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## THE OLD CANONRY AND CANON COTTAGE, WINGHAM

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The Old Canonry is one of the most attractive of the medieval houses in Wingham, and Canon Cottage which adjoins it is seemingly the oldest.

After a brief description of Wingham and its many old houses in the last volume of *Archaeologia Cantiana*,<sup>1</sup> these two have been selected for a further and more detailed study.

One realizes very quickly that there is little in common between them; the style of each being in fact some two centuries apart. Canon Cottage may well be one of the small, original dwellings of the canons of the prebendal college founded by Archbishop Peckham in 1283,<sup>2</sup> while the Old Canonry appears to be entirely fifteenth century. Both of course have seen many changes, chiefly at the beginning of the nineteenth century when the buildings were converted into three workers' cottages.

About 1880, the neighbouring Wingham Court was leased to James Robinson, who came from Dambridge, the attractive old Dutch farmhouse half a mile to the east. When he died in 1893, the Old Canonry was thoroughly 'restored', very much as we see it today, for the use of his widow who lived there until 1906, the house then being known as Canon House.<sup>3</sup> Several original features were uncovered during the restoration, notably the beautiful fifteenth-century glazed front door (Plate III) and the large eight-light window.

Happily, most of the important features of both houses have survived, and are now well looked after.

### CANON COTTAGE

At first glance, both houses appear to stand on a high ground wall of flint some 1.30 m. high (4 ft. 3 in.), and this is so in the case of the Old

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, xciii (1977), 61.

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

<sup>3</sup> Kelly's *Directories of the County of Kent*, 1882 onward.

Canonry, but Canon Cottage stands upon a cellar of flint, with stone dressings, which once had outside stone steps leading down into it at the west end, and which may still be seen from the cellar. This cellar doorway has stone jambs, with rebates for the door. Two small stone windows light the cellar, and may be seen on the street front. Inside, some of the original cobbled floor remains, with stone flags in places, while the heavy oak joists above also appear to be original, these being of oak, square in section, and similar to those at Lake House, Eastwell.<sup>4</sup> The old oak floorboards, now covered by later flooring, may also be thirteenth-century.

The narrow front door of Canon Cottage (D3 on plan) is reached by four brick steps, while immediately to the left of it may still be seen the original Gothic doorway, now blocked, made from two plain solid oak pieces (Plate IA, and D1 on plan).

The corresponding rear doorway also survives, complete with its door (D2). This is hidden behind laths and plaster on the present kitchen side, but can be seen from the cellar steps.

At the spot marked 'ped' on the plan, a substantial oblong brick pedestal rises from the cellar floor, appearing as a small dais in the room above. What this was for is not clear, but it is assumed to have been a support for something heavy, perhaps a printing press, or even a loom. Its brickwork shows that it is not earlier than the eighteenth century.

In looking at Canon Cottage from the outside, one could be forgiven for assuming that the upper storey, with its jetty or overhang was of a later date than the lower part; however, that does not appear to be so.

The Old Canonry next door has a typical fifteenth-century crown post roof, but that of Canon Cottage, the lower building is patently a much earlier 'sans purlin' roof, that is, it has no longitudinal timbers. There one finds simply paired rafters with three pairs of heavy principal rafters which alone are fitted with low collars, or cross-pieces (Fig. 2). The joints between these collars and the heavier rafters are 'barefaced lap dovetails'<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 3). This is clearly a very early roof, and as it fits the extra width of the front jetty, then the jetty also must be part of the original building; in fact, this must be one of the earliest known jetties.

The dormers in the roof here are comparatively modern, but there is no evidence remaining of original windows.

#### THE OLD CANONRY

As already stated, this fine house was built on to Canon Cottage in the second half of the fifteenth century, when both were still part of the

<sup>4</sup> E. W. Parkin, *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiii (1968), 159.

<sup>5</sup> C. A. Hewett, *The Development of Carpentry, 1200-1700*, 212.

