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THE ANCIENT CINQUE PORT OF SANDWICH

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It has been said that the history of Sandwich is the history of England; indeed, for centuries it was the premier port of this country, and one of its most ancient towns.

The Saxon Chronicle speaks of 'Lundenwic', referring to the earliest settlement there, but by 664 we find the name 'Sandwic' used, when Wilfred, Bishop of Northumberland '... landed happily and pleasantly at Sandwic', on his way from France, after his consecration there.¹ Sandwic, as it was then spelled, – or the Latin equivalent Sabulovicum, both mean the village or settlement on the sand, and this is exactly what it was, having been built on the sandbank which at that time jutted out into the large and sheltered haven separating Thanet from the mainland of Kent.

A complete history of the town would indeed fill many volumes, and a number of excellent authors have attempted this task, notably William Boys, a one-time mayor of the town, who published *Collections for an History of Sandwich* in 1792.²

The purpose of this paper, while reminding ourselves very briefly of its history, is to study the town itself, especially its ancient streets and buildings, where every corner has a story to tell.

SANDWICH BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST (Fig. 1)

Following the landing of the Jutes in Kent in 449, and afterwards by Saxons and Angles in neighbouring counties, ships began to ply

¹ Eddius Stephanus, *The Life of Wilfred of Northumberland*, vide Dorothy Gardiner, *Historic Haven*, 2.

² Also K.M.E. Murray, *The Constitutional History of the Cinque Ports*, Manchester, 1935. Dorothy Gardiner, *Historic Haven, The Story of Sandwich*, Derby, 1954. Helen C. Bentwich, *History of Sandwich*, Deal, 1971.

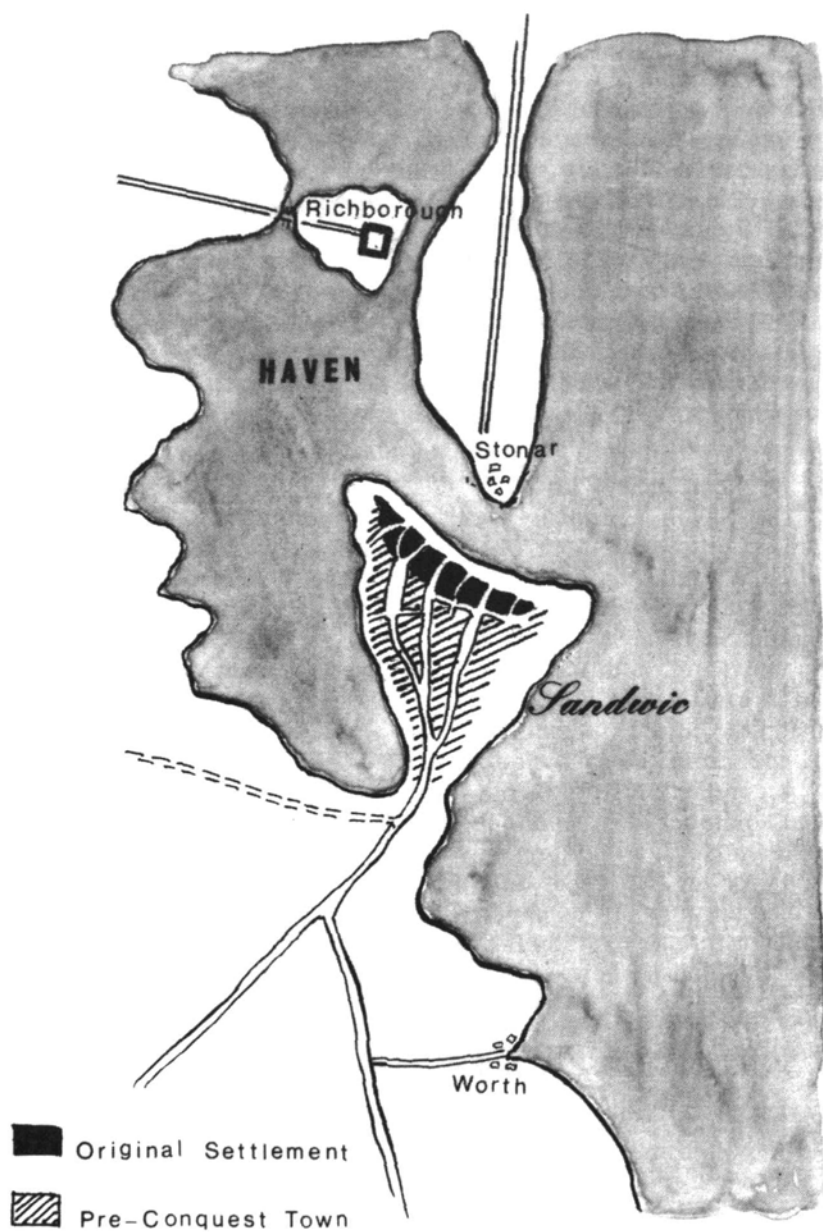


Fig. 1. Sandwich before the Norman Conquest.

regularly between the Thames and the Continent, making use of the wide haven between the Isle of Thanet to shelter, or to replenish stores and water. Thus, we have a picture of huts and store-sheds lining a small quay on the tip of the sandbank, facing the main anchorage. The site of this settlement must now lie behind the present line of Strand Street, where once stood the earliest quay, before the waters silted, and narrowed into the small river we see today.

The old word 'Strand' was used in Saxon times to indicate a waterfront, and this applies also to the Strand in London, which, too, was once a riverside walk before silting caused the Thames to become narrower.

From this modest beginning, Sandwich grew rearwards into a small pear-shaped town – virtually the old parish of St. Peter's, the narrow streets of which still survive today.

To the visitor, these streets and alleys are bewildering, and it is very easy to become lost. Iggesden, in his *Saunter through Kent* remarks; 'These good Sandwichians love you so much that they have laid out their town in the form of a maze, to keep you inside for all time!'³ To understand the reason for this, one must imagine the first line of huts and sheds on the tip of the sandbank having to allow gaps at intervals for the passage of ox-carts proceeding inland. Walking along Strand Street today, a visitor can still see these gaps as the narrow side-streets – Three Kings Yard, Love Lane, Potter Street, etc., all of which are only 3 m. (10 ft.) wide, and all curving round into a south-easterly direction, towards what was then the only dry passage to the mainland; for, at that time, the sea flowed right around the west side of the town at high tide, and would do so today but for the earth-walls built by the monks of Canterbury soon after the Conquest. The land thus reclaimed is still marked on local Ordnance maps as the North and South Poulders.

