

WHAT'S IN A NAME – “TOWER ROYAL” & “BUDGE ROW”

John Mathews

I have for some time been curious about the reason for the name Joseph Sloper gave to his works at West Hampstead – Tower Royal Works. Now I have found the web site of the Ward of Cordwainer Club which was founded in 1902. It gives a history of some of the more interesting streets within the Ward. Under “Tower Royal”, it gives the origin of the word Royal in this context as being a corruption from “Reole”, the hill and neighbourhood where wine merchants from La Reole, near Bordeaux, settled during or after the reign of Edward I. The main building was called “Tower Royal”. Richard II was in residence there in 1381. In 1677, it was called “Tower Royal Street”.

On a 1762 map of London, I found that Tower Royal ran south from Budge Row opposite St. Antholin’s Church. It is still marked on an 1882 Ordnance Survey map, but does not appear on my modern map of London.

The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable tells us that Budge “is lambskin with the wool dressed outwards, worn on the edge of capes, bachelors’ hoods, and so on. Budge Row, Cannon Street, is so-called because it was chiefly occupied by budge-makers.” St. Antholin’s Church stood about halfway along Budge Row where the street had a slight bend (see the picture opposite). It was destroyed in the Great Fire in 1666 (which melted its bells) and was rebuilt in 1682 by Christopher Wren. It was demolished in 1875 to clear a site for the new Queen Victoria Street. Since World War II, Budge Row has seen many changes and now survives as a pedestrian way, covered at its southern end by a large concrete block of offices.



View looking eastwards along
Budge Row, date unknown.
(Budge Row curves to the right side of
St. Antholin’s Church, and Tower Royal
Street is to the right off Budge Row,
opposite the church.)