

The fraternity of St Katherine

Special confections bearing the image or form of St Katherine with her attributes of a spiked wheel and sword might have been made for the benefit of members of the fraternity or 'brotherhood' of St Katherine, which was affiliated to the church of St Botolph without Aldersgate during the late 1400s. This fraternity, like all others of its kind in the capital, was established by members of local community as a mutual-benefit society for collective worship, social events and economic support. The little that is known about the 'brotherhood' of St Katherine comes from a document of 1389: a list of rules, which states that the brethren were to swear an oath of membership and greet each other with a fraternal kiss. The entry fee was 3d per quarter, or 6d for a married couple. Single women paid the same as their male counterparts. The members were to assemble for mass in St Botolph's on the feast of St Katherine (an annual event followed by a feast in the hall nearby). Tallow wax tapers each weighing 20lbs were to be lit on major Holy Days, 'in honour of God, the Blessed Virgin, St Katherine and All Saints.'

Monies were given from the 'common box' to cover the funeral expenses of impoverished members, and to help those in financial difficulty. Members could also borrow a reasonable sum from the 'common box' as security against a loan or some other payment. Should a member die outside the City but within a ten-mile radius of the capital, the wardens were required to bring the body back to London, where they were joined by other members of the company who formed an escort back to St Botolph's.