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## COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

By E. W. PARKIN

### THE STONE HOUSE

How deceptive can be the façade of an old building? One would probably pass Cogan House in St. Peter's Street without a second glance at it, and this must happen daily in all our ancient towns and cities. Only a small plaque with the name 'Cogan House' over a hairdressing salon gives any indication that here is a house of extraordinary interest.

The entrance to it is through a side door and passage, and this leads into a small hall, around which is some of the finest Tudor panelling in Kent. However, a stone Gothic doorway, and some very thick walls give a clue that the house must be very much older than this.

It is only by exploring every corner, by measuring, and preparing a scale plan that the nature of the original house will slowly emerge, and here the visual evidence shows that a substantial part of a very ancient stone house still survives on the street front, with part of an aisled hall behind it of a date sometime before 1250.

Documentary sources indicate that the building was originally the short-lived Cokyn's Hospital, that it became a private house, and, then again, a hospital in the seventeenth century, known this time as Cogan's Hospital.

The first mention of a dwelling here is c. 1200 A.D. in 'Rental D' of the Christ Church rentals published by Dr. Urry.<sup>1</sup> The frontage of the plot (D 365) is given as 36 ft. (10·92 m.), which corresponds with the present frontage of no. 53 St. Peter's Street, and is probably the plot where Luke the Moneyer had a stone house. The adjacent plot, the western half of D 366, now occupied by no. 54, was held, of St. Gregory's Priory, by William Cokyn.

William was apparently the son of Augustine of London,<sup>2</sup> and married Margaret Cauvel, eventually acquiring her family residence at 'the west end of St. Margaret's church'; this was presumably on the site of a building which stands back behind St. Margaret's Church, and is now no. 31 St. Margaret's Street.

### THE FOUNDATION OF COKYN'S HOSPITAL

Shortly before the year 1203, William Cokyn purchased the property next to his own in St. Peter's Street, and founded there a hospital.

<sup>1</sup> W. G. Urry, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, London, 1967, 312 and Map 2, Sheet 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 64, 176.

Exactly which year is not known; Somner<sup>3</sup> puts it ' . . . in the time of Archbishop Hubert (1193–1205), but it must have been after the compilation of Rental D (c. 1200, or a trifle earlier;<sup>4</sup> over-confidently assigned by Mrs. Gardiner to 1195), and before 1203, when Cokyn's hospital was united with Eastbridge.

Somner continues: 'In this archbishop's time (Hubert), there was another hospital neighbouring unto this of Eastbridge called Cokyn's Hospital, built and founded by one William Cokyn, a citizen of Canterbury and of a worthy family whose name in his posterity did long survive him in this city, some of whom were bayliffs in their time. The hospital was dedicated to St. Nicholas and (the virgin and martyr) St. Catherine, and stood sometime in the parish of St. Peter in Canterbury, almost directly opposite the now Black Friars gate,<sup>5</sup> having had a lane by it aforesaid called Cokyn's Lane, now shut up and built upon, often mentioned in Eastbridge books, and not forgotten of some now living.'

The Black Friars gate stood on the north side of St. Peter's Street, at the entrance of what is now a street called the Friars,<sup>6</sup> and Cokyn's Lane was on the south side of St. Peter's Street, on the left, or east side of Cogan House. This lane, though difficult to locate, is, strangely enough, still a right of way, and though, as Somner says, is built over, it can still be entered by passing through the shop entrance on the left and opening a door at the rear into the passage which still leads to the River Stour, and to the site of the former Franciscan priory of the 'Grey Friars'.

It can be assumed that the lane was much used before the Dissolution, and much less so afterwards. As Somner first published his book in 1640, his reference to the lane as being within living memory means that it was built over sometime about 1600, and that tallies with the high-gabled, timber-framed building, no. 54, which is there now. Behind that building is the extensive garden of the Master's House of Eastbridge Hospital, and this abuts the passage with an ancient wall, and once had its main entrance gateway in it.

Somner then records the purchase of the property where the hospital was founded;<sup>7</sup> ' . . . I collect by charters which I have seen that the founder lived by that lane, and find that for 18 marks *de gersumâ* or for the consideration of 18 marks, he purchased of Stephan the Priest, and Godesman the sons of Richard the Mercer of Canterbury, with the

<sup>3</sup> William Somner, *The Antiquities of Canterbury*, 2nd edition revised by Nicholas Battely, 1703, from original edn. of 1640, i, 60.

<sup>4</sup> W. G. Urry, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>5</sup> Erected 1340, demolished 1787.

<sup>6</sup> A plaque on the corner-shop commemorates the gate.

<sup>7</sup> William Somner, *op. cit.*, 2nd edn., 61.

COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

consent of their widow mother Cicely,<sup>8</sup> a messuage next adjacent to his own . . . Somner prints the deed in full, but without source. It describes the plot as lying between those of William Cokyn, which was of stone, and Walter the Merchant, and extending from the King's highway to the River Stour, the street frontage being given as 42 ft.; ' . . . in latitudine versus cheminium domini regis 42 pedes . . . '

This is interesting as the frontage of the old stone house is 36 ft., and the measurement must therefore include the width of the passage. Further, the lease of 1473, whereby John Bygg agreed to pay the city 2d. *per annum* ground rent, describes the 'lane' as 40 ft. wide, and to have Eastbridge garden on its eastern boundary.

