

INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH
SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STUDY OF MEDIEVAL LONDON
FINAL REPORT TO ESRC ON STAGE 2 (ALDGATE PROJECT)

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Objectives

1.1 The aim of the research was to investigate the character and development of the eastern suburb of the city of London from the time of the earliest detailed written records (c. 1100) up to that of the Great Fire of 1666. This was to be done by reconstructing the history and topography of the houses, gardens and other properties in the area so that it would be possible to trace changing patterns in the use of land and buildings and in the social and occupational character of those who owned and used them. The value of this approach to the study of medieval and early modern London had been demonstrated in an earlier study of a part of the Cheapside area of the city (Stage 1, funded by the SSRC). As well as providing a remarkable insight into conditions of life in the heart of the city, the Cheapside study led to conclusions which questioned traditional assumptions concerning the size and importance of London and the pattern of its growth during the medieval and early modern period. For example, the Cheapside evidence suggests that by about 1300 London achieved a peak in both density and population which was not to be equalled again until the 16th century, and possibly well after 1550. London thus appears to have undergone a late medieval 'decline' of a type hitherto thought to have been characteristic only of provincial towns. Such conclusions, arising from the study of a small, but central and important, area of London, were worthy of being checked by comparison with another area of the city.

1.2 A suburban area was chosen for the new study because it was likely to present the sharpest possible contrast with the Cheapside area. The eastern suburb was relatively free from the influence of the royal court and the legal quarter to the west of the city, and so might be expected to reveal most clearly the underlying demographic and economic development of London. Furthermore, since many of the most useful sources for this type of study relate only to the city, it was necessary that the study area should be within the jurisdiction of the city. The study area was defined as the parish of St. Botolph outside Aldgate. The source material was identified from the Survey of documentary sources for property holding in London before the Great Fire, prepared in Stage 1 of the project.

1.3 The parish of St. Botolph and the extramural city ward of Portsoken were originally more or less conterminous. From the 12th century onwards, as a direct or indirect result of the formation of religious precincts, several large areas were lost to the parish, to the ward, or to both (see Fig. 1). The largest of these losses was the liberty of East Smithfield, which lay towards the river. This was a gradual and confused process: even in the 1540s residents of the East Smithfield area, formally detached from the city in the 14th century, were taxed as inhabitants of Portsoken. To have established the pattern of these changes in outline, a valuable contribution to our knowledge of London on its own account, means that it is now possible to assess the representativity of, and so effectively to use, the numerous 16th- and 17th-century listings and assessments for the area which differ widely in their coverage.

1.4 The parish of St. Botolph extended over an area of 92 acres, of which from c. 1550 onwards less than half was occupied by the ward of Portsoken. By contrast, the Cheapside study area occupied about 8 acres. The suburb, however, was much less densely settled, and the quantity of extant records for the two areas was expected to be about the same. In the event, the quantity of records for the suburban area, particularly for the period from c. 1550 onwards, turned out to be much greater than was anticipated, so that with the resources available it was not possible to deal fully with the material. An alternative sampling strategy would not have overcome the problem, since in order effectively to examine any part of the parish it would still have been necessary to assemble and examine in detail all the material relating to the whole.

1.5 The parish included a number of distinct areas (Fig. 1). Its focus was the street, known as Aldgate Street or High Street, which led from the city to Essex and beyond. Extending north and south from Aldgate itself were two streets, now known as Houndsditch and Minories, which ran parallel and close to the city wall just in front of the extramural ditch. The parish and suburban liberty boundary was also parallel to the city wall, and some 250 yards in front of it. These topographical arrangements almost certainly originated well before the Norman Conquest. By the 13th century, if not before, both frontages of High Street, and the frontages opposite the ditch in the other two streets, appear to have been continuously built up, although there were extensive areas of garden to the rear. By c. 1300 the built-up frontage of High Street probably extended beyond the suburban limit, but the extent of this is not certain. South of High Street the land sloped gently down towards the open area just north and east of the Tower which was known as East Smithfield. By 1300 this area was surrounded by housing. South of East Smithfield the land dropped away more sharply to the low-lying meadows which adjoined the river. The western half of this meadow area, next to the Tower, was occupied by the Hospital of St. Katharine, founded in 1148. The records of the hospital are not extensive, and so its precinct, which included many houses inhabited by lay persons, has not been covered in this study. The meadows east of the hospital seem not to have been extensively built upon before the 16th century, although from an early date there was probably a cluster of houses around the tidal mill which straddled the parish boundary next to the river. This mill is almost certainly mentioned in Domesday Book and continued to operate until c. 1630. West of the mill, along a causeway beside the river, was a group of large beer brewhouses. These are first recorded about 1480, and were probably established in the course of the 15th century. They dominated the area subsequently, and their owners were among the

wealthiest residents of the parish. Their riverside location was presumably ideal both for receiving their raw materials and for distributing their product by water transport, both inland and overseas.

- 1.6 The physical, social, and economic character of the different areas of the parish reflected the natural topography, the city's defensive needs, traffic to and from London (by both land and water), military requirements associated with the armouries at the Tower, the availability of open land for cultivation and other purposes, and the introduction of beer brewing which made large-scale commercial production a practical proposition. Overall, the parish presents an exceptional opportunity for studying a suburb which in the 13th century was already an extensive settlement, but which after 1500 expanded rapidly over ground not previously built up.

Methodology, sources, and data collected

- 2.1 With regard to the sources relating to property holding, the methodology adopted was the same as that used for the Cheapside study. The largest single body of records was represented by the deeds enrolled in the city's court of Husting from 1252 onwards. The cartulary of Holy Trinity Priory within Aldgate contained a great deal of material for the area in the 13th century, although by the time it was dissolved the priory had a restricted freehold estate in the area. From this material it was possible to reconstruct the pattern of landownership over most of the parish c. 1250-1400.
- 2.2 Two later religious foundations within the parish, the abbey of the Minoreesses and the abbey of St. Mary Graces, both had extensive freehold estates there, for which 16th-century rentals and particulars survive. Much of the latter material, however, is difficult to interpret in topographical terms, since the two groups of properties were subject to rapid changes of ownership after the two houses had been dissolved. Despite these problems, the parish contains a number of properties for which it is possible, using the estate records of St. Paul's, four livery companies, Christ's Hospital, two city parishes, and London Bridge, to reconstruct the physical arrangement of buildings, the pattern of occupancy, and changing land values during the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries. This detailed insight cannot be extended back so far in time as for the Cheapide area, and the development of individual sites cannot be traced continuously over such long periods. Nor do such sites cover so great a proportion of the study area as for Cheapside. Nevertheless, they form a group representing the principal areas of the parish. In addition, the more miscellaneous records provide vivid pictures of a number of individual properties at single dates. Finally, from the city corporation's own estate records it is possible to reconstruct the process by which, between c. 1550 and c. 1700, the city ditch along Houndsditch and Minories came to be let off as gardens, where eventually rows of cheap houses were erected.
- 2.3 In all, the records of property holding collected for the parish of St. Botolph outside Aldgate amount to about 30% more material than that collected for the five parishes in the Cheapside sample. The material was also correspondingly more difficult to process. This was partly because the suburb was less compact and less densely settled than the Cheapside sample, so that the descriptions of properties overall included

fewer cross-references from one to another. In addition, since there were fewer rents charged on the properties in the suburb and the land market was less active there than in the centre, there were fewer records relating to each property. Finally, the suburban area was subject to more extreme topographical change, especially arising from the amalgamation of properties during the later 14th and the 15th centuries, and from their renewed subdivision after 1500. The continuity of properties and their boundaries was thus more difficult to establish than for the central area.

