

# A PRE-FIRE MERCHANT'S HOUSE IN HART STREET, CITY OF LONDON

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## SUMMARY

*This article investigates a large pre-Fire house in Hart Street, Crutched Friars, drawn by two artists in the 1790s, shortly before its demolition. It identifies the site of the house, the date of building and the person for whom it was built and explains the house's layout, as well as examining critically the drawings of the 1790s. A previously unknown interior view is identified and related to the exterior ones. The house was on a much more constricted site than was previously thought, and was built later, in 1609. It provides a fine example of a Jacobean merchant's house.*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most evocative views of a pre-Fire dwelling in London shows a house with elaborate carvings near Hart Street, Crutched Friars (Fig 1).<sup>1</sup> The house survived until 1801, and was then known locally as Whittington's Palace. It has generally been regarded as a substantial Tudor house hemmed in and possibly reduced in size by later buildings.<sup>2</sup> The view is especially intriguing because no map shows the house, so its exact location and its layout are uncertain, and nothing has previously been uncovered about when and by whom the house was built. The site's present owner holds no documents extending back beyond the Land Registry entry, made long after the house was demolished.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, enough evidence exists to establish who built the house, when they built it and what sort of house it was. This evidence shows that the house as first built was somewhat different from how those who described it in the 1790s

imagined, and indicates that the evocative view itself needs to be examined critically.

The view was drawn by the antiquarian J T Smith in 1792 and was subsequently engraved, together with his view of one of the rooms inside. When Smith saw the house was let out as tenements, the greater part being occupied by Mr Clark, a carpenter, who had the use of the yard and had created a sawpit there (shown in the view). The rooms other than Clark's could be accessed only from what Smith described as 'modern houses' in front of them in Hart Street (Smith 1815, 44–7).<sup>4</sup> Another drawing of the house, by Thomas Prattent, was published in 1796 (Fig 2). According to Prattent the house was then occupied by a carpenter and a basketmaker. Inside, one of the upper floors included a large 'principal room', an ante-room in which the only notable item was the mantelpiece, and an adjoining room not quite as large as the principal room in which the ceiling was 'superbly decorated with carving'. The latter included two tablets, one bearing the date 1609 and the other the initials P.M.M. (the P. being above the M.M.). Prattent believed the two last-mentioned rooms were 'much more modern than the outside'; the room with the tablets 'appears to have been fitted up long since the building of the house' (Prattent 1796, 545–6).<sup>5</sup> A third drawing is dated 1796, and was probably also by Prattent (Fig 3).<sup>6</sup>

Both Prattent and Smith believed that it had been a large and important house, subsequently hemmed in by later buildings. Prattent thought that 'from its situation, near the church, it is probable it has been

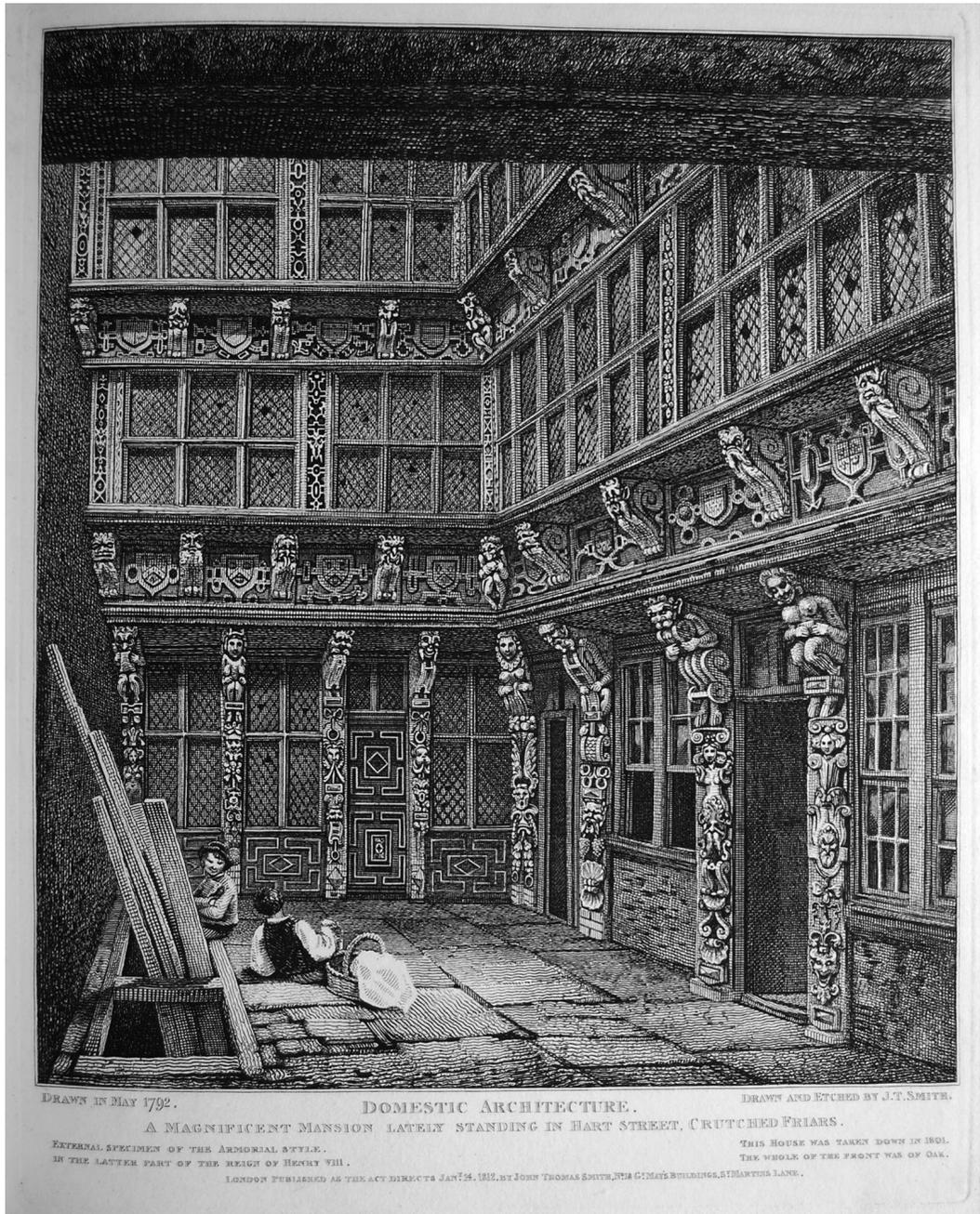


Fig 1. J T Smith's drawing of 1792, as engraved for publication. It shows the back house, looking towards the east wing, with the main (southerly) part of the house to the right. James Clarke's sawpit is on the north side, to the left. The shields between the ground and first floors bore the arms of the City's 12 'great' livery companies (Michael Bull collection)



Fig 2. Thomas Prattent's view of the back house in 1796, showing from left to right the elevations of the east wing, the main part and the west wing, all as seen from the courtyard (London Metropolitan Archives, City of London)