The buildings of early Sandwich were small by modern standards, many standing on plots no more than 3 or 4 m. wide, (10–14 ft.), which plots remain largely unaltered today. On counting these in the ancient core of the town, and allowing for later buildings which obviously occupy more than one plot, we find the number to be around 307 – remarkably close to the Domesday count of 312 inhabited houses '... in the time of King Edward'.

Sandwich was one of the five original 'Cinque Ports', founded before the Conquest, which for centuries, in return for certain privileges, gave 'Ship Service' to the King, each being assisted later

³ Charles Iggesden, *A Saunter Through Kent*, xix, 18, Ashford, 1926.

by several smaller ports or 'Limbs'. The venerable tradition of the Cinque Ports,⁴ with some of its colourful ceremonies still survives, and although now shorn of almost all its privileges, it is, next to the monarchy, our oldest institution. Even today, the mayor, or a leading citizen from Fordwich, Sarre, and Brightlingsea in Essex come to pay in their 'Ship Monies' – dropped into the ancient Moot Horn held by the Sandwich Town Sergeant. This contribution, which amounts to a prescribed number of shillings, does not today even begin to pay for the excellent banquet then served!

THE NORMAN BUILDINGS OF SANDWICH

The coming of the Normans made a big impact on the town, the importance of the port being soon recognised. The Domesday survey shows that Sandwich was at the time the fourth largest town in the kingdom, after London, Norwich and Ipswich.

The rights of the monks of Canterbury to port dues, given by King Knut were duly recognised, and after the reclaiming of land on the west side of the town, two new suburbs were added, St. Clement's on the eastern side, and St. Mary's on the west. Both these parishes were laid out with streets in a grid pattern, since largely lost after the French raids of 1216 and 1457.

NORMAN BUILDINGS BEFORE THE FRENCH ATTACK OF 1216

Only the tower of St. Clement's, which survived the two French attacks, and some stonework inside the west end of the church of St. Mary, together with a few early stone cellars in the town, can be said to date from the twelfth century.

THE TOWER OF ST. CLEMENT'S

This is claimed to be the finest Norman tower of any parish church in England, except perhaps that at Tewkesbury. It has three tiers of arcading all round its upper part, and at least one below the present roof. It is of Caen stone, and its carving and mouldings are superb. The stone doorway leading into the foot of the stair turret is

⁴ Said to have been initiated by Alfred the Great. The first documentary evidence of a Cinque Ports Naval Force dates from Earl Godwin's revolt of 1052. (Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (RS) ii 146 sq. 150-1.)

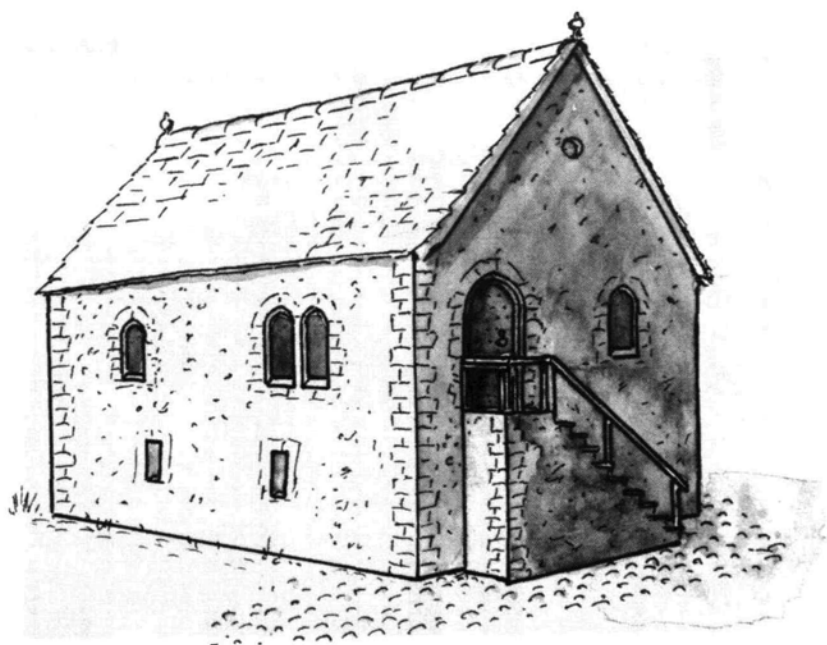


Fig. 2. Reconstruction of a Norman Merchant's House.

pre-Conquest in style, and is thought to have been executed by a Saxon mason. The low outline of the original Norman roof can be clearly seen inside the church on the west side of the tower.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN

This was originally a small cruciform Norman church, to which a steeple was added later, but which fell down in 1448. It was damaged in the French raids of 1216 and 1457, repaired, but badly damaged by a severe earthquake in 1578, which, according to the town records 'dyd shake and cleave fower archies in St. Maries chirch'. It is not surprising, therefore, that a second steeple collapsed in 1667, destroying much of the centre of the building, so that today the church is a remarkable hotch-potch of styles and patching, with wooden pillars supporting the wide roof. Nevertheless, some Norman work still remains inside the west end of the church, showing that the original church was a fine one, and dateable to the first quarter of the twelfth century.



Norman Merchant's House, Three Kings' Yard.

NORMAN BUILDINGS AFTER 1216

French forces under the Dauphin, summoned to assist the barons in their struggle against the misrule of King John, landed in Thanet in May 1216, and sacked the town of Sandwich. They returned early in 1217 and set the town on fire, but were decisively defeated in a great sea battle off the town on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24th, 1217. It is said that afterwards, much of the town was rebuilt, and St. Bartholomew's Hospital founded with treasure captured from the French, and with monies paid for high-ranking hostages taken during the battle. It is certain that the earliest remains of Norman dwellings date from soon after these events. These were small 'hall-and-cellar' buildings, constructed of flint and stone (Fig. 2), and lying in a line behind the present timber-framed ones on the south side of Strand Street. They once stood on the quayside, before the river narrowed, and were obviously designed with defence in mind, for at that time, Sandwich was an open town, and had no walls or gates.

THE SMALL STONE BUILDING IN THREE KINGS YARD (Plate I)

This now stands roofless, and was originally a Norman merchant's

house built about 1230. It became for a time a chantry chapel, becoming a ruin after the Reformation, later being converted back into a house when Flemish refugees poured into Sandwich, as added brickwork in it shows. Originally, it had an undercroft, above which the owner lived in a hall which occupied two-thirds of this part, behind which was a small retiring room or bedroom. The whole building measured only 9.30 by 7.30 m. (30 ft. 6 in. by 24 ft.). The undercroft had two very narrow loop windows on each side, an entrance door at the north-west corner, and a circular stone stairway at the south end, connecting with the room above. The hall had twin lancet windows on each side, and the bedroom two single lancets. The hall had a doorway at the north end, approached by outside stairs, the upper floor being usually of stone flags, supported by massive joists. Only the wealthiest had stone-vaulted undercrofts.