2.4 In spite of this, practically all the material collected (with the exception of a substantial part of the 16th-century rental material concerning the Minoreesses and the St. Mary Graces estates) can be attributed to particular sites, and there is no part of the parish which is not covered at some time during the period. There are, however, large parts of the former meadow area to the south of East Smithfield which are not well recorded after 1550. Elsewhere the coverage is more evenly distributed. Photocopies of the original record cards containing abstracts of this material have been filed in numbered groups corresponding to the properties to which they refer, and the boundaries, at least in outline, of these properties have been plotted. The original record cards were filed in 'archival order' along with those concerning the Cheapside study. The plotting exercise has been based on the Portsoken ward map of 1858 (1:528 scale) and the Ordnance Survey map of 1873 (1:1056). The topography of much of the southernmost part of the parish was obliterated by the construction of St. Katharine's Dock in 1827-8: it has been possible accurately to reconstruct the 16th- and 17th-century plan of this area using the plan compiled by Telford before building the dock, together with the accompanying schedule of landlords and occupants.

2.5 In the time available it has been possible to write up only a part of this material in the form of a completed gazetteer on the lines of that shortly to be published for Cheapside (see 4.2). The completed sections cover the whole of the precinct of the Minoreesses and the parish of Holy Trinity which later occupied the site of the dissolved abbey, together with those properties which extended from the precinct to Aldgate High Street on the north. In these sections alone more than 1500 property holders are recorded. In addition, detailed outlines of gazetteer entries have been prepared for the houses on the south side of High Street. The remaining material is filed according to the properties to which it refers and can readily be consulted.

2.6 In addition to the records of property holding, three other groups of sources were used in an attempt to establish a series of overviews of the area as a whole. The first comprised the Portsoken wardmote presentments (1422-3, 1465-82, 1508) and the court rolls of the manor of East Smithfield (broken series 1422-1534). Neither of these sources is suitable for quantitative analysis, but both provide a vivid picture of the physical and social character of the area at the end of the Middle Ages, particularly concerning the rural aspect of its buildings, the prevalence of prostitution and games playing, the substantial presence of aliens of Dutch or German origin from at least 1422 onwards, and the diversity of occupations. In particular, they contain the earliest detailed evidence for the beer brewhouses on the Thames, and for the impact they had locally, both by providing employment and through the damage which the brewers' drays caused to highways and buildings.

- 2.7 The second additional group of sources comprised various listings and assessments, of which the tithe valuation of 1638 and the Hearth Tax returns of 1666 provide the most comprehensive picture of the distribution of households in the parish and ward, respectively. They have been supplemented by using detailed listings of the poor and their dependents, and of 'divided houses and inmates', both made in 1637.
- 2.8 None of the sources mentioned so far provides an overview of the occupational structure of the area in the 16th and 17th centuries. It was partly in order to remedy this that an exercise was undertaken on the parish clerks' memoranda books, which form a broken series over the period 1583-1624. These are day books which record the parish clerk's business as it came up. Most of the entries concern registrations, but they contain much more circumstantial information than the formal entries in the registers, naming occupations, places of residence, and sometimes the landlords of those who were named in connection with the registration of events. Three two-year and one single-year sample periods were studied with a view to identifying change. Information was collected on all adults mentioned and was used to create a data base on the Museum of London's mini computer, with fields corresponding to the name, date, gender, nature of occurrence, occupation, location, and other descriptive material concerning the individuals. Separate references to individuals were then edited together. Information on 4867 adults was collected, of whom 3090 were identified as male parishioners and 1370 as female parishioners (about whom very little else is known). Rather than providing a balanced picture of the population as a whole, the material collected, which reveals the clerks' great detailed knowledge of individual parishioners' affairs, is skewed towards named heads of households. It is therefore comparable to most of the other material upon which this study is based. Attention was concentrated on the 76% of the male parishioners for whom occupations were given, and on the 67% of that number whose area of residence could be defined. Codes classifying the occupations and places of residence were then added to the data base, and statistical tables were generated concerning different combinations of areas, occupational groups, and individual trades.
- 2.9 It has also been possible to compare the results of the study with past archaeological observations made in the area and with current excavations being carried out by the Museum of London. In this way it was possible to reconstruct a detailed plan of the church and precinct of the Franciscan nuns (or Minoreesses) in Minories (Fig. 2), thus for the first time tracing the history of the house and analysing a mass of archaeological data, and to plot the layout of the abbey of St. Mary Graces.
- 2.10 The completed text of the gazetteer will be published in the Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire (see 4.2). The files of materials relating to other properties in the area, and the other data files and analyses, are available for consultation at the Museum of London, in the archive of the Social and Economic Study of Medieval London.

Conclusions arising from the study

- 3.1 By the 1630s the parish of St. Botolph outside Aldgate had a population of 10,000 or more persons, larger than that of many substantial provincial towns, and containing perhaps 4% of the whole population of metropolitan London. This estimate derives from a statement, reported by Graunt, that in 1631 Portsoken was inhabited by 5703 persons. In 1638 the same area contained 962 houses or households, plus an unknown number, with an annual value of £300, in the area known as Covent Garden. In 1618 the parish clerk stated that there were 112 houses in Covent Garden: by the 1630s there may have been between 150 and about 300. In 1638 the liberty of East Smithfield contained 911 houses. This proportional relationship suggests that the population of the whole parish was between 10,200 and 10,800 persons, with a mean number of persons per household ranging from 4.9 to 5.3. These figures are supported by other sources. Thus, in the analysis of the parish clerks' memoranda books, 48% of the male parishioners whose residence is known lived in Portsoken and 52% in East Smithfield, while in 1618 the clerk stated that the population of the parish was divided about equally between the two areas. By 1695, when the detailed evidence of the study suggests that there had been a steady increase in the density of building since the 1630s, Portsoken contained 7880 persons living in 1645 households, an average of 4.8 per household.
- 3.2 It is less easy to determine the degree of population growth in the parish since c. 1550. In 1548 the parish had 1130 communicants, but there is no record of the figure for the 1630s, when the number of communicants per household in city parishes (when it can be calculated), ranged from 1.3 to 6.5. The figure for St. Botolph's Aldgate was probably about 3, so that there were probably about 6000 communicants there in the 1630s, more than 5 times as many as in 1548. This is a higher rate of growth than for any city parish for which the calculation is possible (these include the western suburban parishes, but not those to the north). The figure seems to be the same as or higher than that for St. Saviour's Southwark, and it contrasts sharply with an overall growth rate of less than 1.5 for the parishes in the Cheapside sample. In c. 1550 the population of the Cheapside sample was perhaps 82% of that of St. Botolph's Aldgate parish, while in the 1630s, it was only between 12% and 23%. Mean household size in the Cheapside area throughout this period was perhaps twice that in the suburb.
- 3.3 The outstanding characteristic of the parish after 1550 was thus the rapid rate of growth and large size of its population. This study has been able to define these phenomena more precisely than was possible before and to set them in the context of the physical and social character of the suburb. It is impossible to be exact about these matters in earlier periods, although some broad trends can be defined (see 3.4).
- 3.4 The physical character of the suburb has emerged very clearly from the study. In the Middle Ages, High Street was where the more substantial properties were to be found. The frontage was lined with shops, perhaps in the sense of 'small houses' rather than of the more purely commercial establishments which were so distinctive a feature of Cheapside. These shops extended east from Aldgate at least as far as the suburban bars. Larger residences were presumably set back behind the shops. In the early 14th century some of them were described as brewhouses (tenementa braccina), and by c. 1400 as inns. The inns were

a notable feature of the north side of the street from then onwards. The physical installations of one of them are recorded in a series of 15th-century building accounts, and the detailed layout of another can be reconstructed from 17th-century sources. In Houndsditch and Minories the houses were on a smaller scale. In Minories the house plots extended back to the suburban boundary. They may originally have done the same in Houndsditch, but in the 13th century most properties there were shorter and backed on to the great garden of Holy Trinity Priory, later known as Covent Garden. The final stages of the enlargement of this garden in the 13th century can be reconstructed. In all three areas it is possible to define the increasing intensity of land use up to 1300, a process which is exactly paralleled in Cheapside. Thus, a single property in Minories contained two tenements (i.e., houses) in 1250, four in 1290, and five (each with a frontage of about 10 feet) in about 1310. The emergence of the later church of St. Mary Whitechapel as a 'new chapel' at the end of the 13th century indicates the expansion of settlement along the High Street beyond the jurisdictional limit of the suburb in this period. The fall in the demand for land after this date which was apparent in Cheapside was also a feature of the suburb. Thus, the Minories property mentioned above contained four tenements in 1335 and only one tenement and a garden by 1460. The decline in the rental value of the Axe inn in High Street (Fig. 3) seems to indicate the same fall in demand for property during the 15th century that was apparent in Cheapside.