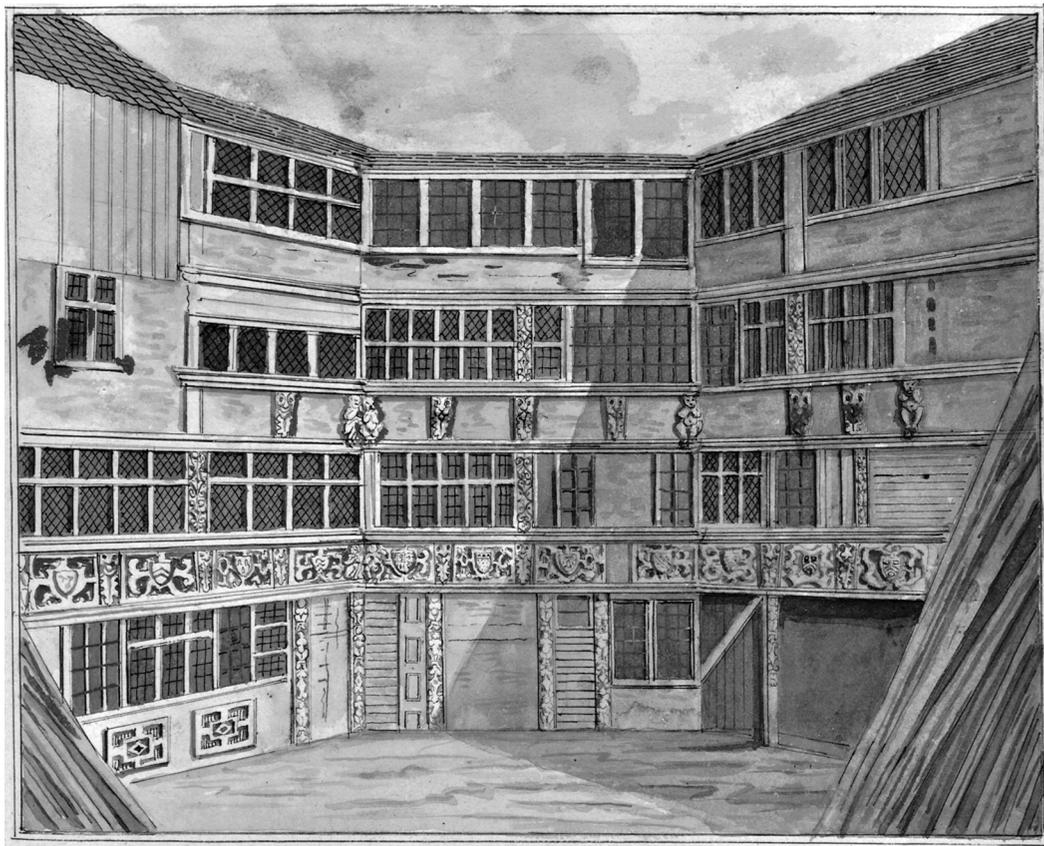
a manor-house', and claimed that old leases described it as Whittington's Palace. Smith described it as a 'magnificent mansion' and referred to its 'magnitude and splendor'. He wrote that 'Most likely the ornaments of the front end of the building [i.e. the two wings extending towards Hart Street], which had originally formed three parts of a square, were taken down to make way for the houses in Hart Street; and this conjecture is supported from the two wings having only been accessible through those houses'. Smith evidently envisaged an open courtyard facing Hart Street. Indeed one of the drawings purporting to show the house is a reconstruction showing what it might have looked like with the wings jettied out towards Hart Street.<sup>7</sup>

According to Prattent, not only was the house described in 'the old leases' as Whittington's Palace, but 'the appearance, especially external, warrants a probability of the truth'. This would have indicated a 15th-century or earlier date. Smith was more cautious about the date, stating that 'I must

honestly declare myself to be in the dark, although it is ascribed in the plate [by Smith himself – see Fig 1], to the latter part of the reign of Henry the Eighth'; the reason for this was an assurance from the vicar of St Olave's that 'it had ever been looked upon by him and other aged parishioners, as the residence of Sir William Sharrington, who lived in the parish at that time'. Smith added that 'it must be observed that this style of building continued so late as 1600'. The belief about Sharrington was probably based on Strype, who stated that Sharrington House was so magnificent that it was subsequently occupied by the Earl of Arundel, though Strype actually placed Sharrington House in nearby Mark Lane (Strype 1720, II 41).

## LOCATING THE BUILDING

According to Prattent the house was 'four houses from Mark-lane, in Hart-street, up a gate-way'. Smith described it as 'at the end of a low dark entrance from the South side of Hart Street, Crutched Friars'. It was therefore



*Fig 3. The back house seen from its courtyard in 1796. This drawing was almost certainly also by Prattent, in view of the date and the same placing of wood stacks in the bottom corners as in Fig 2 (London Metropolitan Archives, City of London)*

on the south side of the short stretch of Hart Street between St Olave Hart Street and Mark Lane. But no passage or courtyard are shown where they ought to appear on Ogilby and Morgan's map of 1676 (Fig 4).

Two clues lead us to the exact site. The first is that on Horwood's map of 1799 a passage is shown leading south from Hart Street on the east side of the third house in the street – later No. 3 – though the house to which the passage led is not shown (Fig 5). The second, and crucial, clue is Smith's reference to Mr Clark, a carpenter, having the yard and the greater part of the house. If we find Clark we have found the house. The parish rate lists record one James Clarke occupying property on the south side of Hart Street from 1787 to 1820.<sup>8</sup> They do not give house numbers until later, but fire insurance records do. In 1792,

for example, insurance records identify the premises in the rate list either side of Clarke's and one less valuable property as Nos 3 and 5.<sup>9</sup> The property Clarke held in 1792 has also been traced forward in the rate lists until they start to give house numbers, again revealing the property as No. 4. The house was therefore on the site known as 4 Hart Street.

That does not, however, completely define the site, as Clarke eventually held the whole of Nos 4 to 7 and some or all of these had been rebuilt and the internal boundaries of the group had been altered by the time of the earliest detailed map in 1858 (Fig 6). In those rate lists and other property listings which include St Olave's rectory (later No. 8), what is consistently recorded immediately after it from 1666 to 1801 is the house, or eventually

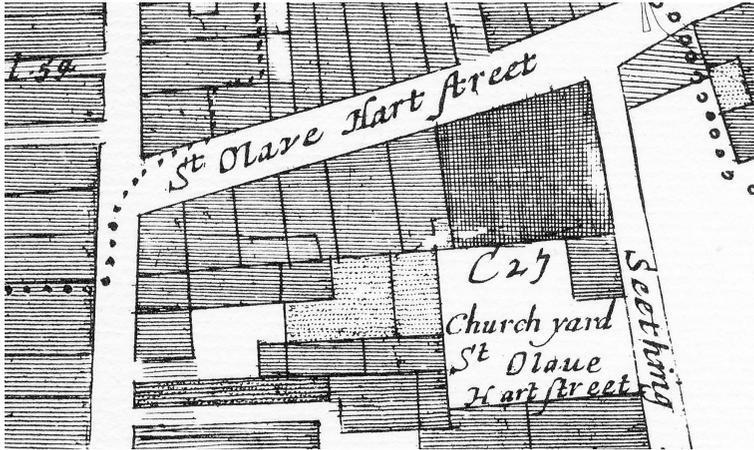


Fig 4. A detail from Ogilby and Morgan's map of 1676, showing Hart Street. The darkly-shaded building on the corner of Hart Street and Seething Lane is St Olave's church. North is at the top