Somner continues: 'Having purchased this messuage, he either builds there a new hospital, or else converts his purchase into one. Afterwards by his charter (wherein he saith the hospitals of St. Nicholas and St. Catherine, and St. Thomas of Eastbridge in Canterbury were united haply and probably by Archbishop Hubert, and that union by Pope Innocent confirmed<sup>9</sup>) entitles these hospitals to all his lands, possessions and chattels, and makes them his heirs. This done, and one Godelman, son of Richard the merchant challenging an interest in the soil where the hospital stood; for 7s consideration he is bought out and makes a charter to Archbishop Hubert, acknowledging in a full Burgmote of the city, of release of all his rights thereunto . . . '

Cokyn's Hospital was thus united with Eastbridge soon after its foundation, and its life as a hospital was something less than 30 years. Somner continues: ' . . . it ceased soon afterwards to be used as a hospital, and was hired and rented out.'

The Priory of St. Gregory, just outside the Northgate, Canterbury, also appears to have had some interest in the land here. Cokyn's own house on the east side of his hospital was held by him 'of St. Gregory's Priory' before the year 1200,<sup>10</sup> and later, in 1238, a charter was signed by Robert the Prior and his convent, confirming the gift of the same house to the joint hospitals on consideration of a yearly payment of 18 pence to the said priory of St. Gregory.<sup>11</sup>

All evidence therefore indicates that Cogan House was at one time Cokyn's Hospital, and here it must be pointed out that William Cokyn did not live there, but as already stated, in the house next to it on the east side, with the passage between. Some confusion has arisen over these two buildings, and no writer attempts satisfactorily to distinguish

<sup>8</sup> In Rental D Cicely, there called wife of Roger Marshal, held the E half of D 366 (now represented by 55 St. Peter's St.), of Faversham Abbey.

<sup>9</sup> By bull of Pope Innocent III, dated Jan. 1203 (Roman reckoning).

<sup>10</sup> W. G. Urry, *op. cit.*, 312; Rental D 366.

<sup>11</sup> J. Duncombe and N. Battely, *History of Three Archiepiscopal Hospitals*, 1785. 304.

COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

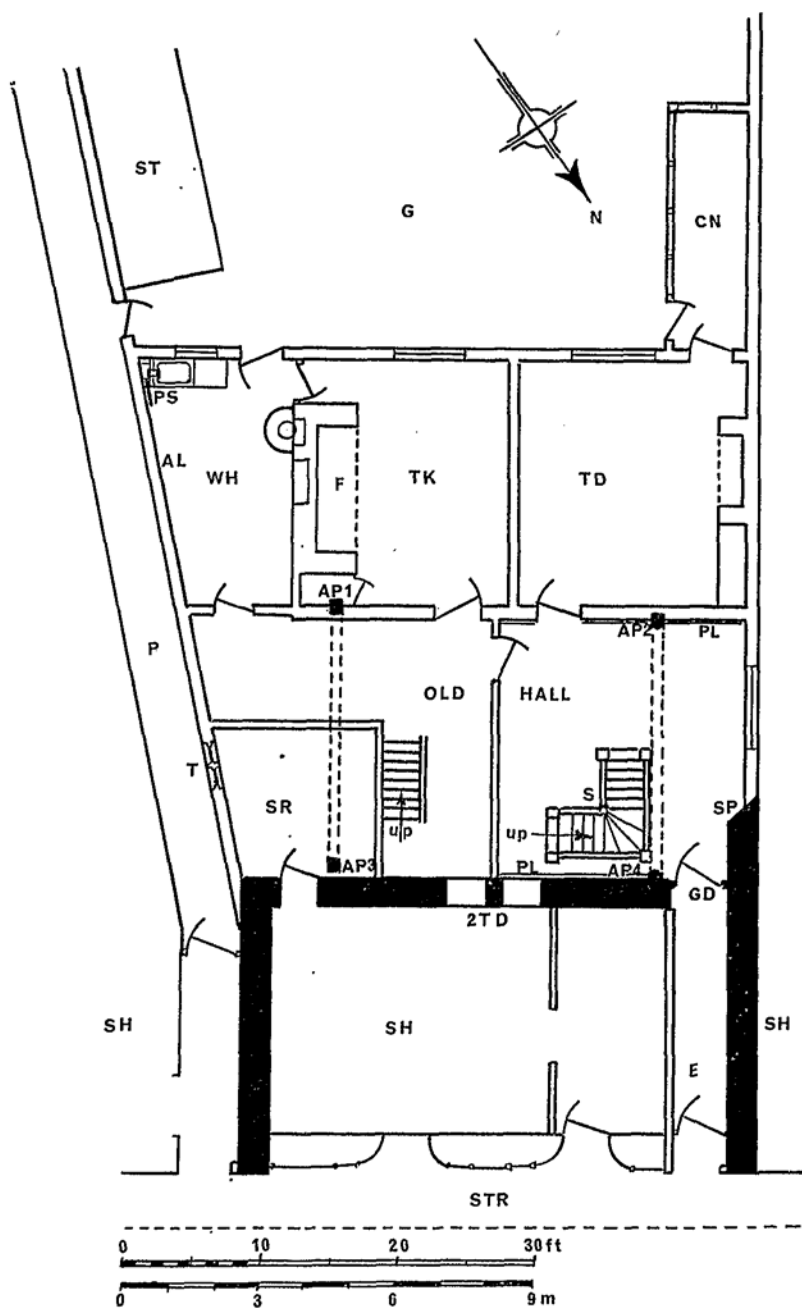


FIG. 1. Plan of present House.

