

Cliffords Inn

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The Hall of the original Cliffords Inn



Cliffords Inn Gatehouse



View from the tower of St Dunstan in the West

Cliffords Inn is the ancient name now attached to the rather undistinguished mansion block of 8 storeys, which occupies less than half of the site of the original Inn. The building contains over 100 flats and some offices on the lower floors. Cliffords Inn before 1934 stretched from Fetter Lane to Chancery Lane with an entrance along Cliffords Inn Passage, through a gatehouse which is now the only relic of its past.

The original Cliffords Inn dates back to 1344, when Isabel de Clifford rented it to Law Chancery, which provided the first stage of the education of lawyers, who would then move on to one of the Inns of Court in order to be called to the Bar. Their educational functions ceased in 1642 due to the outbreak of the Civil War. Cliffords Inn was one of a number of Inns of Chancery. The others, (which included Clements, Lyons's, Thavies, Furnivals, Barnards, Staples and New Inns) were all founded later and were wound up earlier. Cliffords Inn continued as a professional association with residential accommodation and a hall, but over time the buildings deteriorated, and the Society [first time we have mentioned "the Society"?] gradually became moribund. In 1900 they decided to

sell the site and to give the proceeds to the Attorney General for the benefit of legal education.

An account published in 1912 showed that the inhabitants of Cliffords Inn were engaged in a wide variety of trades and professions: literary work, sculpture, painting, architecture, theatre management, law, shorthand, typing, photography and tailoring. It also contained the headquarters of the Art-Workers Guild, the Positivist Society, the London Typographical Society and the Society of Women Journalists. Later, the Society of Knights Bachelor bought the Hall and some of the surrounding buildings. The Chancery Lane frontage was sold to an insurance company, and another large part was sold to the Crown.

After the Great Fire of London in 1666, there was a major problem because most of the buildings were on full repairing leases, and most of tenants were in no position to rebuild the properties. A Fire Court was set up with draconian powers with sixteen judges, of whom three were a quorum, to settle boundaries and to decide which of the parties involved should rebuild the structure.

Cliffords Inn had a number of literary associations. It was mentioned in three of the novels of Charles Dickens. Leonard and Virginia Woolf rented a room in Cliffords Inn in 1912 when they returned from their honeymoon and took all their meals at the Old Cock Tavern which still exists in Fleet Street.



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Additional notes

Source: Website www.cliffordsinn.info

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Additional notes