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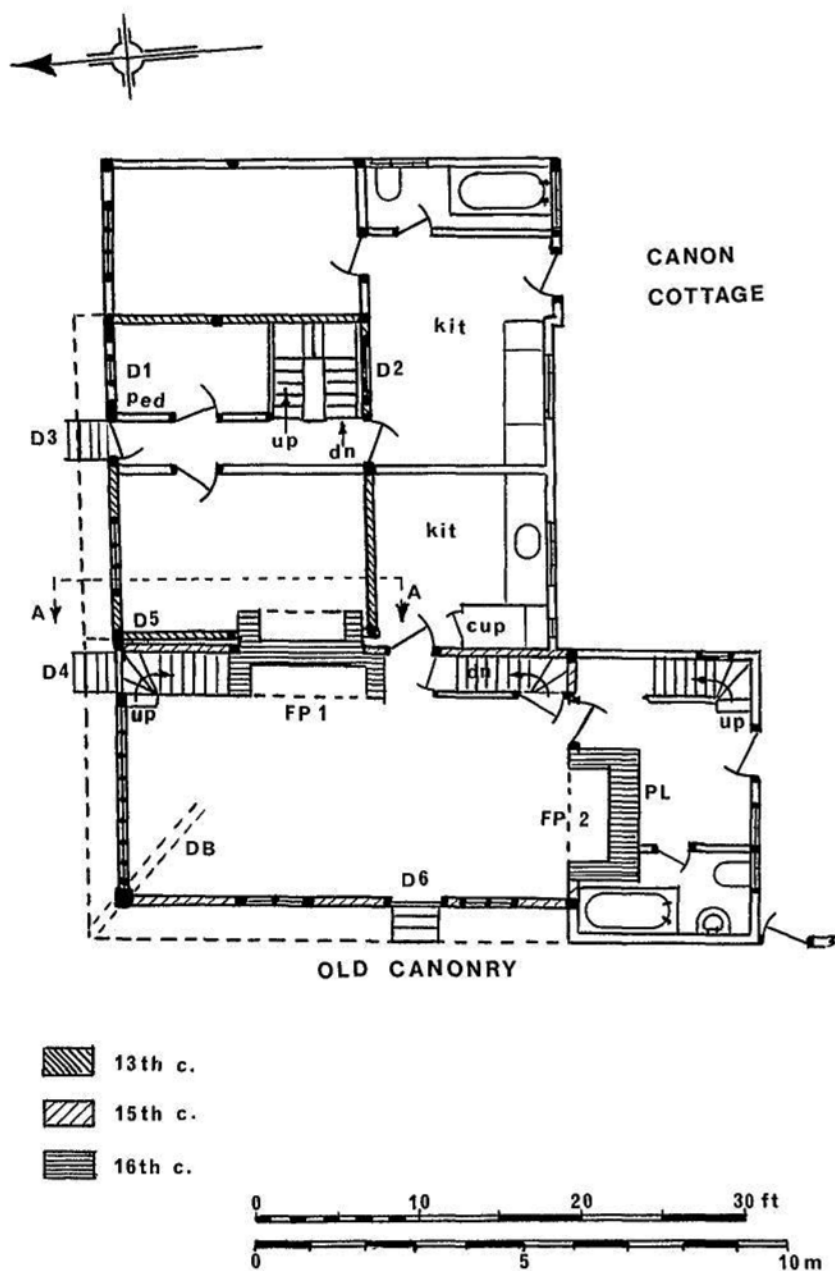


Fig. 1. Plan of Canon Cottage and the Old Canonry.

