculative construction flew in the face of contemporary royal policy. So long as Dallison retained the lieutenancy-general, however, there was little chance for his building scheme to be quashed.

Dallison's maladministration, however, soon caught up with him. In 1616 he found himself unable to satisfy the Ordnance Office's creditors, and he petitioned to be allowed to sell his lands and call in his debts, so as to be able to pay the king.¹⁵² He was almost immediately deprived of office.¹⁵³ His successor, Sir Richard Morrison, was shocked by the state in which Dallison left the Ordnance Office. Morrison initiated a series of investigations that continued for nearly half a decade. He began by drawing up a survey detailing the state of Ordnance properties in the Minories. The residences of many 'officials, clerks, gunmakers, smiths and weelwrights' had been razed or rented to people with no links to the office, and the workshops 'all altered into private tenements,' including the workshops for the 'making of the King's Musquetts & Calivers &c. for the repairing of them when they came from sea'.¹⁵⁴ With Dallison's illegal tenements uncovered, it was not long before the commissioners for buildings moved to stop other construction in the Minories. Seven new structures in the Minories were included in an August 1618 list of 'principall buildinges as have ben erected contrary to his Majesty's proclamacions...John Cooper, dwelling in the Tower, hath built two tenements of tymber upon new foundacions not as yet fully finished. Simon Warren, a broker dwelling in Houndsditch, hath built five tenements upon new foundacions and parte upon an old stable all of tymber'.¹⁵⁵ Although the commissioners for buildings had never before interfered in the Minories, its notional status as a liberty did not protect it after Dallison's fall. In 1619 the buildings commissioners submitted another list of 'new buildings erected at the Minories near the Tower, contrary to proclamation'.¹⁵⁶ The council moved decisively, telling the sheriffs of both the City and Middlesex that all such buildings in the Minories 'be forthwith pulled downe to the ground and utterly demolished, so as the example thereof and his punishment (being agreeable with his Majesty's expresse

¹⁵¹ Under the sixty-year leases Dallison granted, a substantial amounts of new housing was built on the southern edge of the old residential district (along what had during the days of the abbey been the passage to the laundry) and along the northern extension of the street known then as Little Minories and today as St Clare Street. Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, 2(1).38-42.

¹⁵² Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 130; see TNA E 351/2644-2649 and SP 14/108/38.

¹⁵³ TNA E 403/1727.

¹⁵⁴ TNA SP 16/13/91 (fo. 162).

¹⁵⁵ *APC* 1618-9, p. 245.

¹⁵⁶ *CSPD* 1619-23, p. 36. TNA SP 14/108/38. 13 Apr 1619.

pleasure formerly signified) may deterr others from presumeing to offend in the like kinde hereafter.¹⁵⁷

The Privy Council moved simultaneously to restore the Ordnance parts of the Minories to their previous uses. In March 1618/9 they asked ‘the King’s learned counsel’ to consider the legality of Dallison’s lease in the Minories, and to report back on the same.¹⁵⁸ The following January, the council wrote to Morrison to express its concern over the enclosure of public ways and open ground in the Minories, ‘to the great hinderance and prejudice of his Majesty’s service in conveying such carrages two and fro as belong to the Office of the Ordinance’. The council ordered him to ‘cause the said inclosures and pales to be pulled downe and layd open and playne for the more convenience of his Majesty’s service in the same manner formerly it was before Sir Roger Dallison’s graunt.’¹⁵⁹ In July 1620, the council went even further, ordering that

divers houses in the Minories...formerly reserved for gunners, wheelwrights, and other artificers connected with the defence of the realms, but of which leases have been granted by Sir Roger Dallison...be restored to the previous uses, and they summoned before Council, for breach of trust in letting them.¹⁶⁰

In its relationship to the royal government the Minories gained no discernible privileges from its supposed status as a liberty. In this case the Privy Council was primarily concerned about the way Dallison’s programme of development impeded the smooth functioning of the Ordnance Office, but we have already seen that the council was also concerned with illegal building in the liberty more generally. The royal government did acknowledge the strange jurisdictional position of the precinct; rather than taking sides, they ordered officials of the City and Middlesex to cooperate in enforcing orders there.

Sir John Heydon took the office of lieutenant-general eleven years after Dallison was deprived of it. Like Dallison, Heydon took a keen interest in the residential part of the Minories. Unlike his disgraced predecessor, however, Heydon integrated himself into the community there, taking an active role in the residential part of the liberty. Heydon also showed himself to be more conscientious in his official role, setting out to reform the notoriously inefficient Ordnance Office.¹⁶¹ Tomlinson suggests (and Carlin confirms) that during Heydon’s lieutenantancy-general ‘extensive structural alterations were made in

¹⁵⁷ *APC* 1618-9, p. 458.

¹⁵⁸ *APC* 1618-9, p. 412.

¹⁵⁹ *APC* 1619-21, p. 114.

¹⁶⁰ *CSPD* 1623-5, p. 399.

¹⁶¹ A Thrush, ‘The Ordnance Office and the Navy, 1625-1640’, *Mariner’s Mirror*, 77 (1991), p. 342; S Porter, ‘Heydon, Sir John (*bap.* 1588, *d.* 1653)’, *ODNB*.

the parish, as the still existing names of Haydon Square and Haydon Street testify.¹⁶² During the 1630s, Heydon oversaw the collection of ship money from the residents of the Minories; his office was simultaneously responsible for supplying the ship money fleets.¹⁶³ The relative poverty of the precinct is evident in his returns. In October 1637, Heydon transmitted to Sir William Russell, treasurer of the navy, £14/7/8*d*, the Minories' share of the £5,000 levied on Middlesex that year.¹⁶⁴ In 1639, the liberties of the Minories, Westminster and the Tower were expected to contribute £404 in ship money, of which only £10 was due from the Minories.¹⁶⁵ Heydon's task as collector of this deeply unpopular tax may have been eased by his uncommonly close relationship with the residential side of the liberty.

While previous lieutenants-general had used the official residence in the Minories only rarely, Heydon made his home there. Between 1629 and 1640, he had eight children baptised at Holy Trinity Minories.¹⁶⁶ Heydon's is the only name, of all the holders of his office, which appears in the vestry minutes.¹⁶⁷ For all that, little is known about the effects of his involvement. He first appears among the vestry in May 1630, when he signed his name first, above curate John de Cerf, but there is no indication whether or how his presence affected the decisions of the vestry.¹⁶⁸ The curacy became vacant when de Cerf died in 1639.¹⁶⁹ In December of that year John, Viscount Savage wrote to ask a favour of Heydon, whom he understood to be patron of the living at Holy Trinity:

I presume to importune you on behalf of Thomas Cheshire, a servant of mine, concerning the minister's place for Trinity Minories, now vacant, and at your disposal. What favour you shall show him therein, I shall acknowledge as done to myself, and be obliged to requite it in the like or any other way.¹⁷⁰

If Heydon had successfully asserted his right to patronage, it is unclear when he did so. As with Heydon, May 1630 was the first time de Cerf's signature appeared in the vestry minutes. Details of his selection as curate are absent from the vestry minutes, but his tenure in that post was unusually long for the parish. Holy Trinity was known for the

¹⁶² Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 136.

¹⁶³ TNA SP 16/320/68vi; SP 16/369/34; SP 16/428/54; and SP 16/433/9.

¹⁶⁴ *CSPD* 1637, p. 467.

¹⁶⁵ *CSPD* 1639, p. 491; *CSPD* 1639-40, p. 120.

¹⁶⁶ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, pp. 136-7.

¹⁶⁷ The churchwardens' accounts (LPL MS 3390), in the same manuscript volume, often name the lieutenant-general for his annual contribution to the curate's salary, but Heydon is the only one who signed as a member of the vestry.

¹⁶⁸ LPL MS 3390, fo 117v. The vestry was approving the accounts kept by the previous year's churchwardens.

¹⁶⁹ LPL MS 3390, fos 117v-27v.

¹⁷⁰ *CSPD* 1639-40, p. 143; TNA SP 16/435/17. 3 Dec 1639.

high turnover of its clergy, begging the question of whether de Cerf had been Heydon's first nominee to the post. Savage may have misunderstood Heydon's relationship to the parish, or Heydon's own inclinations may have run another direction, but the curacy was soon thereafter filled not by Thomas Cheshire but by Thomas Rhidon.¹⁷¹ Rhidon was himself deprived and replaced after Parliament took control of the precinct in 1642, suggesting that it may well have been Heydon—who had recently joined the royalist forces at York—and not the parish vestry who had chosen him.¹⁷²

The lieutenants-general were the outward face of authority in the Minories after 1563, but the day-to-day responsibility for governing the liberty fell to the householders who served in precinct offices. Many of the offices were in place by the time Edward's accession, and certainly predated the arrival of the Ordnance Office. After Henry Grey took possession of the Minories between 1548 and 1552/3, he took responsibility for the £5 'fee of the warden of the said capital house and the collector of rents and auditor' in addition to the £2/13/4d he paid the chaplain of the precinct.¹⁷³ The position of warden and collector of rents—a holdover from the administration of the precinct by the Court of Augmentations—had been discontinued by the time the precinct returned to the Crown in 1563. The parochial administration was then beginning to crystallise. Two churchwardens, the most senior parochial officers, were responsible for the general administration of the parish. Like their counterparts in the City, the churchwardens managed parish finances and other offices, most of which are mentioned in their accounts. While the churchwardens were the chief administrators of the parish, the vestry actively monitored their performance. In January 1592/3, for example, 'by reason of divers losses they have receyved by the insufficiensie of Churchwardens who hath died in nothing werth', the vestry decreed that 'no Churchwarden shall hereafter have the stocke of the parishe without sufficient suretie for the acompt and deliverie thereof'.¹⁷⁴ This decision suggests the increasing centrality of the vestry in the administration of the parish: by the end of the 1590s, churchwardens' accounts gave way entirely to vestry minutes.

