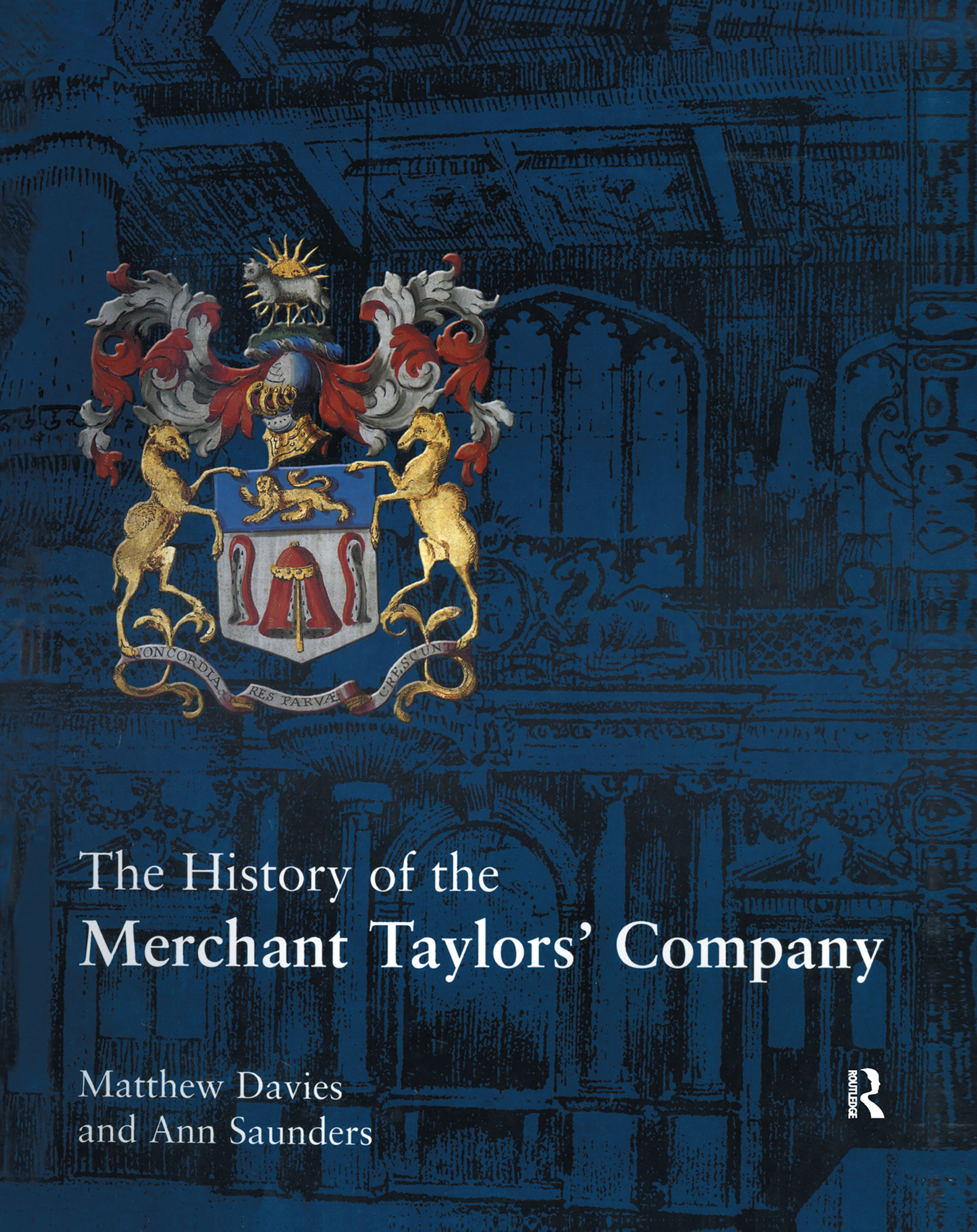


The History of the Merchant Taylors' Company

Matthew Davies
and Ann Saunders

ROUTLEDGE

The History of the
MERCHANT TAYLORS' COMPANY

The earlier of two pre-Reformation hearse-cloths belonging to the Merchant Taylors' Company. It dates from *c.* 1480–1500.
Merchant Taylors' Company

The History of the MERCHANT TAYLORS' COMPANY

Matthew Davies
and
Ann Saunders

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2004 Maney Publishing

Published 2025 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Publisher's Note
The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

ISBN: 978-1-902653-99-0 (hbk)

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

In the year 2003 the Merchant Taylors' Company celebrated the 500th anniversary of the grant of its Charter from Henry VII in 1503. The letters patent recognized the guild in the name of 'Merchant Taylors'. There had been six earlier charters, all referring to the 'Fraternity of St John the Baptist of Tailors and Linen-Armourers', the first of which was granted by Edward III in 1327. The significance of being described as 'Merchant Taylors' was that it recognized the growing numbers of members of the Company who traded in cloth and other goods, rather than in finished garments. The charter was strongly resisted by other 'mercantile' companies, but in achieving it the Company confirmed its rise to a position among the 'Great Twelve' companies of the City of London.

If the Fraternity of St John the Baptist proved to be unique in the incorporation of the term 'Merchant' into its title (although only after the Haberdashers had been forced to abandon a similar title in 1510), it was also unusual in other respects amongst the craft guilds of medieval London. Even before the end of the fifteenth century it was actively recruiting fraternity members from outside the ranks of its craft, and had established close links with both the Church and the Crown. One of its key functions was the provision of charity; the earliest Wardens of the 'Tailors and Linen-Armourers' were known as 'alms collectors'. With the changes that came as the result of the Reformation its activities were greatly expanded by the foundation of schools by its Masters, and other prominent members, many of which survive to this day.

With a large membership, the Company had been enabled to construct its Hall and chapel on the present site. By the mid-sixteenth century many funerals had become very grand affairs at Threadneedle Street, or Broad Street, as it was then known, or at the Company's other chapel in St Paul's Cathedral. Such events raised large sums for charitable funds, and two of the Company's greatest treasures, the magnificent hearse-cloths, originate from this time. The celebrated 'Billesden Award' of 1484, between the Merchant Taylors' and Skinners' Companies, had established the unique annual alternation of precedence of the two guilds, ranking sixth or seventh in the City of London, which has been faithfully honoured ever since.

By the start of the seventeenth century, when the Company had already been in existence for three hundred years, its basic form, and activities, were thus firmly established. In the middle of the century, however, it was not immune from the huge shocks which so greatly changed the City of London; the Civil War seriously depleted the Company's wealth, while the destruction of the Hall and of most of the Company's rented estate in the Great Fire was a financial disaster as well as curtailing its social activities. Gradually the Company's fortunes were restored, and the Hall was rebuilt on the same site. Had Sir Christopher Wren had his way,

London would have been rebuilt as an imposing city of brick and stone, with wide, straight streets, and new churches with towers, domes and spires, all of this crowned by St Paul's, built to the design of the Great Model, still to be seen at the Cathedral. The ceremonial archway that became Temple Bar, which returns to London between St Paul's and the new Paternoster Square in 2004, was intended to be located at the north end of a rebuilt London Bridge, with elegant terraced houses to the full width of the river on either side of the roadway. A monumental column as the focal point where the straight streets were to radiate into the 'new' City from the north end of the bridge would celebrate the magnificence of the 'Carolingian Era'. Merchant Taylors' Hall would probably have been relocated nearby, close to where the 'Monument' now stands.

Wren, incidentally, had a close connection with the Company as his father and his uncle had attended the Company's school in Suffolk Lane. His uncle became a bishop, and both men were Registrars to the Order of the Garter. Much of what Wren intended eventually happened, of course, but he underestimated the power of property and political interests, and the conservatism of the City and Church authorities. The City was indeed rebuilt in brick and stone, but largely on the pre-Fire street plan. There were many 'new' churches, with towers, domes and spires, but sited as in medieval London. St Paul's was rebuilt, but not to the Great Model design.

The Company's own buildings have, perhaps inevitably, been a source of both joy and anguish. If the medieval Hall was destroyed in the Great Fire, its successor, much altered over 250 years, was again destroyed at the start of World War II; the present Hall is thus the third design, only just fifty years old, but still in the same shell, on the same site. In 1851, however, no national disaster was needed to generate destruction. On the day before a full livery dinner the entire, huge ceiling of the Hall collapsed spontaneously, narrowly avoiding wiping out the Master, Wardens, Court, and a large number of the livery at a stroke!

In spite of such alarms the Company has continued to build, and to manage property. Christopher Boone was not a Merchant Taylor, but he identified the Company as a suitable steward of his legacy. His large estate in Lewisham, or the parish of Lee as it then was, became our responsibility at the end of the seventeenth century and has enabled us to provide almshouses, social housing and two nursing homes for the benefit of the population of south-east London. We also became responsible for Christopher Boone's Chapel, Lewisham's only Grade I 'Listed Building', and attributed to Wren; its conservation remains an anxiety to us! We have continued to be involved in property development in the City including, most recently, establishing its first five-star hotel, which opened in 2002. But perhaps the boldest development of all was to move the school from the Charterhouse to Sandy Lodge in 1933. It was a courageous step by the Court, and to appoint a brilliant young architect, William Godfrey Newton, to carry out the commission, which has continued to influence the design of educational buildings to this day, was nothing less than inspired.

The Company's charitable giving continues very actively, and is now directed to both organizations and individuals, targeted to where it will make the greatest impact, and can encourage further support from elsewhere. Many individual beneficiaries are former pupils of our 'family' of schools. The Company continues

to recruit nearly sixty per cent of its membership through apprenticeship, demonstrating our fundamental belief in the potential of young people. The Company's tradition of hospitality also continues, and up to 40,000 people a year greatly enjoy events of every kind at the Hall.

If all of this indicates a strong sense of continuity, it should also be said that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there is a sense of vigour and purpose in the Company. The membership — apprentices, freemen and the livery — are all increasingly engaged in its affairs. The right to the freedom has always passed through the male or female line in the Company, and 2003/4 is the first year in which women members of the livery become eligible to apply for election to the Court and thus to become Master.

With so active a future in prospect, what better time could there be to review the last seven centuries of the Company's history as the platform on which to build the next? We should therefore be particularly grateful to Sir Edward Studd for taking the initiative in 1996 to persuade the Court to commission the preparation and publication of this *History of the Merchant Taylors' Company.* We should also express our gratitude to the authors, Matthew Davies and Ann Saunders, for the depth of their researches and their tenacity in having achieved this splendid outcome, and to Stephen Freeth, one of our livery and Keeper of Manuscripts at Guildhall Library, for his assistance on many fronts. We should also record our appreciation to Maney Publishing, for producing such a splendid volume. I commend this fascinating story of the Company's history to its members, to those outwith who are interested in this unique Fraternity, and to successive generations.

