



The Fan Makers Northern City Walk

by Professor John Salter

FROM SMITHFIELD TO THE FAN MAKERS' FIRST HALL SITE: The walk is centred on Fann Street linking the Cloth Fair to the West to Silk Street and Ropemaker Street to the East. A memorial in Welsh slate in Fann Street records the meeting of Fan Makers in 1710 at their Hall.

Fann Street lies in the centre of a peninsular between the Fleet and its tributaries to the West and the Moor Fields flood plain to the East. At its junction with Aldersgate Street, Fann Street formed an important entry point into the City of London, marked by a blue plaque.

1. Introduction – The Tudor Period

This walk starts at West Smithfield, in the North-West corner of the City of London, just North of New Gate and the Old Bailey. Smooth Field in Tudor times was an open ground used for grazing, helpfully equipped with a horse pond and with easy access via Chicke Lane to the Fleet River and its tributaries with their adjoining pasture lands. It was an ideal location for a meat market. Fan makers, when they were in funds, could eat well in this locality. If they were ill they had access to St Barts Hospital which adjoined the Southern boundary. St Barts Priory, built by Rahere around 1123, lies to the East of Smithfield with the famous fairground adjoining (The Cloth Fair with Founders' Hall), bounded to the North by Long Lane, which was a good place for relaxation until the St. Bartholomew's Fair was abolished in 1855. Some businesses have recently had to leave Long Lane to make way for the Cross Rail works, which include plans for a new station and which are likely to disturb the Charterhouse Outer Cemetery, a 14th Century Black Death Burial Ground. This was fully discussed in a House of Lords scrutiny Committee during the passage of the Crossrail Bill, fully reported in the Islington Tribune published on 6th June 2008.

Aldersgate (known as Aldredes Gate in the time of Henry II) was at this time the main entrance to the City from the North. The good building land lying between the Fleet and the Moor Fields flood plain invited expansion beyond the Roman City walls. In Tudor times the jurisdiction of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen was marked by bars on the main roads leading into the City. So the boundary of Northern City liberties and its control points were marked by bars or barriers across the road at the junction of what is now Fann Street and Aldersgate and at the junction of Cowcross Street with the bottom end of St. John Street (then called Clerkenwell Street) which gave access via St. John's Lane to the Precinct of the Priory of St. John and the Priory Church. Many Fan Makers have or have had connections with the Order of St. John. To the North-East, also just outside the City, lay the Charterhouse with its Priory. An Honorary Liveryman of the Company is Deputy Master of Charterhouse. Immediately to the East of the Charterhouse ran a lane (now widened and in places re-aligned) called Fann Street forming the Northern boundary of the Garden of the Manor of Bas Court or Barbican, part of which to-day exists as a wildlife garden. On its South side was the Gate Tower giving access to the Barbican, with its watch tower (recorded by Bagford around 1710), fronting the North side of Beech Street now included in the City's Barbican Development from which it gained its name.

A Red Cross was erected at the junction of Golden Lane and Beech Street. This gave its name to Red Cross Street which ran due South from this point to the church of St. Giles Cripplegate. Halfway along this Street on the left hand side was a building, which was used as a Hall for the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers from 1710, the approximate position of which is to-day marked by the end wall of Defoe House at Lakeside Terrace upon which the City authorities installed a commemorative blue plaque on the 29th March 2010. Daniel Defoe (c1659-1731) was a writer and journalist, a Presbyterian in favour of religious tolerance and an advocate of the Act of Union with Scotland of 1707. He was buried in the company of William Blake and John Bunyan in the dissenters' cemetery in Bunhill (or Bone Hill) Fields graveyard, just North of the HAC Grounds, where there is also an official Quakers Burying Ground, not far from the former Huguenot Hospital.



