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THE MEDIEVAL ORIGINS OF WYE COLLEGE

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The ancient and attractive small town of Wye is situated 5 km. (3 miles) north-east of Ashford in Kent, and is best known as the location of England's leading agricultural and horticultural college. The main buildings of this fine institution are in the very heart of the little town (Fig. 1), but with broad acres extending far beyond it. Wye College has had a long and chequered history dating back to the fifteenth century when there was established here a college, or 'perpetual chantry', for secular priests. The original buildings have survived surprisingly intact, and it is these which this paper seeks to investigate, together with a brief history of its founder, John Kemp.

JOHN KEMP, CARDINAL AND ARCHBISHOP, 1380-1454

Kemp was born at Olantigh, near the northern boundary of Wye parish, of a noble family of Norman origin, known originally as De Campis de Campania, but seemingly shortened somewhere about 1300 to Kemp, or Kempe, when we first read of one, Ralph Kemp who held the manor at Olantigh as a tenant of the Abbot of Battle, and who died in 1313.

His grandson Sir Thomas Kemp had married Beatrice Lewknor of Bodiam Castle in Sussex, and they had four children, of whom John was the youngest. Before him was an elder brother named Roger, followed by two sisters Beatrice and Isabelle.

Their father died in 1428, and was buried in the north transept of Wye church, when the estate is said to have passed to Roger, but this is not certain. John Kemp was baptised in the same church, and educated first, it is claimed, at King's School, Canterbury. In 1395, his name first appears on the lists of Merton College, Oxford, where in due course he became a Fellow.¹ Then having studied law and

¹ *DNB*, Geo. Smith, Oxford, 1921-2, 1272.

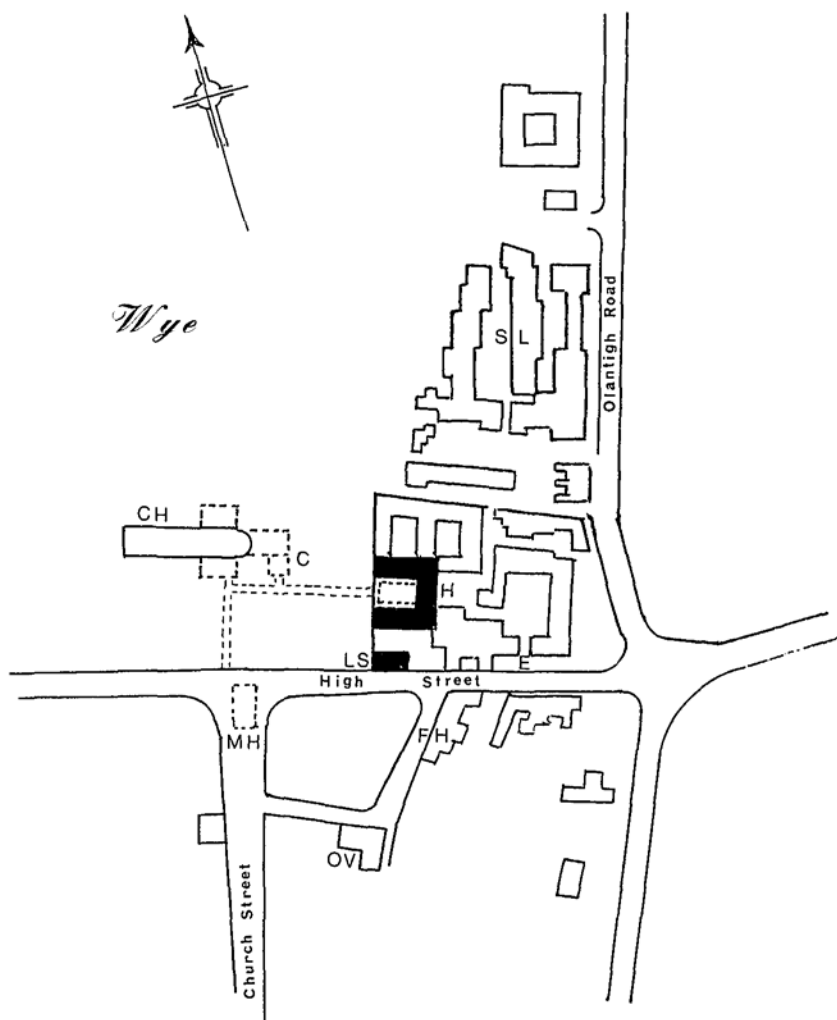


Fig. 1. Plan of the Centre of Wye, showing principal Buildings of the College.

THE ORIGINS OF WYE COLLEGE

KEY TO DRAWINGS

B	Buttery	K	The Old Kitchen
BN	Barn	LS	The Old Latin School
C	Kemp's Chancel	MH	Site of Old Market Hall
CH	The Parish Church	MR	Grammar Master's Room
CP	Path to Parish Church	OH	Site of Original Hearth
CS	Cellar Stairs	OV	The Old Vicarage
CY	Churchyard	P	Parlour, with Wine Cellar under
D	Presumed Dormitory	PL	Porter's Lodge, site of
E	Present Entrance to Wye College	PN	Pentice, the Cloisters
FH	The Old Flying Horse	PY	Pantry
G	The Old Garden	SL	Science Laboratory
H	The Great Hall	W	Probable site of the well.
HS	Wye High Street		

obtained his doctorate, he practised as a lawyer in the ecclesiastical courts, becoming afterwards ordained into the priesthood. His list of subsequent offices is a long one, of which the main ones may be listed thus, beginning with his earliest known preferment, in the small village of Slapton, 13 km. (8 miles) north-east of Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, followed by the rectory of St. Michael's in Crooked Lane, London.²

1408 He resigned the rectorate of St Michael's.

1408 He is said to have become the rector of Southwick in Sussex,³ but this may have been confused with another John Kemp, for he is known to have taken the living of Aldington in Kent about this time.

