II. John Reynewell and St. Botolph Billingsgate

Stephen Freeth and John Schofield

Introduction: a notable medieval burial

Caroline Barron has always been interested in the aldermen and mayors of the city of London, as witnessed by her work on Richard Whittington.1 This chapter presents some recent discoveries about a mayor of the generation just after Whittington: John Reynewell (Reynwell, Raynewell and other variant spellings), mayor in 1426–7. We study a burial in the parish church of St. Botolph Billingsgate in Thames Street, for which the combined archaeological and documentary evidence suggests it was Reynewell. The interior of the church also now begins to come to light, joining other London parish churches which can be reconstructed by archaeological and documentary evidence, another of the honorand’s interests.2

In 1982 the Museum of London excavated a large site next to Billingsgate market in Lower Thames Street in the city of London; this included part of the parish church of St. Botolph Billingsgate (Figure 11.1), destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. Sixty-six skeletons were recorded in the portion of the church which fell inside the archaeological excavation. Of these, six seem to be of the fifteenth century and the rest of the first half of the seventeenth century. A double brick grave in a fifteenth-century extension of the church

---

1 This chapter draws on material in the publication of the Billingsgate excavation: J. Schofield, L. Blackmore and J. Pearce, with T. Dyson, London’s Waterfront 1100–1666: Excavations in Thames Street, London, 1974–84 (Oxford, 2018). We are very grateful to the editors of the present volume for comments on the drafts of this paper.

building to the south contained two skeletons. They are known by the numbers given to them by the excavators. Skeleton [783] was of a man in his sixties (Figure 11.2). He lay above a female skeleton [937] which had an estimated age of 36–45 years.

Osteological analysis has been undertaken by Jelena Bekvalac of the Museum of London. Skeleton [783] had several pathological conditions: first, he had a possible well-healed fracture in his left fibula. Second, in his thoracic vertebrae there was evidence of Diffuse Idiopathic Skeletal Hyperostosis (DISH), which causes fusion of the vertebrae. DISH is linked to a high-protein diet and a well-off lifestyle, especially in older men; it is found in skeletons from the Roman period onwards. Third, his right hand showed evidence of osteoarthritis, which was also found in his cervical (neck) vertebrae. Small impressions on the bone within one of his eye sockets suggested cribrum orbitalium, which has been proposed to be an indicator of iron-deficiency anaemia. Many of his teeth had been lost with the socket spaces remodelled, indicating they had been lost long before he died. The few teeth remaining had mineralized plaque (calculus), decay (caries) and

---

Figure 11.2. Double brick tomb in St. Botolph’s containing a man and a woman (beneath his skeleton) (Museum of London Archaeology; scale 0.5m).
periodontal disease. Whoever he was, he was suffering the aches of old age. The skeletal remains of the younger woman [937] did not reveal any observable pathological changes, but a number of her teeth were affected by decay (caries) and mineralized plaque (calculus).

This man may be John Reynewell (d. 1445) himself, in the lower brick part of a grave or tomb within the church extension which he had sponsored. The brick part would have been below floor level. The substantial substructure implies a stone monument above, with either a brass or a pair of effigies on it, but no evidence has survived (a brass is probably more likely). The monument would have faced an altar in the east wall and a window above, but no evidence of either remains. The identity of the woman remains a mystery (as does their double occupancy of half the brick grave, with the other half being empty, which is probably the result of the removal of a lead coffin). Reynewell had a daughter, Frideswida, but she became a nun at the Minories, so was presumably buried there. The woman buried at St. Botolph's may be Reynewell's wife, whose name is unknown.

But other candidates for the identity of the skeleton should also be considered. Here analysis is limited by the excavation being only of the south part of the church. The double brick grave was the only trace of a substantial monument found. John Stow described how the church ‘hath had many fayre monuments therein, now defaced and gone … al destroyed by bad and greedy men of spoyle’; he had found records of burials here of a dozen worthy citizens, though he does not mention tombs (naturally, in the circumstances). Besides the Reynewell(s), restricting the possibilities to the fifteenth century, Stow mentioned the burials of Nicholas James, sheriff (d. 1423); William Reynewell, John's father (d. 1404); Stephen Forster, mayor 1454 (d. 1458) and the rebuilders of Ludgate, and his wife Agnes; and William Bacon, sheriff in 1480. One of these, Stephen Forster, might seem appropriate because his wife Agnes, according to Stow, was buried with him. But here Stow was in error. Agnes Forster, in her will of 1484, desired to be buried in St. Stephen Walbrook. Her burial there is noted in the will of her eldest son John, who died in 1488; he wished to be buried near her. Nor is this likely to be the burial of Reynewell’s own father, William, and his wife

5 TNA, PROB 11/7, fos.65–6.
6 TNA, PROB 11/12, fos. 157v–8. John Forster’s will is dated 31 May 1488 and he is likely to have died soon after. However, it was not proved until 4 March 1500/1. The note of probate explains that the executors had refused to act. We are grateful to Jane Williams for this information.
John Reynewell and St. Botolph Billingsgate

Isabel. The burial is clearly within the church extension, which is dated by the documents and stratigraphy to the first half or middle of the fifteenth century, and William Reynewell died in 1404. William Bacon, haberdasher (d. 1492), might be a candidate, but then we would have to explain why he is occupying a place of distinction in the middle of the aisle floor.

**St. Botolph Billingsgate church in the middle ages**

The south part of the site of St. Botolph’s occupied the north-west corner of the excavation of 1982, in the open space west of the Billingsgate fish market building of 1875, between Lower Thames Street and the River Thames. From a combination of the excavation findings and documentary evidence (wills, churchwardens’ accounts and vestry minutes from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries), a proposed development plan of the church is given (Figure 11.3). The documentary history provides the stages of growth. The church is first mentioned around 1140, but most of the twelfth-century building lay outside the excavation, beneath the pavement of present Lower Thames Street. St. Botolph’s expanded to the south in the middle of the fifteenth century through a grant to the parish by John Reynewell, mayor 1426–7, administered through his trustees by 1456 at the latest. Reynewell’s gift was an existing stone building a few metres to the south, which was then incorporated into the body of the church, the space between becoming a new aisle. This, originally separate, building stood on a vault, which was subsequently let out by the parish as part of the storage facilities on Botolph Wharf, certainly from the final years of the sixteenth century and possibly before.

Most of the new aisle was within the excavation and it contained fragments of a tiled floor; a double brick grave of the mid fifteenth century was located centrally towards the east end of the space. The east wall was of flint and chalk chequerwork (Figure 11.4). It had later been covered with plaster (hence keying marks on the chalk blocks), perhaps before the Reformation. Various pieces of window tracery and other carved stone discovered during the excavation in 1982 (numbering over six hundred) are currently in store and may be analysed in the future. One further decorative element, recovered during the widespread clearance for construction in 1984, is a stone corbel in the form of an angel bearing a shield (Figures 11.5(a) and 11.5(b)). This is now in Welby near Grantham, Lincolnshire. The carving is of exceptional quality. The corbel dates from the fifteenth century, perhaps c.1450–75 from the treatment of the angel’s hair. The angel is dressed in an alb and the shield appears to show a merchant’s mark, denoting the donor. The mark is similar to fifteenth-century merchants’ marks on brasses in
Figure 11.3. The main stages of development of St. Botolph Billingsgate church (drawn by J. Schofield).
Dunstable (Beds.), Cirencester (Glos.) and Chipping Norton (Oxon);7 if it does incorporate the letter ‘R’, as suggested, this might indicate Reynewell. As the corbel was recovered from a landfill site in Essex to which earth from the Billingsgate site was being trucked (this was in 1983–4; protective legislation for such things would follow in 1990), we can only say it came from the Thames waterfront near St. Botolph’s.

