

Revised Origins of Dyers' Hall

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The research has revealed a pedigree for the site on which the first Dyers' Hall stood. This is invaluable as we have always identified the start of the Company's association with the site as in 1545 with Sir Robert Tyrwhitt's indenture. This led us to assume the Company had no association with the site between the granting of our Charter in 1471 and 1545. This research takes the site's history back 200 years and advances its association with the Dyers by 70 years. It also provides us with the names of dyers willing to take responsibility for securing the future of the Company's property, no doubt a responsibility laid on the shoulders of the wardens and other eminent members of the Company.

The site is one of four contiguous properties lying to the west of the Fishmongers Hall that has been researched by the City of London Archaeological Trust. A full report called *London waterfront tenements* has been written from which they have kindly allowed me to extract and adapt the following.

Medieval Pedigree

In 1328 Isabel, widow of William de Leyre (sheriff in 1290–1), bequeathed to her daughter Isabel for life 20s a year quitrent from the tenement inhabited by Simon de Swanlond and situated between the tenement of John Darmenters to the east and the tenement of Nicholas de Farndon to the west. In 1329 it was in the ownership of Margery de Rokesle and in 1344 it was once belonging to Gregory de Rokesle.

Another rent was levied from the site when in his will made in 1355 Gregory, son of Gregory de Rokesle, left his property to be sold in order to establish with the proceeds a perpetual chaplain in the parish church. He stipulated that part of the rent he received from John and Alice de Horsford for the tenement they held of him in Thames Street was to be put to the support of a chaplain to celebrate his soul during their lives, whereafter it should provide income for a perpetual chantry. This was another quitrent of 20s.

The 1328 quitrent re emerges in 1366 when Isabel's younger brother William bequeathed to his wife Agnes for life the 20s a year quitrent from the tenement lately held by John de Horsford, desiring that it be sold after her death. It was subsequently acquired from William's executors by John Osekyn and Adam Fraunceys, mercer (mayor in 1352–4), and by Fraunceys's will of 1374 provided with other income for the maintenance of two chaplains serving the chantry of Peter Fanelour in Edmonton church.

Evidence survives that gives some suggestion of the construction of part of the property. In 1367 the City complained that Agnes, widow of William de Leyre, had a solar in the parish of All Hallows the Less which overhung the highway by 23ft in length and 10ft in width, gravely impeding the people living there and the common folk passing along the street and preventing the neighbours carting hay and straw and other victuals to their tenements. On the same date Thomas Whytcherch and William Whetele, tawyers, complained that she had a solar in the same parish, overhanging their land to a length of 16ft and width of 7ft so that they could not build their house upright! It seems possible that the buildings being

complained of were erected before 1350. The first-mentioned solar perhaps overhung Thames Street. An overhang of 10ft is large for a first-floor jetty, and it seems possible that this refers to a second-floor solar, the 10ft being the cumulative protrusion of two jettied stories. But if so it is difficult to see how the neighbours could complain it interfered with carting of hay and straw. Perhaps a laden cart was high enough to be obstructed by a second-floor jetty.

In 1374 Fraunceys's will provided with other income for the maintenance of two chaplains serving the chantry of Peter Fanelour in Edmonton church. On 11 September 1376 however Fraunceys's executors sold the 20s a year quitrent to his son Adam.

It is unclear who bought the property after Gregory de Rokesle's death in 1356. However by 1391 Sir Thomas Cobham was in possession of it according to deeds relating to the neighbouring tenement, and remained so in 1394. In 1407 it was described as the tenement late of Sir Thomas Cobham in which Edmund Olyver formerly dwelt. In 1398 Sir Arnold Savage and William Etchingham granted to Reginald Cobham and his wife Elizabeth *the messuage with shops in front, cellars and solars, and extending from Thames Street to the Thames, which Reginald and Elizabeth had previously granted to them.*

The property remained in the possession of Cobham's descendants though there seem to be references to trustees appointed to secure the inheritance of various heiresses. In 1400 it was inhabited by Richard Wedon, fishmonger. In 1428 Thomas Moresby of Kent and his wife Eleanor, daughter and heir of Sir Reginald de Cobham, granted to Thomas Pole, clerk, John Darell, Roger Heron, clerk, John Kelsham and Richard Moresby, clerk, the reversion of the same property, which would otherwise have come to Eleanor on Elizabeth's death. A deed of 1459 relating to the neighbouring site refers to the property as belonging to Richard Moresby, gentleman, and lately of Thomas Moresby.

