

CHAPTER 1

Setting the Scene – Edward Jerman in Context

The Jerman dynasty of seven master-craftsmen, of which Edward belonged to the fourth and last generation, lived and worked in the City of London from 1520 until 1678, a period spanning six reigns. Their working lives are chronicled in the record books of the City companies by whom they were employed, mainly in court minutes and wardens' accounts, as well as in the Repertories of the Corporation of the City of London,¹ Journals of Common Council and various City account books.² From these archives one learns that Edward Jerman held appointments with the Corporation of the City from 1633, and before the Fire was Company Surveyor to the Fishmongers and Haberdashers, and Company Carpenter to the Goldsmiths.

He designed pageants to celebrate both the coronation of Charles II and several Lord Mayors' days, documentation of these being found in company records and in pageant pamphlets or programmes of the days' events. In the post-Fire period, Edward Jerman was approached by eight City companies to plan new halls for them, and was chosen "to order and direct the affair of rebuilding the Royal Exchange."³ He acted as a surveyor to fire-damaged halls and oversaw the building of St Paul's School. Details of these works are sometimes haphazard, sometimes fragmentary, depending upon the assiduousness of the reporting clerk or the condition of the record books.

These record books are factual accounts that, in some cases, give details of meetings of building committees, shedding light on Edward Jerman's negotiations with both the companies and the workforce. Some describe the materials used and the costs incurred, the court minutes usually being supplemented by wardens' accounts in this field. They give a fascinating insight into all aspects of Edward Jerman's working life, allowing us to follow his path from craftsman to designer. Every now and then, it is possible to catch a brief glimpse of the characters, not only of Edward Jerman, but also of those members of the family whose work is recorded, and we find evidence of them being argumentative, dependable, long-suffering or greedy. In the absence of any visual images of these men, such glimpses are helpful in building up a mental picture.

Entries in the records of the Carpenters' Company reveal the approximate dates and ages of the family members, and their relationships with each other, while the Christ's Hospital records indicate where they lived and worked, affording a picture of the background from which Edward Jerman emerged to become such

a sought-after designer in the post-Fire period. Had the Fire not occurred, he might, like his father, Anthony, be remembered merely as a City Viewer and Carpenter, a creator of pageants, a speculative builder and a surveyor to three of the Great Twelve Companies. Instead, the Fire afforded him the opportunity to demonstrate the talents that many in the City of 1666 realised he possessed, talents that vindicated the rulers of the City in their choice of him as a surveyor and architect.

Unfortunately, Wren's dictum "si monumentum requires, circumspice" cannot be applied to Edward Jerman, Apothecaries' Hall being the only one of his designs still extant in any recognisable form.⁴ However, there remain many images, mainly engravings, of the facades of his company halls, together with the Royal Exchange and St Paul's School. As nearly all of these buildings were completed after Jerman's death in October 1668, finer detailing cannot always be reliably ascribed to him, although, as we shall see, certain "trademarks" recur in many of his buildings, leading one to believe that his designs suffered little adaptation.

Contemporary written descriptions of any of the company halls are meagre. John Strype, in his edition of Stow's *Survey of London*, commended many of them as "spacious" and "noble", but gave little indication of their architectural details.⁵ Edward Hatton's writing is more architecturally descriptive. He acknowledged that most of the halls were brick-built (in compliance with the Rebuilding Act of 1667), and mentioned that several incorporated the orders of architecture, praising their elegance.⁶ However, most writers laid greater emphasis on the antiquity of the guilds and their coats of arms, rather than their premises, and none of them mentioned a designer.

Edward Jerman, the craftsman-turned architect, and his forebears have also been neglected by subsequent historians, even those documenting the Carpenters' Company itself. Little or nothing relating to the first two generations of the family is to be found in published literature, save an occasional sentence in a company history. E.B. Jupp, in his history of the Carpenters' Company (1847) mentioned the family in a table of Masters and Wardens.⁷ B. Alford and T. Baker (1968) omitted any reference to the Jermans,⁸ while Jasper Ridley, writing on the Carpenters in 1995, simply acknowledged a cup given to the Company by Edward's father, Anthony Jerman, on his appointment as a Warden in 1628.⁹ Anthony has also been deemed worthy of note for his work in connection with the rebuilding of Goldsmiths' Hall in 1635 and the Church of St Michael le Querne in 1638, probably because both projects involved the intervention of Inigo Jones, the King's Surveyor General.¹⁰