In his panorama of about 1540, Wyngaerde shows the church with two separately roofed aisles, with a prominent tower at the west end of the northern one (Figure 11.6). The southern of the two roofs must therefore have been above the extension. The precise way Reynewell’s originally separate building was incorporated into the church is not known and there are no clear documentary references to its use. The vaulted undercroft forming its lower storey was always a separate feature, entered only from the lane. The floor above, the main floor of the building, did not survive to be recorded. There was probably some form of access from the church. Though there is no direct evidence, we propose on the basis of its much higher floor level (about 3 ft 3 in. above the adjacent aisle) that the main

Figure 11.5(a). Angel corbel recovered from a landfill site in Essex in 1984 (Photograph: © G. de la Bédoyère).

Figure 11.5(b). Close-up of the merchant’s mark on it and one suggestion about its form (photograph: © G. de la Bédoyère; suggested mark, S. Freeth and J. Schofield).
room of this now-incorporated stone building became some kind of parish space, a long hall (or succession of rooms) equivalent in area to the undercroft beneath. There is no information on whether the building had, or then acquired, further rooms above. The parish had a fraternity which obtained a royal licence in 1371.8 The only London analogy for which there is graphic evidence is the hall of the Fraternity of the Trinity at St. Botolph Aldersgate, established by 1389, possibly in 1377.9 This was a first-floor hall in a timber-framed range which belonged to the fraternity, a short distance from the church in Aldersgate; its site is now covered by the roundabout at the junction of Aldersgate and London Wall highways.10 It is similar in size. Overall, however, even with this increase, St. Botolph remained a small church in comparison with others in the immediate neighbourhood, such as St. Michael Crooked Lane, St. Magnus and All Hallows the Great.11

We can reconstruct many aspects of the interior of the church, and some of its building history, from the late fourteenth century to 1666. We arrange these as a short tour of the interior, but not dealing with the post-Reformation changes, which are described in the recently published account.12 In the chancel there was an image of Our Lady on the south side of the high altar (John Park, 1413)13 and an image of St. Botolph on

8 This was the Fraternity of St. Mary, founded in 1361 in St. Mary's chapel by the will of Thomas de Snowdylonde, the rector. Both will and royal licence were copied into the St. Botolph's parish cartulary (LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/MS00059, fos. 15v–6 and 13v–4). See also C. M. Barron, ‘The parish fraternities of medieval London’ [1985], repr. in Medieval London: Collected Papers of Caroline M Barron, ed. M. Carlin and J. T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo, 2017), pp. 135–63, at p. 142.
11 Plans of these and other churches in 1667 are given by J. Leake in his ‘Exact Survey’ of the city (BL, Additional MS. 5415.1.E); the plans of St. Botolph and 6 nearby churches are redrawn in Schofield et al, London’s Waterfront, fig. 235.
12 Pre-Reformation, our chief sources are over 100 wills of parishioners dating between 1313 and 1558. For a detailed list, see S. Freeth, ‘Wills mentioning the fabric, ornaments, fraternities, chantries or earlier burials in the church or cemetery of St. Botolph Billingsgate to 1558’, in Schofield et al., London’s Waterfront, pp. 407–13. For the post-Reformation changes see Schofield et al., London’s Waterfront, pp. 235–51.
13 LMA, DL/AL/C/002/MS09051/001, fo. 283v.
the north side (Thomas de Snowdylonde, 1361;\(^{14}\) Richard Segrym, 1495).\(^{15}\) The chancel appears generally to have been reserved for clergy burials, as was often the case. Snowdylonde was the rector; Segrym was a chaplain or curate.\(^{16}\) William Symmes, 1439, left 10 marks ‘to paint the Sepulchre ordained by him’ (*ad pictand’ sepulcrum eiusdem ecclesie sancti Both’i per me nuper ordinat’ & non in alio usu, x marc’).\(^{17}\) Such Easter sepulchres, for the

\(^{14}\) The will was copied into the St. Botolph’s parish cartulary (LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/ MS00059, fos. 15v–6). It was also proved in the hustings court (LMA, CLA/023/ DW/02/088(84); calendared in *Calendar of Wills Proved and Enrolled in the Court of Husting, London, A.D. 1258–A.D. 1688*, ed. R. R. Sharpe (2 vols., London, 1888–9), ii. A.D. 1358–A.D. 1688, 22, where the image of St. Botolph is wrongly stated to be on the south side of the high altar.

\(^{15}\) LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/008, fos. 83v–6.

\(^{16}\) The only known request for lay burial in the chancel was by Thomas Marmeon esquire ‘of Thurlbe’ (Thirlby, Lincs.) (1517). One of the witnesses to his will was Edward Marmyon, a chaplain or curate of St. Botolph’s, whose own will (leaving no instructions about his burial) was proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury in 1541 (TNA, PROB 11/28, fos. 243–3v).

\(^{17}\) TNA, PROB 11/3, fos. 199v–200, at fo. 200.
host and crucifix between Good Friday and Easter morning, were frequently made of wood but here might have been of stone.  

There was a canopy over the high altar. The maintenance instructions for the canopy are written into the parish cartulary, where it is stated to have been given by William Laurence in 1472. Richard Rawlyn had left 40s. for a canopy for the high altar in 1471; perhaps this was merely a contribution. As for more portable items, John Witteneye, chaplain, 1406, bequeathed his best vestment of blue embroidered silk, his best silver chalice, a missal and portable breviary and a book of divinity (vestimentum suum optimum de serico blodio & brouderizato et suam optimam calicem argenti unum missale & unum portiphorium ac unum librum divinitatis ibidem in dei servicio imperpetuum permansur). Richard Awbrey, 1474, left 40s. towards a suit of vestments. Richard Johnson, priest, 1487, left a ‘processionary’ (i.e., a processional, a book containing litanies, hymns etc. to be used in religious processions). Nicholas Alday, 1518, left money for two copes of red damask to be made, ‘with Tonnes and Burres’ [barrels and flowers?] like the suit of copes at St. Clement’s Sandwich.