In 1465 Richard Moresby, gentleman, along with Thomas Billyng, justice of King's Bench, Thomas Bryan, serjeant-at-law, and Thomas Urswyk and Roger Philpot, gentlemen, granted to Christina Underwode, Richard's intended wife, an annual quitrent of 5 marks to be received from their messuage called *le Thre Sterres with shops in front*, lately held conjointly with Sir Aubrey Vere, Henry Bourgcher, son of Henry earl Bourgcher and Walter Copynger, gentleman now deceased, by grant of Thomas Dymoke and Thomas Wymbyssh. It was to be held by her from the date of Richard's decease for the term of her life, should she survive him.

The Dyers were granted their Charter in 1471 and the pedigree soon begins to reveal the names of Dyers who must have been among the driving forces of those who established the guild. In 1474 Moresby granted to Robert Cartleage and John Hawe, gentlemen, the messuage called *le Three Sterres with shops in front and abutting north on Thames Street and south on the bank of the water of Thames (ripam aque Thamisie).* In 1475 Cartleage and Hawe granted the property to Thomas Danyell, dyer, Humphrey Starkey, Recorder of London; William Dunthorne, Common Clerk of the City; Robert Vaus, gentleman; Thomas Roger, fishmonger, and Thomas Rede, dyer. They granted it in turn to John Meryden senior alias John More senior of Wing (Bucks), yeoman, and William Blakenoll of Westminster at some date before 14 September 1484, when the latter granted *lez thre Sterris* to Henry Warfeld, William Body, dyers, William Dunthorn and John Hawghes, gentlemen, and Thomas Rede, John Lewes, William Michell, Robert Roseby, John Bernys, John Symson and Thomas Nicholson, dyers.

The Hall's Origins Reviewed

There is a problem about choosing 1484 as the start of the Dyers' association with the site. Judge Daynes records that the Dyers' Company had only recently acquired a hall of its own in Anchor Lane in the Vintry. In 1676 it is marked as a narrow lane running up from the Thames to St James Garlickhythe, next to the Vinters' Hall. According to Judge Daynes the Company's second hall on this site being discussed, in All Hallows the Less, was given to it by Sir Robert Tyrwhitt, deputy chamberlain of Henry VIII, on 4 March 1545 described as *all that great messuage called the Three Stars and all houses, buildings, wharves, stairs, draft and post galley to the same belonging, and also a little house and tenement belonging thereto*. Seven almshouses were to be built on part of the site. But this must have been a regrant or confirmation, for a viewers' certificate of the period 1509–13, concerning a variance in the parish of All Hallows the Less, refers to the *common hall of the craft and fellowship of Dyers in Thames Street*, and confirms that the Company had actually acquired the property considerably earlier, most probably in or soon after 1484.

A notable feature of this tenement is the absence as late as 1484 of any reference to a quay or wharf as part of the property, routinely made in the case of other waterfront properties.

Perhaps the Company saw this site as providing more opportunity for the expansion of the membership and for securing an income from leasing out the Three Stars and parts of the site. For in 1579 the earliest surviving Dyers' Company document relating to the hall, records that Lionel Cooper, dyer, executor of his father, Richard Cooper, dyer, transferred to William Glover, dyer, for the sum of £220 the lease which the Company wardens had made on 26 July 1571 to his father Richard of *all the lower part of their great messuage or tenement called the three Starres, then also commonly called the Dyers' Hall and already in Cooper's occupation, with all houses, buildings, wharves, stairs, draughts and putgallye* (perhaps a device for rinsing cloths in the river) *pertaining, and with free access by the great gate of the said messuage. This lower part began at Cooper's gate and abutted on the kitchens and yards pertaining to Dyers' Hall to the north, the Thames to the south, the dyehouse tenement in the tenure and occupation of Richard Perte, dyer, to the west and the tenement then in the tenure of Robert Rose, merchant tailor and assigns, to the east. Also leased to Cooper was the small piece of land between part of the premises to the east and Blewcocke Lane to the west, and beneath the Company almshouse in the tenure of Alice Larraunce, excepting a vault or privy which 'had a tunnel coming into it from the chamber above one of the kitchens.'* *The property was to be held by Cooper from the previous Lady Day for a term of 99 years, for an annual rent of £10. In the transfer to William Glover there were also references to leads and cisterns.*

The loss of most of the Dyers' records of this period seriously obscures the early history of the Company and its halls. From other sources it is recorded that the Dyers were involved in the introduction of indigo, a major improvement in dyeing dark colours, in 1577 and no doubt reflecting the growing confidence of the industry. Other dyers were apparently busy in this area. Besides Richard Perte in the property to the west in 1545 John Bennett around 1640 leased a dyehouse from the Mercers two properties to the east. This is considered to be the building that in Hollar's map of that year sports cloths fluttering from the gallery or the windows. The significance on the process of dyeing of using sea water from the Thames for dyeing or rinsing cloths is not discussed.

