PART I

THE LAND BEFORE THE HOUSES

§ 1. INTRODUCTORY

The plan which furnishes the basis for the history to be given here covers an area of about three-quarters of a square mile, extending from a little east of St Martin’s Lane to a line some distance west of Bond Street; on the north-east it takes in the church and village of St Giles-in-the-Fields, and on the south-east the church of St Martin and the houses about Charing Cross. The Plan was drawn in 1585 to illustrate a lawsuit as to the ownership of a piece of land called Gelding’s Close, which like the greater part of the lands shown in the Plan was held by lease from the Crown. The rights of the Crown being thus involved it became necessary to determine what were the bounds and what were the tenures of the lands belonging to the Queen. All the Crown lands, with the exception of the Mews, which had been royal property from an early date, had been acquired by Henry VIII about 1536. The chief acquisitions had been made from Abingdon Abbey, the Hospital of Burton Lazar, to which St Giles’s Hospital belonged, and the Mercers Company of London. Other lands were acquired from Westminster Abbey, or as parcel of the Hospital of St James, or from a variety of private individuals.

Originally the greater part of the land had belonged to Westminster Abbey, and was in the parish of St Margaret, Westminster, to which St Martin-in-the-Fields was subordinate. It was not till 7th March 1542 that Henry VIII, to avoid “danger of infection which might happen to our Court by the carrying of dead bodies past our royal palace to be interred at St Margaret’s,” constituted St Martin-in-the-Fields an independent parish. The change of parishes

subsequently gave rise to some question as to where lands
anciently described as in St Margaret’s were really situate.

Almost all the lands shown in the Plan were anciently
common-fields, in which, however, enclosures had been made
at an early date. But these enclosures had to lie open for
pasture after Lammas in every year. Hence, when at a later
time the land was built over, compensation in the shape of
Lammas money became payable to the parish. Between the
vills or town-places of St Martin and St Giles lay St Martin’s
Field and St Giles’ Field. These were bounded on the west
by Colman Hedge Lane, corresponding to the modern Whit-
comb Street and Wardour Street. On the west of the upper
part of Colman Hedge Lane was the Windmill Field, ex-
tending to Sugg or Shrug Lane and the roadway which
developed into Regent Street. West of this roadway was The
Great Common Field, a considerable part of which was also
called the Conduit Meadow, reaching as far as the Tyburn
brook. The northern and southern boundaries of these last
Fields as shown in the Plan were formed by the road from
Uxbridge (Oxford Street) and the road from Colnbrook
(Piccadilly). South of the latter road was St James’s Field.
On the east of the roadway which became the Haymarket
there were two small closes.

At the end of the fifteenth century the greater part of the
enclosed land belonged to Abingdon Abbey, the Hospital of
Burton Lazar, and the Mercers Company. These it will be
convenient to refer to as the Abingdon Lands, the Burton
Lazar Lands, and the Mercers Lands. Other lands belonged
to Westminster Abbey or to the Hospital of St James. For
these last there is no early history with which we need here
be specially concerned.

§ 2. THE ABINGDON LANDS

The Abingdon Lands had belonged originally to West-
minster Abbey, but at the beginning of the fourteenth century

1 A fuller account of the Plan will come more conveniently later. See
§ 2]  **THE ABINGDON LANDS**

had been demised, subject to some small rents, to William Charles, son of Sir Edward Charles. In 1305 Joan, widow of William Charles, held a messuage and 32 acres of land of the Abbot of Westminster, rendering 10s. rent to the abbey, 5s. to the Church of St Margaret, and 10d. to Master William de Wauden. In 1334 Joan's son William Charles sold the messuage and land to Sir John Stonor; the property is then described as situate in the vills of Westminster and Eybury. At Stonor's death in 1354 he was found to have held a messuage and 60 acres of land with their appurtenances in Westminster, paying 10s. rent to the abbey. In 1390 his great-grandson, another John Stonor, was found to have held a tenement with its appurtenances called La Mote in Westminster, yielding 46s. 8d. in rents, and a barn with 60 acres of land; the whole being held of the Abbot of Westminster. The manor of La Mote remained in the possession of the Stonors till 1478, when Sir William Stonor sold it to the Abbot of Abingdon. In the agreement for sale it is described simply as "the manor called The Moote in the parish of St Margaret in the town of Westminster with all the appurtenances belonging thereto." But in a Recovery made for the purpose of the sale it appears as the manor of The Mote with eight messuages, a garden, — 4 acres of land and 20 acres of meadow in the town of Westminster and the parishes of St Giles and St Martin-in-the-Fields. In August 1490 "Mote Place" in Westminster was in the King's hands through the treason of the late Abbot of Abingdon. However, the abbey recovered its property before 1495, when it paid rent to Westminster for The Mote, and held it till 1536, when it was purchased by Henry VIII.