John Howard Penton
Master 2003/2004

AUTHORS' PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE WRITING of this new History of the Merchant Taylors' Company has been split between the authors along chronological lines, reflecting their particular areas of interest and expertise. Matthew Davies was responsible for researching and writing about the earlier history of the Company, up to and including the Reformation and the sixteenth-century educational foundations (Chapters One to Seven). To these Ann Saunders contributed material on the reign of Queen Mary and the foundation of Merchant Taylors' School. Ann is the sole author of the remaining chapters, covering the Company from the accession of Elizabeth I to the rebuilding of the Hall after World War IL

The authors wish to thank all those who have helped them to research and write this book. They are most grateful to the Merchant Taylors' Company for having entrusted the task to them, and in particular to the History Committee: Sir Edward Studd (Chairman), Sir Geoffrey Holland, Mark Barty-King and Stephen Freeth. At the Hall, the Clerk, David Peck, and the Beadle, Robert Henry, gave steadfast support, as did John Bayford (Assistant Clerk), Anne Scott and Lorraine Phillips. Stephen Freeth deserves a double measure of gratitude, both as a Committee member, and as Keeper of Manuscripts at Guildhall Library. During the five years that it has taken to research and write the book, he has catalogued the volumes and loose papers which fill a furlong of shelving in the strongrooms below Guildhall where the Company's archives now safely rest. The knowledge he has acquired during this process has been invaluable, together with his painstaking checking of original references. He also contributed substantially to the Bibliography. He, and Sir Geoffrey Holland, have read and commented on the final draft with particular care. We both owe them much for their precision. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure consistency in the spelling of names, it should be noted that surnames, in particular, were not standardized until the eighteenth century.

The staffs of Guildhall Library's Manuscripts Section, Printed Books, and Prints and Maps have supported us cheerfully. Dr Pamela Taylor listed over a hundred boxes of loose papers. John Fisher, Jeremy Smith, Lynne MacNab, and Michael Melia helped tirelessly over the illustrations; all the photography, save where otherwise accredited, was taken by Robert Pullen with exemplary skill. Annie Hunter and her team have laboured to ensure smooth delivery of documents and heavy tomes. James Sewell, OBE, and his staff in the Corporation of London Records Office were equally supportive, as were the staffs of the British Library, the Public Record Office (now part of The National Archives), London Metropolitan Archives, Lambeth Palace Library, the London Library, and the National Monuments Record, now part of English Heritage.

The archivists of other City companies lent their aid. We thank especially David Beasley (Goldsmiths), David Wickham, FSA, and Alexandrina Buchanan (Clothworkers), Ursula Carlyle (Mercers), Raya McGeorge (Fishmongers), and Robin Myers, FSA (Stationers). At St John's College, Oxford, Sir Howard Colvin and Dr Malcolm Vale made us welcome and helped our research. The staffs of the schools associated with the Company have given full support: we thank particularly Mr Gabitass, headmaster, and Geoffrey Brown, archivist, at Merchant Taylors' School, Sandy Lodge; Mr Dawkins, and Mrs Mills and her staff, at Great Crosby; Mr Trafford, who also took photographs, and Helen O'Donnell at Wolverhampton Grammar School; Mr Magill and Mr McNee at Foyle & Londonderry College; and Mrs Judith Dewey, school governor at Wallingford. Liverymen and former pupils have offered us memories and suggested corrections. Reginald Adams, the late Hume Boggis-Rolfe, Donald Bompas, Walter Clode, James Corden, the late John Gibson, John Owens, John Penton and Michael Skinner have all contributed. Charles Hind generously lent Ann his uncle's collection of books about the school.

The authors are especially grateful to fellow historians who have contributed references, ideas and enthusiasm to this project. In particular, they would like to thank Caroline Barron, Anne Sutton, Vanessa Harding, John Schofield, and other members of the seminar on Medieval and Tudor London at the Institute of Historical Research, where early versions of some of the chapters were read. Ian Archer read and commented, most helpfully, on Ann's early chapters. Fiona Kisby, Eva Griffiths, and Simon Bradley gave advice. Nigel Sleigh-Johnson permitted us to draw on his unpublished PhD thesis, while Claude Blair allowed us to see a draft of parts of his forthcoming history of the Armourers' and Brasiers' Company. Matthew Davies wishes in addition to thank his present and former colleagues, especially Linda Clark and Hannes Kleineke at the History of Parliament Trust, and Derek Keene, Heather Creaton, and Olwen Myhill at the Centre for Metropolitan History, for their support and encouragement.

Ann Saunders thanks Mrs Joorun of the Company's almshouses at Lewisham, and David Short and Mrs ten Hove of Ashwell, Hertfordshire, who all made her welcome. Help has been offered by, and accepted gratefully from, Peter Barber, FSA (British Library); Stephen Croad, MBE, FSA (National Monuments Record); Robin Harcourt-Williams, FSA (Hatfield House Archives); Sam Holland, FRIBA, the third member of the team who restored the Hall, and Simon Houfe, Sir Albert Richardson's grandson; Hazel Forsyth (Museum of London); Raymond Lowe, churchwarden, St Jude-on-the-Hill; Dr Noel Mander, MBE, FSA, organ builder; Susan North (Victoria and Albert Museum); Dr Thom Richardson (Royal Armouries, Leeds); Dr Francis Sheppard, formerly Director of the Survey of London; Kay Staniland, FSA, scholar; Alan Swannell; Jean Tsushima, FSA, Hon. Archivist to the Honourable Artillery Company; and David Webb, FSA, formerly Librarian, Bishopsgate Institute. Ann's chapters would not have been written without Roger Cline's help; he willingly lent scores of books from his inexhaustible library devoted to the history of London. Anne Buck, OBE, formerly Keeper of the Gallery of English Costume at Platt Hall, Manchester, and Veronica Stokes, FSA, formerly Archivist to Coutts Bank, have shouted encouragement from the wings.

The team at Maney Publishing — Michael Gallico, Liz Rosindale, and Linda Fisher — have laboured heroically to make this volume handsome and to speed it

through the press. Ann, electronically illiterate, remembers gratefully her cousin and god-daughter, the late Anthea Lecky, who typed the first draft; Linda Fisher completed the work expertly. The authors also thank Ann Hudson for compiling the index.

Finally, both authors owe a great debt to their respective spouses, Jane Sherwood and Bruce Saunders. Their warmest thanks go to them for their support, patience and good humour during the researching and writing of this book.

Matthew Davies
Ann Saunders

PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION OF THE COMPANY HISTORY

In March 2027, the Company will mark the 700th anniversary of the grant of its first Royal Charter by Edward III. As we start the run-up to those celebrations, we are delighted to be able to reprint the official History of the Company, originally published in 2004. This book was the culmination of extensive and detailed research undertaken by the two authors, Matthew Davies, now a liveryman, and the late Ann Saunders who sadly died in 2019 after a long and remarkable career as a historian of London.

In the twenty years since the History was first published, the Company has gone from strength to strength in pursuing its educational and charitable mission. Our philanthropic activities are now vested in the Merchant Taylors' Foundation which brought together multiple charities founded across the centuries. As well as continuing to nurture our network of schools and other educational institutions and striving to improve lives in London, we have enhanced our commitment to charitable housing through the rebuilding of our Lewisham Almshouses in 2019, provided through the Merchant Taylors' Boone's Charity. Our members are actively involved in this mission, though volunteering their time and expertise when and where it is needed. This is in keeping with the values of charity and fraternity that have underpinned the work of the livery companies for centuries, showing that these values are alive and well in the livery movement in the Twenty-First Century. The Foundation itself owes its origins to the many benefactions made by Company members over the centuries, many of which are described in the book and still provide support for our schools and other charities today. It is sustained today through the generosity of members, who share a deep concern to improve lives.

The Company continues to play a prominent role in the City of London, working with other livery companies to focus attention on some of the challenges of our times such as climate change and sustainability. We are working hard to foster a wider understanding of the history and purposes of the Merchant Taylors' Company, and our History and Heritage Group, together with our Curator, are bringing this history to life in different ways, including through the website and social media. I hope that you will enjoy reading this History and will visit our website to find out more about the Company's history, as well as its activities today.

Duncan Eggar
Master, 2024–25

ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
Cal. Letter Bk A, B, C, etc.	*Calendar of the letter Books Preserved among the Archives of the Corporation of the City of London,* ed. by R. R. Sharpe, 11 vols (A–L) (1899–1912)
Clode, *Memorials*	C. M Clode, *Memorials of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist in the City of London* (1875)
Clode, *Early History*	C. M. Clode, *The Early History of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist, London, with Notices of the Lives of Some of its Eminent Members,* 2 vols (1888)
CLRO	Corporation of London Records Office
Court Minutes, ed. by Davies	*The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes, 1486–1493,* ed. by Matthew Davies (Stamford, 2000)
CPMR	*Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls of the City of London, 1323–1482,* 6 vols, ed. by A. H. Thomas (I–IV) and P. E. Jones (V–VI) (Cambridge, 1926–61)
CPR	*Calendar of Patent Rolls* (1901–)
CWCH	*Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, 1258–1688.* ed. by R. R. Sharpe, 2 vols (1889–90)
GL	Guildhall Library
PRO	Public Record Office (now part of The National Archives)
Riley, *Memorials*	*Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth and XVth Centuries,* ed. by H. T. Riley (1868)
Stow, *Survey*, ed. Kingsford	John Stow, *A Survey of London, Reprinted from the Text of 1603,* ed. by C. L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908)

PART ONE

THE MEDIEVAL COMPANY

CHAPTER ONE

ORIGINS: TAILORS AND LINEN-ARMOURERS

> At this time many of the people of the trades of London were arrayed in livery, and a good time was about to begin.
>
> (*Croniques de London*, early fourteenth century)[1]

London's livery companies have retained the ability to fascinate those who have sought to explain their origins, and their longevity. As more and more records have become accessible it has been possible for writers to delve more deeply than ever before into the history of these institutions, which came to play so prominent a part in the social, political and economic life of the capital.[2] Despite this, much about the early years of the City companies remains hidden from modern eyes. Few company records survive from before 1400, and so today those looking to discover more about the livery companies often have to rely upon chance references for clues as to their beginnings and early activities. Nevertheless, investigation of the 'silent years of London guild history' has persisted, and made good progress. Of particular interest for modern writers has been the development within many of the City's diverse trades, in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, of 'guilds' or 'fraternities' (the words are used interchangeably): among them was the Fraternity of St John the Baptist founded by the City's tailors, which in 1503 was granted a seventh royal charter, by Henry VII, that conferred on it the title of 'Merchant Taylors' Company'.[3]