Adjoining the Hall on its South side was a Library, built around 1713, financed by a bequest from Dr. Daniel Williams DD who died in 1711. He was a Presbyterian Minister and arrangements were made to establish a register of dissenters' babies. The Library housed a Librarian and a House-keeper. Provision was made to house 40,000 volumes in a very spacious room. Opposite the Hall was Paul's Alley which led to a Nonconformist chapel which may have suited some fan makers. Michael Faraday and his wife were regular members of the congregation even after they had moved to the West End of London. It also led to the Albion tavern at 172-173 on the West side of Aldersgate Street which provided up-market refreshment for fan makers. Walter Thornbury writing in 1878 recorded that it had long been famed for its good dinners. In fact it was a former mansion house which, at some time before 1771, had been converted for use for functions. The Fan Makers' Court certainly dined there in 1844. Timbs records that the majority of the banquets of the Corporation of London took place there, including the Sheriffs' inauguration dinners "as well as those of civic companies". It must have been very grand for apparently the East India Company dined out retiring Governor-Generals of India there. The Albion was demolished in 1907. The Hall building survived the Great Fire of London – the Roman Wall at St Giles Cripplegate (still standing) formed an effective barrier - but not the bombers with incendiaries of World War II and the Blitz of the 29th December 1940.

Huguenot Protestant fan makers, who started emigrating from France and Spanish Flanders from the 1550s and in large numbers from the 1660s, would have worshipped at one or more of the French churches in the locality. That in Threadneedle Street was long established. Under Edward VI foreign Protestants were encouraged to settle in England and in particular in the City of London. On 24th July 1550 Letters Patent were issued promising some 7,000 immigrants protection and religious liberty. Queen Elizabeth I was an enthusiastic patroness of fan making. Anglican fan makers may have used the parish church of St Giles Cripplegate. However with residential expansion the Parishes of St Thomas the Apostle (perhaps named after the fan makers' patron saint mentioned in their 1709 Charter) and St Luke were proposed. St. Luke's Church in Old Street was opened in 1733, designed by Hawksmoor and John James. It is now used as a headquarters for the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO).

Red Cross Street ran parallel to White Cross Street and Grub Street, forming a kind of Northern suburb with room for more housebuilding. The streets were at first bounded to the North by Beech Street and Chiswell Street, which gave access to the Artillery Ground at Bunhill Row. Many fan makers enjoy or have enjoyed an association with the HAC (Honourable Artillery Company). Bunhill Row leads on to Bath Street and the site of the former Huguenot hospital which overlooked the Peerless Pool (originally the Perilous Pond due to the number of drownings but remodelled and renamed in 1743 by William Kemp to become London's first outdoor swimming pool)). These served the needs of several Huguenot fan makers. In 1805 Baldwin Street was built over the separate fish pond much admired by Jane Austen but nevertheless drained by Joseph Watts for redevelopment. The pool itself was closed in 1850 for the same purpose. The former Pest House (built in 1592-4 following the plague and eventually demolished in 1736) was transferred in 1681 to the Distributors of Royal Bounty for Huguenot refugees. This was the first French hospital. An adjoining four acre site was acquired partly on a 990 years lease from the Ironmongers' Company and partly from the City Corporation for construction in 1718 of La Providence, a new French Hospital, funded by Jacques de Gastigny's substantial bequest. St. Luke's Hospital for lunatics was founded in 1751 at the Old Street end of the Peerless Pool. It was rebuilt in 1782. Not so far away was the French Church at Hoxton, one of several situated to the North of the Roman City walls in an area settled by immigrants with a distinctive non-conformist culture. The Public Baths and Washhouses, built in 1931, still exist in Ironmonger Row as a reminder of former bathing activities.

To the East in Tudor times lay the Moor Fields and open land until a small cluster of buildings is reached just to the North of Bishopsgate. This mainly comprised the Priory and Hospital of St Mary Bethlehem, with the Church and Churchyard of St Botolph's Without Bishopsgate lying just to the South. It was here, following the bombing of the Hall in Red Cross Street in 1940 and the expiry of arrangements for the use of St. Dionis Hall in Lime Street from 1941 to 1951, that a building constructed in the Churchyard was restored by the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers and used as its Hall from 1952 to 1992 when its lease ran out, and is now used by the Company only upon an occasional basis. The site of St. Dionis Back Church, which was demolished in 1878, is marked by a blue plaque in Lime Street.