NO. 50 ST. PETER'S STREET

This lies directly behind the timber-framed corner house in Strand Street, and like the building just described, had thick flint walls measuring 0.60 m. (nearly 2 ft.). The street front is of later brick but, if one views the house from the little garden at the rear, the twin lancet windows of the erstwhile upper hall can be seen, as well as part of the single lancet.

NO. 27 STRAND STREET

A little further along the street is no. 27, where on entering the present shop, one finds at the rear a Gothic stone doorway leading into a two-bay vaulted undercroft. The doorway is a wide one, 1.22 m. (4 ft.), where the rebate for the door, and the original heavy pin-hinges still remain. This must have been the business store, or shop of one of the wealthier merchants, perhaps a wine importer who stored his casks here, and lived in the two rooms above. It is intriguing to note that this, formerly an antique shop, has since become a wine shop again.

NO. 39 STRAND STREET

A fourth undercroft lies behind no. 39 Strand Street, where several steps lead down into it. This has inside it a pointed niche, and two cellar windows, now blocked.

OTHER THIRTEENTH-CENTURY HOUSES

A number of fragments of buildings of this period may be found in various parts of the town, notably behind the old Elizabethan Grammar School near the western end of Strand Street, where in the fine garden may be found walling and two doorways of the 'Stone House', built c. 1220, which was the official residence of the monks of Canterbury. This is mentioned in the Customs Records, now housed among the Chapter archives at Lambeth Palace, and is described as having a central hall with Gothic stone windows, a chapel at one end, and a two-storey wing at the other. Under the hall there used to be a cellar. This house was demolished in 1563, at which time it had been a hospice known as St. Thomas House.

Inside the present Sandwich library in Market Street is preserved *in situ* a fine lancet window of yet another stone house, while an

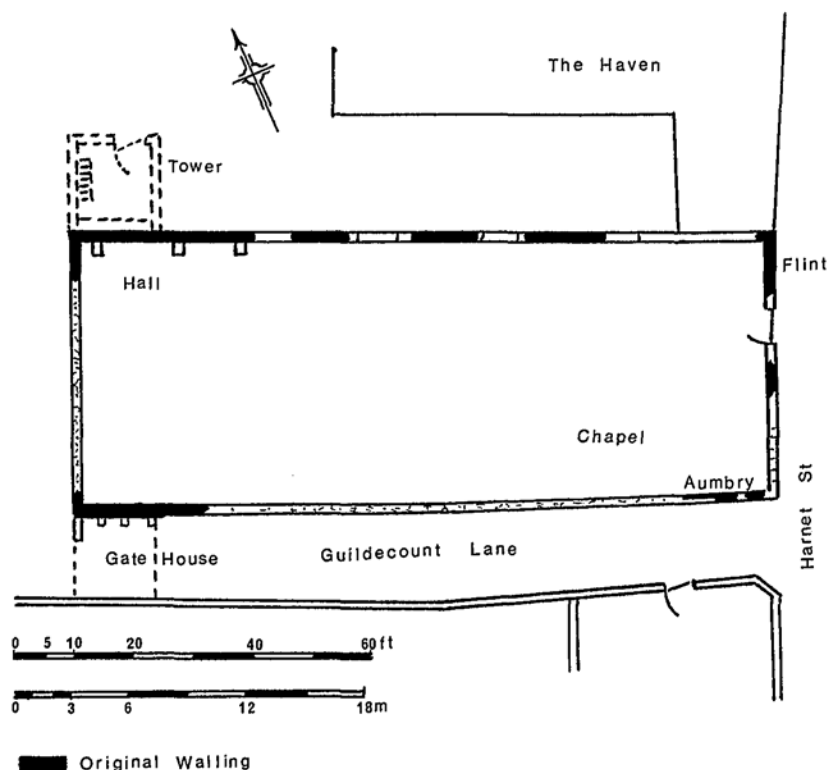


Fig. 3. 'The Haven', Plan of the thirteenth-century fortified House.

undercroft window may be seen in a wall in Quay Lane. Walling from the period still stands behind no. 37 Strand Street, and between no. 3 Strand Street, and the Admiral Owen inn.

THE HAVEN

Another residence of very great interest, but now with only fragmentary remains is to be found in the garden of the Haven in Harnet Street (Fig. 3). A high wall here embraces the whole of the corner of Guildecourt Lane, on the Harnet Street side of which may be seen part of a Gothic stone doorway, and some exceptionally fine flintwork. The Bridewell Museum in Norwich claims to have the finest flintwork in the country in its west wall, but upon examination, although smaller in extent, the Sandwich example must surely show superior workmanship. The flints are 'knapped', or chipped square, and so accurately laid in straight courses, that it is almost impossible to insert a knife between them.

The rectangular walled plot here was built in the first half of the thirteenth century as a fortified courtyard dwelling, having its hall in the north-west corner, and a chapel at the Harnet Street end, where an aumbry may be found in the wall, but now covered with creeper. Until earlier this century, a defence tower stood guarding the north-west corner, while a gatehouse straddled Guildecourt Lane, where corbels, and flintwork, formerly showing on the end of the house opposite, indicated where it stood.

Most of the present walling has been rebuilt from the rubble of the ruins; *for example, ashlar, or squared stones from the chapel may be seen to form part of the walling in Harnet Street.* Inside the garden, however, there is still original walling on the north side, which is easily recognised in that it has four courses of roughly-knapped flints to one lacing course of imported yellow Flemish brick. This often was brought back as ballast in the wool ships which traded with Europe.

This remarkable residence is believed to have been the home of the Condy (or Cundy) family, who lived hereabouts at the time.⁵ They were wealthy ship-owners, importers of wines, etc., chiefly from France. The town records show that John, and later Peter Condy were amongst the earliest mayors of Sandwich, who founded and endowed the thirteenth-century chantry in the nearby church of St. Mary, the town's earliest chantry.

All evidence indicates that this walled, courtyard residence was

⁵ C.H. Fretten, unpublished manuscript. Notes giving a new list of early bailiffs.



Elizabethan Murals in the 'Long House'.

besieged, but vigorously defended during the great French attack of August 1457, and largely reduced to rubble. In the original walling still standing on the north side are several round holes, now bricked-in, apparently made by cannon balls. The large pseudo-Gothic openings in this wall were put in later.