In the nave William Reynewell, 1404, father of John Reynewell, left 6s. 8d. ‘to the light of the Holy Cross on the High Beam’ (lumini sancte Crucis super altam trabem). John Colyn, 1405, left 3s. 4d. ‘to maintain the light on the beam’ (ad sustentacionem luminis trabe in dicta ecclesia). Geoffrey Maughfeld, 1407, left a candle weighing 20 lbs ‘for the light on the high beam’ (lumini super altam trabem in predicta ecclesia sancti Botulphi). Roger Wade, 1408, left four candles ‘to maintain the light on the beam before the Cross’ (ad sustentacionem luminis trabe’ coram cruce). Nicholas James, 1434, asked to be buried where his children lie, before the pulpitum [chancel step]. Richard Rawlyn, 1471, already mentioned, asked to be buried in the

---

19 LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/MS00059, fo. 46v.
20 TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 28–29, at fo. 28v.
21 LMA, DL/AL/C/002/MS09051/001, fo. 159v.
22 TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 130v–1v, at fo. 130v.
23 LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/002, fo. 104v.
24 LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/002, fo. 125.
25 TNA, PROB 11/2A, fos. 36–7v, at fo. 36.
26 LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/002, fo. 71.
27 LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/002, fos. 104–5, at fo. 104v.
28 LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/002, fo. 125.
29 TNA, PROB 11/3, fos. 138v–41, at fo. 139. We are grateful to Christopher Wilson for explaining this term.
nave of the church, before the crucifix.\textsuperscript{30} William Bullee, 1518, asked to be buried ‘afore the Rood in the body of the church’.\textsuperscript{31} Henry Rigby, 1521, asked to be buried ‘within the midst of the church’, i.e., in the nave aisle.\textsuperscript{32}

It is possible that the church had a tower at the west end from the beginning. References from the fifteenth century imply a tower. John Knotte, 1448, asked to be buried \textit{infra porticum}, where his wife lay; presumably within the entrance lobby of the church, probably under the tower (there was no projecting porch). He also left 20\textshy{s} to paint and make a new door for the church in the best manner possible (\textit{versus picturam \& fabricacionem ostii dicte ecclesie sancti Botulphi, ita quod conetur meliori modo quo poterit}).\textsuperscript{33} Thomas Crofton, 1439, requested ringing of bells at his funeral;\textsuperscript{34} the same John Knotte, 1448, as above, asked that bells not be rung. Both imply that the ‘4 great bells’ listed in the inventory of church goods of 1552, or some of them, were already installed in the tower. Thomas Langeforde, 1517, asked to be buried at the church door, ‘under the holy water stock’. Again, this was probably under the tower.\textsuperscript{35}

The most prominent chapel, as in many parish churches, was dedicated to the Virgin. Oliver de Kent, 1323, left an annual quitrent of 40\textshy{d}. for a perpetual light in honour of Our Lady and All Saints.\textsuperscript{36} Thomas de Snowdylynde, the rector, 1361, already mentioned, left 60\textshy{s}. to the fabric of St. Mary’s chapel, together with a missal, a consecrated chalice, a white vestment, a \textit{Legenda Sanctorum} and a cup ‘neither gilt nor consecrated’ (\textit{fabric’ capelle beate marie eiusdem ecclesie sancti Botulphi lxs. unum missale unum calicem consecratum unum vestimentum album consecratum unam legendam sanctorum et unum calicem non deoratum nec consecratum}).\textsuperscript{37} He also established a perpetual chantry there, for his own soul and for the welfare of the Fraternity of St. Mary in the same chapel. However, he asked to be buried on the north side of the high altar. This may suggest that St. Mary’s chapel was at this early date on the north side of the church, perhaps against the northern buttress of the chancel arch. (The extension of the church building to the south

\textsuperscript{30} TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 28–9, at fo. 28.
\textsuperscript{31} TNA, PROB 11/19, fo. 42.
\textsuperscript{32} LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/009, fo. 179v.
\textsuperscript{33} LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/004, fo. 227. Knotte described himself as ‘citizen and tailor’. His bequests included 100\textshy{s}. to the Tailors and £4 to persuade a fellow tailor, Thomas Davy, to act as his executor. No doubt these are the same individuals that were masters of the Tailors in 1427 (Knotte) and 1436 (Davy).
\textsuperscript{34} Vintners’ Company Wills Book (LMA, CLC/L/VA/G/001A/MS15364), fo. 32.
\textsuperscript{35} TNA, PROB 11/18, fo. 219.
\textsuperscript{36} LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/031(108).
\textsuperscript{37} LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/088(84) and in the St. Botolph’s parish cartulary (LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/MS00059), fos. 15v–6.
was still far in the future.) Andrew Pykeman, 1391, also set up a perpetual chantry in St. Mary’s chapel. His will mentions a candelabrum for feast days.\(^3\) Geoffrey Maughfeld, 1407, already mentioned, left a second candle weighing 20 lbs ‘to the light of the Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (lumini fraternitatis beate marie).\(^3\) Robert Muston, 1420, left 4 marks for ornaments for St. Mary’s altar.\(^4\)

However, references to St. Mary’s altar now cease. From 1439 there are references to a Fraternity of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist;\(^4\) and from 1465 we hear of a new altar, of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist.\(^4\) This, we suggest, was within the new extension to the south. The will of William Laurence, 1477, makes it clear that there were now three altars: the high altar, the altar of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist and ‘the altar in the north aisle’.\(^4\) This third altar was perhaps the former St. Mary’s altar. On 23 January 1542/3 William Lucar, priest, was appointed to the perpetual chantry of Thomas Snowdylonde, established in St. Mary’s chapel in 1361, almost two hundred years earlier. Lucar was appointed jointly by the churchwardens and the wardens of the Fraternity of the Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist, who together were the ‘true patrons’ (veri patroni) of the chantry. The new altar and new fraternity were thus the reincarnation of the former altar, chapel and fraternity of St. Mary.\(^4\)

The former St. Mary’s altar appears to have been rededicated later to the Trinity. Robert Atkinson, 1531, asked to be buried ‘by the Trinity altar, under Our Lady of Pity’;\(^4\) William Stoderd, 1537, likewise asked for burial ‘before the picture of Our Lady of Pity in the Trinity chapel on the north side of the church’.\(^4\) These are the only references to this statue, which was probably relatively new.\(^4\) William Bodley, 1540, asked for burial ‘under the door as they [sic] go into the Trinity chapel where my father and my

\(^3\) LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/119(71); and TNA, PROB 11/1, fos. 62–3. An extract is in the St. Botolph’s parish cartulary (LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/MS00059, fos. 11r–v).

\(^4\) LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/002, fos. 104–5, at fo. 104v.

\(^4\) TNA, PROB 11/2B, fos. 160v–1, at fo. 160v.

\(^4\) The earliest reference is in the will of William Symmes, 1439 (TNA, PROB 11/3, fos. 199v–200, at fo. 200).

\(^4\) The earliest reference is in the will of Alice Abraham, 1465 (LMA, DL/C/B/004/ MS09171/005, fos. 374v–5, at fo. 374v).

\(^4\) TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 208v–10v, at fo. 209.

\(^4\) LMA, DL/A/A/006/MS09531/012/001, part 1, fo. 142v.

\(^4\) TNA, PROB 11/24, fo. 84.

\(^4\) TNA, PROB 11/27, fos. 17–7v, at fo. 17.