THE CITY OF LONDON AND ITS GOVERNMENT

Between 1000 and 1300 London grew dramatically, to become one of Europe's largest metropolises (see Col. Pl. I). By the early fourteenth century it may have contained within its walls, and ever-expanding suburbs, as many as eighty thousand people. Yet only some twenty-five per cent of the City's adult male population were enfranchised, that is, admitted to the freedom of the City as 'freemen', and so able to claim the various privileges which had been granted by successive royal charters to those who were citizens. Freemen were the only residents of London entitled to participate in the political life of the capital, buy goods with the intention of re-selling them, and keep shops for retailing goods. In return, citizens swore loyalty to the City government, and undertook to pay taxes levied on them and to carry out public duties when required. Access to the freedom of the City was closely regulated and jealously guarded: it could be obtained either through apprenticeship to a citizen, by redemption (through the payment of a sum of money to the City Chamberlain), or by patrimony. By the early fourteenth century a young immigrant to London would typically have sought to become an apprentice, for with the growth of London's economy apprenticeship within one of London's many and diverse trades was the most popular means of obtaining the freedom. After completing a training of at least seven years, the newly qualified craftsman could seek to join the exclusive ranks of the City's freemen.[4]

Those who obtained the freedom were able to take their place in a City which had changed dramatically over the preceding two hundred years, a period when an expanding economy and population went hand-in-hand with the City's gradual independence from royal control. The government of the City was now largely in the hands of its citizens. Until the granting of a charter by Richard I in 1190 two Sheriffs, royal officials appointed by the King, had ruled the City. Now the Mayor was London's chief

DOI: 10.4324/9781315086286-2

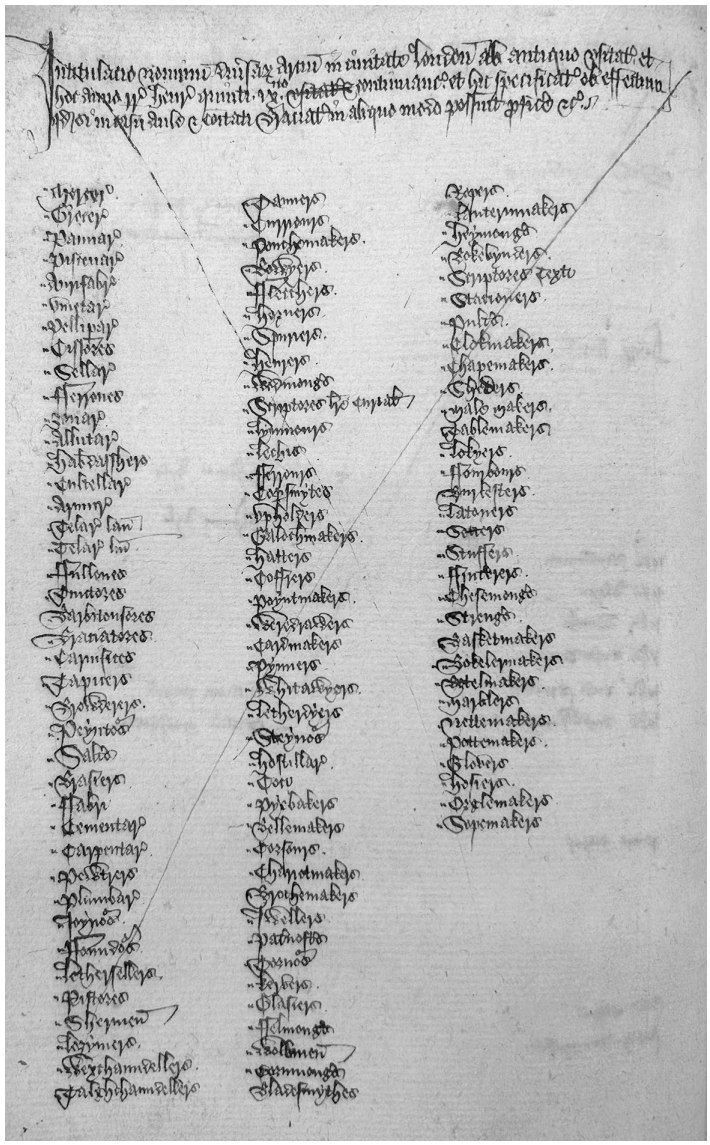


FIGURE 1. A list of 112 crafts of the City of London in 1422, drawn up by the Clerk of the Brewers' Company. The Tailors (*Cissores*) are listed in eighth place.
Guildhall Library, MS 5440, fol. 11v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Brewers' Company

magistrate and leader of the government of the City, with the two Sheriffs, though still the King's representatives, increasingly subordinate to him. Beneath the Mayor were the Aldermen, prominent citizens who exercised jurisdiction over the City's twenty-four wards, administrative units formed out of much older private estates and jurisdictions. The structure of London's government was rooted in the wards, where assemblies of citizens met, under the eye of their alderman and ward officers, to resolve local problems. It was the wards that, by the 1280s, were responsible for selecting freemen to attend meetings of what became known as the Common Council, which, like the Court of Aldermen, met in Guildhall. This framework of government was largely in place by 1300, and was accompanied by the consolidation of the roles of the City's own law courts and by the creation of new administrative offices. The posts of Common Clerk, Common Serjeant and Recorder, for instance, all date from the reign of Edward I (1272–1307), and it is no coincidence that this period also saw the beginning of important series of civic records, such as the 'Letter Books' and the rolls of the Mayor's Court, which provide us with much of what we know of the City, its government and its people at this time.[5]

The diverse trades and occupations practised by London's citizens figure prominently in these records, for by 1300 it had become common for freemen to identify themselves by their craft. More than 180 trades can be found, testifying to the range of goods produced and sold in the capital. The individuals named include both wealthy merchants, such as vintners, grocers and mercers, many of whom imported and exported a wide variety of commodities, and also poorer, more specialized tradesmen, such as quilt-makers, cheesemongers and bowyers. In 1422 the Clerk of the Brewers' Company drew up a list of 112 of the City's 'ancient' crafts, arranged in rough order of size and prominence: heading them were the Mercers, Grocers and Drapers, with the tailors (*Cissores*) in eighth place, while further down the list were crafts such as the 'galochemakers', 'pyebakers', 'glasiers' and 'sopemakers' (see Fig. 1).[6] The identification of individuals according to craft reflected not only the growth of London's economy and the importance of its industries, but also the way in which citizens, as well as being residents of particular wards and parishes, were also linked, through shared skills and products, with fellow artisans and merchants throughout London. These common interests were responsible for the development of organizations within the crafts, and for the increasingly prominent role which the trades were to play in the government of the City.

MISTERIES AND FRATERNITIES

Contemporaries used specific terms to describe the crafts and craft organizations of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Particularly prominent was the term 'mistery' (Latin *misterium,* medieval French *mestier, métier*), the collective noun applied to all those who professed to follow a particular trade, as in, for example, the 'mistery of fishmongers'. Also widely used was *officium,* normally translated as 'craft', which was also used to denote those of one trade. Neither term implied anything about the level of organization within a craft. As London's population and economy grew during the thirteenth century, however, the City government increasingly came to rely upon representatives of the misteries, often known as Wardens, who would be permitted to enforce regulations relevant to their particular crafts. Little else can be inferred by the use of the term 'mistery', however, and certainly not the existence of an association of any kind. Where they have been discovered, these associations were known by a variety of interchangeable terms, of which the most commonly used were the Latin *fraternitas, gilda,* and *congregatio* and the French *confrerie*.

These terms were widely used to describe the religious fraternities which were founded with increasing frequency by lay people throughout Europe from the thirteenth century onwards. Many were established within parish churches, while others were attached to religious houses or hospitals. At the heart of this movement was the medieval notion of the community of the living and the dead, a notion expressed most vividly in the belief that Masses, prayers and good works could expedite the soul's passage through Purgatory. Fraternities drew strength from these beliefs through their focus upon collective worship and charitable activity: alms were given to members in financial difficulty, and it was normal for the fraternity to bear the costs of funeral arrangements. They were founded by groups of men, and sometimes by groups of women, who were not blood relatives, but who nevertheless wished to use the analogy of brotherhood in order to achieve these aims. This led to the use of robes or 'liveries' to emphasize these bonds, as well as to the popularity of feasts and other ceremonial occasions.[7]

In London and many other towns and cities, fraternities also became popular among those who practised a particular trade. In these cases the fraternity acted not just as a means to express religious and charitable aspirations, but also as a focus for commercial and political interests. In some towns membership of the relevant fraternity was compulsory for all those who wished to make, or trade in, particular commodities, but in other urban centres, including London, they were chiefly exclusive organizations for the wealthiest and most prominent artisans. As well as having religious and charitable functions, they normally exercised a wider economic jurisdiction over particular crafts.[8] In London there is no doubting the role of these institutions as the forerunners of what would later

be known as the 'livery companies', named after the robes which members came to wear on ceremonial occasions. Yet the historical relationship between the two is not a simple one, not least because in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries it was by no means inevitable that the crafts would become organized in this way. While some, such as the Skinners, Tailors and Goldsmiths, formed well-supported and successful fraternities dedicated to the feasts of Corpus Christi, St John the Baptist and St Dunstan respectively, others, notably the Vintners and Ironmongers, never founded proper fraternities and, initially at least, developed few structures beyond what were needed for the administration of their own crafts. Certain crafts were also concentrated in certain parts of the City, and this may have meant that a formal craft organization was, for many years, superfluous, the crafts being supervised at a local level by more informal networks.[9] Conversely, it is clear that some crafts became organized earlier than others as a result of external pressures: the Grocers, for instance, may have founded their guild of St Antholin partly because of a growing need to protect their commercial interests.[10] By the fifteenth century, these differences of emphasis had largely been eroded: most of the crafts had by this time adopted the visible trappings of guild life, whether it was the wearing of liveries, the celebration of services for members living and dead, or the distribution of alms to those who had fallen upon hard times. These apparent similarities in structure and function should not, however, disguise their diverse origins.[11]

