

A Gazetteer of Our Christian Heritage

London 2: "London Bells"

The Churches of the Nursery Rhyme (Part Two)



6. "Two Sticks and an Apple" say the Bells of Whitechapel

No one knows for sure what the "two sticks and an apple" mean. Could it be a game with two sticks and an apple? Traditionally, "the bells of Whitechapel" appear to refer to the Whitechapel Foundry. However, they could as easily refer to the ancient chapel. After all, the London neighborhood of Whitechapel, formerly a suburb, takes its name from the 13th century whitewashed chapel that became the parish church of St. Mary Matfelon¹. We even know the name of its rector in 1329: Hugh de Fulbourn. The church, was rebuilt three times, damaged seriously by fire in 1880, and destroyed by enemy fire during the Blitz in 1940 (*Right above*:). It was demolished in 1952, and its footprint is preserved on the church site with ancient burials (*Right below*:). The area was dedicated as St Mary's Gardens in 1966.



It became a public park and in 1998 and was renamed Altab Ali Park for a young Bangladesh man who was murdered in Alder Street.



Whitechapel became congested early focusing on a large market area where everything was sold. It has been described as "the poor feeding on the poor". There was an influx of East European Jews, and in the 1880's St. Mary Matfelon had an outdoor pulpit from which some sermons were preached in Yiddish. (*Left*: Crowded area, 1888)

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry

Metalworking was considered a nuisance industry in the City, and eventually metal workers moved to Whitechapel, then a suburb of London. The Bell Foundry (established in 1420) moved to Whitechapel in 1583 and at this site cast bells for Westminster Abbey. In 1738 the foundry moved into buildings of the old Artichoke Inn (*Right*:) The cellars of the Inn were preserved for some time. It was here that the Foundry cast America's Liberty Bell and the Bicentennial Bell, a gift from the people of Britain to the people of the

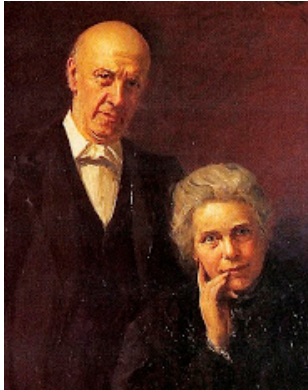


United States in 1976. The foundry came under new ownership in 2016 and the old shop was closed.

Sadly, Whitechapel has become famous, not for the foundry, but for ten brutal murders committed between April 3, 1888 and February 13, 1891. These crimes, and speculation about their unknown perpetrator, have become fodder for books, films and television ever since.



Three of The Foundry's Neighbors



Toynbee Hall Rev. (later Canon) Samuel Augustus Barnett (1844-1913), a social reformer, founded the University Settlement, Toynbee Hall, in 1884 “to educate citizens in the knowledge of one another, to provide teaching for those willing to learn, and recreation for those who are weary.” It was



named for the economic historian Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883), not to be confused with Arnold J. Toynbee, the historian-philosopher. Settlements were designed to bring university students closer to the poor and to assist in educational, recreational and social projects. Students lived in the facility. Old Toynbee Hall (*Right above*) is now at the center of a major expansion project, and it appears that the old building will be retained at its heart. Rev. Barnett and his wife, Henrietta, moved to St. Jude Parish, Whitechapel, in 1873 hoping to work to alleviate conditions in the slums. Henrietta Rowland Barnett (1851-1936), heiress, philanthropist, and social reformer, later Dame Henrietta, was the perfect partner for Samuel Barnett who was Canon of Westminster Abbey from 1907 until his death. He carried the orb in the procession in the Abbey at the coronation of King George V, grandfather of Queen Elizabeth II.

Whitechapel Art Gallery and Library. Canon Barnett and the philanthropist J. Passmore Edwards were instrumental in founding the Whitechapel Art Gallery (Est. 1901) and the Whitechapel Library that stood side by side. The Library (Est. 1902), the first free library in Whitechapel, known as “the university of the ghetto”, closed in 2010 but the Gallery (*Right*) will use the space. The Barnetts firmly believed that “the social problem is at root an educational one.”