The Church Hall, now demolished, was situated on the West side of the Southern part of Lime Street behind a row of houses (now Marks and Spencers) fronting Fenchurch Street. After the Great Fire it had been rebuilt in 1674. The Drapers' Company, which has lent its Hall to the Fan Makers Company on many occasions, administered the Walters' Trust (1656) which owned land here. The Church was dedicated to St. Dennis or Dionysius, an Athenian Areopogite. The offices now comprising 159 to 147 Fenchurch Street include appropriately those of the International Union of Aerospace Insurers. The Ship Tavern in Lime Street sadly is closed pending redevelopment of the whole area but The Grapes is thriving.

In 1992 the Company took up the kind and generous offer from the Skinners' Company of a 25 year lease of the Hall, Committee and Court Rooms and in 2009 took over the ground floor and basement of 9 Dowgate Hill as offices and Committee, Research, Archives and Storage Rooms officially opened by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucester after a thanksgiving in St. Paul's for the Tercentenary.

2. Smithfield.

The site gained some notoriety as a place of execution of heretics or religious reformers and of political opponents such as William Wallace and Wat Tyler. The livestock market survived the Great Fire, which stopped at the Fortune of War tavern at the junction of Giltspur Street and Cock Lane, suitably marked by the Golden Boy of Pye Corner which was the name given to the approach to Smithfield and is where the walk begins. Walk around West Smithfield anti-clockwise taking in St. Barts Square and North Wing designed by James Gibbs, the Great Hall with Hogarth's (1697-1764) The Good Samaritan and The Pool of Bethesda on the staircase, St. Bartholomew's Great Church founded as an Augustinian Priory by Rahere (see his tomb) around 1123, Cloth Fair entrance (where medieval merchants, mercers and drapers gathered to buy and sell materials) and Long Lane. Then turn left into Smithfield and walk through Poultry Avenue. As authorised by the Metropolitan Meat and Poultry Market Act, 1860, part of the open area was covered in 1868 by an impressive Grade II listed building designed by Sir Horace Jones. Turn right into Charterhouse Street to view site of the four West Smithfield Bars. Then continue to the East along Charterhouse Street into the Square.

3. Charterhouse.

The gatehouse Entrance Court adjoins the Malmaison Hotel. Walk through the Master's Court, Chapel Court, down corridor to the Chapel, return to the Great Hall (where hangs a portrait attributed to Hogarth circa 1762 of Elizabeth wife of the Master Samuel Salter 1761-1778), Library, Norfolk Cloister, Preacher's Court, The Master's Garden, the Admiral Ashmore Building, Wash- House Court, Master's Court again and return to Entrance Court. The area was used as a Black Death burial ground. The London Charterhouse was a Carthusian priory founded in 1371 and dissolved by Henry VIII in 1538. It served as a Tudor Mansion from 1545 to 1611, when it was bought by Thomas Sutton who endowed almshouses and a school which was moved away in 1872. The almshouses are still occupied by residents known as "Brothers". It is outside the City and constitutes an extra-parochial area. The buildings to the East housed St Barts' Medical College and now house Queen Mary College, part of London University.

4. Aldersgate Bars

A City blue plaque is set into the wall of 108 Aldersgate Street at its modern junction with Goswell Road then located in the Borough of Finsbury, the product of a local government re-organisation under the London Government Act of 1899 until 1965(it is now the London Borough of Islington). It declares that "Opposite this tablet a drinking fountain was erected in 1878 in memory of Robert Besley Esq. Alderman of this ward and Lord Mayor of London 1869-70." The fountain was removed in 1954. It may have replaced the well and pump in Fann Alley off Aldersgate Street which was demolished soon after 1875. The bars have been described as two granite obelisks with drinking fountains attached. "Fann Alley" was shown on Olgivy and Mather's map of 1677 and "Fan Street" on Horwood's map of 1799.