The dedications of these fraternities to particular saints and feast days should be noted at this point. Guilds and fraternities throughout Europe commonly adopted patron saints that had some connection, even if often rather tangential, to the craft in question. Guilds of tailors were frequently dedicated to St John the Baptist, almost certainly because of the references in Matthew 3:4 and Mark 1:6 to the clothing worn, and perhaps made, by the saint in the desert: 'John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey.' John the Baptist's role as the harbinger of the Lamb of God was also important, and representations of the saint in paintings and illuminated manuscripts frequently show him with the Holy Lamb. Indeed an example, shown in Colour Plate IIa, can be found in the illuminated lectionary owned by Stephen Jenyns, the second Merchant Taylor to be chosen as Lord Mayor (1508). This was also the reason why the Lamb was subsequently incorporated into the Arms of the London tailors. The dedication to the saint was shared by tailors' guilds in other towns and cities in England, including Bristol, Exeter, Oxford, Salisbury and York. The Nativity of the saint (24 June) was commonly chosen as the date of the annual feast, although the Decollation (29 August) was also used. It is worth remarking, however, that some of the London craft fraternities were not dedicated to saints or feasts with obvious connections to their occupations. In the case of the Skinners, for example, their dedication to the feast of Corpus Christi may perhaps reflect origins in a parish fraternity that was subsequently 'taken over' by skinners.[12]

THE CITY AND THE CRAFTS 1250–1300

What all the crafts of thirteenth-century London had in common, however, was an increasingly well-developed sense of identity, which naturally encouraged them to seek to regulate their own affairs. A fraternity was one way in which such ambitions could be expressed, but by no means the only one. The expectations of the leaders of the crafts were rising in the mid-thirteenth century, as the economy of the City began to grow and diversify: some misteries, such as the Goldsmiths and Vintners, had already been accorded a limited role in regulating their own affairs. By the 1250s the ambitions of the crafts had set them upon a collision course with conservatives among the City's aldermen, who asserted the traditional role of the wards in governing the City and who regarded the misteries, which were not constrained by ward boundaries, as a threat to their positions. The rise of the crafts in London was thus part of a fundamental constitutional debate. At the heart of the matter was the role which the increasingly vocal misteries should have in the government of the City. In the 1260s these struggles became closely bound up with the divisions in London caused by the civil war between the King, Henry III, and the

barons led by Earl Simon de Montfort. Prominent among the conservatives was Alderman Arnold FitzThedmar, author of an important contemporary chronicle in which he bitterly attacked a fellow alderman, the populist Thomas FitzThomas, during whose time as Mayor (1261–65) the City had committed to the baronial cause. FitzThomas was said to have 'pampered' the City populace by giving a voice to the 'commons of the City' and, in addition, had encouraged the crafts to draw up regulations for themselves.[13] Another target of his polemic was Walter Hervy (Mayor 1272–73), who was said to have granted charters to various (unnamed) crafts. These were revoked during the mayoralty of his successor, Henry le Waleys, who had Hervy arrested for good measure, a move which seemingly heralded a defeat for the crafts.[14]

In the event, the last two decades of the thirteenth century were far from being disastrous for the crafts. The very dominance of conservative elements in London created a stable atmosphere conducive to gradual reform. This was particularly so from 1285 to 1298 when Edward I took the government of London into his own hands and appointed royal Wardens in place of the Mayor.[15] There was a growing recognition that the misteries had become indispensable to the government of the City, and could be used to buttress the traditional authority of the wards rather than undermine it. In particular, the City authorities increasingly looked to the crafts as the best means of regulating access to the all-important freedom of the City. As we have seen, the freedom could be obtained through apprenticeship, by redemption or by patrimony, and apprenticeship in particular gave the misteries an ever more powerful voice in a period which saw increasing immigration into London. In 1274–75, according to one source, a new register of apprentices and redemptioners was begun, with enrolment of the names of apprentices and freemen made compulsory.[16] Two further measures are noted in the City records over the next twenty years: in 1282 Mayor Henry le Waleys ordered all the misteries to present the names of their freemen and apprentices to the Court of Aldermen, and a similar order issued by the royal warden in 1294 required the 'better and more discreet' men of the misteries to compile a record of their members on the grounds that 'misdoers and disturbers of the King's peace' had come to be hidden among the 'good men' of the City.[17] These difficulties were still in evidence in December 1312 when a petition from the 'good men of the commonalty of every mistery' sought reassurance that a newcomer to the City would not be allowed to take up his freedom until his 'condition and trustworthiness' had been certified to the Mayor and Aldermen by the merchants and craftsmen of the trade he wished to practise.[18] These concerns were addressed in the important charter granted to the City by Edward II in 1319, in which for the first time it was laid down that admission to the freedom could only be obtained through one of the recognized misteries. Moreover, strangers in the City had to find six men from their chosen craft to act as guarantors of their standing and future conduct before they could be admitted. From this date onwards it was usual for freemen to describe themselves as 'citizen and tailor', 'citizen and mercer' and so on in all legal and quasi-legal documents. This charter thus marked a watershed in the history of the crafts. It set the seal upon many of the changes which had taken place in London over the previous fifty years, and provided a further stimulus to the development of organizations within the misteries.[19]

THE TAILORS' FRATERNITY: EARLY EVIDENCE

We can now attempt to trace the beginnings of organization among the tailors of London. It is perhaps not surprising that little is recorded of them in this period: though clearly a large craft, the City's tailors were not as prominent in City affairs as the mercantile crafts such as the Grocers, or those such as the Vintners and Goldsmiths which had strong links with the Crown. Tailoring was an artisan occupation which was based around the manufacture of different types of clothing and other related items such as bed-hangings: profits were generally smaller than those which could be achieved through trade in commodities such as wool, cloth, wine or spices. Wealth and political status went hand in hand, and because the tailors were not among the great merchants of the capital they did not provide any aldermen, let alone a mayor, until the fifteenth century. Nor do

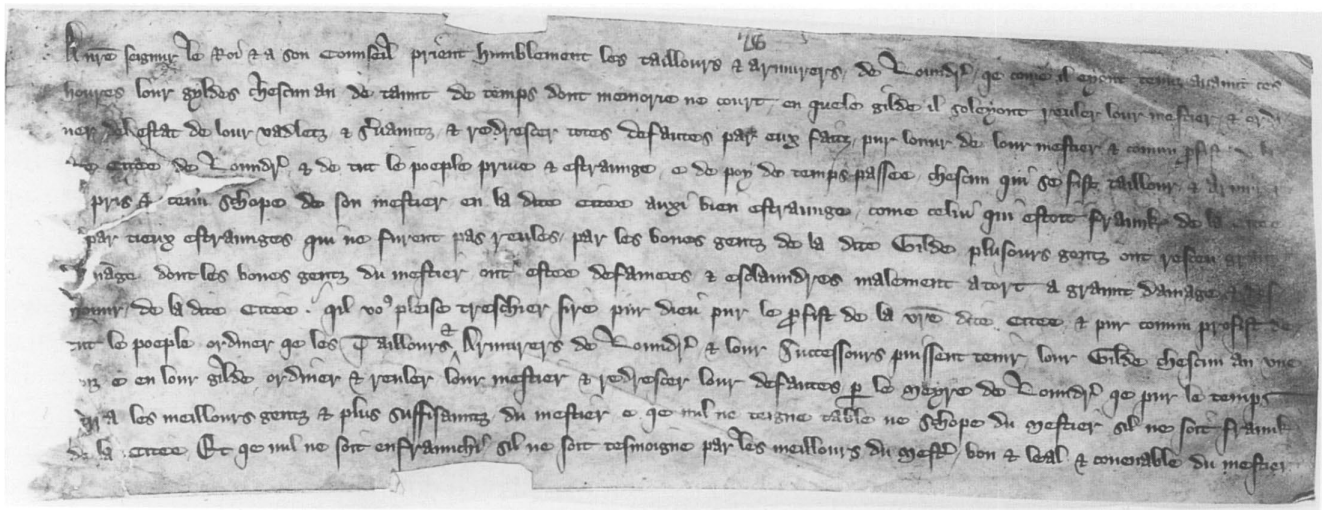


FIGURE 2. Petition of the Tailors and Linen-Armourers, 1327.
Public Record Office, SC8/260/12978

the tailors of London appear to have been concentrated in any particular area of the City, unlike the pepperers of Soper Lane, the driving force behind the Grocers' fraternity, or the Skinners, many of whom lived and worked in the Peltry which ran southwards from the church of St John Walbrook. The establishment of Tailors' Hall in Broad Street (now Threadneedle Street) from the mid-fourteenth century might suggest that leading tailors were concentrated in that part of London, but there is no evidence of this in the returns made for taxes raised in 1292 or 1309.[20]

Anecdotal evidence must be used with caution. In an entry in his chronicle for late November 1267, for instance, FitzThedmar described serious rioting in the City of London between 'certain of the craft of goldsmiths and certain of the craft of tailors (*quosdam de officio cissorum*)'. They were joined by men of the parmenters (robe-trimmers or furriers) and tawyers (leather-workers) and the ensuing disorder lasted for three days before being brought under control. More than thirty rioters were arrested by the Sheriffs and thrown into Newgate prison; they were later tried for various offences, including the murders of men whose bodies had been thrown in the Thames, and a number of men were hanged. In the absence of other information it might be tempting to regard such evidence as indicating some sort of organization among the tailors at that date. However, this would be premature. The disorder noted by the chronicler probably had as much to do with the tense political climate in London at a time of continuing strife between the King and his barons, as with craft identities and rivalries. Whilst not doubting the spirit of these tailors, their riotous behaviour only goes a certain way towards our goal of finding the origins of the Company.[21]

Less dramatic, but probably more significant, is the will of a citizen of London named Robert de Mounpeillers among the deeds and wills formally approved and enrolled in the City's Husting Court in 1278. Among the bequests Mounpeillers made to his sons was a rent charge on a shop and solar (upper room) which were said to belong to the Tailors. This might indicate that senior tailors, perhaps officials such as a master and wardens, were holding property on behalf of the rest of the craft. If so, this is our first evidence of organization within the mistery.[22] Slight though this evidence is, there is every likelihood that the Tailors and their associated craft, the Linen-Armourers (for which see below) had indeed developed structures for self-regulation by the close of the thirteenth century. John Stow, the unrivalled sixteenth-century chronicler of London's history and everyday life, was himself a freeman of the Merchant Taylors' Company. As such he had unique access to the already extensive archives of his company when he wrote his *Survey of London* in 1598. His account of the 'origins' of the company is of more than usual interest:

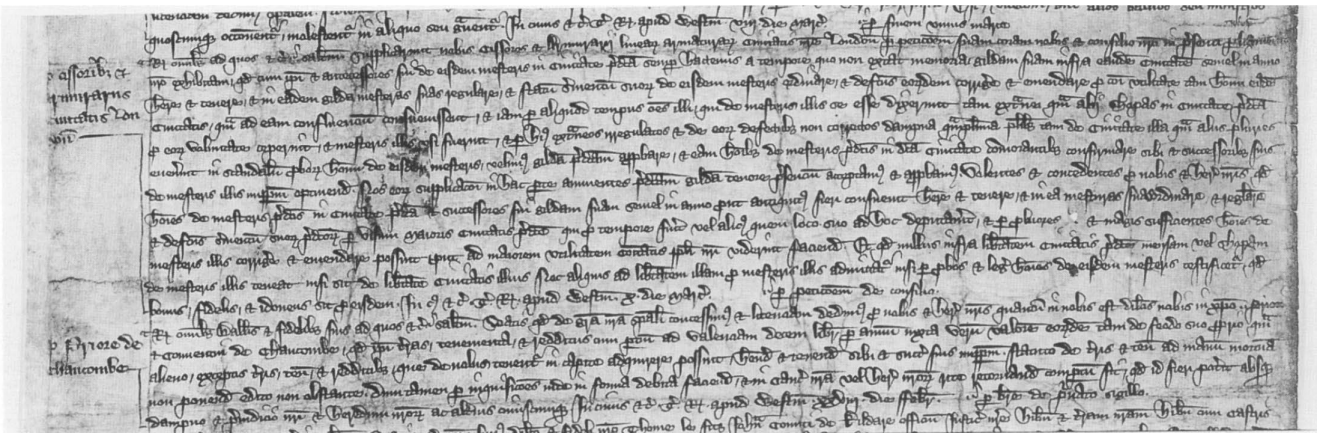


FIGURE 3. Enrolled Letters Patent of Edward III, 10 March 1327.
Public Record Office, C66/166, m. 22

I find that King *Edward* the first . . . confirmed this Guild by the name of Taylors and Linnen armourers, and also gaue to the brethren thereof authority euery yeare at mid-sommer to hold a feast, and to choose vnto them a gouernour, or Mayster with wardens: whereupon the same yeare 1300, on the feast day of the natiuitie of saint *Iohn Baptist,* they chose *Henry de Ryall* to be their pilgrim, for the maister of this misterie (as one that trauelled for the whole companie) was then so called . . . and the foure wardens were then called Purueyors of almes.[23]

How reliable is this? It is impossible to reconstruct the actual sources used by Stow in this instance, but the surviving records of the Company do contain clues. Inventories of the Company's books taken in 1609 and 1689 show that the Company had in its possession a series of nine manuscript books, labelled 'A' to 'I', of which the earliest was said to begin in the year 1299. Book 'I' still survives as the earliest complete book of minutes of the Company's Court (1562–75), but the others, with the exception of parts of two fifteenth-century books, disappeared in the eighteenth century. It is likely that the early books were similar to the surviving fourteenth-century books of the Mercers' and Grocers' Companies, which contain a mixture of accounts, minutes and ordinances (craft regulations); if so they would undoubtedly have provided Stow with much of what he included in his *Survey.*[24] He might have gleaned further information from another manuscript listed in one of the inventories as 'one other auntient book in paper contaynyng the names of all the M[aste]rs and the Wardens of this company sithence the yere Anno Domini 1300 being the xxviiith yere of the raigne of King Edward the First'. According to Charles Clode, Master in 1873–74, this 'invaluable book' was produced by the Clerk in 1865 but had vanished from the archives ten years later when Clode compiled his *Memorials* of the Company.[25]

Stow's evidence suggests that the Fraternity of St John the Baptist received some sort of royal confirmation from Edward I in 1300 which ratified its jurisdiction over the City's tailors and linen-armourers. Unfortunately there is no evidence that 'letters patent' were obtained by the Tailors from Edward I: normally a copy of such letters would have been enrolled in the royal Chancery, but nothing relevant survives in the chancery rolls for that period. Nonetheless, Stow's claim emphasizes the important position of the fraternity within the craft as a whole.[26] Stow clearly regarded the Master and Wardens of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist as responsible for regulating the affairs of the mistery generally. Like the members of other fraternities, it is probable that the Tailors by this time wore livery robes and hoods on ceremonial occasions, particularly their annual feast on 24 June, the feast day of their patron saint, St John the Baptist. The Master named by Stow, Henry de Ryall, was certainly a suitable individual to be chosen for that office: also known as Henry le Taylor, he was a prominent common councilman who makes several appearances in the City records between 1300 and 1305.[27]

Further clues are revealed by Stow's claim that the terms 'pilgrim' and 'purveyors of alms' were

FIGURE 4. A linen-armour 'jack', *c.* 1560.
Royal Armouries Collection, Leeds

originally used for the Master and Wardens. Confirmation of the use of these terms can be found among some of the earliest documents surviving in the Company's archive. In 1351 John de Totenham, a prominent carpenter, granted a small rent charge to five tailors, John Pecche, William de Derby, Robert de Gyldeford, Giles de Westmill and Roger de Cologne. Pecche, already prominent in the craft, was described as *peregrinus* (pilgrim) while the other four were referred to as the *collectores elemosinarum* (alms collectors). The use of these titles is unique among the London livery companies, and suggests that the Fraternity of St John the Baptist was especially conscious of its role as a provider of charity to members who had fallen on hard times. The term 'pilgrim' is particularly evocative of the contemporary enthusiasm for crusading and pilgrimage. A number of English fraternities in the medieval period, including that founded by the tailors of Lincoln, even provided funds for pilgrims to travel to the Holy Land or to the popular shrine of St James at Compostela in northern Spain. It is uncertain, however, whether the Master of the London tailors was actually required to undertake such journeys on behalf of his brethren, as Stow implies.[28]

It is clear from these references that by 1300 the Tailors had laid the foundations for what would eventually become one of the most successful of the fraternities founded within the crafts of London.[29]

However, further early evidence is hard to come by. This is partly a consequence of the apparent loss of important records belonging to the Company from that period: much more can be said about the fraternity after 1398, when the surviving accounts begin. Even records which might be expected to reveal something about corporate life within the craft are not especially helpful. On 10 March 1327, following a petition submitted to the King and his council, the 'Tailors and Armourers' of London obtained their first charter, more correctly referred to as 'letters patent', a document which confirmed their right to hold an annual assembly and to 'rule their mistery and order the state of their workmen and servants and redress all faults by them committed' (see Figs 2 and 3).[30] Unlike subsequent charters obtained by the Tailors there is no mention of a fraternity or even of a Master and Wardens. This does not mean that Stow was wrong. The crafts which obtained charters at this time, a group that also included the Goldsmiths and Skinners, may have felt no need to obtain royal confirmation of the status of their fraternities. This was to change later in the century, particularly when guilds came to acquire property in their own right. For now, however, other priorities loomed larger, notably the need to define and expand the regulatory functions of the crafts in the decades which followed the granting of the 1319 charter to the City of London. By obtaining royal letters patent the Tailors and the other misteries demonstrated their self-confidence, and their willingness to look outside the City to the Crown for confirmation of their rights and privileges.

City records likewise do not reveal much about craft fraternities, probably because the government was mainly concerned with economic regulation. This can be seen in an entry in one of the City's 'Letter Books' from November 1328, when lists were drawn up of men who were to be responsible for governing twenty-four of the City's numerous crafts. Each mistery had a group of governors in proportion to its size: the tailors, already among the largest of the crafts, were to have twenty, a number exceeded only by the twenty-one for the fishmongers and the twenty-four for the butchers. At the other end of the scale, the cappers, girdlers and painters were to have four each. This, and a subsequent list compiled in 1340, suggest that the principle of drawing upon senior craftsmen to help in the regulation of the misteries was becoming well established, and that we should look in these groups for the origins of the 'Courts of Assistants' which later came to act as the governing bodies of the livery companies. The list of 1340 was among the early 'constitutional' documents copied into an early-sixteenth-century illuminated book which is still owned by the Company. The men named in these lists were certainly prominent within the craft: John Pecche, one of the governors of 1328, went on to become the 'pilgrim' of 1351, while two of the 'alms collectors' noted in that year, Roger de Coloigne and Giles de Westmelle, or Westmill, were listed among the leading tailors of 1340.[31] A further step towards the effective regulation of the craft was taken in 1364, this time at the request of the Tailors themselves. After reciting the terms of their charter, they asked the City to confirm a new ordinance which would allow access to the freedom only after six out of a named group of leading tailors had certified the 'condition' of each candidate. Once again, the list contains several men whose prominence within the fraternity is attested by later documents.[32]

TAILORS AND LINEN-ARMOURERS

Stow's evidence, together with the charter of 1327, confirms that as early as 1300 the London tailors were closely identified with another, allied trade, the linen-armourers. The nature of this specialist occupation is discussed more fully in a subsequent chapter, but in essence practitioners of this craft made soft armour, one of the four basic types of armour in common use in the Middle Ages, the others being mail, scale and plate armour. These garments could be worn either alone, or above or underneath metal armour. Surviving English examples include the Black Prince's 'jupon', now in Canterbury Cathedral, and others now in the Royal Armouries Collection (see Fig. 4).[33] Ordinances for the regulation of all types of armour were issued by the Mayor in 1322 to deal with abuses in the