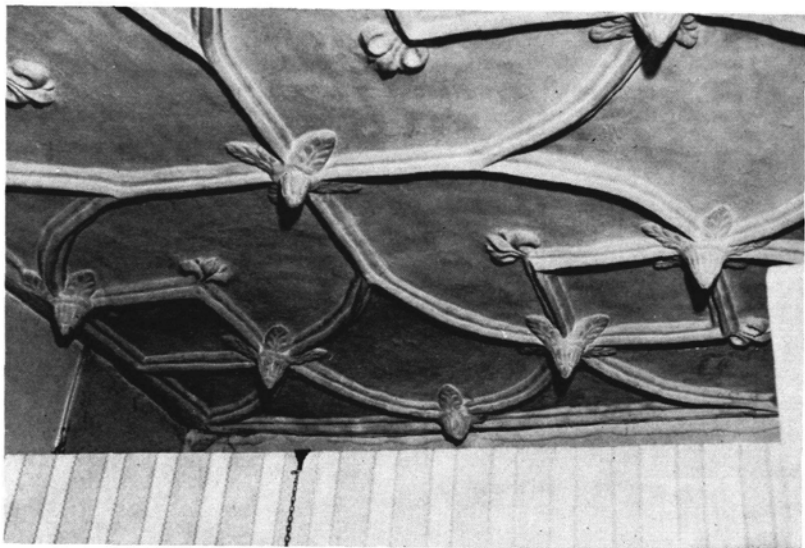


A. Cogan House, and Entrance to Passage, as seen from the Street.



B. Carved Panelling of *circa* 1529.

PLATE II



A. Plaster Ceiling of front Parlour, now Part of Shop.



B. Tudor Beams and Joists, with parallel Floorboards.



A. The Hall Roof.



B. The Aisle-post.



## COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

between them. Both appear to have been stone houses,<sup>12</sup> that is, with walls of flint and chalk lump, with stone dressings, and both may have been built before 1200.

In Cogan House these walls survive right up to wall-plate, or roof-level, only the front wall being missing. They are of considerable thickness, measuring 2 ft. 4 in., or 80 cm. through. On the first floor rear may be observed two recesses, some 3 ft. wide, which may have been external windows before the great hall was added by William Cokyn at the rear. This hall, which was 36 ft. wide (10·92 m.), was obviously intended to be something larger than an ordinary town house of the time.

The original stone house was probably of the first-floor hall-type with an undercroft at street level. This last could be then easily converted for use as buttery, pantry, etc., by inserting four of the new type pointed doorways leading into the rear hall. The one through which one still enters the house must have been originally the entrance doorway, and a corresponding opening at the far end was presumably the stairs door. In the centre are twin doorways, now blocked, doubtless for buttery and pantry.

### THE AISLED HALL (Figs. 1, 3, 4, 5)

The hall was aisled, that is, it had free-standing posts as in a barn, and four of these posts still survive, though three of them are now encased. The fourth is inside a cupboard on the left of the great Tudor fireplace in the kitchen, and bears simple mouldings (Fig. 5, P, Q). The surviving section of the hall is one bay of 18 ft. (5·48 m.), and the Tudor wing, which is in width another 18 ft., presumably occupies the missing second bay.

The roof is in part intact and undisturbed. It is heavily soot-coated, and with long cross-bracing and archaic 'notched lap joints', both 'secret' and plain (Fig. 5, B, D), and may be ascribed with confidence to the period of Cokyn's Hospital.

### SOME OCCUPANTS OF THE HOUSE AFTER 1230

Cokyn's Hospital ceased to be used as such about the year 1230, when it passed again into private hands. The records of Christchurch and of the city<sup>13</sup> provide many intriguing glimpses into the lives of people who dwelt in this ancient place, and Dorothy Gardiner, the historian, who actually lived there for some years after the Second

<sup>12</sup> William Cokyn's own house, on the east side of the hospital, is described at the time of its sale to William Samuel as, '... the whole tenement with all the edifices of wood and stone ...'. Somner, *op. cit.*, 61-62.

<sup>13</sup> A former solicitor of Canterbury, Alderman C. R. Bunce, spent many years copying the city records, which work is now a treasured possession of the city library. Extracts of this appeared in the *Kentish Gazette* (16 September, 1800, ff.) and subsequently in *Ancient Canterbury, Records of Alderman Bunce*.