1413 He was one of the assessors appointed by Archbishop Arundel at the trial of Sir John Oldcastle for Lollardry, held in the Chapter House of St. Paul's in London before the Archbishop. After this he was transferred to Hawkhurst in Kent.

1415 He became, in rapid succession, Dean of the Court of Arches, Vicar General to Chichele,⁴ and Chief Justiciary to the Province of Canterbury.

1416 He was appointed Archdeacon of Durham,⁵ when he was employed by King Henry V to conduct important negotiations in France.

² *Ibid.*, Newcourt.

³ J. Dallaway, *History of western Sussex*, London, 1815-40.

⁴ C.S. Orwell and S. Williams, *A History and Wye Church and Wye College*, Ashford, 1913.

⁵ J. Le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae anglicanae*, Ed. Hardy, iii, London, 1716, 303-4.

- 1418 He resigned the living at Hawkhurst, which, as with other parishes, he may seldom have visited.
- 1418 He became the Keeper of the Privy Seal.
- 1419 (Jan.) He was elected Bishop of Rochester.⁶
- 1421 (Feb. 28th) He was translated to Chichester, but never officiated there.
- 1421 (Nov. 17th) He was moved by Pope Martin V to the bishopric of London, which office gave him control over great estates. He there began the restoration of Fulham Palace.
- 1424 He was ordained the fiftieth Archbishop of York.
- 1429 He officiated at the coronation of Henry VI, who was then only eight.
- 1430 He quarrelled with Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who had become the Protector of England.
- 1431 (Jan.) Kemp became ill, and was unable to attend the opening of Parliament, at which occasion he had always preached the sermon in the Painted Chamber. He was attended by John Somerset, the King's physician.
- 1432 He resigned the Chancellorship but remained on the Council of State.
- 1432 On recovering his health somewhat, he departed for France, where he attempted to end hostilities with that country.
- 1435 After his initial efforts had failed, he was appointed head of an embassy to the Congress of Arras which opened on August 3rd. This again failed, and a second one was convened in 1439.
- 1439 (Dec.) He was made Cardinal Priest of Santa Balbina by Pope Eugenius IV,⁷ an office later confirmed by the King of England. On returning to this country, he found himself in violent disagreement with Archbishop Chichele over the matter of precedence. This was referred to the Pope, who decided in favour of Kemp.⁸
- 1445 He officiated at the marriage of Henry VI with Margaret of Anjou.
- 1450 Kemp had to face considerable social unrest at this time, culminating in Cade's rebellion, and he was forced to take refuge in the Tower of London. During a lull in the uprising, Kemp, together with Waynflete, the Bishop of Winchester, crossed the Thames to meet Jack Cade in St. Margaret's

⁶ H. Wharton, *Anglia sacra*, London, 1540.

⁷ M. Latrie, *Trésor de Chronologie*, v. *DNB*, John Kemp, 1274.

⁸ A. Duck, *Life of Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury*, London, 1699.

church in Southwark. Kemp prepared two pardons under the Great Seal, and many of the rebels returned home.⁹

1452 He was translated from York to Canterbury, as successor to Archbishop Stafford, being also made Cardinal Bishop by the Pope, with the title of St. Rufina. At this time most of the nobles were arming in favour of the Lancastrian cause, and although threatened by Norfolk and other lords, Kemp clung bravely to his loyalties.

1454 By this time, he was becoming old and frail, and after a short illness he died at Lambeth Palace on March 22nd, aged seventy-three. He was laid to rest in Canterbury Cathedral, where his tomb may still be seen on the south side of the Presbytery.

An inventory of his personal effects at this time, totalling in value £4079 18s. 8d., is still in the library at Lambeth Palace.

THE FOUNDING OF WYE COLLEGE

In February 1432, Kemp had applied for and obtained a royal licence to found a college for secular priests in his native town of Wye in Kent, but it was not until 1447 that he was able to bring his plans to fruition, being delayed by prolonged negotiations with the Abbot of Battle, from whom he wished to buy land adjoining the parish churchyard at Wye. Kemp had already greatly enlarged Wye church, where excavations in 1952¹⁰ showed that besides transepts, Kemp's chancel had been as much as 18.3 m. (60 ft.) long by 7 m. wide (23 ft.), with walls 1.2 m. thick (4 ft.), and had a small chapel or vestry on its south side, near the east end. Hasted describes this chancel thus: 'The great chancel was made choir fashion, wainscotted, and seated around for members of the new college.'¹¹

It was in the old north transept that Kemp buried his parents, whose tomb was destroyed when the tall steeple of the church fell suddenly, after morning prayers on Sunday May 21st, 1686, demolishing the transepts and chancel. Kemp gave his college the same dedication as the church, that of St. Gregory and St. Martin; he also compiled a book of statutes for the good government of the college.

THE BOOK OF STATUTES

These statutes, dated January 14th, 1448, were lengthy and

⁹ *Gregory's Chronicle*, v. DNB, 1275.