3.5 Before 1350 the area around East Smithfield was also extensively built up, perhaps to about the same degree as in the 1550s. This is indicated by the records of the properties acquired c. 1360 to make the precinct of the new abbey of St. Mary Graces.

3.6 The extensive areas of open ground were an important feature of the medieval suburb. Many of the gardens, perhaps in particular the long narrow ones behind the houses in Minories, were probably used for the intensive cultivation of vegetables to be sold in the city's markets, as was certainly the use in the 16th and 17th centuries. The land immediately beyond the suburban boundary was described as the 'fields'. Between the 13th and the 17th century a large block of this land to the south of High Street belonged to a succession of owners who inhabited a manor house set back from Minories. This land was perhaps used primarily for dairy farming (as in the 16th century) and fattening stock. It is also clear from 14th-century and later references that loam was dug extensively on land near the suburb for use in building within the city. The carters, who were numerous in the parish of St. Botolph, presumably played a part in moving this and other building materials. There were also lime kilns near the suburb, and by the 1530s there was a large timber yard behind the houses to the south of High Street. Later timber yards, presumably specializing in imported softwood rather than native hardwood, were in East Smithfield near the river. In the 16th and 17th centuries the availability of open ground allowed many industrial activities to proliferate on the margins of the built up area, including the manufacture or processing of tallow, vinegar, saltpetre, and horn. Osier growing and basket making were also common in the area towards the river.

3.7 Soon after 1500 it is clear that the density of settlement and the demand for property in St. Botolph's parish was increasing. Figs. 3 and 4 summarize the evidence concerning a property in Minories. This evidence for renewed growth is notably earlier than for the Cheapside area, where a decisive reversal of the 15th-century trend was not

apparent until about 1550. There may have been a similar though less extreme contrast between the more densely built up parts of St. Botolph's parish and the more open areas (cf. Fig. 4). In Southwark there is some evidence for expansion during the later 15th century on spacious sites at the limits of the settlement, but none of the surviving records demonstrate that this was the case in St. Botolph's parish. The appearance of the beer brewhouses along the Thames in the 15th century probably reflects a reorganization and relocation of the industry arising from a technological innovation, rather than local demographic growth. The new brewhouses presumably drew business away from other parts of the city, including Aldgate High Street. The great variety of topographical settings for properties within the parish, particularly with regard to the amount of open land available, means that it is more difficult to establish an overall picture of the renewed growth of the suburb than it was for the more compact and evenly built up Cheapside area. At present, however, and subject to revision once more of the gazetteer has been completed, it seems that the proliferation of new dwellings, arising from either building new houses or dividing old ones, was most rapid between 1550 and 1650 in the neighbourhood of High Street, but that in less densely settled areas the most rapid expansion took place within the periods 1500-1550 and after 1600. The possibility that there was a cyclical relationship between the rates of density increase in adjoining areas which were built up to differing degrees is worth exploring. A noteworthy feature by comparison with Cheapside is the continued rapid increase in the number of houses during the mid and later 17th century, particularly towards the river.

3.8 Over the period as a whole after 1500 the values of particular sites in real terms (using the same London wage-rate index as for the Cheapside study) rose more rapidly than the numbers of houses upon them. In Cheapside this phenomenon probably reflected the great influence which commercial factors, especially the retail trade, had on land values. In the suburb, by contrast, it probably reflected a rise in the unit cost and a fall in the general standard of domestic accommodation. Fig. 4 shows that between c. 1550 and c. 1590 the value of one property fell in real terms, in spite of a small increase in the number of dwellings there. This presumably reflected the progressive impoverishment of the tenants. The study has revealed many examples of the use of 'garden houses', sheds, stables, and coachhouses as dwellings in this period. The inhabitants' relative lack of resources to spend on housing is clear from the frequency of arrears of rents, and from the fact that it was not until 1600 or later that institutional landlords began to lease their holdings for terms of years, charging a capital sum for the renewal of the lease, a practice that was widespread in Cheapside by 1550.

3.9 Figs. 3 and 5 illustrate two ways in which properties came to be subdivided. In one case (Fig. 5) the leaseholder of what in 1600 had been a single house and garden, in 1650 held three houses and several outbuildings which she let out to undertenants, one of whom had a tenant beneath him. Several of the inhabitants of this property held only a single room within the houses, and this was common throughout the parish. In the other property (Fig. 3) the landlord managed to maintain a more direct relationship with the tenants, and from the descriptions of the parts of the property it is possible to map the process of subdivision. First the house which occupied the street frontage was divided, then further houses were created in the yard immediately behind. By this stage the long narrow garden to the rear had been divided into separate plots, each of which was held by the tenant of one of the houses near the street: the tenants of the larger houses, which occupied the frontage,

held the larger and more secluded gardens. The sheds and garden houses which stood on these plots came to be replaced by or converted into dwelling houses. The winding alley which led to these houses was the direct descendant of the paths which had led to the earlier gardens. Eventually it was connected up with similar networks which had evolved in adjoining properties.

3.10 Alleys were common throughout the parish from 1550 onwards. In many cases the building of new houses in them was preceded by a phase in which land was divided into garden plots, presumably so that it would be more intensively cultivated. Gardeners were a distinctive group among the inhabitants, and in 1596 the herbalist John Gerard, proposed to establish a herb garden in East Smithfield. These processes of development were widespread, but their physical expression differed according to the constraints imposed by land ownership and topographical features. Thus, contrasting patterns, the origins of which sometimes date back to the 13th century and earlier, can be observed within the large rectangular expanse of Covent Garden, within the city ditch, and in the area occupied by the long narrow properties in Minories. The distinctive long alleys towards the river, containing up to 100 houses each were created piecemeal on plots of land defined by the ditches which had bounded the former meadows there. About 1630 the ditches were becoming choked with rubbish and the tidal mill, for which they had once served as a reservoir, ceased to function.

3.11 By the mid 17th century the houses on the main street frontages generally included three storeys and a garret above ground (i.e. 3 1/2 storeys). This had been the common height for houses in the Cheapside area since the 14th century or earlier, although by 1650 there were many taller houses on the Cheapside frontage itself. In the suburb many houses had only recently become this tall. A pair of small houses in Houndsditch in 1610 contained only 2 1/2 storeys, By 1667 the ground area of the structure had been increased, cellars had been dug, and an additional storey had been created above ground. In an alley off Minories there was c. 1650 a clear gradation from houses with 3 1/2 storeys by the street, those with 2 1/2 storeys immediately behind, to houses of 1 1/2 storeys 125 yards back from the street. Many of the garden houses which had proliferated earlier were presumably of one storey only. Even in 3 1/2 storey houses each floor was often occupied by a single tenant, sometimes living in a single room (Fig. 6). The density of occupation of such buildings was commonly even greater than these arrangements suggest. Thus, in an extreme case reported in 1637 a house with one front door and containing three rooms was occupied as follows: one room by a married couple with 3 children, another by a couple with 5 children plus a lodger, and the third by two widows and a man. In this house the mean floor area per person may have been no more than 27 square feet. Houses were divided in the Cheapside area, but never to this degree.