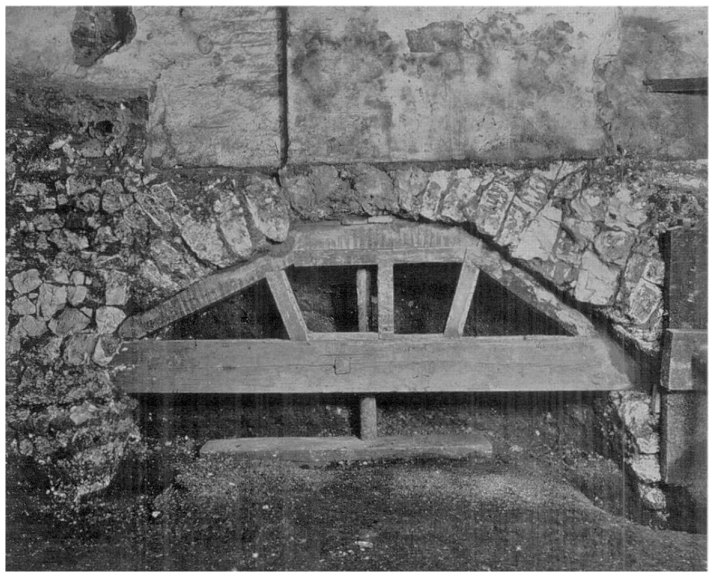
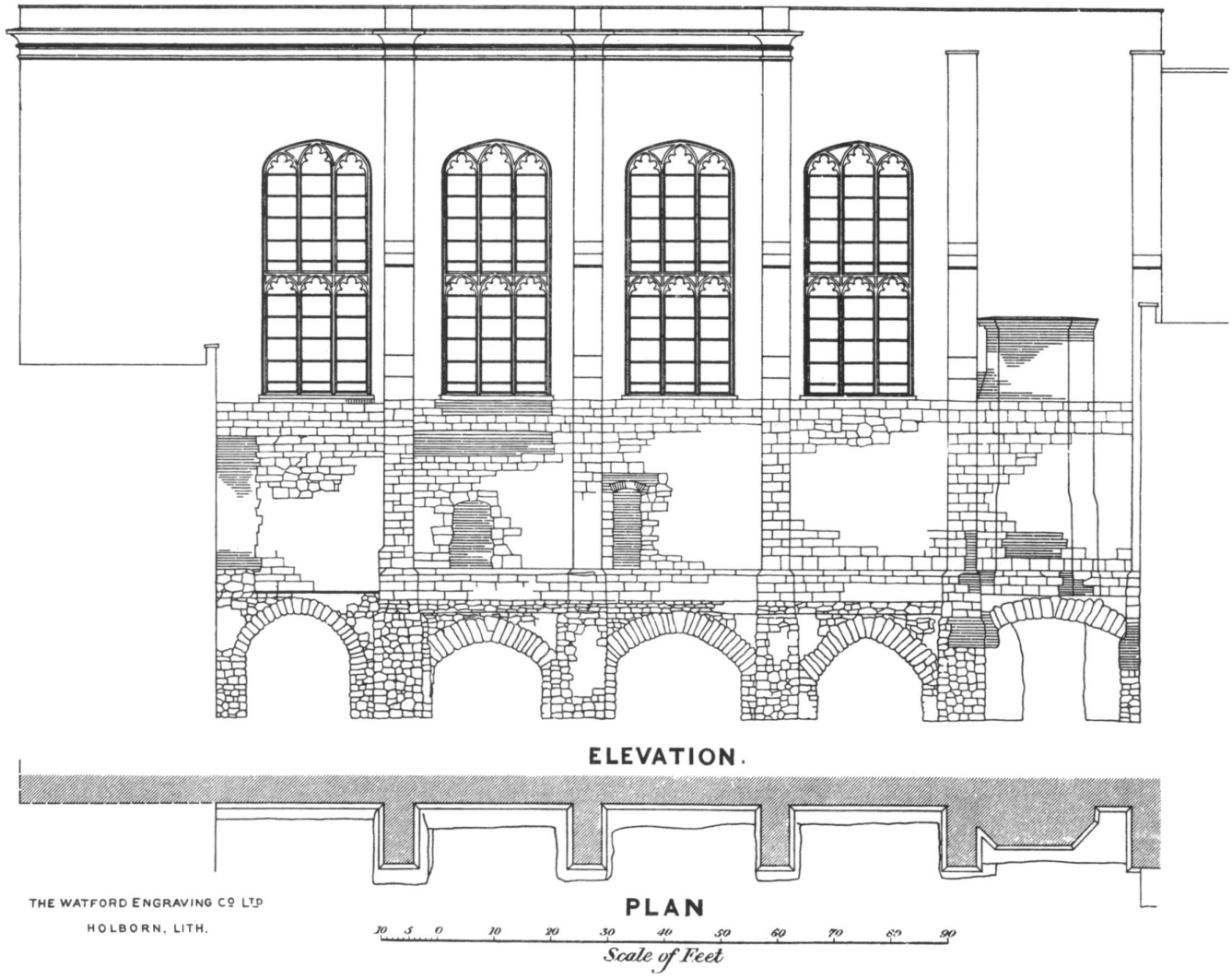


FIGURE 5. Foundation arch, late fourteenth century, under the south-east wall of the Great Hall. Discovered during the excavation of the Muniment Room in 1919.
Guildhall Library, MS 34353/1

FIGURE 6. Elevation of the north wall of Merchant Taylors' Hall, showing foundation arches, as exposed by demolitions along Threadneedle Street, in 1910.
Guildhall Library



manufacturing processes, but by this date the linen-armourers were already closely associated with the tailors. Four linen-armourers were among the twenty men who were chosen by the Mayor in November 1328 to govern the mistery of Tailors and Linen-Armourers.[34]

The coming together of the two crafts was a natural development, for the linen-armourers had as much, if not more, in common with tailors as they did with armourers who worked mostly with mail or plate. Yet this in itself does not explain why the linen-armourers were singled out for such a formal alliance, or indeed why any large, diverse mistery would wish to link itself in such an explicit manner with a small, specialized occupation. Close examination of the records of the Company and the Crown in this period can shed some light upon these questions. The answer appears to lie in the growing importance of linen-armourers and other associated craftsmen in the Great Wardrobe, the institution responsible for supplying goods ranging from robes to military hardware to the King and the royal household. Once the Wardrobe became permanently established in London (from 1311), it became an important centre for the production of goods in the capital, and something akin to a 'factory' environment in a world dominated by the small workshop. Separate departments dealt with the manufacture of the various types of goods needed by the King, his family and household: by the close of the thirteenth century, the King's tailor headed a large department, while smaller, specialist sections had been created for the King's pavilioner or tent-maker and also for his armourer. While the King's tailor had always been a key employee, the importance of the other two offices increased significantly with the onset of the wars with Scotland and France under Edward I and his successors.[35]

During the reign of Edward III there is evidence of connections between the London Tailors and these important royal servants. First, in May 1332 Edward's pavilioner, John de Yakesley, acquired from Edmund Crepin a 'great and principal messuage [dwelling-house]' in the parishes of St Peter Cornhill, St Benet Fink and St Martin Outwich, together with a great gateway towards Cornhill and another gateway onto 'Bradestrete' (Threadneedle Street). In November 1345 Yakesley granted the property to a London merchant, John de Aystwick, and in July 1347 Aystwick conveyed it to twenty- six tailors. It was on this estate that the Tailors built their Hall, which the Company has occupied continuously ever since. At about the same time the Tailors were connected with Edward III's armourer, John de Cologne, a linen-armourer who served the King in this capacity until his death in 1357.[36] Cologne's involvement in the craft in the City had been apparent as early as 1334, when he was commissioned to provide clothing for 100 foot soldiers to campaign against the Scots. He was to be paid £11 15*s*. 8*d*., and an additional 14*s*. 2*d*. was allocated for wine for the tailors working under his direction.[37] He was a relative of Roger de Cologne, one of the 'alms collectors' noted in 1351, and in 1340 both men had been named among the governors of the Tailors and Linen-Armourers in London. Seven years later John was named as one of the first trustees of the site of Tailors' Hall, and there is also evidence to connect him with Edmund Crepin, whose conveyance to Yakesley had started the whole process.[38]

These links continued into the later fourteenth century through such men as Thomas Carleton, an embroiderer who was one of Cologne's successors as royal armourer. He too became an influential member of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist, and on his death in 1389 left substantial property in Wood Street to the fraternity on condition that a priest was found to sing for his soul daily in St Paul's Cathedral.[39] The adoption of the name 'Tailors and Linen-Armourers' was therefore a direct recognition of the importance of men such as Cologne and Carleton within the craft, and of the status they had attained within the Great Wardrobe of the King by virtue of their specialist skills. The Company retained this name until 1503 when a charter granted by Henry VII reincorporated it as the Merchant Taylors' Company. Symbolism also ensured that John de Yakesley's place in the Company's early history was not forgotten: in 1481 the Tailors' first grant of arms incorporated a pavilion into the design, and in one of the Company's two pre-Reformation hearse-cloths the image of a pavilion is set between the blades of a pair of scissors (see Frontispiece and Fig. 15).[40]

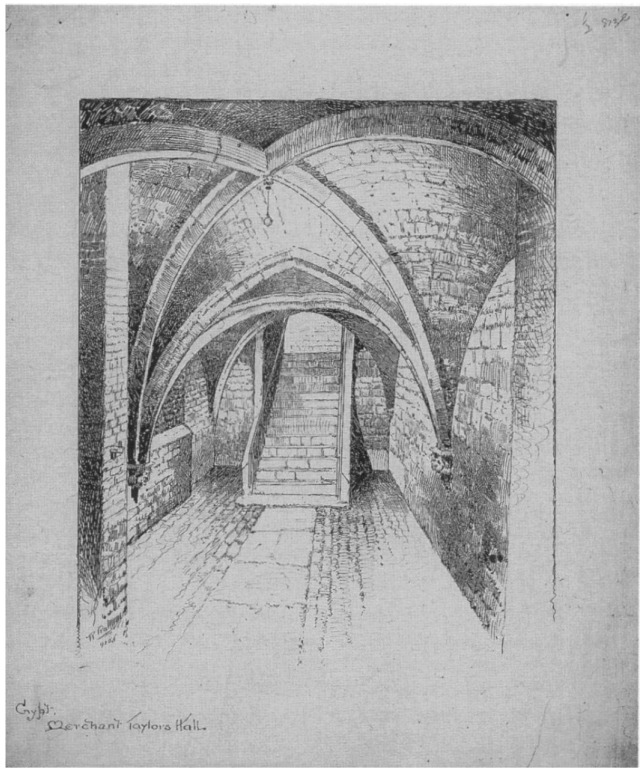


FIGURE 7. Line drawing of the fourteenth-century undercroft, by Robert Randoll, *c.* 1910.
Guildhall Library

THE TAILORS AND THEIR HALL IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Like most associations of its kind, the Fraternity of St John the Baptist needed a physical space for its activities, such as the collection of quarterly alms payments or the celebration of the annual feast day. Premises were especially important as a forum for resolving disputes between craftsmen and for drawing up and enforcing regulations. Many of the craft fraternities founded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were initially located in religious houses or parish churches: the Saddlers were attached to the college of St Martin le Grand, the Skinners to the church of St John Walbrook, and the Grocers to St Antholin's, while the Drapers became established first at St Mary of Bethlehem (by 1361) and later at St Mary le Bow.[41] Gradually each of these crafts acquired premises of its own, normally after a group of senior craftsmen or merchants had agreed to act as trustees for this purpose. Predictably, those crafts which later made up the 'Great Twelve' companies were at the forefront of this movement, and of these the Tailors were among the earliest to establish a permanent home.[42] Unlike the halls of the Skinners or Goldsmiths, however, Tailors' Hall does not seem to have been in a part of London closely associated with their trade. Indeed the choice of site in what was then known as Broad Street may have been purely accidental, based upon little more than John de Yakesley's own connections with that part of London.

