

History of the Tylers and Bricklayers

John Peck

Edited by George Bird

Chapter 4: Decline: 1688-1798
I – The loss of control over the Craft
II - Two Lord Mayors and a Sheriff
III – The Hall

Chapter 4

DECLINE: 1688-1798

With the political vicissitudes of the 17th century and the Settlements of 1688 behind them, the members of the Company might well have hoped that the 18th century which lay ahead would bring calmer waters in the political avenue and greater prosperity for the Company. So far as the former was concerned they would prove to be justified in their hopes, but so far as the latter was concerned they would be sadly disappointed, for the new century would bring only financial decline accompanied in the first half of the century by the total loss of the Company's control of the craft, and in the second half of the century by the loss of their Hall. This gloomy picture is relieved only in the middle of the century by the election of the Company's only three Aldermen, two of whom became Lord Mayor and the third of whom became Sheriff. We will consider separately in chronological order the courses of these three elements in the Company's history during this period.

I THE LOSS OF CONTROL OVER THE CRAFT:

Most of the Livery Companies were to lose control of their craft during the 18th century, the underlying cause being the ever increasing size of the cities of London and Westminster and their suburbs and therefore the size of the area over which the control had to be exercised, together with the increasing resistance to control by craftsmen in the suburbs who were strangers to the customs of the City of London. In the case of the Building Craft Companies another underlying cause was the influx of "foreign" labour allowed in the City following the Great Fire, after which it inevitably became difficult to return to the status quo. In the case of the Tylers and Bricklayers' Company there were two further underlying causes for their loss of control, namely the 15 mile radius for their powers of search, which, as we have already noticed, was considerably larger than that of most Companies including all the other Building Craft Companies, and secondly the Company's comparatively modest financial resources which appear always to have been strained by its attempts to control the craft especially in the area of tile and brick and lime searches.

Those who have any knowledge of the failure of the Company's attempts to control the quality of bricks at this time usually associate it with something called "Spanish" and a somewhat alien architect called Batly Langley. Certainly their work and their name must have come to haunt Tylers and Bricklayers of the period, and their place in the Company's history must be considered in some detail.

Christopher Wren apparently commented that "the earth around London, rightly managed, will yield as good brick as were the Roman bricks ... (which) will endure in our air beyond any stone our island affords". In due course no doubt brick would in any event have become the most common building material in London, but as we have seen the process was greatly accelerated by the Great Fire and the principal type of brick after the fire was the London Stock. The term "stock" originally referred to bricks made with the

aid of a "stock board" which was a wooden board plated with iron which formed a detachable base to the wooden brick mould, which could be adjusted to produce bricks of varying thickness and also to add to the now familiar "frog". The term however came to be applied only to facing bricks, that is the better quality fully-burned bricks as opposed to common bricks which were not so durable. For these "London Stocks" as they came to be called, the clay or brick earth which is most often found in river valleys including those of the Thames was dug either close to the building site if that was possible, or brought up the Thames from Kent. The clay was left to weather after being dug up in the time honoured manner prescribed by the Statute of 1477. Thereafter it became the practice after the Great Fire to add it to household rubbish containing coal ash which for some reason became known in the trade as "Spanish". This practice seems to have begun by chance through the use of brick earth dug in fields in the suburbs of London which had been "dunged" with ashes, as it became apparent that the brick earth so treated required less coal for adequate burning, thereby reducing the cost of manufacture.

Having examined the underlying causes which would in any event in time have ensured in time the Company's loss of control over the craft, it is appropriate to look at the immediate cause which was to ensure that the loss of control came more suddenly and sooner than might have been expected. It was closely concerned with the scheme known as "Spanish" which we have already considered and with another factor which we must now consider.

The Parliamentary elections of October 1710 brought into the House of Commons a large Tory majority for the first time for over 20 years. Almost immediately on the 29th November 1710 the roof of St Alphege Church Greenwich collapsed and the parishioners requested that the money for the rebuilding of the church be found from the Coal Tax, imposed after the Great Fire on coal brought into London, for the purpose of the rebuilding of churches destroyed by the Fire. The Tories, the High Church party as they ... instead to strengthen the position of the Church of England in the suburbs of London where for lack of Churches the dissenters had gained strength and, encouraged by the demands of the Parishioners of Greenwich they introduced legislation in the form of an Act "for the building of 50 new churches in and about the cities of London and Westminster and the suburbs thereof" and for extending the application of the Coal Tax for that purpose. It may be doubted whether any member of the Company who heard about the disaster that had befallen the members of the established church in Greenwich regarded it as an event of ill omen for their Company but in a sense it was the spark that lit the fire which exploded the powder keg which was to blow away for ever their control over their craft.