The house called The Mote was on the west side of King Street; the actual house seems to have stood back from the

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1 *Calendar of Inquisitions*, iv. 299.
3 *See Stonor Letters and Papers*, i. p. xvi (Camden Soc.).
4 The record is imperfect.
5 Placita de Banco, Roll 867, m. 457.
6 *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, Henry VII, i. 316.
7 Westminster Abbey Muniments, 17127.
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street, as there were two shops with a garden on the east side of it. Probably it had a gate-house in King Street, and the rest of the frontage was let in subordinate tenements. In 1382 Edmund Stonor held four shops in Westminster of the abbot; we also hear of a tenement in King Street lately called "Stonor's." ¹ The lands of the manor lay partly in St James's Fields and partly in the district between St Martin's and St Giles's. In the Westminster Abbey muniments there is reference to a garden "late Stonor's now the Abbot of Abingdon's"; from the description it must have been to the east of St Martin's Church, for it was bounded on the south by a house which was opposite to Norwich Inn, and the site of that Inn was immediately east of the present Charing Cross Station. It is not, however, possible to identify this garden with any of the known Abingdon lands. The chief medieval document which throws precise light on the position of the Stonor or Abingdon Lands is a deed of 1391 which shows that a part of them lay in The Great Common Field and the Windmill Field². There were two smaller parcels in St Giles's Field and in St Martin’s Field. These are the Abingdon Lands with which we shall be concerned. A further piece of 13 acres lay in the western part of St James’s Fields outside the area covered by the Plan.

When the Abingdon Lands were acquired by Henry VIII in 1536 they were described as 60 acres of arable in the parish of St Margaret’s, Westminster.³ This no doubt included all the lands which had belonged to The Mote. In 1585 they were stated to include seven separate parcels. The first was a narrow strip of under one acre in Windmill Field, bounded on the south by the Windmill, the land of Widow Golightly and Mr Wilson and some of the Burton Lazar land, whilst on the east it abutted on Colman Hedge Lane. The second, which is sometimes called The Four Acres, was also in Windmill Field, and had lands of Mr Wilson on the north, east and south, with land of St James’s on the west. The third, which was known as Stone Conduit Close, was on the north

¹ Westminster Abbey Muniments, Reg. 1. ff. 68, 124. ² Id. f. 15. ³ See p. 8 below. ⁴ Statute 28 Henry VIII, c. 42.
§ 3] THE BURTON LAZAR LANDS

side of the way from Colnbrook (now Piccadilly) and lay between the land of St James’s on the west, of Mr Wilson on the north, and of Widow Golightly on the east; its area was nearly nine acres. The fourth was a small close of under two acres “At The Grauell pits” in The Great Common Field. The fifth was a narrow strip, a little over one acre, between the land of Widow Golightly and the Round Ryngles, also in The Great Common Field. The sixth was a long piece in St Giles’s Field on the east side of Colman Hedge Lane. These closes make up about 21 acres. The 13 acres in St James’s Field are described as “not in the plotte.”1 Some land in St Martin’s Field is not included in this description, and we only hear of it in another connexion. It will be noted that the total falls far short of 60 acres; the residue will have comprised the land about the Mote house, and the garden near St Martin’s, and possibly other lands which have not been traced.

§ 3. THE BURTON LAZAR LANDS

The Burton Lazar Lands were part of the endowment of St Giles’s Hospital, and had no doubt belonged to it from an early date. Parton in his History of St Giles² gave a list of the lands of St Giles’s Hospital from the Cartulary in Harley MS. 4015 at the British Museum. But his attempted identification of the lands is based on a very inaccurately reconstructed map³, which does not represent anything that can ever have existed. That map differs altogether from the Plan of 1585. Having regard to the permanence of such features there can be no doubt that the Plan represents both fields and roadways substantially as they existed during the whole history of St Giles’s Hospital from 1117 to 1547. In Parton’s list 27 pieces of land are given as situated in the Fields of Westminster and at Charing. The Fields of Westminster must mean those fields which lay in St Margaret’s