¹⁰ R.F. Jessup, 'Wye Church', *Arch. Cant.*, lxvi (1953), 149-50.

¹¹ E. Hasted, *History of Kent*, vii, Canterbury, 1798, 362.

meticulous, and throw a great deal of light on the life of the college as Kemp had planned it. Firstly, the head of the institution was to be the master, or provost, preferably a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford. He must live in the college and never be absent from it for more than sixty days a year, he taking precedence over all others. Secondly came the 'maister of gramer, diligently intent in techyng, that shall frely teche withoutin anything takyn of hem all thos what wol come to his techyng . . .'. He must be a master or member of Oxford or Cambridge, fully instructed in grammar, who, if he were a priest, could be admitted a Fellow of the college, and 'for more honor' should sit next to the provost or his deputy at table. Even possible causes for his dismissal were laid down, which included negligence in teaching, or incapacity through age or illness, although if he were merely infirm he might retain his fellowship while giving up the mastership, the pay for which was to be a matter of arrangement.

Again, should he show any partiality in college or school, the provost would have to consider his behaviour.

Following the master, there was to be a chaplain, and then a precentor, or singing master who was to 'direct all psalms, antiphons, responses and other ecclesiastical hymns'. Then a music master to teach the basic singing of chants, etc. The salary of the provost was to be twenty marks per annum, (£13 33p.), whereas the other fellows, and the parish clerk were to receive six marks each (£4) beside their keep.

There is some divergence between writers regarding the number of novices or pupils in the college, and although this did in fact vary, the maximum seems to have been ten, divided between priests, clerks and choristers.

The free Grammar School was a separate institution, held in the small fifteenth-century building still known as the Old Latin School, (Plates IA and IB). Some historians refer to this as 'the former chapel', and although there is no doubt that it was intended to be used as a school right from the start, there are occasions when it may have been pressed into use as a chapel, as for example after the two known major disasters which befell the church. The first of these, culled from an old churchwarden's book informs us: 'The steeple was ffyred by lightenyng the XVth day of our Souerayne Ladye Quene Elizabeth in the yeare of our Lorde God one thousande fyve hundred threescore and eleven, (1571) betwene the hours of two and three in the afternoone of ye same day.' It appears that the tall wooden spire was burned down to the massive stonework of the central tower, but the fire was contained there, and the steeple subsequently rebuilt.

The second and worse disaster occurred, as already described, in 1686, when cracks in the stone arches of the central tower gave way,

and the tall steeple fell, destroying the transepts and also the fine chancel built by Archbishop Kemp. The nave had to be boarded-in to allow services to continue, the church not being fully restored until 1706, with the small, semi-circular chancel still to be seen today.

The total number of staff on the payroll of the college is not known, but there is mention of a cook and a butler, and there must have been others, such as a porter, cleaners, gardeners, etc.

The book of statutes sets out very clearly that meals were to be taken in the great hall at two tables, with the provost and fellows at the high table, and the novices and others at the lower one. Should any visitor be important enough to sit at the master's table, he would be charged two pence for his meal, but if at the lower table, a penny. One may assume that wine would be offered at the high table, but merely ale at the other!

The hours for the novices were long; they were to rise at five each morning and begin matins in the parish church at six, followed by mass at eight. Then after 'a convenient hour for dinner' to church again to say vespers, finishing again at five. Even then they were not free, for after compline, the evening service, on each Holy Day, (and there were many), the fellows, clerk and choristers were to assemble at the tomb of Kemp's parents in the north transept of the church to recite the *de profundis*.¹²

A strong chest was provided for valuables, and a second one, yet to be ordered, for documents. Each chest was to have two separate keys.

Kemp also laid down the procedure for selecting a new provost. At each vacancy of the provostship, the fellows were to submit several names to the Abbot of Battle, who would select one. No candidate could be eligible unless he were a doctor or scholar of theology, and a member of Merton College, Oxford. Generous endowments were provided for the upkeep of the college, not only from Kemp, but also from King Edward IV. These included the revenues from properties in Newington-next-Hythe, Withersdane, Wye, Postling, Brenzett Grange, Hinxhill, Bromhill, Boughton Aluph, Godmersham, Westwell, Surrenden in Bethersden, Hothfield, Great Chart, Nackholt, Crundale and lands in Walland Marsh.

There must have been other properties in addition to these, for documents in the possession of the Ashford History Society show that, in January 1649, 'The Wye College house and land at Eastbridge' was transferred from Thomas Marriot to John and Anne

¹² Dugdale, *Monasticon*, Eds. Caley, Ellis and Bundinel, 1430-32, iii, 254.