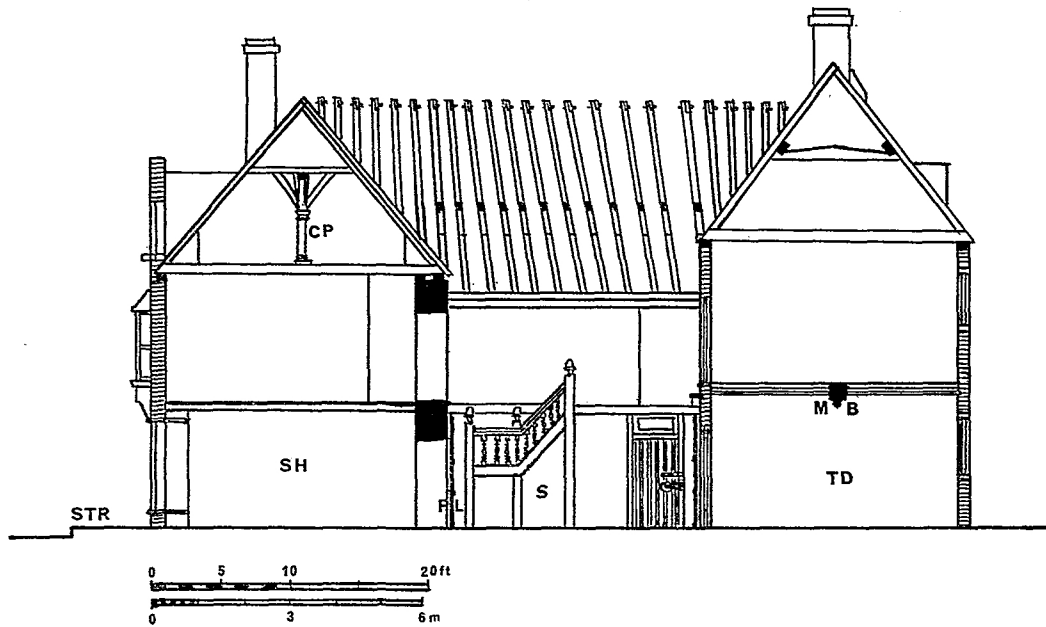


FIG. 2. Section of present House.

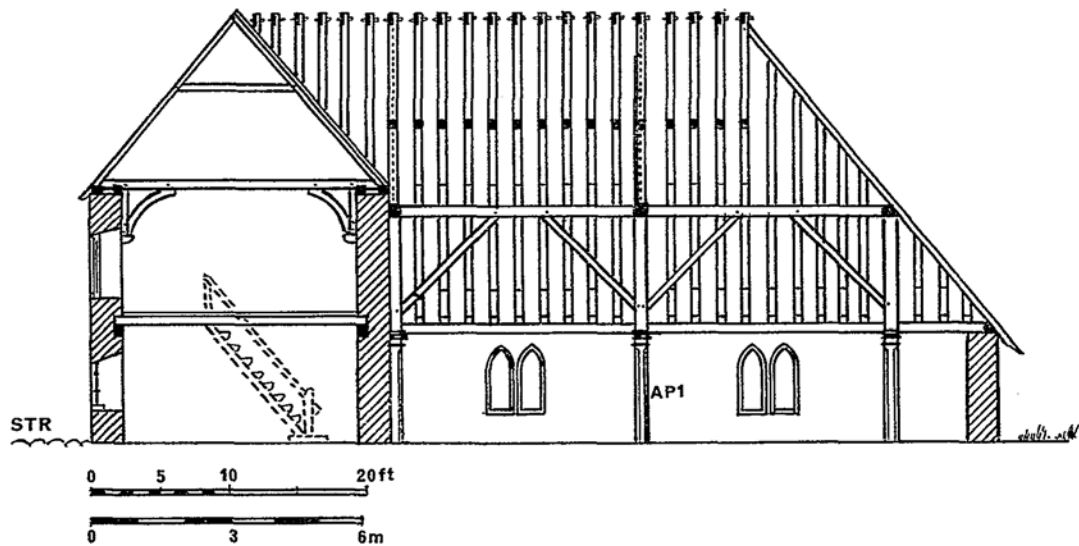


FIG. 3. Sectional Reconstruction of House in Thirteenth Century.

## COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

World War, has left an interesting booklet on the house.<sup>14</sup> It is rare that the story of a small house is backed by such a wealth of material.

William Cokyn and his son, also William, both lived in the house next to the hospital before it was 'demised' to one, William Samuel, in 1238. Edmund Cokyn, the grandson, is recorded as living in St. Margaret's Street.

Two later members of the founder's family lived in Cogan House in the mid-fourteenth century, they were William Kokyn, and his son Alexander Kokyn. Thomas Ickham, who lived there from 1404 to 1415 and who was bailiff at least five times, was probably responsible for the first major alteration to the frontage. Evidence of the building itself indicates that the stone front was removed about then, and replaced by a timber-framed one, probably with a jetty, or overhang. A new crown-post roof was built over this; the early-fifteenth-century crown-post may still be seen, embedded in a partition on the second floor.

Another important occupant was John Bygg, who purchased the house in 1473 and who paid ground rent at 2d. per annum. He was a mercer by trade, and was mayor<sup>15</sup> of the city three times. His father appears in Christchurch records as the baker of noted white bread, living at the King's Mill at Eastbridge.<sup>16</sup>

The most extensive alterations to the house were made, however, by one, John Thomas about 1529. He pulled down the rear part of the aisled hall and built the Tudor wing. The remaining part of the hall was divided into two floors, and the beautiful panelling added. Thomas was a hosier and 'poyntmaker', his hobbies appear to have been hunting and bear-baiting. Point making was a lucrative trade at this period, as metal tags or points were extensively used on laces by gentlemen of fashion.