Howard Colvin's *Dictionary*, of course, supplies the fullest biographical details of Edward Jerman, and refers to his post-Fire designs for the halls of the Apothecaries, Barber-Surgeons, Drapers, Fishmongers, Haberdashers, Mercers, Wax Chandlers and Weavers, together with those for the Royal Exchange and St Paul's School.¹¹ Fuller accounts of Jerman's work for the Mercers are provided by Jean Imray and Ian Doolittle,¹² while his commission at the Exchange is described

in Ann Saunders' chapters in the recent publication by the London Topographical Society.¹³ Edward Jerman's long association with the Fishmongers' Company has been thoroughly chronicled and appraised by Priscilla Metcalf.¹⁴

This lack of documentation is perhaps understandable, given the paucity of research that has been conducted into Jerman himself,¹⁵ or indeed into secular, post-Fire rebuilding, which seems to have been considered something of an architectural backwater by many writers. Margaret Whinney considered Edward Jerman's work for the Mercers' Company and the City, namely the Mercers' Hall and the Royal Exchange. She mentioned the "confused Serlio-like form" of the Hall, and the Flemish influence evident in the Exchange, which she compared with the King Charles block at Greenwich, designed by Jerman's contemporary, John Webb.¹⁶ For Whinney, the contrast demonstrated the gulf between the taste and knowledge of the City and the court patrons and artists, a point as we shall see, taken up by Sir John Summerson and Cynthia Wall. Kerry Downes, who described Jerman as a mason rather than a carpenter, believed that the Exchange represented a middle-class taste "noticeably and almost archaically conservative in its time."¹⁷ Summerson dismissed it as "typically mannered and coarse as one would expect from City artificers", and erroneously accredited Jerman with the rebuilding of Merchant Taylors' Hall.¹⁸ Even if one accepts that Jerman's style was coarse and mannered, how much of that style was due to his own artisan background, and how much was dictated by his City patrons is open to question. Certainly, the rulers of the City showed little interest in emulating the cultivated court architecture of the West End, if only because of its cost.

As we shall see, the reconstruction of the City was, of necessity, executed with speed and thrift, but the unsophisticated taste of many City dwellers certainly influenced the design of buildings in that immediate post-Fire period. Summerson, discussing City taste, remarked that it was "a subject of mockery and disdain in the West End. . . . They [City folk] liked cornices and enormous iron-work shop signs, just as they liked starting the day with a draught of sack, over-eating and pinching each others' fat wives. The City contributed nothing to the art of the Stuarts or the Georgians, it was content with the robust second-rate".¹⁹ Wall also makes this distinction between those merchants of the City and the cultivated courtiers of Westminster, with reference to Restoration theatre: "The most obvious reason that Restoration drama deals so little with the City life is the usual one, the Restoration playwright and the Restoration audience were emphatically not of the City, but . . . members of the court, of prominent literary and social circles. . . . The City housed the Puritans, the money-makers, the recalcitrant Commonwealths. What had City life to do with cultivated urban court life?"²⁰ As with the theatre, so also with architecture, between the court and the City lay a great aesthetic divide.

Most writers on the reconstruction of the post-Fire City have focused on Wren, although Paul Jeffery stressed the important role played by Robert Hooke, and especially Edward Woodroffe in church rebuilding.²¹ Wren's own contribution to the rebuilding of the City was confined mainly to ecclesiastical buildings, St Paul's

and the City churches, together with a very few public buildings, including the Custom House. Both W.G. Bell and Reddaway gave thorough and detailed descriptions of the Fire and its aftermath, and factual accounts rather than aesthetic judgements of post-Fire buildings.²²

The writings of Bell and Reddaway have recently been superseded by Stephen Porter's comprehensive book, *The Great Fire of London*.²³ Porter has condensed and amended these seminal studies, incorporating research and publications that have become available in the intervening years. He has especially taken into account the research of A.L. Beier and Peter Earle, who have concentrated on social topography and the culture and society of Restoration London. Beier, in his essay "Engine of Manufacture: The Trades of London",²⁴ stressed that, in the seventeenth century, the City of London was probably the greatest trading centre in the world, and by the 1660s was also a major manufacturing centre, with the parish of St Giles Cripplegate (where Edward Jerman was buried in 1668), for example, supporting 390 different trades. The abundance of merchants and masters living within the City walls reflected the fact that, for such people, their workplace was commonly also their residence. Understanding this helps one to realise why speed of rebuilding after the Fire was so crucial, to avoid the loss of income caused by the collapse of this all-important manufacture and trade.

