

Historical references to Erith Market

There is no doubt that Erith had a market established by a royal charter in medieval times.

King Edward II granted one to Bartholomew de Badlesmere, Lord of the Manor of Erith and Lesnes, in 1315. Part of this charter reads in translation as follow: " we have granted unto our dear and faithful Bartholomew de Badlesmere that he and his heirs may forever hold a market on Thursday of every week in his manor of Erheth... and a market on Thursday of every week in his manor of Lesnes....." The original document is in the Public Record Office. It is mentioned by Hasted (1797) and by Smith (1873).

At an even earlier date the great granddaughter of Richard de Luci (founder of Lesnes Abbey) obtained a charter for a market from King Henry III. She was Rose, wife of William de Wilton, whom she married in 1250 or 1251. This charter granted a market on Thursdays in the manor of Lesnes, the name by which Erith was then known.

Both these charters are included in Palmer's Index no. 93, a volume at the Public Record Office containing a list of charter markets established between 1199 and 1483, which was published in the **Report of the Royal Commission on Market Rights and Toll** (1888) and again in Richardson's **Local Historian's Encyclopaedia** (1974).

There are occasional references to Erith's market in local records down the centuries. In 1663 Richard Findall, a baker, was fined for charging more for bread than was justified by the price of wheat in neighbouring markets. In the next four years he was fined for the same offence several times. Other bakers were similarly fined, including one Richard Turpentine. (Both Findall and Turpentine belonged to Woolwich). In 1752 the lord of the manor was asked to set up a cage and stocks at the Erith market house. There is no evidence of the site of this market house, except that it was in the High Street and to provide weights and scales there. This request was made again in 1777.

But the market fell out of use. In Fisher's **Kentish Travellers Companion** (1776) it is said to have been "long discontinued" and in 1841 Pigot's Directory said that the market had not been held in living

memory. Thorne (1876) and Walford (1884) both speak of it as being no longer in existence. There is no mention of a market in the minutes of the Local Board (later the U.D.C.) from 1876 to 1919, except that a proposal to set up a market was not accepted in 1904 and that the local Tradesmen's Association voted against the provision of a market in 1910. In 1919, however, the Council decided in favour of a market, and stalls were placed in Pier Road and the High Street. This is presumably the market now remembered by our contemporaries as lasting until World War II.