'THE LONG HOUSE'

Another important thirteenth-century house was the 'Long House' in Strand Street, of which the cellar still survives. This was built c. 1253 for John Pickenot, cellarer to Christ Church, Canterbury. It was recorded as being 52 ft. long, which it still is, and to have been built of stone with a tiled roof, in the centre of which was a louvre. It was no doubt a Norman-style house, with a hall and two other rooms on the first floor, but reduced to ruins in the 1457 French attack, left in that state for at least a century, and finally rebuilt about 1570 as the very interesting house we see today. It has an upper room with fine Elizabethan frescoes (Plate II), a room with sixteenth-century paneling, and a Georgian room. The original stone cellar still has a short underground passage, now blocked, which once led out on to the Monkenkey, a stone quay built by the monks of Canterbury in 1322

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at a cost of £26 16s. 6d., and excavated a few years ago by Messrs. Southam and Trussler, who found it to be still largely intact.

Other important houses of this period formerly stood at the west end of Strand Street, such as Bay Hall, and Packer's house, mentioned in various records, but of which little is known.

A number of cellars in Sandwich must also date from this time, a full survey of which might tell us much about the Norman town.

THE GREAT STORM OF 1287

One event which had a profound effect on Sandwich, and indeed on the whole of the south-east coast, was the terrible storm of February 1287. It was described as '... that hideous tempest, when the sea flowed twice without ebbing. . .', which did untold damage to towns along the south coast. The harbour at New Romney was silted up, and the River Rother, which formerly flowed into the sea there, changed its course. Sandbanks appeared in front of the anchorage at Hythe, while Dover was forced to rebuild its harbour.

At Sandwich, new sandbanks built up across the entrance to its fine haven, pushing the exit nearer to Pegwell Bay. However, the harbour continued to function, reaching the peak of its trade between 1377 and 1400, when there were 810 inhabited houses in the town, with an estimated population of over 3000.

THE FORTIFICATIONS OF SANDWICH

As already mentioned, Sandwich was an open town before 1385, relying on its stone Norman houses and also its churches for defence. Its only fortification at that time was the 'King's Castle' situated on the eastern side of the town, close to the Sandown road. Excavations by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust in 1983 proved that it was of the usual 'motte and bailey' construction with a small central keep protected by ditches. The first documentary reference to it was in 1260, when it was a subsidiary of Dover Castle, and garrisoned from there. The first recorded custodian was Hugh Helpeston, who was installed in 1299.

The castle was demolished *temp.* Henry VIII, its stones being taken by sea, and re-used in the building of Sandown, Deal and Walmer Castles. Gunpowder was initially brought to Europe from the Far East about 1289, and the first mention we have of the use of cannon was by the Moors in Spain, in 1331. The implications of this caused rulers everywhere to review their defence strategy, and in

1385, Richard II issued a royal order for enclosing and fortifying the town of Sandwich, which works were commenced soon afterwards.⁶ The town wall was built behind the then quay with several small access gates, one of which still survives with its 'squint' in a complete section of the wall behind the house called St. Cuthbert's, in Strand Street. Fragments of the wall may be seen elsewhere, especially along the modern quay, where in the cellar of the Bell Hotel the base of the wall and of one square tower may still be seen. The Fisher Gate on the Quay is the only remaining fourteenth-century town gate, while just beyond that was the 'Round House', of which part remains inside a modern house. This was a guard tower, with a winding mechanism for drawing up a heavy chain across the river.

The stone wall ended at the Sandown Gate, beyond which the 'Town Ditch' encircled the whole of the south side of the old town. Here, above the water-filled moat, was a steep bank, surmounted by a strong wooden palisade, and believed planted with a thorn thicket hedge on the bank, for there are frequent notes in the town records of the purchase of thorn bushes. The barbican was erected by Henry VIII, on the site of the medieval David's Gate.

PELICAN HOUSE AND 'THE ARSENAL'

Boys shows a small map of the town as it was in 1792, and on it is marked 'The Arsenal', situated on Pelican Hill, now part of High Street. A small powder magazine stood close to Seven Post Alley, of which a few stones can still be seen. A little further along is the strange flint building called Pelican House with its battlemented front, believed to have been the ordnance store.

Although much altered in the eighteenth century, with added windows, etc., an examination of the interior shows that it dates at least from the early fourteenth century. The roof of part of the northern half of the building is original and is the earliest collar purlin roof known. It has straight tie-beams with low collars, supported by raking struts, and evidence that it once had a central collar purlin pegged to every collar. This was before crown-posts became fashionable. In the thick flint wall at the rear are two deeply-splayed lancet windows, now blocked. The whole building is, of course, now much divided up, with most of the later features being Georgian. It is interesting to note, however, that the town records of 1727 state that in that year, 'Mr Dymar's comedians performed here', the first mention of theatre in Sandwich.

⁶ Town Records, Springfield, Maidstone.

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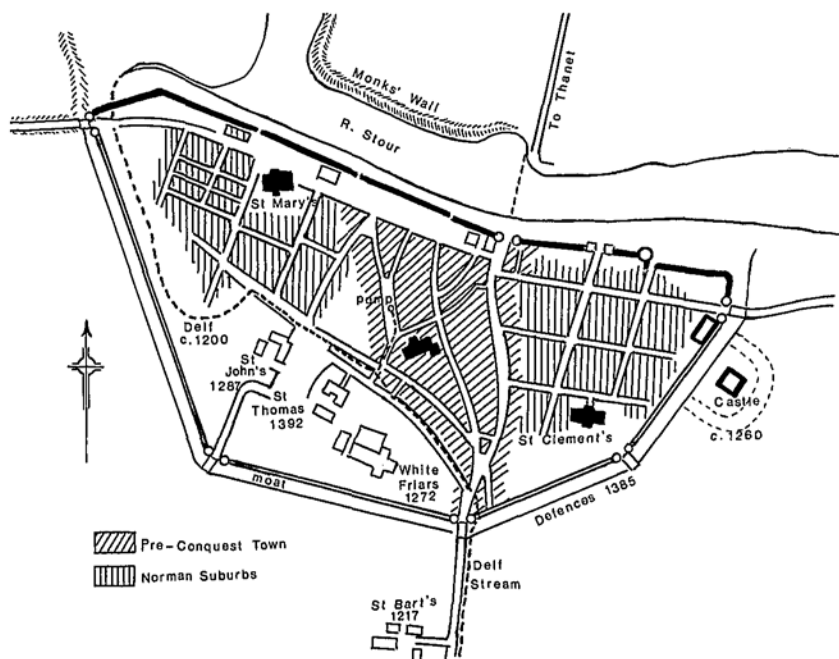


Fig. 4. Medieval Sandwich.