Peter Earle, in *The Making of the English Middle Class*, attempted to rationalise Daniel Defoe's seven classes of society (which he had described in 1709) into three: the upper or "West End society" of aristocracy and gentry; the middle, commercial and industrial capitalists and professional men; and the working class, Defoe's "mechanic part of mankind". However, as Earle admits, in the seventeenth century, some independent artisans such as Edward Jerman, with their own workshops and tools, had most of the attributes of the middle class, and had a great chance of improving themselves over the course of a lifetime.²⁵ Although, at the time, these classes would have been identifiable by their speech, dress, behaviour, bearing and income, the status quo was constantly fluctuating. Society was a continuously ascending hierarchy, and for artisan families of the calibre of the Jermans, each generation was a little better off and a little more genteel than the previous one.

The craftsman's role, his conditions of work, his position in society and within the trade guilds of the seventeenth century have been elucidated by both Donald Woodward and Steve Rappaport. Although Woodward discussed the working conditions of building craftsmen in the towns of northern England,²⁶ circumstances prevailing in the City were not very dissimilar. Woodward considered contracts and methods of payment with reference to Wren's oft-cited discourse, addressed to the Bishop of Oxford, on ways of working.²⁷ He demonstrated the wage differentials among building craftsmen arising from different levels of skill and responsibility, and also discussed the provision and transport of building materials. These subjects are particularly pertinent to Edward Jerman's work at Fishmongers' Hall, the Goldsmiths' Hall and the Royal

Exchange. Rappaport discussed the position of the City companies in the sixteenth century, and stressed the powerful part they played in the protection and succour of their members and explained the hierarchy that existed within them.²⁸ This issue is taken up here in relation to the Jermans' status within the Carpenters' Company. The importance of the companies was indeed waning in the City by the seventeenth century, due to the growth of the suburbs and migration of provincial workmen, but for craftsmen such as the Jermans, still under their jurisdiction, both structural inequalities and patterns of mobility remained pertinent.

The Company Halls

The predecessors of Jerman's company halls cannot be easily classified as a building type because their individual evolution resulted in a very disparate group of structures. The great majority of them had developed, or, like Topsy, just grow'd,²⁹ in their different ways, from City houses of varying degrees of grandeur, usually bequeathed to the company by a wealthy member. Livery halls (great halls in which the livery met), company offices and parlours were subsequently added to such houses wherever sites permitted, and often by jettying when they did not. By the mid-seventeenth century, therefore, they were a heterogeneous group, as we shall see, united only by their incorporation of a livery hall. By this time, too, the companies' financial resources had been gradually eroded by a fall in membership and by demands not only of the Crown, but also of Parliament during the Commonwealth. The wars with France and the Netherlands were both costly and unpopular, and were trebly burdensome for those companies involved in the building industry. They were obliged to pay taxes towards the wars, they lost craftsmen, sent to Tilbury for defence work, and their trade suffered from a shortage of timber, used for shipping. Any building programmes the companies might have envisaged were therefore curtailed, and very few had the resources to build anew.

By 1666, the companies must have agreed with Claudius when he said, "When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions."³⁰ Their finances were depleted, and the plague of 1665 had further reduced their membership and so their revenue. The Fire destroyed not only their halls, but also their plate and memorabilia, and they also found themselves responsible for the homeless dependants of their gutted almshouses. They were indeed walking a financial tightrope. To compound their woes, floods in October 1666 were followed by the most severe winter in living memory, rendering any immediate attempt at reorganisation impossible.