In the event only some dozen “New Churches” were built under the Act but the first ten were of major importance both architecturally and for Tylers and Bricklayers. These ten churches were St Alphege, Greenwich, itself begun in 1712 and designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, St Paul, Deptford, begun in 1712 and designed by Thomas Archer, St John’s, Smith Square, begun in 1713 and designed by Archer, St George’s, Hanover Square, begun in 1713 and designed by John James, St Anne, Limehouse, St George in Upper Wapping and Christchurch, Spitalfields, all begun in 1714 and designed by Hawksmoor, St Mary–le–Strand, begun in 1714 and designed by James Gills, and St George’s, Bloomsbury and St Mary, Woolwich both begun in 1716 and designed by Hawksmoor.

The Act for the building of the fifty new churches provided for the appointment of Commissioners to be responsible for carrying out the work and of surveyors who were to supervise the work and report on its progress to the Commissioners. The reports of the latter still exist in the library at Lambeth Palace and at an early stage begin to complain of defective bricklaying and badly made bricks. On the 10th December 1713 the surveyors refer to the use of defective bricks on the foundations of St John’s, Smith Square, which they describe as “commonplace bricks , mixed with sea coke ashes, after the infamous way of the City of London” which were “burnt to a cinder except for a quantity that are ‘’ And not thoroughly burnt”. On the 30th December in the same year they recommend that “no Spanish be used .. for it the brickmaker gets liberty to put in the least quantity of Spanish they (sic) cake mix what they please and pretend that it is no more than allowed by the Commissioners”. On the 13th May 1714 the Tylers and Bricklayers Company wrote a letter to the Commissioners, which is now in the Lambeth Palace Library, having said that:

“It is with much regret we have for several years past observed the bricks made round this city to be very bad and of late worse than ever; and according to the powers granted us by Royal Charter and our Ordinances; have yearly appointed searchers ... to view and destroy such bad materials. So on to express the opinion “that the badness of bricks proceeds from the practice of using ashes commonly called Spanish in making bricks begun about forty years since, occasioned by digging up several fields contiguous to the city after the Great Fire which fields having been much dunged with ashes it was observed the bricks made with earth in those fields would be sufficiently burned with one half of the coles commonly used since which time, coles being by the high duties on them of more value here, the quantity of Spanish is increased, especially since the habit of strewing houses with sand hath prevailed the dust bucket in every house being the common receptacle for sand as well as ashes so that the Spanish hath not the force as formerly since the corrupt mixture of it; which excessive quantity so corruptly mixed we take to be a great occasion of the badness of bricks”

The Company clearly felt under pressure to do something to increase the effectiveness of its control over the craft and (arguably?) the quality of brick manufacture within its 15 mile radius and the only ... it had to hand were the powers conferred on it by the Charter of 1568 and the rules and ordinances made thereunder and approved in 1571 in accordance with the Statute of 1503. For the next few years it seems to have made strenuous efforts to carry out the twice yearly searches for defective bricks and tiles as well as brick sand and mortar. The difficulties of enforcement remained an obstacle and

especially it must have been thought that although the old ordinance specifies the amount of the fine for some purposes there were no specifies fines for making or offering for sale defective bricks of tiles and in particular no sliding scale for the quantities involved. The Court therefore decided to remedy these defects by a new ordinance amending the one of 1571. This ordinance was on the 2nd August 1723 and afterwards under the Statutes of 1503 of the Lord High Chancellor and the Chief Justices of the Kings Bench and the Common ... on the 25th January 1723. (Until 1753 the calendar year ended on the 25th March and not the 31st December). The following is a copy of the ordinance which was to be the last ordinance approved under the Statute of 1503 which the Company was ever to make. As is the way with 18th century drafting, the first two ... of the text is taken up with reciting from the existing powers and secondly the circumstances which make an amendment desirable, and only the last one ... the actual new Ordinance.

“A Rule ordinance and Order made by the Master Wardens and Society and Company of the Art and Mistery of Tylers and Bricklayers at a Court held the second day of August 1723.