3.12 The trades practised in the parish were diverse in character, but the occupational structure has a number of distinctive and long-continuing features. Leather manufacture seems to have been more prominent before 1300 than later, although crafts using leather, particularly shoemakers, were present throughout the period. By 1300 the potters were a notable group. Their job was the casting of brass vessels, a trade which was suited to a suburban location on account of the fire risks associated with it and because of the availability for loam (cf. above 3.6) for making moulds. By 1400 the potters were casting

bells, and their direct successors in the 16th and 17th centuries were the gunfounders of Houndsditch and elsewhere. In this latter period the presence of the Tower armouries near by, and the establishment within the former precinct of the Minories of an annexe to the Ordnance Office, promoted a wide range of armaments-related activities and metal-working crafts. The small group of moneyers present in the area c. 1300 presumably exploited the same facilities for smelting metals as did the potters.

3.13 A second important group c. 1300 were the butchers. Aldgate High Street served as an important centre of distribution for the city's meat trade, and the local activities of the tallow chandlers clearly arose from this. Butchers were even more prominent in High Street by 1400, possibly because of a switch to pastoral farming and a consequent increase in meat eating, but perhaps also because the physical contraction of the suburb enabled the city butchers, who had previously been prominent a mile beyond the suburb at Stratford, to practice their trade closer to the city walls. From the 16th to the early 20th century butchers and their slaughterhouses dominated the south side of High Street.

3.14 A statistical approach to the occupational structure is possible for the period around 1600. The 250 occupations recorded in the samples derived from the parish clerks' memoranda books fall into 18 categories, but more than 90% of those whose occupation is known fall into 10 categories, each accounting for between 5% and 14% of the total. The largest of these was 'miscellaneous services', in which by far the greatest number of individuals were concerned with land transport: draymen, porters, carmen, and the like. Much of their business was provided by the East Smithfield brewers, not numerous in themselves but employing many servants and generating business for other crafts. Thus, the coopers (with the chandlers) largely account for the significance of the 'miscellaneous manufactures' group. Maritime-related trades, mostly sailors living towards the river in East Smithfield, are another one of the leading groups. The two occupational groups which appear to have been increasing in significance over the period 1583-1624 were those associated with textile manufacture (especially silk- and felt-making) and the manufacture of clothing (almost all tailors). By 1600 the Houndsditch brokers, dealing in second hand clothing and money lending, had emerged as another distinctive group. These types of activity have remained characteristic of the East End of London to the present day: their roots lay both in the economy of the medieval suburb and in the rapid expansion of the city after 1550, which may have been accompanied by a migration of many manufacturing trades from an intra-mural to an outlying location.

3.15 The diversity of occupations is emphasised by the presence of a small number of entertainers (musicians, trumpeters, players), who presumably found employment at the Tower, in the aristocratic houses of the neighbourhood, and at the playhouses in Shoreditch and Whitechapel. Some of them were artists of distinction, and their families intermarried and persisted in the area over more than one generation.

3.16 On average, the inhabitants of the parish had probably always been poor. The medieval evidence does not enable the condition of the poor to be investigated in detail, although on the eve of the Reformation both Houndsditch and Minories included a number of small dwellings inhabited

by bedridden persons, who were regularly visited by alms-givers from within the walls. By 1600 the suburb was widely recognized as being characterized by its poor, who were said to be increasing rapidly in numbers. They included many 'marginal' categories such as the old, the blind, single women, and those who lacked the 'means to set themselves to work'. Casual labour for others, rather than self-employment in a craft, thus played a large part in the life of the area, probably much more than is indicated by any listing of recorded occupations. This study has enabled some of the conditions in which such people lived during the late 16th and early 17th centuries to be investigated more fully than ever before. With regard to housing, a rough form of measurement of poverty can be established. Thus, taking the listing of the poor in 1637 as a basis, it has been possible to identify the broad concentration of poor within the parish (towards the river) and these areas which were characterized by poor families with children (Houndsditch), or by the single poor, who were almost all women (alleys to the south of High Street). The mean size of poor households was 2.85, by comparison with about 5 for the parish as a whole. The houses of almost a third of the poor can be identified: of these, 80% occupied accommodation worth between £1 and £3 a year. For £3 it was impossible to obtain more than two ground floor rooms, each about 12 feet square, in a 3 1/2 storey house near the Minories (cf. Fig. 6), but not actually on the main street frontage. £1 a year was enough for a converted still-house, offering about the same floor space but in the form of one small room over another at the back of a long alley off Minories. The 1638 assessment (the values in which are broadly consistent with those in other sources) does not list individual houses with lower values than this, but clearly many poor families who shared such houses or single rooms paid much less than £1 a year for their lodging. In the mid 16th century some single rooms in High Street alleys were being let to tenants for rents equivalent to about 10s. a year in the 1630s.

3.17 A remarkable feature of this suburb, but one which can be recognized in many English suburbs from the 11th century onwards, was the juxtaposition of the many poor with a small number of the very rich, who favoured the location for the space and air which it afforded. Outside Aldgate this tradition may have been reinforced by the fact that from the 14th century onwards the religious precincts had included several residences of the lay aristocracy (cf. Fig. 2). After the Reformation the sites of these precincts included the dwellings of wealthy men. Towards the end of the 16th century it seems that the newly built-up Covent Garden area was developing a fashionable character. It contained at least two large houses of aristocratic standing: contemporary descriptions and fragments which survived into the 19th century show that they were imposing structures with extensive formal gardens. Here and elsewhere in the parish, owners erected brick walls to segregate such high status dwellings from the neighbouring alleys of the poor, many of the latter built by the occupants of the larger houses themselves. By c. 1630 the increasing density of cheap housing and of manufacturing activities brought this phase of the suburb's growth to an end.

3.18 The results of this study, particularly when compared with those from the earlier study of Cheapside, make an important contribution to our understanding of London's development in the long term, and of the particular character of its renewed expansion from c. 1500 onwards. The suggestion, arising from the Cheapside study, that c. 1300 London reached a peak in population, business, and physical extent, from which it thereafter declined, is reinforced. Outside Aldgate there is no clear indication of renewed growth until soon after 1500, and it seems that in

this part of the city the extent and density of building which had prevailed c. 1300 was again equalled only by the 1530s, several decades earlier than for the Cheapside area. The representativity of the evidence for the suburb is less easy to determine than for Cheapside, but the contrast between the two areas is clear. London's renewed growth manifested itself earliest in areas where housing was cheapest or could be run up quickly. This growth was associated with manufacturing and marginal activities, which perhaps included the search for alms, rather than with the commerce and retailing which characterized the centre. High land values and high accommodation costs presumably kept these new arrivals away from the centre. Against a background of rising food prices and falling disposable incomes among wage earners, the increasing prosperity of the leading inhabitants of the Cheapside area was not at first sufficient to cause a rise in the overall demand for property in the centre of the city or an increase in the density of settlement there. This model for early 16th-century London, associated with an increase in the population of the country as a whole, a fall in the mean level of incomes, and a widespread perception that London was the place where work or relief were to be found, does not seem to apply to 13th-century London. Then, the national growth in population and the increasing concentration of business in London appear to have promoted growth in both the centre and the suburbs of the city concurrently. This may point to significant differences in the character of the city's prosperity in the two periods, or it may reflect a contrast between the initial and the later stages of urban expansion.

3.19 Most of the new inhabitants of the suburb in the early 16th century, as in other periods, presumably came directly from the countryside. But if a fall in mean disposable incomes was a significant factor in determining the pattern of demand for London housing at this period, it seems possible that some of the poorer residents in the centre of the city chose to migrate to cheaper locations on the margins. The earliest phase of renewed suburban growth may thus have been associated with the impoverishment and relocation of the population within London rather than an overall expansion of the city, although clearly it is possible that relocation and overall expansion were taking place at the same time.

3.20 While it has not been possible, on account of the magnitude of the task, to attain the original objective of writing a full account of the parish of St. Botolph outside Aldgate up to c. 1670, the study has answered some questions arising from Stage 1 of the project and raised several new ones, as well as establishing many of the basic economic, social, and physical characteristics of a substantial London suburb in the medieval and early modern periods. For the medieval period in particular, these conclusions would have had a firmer statistical basis, and a range of other conclusions would have been possible, had there been resources available to complete the writing of the gazetteer.

