

1576-1577

# THREE NEW THEATRES IN LONDON

## Burbage's Shoreditch "Theatre"

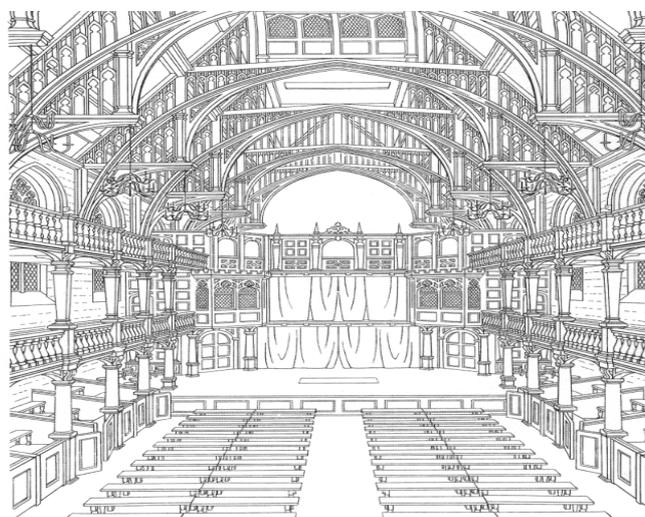
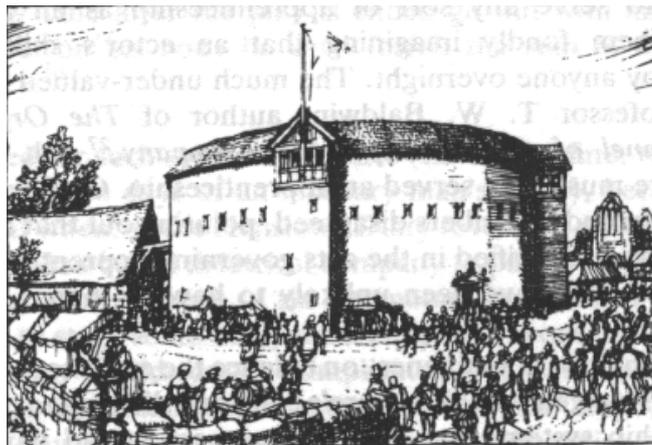
1576: James Burbage, in partnership with the wealthy grocer, John Brayne, has taken a 21 year lease on an unused site in Shoreditch - to the north of the Bishopsgate entrance to the City of London. On this site he has built his "Theatre". It is a timber-frame construction assembled from pre-constructed pieces. The Theatre towers above the surrounding buildings and has a yard for the standing audience and galleries where richer patrons can sit under cover. It has a covered "tiring-room" for the actors, and this is topped with a large tower.

It has been built on the ruins of Holywell Priory, dissolved by Henry VIII, but still legally having the status of a "liberty" - meaning it is not subject to the jurisdiction of London's civic authorities. In theory, the site is subject only to the authority of the Queen herself.

Performances take place at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Standing places are one penny each (which is the equivalent of one full day's pay for the ordinary working-man) and gallery seats are twopence.

It appears that the actors will have equal shares in the income from all the standing places, and Messrs Burbage and Brayne will receive all the money from gallery sales.

The building has cost between £600 -£700, thus bringing into effect a clause which says that if Burbage has spent more than £200 on the building itself, he is permitted to take it down at the end of the lease period. Burbage has also negotiated an automatic extension to the lease at the end of 21 years subject to new terms being agreed.



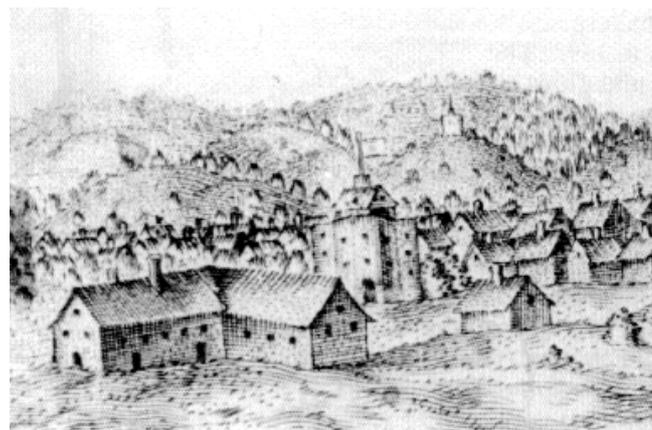
Irwin Smith

## A "Playhouse" in Blackfriars

1576: Richard Farrant has built the Blackfriars Playhouse, the first permanent indoor venue for plays in London. It is probably intended as a private building for use by the Children of the Chapel Royal. The Playhouse has been created as a large, rectangular hall - achieved by knocking two rooms into one. The original building was within the walls of the old Blackfriars Monastery - a building which fell into disuse after Henry VIII ordered the closure of the monasteries

## The "Curtayne" in Shoreditch

1577: Built by a speculator called Henry Laneman, a new public theatre has opened on a piece of land in Finsbury Fields, Shoreditch, called Curtayne Close. The theatre takes its name from the area and is to be called the "Curtayne". It is a close neighbour of James Burbage's Theatre which opened last year. It is an "open air" theatre, and is very similar to its neighbour, The Theatre. Although it is not known for definite who is managing the new building, it is thought that James Burbage is responsible for both the venues. Finsbury Fields is already established as a popular centre for entertainments in London - much used by citizens for archery contests and the like.



## New Company to tour Provinces Wakefield Ban

1576: Charles, Lord Howard, has given his patronage to a troupe of players to be known as Lord Howard's Men. They are currently undertaking a provincial tour.

1576: Wakefield has become the latest victim of the Government's crackdown on "Catholic-biased" Mystery or Morality plays. The Wakefield Guild has been ordered to cease all performances forthwith.

### Opened 1576

London— The Theatre, Shoreditch  
Blackfriars Playhouse

### Opened 1577

London - The Curtayne