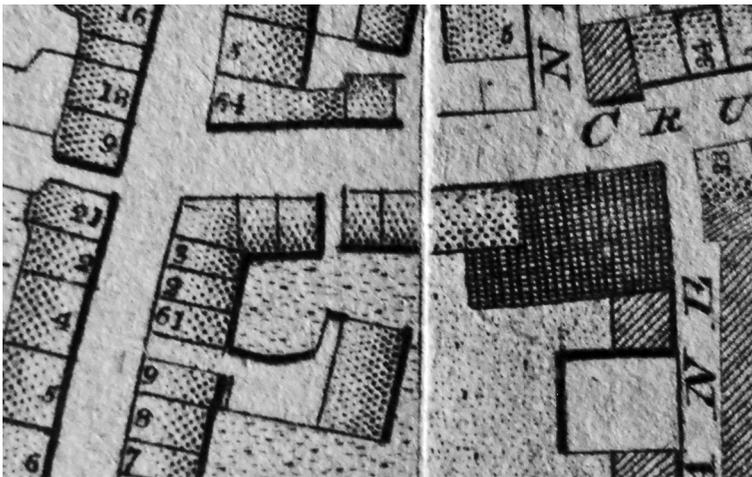


Fig 5. A detail from Horwood's map of 1799, showing Hart Street (treated by Horwood as part of Crutched Friars). North is at the top



Fig 6. A detail from the ward map of 1858, showing the south side of Hart Street, after the boundaries within Nos 4-7 had been altered by James Clarke. The street to the left is Mark Lane. North is at the top (London Metropolitan Archives, City of London; COL/WD/03/029)

houses, in front of what became Clarke's (later Nos 5 and 6), Clarke's house (later No. 4) and the house west of Clarke's (later No. 3, the Ship public house). In other words, there was no property between Clarke's house and the rectory, and therefore the plot on which Clarke's house stood extended to the boundary of the rectory and covered the whole of the back part of what were Nos 4–7 by the time of the 1858 map. This is supported by the fact that, as discussed later, Prattent's principal room, 25 feet long, extended from the eastern edge of the site to the centre of the courtyard, which would have left too little room for the western side of the house if there had been much less than the 45½ feet width of Nos 4–7. There is no reason to believe the property ever extended south of the back boundary of Nos 4–7, on to what was later 60 Mark Lane.

Why then was the house not shown there on Ogilby and Morgan's map of 1676? Ralph Hyde long ago warned that their map 'is not a large-scale Ordnance Survey plan, and it should not be used as if it were'; the number of buildings in the main streets and their outline ground plans are likely to be correct, but the information about alleys and courts is 'less dependable' (Hyde 1992, xi). In the case of the Hart Street house its passage from the street had both a 'street gate' and an inner gate, both with locks and keys,<sup>10</sup> and if the street gate were closed there would be no reason to suspect a large house lay behind. The house's omission from Ogilby and Morgan's map is therefore not surprising.

The most important boundary of No. 4 for our purposes is the western one, bordering on properties which were in separate ownership in Clarke's time and later.<sup>11</sup> They were 3 Hart Street, then and now the Ship public house,<sup>12</sup> and 62 Mark Lane. It is important because 62 Mark Lane belonged to the Clothworkers' Company, and was therefore surveyed along with the Company's other property by Ralph Treswell in 1612. This provides the next crucial clue, as Treswell usually indicated neighbouring landowners. His plan of 62 Mark Lane shows the adjoining property, later 4 Hart Street, as belonging to Mr Palmer (Schofield 1987, 93). The next step, therefore, is to find deeds or leases relating to Hart Street and involving a Palmer.

## FINDING MR PALMER

The first such document linking a Palmer to Hart Street is a lease of 1632 enrolled in the City's Court of Husting. John Palmer, son and heir of Michael Palmer, leased out 'all that newe messuage or tenement lately builded and erected standeing and being apparte from the streete in the parish of St Olave in or neere White Hart Streete in London as the premisses are now seperated'. (As discussed later, 'now seperated' relates to the division of a larger plot into two separately-owned parts.) The lease refers back to an earlier one made in 1622 by Michael Palmer, John's father, which has not survived.<sup>13</sup> The same property, variously described as being in or near Hart Street or in Crutched Friars, is recorded in leases or deeds of 1634, 1641 and 1650.<sup>14</sup> By 1650 Robert Tapping was not only the owner but also, according to the parish rate lists, which start in 1647, the occupier of the property. The property can be traced forward in the rate lists until it becomes the one occupied by James Clarke.<sup>15</sup> The link between Michael Palmer and what became 4 Hart Street is therefore established.

Michael Palmer's wife was named Mary, and there can be no doubt that Michael and Mary Palmer were the 'P.M.M.' of the tablet. Did the date 1609 on another tablet in the same room therefore record the building of the house, or only the refurbishment of a room or a family event? Both Prattent and Smith believed that the decoration of the room containing the tablets was later than the house itself, but that was because both believed the house had been built long before 1609. J P Malcolm in 1802, without any preconceptions about the house's date, noted that earlier writers had regarded the room dated 1609 as more modern than the rest of the house, but stated that 'the inside ornaments are too similar to those without to admit a doubt that the house was then built' (Malcolm 1802, 558). In fact the style of the house is entirely consistent with a date of 1609, as discussed below. And Michael Palmer settles the matter for us by what he stated in his will of 1630. He left to his eldest son John

All those my messuages or tenements  
scituate and being in Hart Streete neere

Marke Lane in London which I had in marriage with his mother Mary Versalyne my first wife, which tenements heretofore were but one tenement since which tyme to my great charge I have builded it and devided it into two tenements and encreased the rent from twentie and eight pounds per annum unto three score pounds per annum.

He added that he hoped John Palmer 'will thinke himselfe well dealt with in all' because, among other things, 'I have laid out ... foure hundred pounds at the least on the tenements in Hart Streete'.<sup>16</sup> The lease of 1632 described the house as 'lately builded and erected'.

### THE PALMERS AND HART STREET

Now we can examine how this came about and exactly what Michael and Mary Palmer built. Michael was the son (almost certainly the eldest son) of John and Anne Palmer. John Palmer was a citizen and grocer of London, living on the southern part of London Bridge. He was made a liveryman of the Grocers' Company in 1592, was one of the Company's most substantial members by 1598, became one of its Assistants in 1601, was elected second Warden of the Company in 1603, and died in 1605. He was evidently prosperous, having acquired two houses with 150 acres in and around Downe in Kent, an inn and five tenements at Bow Bridge, Stratford, and six tenements elsewhere. His bequests of money totalled £1,800.<sup>17</sup>

Michael Palmer was a 'bacherler' of the Grocers' Company by 1598, and was a member of its 'yeomanry' (the rank below liveryman) by 1604.<sup>18</sup> In 1613 he was described as a merchant, and it was recorded then that in 1603/4 he had entered into a partnership involving overseas trade with another London merchant and one from Totnes in Devon.<sup>19</sup> In 1599 he married Mary Versellin at St Olave's church, Hart Street. She was the daughter of Jacob Versellin or Verzelini, a glassmaker from Venice, who from the 1570s made glass on the site of the former friary in Crutched Friars, very close to Hart Street (Bannerman 1916, 256; Sutton & Sewell 1980, 190–2). In his will of 1605, John Palmer, evidently fearing family

strife, charged his children and sons-in-law to be content with the legacies left to them, 'the rather for that I have heretofore at the time of their seaverall mariiags reasonably advanced them and every of them according to my habillity'. The terms of the marriage included an undertaking by John and Michael Palmer that Mary should have £1,000 in goods if left a widow, and an undertaking by Versellin to convey one of his London properties to Mary and her heirs. In his will of 1604, Versellin left all his houses in London to his wife Elizabeth, 'excepte onely one messuage nowe in the occupacon of Hugh Hammersley merchaunte which I assured to or for the use of my daughter Marie Palmer at her marriage'. This brings Hart Street into the Palmer story, as it was evidently the tenement which Michael Palmer said in his will that he had received 'in marriage' with Mary. Jacob died in 1606 and his widow Elizabeth in 1607, and, as the tenement was only 'assured' to Mary rather than already transferred to her, this may explain the timing of the house's construction. Versellin also left to Michael and Mary the capital messuage or farm called Halls in the parish of Chevening, Kent, and Michael inherited his father's property at Downe and Bow Bridge (Bannerman 1916, 139).<sup>20</sup> Thus by 1606 or 1607 Michael Palmer had both the site in Hart Street and the resources to improve it.