Many of the offices in the churchwardens' accounts are only mentioned after 1578, though in all likelihood most had existed long before that time. In 1578 separate

¹⁷¹ LPL MS 3390, fos 128-9.

¹⁷² LPL MS 3390, fo 129v.

¹⁷³ *CPR Ed. VI*, iv.406.

¹⁷⁴ LPL MS 3390, fo 78v.

collectors for the poor, (who answered to a subcommittee of vestrymen) assumed responsibility for poor relief, which had previously been taken care of by the churchwardens.¹⁷⁵ Martha Carlin mistakenly writes that the constabulary, ‘first mentioned in 1584, was not paid’.¹⁷⁶ The first known constable was Lawrence Thomas in 1579, and while there is no evidence of regular remuneration of early constables, the office included an annual salary of £2 after 1612.¹⁷⁷ It appears that the office of scavenger was also formalised by the parish vestry in 1579. The Minories’ scavengers were extraordinarily active, perhaps because the residential part of the liberty (with which they were concerned) was relatively small. The actual removal of refuse was left to the rakers, but the scavengers certainly saw to the regular maintenance of the parish laystall, and its 1579 reconstruction.¹⁷⁸ They were also instrumental in the plans for an enclosure of a sewer running from the Minories to the Thames in the 1630s.¹⁷⁹ The parish clerk is first mentioned in 1582, and the vestry explicitly defined the responsibilities of the office in 1597.¹⁸⁰ The post carried with it an annual salary of £4, though its payment is not consistently recorded by the churchwardens. Officers such as the sidesmen, criers, bellmen, and headboroughs are mentioned in the churchwardens’ accounts only rarely, but they make it clear that there was a wider body of officers helping to govern the liberty.

Although they appear infrequently in parochial records, the gatekeepers of the Minories deserve specific mention. The unique structure of the office reminds us of the creative ways in which liberty residents approached the task of governance. At any given time, there were two gatekeepers in the Minories. One kept the northern gate, which gave entrance to the residential part of the liberty and the parish church; the other kept the southern gate for the Ordnance Office. Martha Carlin suggests that there was probably a third gate on the site of the later Sheppy Yard, on the Ordnance side of the precinct, but it is unclear when this gate was built or whether it was ever in active use.¹⁸¹ The keeping of the Ordnance Office gate was significantly more expensive than that of the residential gate. A November 1562 grant records the appointment of William Allen as the first ‘porter of her Majesty’s house, called the Minorites, now intended to hold munitions belonging to the Ordnance Office’, a post which he was to hold for life at a

¹⁷⁵ LPL MS 3390, fo 50v

¹⁷⁶ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, iii.9.

¹⁷⁷ LPL MS 3390, fos 53, 108.

¹⁷⁸ LPL MS 3390, fos 48, 54, 86, 89.

¹⁷⁹ CLRO Rem VII, fo 138.

¹⁸⁰ LPL MS 3390, fos 60v, 95v, 107.

¹⁸¹ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, iii.9. See map on p. 72, above.

fee of 8*d* a day—an annual salary of £10/8*s*.¹⁸² Allen was still the porter of the precinct in August 1596, when the reversion of the office was granted to Richard Olive on the same terms.¹⁸³ The office had changed hands several times by 1616, when a complaint that ‘your Majestie payeth 8*d* a day to a porter keeping of the Gate of the said Storehouse. And hee doth not anything for it, but is a hindrance to your Majesties service that should there be done’ spurred the Privy Council inquire into the specifics of the office.¹⁸⁴ Whatever concerns may have been raised about the position, however, quickly subsided since in August 1618 the office was granted to James Woodward for life at the traditional salary of 8*d* per day.¹⁸⁵

The arrangements for the parochial gatekeeper caused fewer problems. The northern gate was closed and locked nightly, at ten in the summer and nine in the winter ‘and at noe other hour’.¹⁸⁶ The parish vestry appointed the northern gatekeeper, and funded the repairs made to the gate in 1569 and 1584.¹⁸⁷ In July 1569 the vestry declared that

Whereas the place of the vitler within the precinct of the said parishe is latelye become voyde...and that the disposing of same hath always heretofore been & used by the parishioners. It is agreed by us the said parishioners...that the said Gregory Hopkins shall keep and utter [victuals] within the said parish & precincts of the Trinitie Minories...duringe the pleasure of the said parishioners. And also...that whosoever should be the vitler within the said parishe should also have the chardge and keeping of the keyes of the gate to the said parishe.¹⁸⁸

Unlike other officeholders in the Minories, the gatekeeper’s term was not limited to one or two years. He was also *ex officio* parish victualler: the only man authorised keep a public house in the Minories. The residents of the precinct were therefore freed from the need to pay their gatekeeper, and the vestry created a mechanism to monitor the behaviour of a single publican. Gregory Hopkins was also expected to make regular payments for the support of his predecessor’s widow. When Hopkins relinquished his post the following July, the vestry named Robert Mott to succeed him and simultaneously modified the payment expected of the gatekeeper-victualler to ‘6/6*d* a monthe to the use of the pore of the said parishe’.¹⁸⁹ Thus the need to maintain a gatekeeper was turned into a net financial benefit for the parish. This arrangement evidently was still in effect in 1612

¹⁸² *CSPD* 1601-3 (Add. 1547-65), p. 528.

¹⁸³ *CSPD* Add. 1580-1625, p. 377.

¹⁸⁴ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 131. See also TNA SP 14/32/36 and SP 15/33/63.

¹⁸⁵ *CSPD* 1611-8, p. 564.

¹⁸⁶ LPL MS 3390, fo 108.

¹⁸⁷ LPL MS 3390, fos 32v, 66.

¹⁸⁸ LPL MS 3390, fo 85.

¹⁸⁹ LPL MS 3390, fo 96v.

when the victualler, with the consent of the vestry, hired a deputy gatekeeper at his own cost, to keep the gate for an annual salary of £2.¹⁹⁰

The Minories' Community

The social composition of the Minories is more difficult to assess than that of other liberties, in large part because of its small population. It did not have the reputation as a centre of alien settlement that befell St Martin le Grand, Blackfriars, and St Katherine's, and while its Puritan tendencies linked it to Blackfriars, it was never so fashionable as that liberty. The nunnery had certainly housed the great and the good, as evidenced by a chronicle of its lofty connections drawn up by one of Holy Trinity's nineteenth-century curates.¹⁹¹ We have already seen that some aristocratic residents continued to live there through the end of the 1560s, though perhaps motivated by confessional rather than social considerations. And even before the dispersal of the Minoreesses lay tenants came from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. In her physical survey of the precinct, Martha Carlin writes that the Minories boasted dwellings built primarily between during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries:

These were let by the nuns to their active and former officers, servants and retainers, and to other lay residents.... From 1352 until the dissolution of the abbey and after there seems to have been a great mansion...that was occupied by a succession of aristocratic tenants. A second such establishment seems to have been created between 1380 and 1487.¹⁹²

The eleven buildings which housed the Minories' residential population were arranged on either side of the short road (later called Church Street and now known as St Clare Street) that ran from the eastern edge of the precinct westward to the church. Dating from the abbey's early decades, the lay community in the Minories was long-established. According to Carlin, the survival of the abbey after its back-to-back tragedies of plague and fire in the 1510s was largely a result of the lay tenants' cohesiveness and support for the nuns.¹⁹³ The abbey never fully recovered from either tragedy: the former killed twenty-seven of the abbey's fifty-odd nuns, and the latter caused more than £500 in damage. After the dissolution of the abbey, the ownership of the Minories precinct by the

¹⁹⁰ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, iii.9. See also LPL MS 3390, fo 108 (on 1612 gatekeeper).

¹⁹¹ S Kinns, *Six Hundred Years, or, Historical Sketches of Eminent Men and Women Who Have Come into Contact with the Abbey and Church of Holy Trinity, Minories, from 1293 to 1893* (London, 1898).

¹⁹² Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, ii.31; 35-42. Residents of the older of the two great mansions in the Minories included Elizabeth de Burgh (1352); the countess of Warwick (1390s); the countess of Kent (1421); the duchess of Buckingham (1480); the duchess of Norfolk (1487-8); the countess of Suffolk (1502); Robert, earl of Sussex (before 1537) and Elizabeth, countess of Kildare (July 1537).