1 See p. 143 below.
2 The lands with which we are concerned are described on pp. 79–82.
3 Facing p. 161. He was in part misled by the Agas map.
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parish (and after 1542 in St Martin’s), viz. in St Giles’s Field, St Martin’s Field and in that part of Windmill Field which is sometimes called Colman Hedge Field. Of the parcels of land described many seem to have been in St Giles’s Field. Thus an acre of ground given by Henry de Belgrave is described as lying as one goes from the Hospital towards Coliereshage1 (Colman Hedge) on the straight path, and extended from Eldestrate (Hog Lane) to the said path2. Another piece called Longesmale butted west on Colemanneshegge Lane, and a similar western boundary is given for other pieces. Other parcels adjoined the Hospital garden and were probably in the close on the south of the Hospital. All these lands were acquired during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but in the absence of precise information as to the bounds and areas it would be hopeless to attempt to fit them together. In the case of two other parcels there is reference in fourteenth century deeds to the field called Le Merslade or Le Meryslande; this is no doubt Marshland. In another source under date 1429 we find land described as situated in the field called Merslade between the land of the Hospital of St Giles and land of the Abbot of Westminster3. The lands given by Parton as “Apud Cherryng” were: first a walled garden containing four acres of arable “juxta les Muwes”; this may be the land which we know that the Hospital held in St Martin’s Field. It was given to the Hospital by Juliana de Stowe, who also gave nine acres of arable, of which three lay in the field adjoining the way which goes “juxta Charyng usque Knighytsbrugge” and were on the north of the road called Spitalstrate4. Two other parcels were in the same field, and another had the way from Knightbridge to St Giles on the north side, and yet another half acre lay by Colmanhegghe on the east of the land of Edward Charles. The way beside Charing to Knightsbridge may perhaps mean the way from St Giles to Knightsbridge passing near Charing; in that case

1 Not Cohereshage as in Parton.
2 Two stiles marked in St Giles’s Field on the Plan of 1585 indicate the existence of a path, not necessarily the one referred to above.
3 Cotton MS, Nero, E. vi. f. 50.
4 Harley MS, 4015, f. 160.
§ 4] THE MERCERS LANDS

the first three parcels may have been in the south part of St Giles’s Field, which was afterwards called Camps Close; Spitalstrafe will then be the lane on its south side. Some other part of the lands may have been in Colman Hedge Field or St Martin’s Field. Parton placed all these latter lands in the area between Hedge Lane and the present Haymarket, or in St James’s Field. This is quite impossible, and there is no evidence that St Giles’s Hospital ever had any lands so far west. In the uncertainty of the description and early history of these lands we must seek our first precise knowledge of the Burton Lazar Lands in the account of them as acquired by Henry VIII.

Henry VIII in 1536\(^1\) acquired by exchange from the Master of Burton Lazar: (i) 25 acres\(^2\) in two parcels in St Giles’s Field, bounded north by the highway from Uxbridge, south by the highway from Knightsbridge to St Giles, east by a lane (Hog Lane) connecting the two highways, and west by a parcel of Abingdon Lands and Colman Hedge Lane; this is marked on the Plan as B. 1. (2) Two acres in St Martin’s Field; not shown in the Plan. (3) A close of five acres next Colman Hedge Close; this was at the north end of Colman Hedge Lane, and is marked B. 2. (4) Five acres of pasture in Colman Hedge Field; this is B. 3. (5) Marshland. (6) Conduit Close; five acres near St Giles’s Church. There were several other lands farther east which do not come in the Plan.

§ 4. THE MERCERS LANDS

The Mercers Lands are not specifically described as such on the Plan or in the relative documents, though alluded to incidentally in the latter. Their history goes back to the fourteenth century, when John Bosham, citizen and mercer of London, on 12th December 1391 enfeoffed Denys Lopham, clerk, Robert Gunypey and John Lane, mercenaries, and Richard Forster, citizen of London, in 52 acres of arable and 12 acres

\(^{1}\) Statutes 28 Henry VIII, c. 24.
\(^{2}\) Given as 27 acres on p. 144 below.
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of meadow called Pantersmede, lying between the meadow of the Abbey of Westminster\(^1\) on the west, land of the Hospital of St Giles and the King’s way called Suggen Lane on the east, and the lands of Edmund Stonor\(^2\), William Norton and the Hospital of St James on the south, and the highway on the north: also in 20 acres of arable lying between the highway on the north, the land of St Giles on the east, and the lands of Edmund Stonor, St Giles and St James on the south and Suggen Lane on the west; also in three acres of arable bounded by the highway on the north and by the lands of Edmund Stonor on the east, west and south; also in a croft called Muwes Croft containing two acres of arable and butting on the wall of the Mews south, and in part east, and bounded by the highway on the west; also in five acres lying as far as the highway on the north, the land of Edmund Stonor east, the land of St Giles’s Hospital south and Colman Hedge west. Two days previously Forster had made an enfeoffment to Bosham of the same lands, which he and Robert Warbulton, Thomas Austyn and John Shadworth, mercers, had by an enfeoffment from John Dane, another mercer. In April 1398 Lopham, Guppey and Lane made a release of the lands to Richard Forster and others\(^3\).