THE GREAT FRENCH FLOATING WALL

In the south of England there was often a threat of attack from the French, when in 1383, a banished Englishman devised a great floating timber wall, said to be 20 ft. high and 3,000 ft. long (6 m. by 914 m.), with turrets at intervals. The idea was to float this slowly towards the shore near Sandwich, giving shelter to ships behind it. It was such a cumbersome scheme, however, that it was seen long before it could approach these shores, giving ships of the Cinque Ports time to assemble, and to capture it. It was finally drawn ashore, dismantled, and the timbers used to strengthen the town's defences, particularly in making 'The Bulwark', a large two-storeyed gun platform, subsequently erected next to the Sandown Gate.

SANDWICH FROM 1385 TO 1500

The town, now feeling more secure behind its new defences, started

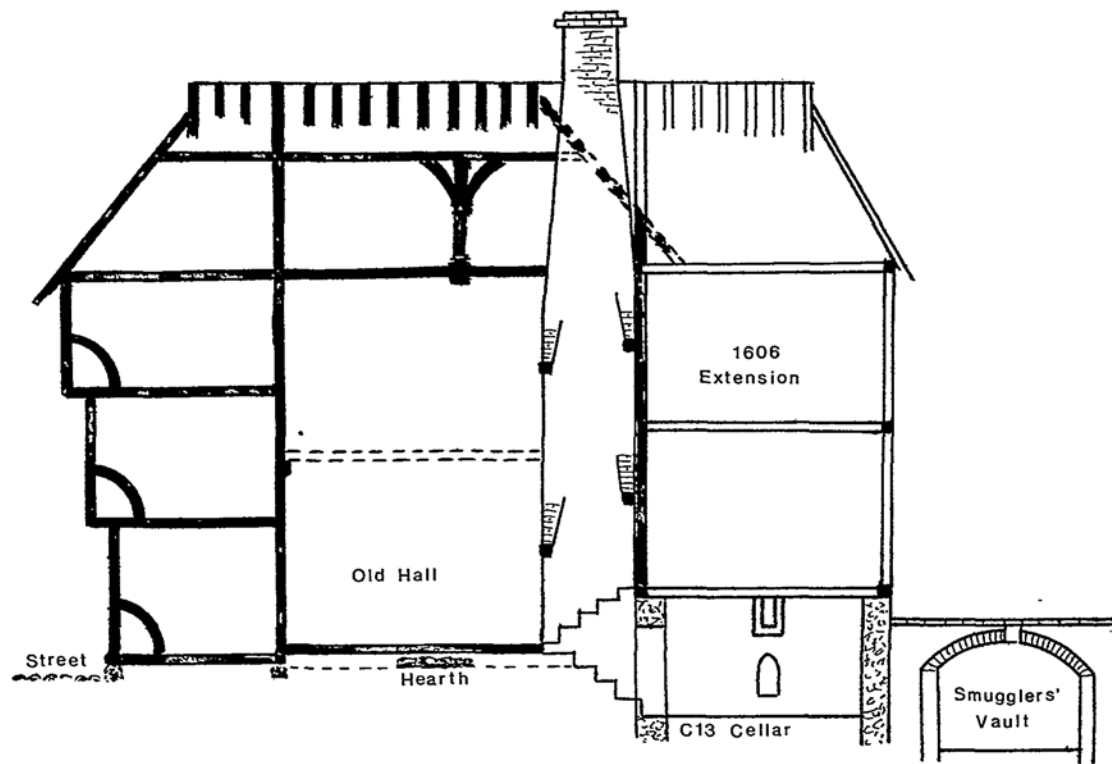


Fig. 5. Section of no. 39 Strand Street.



Crown-Post Roof of no. 39 Strand Street.

to build larger timber-framed houses, instead of the small stone Norman dwellings (Fig. 4). A number of these may still be seen, the best example being 'The Pilgrims' in Strand Street, which dates from before 1400. As the river had by now become narrower, and the quay wider, these houses were erected in front of the old line of small Norman buildings, thus uniquely preserving so much of them.

'THE PILGRIMS', NOS. 39 AND 41 STRAND STREET (Plates III-IV and Fig. 5)

These two fine timber-framed buildings, at present a restaurant, were restored in the 1920s by Lady Edward Pearson, who also restored the 'Old Weavers' in Strand Street, and the 'Old Drum' in Church Street St. Mary's. Both nos. 39 and 41 have three floors on the street front



Nos. 39 and 41 Strand Street.

with two oversailing jetties, behind which each has a 'High Hall', once open to the roof. The style of the crown-post in no. 39 indicates that this house was built before 1400 (Plate III), while the soot-coated roof timbers there prove that there was formerly an open hearth below. Between the two buildings is a passage and a small courtyard which gave access to the small Norman house behind, apparently in use up to 1606, when its top part was cut down, and no. 39 extended over it. At the same time, a floor was inserted in the old hall, and the chimney and wide fireplace put in, which can still be seen today. The fine, large window in the courtyard, typical of the early seventeenth century, with the moulded doorway and heavy door are also contemporary. Over the door is a small plaque with the initials F.B., a wine barrel surmounted by a spray of leaves, and the date 1606 A.D. In the glass of the window are two small coats of arms, one of the Solly family, and the other of the Sollys impaled with that of the Septvans, both old Sandwich families, of which there are still Sollys living in the town.



The 'King's Lodging' from the North-east.

THE KING'S LODGING (Plate V and Figs. 6-7)

This is probably the finest timber-framed building in the town, and stands behind a brick wall on the north side of Strand Street. Its front is of brick with a date-stone 1713, but this masks the older building behind it. The house dates from c. 1400, and is believed to have been built originally as a hostel for travellers, of which there were some six in the town. It stands on what the modern Ordnance map still calls the 'Jesus Quay', built by Christ Church, Canterbury. The house has been through many hands, and known by various names, St. Ninians, The Old House, The King's House, and now the King's Lodging. It is claimed that Elizabeth I stayed here on her visit in 1573, 'As her father did twice before'. It is unfortunate, however, that some of the relics of those days, described by Arthur Mee,⁷ such as the Tudor four-poster bed, the Crusader's chest and the carved overmantel were sold to America by a subsequent owner.

The house is roofed in two sections, the dormitory part being on the right-hand side, and having three floors, with overhangs and

⁷ Arthur Mee, *The King's England*, 389, London, 1949.