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, ii.4.

bishops of Bath and Wells and subsequently by the Grey family extended the genteel presence in the liberty into the 1560s. From the mid-sixteenth century, however, the western suburbs began to claim the heart of fashionable society. The residence of successive lieutenants-general generally kept one gentry family in the liberty, but when Sir Roger Morrsion rented his official residence to the earl of Northumberland in the 1620s, it was a remarkable arrangement. In a letter dated 15 November 1623 John Chamberlain informed Sir Dudley Carleton that the earl 'lies in towne, having hired Sir Richard Morison's house in the Minorites by the tower. His coach is drawn with eight horses, to surpasse his sonne Carlisle, and the Spanish ambassador with his sixe carion mules'.¹⁹⁴

The Minorities is notable for having missed the first wave of dramatic growth that occurred in London's other post-monastic precincts. In the immediate aftermath of the dissolution the liberty passed *en masse* to the bishopric of Bath and Wells. With a full slate of tenants in the residential portion of the precinct, the bishops used the remainder as their London residence through much of the 1540s. They kept its gardens and open spaces intact, though they did rent some monastic structures adjacent to the residential area to private tenants.¹⁹⁵ The Minorities thus escaped the construction that consumed the open spaces of other former religious houses. There is, similarly, no evidence of speculative building by Henry Grey. The four men who bought the precinct from Grey possessed the Minorities in common. Although three of them were brothers, they lacked either the will or the time to exploit the plentiful open space that remained in the late 1550s. The Ordnance Office therefore took over the conventual part of the Minorities in much the same state as it had been left in 1538. Having outgrown its previous home in the Tower, the office used all available space in its new home. Through the end of the sixteenth century, the presence of the Ordnance Office served as a natural constraint on growth in the Minorities. Martha Carlin's invaluable, exhaustive study of the properties in the liberty shows that, in 1560, the buildings which housed the Minorities' residents remained largely intact, with only a few houses subdivided into smaller tenements.¹⁹⁶ The lack of rental surveys for the precinct after 1560 makes it difficult to reconstruct subsequent developments, but it is clear from the parish registers that the population there began to grow. The two or three baptisms recorded annually in the 1560s grew to a dozen or more per year by the early 1580s.¹⁹⁷ These people had to live somewhere, and it

¹⁹⁴ TNA SP 14/154/28.

¹⁹⁵ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, ii.32-3.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ GL MS 9238, fos 3-45.

seems most likely that they were accommodated by the subdivision of larger structures in the residential part of the liberty. Roger Dallison's attempts to enrich himself by renting out parts of the Ordnance Office portions of the liberty as private residences in the 1610s were eventually ended by the Privy Council.¹⁹⁸ It seems that new construction in the Minories began in earnest with Dallison. It is only after 1616 that the records of the royal government begin to include the Minories among the notes of 'such persons as are greate offenders in building contrary to his Majesty's proclamacions', and the precinct is featured frequently in such notes thereafter.¹⁹⁹

Holy Trinity's parish registers suggest that residents of the Minories pursued a wide variety of trades and professions. It should be stressed that, despite their location beyond the jurisdiction of the City of London, many residents were engaged in business that was far from illicit. John Hide, a citizen and merchant tailor, moved to the Minories some time before 1566, when he began a two year term as churchwarden. His quarterly contribution to the church was 2/4*d*, putting him among the wealthiest members of the parish. When a collection was taken in 1567 for repairs to the precinct church, Hide made the largest single donation, accounting for more than fifteen percent of the whole sum raised (£11/18/2*d*). In 1569, he recommended several poor people for relief by the parish.²⁰⁰ At various times during his life, Hide owned or occupied seven different tenements in the precinct.²⁰¹ In 1604 Hide left a charitable bequest 'chargeable out of all my landes tenementes and hereditaments in the precincte called the Myneries' to the parson and churchwardens of St Andrew Undershaft. The churchwardens were to use the forty shillings annually to purchase coal to be distributed among 'three or four of the Ancienties of the said parish', which was in Aldgate ward, not far from the Minories.²⁰²

The silk industry—dominated by alien craftsmen who enjoyed the support of an eager royal government—also had a foothold in the Minories.²⁰³ In March 1624/5, John Bonnal received a grant 'of the King's interest in the leases of two gardens and a shed there, on condition of his building and maintaining a house for keeping and breeding of silkworms for his Majesty'.²⁰⁴ Bonnal joined a community of silk-workers that had existed in the neighbourhood for decades. The 1568 return of strangers listed one alien

¹⁹⁸ TNA SP 14/176/8i; TNA SP 16/13/91-3; *APC* 1618-9, p. 412; *APC* 1619-21, pp. 236-9.

¹⁹⁹ *APC* 1616-7, pp. 15-6; *APC* 1618-9, pp. 245, 458; 1619-21, p. 114.

²⁰⁰ LPL MS 3390, fos 2-3v, 15v, 17, 18, 23, 29v, 31v.

²⁰¹ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, iv.55.

²⁰² TNA C 93/6/3, fo 4.

²⁰³ Luu, *Immigrants*, p. 3

²⁰⁴ *CSPD* 1623-5, p. 497 (12 Mar 1624/5); *CSPD* 1625-6, p. 68 (22 Jul 1625).

silkweaver living in the Minories, but three years later the number jumped to seven.²⁰⁵ Some of the Minories' alien silk-workers enjoyed substantial success. Roger van Herwege, a silk-twister and member of the Dutch church living in the Minories in 1625 reported that he employed thirty-five Englishmen alongside seventeen Dutch workers.²⁰⁶

Two other occupational groups were particularly noteworthy for their concentrations in the Minories: metalworkers and musicians. Metalworkers of many stripes settled in the liberty—the 1568 return of aliens listed a gunmaker, three buttonmakers, two pinmakers and a goldsmith, and the 1571 return added three clockmakers to the mix. While underrepresented among aliens in the Minories, gunsmiths were the most prominent group of metalworkers in the liberty. Henry VIII's reign marked the beginning of large-scale gun manufacture in England.²⁰⁷ The Ordnance Office's move to the Minories in the first years of Elizabeth's reign therefore helped establish it (and other eastern suburbs) as an early centre of the trade.²⁰⁸

The Minories' gunsmiths operated alongside smithies run by cutlers and the makers of precision instruments. Physician and mathematician Thomas Hood lived in the Minories for nearly a decade around the turn of the century, and it was from the Minories that he first introduced the sector—a predecessor of the modern slide rule—to England.²⁰⁹ The Dutch engineer Cornelius Drebbel (whose compound microscopes and human powered submarine made him famous in his day) also lived in the liberty until his death in 1633.²¹⁰ In 1623 his daughters had married the two brothers called Kuffeler. The Kuffeler brothers lived and worked alongside Drebbel at the Minories workshop he had been given by James I; they continued there until the eve of the Civil War, when they moved back to the Netherlands.²¹¹ Less famous men, clockmakers, pinmakers and engineers, lived and worked alongside Hood and Drebbel, producing instruments for which demand far outstripped supply.

Knife-makers caused more of a stir, since illicit operations in the Minories were seen as a direct threat to the established knife trade in London. In 1622 the Cutlers'

²⁰⁵ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, i.392, ii.146. See also p. 61, above.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, iii.281.

²⁰⁷ J F Hayward, *The Art of the Gunmaker*, 2 vols, (London, 1962), pp. 106-9.

²⁰⁸ W K Neal and D H L Back, *Great British Gunmakers: 1540-1740* (Norwich, 1984), pp. 155, 160-2, 167, 181, 196.

²⁰⁹ T Hood, *The Making and Use of the Geometrical Instrument, Called a Sector*, 1st edn (London, 1598); C J Sangwin, 'Edmund Gunter and the Sector' (unpublished article, 2003); H K Higton, 'Hood, Thomas (*hap.* 1556, *d.* 1620)', *ODNB*.

²¹⁰ H A M Snelders, 'Drebbel, Cornelis (1572-1633)', *ODNB*.

²¹¹ J H Appleby, 'Kuffeler, Johannes Sibertus (1595-1677)', *ODNB*.

Company set out to identify the alien cutlers living throughout the metropolis.²¹² Of the twenty-seven cutlers identified, seven were resident in post-monastic precincts. There were two in East Smithfield (one of whom was listed as ‘very pore’) and one, a widow, in the adjacent liberty of St Katherine’s Hospital. Blackfriars boasted four stranger cutlers, although one, Matthew Margren, ‘useth not the trade, but is the Kinges servaunt, a messenger’.²¹³ No cutlers are listed as resident in the Minories, but a number must have lived there. The following year, the Cutlers’ Company joined with the Ironmongers’ Company in submitting to the Court of Aldermen a complaint that

divers foreigners had sold, and still continued to sell, such wares in...places in or near the City; some of them had taken houses or chambers in the Minories (a privileged place), where they sold them, to the deceit of His Majesty's subjects and the great hindrance of the Petitioners, who pray the Court to take steps for remedy thereof.²¹⁴

The mayor and aldermen duly forwarded the petition to the Privy Council.²¹⁵ No record survives of how the council responded to the complaint, but neither do the Remembrancia of the City record further complaints from the Cutlers. This rapidly-defused incident is the only evidence that the Minories’ liberty status ever caused friction with the City of London. In comparison, other liberties clashed frequently with civic authorities over the precise limits of jurisdiction.