### THE HOUSE

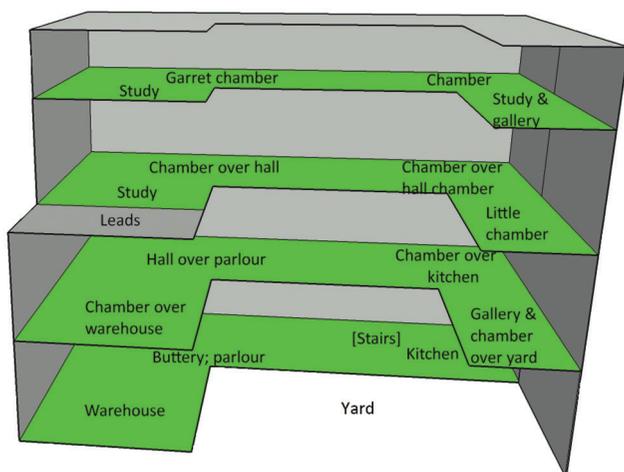
Hart Street was close to the quays east of London Bridge which handled almost all of London's overseas trade and was in the part of the City where merchants and warehouses were most heavily concentrated (Spence 2000, 121, 135, 137, 139). Starting with a single dwelling, probably bordering Hart Street itself, Michael Palmer rebuilt the site in or around 1609 with two houses, described in 1689 as a front house and a back house.<sup>21</sup> The back house drawn by Smith and Prattent was therefore a classic piece of backland development, providing an example of the way in which the City was becoming more densely built-up. It was always tucked away down a passage from the street, like most large City houses, and never had wings making a magnificent show towards Hart

Street. Indeed the wings almost certainly joined on to the front house, at least in the lower storeys: not only would the depth of the site (discussed below) not have allowed more than a tiny gap at most, but when the front house was demolished in 1689 the tenant of the back house complained about the demolition 'laying this defendants house great parte thereof open & severall roomes thereof remayneing soe without use'.<sup>22</sup> The south, west and east sides of the back house almost certainly extended to the boundaries of the plot (except possibly in the south-east corner), as discussed below. Its numerous windows probably reflected the fact that all or nearly all the house's light came from the small courtyard. The quality of the decoration in the courtyard may also have been compensation for the smallness of the site. Nevertheless, even if not as grand as Smith and Prattent envisaged, it was both a substantial house and a fine one. In 1666, when it was occupied by Gerrard Lloyd, it had nine hearths, one more than the eight hearths which were the average for merchants' houses (Davies 2014, 889; Power 1986, 214). Conceivably Michael Palmer originally built both houses as a single courtyard house, but it seems more likely that they were intended from the start as two houses; hence the back house's separate access from the street (discussed below), and the wording in his will.

The layout of the back house can be reconstructed from the schedule attached to

the lease of 1632, which lists the fixtures in each room (see the Appendix), and further information is provided by a deed of 1688 relating to the front house, recited as part of a lawsuit. The schedule starts on the ground floor and goes from right to left and left to right on each storey alternately, as shown in Fig 7.<sup>23</sup> The house therefore had three and a half storeys (counting the garrets as a half-storey). The schedule confirms what the two views by Prattent suggest, that the second and third floors originally extended only about half way along the east wing, with the study which seems to have been on the second floor giving access to the leads there. This was perhaps to avoid turning the courtyard into a gloomy light-well. On the west side, where the passage from the street is likely to have entered, the courtyard extended to the edge of the site with the west wing over it.

Such schedules did not list rooms which contained no fixtures of value, and small rooms such as ante-chambers may have been omitted, but the inclusion of casements, doors and locks suggests that every significant room was included. Assuming that the buttery, warehouse, galleries and the whole top floor lacked heating, which would have been normal at the time, the heated rooms (parlour, kitchen, hall and six chambers below garret level) correspond to the assessment of nine hearths. The plan was a typical one of the period: a parlour for informal daily life together with service rooms on the ground floor; a single-



*Fig 7. Cutaway drawing, looking south, showing the rooms in the back house listed in the schedule of 1632. The location of the stairs is conjectural. The drawing ignores the cellars and the warehouse under part of the front house (Source: see Appendix)*

storey hall which may have been used as a dining room on the first floor; and a best chamber and other chambers (equivalent to bedrooms) on the upper floors (Schofield 1987, *passim*; Gerhold 2016, 24–6). The stairs are not mentioned in the schedule, presumably because they lacked any fixtures, but it is hard to see how they could have been anywhere except towards the centre of the house, between the two main rooms in the back part. The house's two privies were at the top of the west wing, and would have had a funnel of lead or wood to a cesspit in the cellar below.<sup>24</sup> The schedule indicates some of the internal fittings and decoration: the parlour was wainscoted, the hall was 'wainscotted round more curiously than the parlor', the chamber over the hall chamber had a painted chimney-piece, and the chamber over the hall had a 'fretted sealing', indicating fretwork – decoration with intersecting lines. The numbers of casements cannot be related to the surviving windows in Prattent's view because 'casement' referred only to a window which could be opened, which did not apply to all windows. All the ground-floor rooms had windows with iron bars, though no such bars are visible in the two views.

The location of the room drawn by Smith, described as an upper apartment, can be identified, thanks to the survival of what may have been his original drawing (Fig 8) – wrongly labelled and therefore not previously identified. The label 'Saloon in Sharrington House' reflected the local belief that Sir William Sharrington had lived there, probably based on a misreading of Strype, who actually stated that Sharrington lived in Mark Lane (Strype 1720, Book II, 41). 'Mark Lane' was incorrectly added later, probably by someone who assumed that the drawing really showed Sharrington House and, on the basis of reading Strype correctly, believed that the building must therefore have been in Mark Lane. The drawing is from the same angle as the printed version, but shows more of the room, including the whole six-light window. Its differences from the printed version are mostly slight, except that the latter omits the columns at the far end of the room.<sup>25</sup> The room's decoration corresponds to Prattent's description of the house's 'principal room', and we therefore

have the dimensions given by Prattent: about 25 feet long, 15 feet wide and 10 feet high. The placing of the window indicates that the room was in the back part of the house on the east side, with the window facing northwards into the courtyard. It could have been the second-floor chamber there, as this was the only one described in 1632 as having a fretted ceiling, but it is more likely to have been the hall, given that it was referred to as the saloon and as the principal room, suggesting a first-floor location.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the drawing makes the top lights of the window smaller than the bottom ones, as they were on the first floor but not the second floor in Prattent's two views. Smith stated that:

the ceiling, the cornice, arches, and figures supporting them, upon the lower cornice, were all of plaister. The lower cornice, together with all the ornaments, and other parts of the room, including the chimney-piece, were of oak: the carvings of the chimney-piece, the shells and scrolls above the pannels, together with their projecting mouldings, had been gilt.