Work arising from Stage 1 (Cheapside project)

4.1 An addition was made to the grant to allow Dr. Keene a period of 6 months to work on his contribution to Cheapside and the Development of London before the Great Fire, a book which reviews the detailed results of the earlier Cheapside study in the light of the contribution they make to our understanding of London as a whole between the 10th and the 17th century. A substantial part of the text was completed. This part deals with the

wealth and social composition of the Cheapside area by comparison with the remainder of the city, the origin of the street pattern, the form and subsequent subdivision of early units of landownership, the changing pattern of houses, shops, and other buildings, and the use of Cheapside itself as a public space for marketing and ceremonial display. Dr. V.A. Harding, (Dr. Keene's co-author and former research assistant, now lecturer in London history at Birkbeck College) has also been working on her section of the book, and it is hoped that the completed text will be ready for the publisher in the summer of 1987.

4.2 During the period covered by the grant (Stage 2), it was necessary to put some time into the editing and preparation of texts which had arisen from the Cheapside study (Stage 1). These included A Survey of Documentary Sources for Property Holding in London before the Great Fire, published by the London Record Society at the beginning of 1986, and Part 1 (Cheapside) of the Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire. The latter is a microfiche edition of the detailed property histories for the five parishes in the Cheapside area. The text and indexes, together with about 90 reconstruction maps and other illustrations, occupies about 60 fiches. It was submitted to the publisher in Summer 1986 and should appear in March or April 1987. Preparation of the text itself was made possible by means of several small grants received from the Corporation of London, city livery companies, the Pilgrim Trust, the Marc Fitch Fund, and others, a result of which it was possible to equip the project with a micro computer. The detailed results of the Aldgate and other area studies will appear as later parts of the Historical Gazetteer.

4.3 During 1985, at the request of the ESRC, some considerable time was devoted to producing a popular, illustrated booklet based on the Cheapside study and entitled Cheapside before the Great Fire. This has had some success in making the results of a pioneering research project available to the public at large.

Related work not funded by ESRC

5.1 During 1984-6 a similar study was undertaken of a block of four parishes immediately east of the Cheapside area and focusing on the point which the Cheapside axis in the city's street pattern crossed the Walbrook stream. This study was financed by a private donor in the city. The text arising from it should be complete by the end of 1987 and will be published as a future section of the Historical Gazetteer.

5.2 During the same period funds were secured from a number of financial institutions in the city for a study of the development of the area now occupied by the Bank of England up to the early 18th century. This will be undertaken during 1987-8. Already it is clear from both the study of this and that of the Walbrook area that neighbourhoods close to Cheapside were complementary to it yet presented some notable contrasts. These points of comparison not only add to our knowledge of the city as a whole, but in particular throw new light on the role which the city assumed during the 13th and 14th centuries within the kingdom at large. In this way, using funds provided by the ESRC and funds of almost equal value from private and institutional sources in the city, it will be possible to trace the long term development of London through a substantial cross sectional sample extending from Cheapside towards the

eastern suburb. The broader conclusions arising from these studies will be presented in the form of monographs and articles on the lines already established.

5.3 In addition to containing the evidence on which the conclusion discussed above are based, the Historical Gazetteer is a major source for many other aspects of London history, including the careers of citizens. Already scholars have made use of the Cheapside gazetteer and the materials assembled for other area study. As an example of the new lines of enquiry which are facilitated, a post-graduate student has been able to use the Cheapside material as a starting point for an examination of the economics of the rebuilding of the city after the Great Fire.

5.4 Throughout the period of the research the Museum of London has continued to give substantial support to the project by providing accommodation and other assistance in kind.

Future work

6.1 The future of the project remains uncertain after the middle of 1988 when the available resources run out. For example, further funds are needed to complete the writing up of the study of the eastern suburb begun as Stage 2 of the ESRC-supported work. Work on the Walbrook and the Bank of England areas demonstrates that further sample studies within the city walls do not merely replicate the results of earlier ones, but continue to add to our understanding of how the city functioned. It would be valuable, therefore, to continue the survey on these lines, in particular by completing the cross section from the centre to the suburb and by examining the functionally very different area between Cheapside and the river frontage.

6.2 Some of the wider conclusions which have emerged so far suggest entirely new lines for research in the future. Thus, the conclusions concerning the great size of London c. 1300 identify as of particular interest the means by which the city was supplied with food and other materials at this period, and the impact of this demand on domestic and international agriculture and marketing systems. The sources for such a study can easily be identified, and its conclusions would make a ready basis for comparison with other periods and other major cities.

6.3 Should the Institute of Historical Research be successful in establishing the proposed Centre for Metropolitan History, the Study of Medieval London would form part of the Centre's activities. Research on medieval London would then form part of a wider programme concerned with the history of London and other major cities up to the present day.

Derek Keene

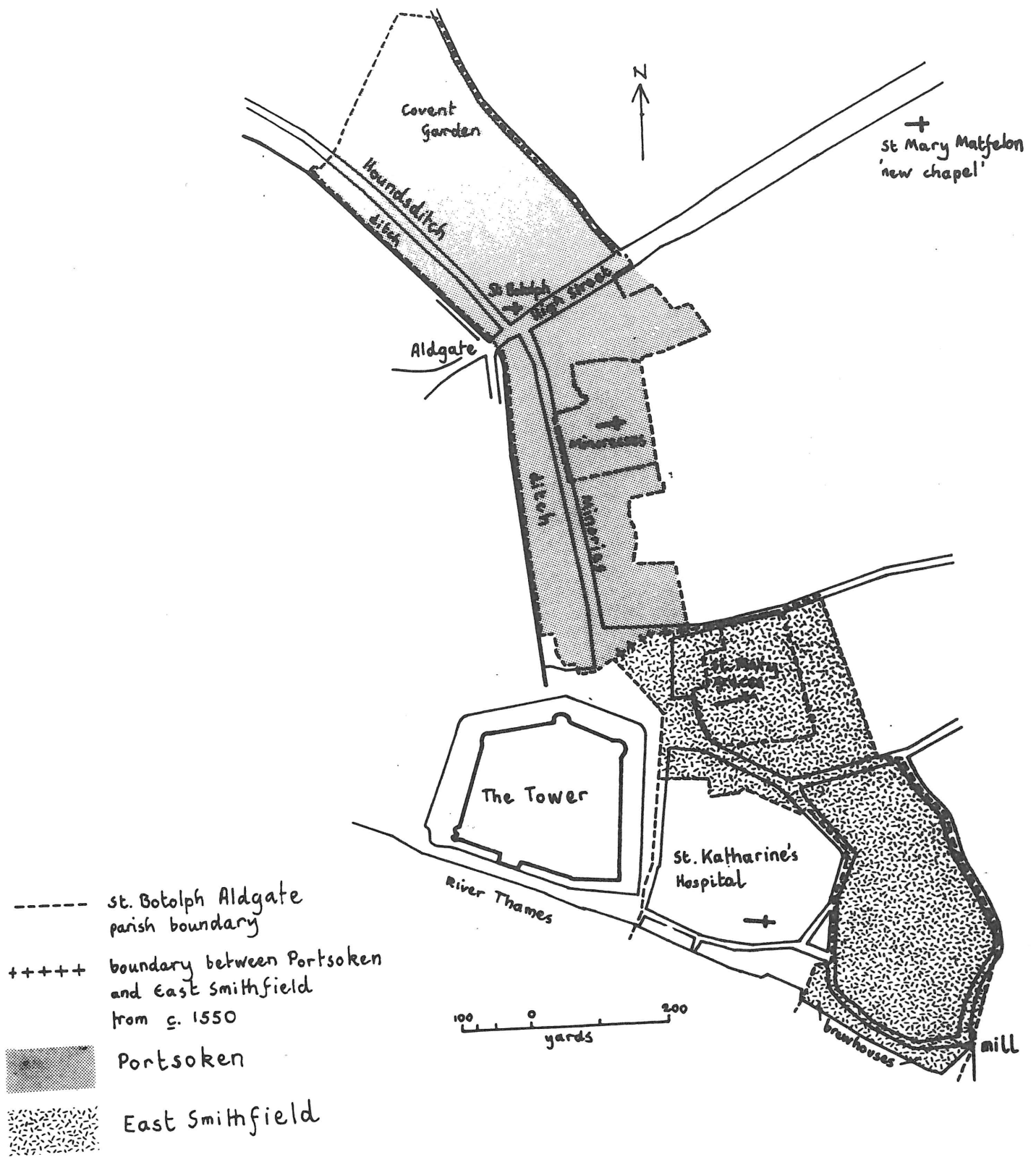


Fig. 1. The St. Botolph Aldgate study area
(drawn by Derek Keene)