5. Fann Street

The entrance to Fann Street is marked on the left with The Shakespeare Public House. This area was one of Shakespeare's territories. His plays, originally performed at the Theatre in Shoreditch built by James Burbage in 1576 until it was demolished in 1598 and taken across the water to Bankside where it was re-erected as The Globe, were performed at the Fortune Theatre just across from the end of Fann Street. Fann Street's entrance is marked on the right with a principal pedestrian access to the Barbican alongside a Youth Hostel and an imposing piece of masonry inscribed "This frieze was removed from 53-4 Barbican when it was demolished in 1962. It was re-erected in 1975. It was located at the premises of W. Bryher & Sons Gold Refiners and Assayers whose trade is depicted in this frieze. The premises were damaged by incendiaries in December 1940." The South side of Fann Street broadly speaking lay inside the City and the North side outside the City before the development of the Golden Lane Estate. This gave immigrant fan makers from about 1660 a choice of where to locate families engaged in fan production. The City side was and still is divided up between two wards, Aldersgate and Cripplegate. Huguenots were attracted to the area from Fann Street and Red Cross Street across to Spitalfields via Silk Street because it afforded them an opportunity to practice their craft in communities within and without the City in a non-conformist atmosphere created by the early settlements of silk and textile weavers. Fann Street still has access to a wildlife garden on the right. Turning right down Viscount Street one can view the front of the Welsh Church. Walk around Bridgewater Square which around 1690 replaced the Barbican which was sold by the Earl of Bridgewater to Christopher Wren and George Jackson for redevelopment. The square has some interesting features. Returning to Fann Street, view the Welsh slate-blue memorial tablet affixed to the return wall of the Welsh Church fronting 72 Fann Street which is inscribed "Fann Street. Huguenot fan makers settled here and the Worshipful Company of Fan Makers met in their Common Hall nearby" (i.e. in Red Cross Street) "and adopted their new constitution in the year 1710". This accorded with the legal requirements imposed by the Charter which also required the Company to have a Hall. Evidence of fan maker settlement is provided by legal documentation relating to the Charter and by documents held in the Huguenot Library, especially the 1710 printed accounts of distribution of the Royal Bounty, where beneficiaries were listed by social class and the area in which they had settled. At the end of Fann Street to the left lies Fortune Street (once called Playhouse Yard), leading into White Cross Street, where in late November 1600 Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn the actor (1566-1626) opened the Fortune Theatre overlooking the park, originally built in a square shape four storeys high (as shown in a Wilkins' print of 1811) by Peter Street who also built the Globe around that time in a round shape. It was burnt down in 1621, rebuilt in circular format in 1623 and burnt down again in 1649. Some of Shakespeare's historical plays would have been performed here. His sonnets were first printed in 1609. He died in 1616.

6. The Barbican, The Red Cross and Red Cross Street

Turning right at the end of Fann Street into Golden Lane one comes to the Barbican Conference Halls. Under the bridge is a cross roads where in Tudor times stood the red cross. To the right walking a little way along the bridged over Beech Street one can imagine the entrance to the Barbican via a Gate Tower. On the right of the Barbican entrance Court was the Garter house with a Chapel above. Then came the substantial building of the Barbican or Bas Court, behind which came the formal garden bounded by Fann Street. The Manor was acquired by the Earls of Bridgewater. Following a disastrous fire in 1688 the site was acquired and developed by Sir Christopher Wren and George Jackson who, as already mentioned, laid out Bridgewater Square, which became a popular centre for watchmakers in the Eighteenth Century. The entrance to the Barbican car park marks the entrance to Red Cross Street from The Red Cross. The street ran due South to St.Giles Cripplegate.