Prattent described an ante-room adjoining, 'with nothing worth notice but the mantle-piece', and the next room, which was 'not quite so large as the principal room, but the cieling is as superbly decorated with carving ... In medallions on the above cieling are several heads of the Caesars, and two coats of arms; a chevron between nine pallets; but no colours are expressed.'<sup>27</sup> The same ceiling included the two tablets mentioned earlier. If it was on the first floor the room was either the one described in 1632 as the chamber over the kitchen or, more probably, the chamber over the warehouse, with its ten-light window. Smith noted that the ornamentation of the ceilings included a cat's head, which he thought might have been the reason for the house becoming known as Whittington's Palace. He was probably right, as, despite what Prattent claimed, none of the four extant 17th-century deeds and leases refer to the house as Whittington's Palace and there is no other evidence of any link with Whittington.

The house was built in the Jacobean style which flourished from the 1590s to



Fig 8. The room in the back house which was probably the hall in 1632. This may be Smith's drawing of 1792 on which his published engraving was based, though the drawing shows more of the room (London Metropolitan Archives, City of London)

about 1620. It has been described as an intensification of aspects of Elizabethan style, including a profusion of outlandish ornamentation (Summerson 1983, 83–4). The only interior of which a view exists (Fig 8) had a somewhat conservative design, as the classical columns, round arches and relatively light plasterwork were all characteristic of earlier decades. The exterior woodwork was much more in the Jacobean style, especially the heavily carved columns and the grotesque corbels supporting the jettying. Other London houses with similar features included one at the corner of Chancery Lane (possibly of 1596) and Sir Paul Pindar's house in Bishopsgate (*c.*1599), while surviving examples of similar work elsewhere include the hall screen at Audley End (*c.*1603), the frontispiece at Charlton House (*c.*1607) and the staircase and hall screen at Hatfield House (1607–12) (Summerson 1983, 83–103; Schofield 1984, 153–5, 163–5; Mowl 1993, *passim*).

Leases of the back house included the cellars belonging to it (and there was a cellar door in the courtyard), but also a cellar described as formerly occupied by William Leechland, vintner, who had been a tenant of the front house.<sup>28</sup> The vague wording could indicate either that a cellar under the back house had formerly been let to Leechland or that a cellar under the front house once occupied by Leechland now belonged to the back house. The latter seems more likely as the deed of the front house of 1688 omits the cellar under its eastern part. When Thomas Serocold occupied the back house (*c.*1622–40) he also held the ground-floor warehouse on the east side of the front house (see Fig 9 below), which was mentioned in the deed of 1688 but not included in the property conveyed. It adjoined the warehouse within the back house. It may have been included in the schedule of 1632 (unless let separately to Serocold), which would help to explain the warehouse's four doors and its numerous window bars. Probably it continued to belong to the back house. In 1689 the tenant of the back house complained that the rebuilding of the front house had prevented him letting out a warehouse and cellar and other rooms.<sup>29</sup>

The courtyard of the back house had a 'pissing cisterne' (running continuously) let

into the ground storey of the front house. The passage from the street to the back house had gates at both ends in 1632, and the deed of 1688 indicates that it was four feet wide.<sup>30</sup>

## THE VIEWS

At this point the several views of the back house need to be examined to see what we can really conclude about its external appearance. Prattent's engraving (Fig 2) is almost certainly the most reliable. He drew the three sides of the courtyard in elevation, and did not attempt to make the house picturesque or to conceal the battering it had received over time, including the alteration of many of the windows. The one problem with the engraving is that, as the upper storeys were jettied out,<sup>31</sup> the elevations, instead of having a constant width from top to bottom, ought to narrow slightly towards the top. This probably explains, for example, why the windows seem to have fewer lights within the same space the higher up they are. Prattent's drawing (Fig 3) has several differences from the engraving but only those relating to the first-floor windows are significant.

Another view is dated 1805 and marked 'Designed & Engraved for Lamberts History of London'.<sup>32</sup> Prattent was acknowledged as the artist, but the print was by Birrel. This was after the house's demolition and must have relied entirely on Prattent's work – apparently the engraving rather than the drawing, though there are numerous differences from both. Given the date, Birrel's engraving cannot be relied on.

Comparison of Smith's and Prattent's views raises many more issues. Smith drew the house in 1792, and there may have been changes between then and 1796, but the differences are too numerous and varied to be explained in that way. Smith's drawing corresponds reasonably well with Prattent's engraving for the central part of the house, except in the following respects: between the ground and first floors, the spacing of the brackets is changed, a partly-missing bracket and shield is restored, and the number of brackets and shields is increased by one; between the first and second floors the spacing is changed again and shields, not

shown by Prattent, are introduced. There are far more problems with the east wing, where hardly anything in Smith's drawing corresponds to Prattent's – little more than the brackets and shields between the ground and first floors, two of the ornamented columns and some of the decoration below the ground-floor windows. In particular, Smith has made the upper storeys jetty out towards the north, which is highly improbable, he has given the windows on the first floor six lights instead of Prattent's ten lights, he has made the second storey extend the full length of the wing, whereas both of Prattent's views and the schedule of 1632 indicate that it did not, and he has three more ornamented columns than Prattent on the ground floor.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that Smith did not draw what existed in 1792 but instead reconstructed the house as he believed it had appeared when first built. In fact he almost tells us this: he believed that the time would come when his views of the house 'will be of great service to the young historical painter', and stated that 'had my investigations enabled me to have produced a part of the original glazing, the subjects would have been complete'. Other topographical artists of the period, such as J.C. Buckler, also sometimes drew what they thought had once existed, and they too sometimes made mistakes (Catchpole *et al* 2008, 10–11). In fact Smith seems usually to have been faithful to what he actually saw, and his prints often show later alterations, such as sash windows in 16th- and early 17th-century houses. It was perhaps only when the surviving evidence seemed to demonstrate comprehensively what a house originally looked like that he was tempted to reconstruct vanished features, as in this case. The result is that, while Smith gives a good impression of the house's original character and provides the best view of the detail of the ornamentation (in so far as Prattent's engraving confirms that it existed in the 1790s), his work cannot be relied on in this case, unlike Prattent's.

There is one other drawing, of uncertain date, which is clearly a reconstruction derived from the view by Prattent and reflects Prattent's and Smith's beliefs about the grandeur of the house and the openness

of its situation.<sup>33</sup> The wings are ornamented on the front and jettied not just towards the courtyard but on three sides, resulting in the ground storey being only four lights wide. It is highly unlikely that the house (or any house) ever looked like that.