WHEREAS among divers ancient Rules ordinances and orders heretofore made by the Master and Wardens of the fellowship of the Company of Freeman to the Art and mistery of Tylers and Brickms. Of London for the conservation rule good order and governance of their Mistery and fellowshipp and confirmed by St Nicholas Baron Knight then Lord Keeper of the Great Seal of England Wm Marquis of Winchester High Treasurer to our late Sovereigne Lady Queen Elizabeth Sr Robert Catline Knight Lord Cheife Justice of her said Majesties Court of Queens Bench St James Dyer ... Lord Cheife Justice of her said Majesties Court of Common Pleas Pursuant to the Statute in that case made and provided. It is ordained that it shall and may be lawfull to the Masters and Wardens of the said Fellowship or to two of them or to two other honest men of the said list by the same Master and Wardens to be appointed twice every year or oftener if they think it good to enter into all Livery place and places where any Earth and Clay shall be digged within fifteene Miles compas of the said Citty of London to make any Tyle or Bricks of or where any sand chalk or other stone shall be digged or broken to be occupied with or about the laying of Brick or Tyle or for making of Lime. And to search View and understand by their knowledge and discucions whether the said earth or clay be good and lawfull stuff and well seasoned and tempered to make brick or Tyle of or no. And whether the stone Chalk and sand be meet and convenient to be occupied in the same art for the making of Lyme or to be tempered with Lyme . And whether every brick meant and intended to be offered or putt to sale be of the length of Nine Inches and in breadth Four Inches and one quarter of an Inch and two Inches and one quarter in thickness as they ought to be . And whether every Plaine Tyle do contain in length Ten Inches and a half and in breadth Six Inches and a quarter of an Inch and in thickness half Inch and one half a quarter as it ought to be and whether every paveing Tyle be of good sufficient lawfull and merchantable stuffe. And whether every roofe Tyle do containe in length Thirteen Inches and in thickness one Inche with convenient depth accordingly as it ought to do. And whether every corner Tyle and Cover Tyle doth containe in length Tenn Inches and a half with convenient thickness and depth accordingly as they ought to do. And if the said Master and Wardens or any two of them do find any such default with any of the stuff aforesaid meant to be putt to sale as is aforesaid Or that any manner of person or persons

shall bring or cause to be brought any kind of Tyle Brick or Lyme made of insufficient stuff or not of the said sizes or any sand being not lawfull meet convenient or not sufficient to be sold and occupied in the said art within the Citty of London the suburbs thereof or within Fiftiene miles compass of the same Citty Then it shall be lawfull to the said Master then for the time being and to their successor or to two of them to break in peices the said Brick and Tyle so unsufficiently or ill made as is aforesaid or wanting the thickness breadth or length aforesaid And further to Fine and annexe every of the owners and Masters of the said Brick Tyle Lyme of Sand in the Court of the said Master and Wardens within one month after to be kept according to the discrecons of the said Master and Wardens.

AND WHEREAS It fully appears to this Court upon the report of two severall persons of the said Art who have annually for several years past by virtue of the said recited order been appointed by the Master and Wardens of the said Company to search and view the earth and clay within the limitts aforesaid wherewith Bricks and Tyles have been and are continued to be made and the demencons and contents of such Bricks and Tyles That severall persons within the Limits of the aforesaid have made and continue to make great quantitys of Bricks and Tyles of bad and unlawfull stuff not well seasoned or Tempered for the said purposes and of less demencons both in length breadth and thickness than by law and by the said recited order they ought to doe in contempt and defiance of the said order and to the great prejudice of Buildings and the deceit of the buyers thereof for remedy of which evell practice and the better to enforce a Compliance with the said recited order and oblige all makers of Bricks and Tyles within the said Limitts for the future to make their Bricks and Tyles of good well seasoned and Tempered stuff and of the several lengths breadths and thickness aforesaid.