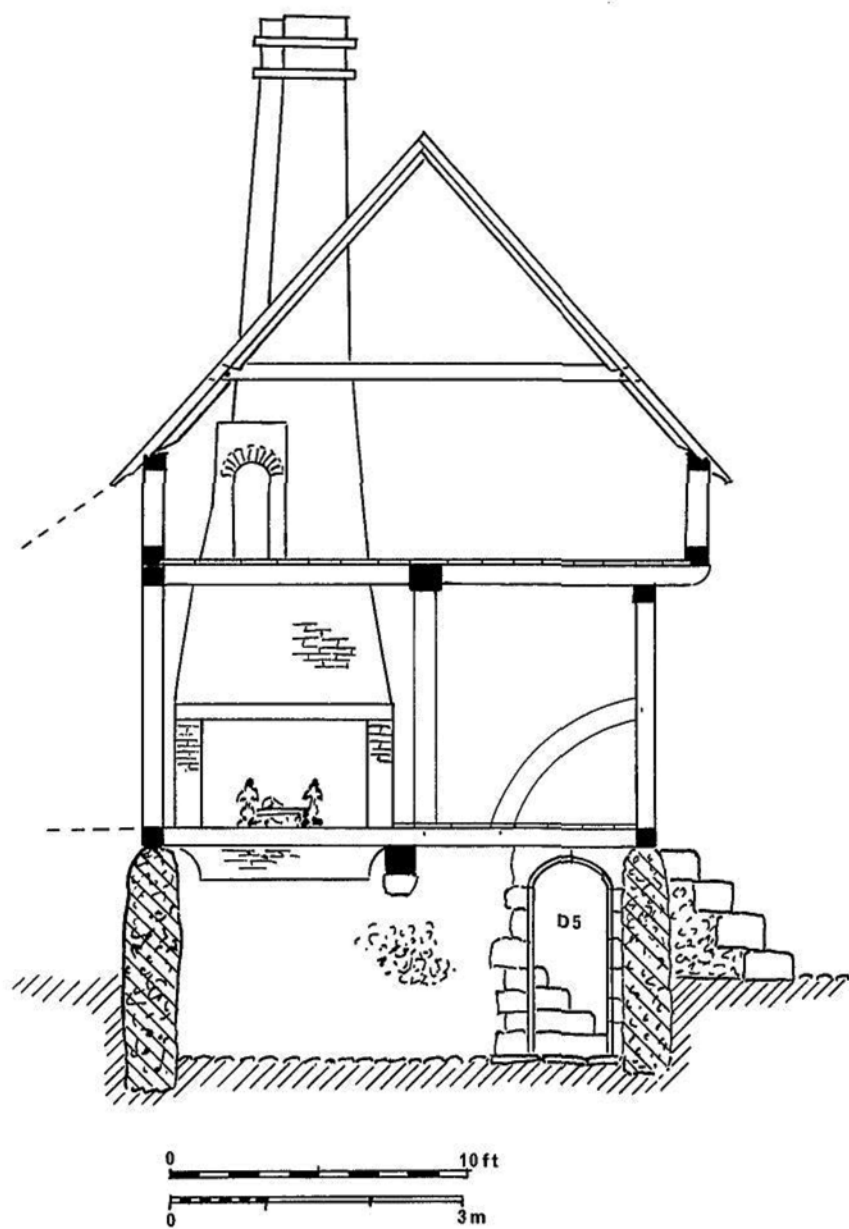


Fig. 2. Section A-A through Canon Cottage, looking West.

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prebendal college of canons. It appears to be contemporary with the nearby Dog Inn, but a little earlier than the Red Lion, the crown post of which is shorter and more stocky.

During the restoration of 1893, the attractive glazed front door, with its internal shutter, was discovered under plaster (D4 on plan, Plate

## KEY TO DRAWINGS

- DB Dragon Beam
- D1 Blocked thirteenth-century Doorway
- D2 Original rear Doorway and Door, now sealed
- D3 Present Entrance to Canon Cottage
- D4 Original Stone Steps, and glazed Door of Old Canonry, now sealed
- D5 Thirteenth-century Stone Doorway and external Steps, still seen in the Cellar of Canon Cottage
- D6 Doorway, now sealed
- kit Modern Kitchen
- A-A Section, see Fig. 2
- FP1 and FP2 Sixteenth-century Fireplaces
- PL Original Panelling (removed)