\(^4\) The original spelling of Stoderd’s will, which is in English, has ‘pycture’. We are grateful to Christopher Wilson for pointing out that at this date a ‘picture’ was almost always three-dimensional, i.e., a statue, not a painting or hanging.
mother and Elizabeth my wife lie on the left hand of my father’s tomb’. \(^{48}\) This suggests some sort of partition or screen. References to the altar and Fraternity of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist include the following. Agnes Clerke, 1466, left a vestment and altar cloth to the Fraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. John the Baptist, worth £3 each. \(^{49}\) John Payn, 1466, and John Paris, 1485, both mentioned a roll of benefactors or bede roll of the fraternity. \(^{50}\) William Laurence, 1477, left £13 6s. 8d. for two vestments with apparels, to be used for his five-year chantry at the altar of Our Lady and St. John and then to pass to the fraternity at the end of the five years for the fraternity’s priest at the altar of Our Lady and St. John. \(^{51}\) Sir John Yong, 1482, left to the chapel of Our Lady his best mass book, his best chasuble with the alb belonging to it, two silver-gilt cruets and his best paxbread (an osculatory), garnished with stones. \(^{52}\) Joan Chicheley, 1521, left a diaper tablecloth to be divided between the high altar and Our Lady’s altar. The latter could have been either an altar of Our Lady of Pity in the Trinity chapel on the north side, or that of Our Lady and St. John the Baptist in the new south aisle. \(^{53}\)

Unusually, the parish cartulary mentions two elaborate late fifteenth-century ornaments in the church: a canopy, already mentioned, and an automaton of St. George and the dragon. \(^{54}\) These must have been expensive and a source of pride. The entries in the cartulary comprise the maintenance instructions for both items, not full descriptions. The canopy was given by William Lawrence (‘lawrauns’), apparently in 1472. It was for the blessed sacrament to hang in above the high altar. The canopy was suspended on a chain and was lifted up and down by a rope. Wires bore ‘imagery’ and ‘threads’ spread out the cloth. \(^{55}\) The statue of St. George on a beam, set up on St. Botolph’s day in 1474, showed him in armour, on horseback, with a dragon, a castle, a maiden and a king and queen. The maiden and king and queen were ‘turned’ by a line fed through two spindles in the castle towers.

\(^{48}\) TNA, PROB 11/28, fo. 132v.
\(^{49}\) LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/005, fo. 38iv.
\(^{50}\) John Payn: St. Botolph’s parish cartulary (LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/MS00059, fos. 26v–8v); John Paris (TNA, PROB 11/7, fos. 151–2v).
\(^{51}\) TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 208v–10v, at fo. 209.
\(^{52}\) TNA, PROB 11/7, fos. 29–31.
\(^{53}\) LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/009, fo. 193v.
\(^{54}\) LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/MS00059, fos. 46v–7. This automaton was not unique in the city. There was another at St. Mary Woolnoth, also a St. George (H. B. Walters, London Churches at the Reformation, with an Account of Their Contents (London, 1939), p. 468).
\(^{55}\) A rare surviving example of a canopy, or rather its wooden core, from the late 15th or early 16th century survives at Dennington, Suffolk, and in recent years has been brought back into use.
John Reynnewell and St. Botolph Billingsgate

St. George and the horse were turned by a crank in the castle floor.

Both had been made by William Parnell of Ipswich, Suffolk, his son John and his apprentice William Baker. William Parnell was an expert in statues and engines for pageants, responsible for this aspect of the annual celebrations in Ipswich of the guild of Corpus Christi. He was also called upon in July 1467 to provide decorations, heraldry, statues etc. for the visit of Queen Elizabeth Woodville to Norwich. He and his son were almost certainly responsible for some of the medieval carving that survives in churches in East Anglia, for which no written records survive.66

There was no room for a churchyard. In consequence, at the end of the fourteenth century the parish acquired a small detached churchyard on the north side of Thames Street, east of Botolph Lane. This was consecrated in 1393. It still survives as an open space called One Tree Park in the forecourt of an office block.57 However, as in most parishes, wealthy parishioners often sought burial in the church itself, as we know from Stow.58 It is possible that among the several hundred pieces of carved stone from the church recovered in 1982 are fragments of altars and tombs.

The rich fittings of the church were still fresh in the memory in 1552, when they were listed as having been sold.59 ‘They included at least ten copes, twenty-one banners and three streamers; three and a half hundredweight of latten (brass plate) ‘taken out of the gravestones’,60 ‘a tabernacle that did

66 We are grateful to the late John Blatchly of Ipswich for information about William Parnell; and to Phil Butterworth for early access to his essay with E. Williamson, ‘The Mechanycale “Ymage off Seynt Iorge” at St. Botolph’s, Billingsgate, 1474’, in Medieval Theatre Performance: Actors, Dancers, Automata and their Audiences, ed. by P. Butterworth and K. Normington (Woodbridge, 2017), pp. 215–38. This includes transcripts of the texts in the cartulary about both the St. George and the canopy. A transcript of the text about the St. George, with a brief commentary, is also in Ecclesiastical London, ed. M. C. Erler, Records of Early English Drama (Toronto, 2008), pp. 292–3.


58 Stow, Survey of London, i. 207–8.

59 Inventory of church goods of St Botolph Billingsgate (TNA, E 117/4/57).

60 Two fragments of monumental brasses from St. Botolph’s may still exist: (1) a brass shield of c.1500, bearing the pre-1512 arms of the Fishmongers’ Company, was discovered on the Billingsgate foreshore in 1982 and remains in private hands (Schofield et al., London’s Waterfront, p. 206). The shield is 5.2 in. tall, a size appropriate to a monumental brass. It also bears a single, central rivet-hole, the normal method of fixing such shields to gravestones; (2) a tiny fragment of a brass inscription in Latin was likewise discovered at Billingsgate by a mudlark in 1984 and donated to the Museum of London (Museum reference 84.304). Scarcely 2.7 in. in any dimension, this bears the words uxor eius [his wife]. It can be dated
hang over the altar’; ‘a large painted cloth that was wont to hang before the Rood’; ‘a valance of buckram about the Sepulchre’; ‘the table [retable] over the high altar’; ‘a hanging of cloth of gold for the Trinity altar’; and a total of 508 sq. ft of ‘old glass’. The church still possessed much else, including more copes, three hearse cloths (one for servants), a ‘pair of organs’, two bibles, a Paraphrases, four ‘great bells’ and a sanctus bell.

The parishioners of St. Botolph Billingsgate

St. Botolph’s in the middle ages was a wealthy parish, with wealthy parishioners. In 1428 its yearly value, £32, was one of the highest in the city.61 In the late fifteenth century John Benyngton, being sued in chancery by John Motttram, clerk, about the non-return of an antiphoner, claimed that St. Botolph’s parish had bought it for £14 10s.62 This was a huge sum, enough to pay a chantry priest for over two years. Wills of wealthy parishioners are numerous. Nicholas James, ironmonger, 1434, left money for a ‘Majesty’ (a representation probably of Mary or Jesus, enthroned in glory) for Cromer, Norfolk, for new pews at Croydon and for a new east window in St. Olave Southwark;63 Stephen Forster, 1458, left 1,000 marks to each of his two sons and 500 marks to his daughter;64 Richard Rawlyn, grocer, 1471, left £300 to his son and £200 to each of his two daughters;65 William Laurence, grocer, 1477, left to a kinswoman his one-third share of the crayer (coasting vessel) the Martin of London and asked that his household (his servants and dependants) be kept together for one year to make it easier for them all to find new jobs.66

The wills also hint at trade links to other towns. Ralph Double, fishmonger, 1392, who died at New Shoreham, left money to the parish church and

---

61 Cal. Letter Bks. K, p. 71. Those city churches with higher yearly values than St. Botolph’s were, in descending order, St. Sepulchre (£65); St. Bride (£47 13s. 4d.); St. Lawrence Jewry, St. Magnus, St. Michael Cornhill and St. Vedast (£40 each); All Hallows Bread Street (£36 13s. 4d.); and St. Dunstan in the East (£33 6s. 8d.). The yearly values of the parishes contiguous to St. Botolph’s were as follows, from west to east: St. Magnus (£40); St. Margaret New Fish Street (£20); St. George Botolph Lane (£8); and St. Mary at Hill (£25 6s. 8d.).