## THE SITE'S OVERALL LAYOUT

Michael Palmer seems to have rebuilt the front house as well as the back one, as the £400 referred to in his will was spent on 'the tenements in Hart Streete'. The front house was of brick and had two and a half storeys.<sup>34</sup> Its construction followed the Government's proclamations of 1605 and 1607 requiring the outer walls of new buildings in London to be of brick or stone rather than timber, so the house exposed to view was of the more expensive brick while the one hidden behind was timber-built. The front house had seven hearths in 1666 (Davies 2014, 889), and the rooms listed in the deed of 1688 would match that assessment if kitchen, chambers and two of the garrets were heated and other rooms were not (Fig 9). It was occupied by John Marvin or Mervin, a merchant, from 1662 to 1688.<sup>35</sup>

Whereas the deeds and leases of the back house were vague about exactly what they covered, those for the front house gave measurements, and these, together with Prattent's engraving and the dimensions he provided, make it possible to reconstruct the entire site developed by Michael Palmer (Fig 10). The front house formed a block 21 feet deep and 39 feet wide.<sup>36</sup> The depth of the whole site is given by the Ordnance Survey map of 1873, and was about 48½ feet on the west side and 55½ feet on the east. Prattent's dimensions for the principal room (15 feet wide) indicate the depth of the main part of the back house, from which a fairly arbitrary 1½ feet is deducted here to allow for the jettying. The height he stated (10 feet) allows an approximate scale to be applied to his engraving, and this indicates that the wings were about 18 feet long. The depth can then be accounted for as follows: 21 feet for the front house, 18 feet for the wings of the back house and 13½ feet for the main part of that house, totalling 52½ feet, which approximates to the actual depth. This confirms that the front and back

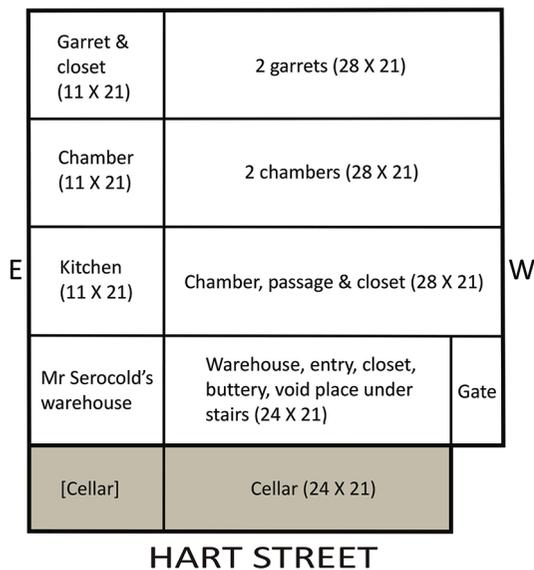


Fig 9. Diagram showing the rooms in the front house (as seen from the street, looking south) in 1688, just before demolition. Measurements are in feet. The vertical line indicates only that the east and west parts of the house were described separately. The 'gate' refers to the passage formerly held by Mr Serocold leading to the back house (Source: TNA, C 7/255/30)

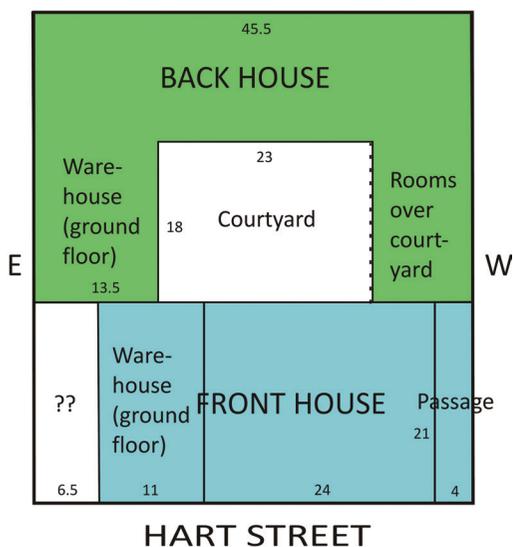


Fig 10. Schematic ground plan of Michael Palmer's front house and back house. See text for measurements and assumptions. It does not take account of the fact that the property's back boundary was not quite parallel to the street. Measurements are in feet, and are approximate. The dotted line on the west side of the courtyard indicates that the courtyard extended to the west end of the site with rooms over

houses were joined together on the lower floors. Whether the main part of the back house was aligned with the back boundary or with the street is unknown. If the former, the west wing would have been up to 7 feet shorter than the east wing, which would not be consistent with Prattent's engraving; if the latter, the depth of the back part of the house would have been slightly reduced on the west side and there might have been room for a small light-well on the east side

(which could have been where some of the parlour's windows with their ten iron bars were). Because of this uncertainty about the house's exact shape, Fig 10 is schematic only. The width of the site was about 45½ feet, which was about 6½ feet more than the width of the front house. The extra width must have belonged to the back house, as there is no evidence of a separate narrow property. No obvious purpose would have been served by a 6½ feet passage on the west side of

the site, where there was already a passage under part of the front house. The extra 6½ feet is more likely to have been on the east side, where it could have been used for an extension of the warehouse occupied by Serocold (presumably single-storey, allowing light into one of the chambers of the back house), for access to the back warehouse and perhaps for a cart-house and stable, enabling goods to be transferred securely between cart and warehouse, or for some combination of these. This would explain how in 1795 No. 4 could include a stable with a granary over, let separately to a firm of corn merchants.<sup>37</sup>

Prattent's engraving indicates that the central part of the back house was about 23 feet wide, which would leave 22½ feet for the two wings. The fact that the west wing's second floor contained only a 'little chamber' suggests that it was narrower than the east wing. This is confirmed, if Prattent's measurements were accurate, by the fact that the principal room 25 feet long extended from the eastern edge of the site to the centre of the courtyard, as indicated by the six-light window, leaving only about 20½ feet between there and the western edge. The east wing was therefore about 13½ feet wide at ground floor level and a width of about 9 feet was available for the ground floor of the west wing, or 10½ feet at first-floor level (allowing 1½ feet for jettying). The jettying would of course have made both wings wider on the upper floors than the ground floors. The overall layout is then as shown in Fig 10.

## OWNERS AND OCCUPANTS

Placing their own initials in one of the rooms suggests that Michael and Mary Palmer built the back house for their own occupation, but if so they left it not later than 1622. In 1612 the Grocers' Company agreed that Michael Palmer, 'being decayed', should be paid back some money he had lent to other members of the Company, and in 1613 Palmer claimed that the debts of one of his partners had led to his 'utter undoing' but that he was willing and able to pay his share if the third partner did so too.<sup>38</sup> By 1622, if not earlier, the back house in Hart Street was leased out, and in 1630 Michael Palmer described himself as of Downe, Esquire; he apparently lived at Upstreet there. Whatever

happened in 1612/13, his will suggests a successful transition to being minor gentry, with a manor and other lands in Downe, as well as property in London and at Bow Bridge.<sup>39</sup>

Michael Palmer died in 1631. His eldest son John was recorded in 1634 as a grocer, married to Elizabeth, daughter of William Topesfield of Upton, West Ham (Metcalf 1878, 504), but by 1641 he was describing himself as a gentleman of Upton. He inherited from his father the Hart Street site and the manor of Downe Court. In 1641 he sold the back house in Hart Street separately to Robert Tapping, citizen and cooper of London, for £640.<sup>40</sup> He seems to have sold the front house too, but that sale is not recorded. After Tapping two families held the back house for the rest of its life. John Heather, citizen and grocer, bought it from Tapping in 1650, and unlike Tapping let it to others.<sup>41</sup> Later he was described as John Heather of Wallington, gentleman or esquire. The back house passed to his son, also John Heather of Wallington, in 1687; to his son, John Heather of Streatham; to his sister Susanna Heather in 1742; to Thomas Clendon of St Clement Danes, gentleman, in about 1743 (via a mortgage of 1730); to his nephew, William Clendon of Mears Ashby, Northamptonshire, in 1750;<sup>42</sup> to his cousin Owen Manning, Rector of Godalming (and historian of Surrey) in 1764; and probably on his death in 1801 to his son John Manning (Chitty *et al* 1974, 178; East 1814, 59–61).