The history of the site has been well documented, and only the essentials need be repeated here. In the late thirteenth century a 'principal mansion' in Cornhill, with the houses adjoining it, was acquired by a prominent alderman, Ralph Crepin, who conveyed it to his son Walter in 1299. The property then passed to Walter's own son, Edmund, who held it until May 1332 when, as we have seen, it was sold to John de Yakesley. The Company's own archive contains copies of all these deeds, and of the subsequent transactions in which the property was conveyed to John de Aystwick who then, in July 1347, settled it upon a group of twenty-six tailors.[43] Unfortunately, whatever their value for details of ownership, such documents do not reveal much about how the buildings were used. Did the Tailors and Linen-Armourers start meeting there soon after Yakesley's purchase in 1332, or only in 1347 when the site was settled on the fraternity's trustees? No definitive answer is possible: all that can be said is that the estate passed through the hands of a number of trustees, until in June 1392 the Master and Wardens of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist purchased from the Crown a licence allowing property to be granted to the fraternity 'in mortmain'. This was necessary to fulfil the provisions of a statute passed the previous year which had attempted yet again to restrict the granting of property into the 'dead hand' of the Church, and of other institutions with religious functions such as guilds and fraternities. By the late fourteenth century many fraternities were seeking to acquire property in their own right, but the statute of 1391 required them to obtain a licence, or alternatively a charter, for this purpose.[44] The licence, obtained on 23 June, enabled Simon Winchecombe, citizen and armourer, and his three fellow trustees to grant to the Fraternity of St John the Baptist

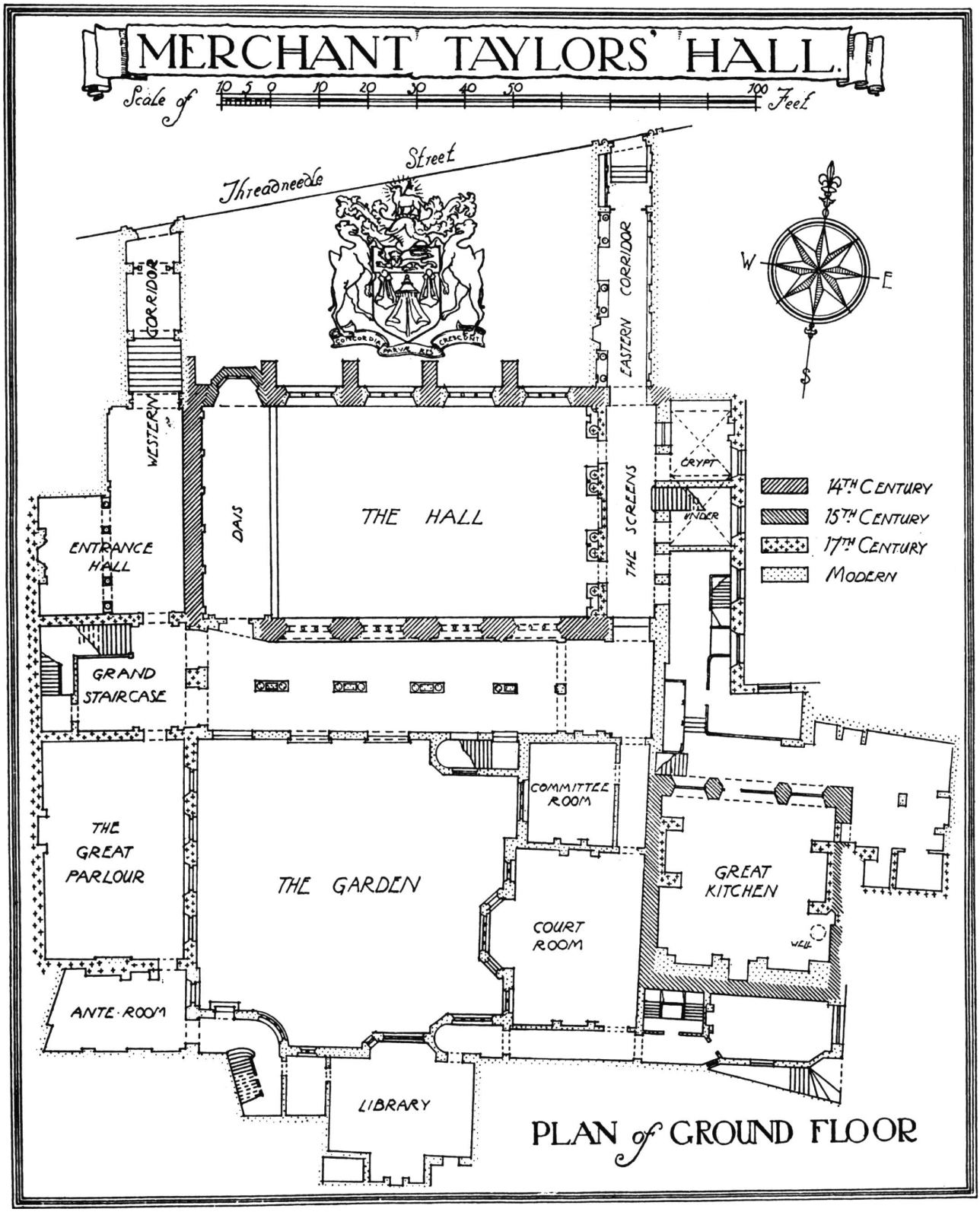


FIGURE 8. Plan of the pre-war Hall buildings showing the phases of building.
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1929

all those two messuages and eleven shops of which one messuage called 'Tailloursh alle' and the aforesaid eleven shops are on the south side of Brade Street [Threadneedle Street] in the parishes of St. Benet Fink and St. Martin Outwich, and the other messuage is on the north side of Cornhill in the parish of St. Peter Cornhill.

The conveyance itself was dated 24 June, the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist, the day of the fraternity's annual feast and elections.[45]

This marked the final stage in the acquisition of the site by the Tailors, a process which had begun almost exactly sixty years before. The messuage in the parish of St Peter Cornhill is probably to be identified with the 'principal mansion' owned by Crepin, and which stood on the site of what is now No. 2 White Lion Court. In the early fifteenth century it was rented out, first to the Earl of Devon and later to a succession of schoolmasters, for £6 13*s*. 4*d*. per annum and was described as 'le viell' hostiell' ('the old hall'). The phrase suggests that it was the Tailors' first meeting place, and was superseded by 1392 by the other messuage on the site, now known as 'Tailloursh alle', which lay slightly further north in the parish of St Martin Outwich.[46] This is where the common hall has stood ever since. Its medieval foundations were uncovered during excavations in 1910 and 1919 (see Figs 5 and 6), and investigation of these suggests a building date in the latter half of the fourteenth century, after the site as a whole was settled on the twenty-six tailor trustees. With the incorporation of other buildings, 'Tailors' Hall' came to include associated rooms such as the kitchens (known to exist in 1388), a parlour, chapel and court room; to the east of the common hall are two surviving bays of an undercroft, which also date from the fourteenth century (see Fig. 7). As we will see, further building works took place in the fifteenth century and survivals of these include an enlarged kitchen and an oriel window, incorporated into the north-west corner of the common hall (see Fig. 8).[47]

By 1400, therefore, the Tailors and Linen-Armourers had become established in what has been the Company's home for the last six hundred years. The speed with which it did so, compared with some of the other greater companies, was testimony to the important connections established in the early fourteenth century by members of the fraternity with individuals such as Yakesley, whose patronage and assistance were invaluable. This achievement was all the more remarkable because the craft, though large and diverse, did not yet possess wealthy and influential figures such as headed the mercantile crafts of the Drapers, Mercers and Grocers. As the next chapter will show, the rising fortunes of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist were closely linked with the ambitions of members of the craft to achieve greater prominence in business and among the City's ruling élite.

NOTES

1. *Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London AD 1188–1274, and the French Chronicle of London, AD 1259–1343,* ed. by H. T. Riley (1863), p. 253.

2. Among the classic works on this subject are: W. Herbert, *The History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London,* 2 vols (1834–37); G. Unwin, *The Gilds and Companies of London* (1908, 4th edn 1963); and S. L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Chicago, 1948, repr. Ann Arbor, 1962). For recent contributions on particular companies, see E. M. Veale, *The English Fur Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1966), on the Skinners; T. F. Reddaway and L. E. M. Walker, *The Early History of the Goldsmiths' Company, 1327–1509* (1975); I. W. Archer, *The History of the Haberdashers' Company* (Chichester, 1991); and P. Nightingale, *A Medieval Mercantile Community: The Grocers of London, 1000–1485* (New Haven, 1995).

3. A. F. Sutton, 'The Silent Years of London Guild History before 1300: The Case of the Mercers', *Historical Research, 71,* no. 175 (1998), pp. 121–41; E. M. Veale, 'The "Great Twelve": Mistery and Fraternity in Thirteenth-Century London', *Historical Research,* 64 (1991), pp. 237–63; M. Davies, 'The Tailors of London: Corporate Charity in the Late Medieval Town', in *Crown, Government and People in the Fifteenth Century,* ed. by R. E. Archer (Stroud, 1995), pp. 161–90; M. Davies, 'The Tailors of London and their Guild, c. 1300–1500' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1994), ch. 1.

4. Thrupp, *Merchant Class,* pp. 2–3; C. M. Barron, 'London 1300–1540', in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume I: 600–1540,* ed. by D. M. Palliser (Cambridge, 2000), p. 400.

5. C. M. Barron, 'The Later Middle Ages: 1270–1520', in *The British Atlas of Historic Towns, III: The City of London from Prehistoric Times to c. 1520,* ed. by M. D. Lobel (Oxford, 1989), pp. 43–44; Barron, 'London 1300–1540', pp. 403–04.

6. E. M. Veale, 'Craftsmen and the Economy of London in the Fourteenth Century', in *The Medieval Town 1200–1500: A Reader in English Urban History,* ed. by R. Holt and G. Rosser (1990), pp. 127–28.

7. C. R. Burgess, '"A Fond Thing Vainly Invented": An Essay on Purgatory and Pious Motive in Later Medieval England', in *Parish, Church and People,* ed. by S. Wright (1988),

pp. 56–84; S. Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900–1300* (Oxford, 1984), ch. 3, esp. pp. 67–75; Davies, 'Charity', pp. 161–90; B. McRee, 'Charity and Gild Solidarity in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies,* 32 (1993), pp. 195–225; G. Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternity Feast: Commensality and Social Relations in Late Medieval England', *Journal of British Studies,* 33 (1994), pp. 430–46.