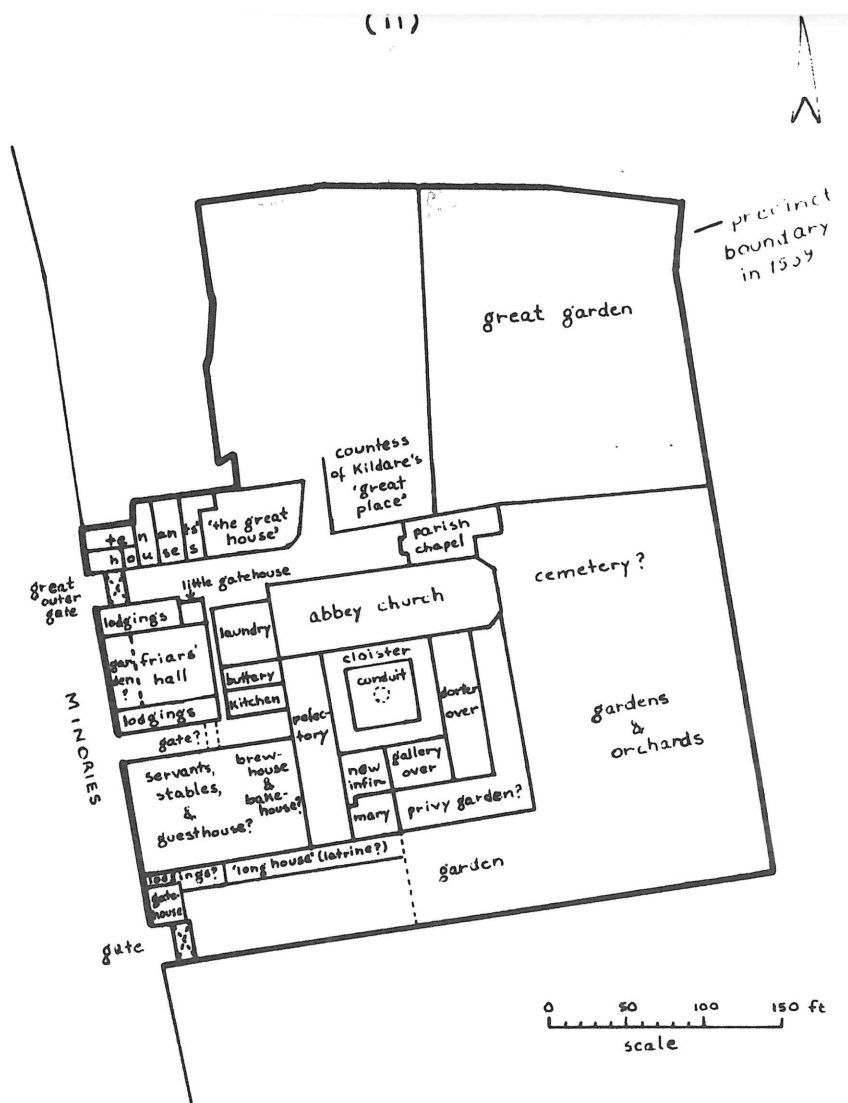
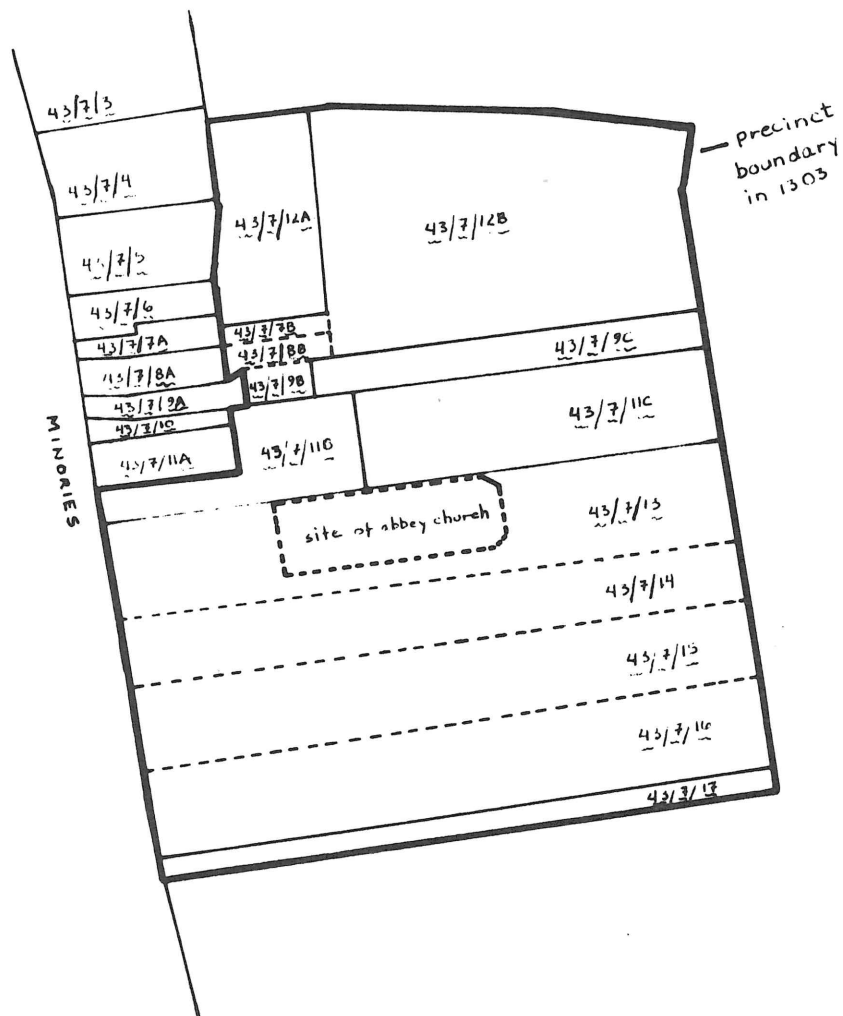
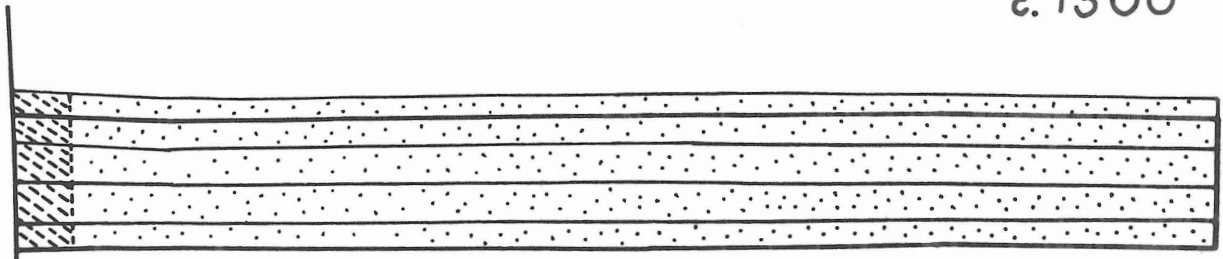