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED ESTABLISHED AND ORDAINED That if at any time or times hereafter it shall appear to the said Master and Wardens at any of their Courts hereafter to be held upon the View and report of the said Master and Wardens or any two of them or of any two honest persons of the said art by the Master and Wardens of the said Company for the time being to be annually nominated that any person or persons within the limits aforesaid have been guilty of making any number of quantity of Bricks or Tyles with bad or not well seasoned and Tempered stuff or of less demencons in length breadth or thickness than by the said recited order the same are prescribed or directed to be made such person or persons against or of whom such a report shall be made shall be forthwith summoned to attend the said Master and Wardens at their first and next Court to be held after such complaint to shew cause if he or they can why a sume or penalty not exceeding the severall sumes and penaltyes hereinafter mencioned shall not be levied on him of them for his or their offence or offences in making such Bricks or Tyles contrary to the true intent and meaning of the said recited order. And if the person or persons summoned shall either neglect to attend at such next Court or upon his attendance shall not shew good cause to the Contrary Then and in either of the said cases the said Master and Wardens shall and may at such next Court annexe and fine every person or persons or offending as aforesaid the sume of (interpolated) two shillings and sixpence for every Thousand of Bricks. And alsoe the sume of one shilling for every hundred of Tyles which shall have been made by each person or persons of bad earth or Clay or unlawful stuff or of less demencons than in and by the said recited order are appointed And in case such person or

persons shall refuse or deny to pay the said amercement or fine which shall be the said Master and Wardens be so annexed and sett the same shall and may from time to time be recovered by acion of debt in the names of the Master and Wardens of the said fellowship or be levyed by Warrant made under the Company's seal by the Clerke of the said Company by distress of the goods of such offender.

II TWO LORD MAYORS AND A SHERIFF

As we have already noted, at least since the beginning of the 12th century, and possibly since Saxon times, there had been Aldermen elected in the Wards, and from an early date, and until the second half of the 16th century, these aldermen were always chosen from the Twelve Great Companies.

Since Saxon times there had been two Sheriffs jointly for London and Middlesex, who had originally been Royal appointees. Later these Sheriffs came to be elected annually by the aldermen and citizens, then after 1475 one of the sheriffs was elected by the Liverymen, the other being appointed by the Lord Mayor, and finally since 1694 both had been elected by the Livery. Usually one of the Sheriffs was an alderman, and one (now called the Lay Sheriff) was not, but there could be two Sheriffs who were Aldermen or two who were not.

In the second half of the 12th century the citizens had formed a council on the French model under an official called the Maior, and since 1189 there had always been a Mayor, who replaced the earliest Port Reeve and who since about 1400 had assumed the title of Lord Mayor. Probably the Mayor had always been chosen from the ranks of the aldermen and this became a legal requirement in 1435. Since 1385 it was recognised that the Lord Mayor must have served as a Sheriff, and until 1742 it was also regarded as a requirement that he "should also be a member of one of the "Twelve Great Companies".

It will therefore be apparent that no Liveryman of a minor Company and therefore no Tyler and Bricklayer could have held the office of Alderman until the second half of the 16th century or that of Lord Mayor until the middle of the 18th century without having been transferred, or, as it was termed, translated, to one of the twelve. As it turned out, only three Liverymen have so far become Aldermen, all did so in the second half of the 18th century, all three subsequently held office as Sheriff, and two became a Lord Mayor, one of whom "translated". All three received the no doubt unwelcome distinction of an entry in "City Biography", a book published for its anonymous author in 1800, and containing largely scurrilous anecdotes of some sixty City Aldermen of this period. We will now consider the careers of these three Aldermen in turn.

The first of the Company's Aldermen, Samuel Fludyer (1705-1768), was the son of a Liveryman of the Company also called Samuel who was excused service as Master in the year before his son's birth, and whose family were wool merchants and clothiers in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. He was a Common Councillor between 1734-51, Alderman for Cheap between 1751-68, having translated to the Clothworkers Company in 1752, Sheriff in 1754-55 and Lord Mayor in 1761-62. Fludyer was also M.P. for Chippenham 1754-68, a director of the Bank of England 1753-68 and deputy Governor 1768. He received a Knighthood in 1755 and a Baronetcy (which became extinct

with the death of the 5th baronet in 1922) in 1759. The "City Biography" which is inclined where possible to attribute humble origins to its subjects, having referred to his early days leading packhorses carrying wool from Wiltshire (perhaps no more than an indication that the best place to begin a career in a family business is at the bottom) goes on to say that "by great industry and spirit of enterprise and good fortune he acquired prodigious wealth and in his family life lived in all the taste and luxury of society to which he had allied himself by marriage". This seems a fair summary on one who in business was, with his brother, Sir Thomas, head of the great city's commercial house of Cloth Factors of Samuel and Thomas Fludyer later known as Fludyer Marsh and Hudson, which enabled him to amass a fortune which at his death in 1768 amounted to almost a million pounds, and which the historian Lewis ... compared with that of Lord Bath (£1,200,000) who died in 1764. His social aspirations are sufficiently indicated by his own marriage to a niece of the Earl of Cardigan, and those of his sons respectively to a niece of the Duke of Montague and a daughter of the Earl of Westmoreland. Samuel Fludyer's last years were somewhat clouded by a scandal over the export of contraband cloth to India. He survives, if at all, in the little read pages of the satirical poem "The Ghost" published in 1762 by John Wilkes' friend and political ally Charles Churchill in which Fludyer appears as "Dulman" the City Magistrate who as Lord Mayor tried the Cork Lane conspirators in 1761.