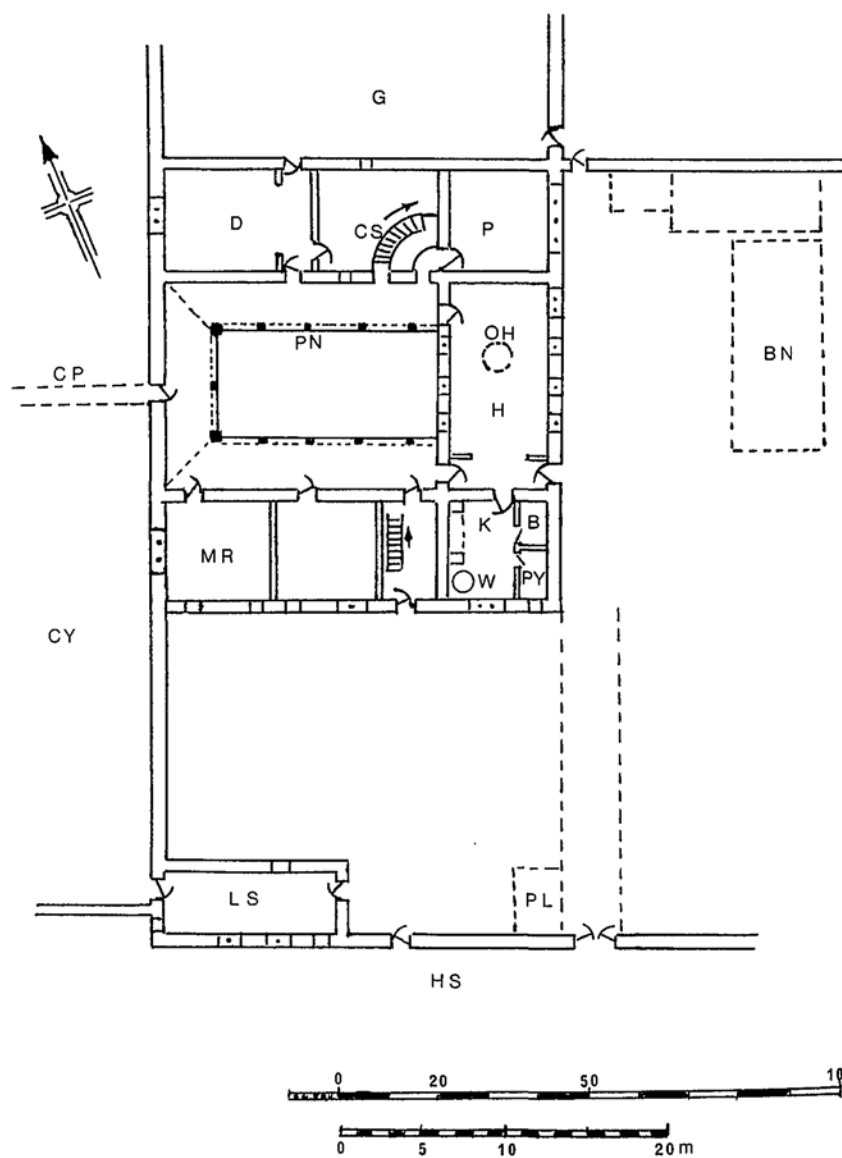


Fig. 2. Plan of the College in the fifteenth Century.

Tylden of Wye, and then through various hands to Josphe Ewell, grocer of Canterbury, and his wife Frances, (in 1693).

The property at Eastbridge was opposite the old mill at Ashford, where only a few years ago old timber-framed houses, one with a crown-post roof were demolished for the purpose of road widening.

The first provost, nominated by Kemp was Richard Ewan, a Fellow of Merton, who held the post for only two years from 1448 to 1450, followed by Thomas Guage in 1450, who resigned in 1462; Nicholas Wright, 1462 to 1511, the longest presiding provost; John Goodhew, 1511 to 1518; Richard Waltare, 1518 to 1544; and Edward Bourdon or Bowden, 1544 to 1545.

It was Richard Waltare who took the oath of acknowledgement of the Royal Supremacy, together with three others, in December 1534,¹³ and Edward Bourdon who surrendered the college to the King's commissioners on January 19th, 1545/6, at which the revenues amounted to a total of £93 2s. 0½d.

An inventory of articles of value was taken on the same day, and included: A silver salt weighing 18 oz, valued at £3; 10 silver spoons weighing 8½ oz, valued at £1 7s. 8d. 2 'Old masters', valued at 6s. 8d. The total amounted to £7 1s 10d.

Following this, the provost, Edward Bourdon was awarded a pension of £26 13s. 4d. per annum, the master of grammar, Richard Clifton £10, while William Dodding and Thomas Sotheby, fellows, each received £6.

THE OLD COLLEGE BUILDINGS

The original college buildings, as established by Kemp when he was Archbishop of York, still survive surprisingly intact, due principally to the fact that they were sold following the Dissolution to Walter Bucler, secretary to Queen Catherine Parr, on condition that a free school for poor children of Wye should continue as before.

These buildings occupy three sides of a small cloistered courtyard, being almost square in plan, of which the fine hall forms the eastern side, with the north and south ranges adjoining it (Fig. 2). The hall is built of stone and rubble, as are the ground floors of the two ranges. The upper floors of the latter were originally timber-framed, but were refaced c. 1740 with brick, and fitted with sash windows of that period. Some of the original timber-framing can still be seen inside, especially at the head of the Jacobean staircase.

All the stone walls are thick by modern standards, measuring some 90 cm. through, (nearly 3 ft.).

¹³ *VCH* (Kent), ii, London, 1926, 235.

There is some confusion among writers regarding the original use of the various parts of these buildings. Some believe that the provost occupied rooms on the west side of the south range, but upon examination this is thought unlikely. For one thing, this part is close to the kitchen, and has no direct access to the main hall, only into the cloisters and through the service end. Furthermore, the roof here, which is original, is a very plain one with basic, square crown-posts and curved braces. More probably the rest of the staff lodged here, for there are two fine rooms down, and two up, each some 6 m. sq. (20 ft.), still having their fifteenth-century partitions upstairs. It is thought more credible that the provost occupied the fine suite beyond the north end of the great hall, with its parlour, (P on Fig. 2), having immediate covered access into the high end of the hall, and the bed chamber above, both now with large bay windows, inserted in 1892, and not forgetting the imposing wine cellar down below!