8. On this subject see, for example, Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*; D. Palliser, 'The Trade Guilds of Tudor York', in *Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500–1700,* ed. by P. Clark and P. A. Slack (1972), pp. 86–116; R. Mackenncy, *Tradesmen and Traders: The World of the Guilds in Venice and Europe, c. 1250–c. 1650* (1987); R. F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (1982); S. L. Thrupp, 'The Gilds', in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe,* III, ed. by M. M. Postan, E. E. Rich and E. Miller (Cambridge, 1963), pp. 230–80.

9. Veale, '"Great Twelve"', pp. 240–52.

10. Nightingale, *Grocers,* pp. 43–49. The pepperers (later the Grocers) were among eighteen unlicensed guilds fined as early as 1180: *Pipe Roll 26 Hen. II,* p. 153.

11. Veale, '"Great Twelve"', pp. 249–50, 256–57; M. Davies, 'Artisans, Guilds and Government in London', in *Daily Life in the Late Middle Ages,* ed. by R. H. Britnell (Stroud, 1998), pp. 125–28.

12. Veale, '"Great Twelve"', pp. 237–63.

13. *De Antiques Legibus Liber,* ed. by T. Stapleton, Camden Society, 34 (1846), pp. 55–57.

14. Sutton, 'Silent Years', pp. 134–37.

15. Nightingale, *Grocers,* p. 81; Sutton, 'Silent Years', pp. 135–37.

16. *Chronicles of Edward I and Edward II,* ed. by W. Stubbs, 2 vols, Rolls Series (1882–83), 1, *Annales Londonienses,* pp. 85–86; *CPMR,* 1364–81, p. xxvii.

17. *Cal. Letter Bk B,* p. 241; *C,* p. 84.

18. *Cal. Letter Bk E,* pp. 12–14.

19. For discussion of the significance of this charter, see G. A. Williams, *Medieval London: From Commune to Capital* (1963), p. 282; Thrupp, *Merchant Class,* pp. 3–4; Nightingale, *Grocers,* pp. 144–45.

20. Veale, '"Great Twelve"', pp. 253–54; Veale, *Fur Trade,* pp. 44–47; *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls,* ed. by E. Ekwall (Lund, 1951), pp. 85–86.

21. *De Antiquis Legibus Liber,* ed. by Stapleton, p. 99.

22. Sutton, 'Silent Years', p. 121; *CWCH,* 1, p. 38.

23. J. Stow, *A Survey of London,* ed. by C. L. Kingsford, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908), 1, p. 181. The italics are Stow's.

24. The inventories are now GL, MSS 34360; 34361, p. 3. Book 'I' is now GL, MS 34010/1. See also H. L. Hopkinson, *Report on the Ancient Records in the Possession of the Guild of Merchant Taylors of the Fraternity of St. John the Baptist in the City of London* (1915), pp. 99–101. For the remnants of these earlier books, see *The Merchant Taylors' Company of London: Court Minutes, 1486–1493,* ed. by M. Davies (Stamford, 2000), pp. 6–8.

25. Hopkinson, *Ancient Records,* pp. 3, 105; Clode, *Memorials,* p. 2n.

26. The Skinners' Fraternity of Corpus Christi did not come to have full control of the mistery until the 1340s, while at least one other mistery contained rival associations: the fraternity founded by the drapers of Cornhill came to govern that craft, not the equally prominent guild of the associated craft of 'burellers' in St Mary Abchurch: Unwin, *Gilds and Companies,* p. 106; Veale, *Fur Trade,* p. 107.

27. *Cal. Letter Bk B,* p. 185; *C,* pp. 67–68; *Cal. Early Mayor's Court Rolls,* ed. by A. H. Thomas (Cambridge, 1924), p. 180.

28. GL, MS 34127 (the Company's 'Wills Book'), p. 12; Davies, 'Charity', pp. 161–90. See also C. Tyerman, *England and the Crusades 1095–1588* (Chicago, 1988), ch. 10; T. Smith, *English Gilds,* Early English Text Society, 40 (1870), pp. 157, 177, 180, 182, 231. There also existed at Ludlow a guild of 'palmers', i.e. of pilgrims who had returned from the Holy Land with a palm branch, ibid., pp. 193–99.

29. The subsequent development of the fraternity is explored below, Chapter Two.

30. *The Charters of the Merchant Taylors' Company,* ed. by F. M. Fry and R. T. D. Sayle (1937), pp. 12–13.

31. *Cal. Letter Bk E,* pp. 231–34; *F,* pp. 52–53; GL, MS 34004, fols 23^{v}–24. For the origins of the Court of Assistants, see Davies, *Court Minutes,* pp. 3–6.

32. *Cal. Letter Bk G,* pp. 161–62.

33. C. Blair, *A History of the Armourers' and Brasiers' Company* (forthcoming), Ch. 1.

34. *Cal. Letter Bk E,* pp. 231–34.

35. T. F. Tout, *Chapters in Administrative History,* 6 vols (Manchester, 1927–33), IV, pp. 389–91; Veale, 'Craftsmen and the Economy of London', p. 132.

36. GL, MS 34127, pp. 2–6.

37. R. R. Sharpe, *London and the Kingdom,* 3 vols (1894–95), 1, pp. 179–80; CLRO, Letter Book E, fol. 1. The full list of items to be supplied was not included in the printed calendar.

38. *Cal. Letter Bk F,* pp. 52–53; GL, MS 34130 (the Company's 'Evidence Book'), pp. 6–8; CLRO, Husting Rolls (HR), 71/23.

39. *CWCH,* 11, pp. 272–73; GL, MS 34127, pp. 5–6; Davies, thesis, p. 57. See also H. Kleineke, 'Carleton's Book: William FitzStephen's "Description of London" in a Late 14th-Century Common-place Book', *Historical Research,* 74 (2001), pp. 117–26.

40. See Chapter Four.

41. Unwin, *Gilds and Companies,* pp. 95–107; Veale, '"Great Twelve"', pp. 258–59.

42. For the early company halls in general, see J. Schofield, *The Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire* (1984), pp. 116–17. For the use of trustees, see below, n. 44.

43. The transactions are recorded in detail in H. L. Hopkinson, *The History of Merchant Taylors' Hall* (Cambridge, 1931), pp. 5–11; GL, MS 34130, pp. 2–12.

44. In 1272 the Statute of Mortmain was passed to slow the rate at which property was being granted permanently away from the Crown and into the 'dead hand' (*mortmain*) of the Church. Guilds and fraternities of all kinds, because of their religious functions, were covered by this legislation. To circumvent the law it became common for property to be held by trustees, usually members of the fraternity concerned, who would then 'allow' the fraternity to use the premises, and ensure compliance with the law. See H. M. Chew, 'Mortmain in Medieval London', *English Historical Review,* 60 (1945), pp. 8–15.

45. *CPR,* 1391–96, p. 139. An inquisition held in that year, prior to the alienation, valued the properties at £10, which was almost certainly an underestimate: PRO, Chancery Inquisitions *Ad Quod Damnum,* C143/413/13; GL, MS 34130, pp. 2–12.

46. This distinction was noted by Hopkinson, *Merchant Taylors' Hall,* p. 10.

47. J. Schofield, *Medieval London Houses* (1994), pp. 44, 69–70; Schofield, *The Building of London,* p. 117; Hopkinson, *Merchant Taylors' Hall,* pp. 17–18, 41–47, 53–54; GL, MS 34130, p. 10.

CHAPTER TWO

'GHOSTLY TREASURE': THE FRATERNITY OF ST JOHN THE BAPTIST 1350–1530

By the end of the fourteenth century most of London's major crafts had established organizations for their most important members, usually in the form of 'guilds' or 'fraternities'. The Fraternity of St John the Baptist, founded by the City's tailors and linen-armourers, was at the forefront of this movement, and the aim of this chapter is to trace its development over the ensuing two centuries. During this period the Fraternity of St John the Baptist grew into the largest and most extraordinary of those founded by the London crafts, and might with some justification be viewed as one of the most remarkable of the craft fraternities founded in late medieval England. This chapter will focus on a number of key themes in the fraternity's history, such as its active recruitment of 'honorary' members, the employment of priests in its own chapels and elsewhere in London, the growing importance of charitable provision, and the significance of the annual feast.

The Tailors were well aware of the significance of their fraternity, and were keen to advertise its qualities. In 1464–65 a payment of 10*s*. 1*d*. was noted in the Master's accounts for 'the composition, writing, illuminating and painting of a table of indulgences and remissions of this fraternity granted by divers Popes, archbishops, bishops and other prelates . . . which hangs in the church of St. Paul's'.[1] The 'table' — probably painted on a wooden board — was intended to be displayed in a chapel by the north door of the cathedral church, dedicated to St John the Baptist, which the fraternity had used for many years as a place of worship. While the original table no longer survives, its contents were incorporated, along with a full set of the Company's ordinances, into a fine early-sixteenth-century illuminated manuscript book. The earlier material was originally put together in 1456, and includes a list of indulgences and other religious privileges granted to the fraternity which must have formed the basis of the illuminated table in St Paul's in 1464–65. It placed great emphasis upon the 'goostly tresoure' built up by the fraternity over many years, and went on to list these spiritual 'assets' in great detail. They included the fraternity's charitable activities, its chapels at the Hall and in St Paul's, and its 'confraternal' links with no fewer than eight religious houses in and around London.[2] No comparable series of documents survives for any other London livery company, and this unique statement of the fraternity's spiritual heritage is testimony to the way in which London's tailors created an organization which went far beyond what was usual for a craft fraternity, even in a city as large and diverse as London (see Col. Pls IIIa and VIb).

MEMBERSHIP

The most striking feature of the Fraternity of St John the Baptist was its recruitment of members from outside the ranks of the craft. These men and women normally paid the same admission fee (20*s*.) as tailor members and were required to contribute to the alms box of the fraternity on a quarterly basis just like everyone else. At the same time, it was made clear that these non-tailor members would have no say in the running of the fraternity or the wider craft, could hold no office within it, and could not benefit themselves from the alms payments they made. The difference between the two categories of members was reflected in the fact that the so-called 'oute broders' had to swear a different oath on admission to that of their tailor counterparts. Tailor brothers had to swear to obey the rules and ordinances of the craft, to attend quarter-days and other meetings

DOI: 10.4324/9781315086286-3