The second of the Company's Aldermen, William Plomer (d.1801) became a Liverymen of the Company a few months after Fludyer's translation to the Clothworkers, in 1752. He was Common Councillor for Aldgate 1765-72, Alderman for Bassettslaw 1772-1801, Sheriff 1774-75 and Lord Mayor 1781-82. He was Knighted in 1782 and held office a Treasurer of the Honorable Artillery Company from 1780-93 and as President 1793-95. "City Biography" describes him as beginning life with the usual humble origins, in his case in a "dark oil shop near Aldgate", and subsequently as "having saved £30,000 he obtained the highest City Honors and retired extremely rich". Its notice of Plomer is embellished with a quotation from Horace which has been translated as "the people hiss at me, but I applaud myself at home when I gaze at the money in my coffers". Plomer earned a reputation for a degree of eccentricity as is indicated by the stories mentioned below, and his widow appears to have continued the tradition by ending her days living in a hut in Epping Forest which enabled her to continue also the tradition of being the subject of a satirical print. However Plomer was a much better Company man than Fludyer taking office as Master of the Company at the end of his year as Lord Mayor, i.e. for the year 1782-83, and he was Master again in 1790-91. The Court minutes record the fact that the members of the Court received invitations to Plomer's Lord Mayor's Banquet, adding with a sense of evident enjoyment that echoes down the years "the viands for the dinner remarkable good, profusion of game, great plenty in the dessert with iced cream etc – the wine was good vintage, Burgundy, Claret, Champaign, Red Port etc."

So far as the Lords Mayors and Aldermen were concerned, the second half of the 18th century was one of greater involvement in national politics than at any time since, and its commencement was marked by two permanent changes. First in 1742 the election of Robert Williams, a cooper, as Lord Mayor without his translation to one of the Great Companies, showed there was in fact no rule banning members of Minor Companies from that office, so that although some Aldermen continued for a time to translate, the office of Lord Mayor was increasingly to be filled from Minor Companies. Secondly the completion of the Mansion house in 1752 has provided a permanent home for Lord Mayors during their term of office ever since.

This period of involvement in national politics really began with the accession of George III in 1760 and the resignation in 1761 of William Pitt, who as secretary of State had been the architect of the astonishing successes of the Seven Years War, the resignation being followed by the inclusion in the cabinet of the King's protégé, Lord Bute, who shortly became the Prime Minister. The King, Pitt and Bute all attended Fludyer's munificent inaugural banquet in 1761, Pitt being acclaimed by the crowd while their reception of the King was less enthusiastic and that of Bute openly hostile. A print depicts the scene inside the Guildhall on the occasion appeared in "The Gentleman's Magazine" for December 1761. Fludyer was a Tory and a supporter of the new King and Bute's subsequent Tory administration.

While the Court of Aldermen remained largely Tory during his period, there was an influential minority of Radicals who took more or less the Whig line who included Beckford and Crosby and later John Wilkes all of whom became Lord Mayor. Then the City was much involved in the controversies which arose over the matter of Wilkes and the General Warrants, Wilkes' candidature as M.P. for London and later Middlesex and the riots which attended these. Beckford who succeeded Fludyer as Lord Mayor in 1762 became Lord Mayor again in 1769 and made his celebrated protest to the King against Wilkes' imprisonment. Brass Crosby became Lord Mayor in 1770 and at once began his campaign against the issue of Press warrants enabling naval Press Gangs to operate within the City, and the City Biography gives Plomer, who had been a Common Councillor since 1765 credit for his support of the Radical line on this issue. Wilkes, by now a joiner, became an Alderman in 1769 the year after the death of his opponent Fludyer and Lord Mayor in 1774 by which time Plomer had been an aldermen for two years, and having been Sheriff in 1774-5 when Wiles was Lord Mayor must have had a lively year to put it mildly, for Wilkes may fairly be described as the best known holder of that office save for Whittington.