The concentration of alien musicians in the Minories had more obscure origins than that of metalworkers. It seems likely that the first few musicians moved there for unrelated reasons, and others were attracted there by the original settlers. Ambrose Lupo moved to the liberty by 1564, and the lutenist Richard Pike was buried at Holy Trinity in May 1568.²¹⁶ The earliest and most enduring of these musical families was the Galliardellos.²¹⁷ Mark Anthony Galliardello was a member of a Venetian ‘Jewish musical dynasty’ that provided a number of musicians to the Elizabethan court.²¹⁸ Mark Anthony

²¹² *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, iii.259.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ CLRO Rememb. VI, fo. 24.

²¹⁵ CLRO Rememb. VI, fo 41.

²¹⁶ B Usher, ‘The Cosyns and the Galliardellos: Two Elizabethan Musical Dynasties’, *Consort*, 50 (1994), p. 99.

²¹⁷ One caveat deserves notice in reviewing the musical families of mid-sixteenth century London: surnames were not fixed at first, being more likely to group occupational or musical cohorts than kinsfolk. By 1570 names had stabilised, but care should be used in reviewing earlier documents for kinship ties. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²¹⁸ B Usher, ‘Galliardello, Mark Anthony (d. 1585)’, *ODNB*. Mark Anthony Galliardello was known primarily as Mr Markantony in parish documents; he was in royal service from his arrival in 1545 until his death in 1585. Other Galliardellos at court included Anthony Maria (who took the surname Cosin, as well), who served from 1539 until 1573 and Paul Galliardello, who served from 1555 to 1564. *Ibid.*, pp. 97-8. Anthony Maria, however, called Mark Anthony his friend (not his brother or his cousin) in his 1572 will; see preceding note.

lived in East Smithfield in the 1540s, but soon relocated to the Minories. By the time churchwardens' accounts begin in 1566 he was an established presence in the parish, having embraced the outspoken Protestantism of the Minories.²¹⁹ The 1563 baptism of his daughter Lucretia is the first entry in the Holy Trinity parish register.²²⁰ In June 1568, he was granted a patent of denization, and six months later he was elected churchwarden.²²¹ Galliardello kept meticulous records during his two year churchwardenship, the comprehensive data concerning preachers and poor relief are invaluable in understanding the zenith of the precinct's nonconformity. According to Usher, Galliardello was 'prominent in encouraging the activities' of the radical preachers who converged on the Minories in the late 1560s.²²² Galliardello served as churchwarden again for two years beginning in December 1576, during the final suppression of outspoken Puritanism in the liberty. Galliardello was certainly instrumental in drawing up the parish's 1578 poor relief regulations.²²³

Mark Anthony Galliardello's social and professional connections brought other musical families into the Minories. His son-in-law, another foreign musician called Henry Troches, moved to the Minories in 1579/80, and was immediately welcomed into the parish vestry.²²⁴ Although his wife died in 1584, Troches continued to live in the Minories until his own death more than two decades later. After Galliardello's death in 1585 his seventeen-year-old son Caesar took his father's place among the royal violins, continuing in royal service until his death in 1627. Caesar also became an active member of the parish vestry the following year.²²⁵ In 1592 Caesar further extended the Minories music circle when he married Elizabeth Cosyn (daughter of the 'godly Elizabethan composer' John Cosyn).²²⁶ Caesar's surviving sister also married into a musical family: in 1585 she married John Lanier, a sackbut player at court whose father Nicholas was also a royal musician.²²⁷ Their son, also Nicholas, was the first master of the King's Musick and a favourite of King Charles.²²⁸ Despite being strangers, the Galliardellos were the

²¹⁹ LPL MS 3390, fos 1-15v.

²²⁰ GL MS 9238, fo 3, ff. Three other children were baptised by the end of 1568.

²²¹ LPL MS 3390, fo 24.

²²² Usher, 'Cosyns', p. 100.

²²³ LPL MS 3390, fo 50v.

²²⁴ Troches' signature appears frequently in vestry endorsements from 1580 through 1615, after which his son Jacob seems to have taken his place. LPL MS 3390, fos 56v-109, *passim*.

²²⁵ B Usher, 'Galliardello, Caesar (bap. 1568, d. 1627)', *ODNB*; LPL MS 3390, fos 72v, 77.

²²⁶ Usher, 'Cosyns', p. 95. There is no known relationship between Anthony Maria Galliardello (alias Cosin) and John Cosyn's family, although both lived in the Minories.

²²⁷ M I Wilson, 'Lanier, Nicholas (bap. 1588, d. 1666)', *ODNB*. Lanier was collector for the poor in 1588. He refused the constabulary in 1590, naming William Gouge as his deputy, but he accepted the churchwardenship in 1591-2. LPL MS 3390, fos 75, 77-9.

²²⁸ Wilson, 'Lanier, Nicholas', *ODNB*.

dominant family of the parish for nearly three-quarters of a century. In the 1560s and 70s, Mark Anthony was integral to Holy Trinity's nonconformity. His children's marriages kept prominent musicians in the precinct after his death, and his son (and sons-in-law) were in their turns active members of the parish. Even in death Caesar Galliardello left his mark on the liberty by introducing noted Puritan Josias Nicholls to the Minories. The Galliardello family was exceptional, however. They were they only aliens in any of London's liberties who took a prominent role in local government. Despite larger alien populations in St Martin's, St Katherine's and Blackfriars, it is clear that very few aliens in those neighbourhoods held local offices there.

The musicians of the Minories were only the most prominent members of a larger and more diverse group of aliens resident in the liberty. Owen argues 'the Minories, no less than other London liberties, was a centre of "foreign" and alien craftsmen attracted by the exemptions claimed against the operation of City craft and trading regulations', but we have already seen that the Minories secular franchises exist primarily in the arguments of later writers.²²⁹ The number of aliens in the liberty did grow quickly during the middle decades of the sixteenth century, but as a population centre it never approached the prominence of the other liberties studied here, or of Aldgate, Bishopsgate, Langborne and Tower Wards in the City. In the 1590s, those neighbourhoods each included several hundred aliens; Bishopsgate Ward reported 577 aliens in 1593.²³⁰ Only seven aliens from the Minories contributed to the 1549 lay subsidy; thirteen strangers did so in 1564. In the Blackfriars, another liberty without a history of alien settlement at the time of the dissolution, thirty strangers contributed to the 1564 subsidy.²³¹ Subsidy evasion and underpayment were general problems during Elizabeth's reign, confined neither to the poor nor to aliens.²³² The non-English, however, were a relatively easy group to track, and in the last decades of the sixteenth century sporadic attempts were made to record the whereabouts of strangers who had stopped contributing to subsidy assessments. A 1596 return, for example, listed fifty strangers who had previously contributed to the subsidy in the Minories as 'dead and gone'.²³³ The numbers of subsidy payers therefore under represents the actual number of strangers in an area. Thirteen immigrants contributed to the 1564 subsidy assessment

²²⁹ Owen, 'Liberty of the Minories', p. 85.

²³⁰ BL Lansd 74, no. 31.

²³¹ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, i.176, 303, 308.

²³² Archer, 'Burden of Taxation', p. 610; M J Braddick, *Parliamentary Taxation in Seventeenth-Century England: Local Administration and Response* (London, 1994), pp. 65, 71.

²³³ *Returns of Aliens*, eds Kirk and Kirk, ii.480.

from the Minories, but four years later a return of strangers listed seventy as resident there. In 1571, another return counted sixty-nine.²³⁴ The residential portion of the Minories was of course quite small, but the immigrant population there was still a fraction of the size of those elsewhere in London.

Conclusions

When Parliament seized control of the Minories in 1642, Sir Walter Earle MP took the office of lieutenant-general, but much of the Ordnance part of the precinct was transferred to a new Corporation for the Poor of the City of London.²³⁵ After the Restoration, the Ordnance Office recovered the lands it had lost to the new corporation. The king also 'asserted a right to present the living' for the first time: 'In March 1661 the then incumbent was reappointed to his living by the king, and thenceforth the Crown's right of patronage was never challenged.'²³⁶ The Ordnance Office left the liberty permanently in the first months of 1672/3, two former lieutenants-general receiving the bulk of the Crown's property there.²³⁷

Between the dissolution of the Abbey of St Clare in 1538 and the outbreak of civil war in 1642, the Minories changed remarkably. Where once a dozen households had lived alongside a few dozen nuns, there sprang up a large and coherently (if abnormally) governed community. Especially in the third quarter of the sixteenth century, its residents were decidedly resistant to interference by outside (religious) authorities. On the whole, however, those living in the Minories were disinclined to press their privileges to the breaking point. Even their early prominence as a Puritan enclave was short-lived. After John Aylmer conclusively established the bishop of London's jurisdiction in the Minories the vocal nonconformity of the preceding decade did not re-emerge. Though the parish of Holy Trinity continued to harbour Puritan sympathies into the mid-seventeenth century, they were subtle enough to escape the wrath of future bishops of London.