The 'parchemin' panelling, which is still in such wonderful condition, is carved with a design of foliage and grapes on every panel, and is more Continental than English in style. The frieze shows some of the implements of the owner's trade. There is a tool for piercing holes for eyelets, a wool-comber's comb, and some small wool-sacks, on one of which are the initials 'J.T.'. The frieze must have continued once along the whole of the north side of the hall; this would explain why the royal coat of arms is split in two.

Ralph Baldwin, another point-maker (1568-1611), survived several bad outbreaks of plague to become mayor of the city at least twice. Burial registers show that during his second mayoralty in 1583, no

<sup>14</sup> D. Gardiner, *The Home of Seven Centuries*, 1955. The following account is based on this booklet, which is full of extracts but deficient in references.

<sup>15</sup> Henry VI, by his charter of 1448, granted to the citizens of Canterbury the privilege of electing a mayor, instead of two bailiffs as hitherto.

<sup>16</sup> This was a stone mill, demolished in 1700. It stood by the bridge facing the Old Weavers, and part of its stone base may still be seen.

COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

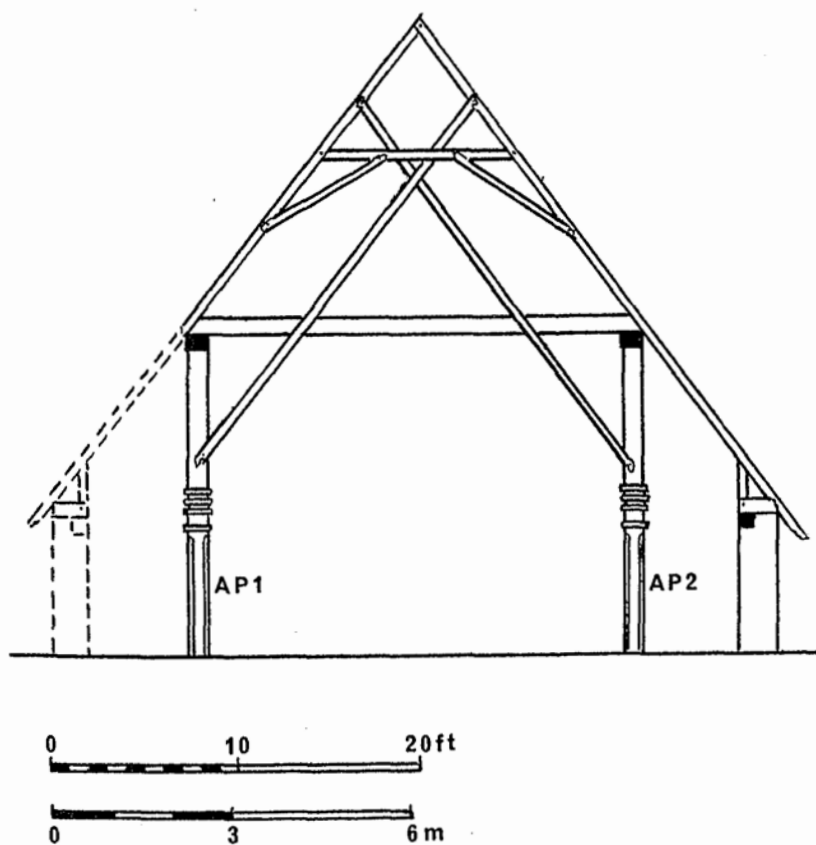


FIG. 4. Cross-section of original aisled Hall.