The first recorded tenant was Thomas Serocold the elder, citizen and mercer, in 1622. As already indicated, Serocold also held a warehouse facing the street and possibly the cellar under it. Robert Tapping, citizen and cooper, was the occupant in 1647–52 (as well as the owner from 1641–50), and he was followed by three merchants in succession: John Hill 1653–5, John Turner 1655–7, and Gerrard Lloyd 1657–71.<sup>43</sup> Lloyd traded chiefly with Seville in southern Spain, in items such as oranges, lemons, raisins, pepper, liquorish, oils, indigo and wrought Spanish plate. He left Hart Street before his death in 1677, but his prosperity is evident from his household goods, including tapestry hangings, and from the £1,800 surplus of assets over liabilities.<sup>44</sup> The next tenant was Dod Brereton, a packer (that is, a packer of

goods so they could be transported) from 1675 to 1689. In 1678 he was living in the back house with his wife, two children, an apprentice, a lodger and a maidservant. Brereton kept several of the presses required for his trade in the yard. His rent was £44 a year, which even in the City was a substantial rent.<sup>45</sup>

The front house was let on a building lease in 1688 to Henry Stubbs, citizen and plaisterer, who demolished it and replaced it by two new brick houses. This resulted in litigation, as Stubbs built on the 'break' which had contained the cistern. Brereton complained in 1689 that without the break and the cistern he could not use his presses as formerly. John Heather, as owner of the back house, complained that the new houses, which were to be of the second rate (that is, three and a half storeys) were a storey higher than before, 'whereby this defendants house is much obscured' (darkened).<sup>46</sup> This must have made the back house less attractive, and it must also have seemed out-of-date, given that most of the City had been rebuilt in brick since the Great Fire. Its great days were clearly over. Brereton left in 1689 or 1690, and for several years the house was empty. In 1694 Timothy Curtis was living there with his wife, a child, a servant and four lodgers.<sup>47</sup> The four lodgers indicate that the house was partly let out as tenements. Subsequent occupiers were Mrs Curtis to 1702, Thomas Burden, joiner, 1707–25, John Battle 1730–5, John Pitt, plasterer, 1736, Mary Pitt, widow, 1738–47, John Seal 1751–2, John Hunt, gentleman, 1759–68, empty 1779 and 1786, James Clarke, carpenter, 1787 onwards.<sup>48</sup> At some stage, parts of the back house were separated from it and attached to the houses in Hart Street, creating the situation described by Smith in 1792. This may have occurred in about 1738, as the front of Palmer's plot contained two houses from about 1690, whereas from 1738 to 1800 there were three households there.<sup>49</sup>

James Clarke began to occupy the back house in 1787, and in 1801 he demolished

it. In that year or shortly before he acquired leases of the three dwellings at the front of Palmer's plot, which enabled him to redevelop the whole of what became Nos 4–7, changing the boundaries between them. The parish rate list of 1801/2 says that he built a dwelling and a warehouse on the site of two houses, though this probably referred mainly to the back part of the site, as the rate lists also record four dwellings coming into his possession. Only after this was there a No. 7, and Nos 4 and 7 subsequently had the same occupants. They included more of the Hart Street frontage than the former back house had done (Fig 6), which may have been one of the reasons for redeveloping the site. By the time of his death in 1820 Clark was describing himself as a warehouseman.<sup>50</sup>

How long Clarke's rebuilt premises existed is not known. The whole of Michael Palmer's plot is now occupied by an office building of 1956 subsequently converted to form part of a hotel.<sup>51</sup> An excavation on part of the site in 2007 found 19th-century foundations but little which could have related to Palmer's houses except part of a 17th-century floor tile and a possible cesspit (*London Archaeol Supp* 2008, 8).

## CONCLUSION

The house in Hart Street was less magnificent than those who recorded it in the 1790s envisaged, but it was nevertheless a substantial and impressive house, with an interesting plan designed to make the greatest possible use of the site. It demonstrates one of the ways in which the City became more densely occupied, with more intensive use of backland. The house was not as old as was previously thought, dating from 1609 rather than being Tudor or earlier. It provides a fine example of the sort of house which was being built for merchants and other prosperous tradesmen in the Jacobean period, most other examples of which perished unrecorded in 1666.

**APPENDIX***The Schedule of Fixtures of the Back House in Hart Street in 1632*

[*Ground floor, west to east*]

In the kitchen.

Inprimis a cesterne of leade marked with H.M.H. one jacke with a halfe hundred weichte of iron, two dressers and one returne eighte shelves and three returnes one barre of iron in the chimney one casement and five iron barres in the windowes.

In the parlor.

Item the same roome wainscotted round about, and a settle three dores two latches one locke and key, two halpes three casements and tenn iron barres.

In the butterie.

Item a dresser a casement and fower iron barres.

In the warehouse.

Item fowre dores twoe casements a bout of a dore and twelve barres of iron in the windowes.

[*First floor, east to west*]

In the chamber over the warehouse.

Item two dores two latches one locke without a key & fowre casements.

In the hall over the parlor.

Item the same roome wainscotted round more curiously then the parlor five casements one settle along the hall of one side with a returne twoe spring locks and two little bolts.

In the chamber over the kitchen.

Item one dore one locke a latches and twoe casements.

In the gallery and chamber over the yard.

Item one dore one locke a latches and three casements.

[*Second floor, west to east*]

In ye little chamber over the said chamber and the gallery there.

Item one dore one latches locke and key and twoe casements.

In the chamber next over the hall chamber.

Item one dore latches locke and key and three casements and the chimney peece painted.

In the chamber over ye hall with the fretted sealing.

Item two dores with two latches and five casements.

In the studdy next the leads.

Item two casements and a dore, upon the leads dore one locke & two boults.

[*Third floor, east to west*]

In the studdy next the garrett chamber.

Item one dore with a locke and no key and one casement.

In the garrett chamber.

Item two dores two locks two keies two latches and fowre casements.

In the chamber next the garrett chamber.

Item one dore lock and key, and two casements.

In the studdy & gallery next to the same chamber.

Item one dore and two casements and in the houses of office two dores.

[*Outside*]

In the yard.

Item eighte freemasons stons two faire posts with two benches and the celler dore with locke and a broken key.

The streete gate.

Item an iron barre all along the gate, with a locke to the said barre and a broken key with a locke to the wickett and the wickett it selfe.

The inward gate.

Item a dore with locke and key and two bolts.

Source: LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/308, No. 26. Storeys and compass points are the author's interpretation.

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**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article by John Schofield and by an anonymous referee.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent discussion is in Schofield 1995, 188–9.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Standard Life Investments for allowing me access to its title document for the property.

<sup>4</sup> Subsequent quotations from Smith are from these pages. The same volume contains the two views.

<sup>5</sup> Subsequent quotations from Prattent are from these pages.

<sup>6</sup> London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), Collage 319728.

<sup>7</sup> LMA, Collage 3470.