1. Matfelon means “knapweed”, a common plant in England. There was no knapweed in this part of London, so it could also refer to the Hebrew word “matfel” meaning a woman who has recently given birth, or one who carries a child in her arms, which seems a much more logical reference.



7. “Maids in White Aprons,” say the Bells of St. Katherine (Cree)

Queen Matilda (Enid of Scotland and Wessex), wife of Henry I of England, founded the Holy Trinity Augustinian priory in Aldgate ca. 1108. In 1280, the canons complained that the attendance of the laity was disturbing their peaceful state, so the parish church of St. Katharine was built and rebuilt in 1531. It was rebuilt yet again in 1628-30; 1633 is also given as the date of reconstruction. The church escaped the devastations of the Great Fire and suffered little damage during World War II. It underwent extensive renovations and is now a guild church, which meant it has no parish, and the rector shares his responsibilities with St. Olave’s church.



Maids in white aprons may refer to the young women vendors in the area who all wore white aprons.

The architecture is Jacobean with some gothic touches. It has a rose window that may have been copied from the one in old St. Paul’s. The “Father Smith” organ of 1680 was rebuilt in 1866, and again in 1906. Purcell and Handel played it.

The church was part of the ongoing struggles of the Church of England. Archbishop William Laud (Right) (1573-1645) consecrated the 17th

century church of St. Katharine Cree and was criticized for the so-called “popish” ceremonies he used. This was later brought against him at his trial. He was beheaded for treason in 1645. He sought uniformity within the Church of England and offended Puritan sensibilities.



Archbishop Laud



Queen Matilda (Left), known as “Good Queen Matilda”, was the daughter of Saint Margaret of Scotland. Saint Margaret is remembered in the Roman, Anglican and Western Rite Orthodox churches.

(Right) The Rose Window



The Lion Sermon: The Lion Sermon is preached annually in October at St. Katharine’s with the theme: “Challenges to the Christian Faith.” Prayer saved Sir John Gayer, 17th century Lord Mayor of London, when faced by a hungry lion. In gratitude he endowed the sermon still preached every October at the church. It is followed by a luncheon.

St. Katharine’s Closest Neighbor is St. Botolph’s church, #10 in this series.



8. “Pokers and Tongs”, say the Bells of St.

John’s (Chapel of St. John the Evangelist in the White Tower). The White Tower, or Castle Keep in the center of the Tower of London, was built between 1077-1097, and is the oldest structure of the Tower complex. St John’s Chapel is on the second (3rd



Eng.) floor in the heart of the White Tower and dates from 1080. It is the oldest surviving place of Christian worship in London, and one of the finest examples of Romanesque architecture in Britain. The stained glass windows and woodwork are not original. The glass came from Horace Walpole’s collection at Strawberry Hill and the altar hangings were made from cloth used at Westminster Abbey for the coronation of King George V. The Chapel has been preserved for over 900 years. It was reserved for royalty and their friends. For a long time it was used as a storeroom.



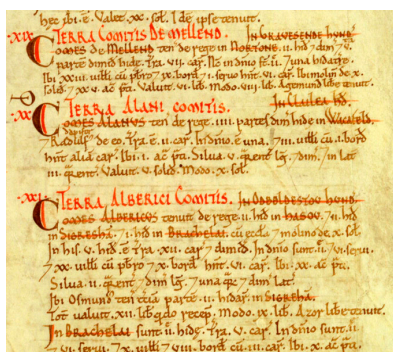
“Pokers and tongs” may refer to instruments of torture used in other parts of the Tower complex.

Today it is open to the public and services are held here. No ticket was required, although this may have changed for security reasons.



George I in 1725, as a revival of medieval chivalry, founded the Most Honorable Order of the Knights of the Bath. New knights kept all night vigil in St. John’s Chapel before their investiture. The first Knight of the Bath was His (small) Royal Highness Prince

William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland (*Right*)



In the year 2000 the Domesday Book was displayed in St. John’s Chapel. The Domesday Book, or “Book of Winchester”, was the report of a survey ordered by William the Conqueror in 1085 to determine *“how many hundreds of hides were in the shire, what land the king himself had, and what stock upon the land; or, what dues he ought to have by the year from the shire.”* “Domesday”, or “Doom Day”, was an opprobrious nickname for the survey.