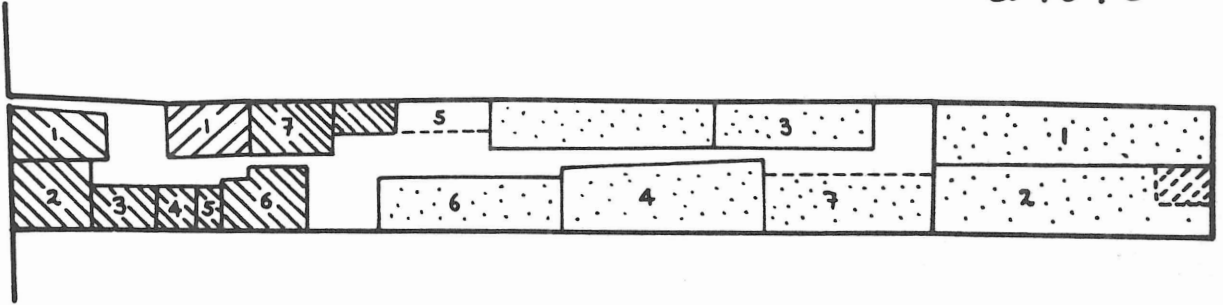
Fig. 2. The abbey of St. Clare (Minoresses);
 (i) at its foundation (the numbers and boundaries denote the properties
 acquired to make the precinct, 1293-1303); (ii) at its dissolution, 1539
 (drawn by Martha Carlin)

c. 1300

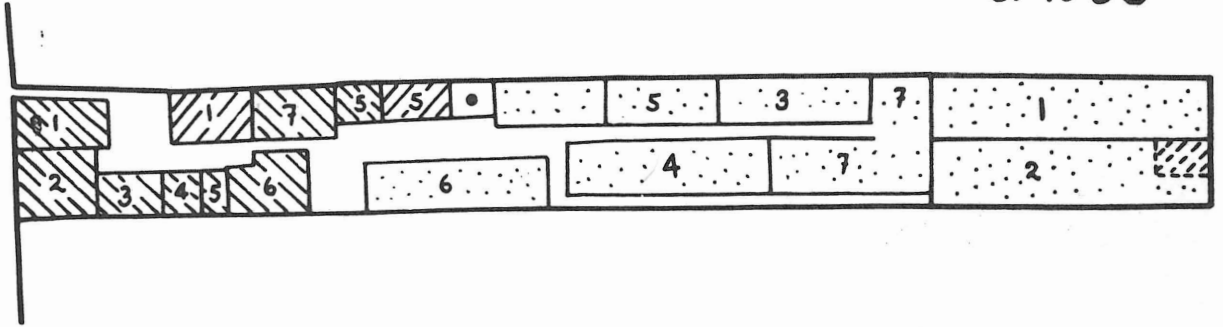


Property boundaries as in 1300;
 earlier and later combinations of plots shown by brackets to left;
 the later Bridge property is in heavy outline

c. 1610

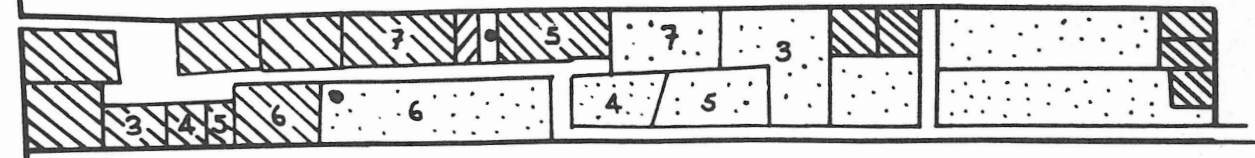


c. 1630



c. 1650

Minorities







-  house
-  shed or workshop
-  garden
-  privy



Fig. 3. The development of a property in the Minorities, c. 1300 - c. 1650 (the numbers indicate parts of the property which were held in combination) (drawn by Derek Keene)

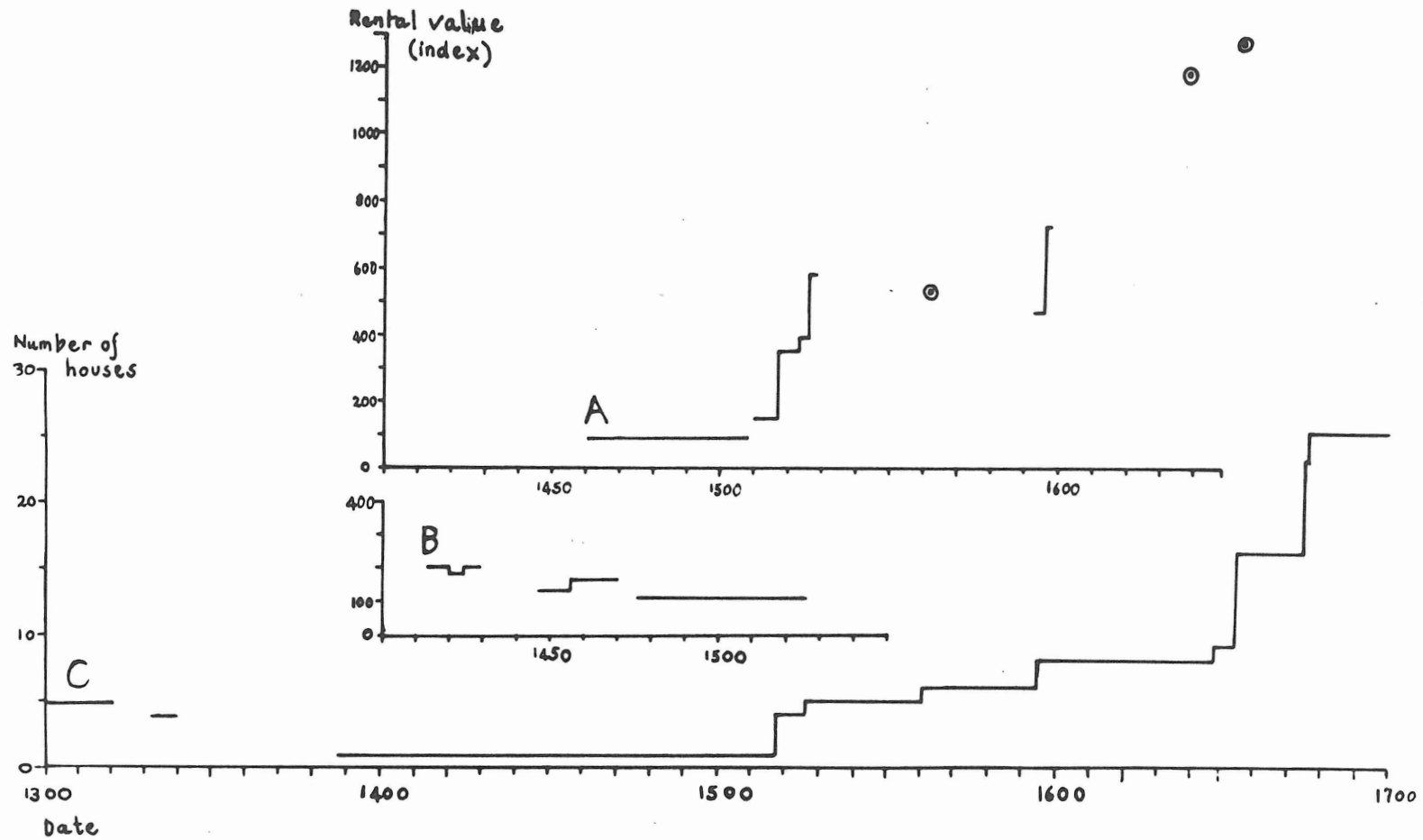


Fig. 4. Some changes in land values and housing density: A, the Bridge House property in Minories (rental values); B, the Axe inn in High Street (rental values); C, the Bridge House property in Minories (number of houses). The rental values have been adjusted for inflation on a wage-rate scale

(drawn by Derek Keene)