The north wing is said to have housed the students, and this may well be so, for there is evidence of an important room in the western half, now divided up, which had a fine roof with two moulded crown-posts (Plate IVB), and which may have been the dormitory. The massive oak staircase here is a later insertion, and part of the improvements of 1610-11.

Situated forward from the main buildings, on Wye High Street is a small, single-storeyed stone-and-rubble building still called the Old Latin School. The main entrance to the college was once to the right of this, guarded by a porter's lodge, both now no more. A driveway ran up from here to the Gothic doorway on the east side of the great hall, and to the yard with its outbuildings on the right.

THE GREAT HALL

This remains very much as it always was, a fine medieval hall, with three windows on its east side which are four-centred, two-light with transom, and two on the west side overlooking the cloisters, the central window here having been blocked by the insertion of the 1611 fireplace and chimney (Plate IIB). The roof is a fine one with heavy oak rafters, collars, soulaces and ashlar posts (Plate IIIB). The main tie-beam which supports the collar purlin and crown-post is, as is usually the case, not centrally placed, but somewhat nearer the lower end of the hall, presumably to avoid the direct heat over the erstwhile open fire. Directly above the site of the hearth is a small boarded square in the roof between two collars, suggesting the position of a one-time louvre there.

The north, or high end, of the hall has some fine Jacobean panelling, immediately above which is the original moulded and

crenellated beam, often seen in fifteenth-century halls. This one has a small carved head at each end, apparently representing an angel, while to the right here is the large bay window put in in 1892, which replaced some form of an earlier one.

At the south end of the hall is the so-called 'minstrel gallery', believed to have been put in in 1946, beneath which is the fine panelled oak screen of 1611, designed to shield the hall from draughts from the two outer doors of the cross-passage there.

The gallery now displays six carved wooden figures which once adorned the newel posts of the great Jacobean staircase in the north range which, being somewhat scantily clothed, were removed because of irreverence by students. The carved figures are sometimes alluded to as 'Ancient Britons', but more probably they were intended, perhaps not very successfully, to represent classic Greek figures. One or two may have been lost, as there are places for ten on the newel posts.

The hall measures internally 6.1 m. (20 ft.) by 13.25 m. (43 ft. 6 in.). It may once have had coloured glass in its windows, judging by a report of the late eighteenth-century headmaster the Rev. Philip Parsons: 'I should judge that there was formerly painted glass in this apartment [the hall], from a solitary fragment still remaining in one of its windows, the device being a garb, or wheatsheaf, . . . I have now recovered the arms of the founder from a neighbouring farmhouse, [Trimworth Manor Farm], by favour of the landlord there.'¹⁴

THE SOUTH RANGE

This is the wing which can be seen from the street, and which once contained the college kitchen at its right-hand end. The doorway, which once connected this to the hall, may still be seen in the cross-passage under the gallery. Morris tells us¹⁵ that the old kitchen contained a buttery and pantry, and that 'it had a fair well in it'. It also had a wide fireplace which, when undergoing repair in 1739, was found to have had its fireback reversed at some time, and that it bore a coat of arms and the date 1610, suggesting that this particular fireplace had been part of the 1610-11 alternations, replacing some form of earlier hearth.

This end of the south range has, however, been since divided up and modernised, although its original fine stone window still remains. This is square-headed with three lights cinquefoiled, together with a

¹⁴ W.S. Morris, *History and Topography of Wye, Canterbury*, 1842, 162.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

single light window at the extreme east end, presumably once lighting the pantry. Next to the old kitchen is an entrance hall in which one finds an elegant early nineteenth-century staircase with a handrail of Cuban mahogany, which must have replaced an earlier stairway. The outside doorway here, which is part of the 1610-11 alterations, is sheltered by a curious porch with twisted 'barley sugar' columns, surmounted by extraordinary capitals, circular in form rather like Catherine wheels. The original doorway here, one stone jamb of which can still be seen, was just to the left of the present one.

Westward of all this are two fine rooms 6.1 m. (20 ft.) sq., with their original stone cinquefoil windows, above which are two matching rooms, still with fifteenth-century timber-framed partition walls, but with eighteenth-century sash windows. The roof, as already mentioned, has plain square crown-posts. Of these four rooms, the lower, end one is superior to the others, having a large three-light window facing westward over the churchyard, in addition to two single-light windows on the south side. This, being the second best chamber in the college, was probably occupied by the master of grammar, for Kemp stipulated that he should come second to the provost in this close-knit hierarchy. There is also in this room a blocked doorway which once led out into the cloisters. The fireplace is a later insertion.

THE NORTH RANGE

This is on the far side of the quadrangle, with original windows and doorways facing into the cloisters. At the extreme right is a doorway leading into the high end of the hall, and next to it in the corner is another one giving access to the parlour (Plate IIIA). Adjacent to this is a low door, inside which are steps which curve down into the wine cellar (CS on Fig. 2).