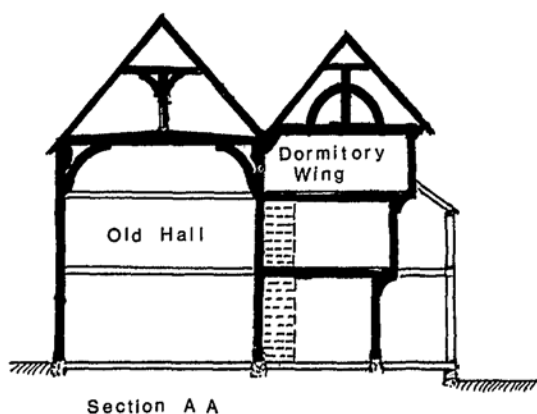
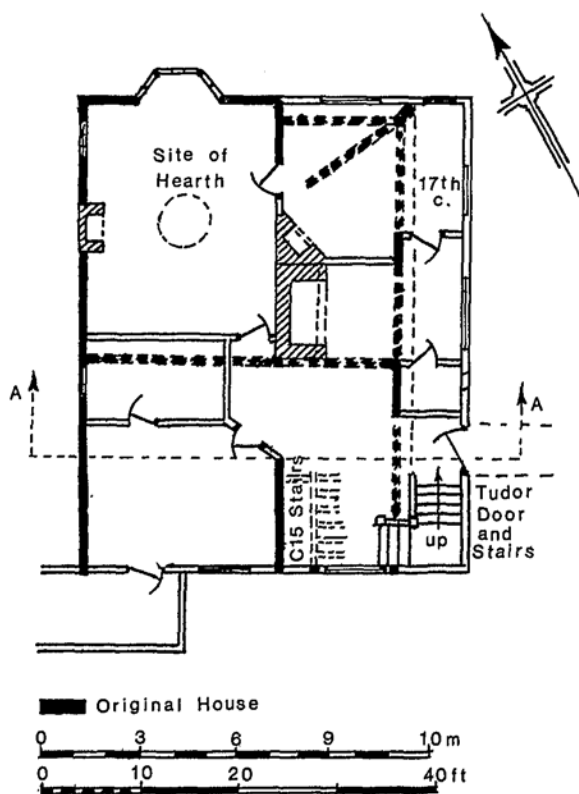


Fig. 6. Plan and Section of the 'King's Lodging'.

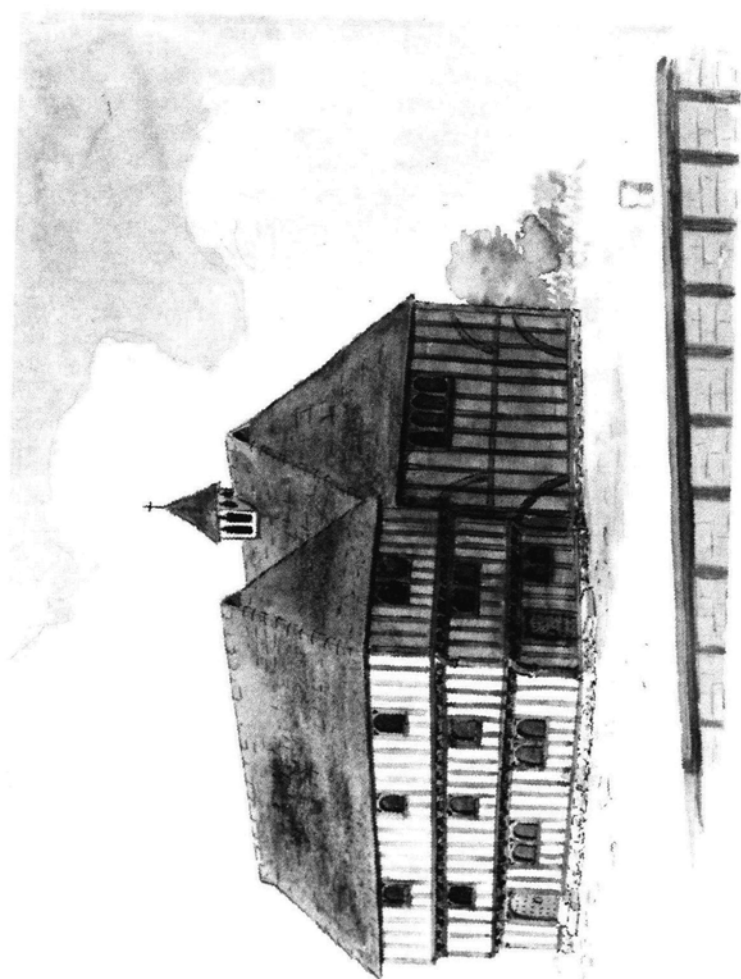


Fig. 7. Reconstruction of the 'King's Lodging' from the North-east.

dragon beams. On the left was the large open hall with a crown-post roof, but now floored-in, and behind that the kitchen, also once open to the roof, with a plain, square, but very sooty crown-post and roof (Plate V).

NO. 38 KING STREET

This was for centuries the Green Dragon Inn, which had three floors overhanging the street with a 'high hall' behind. In 1927, it became a shop and the lower jetty was taken out to give more height. A staircase was then built in the hall, where, despite the wide fireplace of c. 1600, one can still stand at street level and look up at the crown-post roof. The building again dates from about 1400, but was extended rearwards later that century. Although the house plot measures only 4.27 m. wide (14 ft.), it was the last remaining one to have a right of way through it for the purpose of fetching water from the Delph Stream. Of this former passage, now only the well-worn flagstones remain.

NOS. 3, 5 AND 7 STRAND STREET

These were also 'High Hall' houses, with three floors and two jetties on the street front, the latter having been sawn off, as can be seen from the inside, and replaced by ugly Victorian brick. No. 3 has a queen-strut roof, and in its hall a side gallery. A stone *piscina* was discovered in the massive flint wall between it and the Admiral Owen, believed to have been part of Burton's chantry which was pulled down in 1549, when the 'Admiral Owen' was built on the site. Fireplaces and later additions date from the early sixteenth century.

NO. 7 POTTER STREET

This again is a medieval house of three floors, which once had a high hall. The upper floor has no jetty, and there is evidence that this storey once extended over the narrow street, connecting with the opposite building in what was known as a 'haute pas'. The heavy rafters of no. 7 have carpenters' marks on them, beginning with VIII at the street front, and continuing inwards, IX, X, etc., the timbers at the street front being sawn off, and without the usual curved braces. Other three storeyed medieval houses include nos. 21 and 23 Strand Street, and nos. 4, 6, 8 and 10 Market Street.

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SMALLER MEDIEVAL HOUSES

Many small medieval houses are to be found in the ancient core of the town, especially in St. Peter's Street, such as the old Chantry House next to Holy Ghost Alley. As a rule, these had three rooms only, two on the street front with an overhang, and an open hall behind. No. 1 appears to have been different from the rest, in having its open hall on the street front with two floors behind.

Others of note include no. 4 King Street, where inside the present shop there are timbers of a very early house. No. 6, next door also was a hall house.

