



Germanie – Foreign Weavers Settle in Tiverton

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There used to be a part of Tiverton between Greenway's Almhouses in the north and the River Lowman in the south that was known as *Germanie*. It is thought that the location was named after foreign immigrant workers from Europe who were engaged in the cloth trade, particularly as weavers.

It is not known precisely why it was called *Germanie*. It might have been thought by the local Tiverton inhabitants that the immigrants were speaking Germanic languages or were Germanic in origin. Alternatively, *Germanie* might have been used in a pejorative sense to name a settlement of 'foreigners' whatever their origin.

In 2014 a historic survey identified a medieval burgage plot named *Germanie* that bordered onto land on which Greenway's Almhouses were originally built. Burgage is a medieval land term in common use by the 13th century used to describe property that usually consisted of a house on a long and narrow plot of land, with a narrow street frontage.

In his History of Tiverton, Harding refers to 17th and 18th century legal documents that mention 'lands called *Germanie*' and 'houses in *Germanie*'. Mention is also made of a house and gardens near to Greenway's Almhouses. Writing in 1847, Harding further observes that 'The lands behind the almshouse still bear the title of *Germanie* gardens, but the houses were removed many years since' and that 'Between 1838 and 1841, sixteen additional Almhouses were built in *Germanie* Gardens'.

It could be that the term *Germanie* originated in the 14th century in an area which at that time would have sat outside of the town proper, housing a settlement of weavers, possibly Flemish. Foreign weavers from Flanders were settled in Taunton in 1336 and are thought to have migrated to Tiverton during the 14th century as the cloth trade began to develop.

Alternatively, it has also been thought that it is possible that the people of *Germanie* came to Tiverton later as Protestant weavers from the Low Countries and the German States who fled religious persecution.