St. John’s Neighbors: The entire Tower complex (both a fortress and a palace) including the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula, where the condemned prayed before their execution, The Jewel House, other towers, and the inner and outer wards. The White Tower is in the center of the model at right





9. “Kettles and pans,” say the bells of St. Anne (and St. Agnes)

1137 is the earliest recorded date for this church then known as St Agnes near Alderychgate, The Normans referred to it as *St Anne-in-the-Willows*, although there were no willows in the area. Sometime in the fifteenth century the name of St. Agnes was added. The interior was destroyed in a fire in 1548, but rebuilt with additional work in 1624. The Great Fire destroyed the church leaving only the great part of the bell tower that dated

from the 14th century. Christopher Wren rebuilt the church in 1680 in the form of a Greek cross. The design is reminiscent of the Nieuwe Kerk in Haarlem in the Netherlands. There was more restoration in the 18th and 19th centuries. The London Blitz of 1940 was devastating. In 1954 it was made a guild church for Lutherans and joined to St. Vedast Foster Lane. Services were in Latvian, Estonian and English. The parish was known for its Bach Vespers. It was possible to rededicate it in 1966 thanks in large part to the donations of Lutheran churches. In 2013 the Lutheran congregation left to join an Anglican church.



How did the rhyme come about? Well, possibly from coppersmiths who made and sold “kettles and pans” in the area. (Orbis Pictus)

Former parishioners were John Milton and John Bunyan. Other important members were the Percys, Earls (and now Dukes) of Northumberland. John Wesley preached here twice in 1737.



A new life for the

church: The church building is now called Gresham Centre, and is home to VCM, self-described as “*one of the leading vocal music education charities in the world, and is responsible for an innovative and wide reaching education programme.*”

Their website states: *Although there are no regular Sunday services, the church is often open to visitors. In addition we hold some 6 - 8 services a year, often taking the form of sung Evensong by our outreach choirs, as well as on feast days and festivals.*



10. “Old Father Baldpate,” says the Bell of Aldgate. (St. Botulph without Aldgate and Holy Trinity Minories)

The earliest reference to St. Botulph Aldgate is from 1125 when it was received by the Holy Trinity Priory (founded by Matilda, consort of Henry I.) It is possible that the parish has origins as early as 1066. It was rebuilt in the 16th century and more work was done in 1621. It escaped the Great Fire.

The present church dates from the 18th century, having been completely rebuilt by George Dance the Elder between 1741 and 1744. The parish merged with that of Holy Trinity, Minories in 1899.



The church was severely damaged during the Blitz in World War II and suffered damage from a fire in 1965. It was rehallowed in 1966 by the Bishop of London with the Queen Mother in attendance.

The Renuart Harris organ has undergone reconstruction returning it to its 1744 specification. The organ is of such historic importance that it was filmed and recorded for the documentary *The Elusive English Organ*.

Left above: An icon of St. Botulph, who is venerated in Kiev also, shows his monastic tonsure or “bald-pate.” St. Botulph (Botwulf of Thorney) founded a monastery in Suffolk in 654 and died in 680. He is patron saint of travelers. He is venerated by Roman Catholics and Orthodox as well as by Lutherans in Scandinavia.



Near St. Botulph’s can be found The Aldgate Pump. Originally a well in the time of King John, its water came from a stream that ran through Hampstead. New cemeteries were later built there and the Aldgate Pump Epidemic, which killed several hundred people, is believed to have originated because of this. The pump, now a drinking fountain, was removed to a new site in 1876 when its water supply became the “mains water.” The wolf’s head spout commemorates the



last wolf killed in London. The pump is a symbol of the beginning of London’s East End.

(Left Above: 1874; Right Above: Today)

Next: London Bells 3. St. Helen, Bishopsgate; St. Sepulchre; St. Leonard Shoreditch; St. Dunstan, Stepney, and St. Mary-le-Bow.