The 'Blewcocke Lane,' noted as the west abutment of the tenement in the lease of 1571, is presumably to be identified with the 'White Cock Alley' shown west of Dyers' Hall on both Leake's map of 1666 and Ogilby and Morgan's map of 1676. According to Judge Daynes the Dyers purchased the White Cock in 1586 for use as accommodation for almspeople in an extension of the Tyrwhitt almshouses, and Harben notes that a White Cock Alley was purchased by the Dyers in 1586 as the messuage, then a dye house, called the White Cock.

By 1484 the Three Stars was in the possession of the Dyers' Company, through trustees. By 1571 a major part of it was Dyers' Hall, though in 1579 the tenement had been divided and another property lay between the Hall and the Thames. This division could of course have been ancient by that time. The archaeological remains recorded during the watching brief, in salvage conditions, only found parts. This may have preceded the acquisition of the property by the Dyers, but it may have also been part of the property after 1484, as noted above.

The property also contained the seven almshouses of the Dyers' Company, established in 1545; no archaeological traces of these were recorded. By 1571 there was an alley along the property, presumably on the west side where it is recorded after the Fire on Ogilby and Morgan's map; but this part of the property lay outside the area of investigation.

Dyers' Hall at the Three Stars was rebuilt after the Fire of 1666 only to be destroyed by a further fire in 1681, after which the Company seem to have abandoned the project of rebuilding the Hall, despite the fact that their holding in Dowgate Hill, the eventual site of their next hall, was unavailable to them until 1731. The Court Minutes record meetings held in various places, for the regular ones in private houses while the election of officers was held in halls such as the Fishmongers, 1682, Joiners, 1683, and later the Salters and Drapers.

The outline of Dyers' Hall in 1676 possibly related to one of the medieval walls which might have preceded it. In 1676 the hall complex, shown by shading on the map, comprised two buildings or ranges, connected by a smaller third range. The map shows dots on the north side of the east-west range forming the south end of the L-shaped complex, and in the convention of the map these appear to indicate a colonnade. This would therefore suggest that the hall of the company was in this east-west range; a similar configuration is found at the medieval (and post-Fire) Halls of the Vintners' and Fishmongers' Companies, both south of Thames Street. This similarity to the two other company halls would strengthen a suggestion that this range, at least, was on its medieval foundations. The rebuilding of the hall range, the largest and most important chamber, on its previous foundations after 1666 was the case at many other livery company halls.

In 1682 the Court decided not to accept the plans of some iron merchants to rebuild on a long lease. They hadn't offered enough though it is interesting they presented their plans with drawings and models. Perhaps the prolonged negotiations finally bore fruit for the merchants because the wharf was later leased by wealthy iron merchants.

Clearly the Hall had been turned into an increasingly valuable commercial site. There is no indication of the activities of the various tenants until Andrew Lindegren is included in a List of the Principal Tradesmen etc., 1775, as a merchant at 1 Red Bull Wharf. He had other premises near Dyers Hall Wharf including his Majesty's Roasting Office, presumably referring to coffee.

In 1785 Kent's Guide records Edward Jones as Iron broker at Steelyard or 7 Allhallow's Lane Thames Street. This theme is continued in some later directories. In 1812 Dyers Hall was occupied by Thompson Forman & Homfray, Iron & Steel yard. With other partners Thompson occupied Dowgate Iron Wharf as Tin, Tinsplate and Iron Merchants.

Dyers Hall had become one of a succession of wharves running up from London Bridge towards Vintners Hall. Thames Street was the essential access to these premises. From a directory of 1815 we learn that Cartage from any of the wharves between the Tower and London Bridge to Dyer's Hall, Cold-harbour, Steelyard, Dowgate hill cost per load 4/1d and 3/4d for a small load. In fact the wharf was in the centre of the commercial heart of London and must have provided a useful income to the Company. No doubt Tyrwhitt would have considered he had been truly generous to the Dyers Company – if indeed he had been charitable in the first place!

(1879 Dyers' Hall Wharf included the Black Bull public house, warehouses and offices.)