To the left again is an original window, and beyond that a moulded Gothic doorway with drip-mould. This opens into a cross-passage where one finds the massive oak Jacobean staircase, on whose newel posts once stood the carved wooden figures now residing in the hall gallery. Upstairs there are now small rooms and a passage, in the wall of which may be seen two octagonal crown-posts, which were once a feature of an important room here (Plate IVB), thought to have been the dormitory. The low position of the tie-beams and wall-plates suggests that the dormitory was on the ground floor, and open to the crown-post roof, the upper floor being thus contemporary with the great oak staircase, and part of the 1610-11 alterations.

Now on the ground floor at the extreme west end is a small chapel. This is modern, and not part of the original plan.

THE QUADRANGLE

This attractive part of the old college is thought to have had originally a covered walk-way, or timber 'pentice', around three sides of it, a feature once common in monastic complexes, of which the only known surviving example is in the Close of Canterbury Cathedral, north of the cloisters there. By the early eighteenth-century the cloisters at Wye were in a 'very decayed state', and were replaced in 1738 by the substantial brick pillars and arches we see today, together with the extra rooms above them (Plate IIB). The restoration undertaken at this time was materially helped by the will of Lady Johana Thornhill.

The actual brickwork of these cloisters is interesting in that even at this late date, 1738, it is laid in Old English Bond, – that is, with alternating courses of headers and stretchers, while the brickwork of the upper floor of the south front, which cannot be much later, is in Flemish Bond. The old wall between the cloisters and the churchyard still remains, in the centre of which is the narrow medieval doorway, through which staff and pupils must so often have passed to the endless services in the parish church.

THE PARLOUR SUITE

This is situated immediately beyond the north end of the hall, (P on Fig. 2), which rooms are thought to have been occupied by the provost. Below these is the wine cellar, already mentioned.

The parlour is beautifully panelled, with carved pilasters, and a foliate frieze above. These, together with the stone fireplace which is decorated with foliage and winged beasts, all date from the renovations of 1610–11. The fine, wide bay-windows were put in in 1892, replacing some form of earlier ones. The upper chamber has seventeenth-century panelling and arcading.

THE OLD LATIN SCHOOL

This is the small fifteenth-century stone-and-rubble building standing against the High Street and forward of the main buildings (Plates IA and IB), used right from the beginning as a schoolroom to teach Latin and grammar to the poor children of Wye. It has three original windows on the street front, and one window, and a battlemented doorway facing the churchyard.

The brickwork at the right-hand end is repair work of 1883, while that at the rear dates only from 1903, when Principal Dunstan widened the little building to accommodate his billiard table. At the

south-west corner can be seen a small carved stone head, similar to others in the parish church.

THE GARDEN AND THE ANCILLARY BUILDINGS

On the north side of the old college, a site now covered by later buildings, was a garden, 'well walled in stone', (GD in Fig. 2) which, according to a survey of the college buildings in 1744 by Michael Moon, 'surveyor of Wye', was rather more than a quarter of an acre in extent, (OA, 1R, 2P.).

On the east side of the main buildings was a yard in which stood several outhouses, such as a wash-house, wood and coal lodges, as well as a small barn, to which were added later, stables, brewhouse, etc.

Nothing now remains of these buildings, except perhaps in what is now known as the 'Wheel Room', (WR on Fig 2). This appears to have been built in 1848-49 to provide additional accommodation for the girls' section of the Lady Johana Thornhill charity school. It was built of stone-and-rubble, much of it comparatively new, as seen also in the adjoining wall and gateway, all obviously designed to match the original buildings of the college. Inside, one finds old re-used timbers and a fifteenth-century crown-post roof, thought to have come from the former barn. This has given rise to the supposition that the room was part of Kemp's college, but no mention of it can be discovered before 1849. It is not in the detailed survey of 1744, while the very clear illustration of the college by Morris¹⁶ shows a tree where the Wheel House is now sited.

Since it was built, as with other parts of the old college, the Wheel House has served a variety of purposes: in 1849, it was a girls' classroom; in 1860, the infants' school; in 1894, a chemistry laboratory; in 1900, a food store; in 1912, store and servants' hall; in 1946, a students' common room.

THE COLLEGE FROM 1545 TO MODERN TIMES

After the Dissolution, the college and its estates were surrendered to the Crown Commissioners on January 19th, 1545, by the last provost, Edward Bourdon, and were granted to Walter Bucler, secretary to Queen Catherine Parr, 'and his heirs forever', on condition that he should 'at all times provide and maintain a sufficient schoolmaster to

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

teach gratis any children of Wye who should present themselves to him'. The master's salary was to be £13 6s. 8d. per annum.

Bucler, however, held the properties for scarcely a year, for Morris tells us¹⁷ that he alienated them in 1546 to Maurice Dennis, Knight, who sublet them in June 1549 to one Nicholas Piers, a churchwarden of Wye. The buildings were sold again in 1553 to William Damsell, Esq., afterwards knighted. When Damsell died, his four daughters became co-heirs, but showed little interest in his estates, the buildings of the college 'becoming neglected, and the conditions of the grant disregarded'. Thus, it came about that in 1593 a commission of enquiry was ordered, which doubtless put pressure on the owners, for during 1610-11 several notable improvements were made, which included the insertion of fireplaces in the hall and the parlour, and the panelling in those rooms, the grand oak staircase with its carved figures in the north wing, and the new entrance with its curious porch on the south front.

By 1627, it appears that the original conditions were still not being met, and a further commission was convened, who vested the estates once more in the Crown. Eventually, Charles I granted all of them to Robert Maxwell, Esq.