Although, of course, there was no fire insurance, most companies did manage to rebuild, but speed and thrift were their priorities. Very few company minute books or account books mention the actual rebuilding process, only remarking on livery dinners which were held to celebrate the new halls.³¹ Account book

entries concerning both the expenditure on and the design of these post-Fire halls are similarly scanty, but do indicate that following their initial rebuilding, the new halls continued to evolve, as had their predecessors, as company fortunes grew. Thus they always were, and still are today, a miscellaneous group, not easily categorised. One need look no further than Goldsmiths' Hall and its near neighbour Plaisterers' Hall to appreciate this difference. In the City of London, contained within its walls, space has always been at a premium and the individuality of City building has always reflected this.

The reason why the "Puritans, the money-makers, the recalcitrant Commonwealths" of the City chose Edward Jerman to design not only eight company halls, but also the Exchange, is a good question until one remembers that the professional architect, as we understand the term today, was all but unknown in Restoration England. Educated "amateurs", gentlemen with an interest in architecture, as well as craftsmen – carpenters, bricklayers and masons – filled that position. Thus the King's choices for Commissioners for Rebuilding the City were Christopher Wren, Hugh May and Roger Pratt.³² Both Pratt and May had country-house building experience, but Wren, at this time, had only university buildings to his name. All three were, of course, Royalists, and not readily acceptable to those "recalcitrant Commonwealths", when it came to designing halls.³³ The City's commissioners were Robert Hooke, a discreet Royalist, a gentleman and scientist, "brilliant, cantankerous, secretive and always in ill-health",³⁴ Peter Mills, a bricklayer by training, and Edward Jerman, a carpenter. Although the Court of Aldermen had approved Hooke's plan for the new City, preferring it to that of Peter Mills, Hooke had as yet no building to prove his worth. Mills' activity as a surveyor and architect can be traced back as far as 1638, and he is credited with the designs for several country houses; he had worked alongside Jerman for the City Corporation for thirty years when they held posts of City Viewers, City Bricklayer and Carpenter, and City Surveyors. In the post-Fire period, so whole-hearted was Mills' commitment to street surveying that his health deteriorated. This enabled Jerman, whose artistry and craftsmanship were already known to several of the City companies over many years, to gain contracts that might otherwise have been offered to Mills and finally to win that for the Exchange.

Edward Jerman was a well-known City man with local knowledge and a sound reputation. He was manifestly the City's candidate for the rebuilding and it becomes clear why he was chosen by the companies to design their halls. Although he had received no formal training as a designer (Webb being unique at this time in having been instructed in classical architecture as a pupil of Inigo Jones), and most of his inventions must have sprung from observation and discussion,³⁵ his experience as a master-craftsman, then as a surveyor and speculative builder would have rendered him conversant with mensuration and the drawing of plots and uprights. While the designs of Jerman's post-Fire buildings were determined by the amalgamation of a variety of influences – other company halls, Gresham's



1.1 Cromwell House, near Smithfield. John Crowther watercolour (1880).

Exchange, the mansion houses of City merchants, his association with Inigo Jones and with Mills, Pratt and May, and the printed works of architectural masters which were becoming available – it must not be forgotten that the companies required that their halls be rebuilt along the lines of their predecessors, rather than re-designed in some entirely new form. With no extra land available, and little time or money to spare, the companies were conservative in their ambitions.

Jerman was familiar with many of the halls that had been destroyed by the Fire, especially those he had visited in connection with his pageant work, or knew in his capacity as a company surveyor. They included those of the Fishmongers, Haberdashers, Grocers, Skinners and Clothworkers. While conducting his business in these halls, he became familiar with officials who, as we shall see, considered him a skilful and dependable worker. He was also no stranger to some of the recently erected halls which had escaped the flames, including those of the Carpenters, as a member; the Goldsmiths, on which his father and brother had worked for several years and where he was the Company Carpenter; and the Leathersellers, where his advice had been sought in 1632.

Jerman had been a frequent visitor to Gresham College while creating his pageant props because many of them were both fashioned and assembled there. As he crossed its quadrangle, he must have compared its arcaded walks with those of Gresham's other edifice, the Royal Exchange. When he came to design

his Exchange, there were already many images, both engravings and paintings of this nerve centre of the City to which he could refer when he considered his replacement for this much admired building.