No sooner had the Seven Years War been concluded by the Treaty of Paris in 1763 than the trouble over the American Colonies began with disputes as to how the cost of the French and Indian Wars was to be borne, continuing through the American War of Independence beginning in 1775 and ending with the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. Throughout this period of twenty years the City Radicals were supporters of the colonials against the policies of the King and Lord North, and Fludyer remained an Alderman until his death in 1763, Plomer being an Alderman from 1772 until his death in 1801, and Hammerton (of whom more in a moment) was a Common Councillor from 1779.

Beckford as Mayor had claimed the right to compel the Livery to attend Common Hall for political reasons. In 1773 Alderman Plumbe was disenfranchised for protesting, but two years later was reinstated when it was decided that the Lord Mayor had no such right. This was the Alderman Plumbe who became Lord Mayor himself in 1778 and whose "eyes were said to have been blacked" by Plomer in a dispute over a tavern bill during the latter's year of office of Lord Mayor, an incident which became the subject of a humorous caricature.

That the office of the Lord Mayor was no sinecure is apparent from the fact that Bradley Kennet who succeeded Plomer as Lord Mayor in 1789-90 was prosecuted for failure to

bring under control the Gordon Riots which resulted in three hundred deaths and much destruction of property and specifically for his failure to "read the Riot Act"; he died after being found guilty but before sentence. Plomer then became Mayor in the aftermath of the Gordon Riots, but the Lord Mayor in the intervening year was Sir Watkins Lewis, a description of whose inaugural banquet in the journal of William Hickey reads as follows:

"The 9th being the Lord Mayor's day, I arrayed myself in my full suit of velvet. Alderman Woolridge called at my father's and conveyed me in his chariot to the Guildhall at half past four o'clock, about an hour after which the procession arrived from Westminster. At six we sat down to a profusion of turtle and venison, followed by all the etceteras of French cookery, with splendid dessert of pines, grapes and other fruits. I was seated between Mrs Healy, sister to Wilkes, and Lord Lewisham, eldest son of the Earl of Dartmouth. Mrs Healy almost enveloped me in her immense hoop, but was vastly attentive to me, whom she perceived to be a stranger, ordering one of her servants to wait upon me and naming to me the different persons who sat at the same table, amongst whom were most of the great officers of state, the Lord Chancellor, Judges, and Master of the Rolls. The heat from the crowd assembled, and the immense number of lights was disagreeable to all; to many quite oppressive and distressing. The Lord Mayor's table at which I was, and nearly opposite his Lordship, was less so than other parts of the hall from being considerably elevated above the rest. The wines were excellent and the dinner the same, served too with as much regularity and decorum as if we had been in a private house, but far different was the scene in the body of the hall, where in five minutes after the guests took their stations at the tables the dishes were entirely cleared of their contents, twenty hands seizing the same joint or bird and literally tearing it to pieces. A more determined scramble could not be, the roaring and noise was deafening and hideous, which increased as the liquor operated, bottles and glasses flying across from side to side without intermission. Such a bear garden altogether I never beheld. This abominable and disgusting scene continued till near ten o'clock, when the Lord Mayor, sheriffs, the nobility, etc. adjourned to the ball and card rooms and dancing commenced."

This description may well have been equally true of Plomer's own banquet, and while his "top table" no doubt conducted itself with the same decorum as that observed by Hickey the conduct of the lower tables gives some credence to the tale told in the City Biography that Plomer was observed at a dinner in a city tavern with the claw of a fowl protruding from his pocket.

This period of some twenty years from 1760 to the early 1780s covers a lively period in City history and the Tylers and Bricklayers' Lord Mayors come at either end, and between them as Aldermen they have played a part in the discussions of the issues of the day. They are very different characters these two, Fludyer a commercial magnate out to make a fortune and a place in society for himself, and having little to do with the minor Company from which he has been translated after his election as Alderman, and Plomer also a wealthy man, but not in the same league as Fludyer, a rougher diamond altogether, at home in taverns and often the subject of humorous prints, but a good Company man assiduous in his attendance at Court meetings even during the year of his Mayoralty.