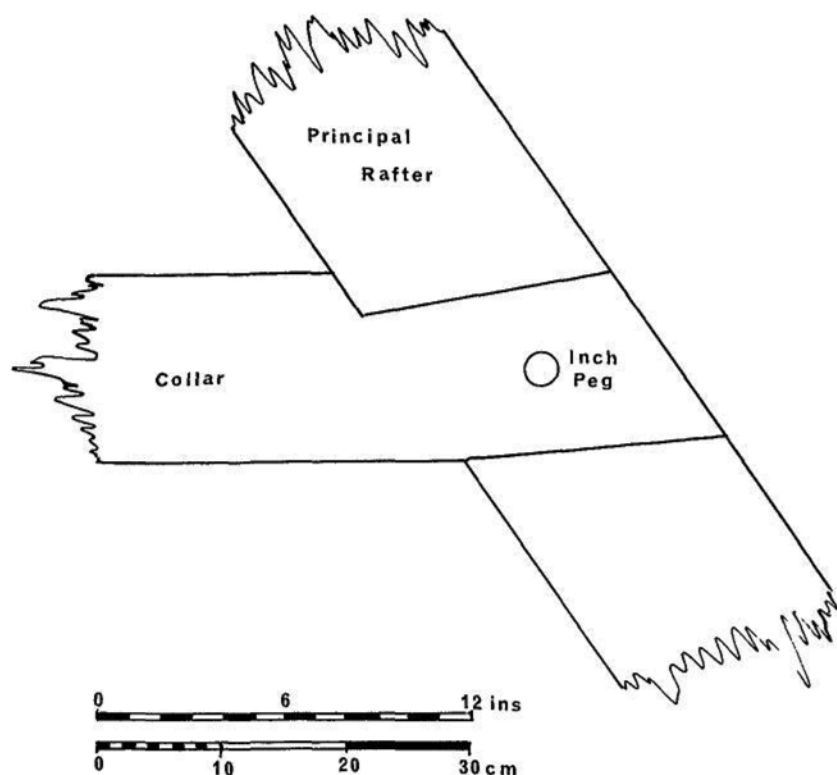


Fig. 3. Canon Cottage, Joint between Collar and Rafter.