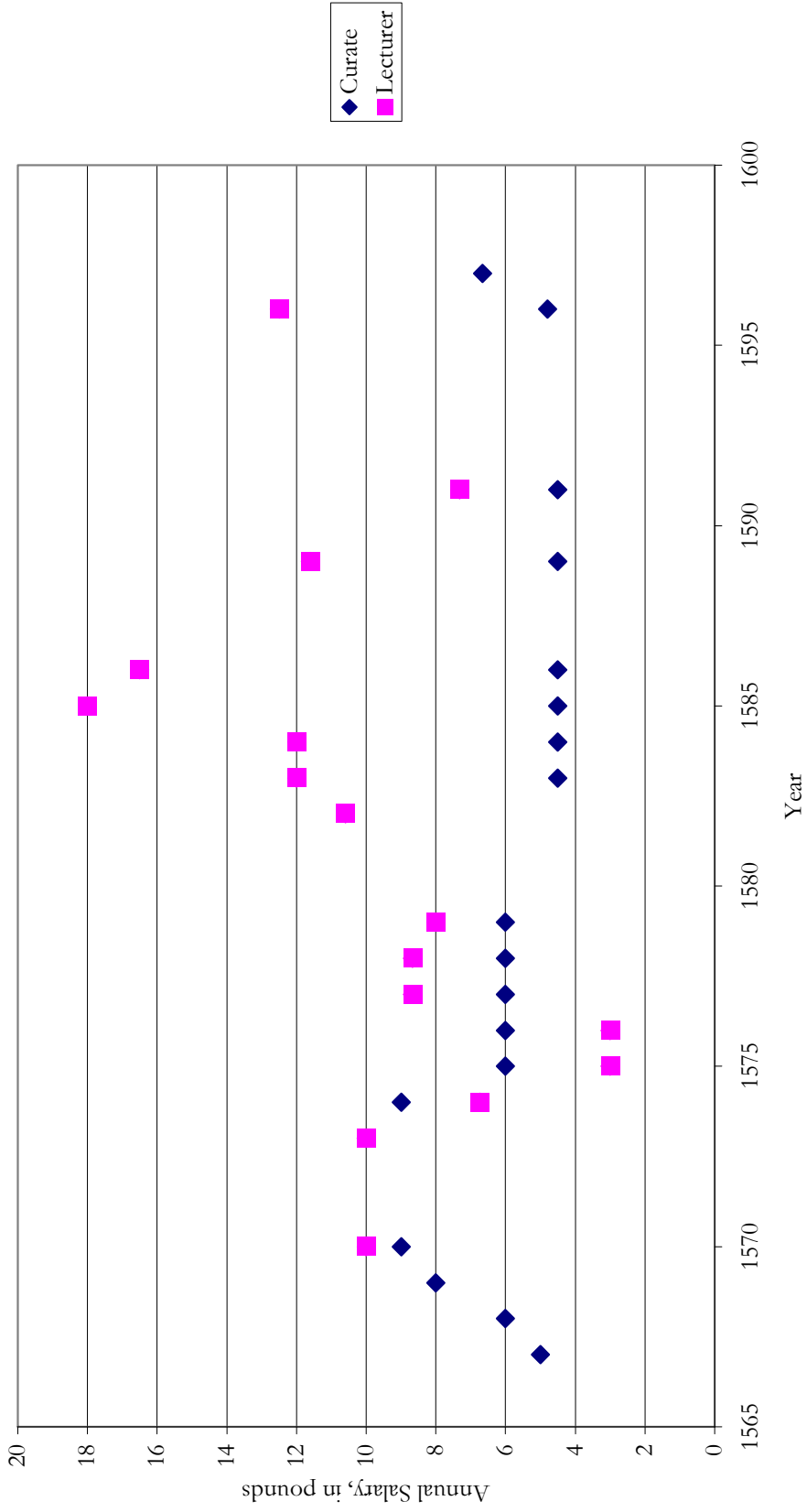
²³⁴ Ibid., ii.127-30, iii.422-3.

²³⁵ Tomlinson, *History of the Minories*, p. 144-6.

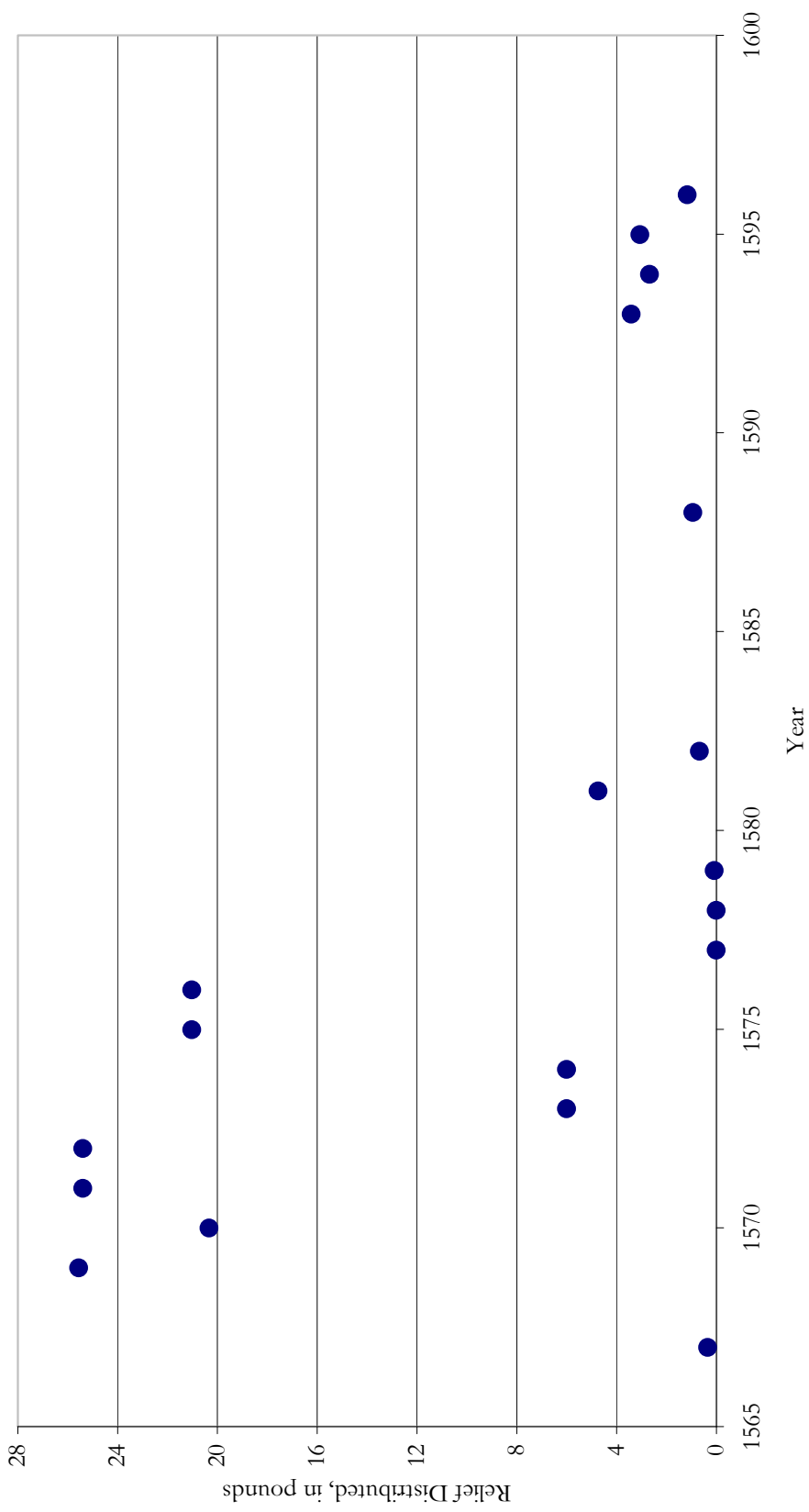
²³⁶ Carlin, *Historical Gazetteer*, iii.11.

²³⁷ Fly, 'Some Account of an Abbey', p. 112; Kinns, *Holy Trinity, Minories*, p. 16.