In the meantime, Thomas Kemp, the last surviving member of that family still living at Olantigh, died in 1607, and he leaving no issue, the manor was sold to the Thornhill family.

After Robert Maxwell, the college passed to the Finch-Hattons, Earls of Winchelsea, whose seat was Eastwell near Ashford,¹⁸ and who duly continued to maintain the grammar school at Wye.

In 1708, Lady Johana Thornhill of Olantigh, following other bequests, left the residue of her estate to her executors to be applied 'to the use and benefit of the poorest children of Wye parish in the improvement of their learning.' These executors purchased farms in Wye and on the Romney Marsh, valued at £97 per annum, from which they paid a schoolmaster £30 per annum salary, and a school mistress £20.

The college meanwhile passed into the hands of Sir George Wheler, a prebendary of Durham, who on his death in 1724 left all the estates to the school trustees, stipulating that the south wing and the old Latin School be reserved for the use of the master of grammar, while the hall and the north wing were to be for the master and mistress of the Johana Thornhill charity school.¹⁹ Note, there

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁸ E. W. Parkin, 'Lake House, Eastwell', *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxiii (1968), 151-61.

¹⁹ Morris, *op. cit.*, 160-1.

was no mention of the small building known as the Wheel Room.

As some of the buildings, and especially the cloisters were in a sad state of repair, plans were prepared for their thorough restoration, which scheme was completed by 1739, including the rebuilding of the cloisters in brick, as seen today, with additional accommodation above them.

The college in 1762 entered its most prosperous school period, under the headmastership of the Rev. Philip Parsons, M.A., there being at that time some 40 boarders, and over 100 day scholars. This happy state of affairs continued into the nineteenth century, with the Rev. Robert Billing, M.A., as headmaster.

Following his retirement, however, the school slowly declined, until in 1889 it was sold as a private school. This, too, was not a success, and, finally, in the year 1892 the Councils of Kent and Surrey combined to establish here the South-Eastern Agricultural College. The new college prospered, gradually adding new buildings, and acquiring more land.

Firstly, in 1892, two new additions for student accommodation were erected in the old garden behind the north range, these being extended into their present form in 1901, with a separate wing to the right for maintenance and toilet facilities being added in 1903.

The present fine dining-hall was built in 1906, with the kitchen and library block beyond it in 1912. The quadrangle planned here was completed in 1914, to include the modern college entrance, with its porter's lodge, and administrative offices. Building afterwards continued northwards along the Olantigh Road, providing fine new science laboratories, lecture theatres, etc.

After the second world war the former Horticultural College at Hextable near Swanley in Kent was incorporated. This had closed at the outbreak of war and become a training centre for Civil Defence.

Today, Wye College owns much property in and around the town, including some buildings of great historical interest. Apart from the medieval buildings of the college itself, several houses in the town are in use as student hostels, including the Old Vicarage, a fine gabled building of 1600, while directly facing the main college entrance is the Old Flying Horse, once an inn, but originally a medieval hall-house of note which has a unique feature, a well-preserved 'dais canopy',²⁰ still with much of its fourteenth-century painted decoration. At

²⁰ At the high end of an important medieval hall, a 'dais canopy' was designed to protect the host and his guests from falling soots and sparks from the open hearth. A good example of this, although later in date, may be seen in the little Guildhall at Fordwich, near Canterbury.

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nearby Brook, the college owns the fifteenth-century Court Lodge, with its ancient barn, now in use as an agricultural museum.

Wye College is known world-wide for the excellence of its training and research, whose buildings may be inspected during vacation, by application to the secretary.

APPENDIX

PAINTED GLASS IN WYE COLLEGE

C.R. Councer

An account of the painted glass now preserved at Wye College can best be introduced by quotations from the writing of the Rev. Philip Parsons, perpetual curate of Wye (1761–1812) and Rector of Eastwell (1766–1812).

Orwin and Williams, *History of Wye Church and Wye College* (Ashford, n.d.) p. 65, quote from the parish register the following notes by Parsons:

'Jan. 21. 1790. I inserted in the window on the left side of the door in the Hall of the College the following piece of painted glass – the arms of Archbishop Kemp . . . The whole piece of painted glass is 28 inch long and 12 in. wide –

I earnestly entreat my successors to endeavour to preserve this memorial of our Founder in the place where it now is, with careful attention. Philip Parsons.

In the Kitchen windows I have also inserted some painted glass. Also a piece in the middle division of the best parlour window. (N.B. – These last are since removed to Eastwell Church).'

In 1794, Parsons published his *Monuments and Painted Glass of upwards of one hundred Churches*, in which (pp. 10–12) is printed the following description:

'I have recovered the arms of the founder, from a neighbouring farmhouse [Tremworth]* . . . and inserted them with additional ornaments, in a window of the front hall . . . [blazoned: the See of Canterbury impaling KEMP (Gu. 3 garbs and a bordure or)]. The escutcheon is fixed in the middle of a border of orange colour, from which it is separated by an half inch strip of ground glass. Below are two ornaments, parted by a piece of blue, under which is a smaller

* See C.R. Councer, *Lost Glass from Kent Churches, Kent Records*, xxiii (1980) Pl. 33.

ornament with a date 1546. The rest is filled up with pieces of purple and orange.