No. 8 The Cattle Market, now a gift shop, had the usual two floors on the street front, of which part of the jetty and the timbering can still be seen inside the shop-window. The timbering of the open hall behind still remains intact. It has a short crown-post on a cambered beam, below which are two long supporting braces, meeting in the centre to form a Gothic arch. Nos. 10 and 12 next door, now a bank, were formerly known as the Mermaid, the oldest inn in the town, and probably its oldest timber-framed building. Nos. 9 and 11 The Cattle Market, known as the XIth century café, has an older part behind no. 11, where can be seen the corner post and jetty, overhanging part of the Delph Stream. In restoring two small properties in The Chain, the outline of the early roof and jetty could be clearly seen.

Houses with crown-post roofs include, in King Street, nos. 6 and 23 (now a private garage), nos. 38, 49, and 62. No. 49 was once the Rectory of St. Peter's, being built with its fireplace and a continuous jetty on the street front, but still with a plain square crown-post. No. 30 St. Peter's Street has a tall crown post, while no. 1 The Butchery has a fine heavy one. No doubt there are a number of others.

THE OLD COURT HALLS OF SANDWICH

Sandwich has had some form of town government from the earliest times, having had a mayor from 1207, and being one of the earliest towns to do so. The old 'Customal' of Sandwich, compiled by Adam Champney, Town Clerk about 1300, shows that before that date the Town Court was held on Thursdays in St. Peter's Church, while the Criminal Court was held in the 'Mastez', on the Sand Downs. This must have been outside the Canterbury Gate at the corner of Richborough Lane on a site still called the 'Gallows Field', and where felons were buried. The first court hall must have been built soon after 1300 in what is now The Chain, near or next to no. 60, for this part of the High Street was referred to in the town records of 1311 as

'Ildehalle Street'. Nothing is known of the actual building.

The second court hall was built in 1432 in St. Peter's Street, next to the 'Old Jail', and abutting on to St. Peter's churchyard. In the old court records which still survive from that date, it was sometimes referred to as the 'New Court Hall'.

After the building of the present Elizabethan Guildhall, the previous hall continued in use as the 'Weigh House', still retaining its royal coat of arms on the front.

The present building, erected in 1579, still has its court room on the ground floor, with its council chamber above, together with a small committee room and staircase. These are still used, and are open to visitors by appointment. Subsequent alterations may be listed thus:

- 1764 Side entrance, corridors and Georgian style front added, as can be seen illustrated in Boys' *Annals of Sandwich*.
- 1818 Re-faced in brick, with a classical pediment.
- 1910-12 Was given an imitation Tudor front, while the adjoining guardroom, built in 1683, was incorporated.
- 1936 Further office extension on the ground floor, with kitchen above.
- 1973 The large and handsome new wing at the rear added, financed by monies accrued from the bridge tolls. The Guildhall today contains many fine treasures and relics.

THE PRIEST HOUSE OF ST. PETER'S (Fig. 8)

This very interesting small building adjoins the east end of the church, and dates from the thirteenth century. It has a fine vaulted undercroft of two unequal bays, and a circular stone stairway connecting it with the small hall above, having been built as a priest house in the Norman style. In 1392, a wealthy merchant of Sandwich, Thomas Elys, founded and endowed a chantry in the church, at which time there were three priests here, William Colyer, John Nelot and Roger Segar, one of which was detailed to instruct the youth of the town, thus establishing the first school there.

The roof and the upper part of the hall were crushed when the tower of the church fell without warning at 11.15 p.m. on Sunday October 13th, 1661, after there had been the usual services that day. The tower was afterwards rebuilt with small Dutch brick as was the upper part of the hall of the old priest house. This has now an attractive Dutch curvilinear gable, and inside it a side purlin roof with high, thin collars.

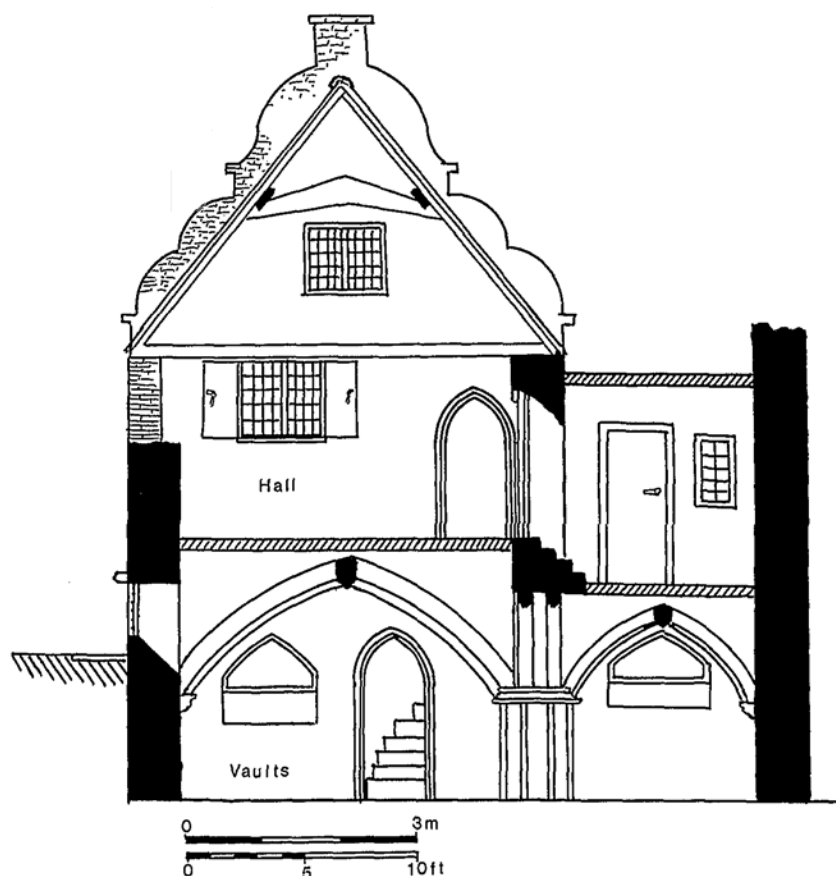


Fig. 8. Section of the Priest House of St. Peter's.