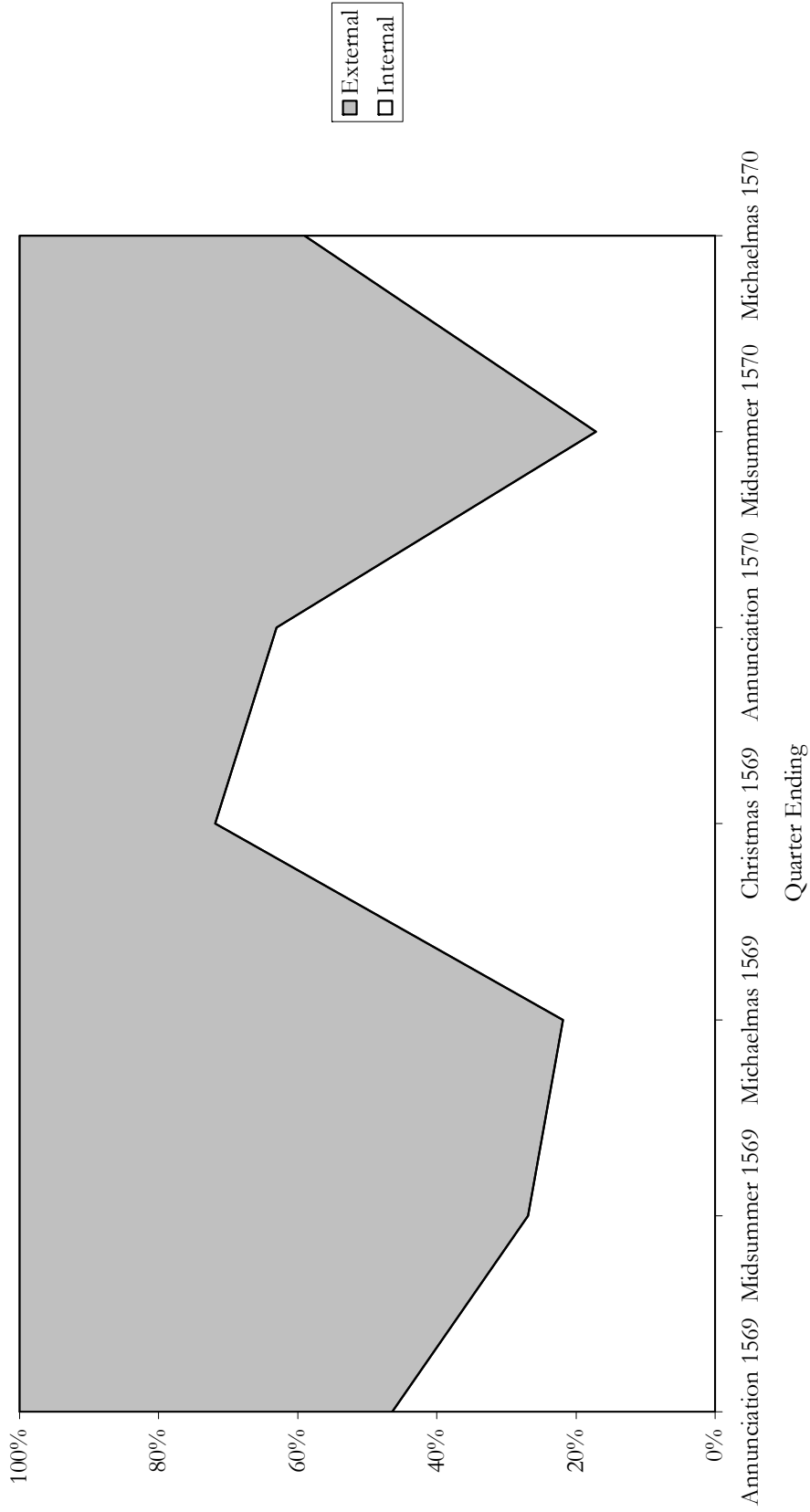
3.1 Clergy Salaries at Holy Trinity Minorities, 1567-1597



3.2 Poor Relief in the Minorities, 1567-1596



3.3 The distribution of poor relief at Holy Trinity Minorities



Chapter 4. Blackfriars

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

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

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

² Stow, *Annales*, p. 868.

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

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

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

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

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

⁵ Stow, *Survey*, i.339.

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

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

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

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

¹⁰ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 277.

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

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

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

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

¹² Starkey, *Six Wives*, p. 121.

¹³ GL MS 9171/15 fo 108v.

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

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

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

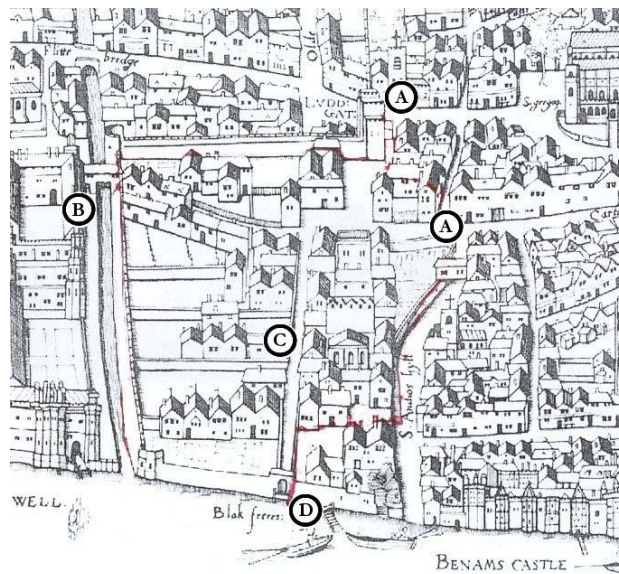
¹⁷ I Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Its Design* (London, 1966), p. 26.

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

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

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

Map: Blackfriars in the 1550s²⁰



¹⁹ *Valor*, i.78.

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

Chronology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁶ Folger MSS L.b. 360, 361.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³⁴ Folger MS L.b. 364.

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

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

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

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

³⁶ Folger MS L.b. 388.

³⁷ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 285.

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

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

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

⁴¹ Stow, *Styype's Survey*, iii.184.

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

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

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

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

⁴⁷ Folger MS L.b. 273.

⁴⁸ Folger MSS L.b. 370, 451.

⁴⁹ Folger MS L.b. 386.

⁵⁰ Folger MSS L.b. 14, 307.

⁵¹ Folger MSS L.b. 377, 379.

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

⁵³ Folger MS L.b. 185.

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁶ Folger MSS L.b. 393, 410.

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

⁵⁸ Folger MSS L.b. 391, 395.

⁵⁹ Folger MS L.b. 399.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶⁴ TNA C 66/831/63.

⁶⁵ Palmer, 'Black Friars', p. 358.

⁶⁶ Folger MS L.b. 394.

⁶⁷ TNA C 1/1330/39.

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

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

⁷⁰ Folger MS L.b. 394.

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

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

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

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

⁷² *LPFD* iii.1053.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ TNA C 1/1330/39.

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

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

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

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ TNA C 1/1405/39-41.

⁷⁷ Folger MS L.b. 399.

⁷⁸ TNA PROB 11/43/4.

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

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

⁸¹ Ibid.

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

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

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

Residents

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

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

⁸⁵ Folger MS L.b. 310.

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

⁸⁷ Folger MSS L.b. 456, 318.

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

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

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

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

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

⁹⁰ Folger MS L.b. 402.

⁹¹ Folger MS L.b. 385.

⁹² Folger MSS L.b. 385, 442.

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

⁹⁴ Folger MS L.b. 433.

⁹⁵ Folger MS L.b. 370.

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

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

⁹⁶ Folger MS L.b. 462.

⁹⁷ Folger MS L.b. 311.

⁹⁸ Folger MS L.b. 451.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁰⁴ Folger MS L.b. 423.

¹⁰⁵ Folger MS L.b. 405.

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

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

¹⁰⁶ Folger MS L.b. 421.

¹⁰⁷ BL Lansd 155 fo 80v.

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

¹⁰⁹ Folger MS L.b. 312.

¹¹⁰ Folger MS L.b. 405.

¹¹¹ Folger MS L.b. 422.

¹¹² Folger MSS L.b. 421, 423.

¹¹³ Folger MSS L.b. 421, 423.

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

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

Playing in Blackfriars

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

¹¹⁵ Folger MSS L.b. 424, 430.

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

¹¹⁷ Folger MS L.b. 421.

¹¹⁸ Folger MS L.b. 431.

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

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 161-2.

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

¹²⁵ TNA SP 12/260/116.

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

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

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

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

¹²⁷ Folger MS L.b. 357.

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

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

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

¹³¹ *APC*, vol 35 (1616-7), p. 123.

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

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

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

¹³³ TNA SP 14/105/61.

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

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

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

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

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

Governance

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

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

¹³⁹ Folger V.b. 275.

¹⁴⁰ *CPR Edm. VI*, iii.336.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴² Folger MS L.b. 453.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

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

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

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

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

¹⁴⁷ Folger MS L.b. 460.

¹⁴⁸ Folger MS L.b. 469.

¹⁴⁹ Folger MS L.b. 469.

¹⁵⁰ Folger, MS L.b.470.

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

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

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

¹⁵¹ See pp. 26-7, above.

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

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

¹⁵⁴ CLRO Rep 17, fo 34.

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

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

¹⁵⁵ CLRO Let Bk X, fo 71.

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

¹⁵⁷ CLRO Let Bk X, fo 287v.

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

¹⁵⁹ *APC*, vol 8, p 240. 16 May 1574.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

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

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

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

¹⁶² *CLRO Rep* 19, fo 23v. Jan 1575/6.