<sup>8</sup> The parish rates used in this study are LMA,

P69/OLA1/C/001/MS00872/1 to 116; LMA, P69/OLA1/C/001/MS00865; LMA, P69/OLA1/C/001/MS00868; all hereafter referred to as 'St Olave rates'. Similar information is available from the tithe list of 1638 (Dale 1931, 166), the hearth tax of 1666 (Davies 2014, 889) and the poll taxes of 1678, 1693 and 1694 (LMA, COL/CHD/LA/03/011/023, 004/003 and 113/002). Confirmation of locations is as follows: for Nos 1–2, 1650–1765, Guildhall Library (GL), MS 15177/2/1 and 2; for No. 2, 1786, Sun Fire; for No. 3, 1765, GL, MS 15177/2/2; for No. 3, 1788–1802, Sun Fire; for No. 4, 1689, 1737, The National Archives (TNA), C 7/255/30, C 11/867/40; for house in front of No. 4, c.1620–89, C 7/255/30; for No. 5, 1775, *Daily Advertiser*, 2 March 1775; for No. 5, 1789–92, Sun Fire; for No. 8, names of rectors of St Olave, though the rates apparently excluded the rector at first – in 1693 Thomas Copping, rector, was said to live there (LMA, DL/B/C/001/MS09538) but he is not named in the rate list, whereas in the 1666 tax list and in the rates from 1736 onwards the rector is included. 'Sun Fire' indicates insurance policies indexed in the online catalogues of TNA and LMA.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, online catalogue, entries for LMA, MS 11936/362/558288, 356/545805 and 356/545806. The site of the house was stated in 1838/9 to be Mr Bucknall's premises (Godwin & Britton 1838, 10), and Bucknall held both No. 4 and No. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Appendix below.

<sup>11</sup> Subject to minor adjustment, as 62 Mark Lane extended slightly further east in 1858 than in 1612.

<sup>12</sup> The Ship is recorded by name in 1786, but the same property was occupied by William Morgan, victualler, in 1765, and Morgan is recorded in the rates from 1745 onwards (GL, MS 15177/2/2, bundle 4; St Olave rates).

<sup>13</sup> LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/308, No. 26.

<sup>14</sup> LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/310, No. 27; LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/317, No. 15; LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/324, No. 42.

<sup>15</sup> With confirmation in 1737 that John Battle, Tapping's successor and Clarke's predecessor in the rate list, was occupying the same house (TNA, C 11/867/40).

<sup>16</sup> TNA, PROB 11/160/502. In 1638 the rent of the back house (Mr Saracould) was £40 and of the front house (Mr Thornton) about £20 (Dale 1931, 166, taking account of the fact that the rents listed then omitted a quarter of the actual rent).

<sup>17</sup> TNA, PROB 11/105/210; LMA, CLA/007/EM/05/01/001, November 1572, January 1588/9;

LMA, CLA/007/FN/02/012, rentals 1603-5; GL, MS 11588/2, pp. 11, 16, 158, 254, 304, 367, 386.

<sup>18</sup> GL, MS 11588/2, pp. 191–2, 357.

<sup>19</sup> TNA, C 2/JasI/P8/29.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, PROB 11/105/210; TNA, PROB 11/109/37; TNA, PROB 11/110/325.

<sup>21</sup> TNA, C 7/594/84.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, C 7/255/30.

<sup>23</sup> The schedule relates badly to the drawings if left and right are reversed. There were only three main rooms on the ground floor, and the first floor included a gallery and chamber over the yard, indicating that one of the wings lacked a ground floor, but the east wing clearly did have a ground floor. The only problem with the interpretation made here is that the 'little chamber' on the second floor would have been a substantial 16 by 12 feet, unless it did not comprise the full width of the wing or the chamber over the hall chamber extended into the wing. Another possibility is that the kitchen included part of the west wing, in which case the courtyard would have extended under only part of the west wing.

<sup>24</sup> For examples of lead funnels at dates from 1674 to 1711, see Gerhold 2016, 92, 231, 243.

<sup>25</sup> The published engraving is reprinted in Schofield 1995, 117.

<sup>26</sup> It cannot have been one of the rooms occupied by Clarke, as Smith stated that Clarke's rooms had lost all their 'ornaments'. Pratten described only the chamber containing the tablets as occupied by the basketmaker.

<sup>27</sup> The coat of arms described has not been identified.

<sup>28</sup> 'Leahland', James Thornton and John Marvin were listed as former occupants of the front house in 1689 (TNA, C 7/255/30).

<sup>29</sup> TNA, C 7/255/30.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid; TNA, C 7/594/84; Appendix below.

<sup>31</sup> It seems unlikely that Smith would have invented the jettying, though the extent of the jettying under the window appears less in the interior view (Fig 8) than the exterior one (Fig. 1).

<sup>32</sup> LMA, Collage 3468.

<sup>33</sup> LMA, Collage 3470.

<sup>34</sup> TNA, C 7/255/30.

<sup>35</sup> St Olave rates; TNA, PROB 11/394/412 (John Mervin).

<sup>36</sup> In the case of the west part of the front house, 21 feet must be the depth rather than the breadth because the first floor could not have been four feet deeper than the ground floor, but could have been four feet wider if part of it was over the passage. In the east part, 21 feet is likely to be the depth rather than the breadth,

not just because it corresponds to the depth of the west part but because (i) as the breadth it would make the building too wide for the site and (ii) though described as ‘breadth’ rather than ‘length’, ‘breadth’ is also applied to the 21 feet on the west side, as opposed to ‘length’ for the 24 and 28 feet.

<sup>37</sup> LMA, CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/397, No. 626924.

<sup>38</sup> GL, MS 11588/2, p. 626; TNA, C 2/Jas1/P8/29.

<sup>39</sup> LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/308, No. 26; TNA, PROB 11/160/502.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*; LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/317, No. 15.

<sup>41</sup> LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/324, No. 42; St Olave rates; TNA, C 5/70/19.

<sup>42</sup> TNA, C 5/70/19; TNA, C 7/594/84; TNA, PROB 11/386/38 (John Heather); TNA, PROB 11/719/530 (John Heather); TNA, C 11/2089/1; TNA, C 11/867/40; TNA, PROB 11/789/140 (Thomas Clendon).

<sup>43</sup> LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/308, No. 26; St Olave rates; TNA online catalogue for East Sussex Record Office, FRE/516.

<sup>44</sup> LMA, CLA/002/02/01/1442. By the time his goods were inventoried in 1677 Lloyd was living in Mark Lane, though he still held the Hart Street lease (*ibid.*). For Lloyd, see also TNA, HCA 13/71.

<sup>45</sup> St Olave rates; LMA, COL/CHD/LA/03/011/023; TNA, C 7/255/30. For City rents, see Gerhold 2016, 286–90.

<sup>46</sup> TNA, C 7/255/30; TNA, C 7/594/84.

<sup>47</sup> St Olave rates; LMA, COL/CHD/LA/03/113/002.

<sup>48</sup> St Olave rates; TNA, PROB 11/614/130; TNA, PROB 11/679/322; TNA, PROB 11/1052/32. Battle’s occupancy in 1737 is confirmed in TNA, C 11/867/40.

<sup>49</sup> St Olave rates.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*; LMA, P69/OLA1/C/005/MS000862; TNA, PROB 11/1625/158.

<sup>51</sup> Standard Life Investments, title document for 4–7 Hart Street.

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