Above the coat is the Cardinal's cap, and crest, it stands on a small base of purple, and over it rises a piece of yellow to the top of the pannels; the rest is filled up with ground glass. The border of orange is one inch wide, and the bottom and sides are the same. On the top of each side are two small ornaments, which are united by a piece of semicircular green, of the same width. The whole piece of painted glass is 22 inches long and 12 wide.

In the window also of the best parlour, are inserted the arms of Kemp, when Bishop of London . . . there are inserted in the best parlour window, in the upper part of it, a small and elegant circle, containing the Prince of Wales's crest, with a date 1546. On each side of the crest are the letters E.P.

This, with the arms of Kemp, when Bishop of London, are in the middle division of the window; in the other two divisions are inserted large pieces of painted glass, each eighteen inches by fifteen, edged with an inch border of plain Azure, within which are various ornaments enclosing two elegant escutcheons, of about eight inches diameter each, with various ornaments about them.

In the kitchen windows are also upwards of thirty quarries of painted glass . . . some are well executed and very curious. For instance, two portcullises with crowns, and one hawthorne bush with crowns in it. There are also four quarries with a rose in the sunbeams, the device of Edward IV.'

Before the *Monuments* was finally published Parsons removed an appreciable part of the glass thus described, and placed it with (I am reasonably certain) a collection which he had formed from other sources, in the east window of the chancel of Eastwell church (*op. cit.*, 529–30). Later, probably when the church was 'restored' about 1837, the collection was again moved, to the west window of the south aisle, where fortunately I was able to record it before the collapse of the church in 1951 (*Arch. Cant.*, liv (1947), 109–13). Its subsequent dispersal is detailed in C.R. Cuncer *Lost Glass from Kent Churches*, (Kent Records xxii (1980), 39–40).

I do not think that any useful purpose would be served by trying now to distinguish the vicissitudes of individual pieces from Wye, particularly as much of the Eastwell glass has been lost without trace since it entered the workshop of Caldwell of Canterbury after the disaster of 1951. I therefore confine myself without further comment to a description of the existing glass in the windows of the college.

In the Old Hall (now the library) are the arms of the See of Canterbury impaling KEMP, bought from Eastwell after 1951.

The 'best Parlour' of Parsons' time is the handsome room forming

the south-west corner of the college quadrangle. It has two windows facing south, of which the one towards the west has three lights, and the other two. In the first window (centre light):

- (1) Remains of a crown in a thornbush, white and stain. Henry VII.
- (2) Prince of Wales' feathers rising out of a crown, initials 'E.P.', and date, 1546. Edward son of Henry VIII, afterward Edward VI.
- (3) Enamel-painted shield formerly in a wreath of which there are slight traces: FRANCE MODERN quartering ENGLAND, Henry VIII.
- (4) Shield of potmetal, stain and leading: the SEE impaling KEMP as in the library. The two coats, though expressing a correct impalement, were not originally together, the sinister side being larger than the dexter.
- (5) Large shield: the SEE OF LONDON impaling KEMP. This might be for the cardinal when Bishop of London, or perhaps for his nephew, who was a considerable benefactor to the college, and continued to interest himself in it after his uncle's death.
- (6) Two quarries; (a) initials: (b) date, '1635'.
- (7) Another (incomplete) example of (2) above.

In the side-lights are six quarries, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: birds, flowers, donkey playing harp, wasp or bee, primula.

In the other window:

- (1) Part of a large wheatsheaf (the Kemp badge) in white and stain.
- (2) Two small fragments of scrollwork in white and stain; fifteenth century.



The Old Latin School, south Side



Interior of the Latin School today

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PLATE IIA



The south Range

PLATE IIB



The Quadrangle and west Side of the Hall



The north Side of the Cloisters, showing original doorways and windows



Interior of the Hall, looking South

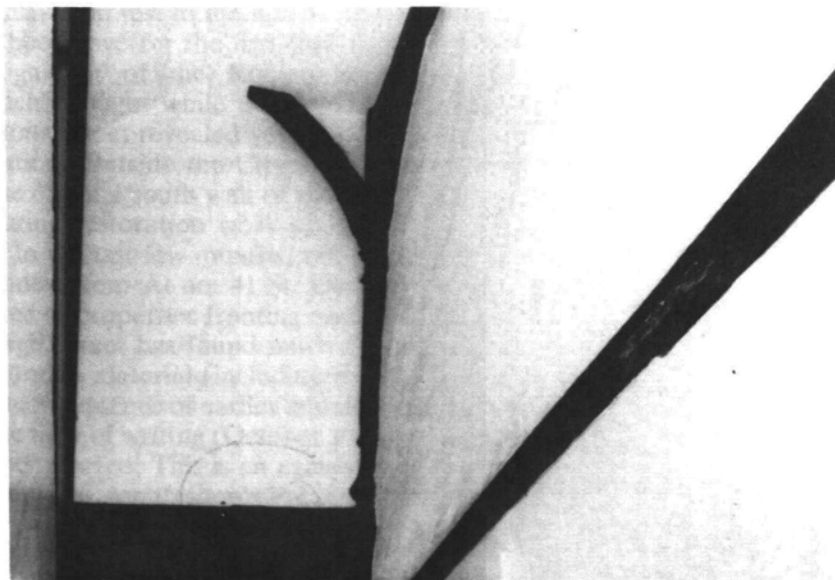
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PLATE IVA



Panelling on the south Side of the Parlour

PLATE IVB



Crown-Post in upper Passage of north Wing