THE GREAT FRENCH RAID OF 1457 (Fig. 9)

This took place on Sunday, August 28th, and was probably in retaliation for the burning of Honfleur in Normandy by English armies retreating at the end of the Hundred Years War. A well organised fleet of some 60 sail, 13 being vessels of war with top castles left Honfleur, and landed some four thousand men, 'well furnished with artillery' near Deal. They arrived outside the Sandown Gate at Sandwich about 6 a.m., and found themselves facing the newly-restored defences and the 'Bulwark', the great two-storeyed gun platform built only six years before. For a time, the French could make no progress, but after heavy losses they forced the town gates

one by one, and entered parts of the town. However, the townsmen, led by their mayor John Drury, continued to fight desperately against superior odds, contesting every street and every house. Meanwhile the news was being carried by fast horsemen to Dover and to other towns, and soon help began to arrive, harassing the enemy from the rear. Men and guns even came from Hythe, with a master gunner named Richard Ozey in charge, until at 5 p.m. the French decided they had had enough and withdrew. Much of the town was looted and burned, but not all of it as some writers have supposed. An examination of roofs in Strand Street, and elsewhere in the centre of the town, shows that without doubt buildings there did in fact survive the attack. Again, the old 1432 court hall in St. Peter's Street was still standing in the seventeenth century, as was the old hospital of St. Thomas. By plotting buildings believed to be earlier than 1457, an interesting plan may be evolved, which shows that while roughly the parishes of St. Mary's and St. Clement's were destroyed, the ancient core of the town with its very narrow streets held out successfully (Fig. 9).

The mayor, John Drury, meanwhile, was killed during the fighting, since when all mayors of Sandwich have worn a black gown in his memory. Today, Sandwich and Honfleur, both once leading medieval ports, are twinned towns, and exchange civic visits.

SANDWICH AT ITS LOWEST EBB

Following that fateful Sunday, the town lay stunned; the next mayor, John Nisham, was not appointed until December 8th, and it was June 1458 before any attempt was made to renew the defences. The parishes of St. Mary's and St. Clement's still lay in ruins, and the trade of the port, already in decline sank to its lowest ebb about 1500, chiefly owing to the continued silting up of the river approaches. Little rebuilding was attempted, the exceptions being Church Street St. Mary's (Plate VI) and Fisher Street, where early Tudor houses may still be seen. These have lighter timber-framing, mainly in squares with herringbone brick infilling, while on the overhang, the ends of the joists are covered by carved fascia boards.

THE COMING OF THE STRANGERS

Despite visits to the town by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, and appeals for help which came to nothing, Sandwich continued in a very depressed state until 1561, when refugees from the Netherlands



Church Street St. Mary's.

began to pour in. This was as Philip II of Spain attempted to subdue that country and to impose on them the Inquisition, in a war which lasted for eighty years, after which the Spaniards were forced to withdraw. All this time, ships continued to arrive at English ports, chiefly Sandwich and Yarmouth, bringing in more and more 'forreniers', as one record states. Despite great difficulties of accommodation, these gentle, hard-working folk brought some revival of prosperity to the town, particularly as weavers, and market gardeners. Evidence of looms can be seen in the reinforced floors and roofs of upper rooms at no. 6 Bowling Street, and also no. 11 Harnet Street, where there are 'warping pegs' on the side walls for measuring the warp, and a coloured plaque with the date 1611, and initials O E intertwined, between hanks of wool.

As the great influx continued, many refugees had, of necessity, to be passed on to other towns and villages, and today, their houses with picturesque brickwork and gables can still be seen in almost every village in east Kent, as well as towns such as Deal, Ramsgate and Margate. The last-named still has its three town halls, the earliest of which is a small, seventeenth-century Dutch style one. In Sandwich, many small Dutch bricks were made from the clay silt of the river, particularly in the inlet near the Sandown Gate, a task in which the women joined. Such brickwork may be seen in many parts of the

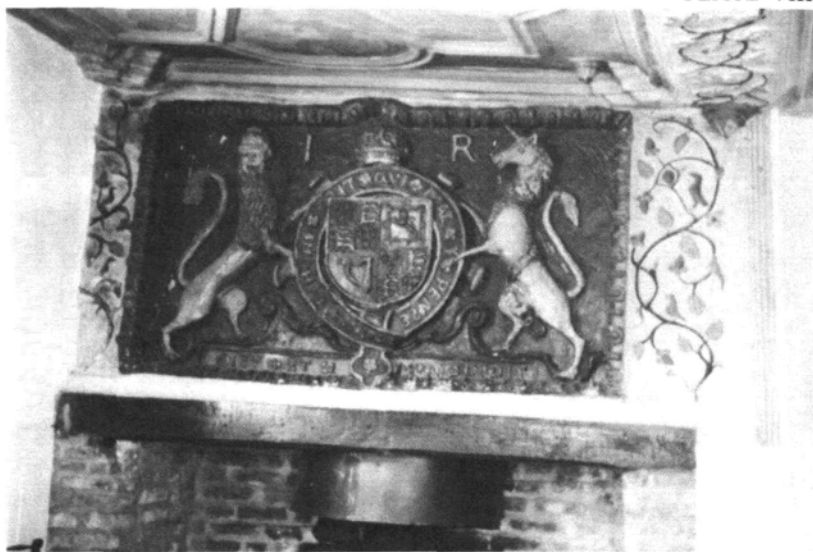


Entrance to Underground Passage, in the Cellar of Hadley House.

town, particularly in the 'Dutch House' in King Street, and in no. 5 King Street, which has unusually small bricks, and part of the date 1613 in fancy iron figures.

SMUGGLING IN SANDWICH

In the eighteenth century, Sandwich, like other ports around our coasts was heavily engaged in this illicit trade, evidence of which is not hard to find. An underground vault with eighteenth-century brickwork lies beneath the paved yard behind no. 39 Strand Street, and a similar one under the back yard of no. 12 Market Street. No. 41 Strand Street has a look-out built into its roof which could signal to vessels in Pegwell Bay, while no. 20 High Street has a small observation, or signalling, platform on the roof, next to the chimney. The blocked entrances to underground passages are to be found in at least seven places in the town, a particularly fine one leads from the cellar of Hadley House, (no. 34) St. Peter's Street, through to the cellar of the Masonic Hall in High Street, where once stood the 'Bell and Anchor', a Tudor inn. This passage was cut out of the hard sand, and still shows the tool marks. It is only 0.60 m. (2 ft.) wide, and has branches leading off it. It is designed in short straight lengths, with



The Old Customs House, Royal Coat of Arms of James I.

bends at regular intervals, so that a light could not be seen very far, and a determined man with a pistol could hold any section (Plate VII).

THE OLD CUSTOMS HOUSE

This well-known house has an eighteenth-century red brick front, which hides the timber-framing of a fine fifteenth-century 'Wealden House', of which the overhang at the western end can still be seen, as well as details inside. It is noted particularly for its fine moulded ceilings, and a magnificent coat of arms of James I (Plate VIII).

The Customs House which preceded this one is thought to have been what is now no. 6 Strand Street, although the front is mutilated after the widening by 6 ft. of this part of Strand Street in 1922, to allow the passage of buses.

Much more could be written about Sandwich, for example, the Whitefriars, the three almshouses, the Delph Stream, and the Old Jail, but space precludes – while so much more awaits discovery.

It is hoped that these brief notes will inspire further investigation in the future, and help to preserve yet more of our fascinating heritage.