Only one other Tyler and Bricklayer has so far held office as Alderman, and he was Charles Hammerton who himself was translated from the Paviers Company; he was Common Councillor for Bread Street 1779-87, Alderman for Bread Street 1787-1800, Sheriff 1793-94 and he died in 1800. The Court minutes describe two occasions on which the Court in the Autumn of 1793 accompanied their opposite numbers in the Goldsmiths Company to Guildhall, to witness the swearing in of the Sheriffs and later by the Goldsmiths barge to Westminster to present the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs to the Court of Exchequer. On each occasion the Assistants of the two Companies returned to dine at Goldsmiths Hall. The explanation for the association between the two companies was that in that year, 1793-4, the Lord Mayor and Senior Sheriffs were Goldsmiths and the other Sheriff was Charles Hammerton. The Lord Mayor was Paul de Mesurier described by Valerie Hope in her book "My Lord Mayor" as son of the hereditary governor of Alderney – the City Biography describes him as the son of "an Alderney Smuggler" but perhaps the two descriptions are not necessarily inconsistent.

III THE HALL

The Company's second Hall in Leadenhall Street had remained in the occupation of the Company until 1761, but thereafter although the Hall, or its site, remained in the Company's ownership for another century and a half, they were never again to have the use of it. During the middle years of the 18th century the Court minutes made occasional reference to the "question of the Hall", from which one can conclude that having lost the battle to control the craft, and having a relatively modest income from investments, mainly property, with little prospect of implementing this to any great extent by contributions from the Livery, the burden of maintaining the Hall for what must have been only occasional use, had become too great. The solution to the problem which was eventually adopted was to retain the hall and the adjoining properties but to let the Hall to produce additional income. The Hall was ... let for a term of 31 years from the 1st September 1762 at an annual rent of £40 and a "fine" (i.e. a premium) of £300. The identity of the lessees and the use to which they were to put the Hall at first sight may seem surprising: the lessees were described in the Minutes variously as "the Jews", and as "the Churchwardens of the Synagogue", and the use to which the Hall was to be put was indeed as a Synagogue. The Synagogue in question was to be called, with no great originality it may be thought, "The New Synagogue", and since there was to be a Jewish connection with the property which would last for ... years, the question of just who these Jews were, and how they came to be looking for premises suitable for a Synagogue in Leadenhall Street merits some consideration.

The first settlement of Jews in London, or indeed in England, is described by Stowe in the engaging style which is all his own in the following terms:

"There is the Old Juric, a street so called of Jews sometime dwelling there, and adjoining in the Parishes of St Olave, St Michael Basing Hall, St Martin Ironmongers Lane, St Lawrence called the Jury, and so west to Wood Street. Williams Duke of Normandy first brought them from Rouen to inhabit there."

Again, after referring to "the Street of Lothberie", Stowe says that on the north side among "fair houses and large for Merchants" is one that:

"Of old time was the Jews' Synagogue which was defaced by the citizens of London. After that they had slain 700 Jews in the year 1262. And that not long after that in the year 1291 King Edward I banished the remnant out of England."

Thereafter although there were always a few Jews living in the country nothing that could be called a Jewish Community was again established in England until a request to admit them to London was made to Oliver Cromwell on behalf of the Sephardi Jews of Spanish and Portuguese origin then residing in the Netherlands, where they had settled during the period of Spanish rule which had nearly been ended by a long struggle for independence in the early stages of which Ben Johnson had played a small part. Although they received no positive response from the Commonwealth Government, a Jewish community began to establish itself in London and by 1688 about 100 Jewish families were thought to be there, most of whom had chosen to live in and around Creechurch Lane just to the north of the Company's Hall. By the end of the 18th century the Jewish population of England was estimated to be at least 20,000, two thirds of whom lived in London and in fact within an area around and to the East of Creechurch Lane.

At this time and for some time to come, the Jewish community was divided into two groups each with their own distinctive rituals, namely the Sephardim who were of Spanish, Portuguese and Mediterranean origin, and the Ashkenazim who were of Polish and German origin. The Sephardim were the first to establish themselves with a Synagogue in Creechurch Lane in 1656 which was moved to Dukes Place also nearby in 1722, the Synagogue being rebuilt in 1766 and known as "the Great Synagogue". Two groups of the Ashkenazim broke away from the Great" and established their own Synagogues, first the "Hambro" (so called after the home city of many of the congregation) in 1707 in Fenchurch Street, and the second the "New" as we have seen in 1761 in Leadenhall Street. All these four Synagogues were within a few hundred yards of each other, and therefore the Company's Hall found itself at the end of the 18th century at the centre of the London Jewish community which at that time constituted the great majority of the community in England.