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

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

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

¹⁶⁶ *CLRO Rep* 19, fo 266. 25 Nov 1577.

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

¹⁶⁸ BL Lansd MS 155, fos 79v, ff.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁷³ Folger MS L.b. 438.

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

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

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

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

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, xxvi.448-9.

¹⁷⁷ TNA SP 46/15/42-3.

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

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

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

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

¹⁷⁹ TNA SP 46/15/41.

¹⁸⁰ TNA SP 46/15/41.

¹⁸¹ BL Lansd 155 ff 80v-81.

¹⁸² BL Lansd 155 fo 80v.

¹⁸³ BL Lansd 155 fo 81.

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

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

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

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

¹⁸⁵ CLRO Rep 21, fo 126v.

¹⁸⁶ CLRO Rep 24, fo 321v.

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

¹⁸⁸ CLRO Rep 47, fo 221v. 9 May 1633.

¹⁸⁹ GL MSS 16957, 21378.

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

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

¹⁹⁰ TNA C 1/1330/39.

¹⁹¹ Folger MS L.b. 429. 4 July 1561.

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

¹⁹³ Folger MS L.b. 419.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁹⁸ BL Lansd 155 fo 81.

¹⁹⁹ TNA C 1/1330/39.

²⁰⁰ BL Lansd 155 fo 80v.

²⁰¹ Stow, *Survey*, i.341.

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

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

²⁰² *APC* xxvi.448.

²⁰³ The new church was dedicated on 11 December 1597.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aliens

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

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

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

²¹⁹ See pp. 179 and 215, below.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²²¹ Folger MS L.b. 385.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²²⁸ Folger MS L.b. 37.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, iii.411, ii.13-7.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

²⁴⁵ Folger MS L.b. 349.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁵⁴ GL MSS 16957, 21378.

Chapter 5. St Katherine by the Tower

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

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

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

² Stow, *Survey*, i.324.

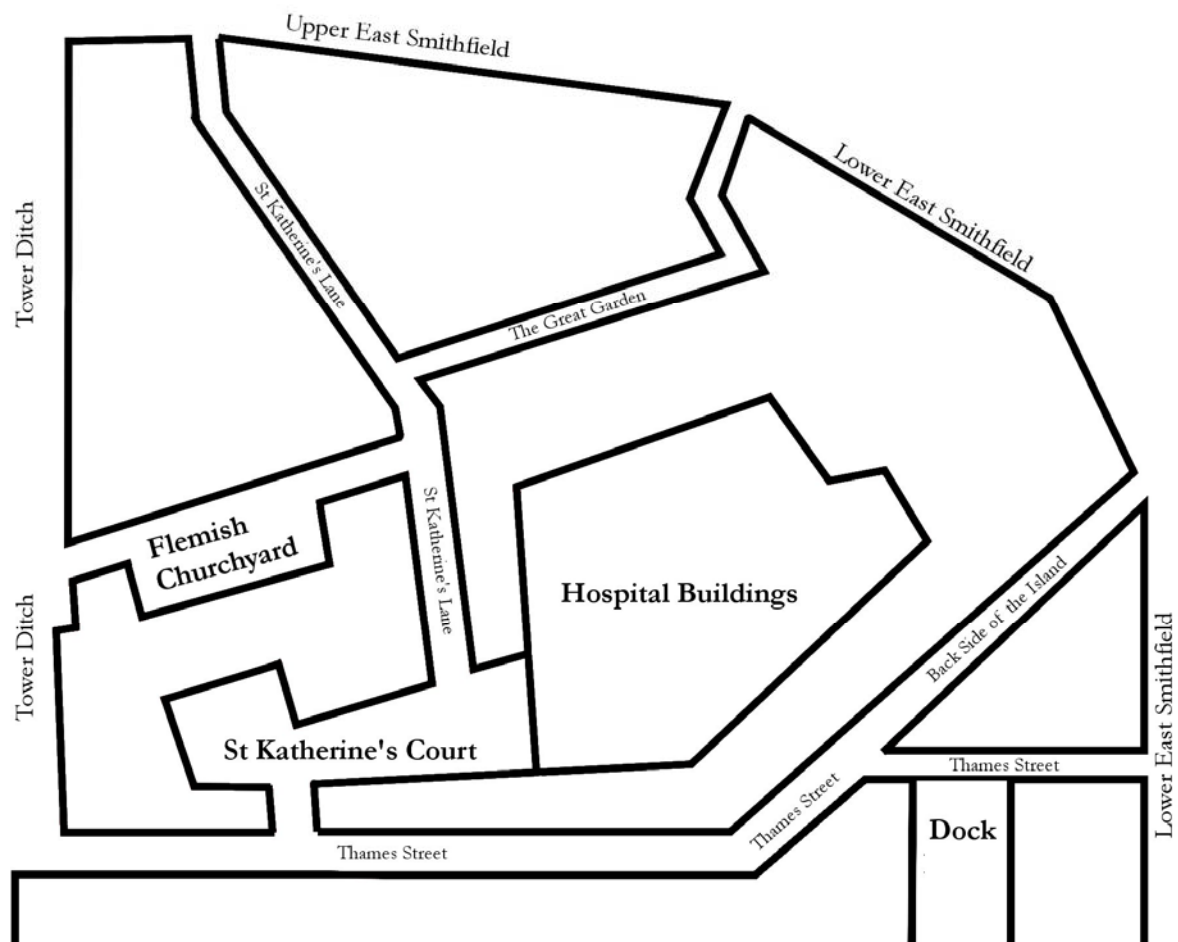
³ Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution*, pp. 25-6; McMullan, *Canting Crew*, p. 63.

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

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

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

Map: St Katherine by the Tower, 1687⁶



Chronology

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹ *Valor*, i.386.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵ TNA E 315/408/17.

¹⁶ Woodward, *Dissolution*, p. 124.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰ CLRO Rep 15, fo 270. 20 Jul 1563.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁹ Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

³³ *APC* ix.297-8; xxiii.277.

³⁴ *APC* viii.324.

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

³⁶ *APC* xxii.549-51.

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

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

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

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

³⁹ BL Lansdowne MS 157, fo 374.

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

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

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

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

St Katherine's Community

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

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

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

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

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

⁴⁷ GL MS 9680, fos 124, 129.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁶³ GL MS 9740A.

⁶⁴ BL Harleian MS 5097, fos 4-24.

⁶⁵ BL Harleian MS 5097, fos 4-24.

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

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

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

⁶⁷ GL MS 9680, fo 37.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷⁴ GL MS 9680, fos 9, 13, 38, 47.

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

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

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

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, iii.141-2.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁸⁷ GL MS 9680.

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

⁸⁹ APC xxi.52, xxiii.121-2.

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

⁹¹ GL MS 9680.

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

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

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

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

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

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

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

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

⁹⁶ TNA E179/142/234.

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

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

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

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

¹⁰¹ GLMS 9680, fos 3-127, passim.

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

Maintaining Order

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

¹⁰² Beier, *Masterless Men*, p. xxii.

¹⁰³ GL MS 9680, fos 1-35.

¹⁰⁴ GL MS 9680, fos 33-35.

¹⁰⁵ GL MS 9680, fo 20.

¹⁰⁶ GL MS 9680, fos 28, 40.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹¹ GL MS 9680, fo 103.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹²⁰ *APC* xxi.52.

¹²¹ *APC* xxiii.122.

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

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

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

¹²² GL MS 9680, fos 1, 6, 7, 11, 33.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹³⁰ GL MS 9680, fos 11-2.

¹³¹ APC xvii.59, xlii.147.

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

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

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

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

¹³⁶ CSPD 1637, p. 505.

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

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

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

¹³⁷ GL MS 9680, fos 85-117.

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

¹³⁹ GL MS 9680, fos 116, 119.

¹⁴⁰ *APC* xlv.33.

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

¹⁴² GL MS 9680, fos 82-92.

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

Aliens

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

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

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

¹⁴⁴ See p. 162, above.

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

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

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

¹⁴⁸ *APC* ix.297-8. 3 March 1576/7

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

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

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

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

¹⁵⁰ Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities*, 101.

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

¹⁵² GL MS 6506/1, fo. 61v.

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

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusions

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

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

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

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.

