

## The Dowgate Hill Site

1. 24/9/1544 Queen Catherine Parr, as Regent for Henry VIII during his absence in France, sold for £912 8s 4½d paid into the Court of Augmentations to *Roger Higham of London Gentleman and William Greene Citizen and merchant taylor[?] London all those our five messuages and tenements with appurtenances situated and existing in the aforesaid parish of St John in Walbroke London now or recently in severalty of tenure or occupation of Robert Lykborne John Fletcher William Arbury Thomas Gibson and William Rogers either his assigns or their assigns anyone existing and the aforesaid recently house or monastery of the Minoresses [Poor Clares] outside Aldgate London formerly belonging and pertaining. And also all those messuages cottages and our tenements with appurtenances now or recently in tenure or occupation of James Finch or his assigns and the same recently of the house or monastery of the Minoresses formerly belonging and pertaining situated lying and existing in the same parish of St John namely between the said five messuages and the same tenements recently belonging to the house or monastery of the Minoresses by the eastern part and tenements belonging to the college of Whittington by the western part and between the Skinners Hall by the northern part and the lane called Pater noster Lane by the south part*

Mrs Marilyn Back has very kindly translated the earliest deed we have relating to Dowgate Hill. It is a copy of the original and for nearly all my time as Archivist has been kept in a parcel sealed with wax and which I was not to undo. There are other deeds which also need translating.



The convent in 1797

The purchase price is equivalent to £384,544.63p, otherwise 192 horses, today. However the purchasers also bought another tenement in Coleman Street so we do not know the precise value of Dowgate Hill.

The Minoresses, or Poor Clares, belonged to the order of St Francis and the convent was founded by 1291. The title of founder was later attributed to Edmund Crouchback, Earl of Leicester and of Lancaster; he was the son of Henry III and brother of Edward I. The name of the area, the Minories, derives from the order. (Wikipedia). Over the centuries the convent attracted powerful patrons and when it was burned down in 1515 the King, Wolsey and the mayor and aldermen generously contributed to the rebuilding. When it closed it had an annual income of £318 net from a string of City properties, including in the parish of All Hallows Thames Street. It had more across the country (History of London Vol1)

1550 Formerly the earliest reference to the site was be the decision of the guilds, including the Dyers, to mitigate the effects of the dissolution by Edward VI of the chantries, colleges etc. by purchasing them and paying *the decayed brethren and*

*almsmen* pensions. The guilds spent £8700 buying rent charges. Hopefully these deeds will shed further light.

1587 The Company bought *lands in Dow Gate* which were the site of a college of Priests called Jesus Commons. Clearly it had survived into the reign of Queen Elizabeth because it is described as being discontinued within 30 years of 1598 when the college was dissolved and turned into tenements.

In its former glory it was a *House well furnished with brass napery and plate etc besides a library well stored with books. All of which were of old time given to a number of priests that should keep commons there; as one left this place (by Death or otherwise) another should be admitted to his room.* Commons means eating meals together. The fact of this establishment existing beyond the Reformation suggests it might have been a place where the redundant priests were housed by the City. This would explain it being discontinued in the 1560s as sympathy for the old religion decreased and numbers died off.

This is a guess and awaits the translation of the Latin deed recording the sale and much greater understanding of how the City coped with the religious upheavals.

1666 These tenements were destroyed in the Great Fire.

1669 The Court leased part of the site for 60 years to a citizen and saddler on condition that within 12 months he was to erect *in truly workmanlike fashion one strong substantial sufficient handsome and convenient new dwelling house* of the size and materials as mentioned for houses of the second sort according to the Act for Rebuilding the City of London. He was also to set up the arms of the wardens carved in Portland stone on the exterior.

1671 A similar lease was issued to a dyer for another part of the site and our neighbours the Skinners rented a third part.

1681 the Hall at Tyrwhitt's site was again burned down and the Company had to find temporary lodgings until the Skinners' lease expired in 1731. What the Dyers built must have been cheapjack as in ...

1768 the Hall collapsed.

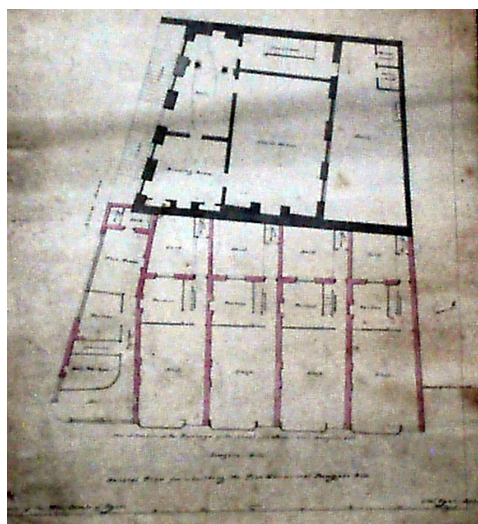
1770 It was rebuilt.

1838 After becoming unsafe it was demolished.

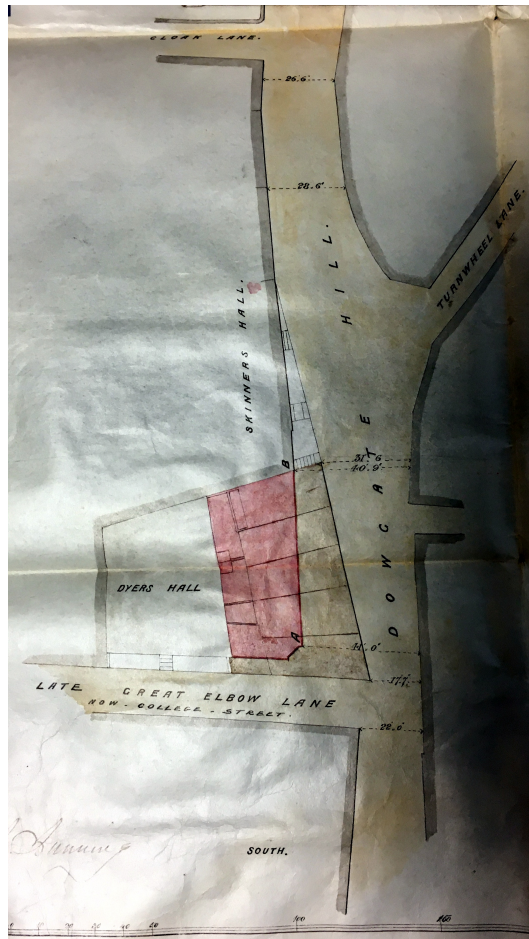
1840 The present Hall was built with the Grapes pub and three houses in front facing Dowgate Hill.

1855/6 Dowgate Hill was widened cutting back the houses significantly (as shown on the maps below)

1879 Dyers' Hall occupied two floors and the Grapes Public House was on all floors as were the houses.



The Hall and Dowgate Hill houses as they were before 1855/6 (poor image which won't enlarge)



1855 Proposed improvement to Dowgate Hill: the consequent changes to the Dyers' houses are shown in brown. The Corporation received £2,600 compensation. (£208,483 today)