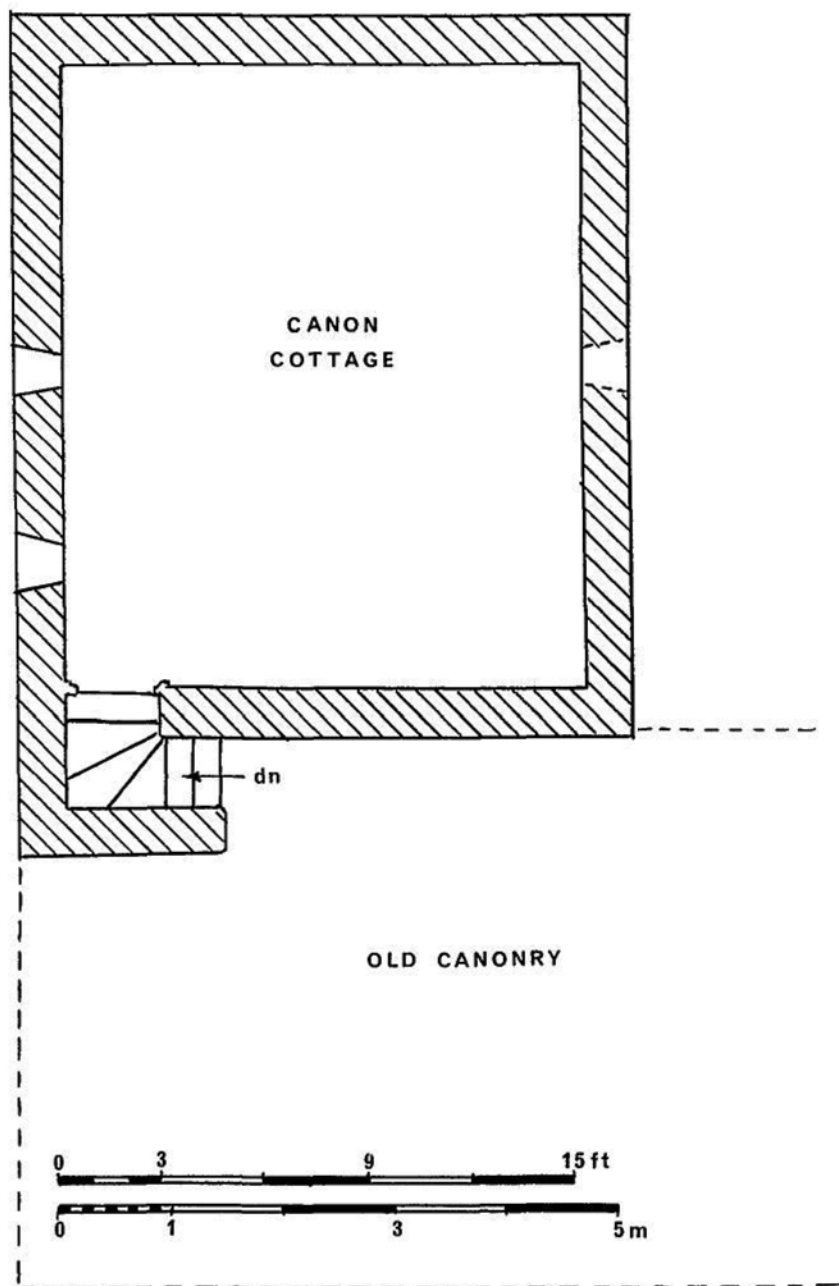


Fig. 4. Original Plan of Canon Cottage.

III), also the very fine eight-light front window, both of which were thoroughly restored.

The gable above had notable bargeboards, as illustrated by Parker,<sup>6</sup> and said to match carving in Winchester Cathedral.<sup>7</sup> In 1893, these bargeboards were found to be in such a decayed state, that they were replaced by exact copies. Also in a bad state was the very fine panelled ceiling of the main room, with its carved bosses, etc.,<sup>8</sup> fragments of which still remain in the cellar. A small part of the wall panelling, however, does survive, and may be seen in the small room at the rear (PL on plan).

The main room upstairs, open to its fine crown post roof must be almost in its original condition, except that it has a new hardboard floor, under which the old oak floorboards still remain. The octagonal shaft of the crown post measures 86 cm. (2 ft. 10 in.) and the slightly cambered tie beam 30 cm. (1 ft.) in the centre. It has hollow chamfers underneath it.

The main fireplace (FP1) is of narrow two-inch Tudor brick, the beam of which is just 3 m. (9 ft. 10 in.) and shows the peg-holes where once a spit machine was fitted. As these houses in Canon Row were sold into private hands in 1549, the fireplaces must have been inserted sometime after that date.

During the difficult times at the beginning of the nineteenth century, this pair of houses was converted into three workers' cottages, each with its cottage type stairs, two of which still remain. It is curious that one was fitted immediately behind the lovely old front door, and directly over the thirteenth-century outside stone steps of the cellar next door, which still remain underneath (Plate III and Fig. 1).

## SUMMARY

Here then we have in Canon Cottage a very rare example of a thirteenth-century building with a cellar and a jettied upper storey. It was small, measuring only 6.10 m. (20 ft.) by 5.03 m. (16 ft. 6 in.) and in its main structure is remarkably complete. One has to assume that in the absence of any medieval hearths the buildings under review were used for dormitory purposes, the 'firehouse' being probably in what is now the Red Lion, as this had the only known open hall.

The Old Canonry was of very advanced design when it was built, as was Canon Cottage in its day. How often do we see such fine Tudor style windows or gables in small houses of the fifteenth century, or

<sup>6</sup> J. H. Parker, *Domestic Architecture in England*, 2nd edn., 1882, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Hussey, *Chronicles of Wingham*, (1896), 38.

<sup>8</sup> E. W. Parkin, *Arch. Cant.*, xciii (1977), 68.



jettied fronts in the thirteenth century? Both these buildings, and indeed the Red Lion, too, still follow medieval practice in that they have no rain gutters.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks are due to the owner of these two properties for permission to record them, and assistance in doing so.

PLATE IA



Canon Cottage and the Old Canonry, from the north-east.

PLATE IB



The Dragon Beam, Old Canonry.

PLATE IIA



The Crown-Post Roof of the Old Canonry.

PLATE IIB



The sixteenth-century Fireplace, Old Canonry.



The rediscovered medieval Front Door, Old Canonry.