It is clear that these transactions related to lands which were held in trust for the Mercers, at a time when the Company had no power to hold land for itself. In spite of some difficulty due to uncertainty and possible inaccuracy in the bounds there is no doubt that the lands held for the Mercers in 1391 include those which are marked W. on the Plan of 1585. Suggen Lane seems to have been used in 1391 of the whole of the lane between the Uxbridge and Colnbrook roads\(^4\). The 52 acres on the west of the Lane are only represented in part by the lands marked W., which amount to less than 27 acres; but we know that 27 acres in Conduit

\(^1\) Or Eybury Manor, of which the Tyburn was the eastern boundary.
\(^2\) It should be “heirs of Edmund Stonor”; Edmund Stonor died in 1382.
\(^3\) Close Roll, 16 Richard II, m. 21, dorse, and Ancient Deeds, C. 328.
\(^4\) The deeds were enrolled in Chancery on 15th January 1393.

See further, pp. 10 and 124 below.
§ 4] THE MERCERS LANDS

Mead had also belonged to the Mercers and thus we get approximately the right area; the bounds on the south would have been Stone Conduit Close (Abingdon land then held by the heirs of Edmund Stonor), the adjoining land of St James, and farther west presumably the land of William Norton; the principal eastern boundary would have been Suggen Lane. The deed of 1391 seems to imply that Pantersmede was west of Suggen Lane, but since one eastern boundary was land of St Giles we must look elsewhere; if Pantersmede is identified with the close of W. land at the north-east corner of Suggen Lane, it may have reached to the St Giles’s land B. 2. The 20 acres of arable on the east of Suggen Lane will be represented by the other W. lands in Windmill Field, the total area of which was a little over 18 acres; if to this we add the 13 acres in the close at the north-west we get a total of nearly 32 acres to represent the 12 acres of Pantersmede and the 20 acres of arable; the bounds as given will be reasonably if not precisely accurate. The three acres of arable bounded on the highway north and the lands of Edmund Stonor on the other three sides are difficult to identify on the description given; their position was uncertain in 1650; they seem to be the same as the “three acres of arable land at Cleypittees” which were described about 1540 as purchased of the Mercers; so far as the area and the northern boundary are concerned Scavenger’s Close, which was W. land, would suit. “Muwes Croft” is undoubtedly the close of two acres between the Mews and Colman Hedge Lane. The last close of five acres is described as on the east side of Colman Hedge Lane; this points to a position in St Martin’s Field, the lands in which are not distinguished in the Plan of 1585. It will be observed that the total area of the Mercers Lands in 1391 was 94 acres.

During the fifteenth century the Mercers Lands were probably sub-let. In 1491 a large part of them were held by

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1 Including Gelding’s Close.
2 See p. 39 below.
3 Rentals and Surveys, 3/13, P.R.O.
4 See p. 13 below.
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Sir John Fortescue of Punsborne, who in that year leased to Sir John Browne and other citizens of London

a meadow called the Conduit Mead with a partition in the midst of the same, which meadow lieth beside the new house of the Conduit of Tyburn in the county of Middlesex, abutting in breadth towards the north upon the King’s highway leading to Londonward eight roods and a half of assise, every rood containing in length sixteen feet and a half, and upon the west side next thereto is a great brook of water running called Aybroke, and upon the east side next thereto lieth two closes of the same Sir John Fortescue, which John Hardy and John Butteler occupie; also an angle of the said meadow called the Conduit Mead abutteth upon a lane called Suglane upon the east, and in breadth there twenty roods and a yard after the measure aforewritten. Also the Conduit Mead abutteth upon the close of the said Sir John Fortescue that John Hardy aforewritten occupieth and upon the land belonging to Saint James in the Field upon the south side, and in breadth there five score roods and two after the measure aforesaid; and the said Conduit Mead is in length from the north to the south with the partition aforesaid seven score roods and three after the measure aforesaid. All which Conduit Mead, as is now hedged, ditched and closed, one Miles Clifton, cordwainer, late occupieth, and now Thomas Duff, innholder, occupieth and holdeth of the same Sir John Fortescue.

The lessees were to hold the Conduit Mead together with another close with a well therein adjoining, for a term of 180 years at an annual rent of £4, “saving always to the Mayor and Commonalty such interest as they have in the said lands for the conveyance of water to the City.”

The “angle” of Conduit Meadow is clearly the enclosed “Cunditt meadowe” marked on the Plan as abutting east on Sug Lane. The main Conduit Meadow lay along the modern New Bond Street with its north end on Oxford Street, its western boundary being the Aybrook or Tyburn. At its south-west corner it reached to Hay Hill, the rest of the southern boundary being formed by Stonebridge Close and the strip marked in the Plan as “the farmeland of St James.”

1 Letter Book, L., pp. 283–84. I have modernised the spelling of the original English deed.

2 See further, pp. 130–32 below.