62 TNA, C 1/51/253–5, of either 1475–80 or 1483–5. The antiphoner appears eventually to have been bequeathed to St. Mary at Hill in 1491–2 in return for an obit. See the churchwardens’ accounts of St. Mary at Hill (LMA, P69/MRY4/B/005/MS01239/001/001, fo. 93v); and Colson (‘Local communities’, p. 197).

63 TNA, PROB 11/3, fos. 138v–41, at fos. 139, 139v, 141.

64 TNA, PROB 11/4, fos. 110–iv, at fos. 110v–1.

65 TNA, PROB 11/6, fos. 28–9, at fo. 28v.

John Reynenewell and St. Botolph Billingsgate

...
Edinburgh University library manuscripts, shows ‘English illumination of the early part of the 15th century at its best’. It contains eleven historiated initials; that for the office of the dead shows mourners and two priests around a coffin draped with a hearse-cloth and surrounded by candles, with other clergy in the background (Figure 11.7).⁷⁹ Edward Marmyon, ‘clerk and parson’ of St. Botolph’s, 1541, left to the parish priest of St. Botolph’s, William Ruffurth, his ‘great book called Distuctionum Viciorum’, perhaps a garbled rendering of Alexander Carpenter’s Destructorium Vitiorum.⁸⁰ Clearly some of the more prominent parishioners were well-read.

**John Reynewell**

One of St. Botolph’s wealthiest parishioners, a great benefactor of both parish and city, was John Reynewell (c. 1380–1445), alderman from 1416 to 1445, sheriff in 1411–2 and mayor of London 1426–7. He was a major city figure, perhaps even more so than other mayors because of his benefactions to the city. The surviving records are frustratingly incomplete, but we can build some picture of the man and his life.⁸¹ He was a member of the Fishmongers’ Company (though sometimes given as an ironmonger),⁸² the son of William Reynewell, a member of the Ironmongers’ Company and an alderman 1397–1403, and his first wife, Isabel. John had two younger brothers, William and Thomas, and two sisters, Cristina and Joan. William Reynewell the father was buried in St. Botolph’s in 1404, next to Isabel.⁸³

John Reynewell was auditor of London in 1409–11, 1414, 1417 and 1419 and a member of parliament for the city in 1410, 1415, 1433 and from 1445 until his death. In December 1407 he was one of four commissioners appointed for levying in the city the tenth and half a tenth granted in the last parliament and for returning the money into the exchequer. In December 1433, along with the city’s three other MPs in the last parliament and the bishop of London, he was, by royal letters patent, appointed a commissioner to apportion the sum granted for the relief of the tenth granted by parliament to the king among the poorer wards of the city. Gregory’s Chronicle refers

---

⁸⁰ TNA, PROB 11/28, fos. 243–3v, at fo. 243v.
⁸¹ We are most grateful to Clive Burgess for making available his unpublished notes on Reynewell and in particular for the reference to the Navy Records Society.
Figure 11.7. Edinburgh University Library MS. 39, a book of hours which once probably belonged to Richard Bodley: miniature on fo. 70r from the office of the dead (courtesy of Edinburgh University Library Special Collections).
to him as ‘the good mayor of the city of London’ and mentions that in 1428
parliament agreed that he should be mayor of the Staple of Calais for the
three following years. During Reynewell’s London mayoralty in 1426–7
the north gateway of the drawbridge on London Bridge began to be rebuilt:
according to John Stow, Reynewell laid one of the first corner stones, the
other three being laid by the sheriffs and bridgemasters, and on each one
the name Ihesus was engraved or written. The gate is shown by Wyngaerde
around 1540.

Reynewell was rich. In March 1417/18 he was one of the citizens who
advanced money for the king’s expedition abroad, he himself lending £20.
In the 1436 lay subsidy roll, his lands in London and Warwickshire were
assessed at £120 per annum, one of the highest figures recorded either for a
private individual or for an institution. For comparison, we may note the
Mercers and Goldsmiths at £70 yearly each and the nunnery of St. Helen
Bishopsgate at £133 per annum. We have glimpses of how he made his
money. First, there was overseas trade, largely in wool. In 1408 he and his
partner Drew Barentyn (mayor 1398–9 and 1408–9) were exporting wool,
hides and wool fells through London and Chichester for the Calais Staple.
In 1412 they and others were involved in a disastrous expedition to export
wool and other merchandise worth a total of £24,000 to the Mediterranean.
The ships and goods were seized at Genoa and the factors thrown into
gaol. On 7 July 1435, after he had ceased to be mayor of the Staple of
Calais, Reynewell was awarded £1,000 at arbitration in what must have
been a most bitter dispute with the Staple, giving the then mayor of the
Staple his receipt. In 1437 Reynewell was shipping wheat and beans from
Norfolk and Lincolnshire to London, to victual the city.

84 J. C. Wedgwood, History of Parliament: Biographies of Members of the Commons House
177; The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century, ed. J. Gairdner,
Camden Soc. n.s., xvii (1876), pp. 161, 164.
85 Stow, Survey of London, i. 25.
(TNA, E 179/238/90).
87 CPR 1405–1408, p. 469.
88 CPR 1408–1413, pp. 461–2; CPR 1413–1416, p. 90. See also The Navy of the Lancastrian
Kings: Accounts and Inventories of William Soper, Keeper of the King’s Ships, 1422–1427, ed. S.
89 CCR 1429–35, p. 360. We are grateful to Jane Williams for this reference. One of the
arbitrators on Reynewell’s behalf was Stephen Forster, mayor in 1454–5. For Forster see J.
Williams, ‘A late-medieval family and its archive: the Forsters of London, c.1440–c.1550’
90 CPR 1436–1441, p. 99.
There was also privateering (bordering on piracy), ship repair and naval stores. In 1413 or 1414 a ship belonging to Reynewell and others captured at sea the Santa Clara, a Castilian ship carrying goods for two merchants, Juan Martinez (John Martyns) and Agostino Lomelino (Augustine Lomelyn), who were covered by a safe-conduct. The captors had to return the royal Castilian standards, some armour and weapons and the ship's dog. In 1416 Reynewell sold to William Soper, a merchant at Southampton who was also the clerk of the king's ships, various materials for a new ballinger for the duke of Bedford's expedition for the relief of Harfleur, as follows: 1 cwt, 1 quarter, 2 lbs of fine oakum (fyn ocom) at 10s. 1½d., and 294 ells of canvas for a sail at £9 11s. 5d. In about 1417 Reynewell sold twenty-two ships’ masts to Soper to repair various vessels. All these stores were bought from Reynewell in London for transport to Southampton.