Walking through the City during his working week, Jerman would have passed the mansion houses of City merchants, some from Tudor times and before. Such houses included Crosby Place (1466), Thomas Cromwell's Mansion which had become Drapers' Hall, Thanet House (1644), Bacon House, which had been acquired by the Scriveners' Company, and Browne's Place, situated on the Thames next to Askham's Place which was the site of Fishmongers' Hall.³⁶ Notably in his rebuilding of the Apothecaries', Drapers' and Fishmongers' Halls, Jerman perpetuated the courtyard form of these houses, about which Hatton remarked in 1708,

Those especially . . . around the Royal Exchange are so numerous and magnificent with courts, offices and all other necessary apartments enclosed to themselves . . . because of the great quantity of ground they are built on, generally situate backwards, and by that means, the City appears . . . not near so stately and beautiful as it really is . . . were these ornaments exposed to public view.³⁷

A glimpse at Ogilby and Morgan's City of London map of 1676, together with illustrations of Jerman's buildings here provided, will confirm Hatton's observation.³⁸ Jerman's Fishmongers' Hall, however, boasted an imposing river front, while the Mercers' façade dominated Cheapside. The pedimented centrepieces of Drapers' Hall and the north front of the Royal Exchange introduced a classical element to Bishopsgate and Threadneedle Street respectively. Edward Jerman thereby bestowed on his new buildings a grandeur which fitted their function as the nucleus from which commerce would again emanate and the future of the City be assured.

Thus Edward Jerman's halls were a disparate group, from that of the mighty Mercers' to the more humble Wax Chandlers'. The lack of reportage of the evolution of the designs and process of building these halls is interesting. In the case of the Mercers, Jerman's surveys of properties owned by them are recorded in great detail, together with his lengthy and intricate negotiations with the argumentative and formidable tenants, but sparse reference is made to hall rebuilding. The possibility of litigation must have loomed large with properties so closely juxtaposed, and with boundaries and ancient lights so frequently contested.³⁹ The progress of hall rebuilding, as long as it proceeded smoothly, was not a cause of concern to the Courts of Assistants, and even if it were debated, it was not recorded. Discussion of architectural elegance was not the province of those "money makers" of the City. Happily for these courts, in Edward Jerman they engaged not only a first-rate artificer and a tactful negotiator, but also an accomplished architect.

After Jerman's death, his colleagues John Lock, Thomas Cartwright and John Oliver continued his work.⁴⁰ Theirs was the last generation of craftsman-organised



1.2 Carpenters' Hall, built 1664. Thomas Shepherd watercolour (1830).

building, for changes were taking place in the building world that had already touched the lives of the post-Fire designers. Speculative building was playing an increasingly large part in urban development, pioneered by Nicholas Barbon, who speculated in both land and houses. Architects such as Edward Jerman designed and often oversaw the materialisation of their schemes, but no longer shaped them in a craft capacity. The direct labour mode of payment was being replaced by one in which work was contracted out to one or more surveyors, men necessarily literate and numerate enough to be able to measure and calculate the size and cost of the proposed work, to organise the provision of materials and to check the finished buildings in accordance with the drafts set down by the designer. And of course, the vernacular style which had predominated in the City was giving way to a more classical one, as Figures 1.1 and 1.2 demonstrate, and brick and stone were, by legislation, replacing wood and infill for external walls. As we shall see in the ensuing chapters, each of these changes directly affected Edward Jerman's working life, the nature of his employment and his remuneration.

Edward Jerman's life can be conveniently divided into three categories that ran more or less consecutively. He was elected to the first of his City posts, that of City Carpenter, in 1632/3 and was subsequently appointed City Viewer and City Surveyor, but by 1657, Jerman had resigned from all these positions to become an independent contractor. From 1656 until 1664, his pageant work for the Lord

Mayors' Shows was well received by the organising City Companies, and through it, he was becoming known to officials of those companies, acting as a surveyor to three of them. The Fire formed the watershed between Jerman the artificer and Jerman the architect, and between 1666 and 1668 his skills as a designer/surveyor were much sought-after by many Courts of Assistants. It was in this brief period that he designed the Royal Exchange, St Paul's School and eight company halls, but as we shall see, it was his pre-Fire work for those very particular City patrons that ensured these post-Fire commissions.

SAMPLE