

ALL WHORES ARE JACOBITES

Georgia Horgan

Part One, Eleanor

On 11 December 1394, a case was brought to the Mayor John Fressh and the Aldermen of the City of London. John Rykener, calling herself Eleanor, having been found *Ut cum muliere* or ‘as a woman’, was caught lying with John Britby by a stall in Soper Lane.

In a separate examination brought before the Mayor, John Britby confessed he was passing through the high road of Cheap on Sunday, and approached John Rykener, dressed as a woman, and believing he was a woman, asked if he could pay her for sex. Rykener consented, and they went together to the aforesaid stall to complete the transaction, where they were caught by patrolling officials and taken to the jail.

At the court Eleanor verified her customer’s account. She named the woman who had procured her, one ambiguous ‘Anna’, and that a certain Elizabeth Brouderer, who kept a house outside the eastern side of the Bishopgate, first dressed them in women’s clothing. Eleanor then describes her career in detail, citing her sexual conquests and clients as monks, nuns, various clergymen and people of high status. Having worked as an embroiderer and a tapster

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Their gendered career choices suggest they lived most of their life as a female.

It is possible to ascertain from her name that Elizabeth, Eleanor’s mentor, was almost certainly too an embroiderer; these weren’t family names at the time but by-names given to individuals, based on occupation.