Near the end of his life Reynewell owned freehold property in the city in the parishes of St. Botolph Billingsgate, St. Mary at Hill, All Hallows the Great and St. Andrew Cornhill and leasehold property in St. Mary at Hill and All Hallows the Great. He also possessed property in Calais. Now, by deeds of 6 May and 19 June 1441, he conveyed all of this property, including the leaseholds, to trustees. The trustees were William Cumbes, William Abraham, John Roskyn, John Colston, John Gyffard and William Stafford. Reynewell then, by his will dated 18 September 1443, asked his trustees to convey all this property to the city for charitable purposes. The city must have possessed a copy of this will, but it seems never to have been proved and enrolled in the hustings court or elsewhere and its text appears to be lost. Fortunately much of it, including Reynewell’s charitable intentions, was recited along with the two trust deeds of 1441 and the details of his


92 Fragmentary naval accounts, part of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, MS. 4102. See Rose, Navy of the Lancastrian Kings, pp. 212, 226. A ballinger was a vessel of 30–120 tons, propelled by oars and/or sails, for ‘swift reconnaissance, the rapid conveying of important messages or passengers, and piracy’.

93 6 May 1441: Plea and Memoranda Roll A68 (LMA, CLA/024/01/02/69), fo. 6, calendared in CPMR 1437–1457, p. 165; 19 June 1441 (LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/169 (46)). These deeds include Reynewell’s property in Calais. They do not specifically mention the London leaseholds, but later documents show that these were included.

94 Cumbes was a fellow fishmonger and an alderman from 1437 to 1452. Abraham was sheriff in 1447 and several times master of the Vintners’ Company. Colston was later one of the administrators of Reynewell’s estate after his death. Stafford, another vintner, was a benefactor of the Vintners’ Company and feoffee of two company estates (A. Crawford, History of the Vintners’ Company (London, 1977), pp. 202, 281). Roskyn and Gyffard remain unidentified. For a brief biography of Cumbes, see Thrupp, Merchant Class, pp. 334–5. For Abraham’s will, proved in 1462, see LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/005, fo. 326v.
London leaseholds in a will made by the last surviving trustee, William Stafford, on 25 October 1458. This tells us that trustees Cumbes, Roskyn, Colston and Gyffard had soon died, so that Abraham and Stafford became possessed (seisiti fuimus et possessionati) of all the property. Abraham, on 5 October 1458, then released his entire interest to Stafford. Now Stafford devised to the city corporation all of Reynewell’s London properties, including the leaseholds, to hold for the charitable purposes specified by Reynewell in his will of 1443. There was one small last-minute adjustment. Stafford had recently come into possession from the city corporation of a stone house (domus petrina), which he planned separately to give to St. Botolph Billingsgate church to serve as a vestry, in memory of Reynewell. This had an annual value of 20s. The terms of Reynewell’s bequest were therefore altered so that the city corporation could take 20s. per annum in compensation from Reynewell’s London estate. Stafford’s will of 25 October 1458 is recorded in the hustings and elsewhere.95

Two points are worth noting here. First, Stafford’s will of 25 October 1458 concerned itself solely with Reynewell’s London property. Its recitals of the trust deeds of 1441 omit the references in those deeds to the Calais property. Its recital of Reynewell’s will of 1443 also omits any mention of Calais. The Calais property must have been conveyed to the city by another document, now lost to us. Second, the trust deeds of 1441 and the will of 1443 described the city properties as being Reynewell’s entire London portfolio, but on 20 July 1443, after he had conveyed his main estate to trustees, Reynewell conveyed a domus on the south side of the church of St. Botolph Billingsgate which he had acquired in 1409 to a different but overlapping set of trustees for other purposes, as will be described shortly.

By the 1560s the city’s ‘Reynwell Estate’, with two other similar estates (Philipot and Carpenter), formed three separate, short accounts appended to the city chamber’s general account. Reynewell’s was the most substantial, with a rental in the 1580s of just over £125. By the 1630s these three separate accounts had been merged into the general account, but the totals of each rental were still clearly identified. The properties comprising each estate also

95 LMA, CLA/023/DW/02/207 (31) (proved and enrolled March 1477/8). A virtually complete text of the will is also in the St. Botolph’s parish cartulary (LMA, P69/BOT3/D/001/MS00059, fos. 23–5). Stafford’s will of 25 Oct. 1458 is crucial to understanding Reynewell’s generosity to the city and parish, but is very long and very complex. Fortunately, the Latin text is printed in full on pages 22–7 of appendix C of C. P. Cooper’s Report of 1837 on Rymer’s Foedera, from a 15th-century certified copy preserved in the archives of Hamburg. Cooper’s report, left unpublished at the time, was eventually printed by the Public Record Office in 1869. Appendix C is available online at <http://dbooks.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/books/PDFs/300078953.pdf> [accessed 14 Feb. 2019].
continued to be listed separately in the rentals until 1784. Thereafter they were merged into the topographical headings of the general rental and their origin was no longer indicated.96

Reynewell’s properties in All Hallows the Great and in Calais are of particular interest. The All Hallows property comprised a ‘great house’, the former house of John of Northampton, mayor 1381–3, in Windgoose Lane (‘Wendegaynelane’ in Reynewell’s will). This included a dyehouse and a wine cellar and was where Reynewell actually lived. The freehold site was augmented with leasehold ground, held from Elsing spital under an eighty-year lease at £7 per annum commencing in 1427. In 1475 the freehold site was granted in perpetuity by authority of the king in parliament to the Hanseatic merchants to be part of the Steelyard, in return for an annual rent of £70 3s. 4d. (The leasehold site was similarly conveyed, by arrangement with Elsing spital.) In the 1580s this former freehold of Reynewell’s was the largest item in the city’s rental of the ‘Reynwell Estate’. An unusual result of the king’s grant is that many deeds of this and adjoining sites are (or were) preserved in cartulary books and other records in Germany.97 Reynewell’s property in Calais was the former earl of Hereford’s inn. In 1430 it was in the king’s hands and when he granted it to Reynewell it was ‘ruinous’. Letter Book O records that in 20 Henry VIII (1528–9) the city sent two representatives to Calais to look after the Reynewell property.98

It is puzzling that Reynewell devised these properties to the city by his will since he is known to have died intestate. On 9 November 1446 the two administrators of his estate were discharged by the archbishop of Canterbury, as noted in his register.99 It seems, therefore, that Reynewell’s will of 1443, with its stipulation that his trustees should convey his trust

---


98 CPR 1429–36, p. 54; Letter Book O (now LMA, COL/AD/01/014), fo. 84. For a recent account of Calais, the centre of the principal English export in the middle ages, raw wool, see S. Rose, Calais: an English Town in France, 1347–1558 (Woodbridge, 2008).