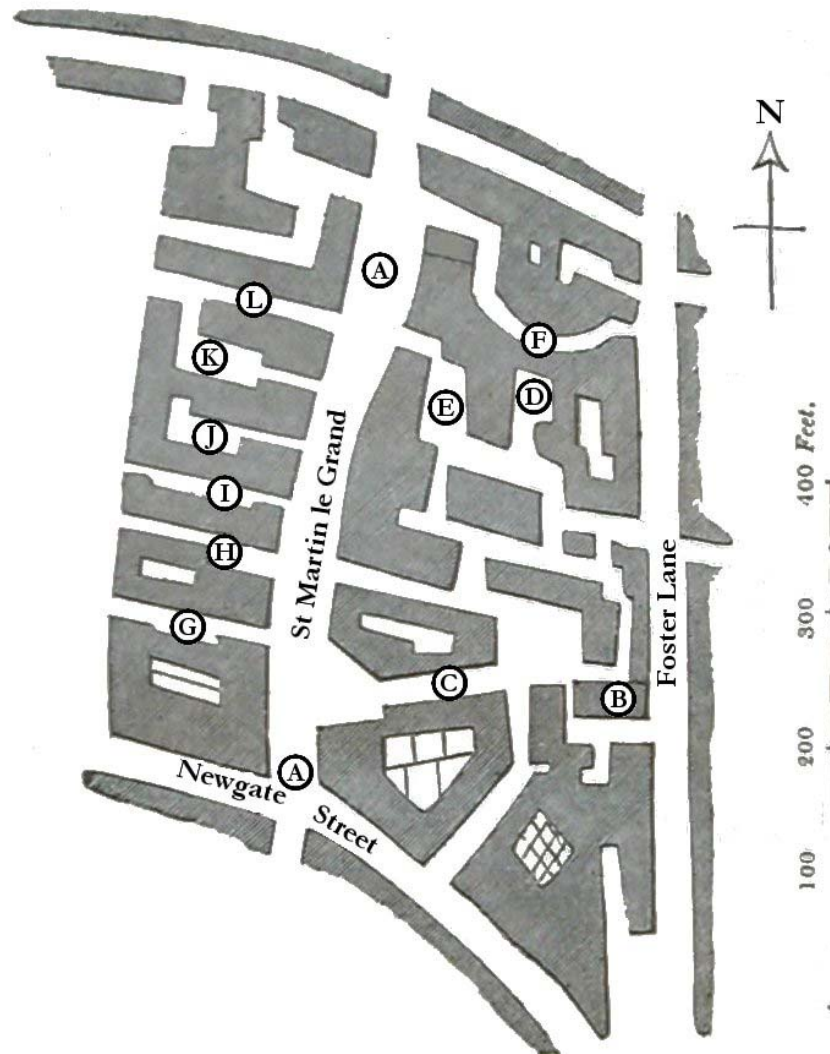
²¹ E J Davis, 'The Transformation of London', *Ibid.*, p. 295.

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 gettyng 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 Cytte’.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 leaste 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 inconvenciencies 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 authority for the execution of the same for the good governaunce of the said Libertye'—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 serche and viewe their wares, never callinge the officer of the Libertye or making him pryvie thereunto, and being reproved for same, sayeth he will come and serche 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 hath 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.

Chapter 7. Conclusions

A thorough examination of these four post-monastic liberties and their relationship to the City of London suggests that the traditional historiographical view of the liberties requires substantial revision. Although the liberties were linked by their claims to jurisdictional exemptions, it is incredibly difficult to generalise about them accurately. The status of each liberty's franchises differed from those of the other liberties, but they also varied over time according to ownership, the status and interests of its residents, and the concerns of outside authorities that might seek to undermine (or bolster) those exemptions. When considered carefully, it is obvious that a given liberty was both dynamic and distinct from other liberties. All too often, however, this fact has been overlooked, and the liberties have long been spoken of as a coherent group of districts within the metropolis.

Historiographically, the liberties have also been approached as tangible and binary entities—they existed or they did not. If an area asserted its jurisdictional independence to the annoyance of neighbouring jurisdictions, it was a liberty. If it cooperated with neighbouring jurisdictions or allowed its rights to fall into abeyance, it ceased to be a liberty. Logical on its face, this historiographical paradigm is too blunt an instrument to be helpful in the examination of the fine distinctions in jurisdiction that affected the liberties. It cannot accommodate the notion that the residents of a liberty might staunchly defend their privileges in certain cases (or against certain authorities) while cooperating in other circumstances—that it might be in a liberty's interests not to assert all of its franchises constantly. In reality, conflicts between liberty residents and outside authorities were complicated by a variety of considerations on both sides, and the resolution of those conflicts was rarely a straightforward matter. The Minories, for example, battled mightily for its ecclesiastical franchises, while in secular matters it caused few problems.

Liberties were in most cases reactionary; they only asserted their rights when pushed to do so, and even then only under certain circumstances. Conflicts normally began with the unwelcome interference of an outside authority. It must be stressed that interference was not universally unwelcome (another concept that the traditional view of the liberties fails to grasp). Outside authorities had a variety of principled reasons to interfere in the liberties; concerns for economic and social stability were the two most important. But the immediate cause of interference was generally more practical,

grounded in a desire to share a tax burden more widely, to protect the outside authority's own franchises, or to address a perceived lack of authority within the liberty. In the face of unwanted interference, certain conditions had to exist (or be expected) for residents to effectively assert their independence. Firstly, they needed an articulated understanding of their privileges. That understanding had to be based on some evidence of the privilege in question, either a positive grant or an established precedent. While individuals of the middling or meaner sorts attempted to invoke the privileges of their liberties on occasion, large-scale conflict depended on the involvement of a person or group of people who could claim a right to defend the privilege at stake (either because of personal eminence, freehold or other interest in the precinct, or by holding an office related to the liberty) and an interest in doing so. The resolution of conflicts was affected not only by the strength of each party's claims, but also by the circumstances surrounding the specific question, the personal or official power of those involved and the sympathies and interests of the arbiter, most often the Privy Council.

While the City of London was only rarely able to exercise full authority within the liberties, it was often able to affect events there. Whether in conjunction with the Privy Council, the justices of the peace or its own companies, the City had a variety of means available to do so. Even when the City was uninvolved, the liberties were never the enclaves of anarchy their critics, contemporary and modern alike, have made them out to be. Both the residents and the proprietors of the liberties worked actively to maintain order there. If they resisted interference by the lord mayor and aldermen, it was in defence of their (often legitimately held) franchises. In many cases, the exempt places in and around London were overcrowded and dirty, but so too was much of the metropolis: City, liberty and suburb alike. They may have lacked the polished and intricately intersecting structures of governance that residents of the City took for granted, but that did not leave them ungoverned.

The differences between the post-monastic liberties were, in many ways, carry-overs from differences that had existed before the dissolution. London's many religious houses were affected by their rules, certainly, but they were also affected by topography, wealth and patronage. Long before the 1530s, Blackfriars had established itself as a royal favourite, a position that was reflected by the exalted status of many of its pre-Reformation lay residents. By way of comparison, St Katherine's had a longstanding alien population—thanks primarily to its waterside location, which had made it an early centre of beer brewing in the capital. While all of the post-monastic liberties studied here could

boast links to the great and the good, the social composition of each had levelled-down by the early seventeenth century. Thereafter, residents of liberties relied on official connections (such as those enjoyed between the Minories and the Lieutenant-General of Ordnance, between St Katherine's and the master of the hospital there, and between St Martin's and Westminster Abbey) for protection from civic meddling. The liberties that lacked such official connections were powerless to oppose annexation by the City under its 1608 charter.

Focusing too closely on the various factors that differentiated the liberties risks obscuring the forest in favour of the trees. Simple though it sounds, one point is worth articulating: the liberties differed in their details because they were different places. While contemporary governors definitely grouped Blackfriars, the Minories, St Katherine's and St Martin's with other precincts under the general title of *exempt places* or *liberties*, they would certainly have joined more common Londoners in acknowledging that individual precincts were not interchangeable: St Martin's could not possibly be mistaken for the Minories, nor could St Katherine's be confused with Blackfriars. The walls that had defined religious precincts for centuries continued to separate the liberties from the surrounding metropolis. The geographical limits of their franchises were closely monitored by residents and civic governors alike; especially in times of tension neither side was willing to concede even minor points to the other. In 1584 Thomas Lord Howard and the aldermen sparred over the City's decision to wall up one of the gates to precinct known as Duke's Place that it suspected had only been constructed after the dissolution of the late Holy Trinity Priory.¹ As late as 1625 the aldermen responded to a report that an innkeeper adjacent to Blackfriars had knocked through his wall 'to make a backe passage through his taverne into the Blackfriars, to the greate annoyance and prejudice of the neighbours there.'²

Despite clear topographic division, however, it should not be imagined that the liberties were off-limits to other Londoners. The City's wall, too, continued to stand; its gates, like those into the liberties, were opened each morning and closed each night. The gates made the walls porous and gave regular (if metered) access between the intra- and extra-mural parts of the City, and to the liberties. We should also remember that the closure of these gates coincided with the nightly curfew, during which respectable people were expected to remain indoors in any case. The Minories was rather out of the way, and its main street only connected to the outside world through a single gate. Hundreds

¹ CLRO Rep 21, fos 89v, 111.

²² CLRO Rep 40, fo 44. 6 Dec 1625.

of godly Londoners nevertheless flocked there weekly to hear its preachers. In sharp contrast, St Martin's had gates at each end of its primary arterial, which doubled as the main thoroughfare from St Paul's and Cheapside northward to Aldersgate. Blackfriars and St Katherine's could both be accessed from land or water, since they stood on the bank of the Thames. In no case should it be imagined that those living in adjacent parts of the City were unfamiliar with their exempt neighbours, or that those in the liberties avoided participation in the economic or social life of the broader metropolis. The liberties were, after all, in the City even if they were not of it.

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