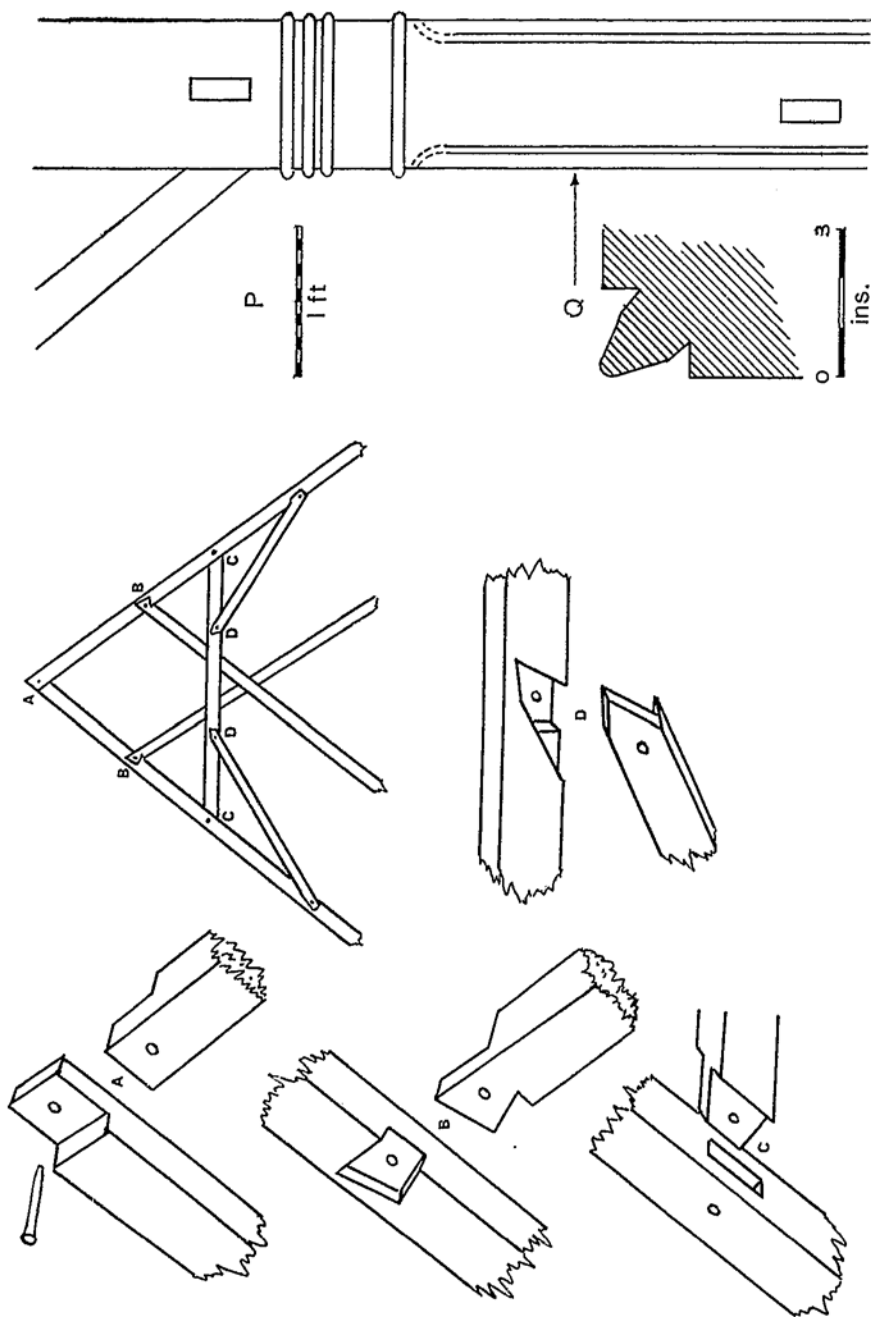


FIG. 5. Jointing of Hall Roof and Moulding of Aisle Post.

COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

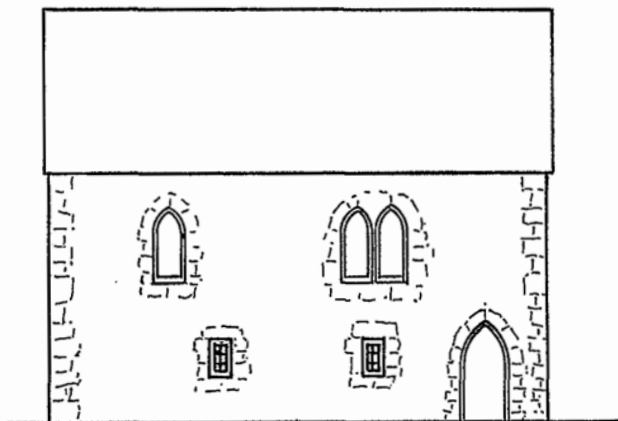


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of Front in Thirteenth Century.

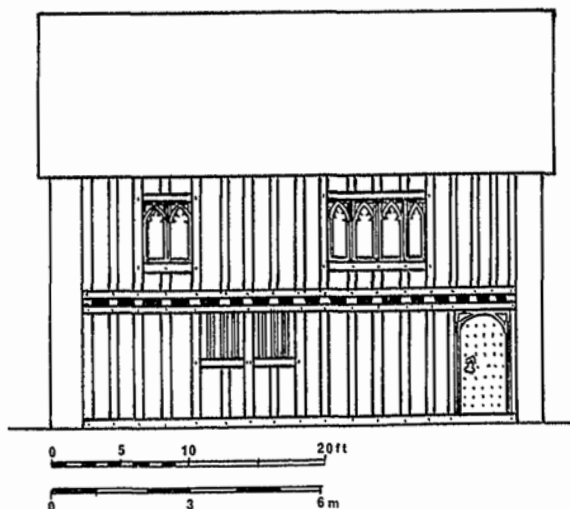


Fig. 7. Reconstruction of Front in Fifteenth Century.

fewer than six persons of his household died of plague between 25th July and 11th August of that year.<sup>17</sup>

The lease for the use of Cokyn's lane had expired, and a new agreement was negotiated in 1574, when the ground rent was raised from 2d. to 16d. *per annum*. Baldwin had married a wealthy widow

<sup>17</sup> 'A Walloon called John, two maids, Martha and Katherine, two damsels Joan and Christian, and an old woman called Margery.'