99 Lambeth Palace Library, Stafford’s register, fo. 144. 9 Nov. 1446: ‘Nono die mensis Novembr’ Anna domini et loco predictis Johannes Colston et Johannes Newerk administratores bonorum Johannis Reynewell dum vixit Civis et Aldermanni Civitatis Londoni nuper ab intestato decedentis acquisitati sive dimissi fuerunt ab officio’ (on 9 Nov. in the year and place aforesaid [1446, Lambeth] John Colston and John Newerk, administrators of the goods of John Reynewell [who] while he lived [was] a citizen and alderman of the city of London, lately dying intestate, were discharged from their office).
property to the city, took effect automatically at his death in 1445, apparently
without formal probate or enrolment. The entry in the archbishop’s
register merely indicated that Reynewell had made no will soon before he
died. William Stafford’s will of 25 October 1458, which finally conveyed
Reynewell’s London property to the city, therefore fulfilled his duty under
Reynewell’s will.

Stafford’s will, in turn, will have come into force at his death in late
1466 or early 1467. This, too, seems not to have required formal probate
at the time, for probate and enrolment in the hustings only took place
almost twenty years later, in March 1477/8, as already mentioned. Informal
arrangements nevertheless seem to have allowed the city to administer
Reynewell’s city property while Stafford was still alive. In February 1463/4
Reynewell’s former ‘great house’ in All Hallows the Great was occupied
by an elderly alderman, John Walden, as tenant of the city. The city also
had control of Reynewell’s Calais property. On 5 October 1447 it leased it
to alderman William Coumbes [sic] for thirty years at 6 marks per annum
‘in recognition of his services in the execution of the will of the said John
Reynwelle, who devised property in the city of London and said town of
Calais to the use of the commonalty of the said city’.

Reynewell’s known benefactions to the city can be summarized as
follows. He asked his trustees, as soon as possible after his death (tam cicius
quo melius fieri posset post suum decessum), to convey his London property
to the city in perpetuity. The income, after all expenses of maintenance
and the payment of 40 marks yearly to Reynewell’s son William and his
legitimate heirs and annual pensions for life to his sister Cristina (10 marks)
and daughter Frideswide, a minoress near the Tower (26s. 8d.), was to fund
the following charitable purposes. The first group were personal matters.
There was to be 12 marks each year for a chaplain to celebrate (divina
celebraturum) every day forever in the charnel chapel in the cemetery of
St. Paul’s Cathedral for the souls of Henry Barton, late alderman, and Joan
his wife; 40s. to the chamberlain of the cathedral to celebrate, per notam,
every year on 1 September Placebo and Dirige, with a mass of requiem
on the morrow, for Reynewell’s own soul and for the souls of his parents
William and Isabel, forever; 13s. 4d. to the churchwardens of St. Botolph
Billingsgate at Easter for an annual obit for the soul of John Reynewell
and the other souls aforesaid, per notam, on Friday in Pentecost week, with
solemn ringing of bells, Placebo and Dirige and mass of requiem on the

100 Wills took effect on death; until then they had no force (G. Jacob, A New Law
Dictionary (9th edn., London, 1772), under ‘Will’).
101 Cal. Letter Bks. L., p. 44.
morrow and other appropriate ceremonies, forever; 13s. 4d. to each to the
curchwardens of All Hallows the Great and St. Andrew Cornhill for the
same purpose; and every Sunday the rector of each of these three churches
devoutly to commend to God by name the souls of John Reynewell and his
parents William and Isabel.

The second group was for city institutions and officials. There was to be
£32 to Billingsgate ward, £28 to Dowgate ward and £6 to Aldgate ward to
relieve the inhabitants every time that a fifteenth (i.e., tax) should be granted
by Parliament to the king and pro rata for fractions of a fifteenth, forever;
£10 per annum to the exchequer to exonerate the annual fee due from the
city’s sheriffs for the fee farm of Southwark, to free all Englishmen coming
there or passing through from tolls and other payments hitherto levied by
the sheriffs, forever; £8 each year to the sheriffs in lieu of tolls at the great
gate of London Bridge or at the drawbridge, forever; both the last above
to apply to Englishmen and not to aliens from overseas (sint personarum
indigenarum et nullarum personarum alienigenarum); 20s. to the mayor; 6s.
8d. to the city recorder and 13s. 8d. to the chamberlain, every year, for their
trouble taken to carry out the above; 6s. 8d. per annum to the aldermen of
the three wards to see everything performed faithfully; and 3s. 4d. each year
to each of the two keepers of the Bridge, forever. Any surplus after these
payments was to be divided into two equal portions, one to install a granary
in the city with wheat for relief in times of need; and the other to cleanse
the ‘shelpes’ [sandbanks] and other obstructions of the River Thames, as
done in Prussia and other places overseas.

Reynewell’s trusts were taken seriously. In 1533 the wording in his will
concerning the relief of the three wards from fifteenths was translated into
English, written out on parchment and displayed openly in Guildhall for
all to see.103 Unfortunately, in 1539 the mayor failed to read this and several
inhabitants of Dowgate ward spent a day and a night imprisoned in the
Tower after he noticed £8 unpaid from a past fifteenth. The prisoners did
not give in, declaring that they would ‘stick to the will of Master Reynewell
… that the ward of Dowgate shall pay none money for no fifteen, except
there be above three fifteenths in one year’. As the London memoranda
records, ‘By the help of God they paid none. Deo Gracias’.104

Reynewell was not only a great benefactor to the city, but to the church of
St. Botolph Billingsgate as well. Through trustees he gave it a house (domus,
which may have been a warehouse, not a dwelling house), formerly part
of Botolph Wharf, a long-established landing place for goods and persons.

103 Sharpe, Calendar of Wills, ii. 576, n. 2.
104 Stow, Survey of London, ii. 310.
This *domus* lay south of and parallel to St. Botolph's church, which we now know from the archaeological record to have included at this time some empty ground between the actual church building and the *domus*. (The rest of the wharf lay south and east of the *domus*.) This allowed the church to be extended to the south across this empty ground so as to incorporate the *domus* into the church, the former empty ground forming a new aisle. Conveyances from 1409 onwards record how Reynewell acquired the *domus* from the city and granted it to trustees on 20 July 1443. By 1456 William Stafford was the last remaining trustee and by his will dated 20 August in that year he devised to the rector and wardens of St. Botolph the land, now part of the church and on its south side, which had once included a *domus*, part of Botolph Wharf (*illa terra mea sive solus iam parcella ecclesie sancti Botulphi … situat in parte australi eiusdem que olim erat quedam domus que fuit parcella kaii sive wharvi vocat' Botulphiswharf*). This he (and others who had since quitclaimed the property to him) had acquired from the late John Reynewell. The gift was intended for the enlargement of the church and in memory of Reynewell, the testator and the co-feoffeees. All of these arrangements were explained and confirmed by archaeology in 1982.

The brick grave which we suggest was Reynewell’s lay in the new aisle. We see no difficulty in Reynewell being buried there in 1445, even though Stafford did not devise the *domus* to the church until his will of 1456 and remained alive until 1466 or 1467. The phrasing of Stafford’s will suggests that the *domus* was long gone; the church already owned the site of the new aisle; and we see Reynewell’s conveyance to trustees in 1443 as evidence that he intended the *domus* to be given to the church. Building works may well have started immediately.