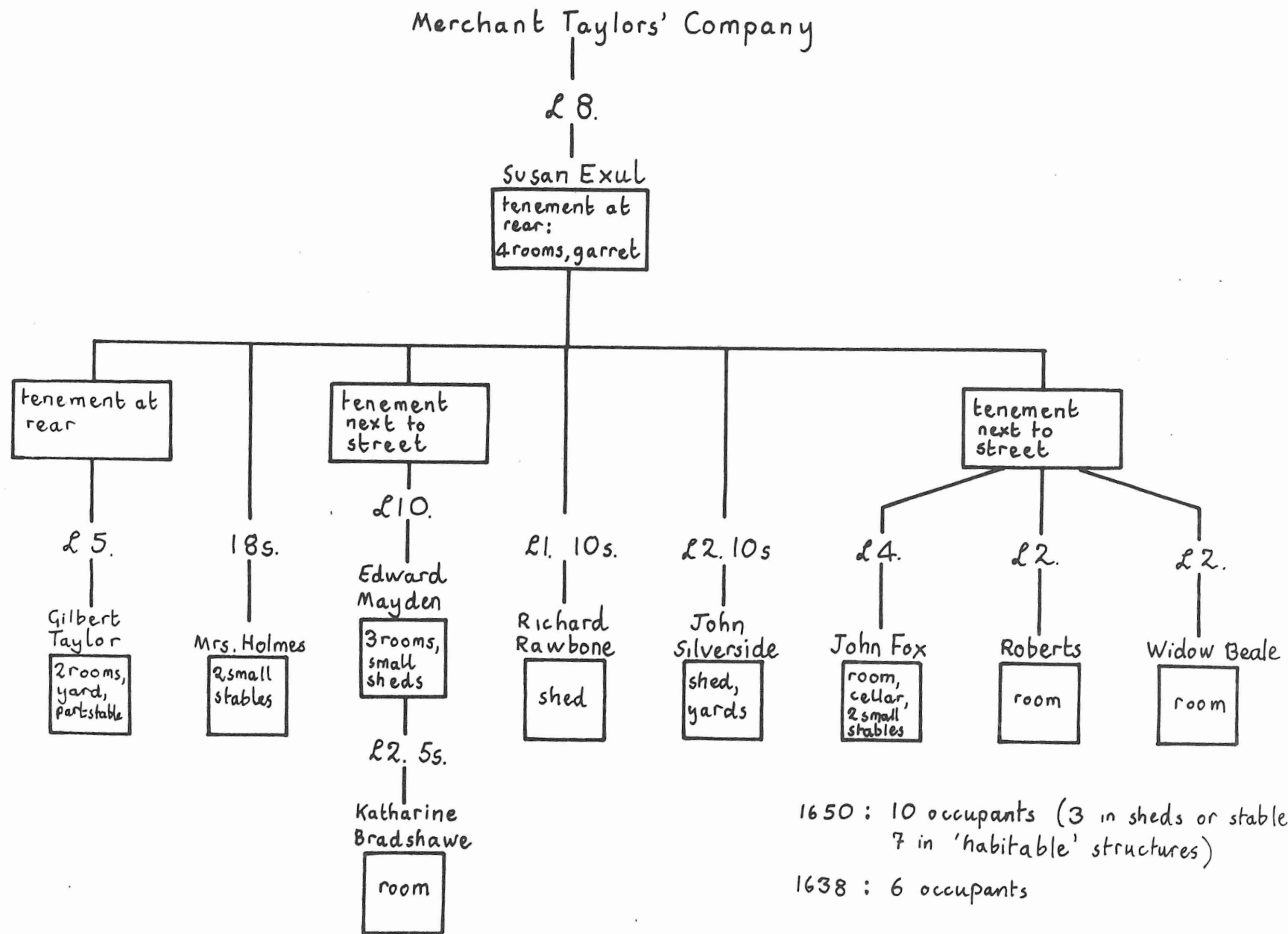
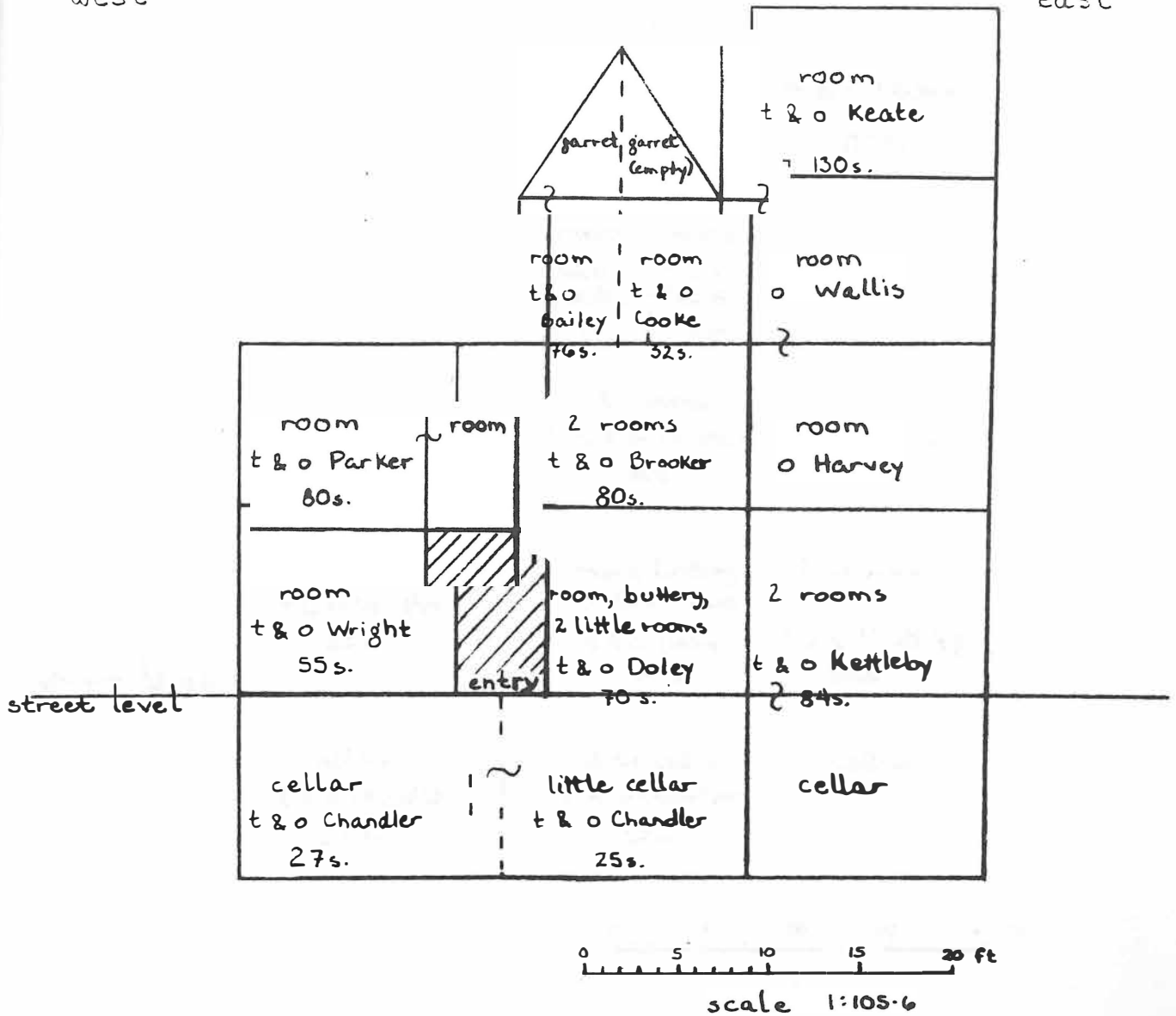


Fig. 5. Subtenancies, rents, and houses at the Merchant Taylors' property in East Smithfield, 1650 (drawn by Derek Keene)

west

east



2 houses in 1651, containing:

3 cellars, 13 rooms, 1 buttry, 2 garrets

9 undertenants of 2 tenants of Merchant Taylors' Company

11 occupants

t tenant

o occupant

? tenancy of more than 1 unit

Fig. 6. Diagrammatic elevation of houses on the north side of Church Street within the Minories precinct, 1651 (for site, see 'the great house' on Fig. 2 (ii) (drawn by Martha Carlin)