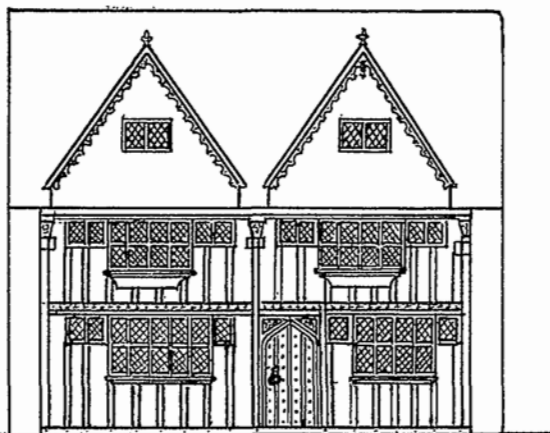


FIG. 8. Reconstruction of Front in Seventeenth Century.

named Marion Breeche and, after her death in 1599, he was unfortunate enough to become involved in a breach of promise action with a certain 'Widdoe Wells'. It is regrettable also that the Town Sergeant was obliged to give evidence against him.

The street frontage of the house was again brought up to date at this time, and records show that 'Rauf Bawden . . . built a parlour finely panelled in oak with a coffered ceiling, and above it a chamber also so ceiled, together with an attic under the roof'. All this tallies with the structural evidence. The fine plaster ceiling still survives in what is now the business premises, while slight remains of another such ceiling may be seen in the room above. The attic rooms in the roof-space are virtually unchanged, they were lighted by large dormers, giving the effect of a gabled front, with now three floors and two jetties supported by carved brackets.<sup>18</sup> A foundation coin was found in this part, bearing the date 1582.

With the addition also of large Tudor windows, the house must have presented a very imposing front which was not substantially altered until 1870. The dormers, since modified, can still be seen behind the present brick parapet.

#### JOHN COGAN FOUNDS THE SECOND HOSPITAL

John Cogan, who gives his name to the house, bought the property in 1626, and lived there until his death in 1657. Hasted<sup>19</sup> gives a full

<sup>18</sup> Dorothy Gardiner mentions two 'corbels', or brackets carved with a pelican and dragon which were saved. Such a bracket is on show in the Westgate Museum in Canterbury.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Hasted, *History of the Ancient and Metropolitan City of Canterbury*, 1799, 60.



## COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

account of the founding of a hospital for the second time in this building. It may be that John Cogan was a descendant of William Cokyn, for that distinguished family lived long in the city, and there were many different spellings of the name. John Cogan is described by Hasted in a footnote:<sup>20</sup> ' . . . He was manager under the committee appointed for the sequestration of the estates of the Royalists in these parts of Kent, and of course benefited himself by some part of the plunder; but he seems to have died in very perplexed circumstances, insomuch that his two executors refused acting as such, and at last his sister's daughter Thomasine Harford, alias Amery, had letters of administration granted to her. He was buried in St. Peter's church'.

The foundation of the hospital is described thus: 'Cogan's Hospital is situated on the south side of St. Peter's Street, almost opposite to the late Gate of the Black Friars. It was found by Mr John Cogan of this city, who by his will proved on July 27th 1657, gave his mansion in St. Peter's Canterbury wherein he then dwelt, together with his moiety of the manor of Littlebourne which he had purchased . . . his house for the habitation, and the lands and tenements for the support and maintenance of six poor widows of clergymen who had lived in Canterbury in the County of Kent, or in London, to be nominated by the mayor of Canterbury and five senior aldermen . . . the sixth widow should attend on the five others and keep clean the house etc. for them: but his circumstances being perplexed and involved in difficulties . . . this house was left alone without any endowment whatever for this charitable purpose; this was however in some measure compensated by future benefactors . . . '.

The first was a Mr. Barling, who left a small annuity in 1670, followed by the principal benefactor, John Aucher, D.D., a prebendary of the Cathedral, who left land at Worth and in the Romney Marsh by his will of 1698. Others were Mrs. Elizabeth Lovejoy (1694), Mrs. Masters (1771), etc., but there were apparently no funds for repairs, and in 1771 the hospital was reported as being in a ruinous state, with only one widow living there. However, subscriptions made by private persons in 1772 reached a total of £343 13s. 0d., and repairs were put in hand soon afterwards.

Bagshaw<sup>21</sup> describes the hospital as 'consisting of six dwellings under one roof, with gardens attached', and after naming one or two later benefactors, adds that each widow received a stipend of £35 *per annum* and a chaldron of coals. The row of six coal-houses still survives on the east side of the garden, though one end has been enlarged to make it into a stable. No major alterations appear to have been made

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*, note q, 60.

<sup>21</sup> Samuel Bagshaw, *Directory of the County of Kent*, ii, 1847, 108.

## COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

during John Cogan's time except possibly the fine stairway, which is seventeenth-century and is assumed to have been added by him.

The hospital continued to function in Cogan House until 1870, when its property had increased so much in value that the Trustees were able to build a row of separate houses to accommodate the six widows in greater comfort. These are in the London Road, Canterbury, and may still be seen there.

A great deal of interesting detail about life in the hospital may be gathered from the giant Minute Book of the Aucher Trustees, and from the volume relating to the Cogan Gift. These are complete only from 1696 onwards, any records before that date being very scanty, and are contained in an old vellum book beginning 15th April, 1668, being records of a few odd details such as charitable clothing, etc. This hesitant start by the hospital may be understood, if one bears in mind all the circumstances following the founder's death.

The capital value of his estate amounted to some £800, of which his 'mansion and lands in St. Peter's Canterbury' (Cogan House), was valued at £100.<sup>22</sup> The remainder, chiefly property at Littlebourne, had unfortunately been expropriated from the Archbishop of Canterbury by the Committee of Sequestration, of which John Cogan had been chairman, and these were restored at the time of the return of the monarchy.