In a second will, drawn up on 25 October 1458, with which we are already familiar, Stafford noted his possession of a stone house (*domus petrina*), of an annual value of 20s., on the south side of St. Botolph’s church, which had been granted to him and his heirs by Geoffrey Boleyn, mayor 1457–8, and which Stafford wished to bequeath to the rector and wardens as

---

106 LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/211 (1), proved and enrolled 19 March 1480/1.
108 This parallels how some livery companies had the use of their halls through trustees long before they acquired legal ownership. For example, the Tailors are believed to have been using their hall through trustees from at least 1347, but did not own it until 1392 (M. Davies and A. Saunders, *History of the Merchant Taylors’ Company* (London, 2004), p. 14).
a vestry (*tanquam vestibulum*) in memory of John Reynewell. The mayor and commonalty were now given 20s. yearly from Reynewell’s estate in recompense.\(^{109}\) In yet another will, written on 30 December 1458, Stafford bequeathed to the church of St. Botolph for use as a vestry the stone house with stone vault and stone walls under the house, which he held by grant of Boleyn and the commonalty. This house, adjoining the church to the north and the city’s land to the south and west, measured 16 ft in length from east to west and 12 ft in width from north to south.\(^{110}\) Stafford’s wills of October and December 1458 specifying a vestry had been anticipated by the appointment of five members of common council on 10 May 1455 to determine whether there would be any loss to the city in a grant to the church of St. Botolph of a certain parcel of the common soil on the east side of the church for enlarging the vestry.\(^{111}\) The findings of this enquiry are not recorded but the outcome was evidently the grant to Stafford by Mayor Boleyn and the commonalty in return for an annual payment of 20s.

These various wills of Stafford were made in proper form, commencing with *In dei nomine amen* and finishing with the appointment of executors, though omitting instructions for burial. What is extraordinary is that they were all proved and enrolled in the hustings (but not, it seems, in a church court), albeit over ten years after his death in 1466 or 1467 and in seemingly random order. The opening phrasing of each will also made it clear that it only dealt with a part of Stafford’s estate.\(^{112}\) Normally, any will was revoked automatically by a later one and any later additions had to be in the form of a codicil. Wills were not supposed to be made in instalments.\(^{113}\) Whether these multiple wills were unique to Stafford, a peculiarity of the city or merely something which is made apparent by the city’s extensive surviving records is unclear. More research is needed.

The merchant’s mark seen on the angel corbel is so far unidentified. We know from Stafford’s seal on yet another will, his fourth that is known to

\(^{109}\) LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/207 (31), proved and enrolled 2 March 1477/8.

\(^{110}\) LMA, CLA/023/DW/01/210 (15), proved and enrolled 9 Oct. 1480.

\(^{111}\) Journal of the Court of Common Council (LMA, COL/CC/01/01/005), fo. 241v.

\(^{112}\) For example, Stafford made his will of 1456 ‘for the disposition of that property of mine now parcel of the church of St. Botolph Billingsgate’ (*ad disposicionem illius terre mee iam parcelle ecclesie sancti Botulphi iuxta Billyngsegate*).

\(^{113}\) See Jacob, *Law Dictionary*, under ‘Will’. We are most grateful to Christopher Whittick for his help with the legal-history aspects of Stafford’s wills. The hustings officials may also have had concerns. Stafford’s wills of 20 Aug. 1456 and 30 Dec. 1458, proved and enrolled comparatively close together in March 1481 and Oct. 1480, are introduced with statements that they were proved ‘as to the clauses relating to a lay fee’ (*quoad articulos laicum feodum tangen*), perhaps to imply that they formed part of a fictitious single, and longer, original will by Stafford.
us, dated 24 December 1463, that he was armigerous.\textsuperscript{114} He will surely have wanted his coat of arms to be displayed in the church and not his merchant mark. The same could be said for Reynewell if he, too, was armigerous, as many mayors and aldermen were.\textsuperscript{115} But merchants in high civic office often used both forms of identification, a mark and a coat of arms.\textsuperscript{116}

According to John Stow, Reynewell, described as a fishmonger, died in 1445 and was buried in St. Botolph Billingsgate. Stow recorded an epitaph, though since the monument had almost certainly disappeared by the end of the sixteenth century it is unlikely that he saw it in the church:

\begin{quote}
Citizens of London, call to your remembrance,
The famous Iohn Rainwell, sometime your Maior,
Of the Staple of Callis, so was his chance.
Here lieth now his Corps, his soule bright and faire,
Is taken to heavens blisse, thereof is no dispaire.
His acts beare witness, by matters of record,
How charitable he was, and of what accord,
No man hath beene so beneficiall as hee,
Unto this cities in giving so liberally
Greate substance of livelode, wherfore now agre
To pray unto God that reynethe eternally
His soule to embrace and take to his mercy.
He died in October the xxij
Of the reigne of the noble sixt Henry.\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{114} This will devised property in Botolph Lane to St. Paul’s cathedral. Uniquely, it survives as an original deed sealed with Stafford’s seal (St. Paul’s Cathedral Archives, LMA, CLC/313/P/008/MS25271/068) as well as a hustings enrolment (CLA/023/DW/01/200 (13), proved and enrolled 16 July 1470). Stafford left two more wills. On 22 May 1466, near the end of his life, he gave instructions for burial along with various bequests of cash and moveable goods. This was proved in the normal way in the commissary court of London in June 1467 (LMA, DL/C/B/004/MS09171/006, fo. 45v). A sixth will, dated the previous day, 21 May 1466, gave land to the Vintners. This is recorded in the Vintners’ Company Wills Book (LMA, CLC/L/VA/G/001A/MS15364), but not in the hustings or a church court. For further details of all of Stafford’s wills and transcripts and translations of the Latin texts of the devises to St. Botolph Billingsgate, see Schofield et al., London’s Waterfront, pp. 407–13.


\textsuperscript{116} This caveat is provided by Elizabeth New. See also E. A. New, ‘Representation and identity in medieval London: the evidence of seals’, in London and the Kingdom: Essays in Honour of Caroline M. Barron, ed. M. Davies and A. Prescott, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, n.s., xvi (Donington, 2008), pp. 246–58.

\textsuperscript{117} Stow, Survey of London, i. 207; the last five lines are omitted in Stow’s published text but are in his manuscript draft (now BL, Harley MS. 538) and were supplied by C. L. Kingsford in his notes (Survey of London, ii. 309).
This inscription is notable for its length, but was not exceptional in London. Stow recorded two other, slightly later, fifteenth-century epitaphs in English on monuments, of John and Margaret Shirley of 1456 in the church of the hospital of St. Bartholomew’s Smithfield and of John Shrow of 1487 in St. Michael Crooked Lane. However, Reynewell’s inscription is unusual in giving only the month in which he died and not the exact date of death. It may have been a later replacement.

John Reynewell died intestate, as noted above. But he left much documentation, even if some of it is a little obscure. The documents are now matched by an archaeological discovery. In conclusion, we suggest that skeleton [783] was possibly John Reynewell, mayor in 1426–7, and we have described what is known about this important but hitherto little-recognized civic leader of the years immediately after Richard Whittington. Further, whoever the excavated couple were, they lay in a parish church which was internally as rich as any other in the city of London in the medieval period. We hope this chapter has shown how the documentary and archaeological records of the medieval city are both, in their own ways, exceptionally rich and should be researched together.

118 Stow, Survey of London, ii. 23 and i. 222 respectively.