7. White Cross Street, Silk Street and the Barbican Centre

The walk, however, continues along Beech Street. Turn right into White Cross Street which continues into Silk Street. Enter the Barbican Centre from Silk Street. Go up the stairs on the right hand side into the upper walk, turning left at the top. Then turn right, walking right through, past the Arts Centre and plaque recording the opening, to a view of the Lakeside Terrace and end of Defoe House from the crossway. Descend to the paved area in front of St Giles Cripplegate from which the line of Red Cross Street and the site of the Hall can be viewed, along with the corner of the Roman fort wall and bastions. St. Giles is associated with John Milton (who was buried there in 1674), William Shakespeare, Frobisher and Oliver Cromwell (who married Elizabeth Bouchier there in 1620). The Church, built in 1550, was badly damaged in World War II. The tower somehow survived.

8. Defoe House and Lakeside Terrace

The walk ends at the site of the Fan Makers' Company's first Hall now comprising the Lakeside Terrace end of Defoe House. The blue plaque, installed in March 2010, commemorates the passing of 300 years since members of the Company, of whom a high proportion were of Huguenot descent, met in Red Cross Street. The plaque reads: "The Fan Makers Company met in their Common Hall in Red Cross Street to adopt their constitution in 1710". The Company was founded by Royal Charter in 1709, taking over from a group and then Guild of Fan Makers active from Tudor times. The constitution refers to the Ordinances and Bye-laws confirmed in 1711, implementing the terms of the Royal Charter of Incorporation.

9. Directions for a basic walk (see above for a few variations)

Take the Eastern side of West Smithfield open space and enter St Barts Hospital through the Henry VIII gate. Walk ahead to the square and view (if open) the Museum, the grand staircase and the Great Hall. Return the same way, stopping off to see the interior of St Bartholomew the Less. Turn right and visit the old Priory Church (along a passageway straight ahead), the chosen location for many films. Return along the passageway and turn right into the Cloth Fair, walk down to No. 1 the Founders's Hall, cross over Cloth Fair and go North via an alley to Long Lane past the Red Cow Public House. Turn left into Long Lane and walk down the side of the meat market turning right into the Grand Avenue of Smithfield Market. Proceed straight ahead crossing over Charterhouse Street and exit the City via the junction of Cow Cross Street and St John's Street. Proceed up St John's Street forking left along St. John's Lane to St. John's Gate and the Museum. Proceed under the archway half left over to the Priory Church. Retrace one's steps to Charterhouse Street, turning left through the wrought iron gateway to Charterhouse Square. View the outer courtyard from the barrier. View the Priory Church from further along the square. View St Barts medical College from the barrier at Rutland Place. Continue round the rest of the Square, viewing the Art Deco building suitable for Hercule Poirot, turning left towards Aldersgate Street past some coffee houses.

Turn left into Aldersgate and walk up to the City boundary at its junction with Goswell Street. Cross over to the Barbican entrance in Fann Street. View plaques and Shakespeare pub. Walk along Fann Street. Note boundary between Aldersgate and Cripplegate without Wards. Note Jewin Church and slate plaque. Note former Cripplegate Library.

Cross over Golden Lane (the Northern continuation of Red Cross Street) and walk through the Park to the junction of Fortune Street and White Cross Street, noting the site of the Fortune Theatre. Cross over and take Dufferin Street to Bunhill Row. View from afar the Peerless Pool and the site of the Huguenot Hospital. Note the HAC grounds. Walk South to and along Milton Street, turn right into Silk Street, enter Barbican Centre. Turn right into reception and go up staircase to left. Turn left at top of stairs. Walk through passing entrance to Barbican Theatre and Centre and Queen Elizabeth II dedicatory plaque, to stairs down to Cripplegate Church and view Roman Wall. Visit Church. Cross over lake at First Floor Level, turn left into Barbican Centre, descend to ground floor and view Fan Makers' Hall Blue Plaque on the wall of Defoe House from the Terrace.