Another factor which greatly delayed matters, was a court action initiated by Cogan's nephew and namesake, John Cogan, who saw fit to dispute his uncle's will. The litigation relating to this dragged on from 1659 to 1670.<sup>23</sup>

### THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS

In 1870, when the inmates of the hospital were moved to their new quarters in London Road, Cogan House was sold to one, Thomas Wells, described as 'Tailor and Outfitter'. He inserted a shop front into the ground floor, and re-fronted the part above it in red brick. Inside the hall, for some reason, he turned the great staircase right round, the base where it stood formerly may still be seen, incorporated into the present floor. He adapted one end of the coal-houses to make a stable for his horse, which pulled a delivery van around the city and countryside for many years. By 1882 the business became Thomas Wells and Son, bespoke tailors, and by 1888 it is listed in the Canterbury directory as Arthur Wells.

The shop traded under the name of Arthur Wells for many years afterwards, while the family lived in the old house behind it. By 1935

<sup>22</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, lxxv (1961); K. W. Jordan, *Social institutions of Kent*, supplement, 31 and 53.

<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Gardiner, *op. cit.*, 22.

## COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

we find that the business had been leased to G. H. Hunter Ltd., another outfitter, while Mrs. Wells, better known as Alderman Lucy Wells, continued to live in the house.

It was during this period that the last major alteration to the building took place. The Victorian shop had been in two halves, with the entrance to the house almost in the centre. This led through one of the twin doorways, where, on the hall side may still be seen the fine Tudor door with its five keyholes. The present shop front was then put in, and the entrance passage to the house moved to the west side of the premises, where it probably had been in its early days.

In 1937, Canon Gardiner retired from his prebendal duties at the Cathedral, and with his wife Dorothy Gardiner<sup>24</sup> leased Cogan House. The Canon died a few years later, while Mrs. Gardiner continued to live there until her own death in 1957. Meanwhile Mr. Wells, son of Alderman Lucy Wells and a judge, had also died, and the house was leased by his wife, Margaret, to her brother, A. J. McFarlane, who still resides there.

The shop was let for a short time to J. O'Brian, a jeweller, and then to Mrs. Ronaldson, who is still in business there as a ladies' hairdresser.

### CONCLUSION

Cogan House is of the greatest importance, as containing the first aisled hall of its archaic type to be discovered in Kent, and the only urban example. The hall of St. Mary's Hospital, Chichester, c. 1290, is conspicuously more advanced. A hall at Old Court Cottage, Limpsfield, Surrey, similar in construction and joints to Cogan's, and likewise probably of the early- to mid-thirteenth century, has been described by R. T. Mason.<sup>25</sup> Across the Thames, where the type may persist longer, are such partial parallels as Fyfield Hall and Abbas Hall, Cornard, Essex, and Kersey Priory (also once a hospital), and Purton Green Farm, Suffolk. Stone halls, as at Eastbridge Hospital (c. 1175) or the Archbishop's Palace, Canterbury (c. 1220),<sup>26</sup> bear no comparison.

The house has been awarded the Historic Buildings Plaque by the joint sub-committee of the Kent Archæological Society and the Council for the Preservation of Rural Kent.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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<sup>24</sup> Dorothy Gardiner, J.P., F.S.A., authoress of *Companion into Kent; Canterbury; Historic Haven, the Story of Sandwich*, etc., *vide Arch. Cant.*, lxxii (1958), 237.

<sup>25</sup> *Surrey Archæological Collections*, lxiii (1966), 130-7.

<sup>26</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, xliii (1931), 298.

## COGAN HOUSE, ST. PETER'S, CANTERBURY

### KEY TO PLAN, etc. (in alphabetical order) (Fig. 1)

- AL Alcoves similar to bee-boles in old washhouse.
- AP1 Aisle post. Moulding, etc., can be viewed inside cupboard.
- AP2 " " Encased in carved Tudor panelling.
- AP3 " " Encased in plain boarding.
- AP4 " " Encased in carved Tudor panelling.
- CN Conservatory.
- CP Crown post of *circa* 1400.
- E Entrance passage to Cogan House.
- F Tudor fireplace with beam 12 ft. 3 in. long.
- G Garden.
- GD Gothic stone doorway.
- MB Moulded Tudor beam and joists.
- P Passage, once Cokyn's Lane, still right of way.
- PL Panelling.
- PS Old lead pump and stone sink.
- S Stairs of *circa* 1626.
- SH Shops.
- SP Splay in stone wall, presumably jamb of old hall window.
- SR Store room, belonging to lock-up shop.
- ST Stables.
- STR St. Peter's Street.
- T Only remaining Tudor window, with moulded red brick mullions.
- TD Tudor dining room.
- TK Tudor kitchen.
- WH Washhouse, with copper.
- 2TD Twin doorways, now blocked, presumably once for buttery and pantry.

### KEY TO DETAILS (Fig. 5)

- A Rafters—halved and pegged.
- B Cross-braces to rafters—notched lap.
- C Collars to rafters—mortise and tenon.
- D Braces to collars and rafters—'secret' notched lap.
- P Aisle-post moulding.
- Q Section of keel moulding.