THE ROPER GATEWAY, ST. DUNSTAN'S STREET, CANTERBURY

TERENCE PAUL SMITH

INTRODUCTION

When John Roper died in April 1524 he left property in 'Candlewicke Street' (= Cannon Street), London, and lands in northern Kent which fall into three groups: a western group in Eltham (Well Hall), Bexley, Charlton, Chislehurst, Greenwich, Kidbrook, Lee, Mottingham, and Woolwich; a central group – south-east of Sittingbourne – in Doddington, Kingston, Lynsted, and Norton; and an eastern group in Canterbury (St. Dunstan's and St. Stephen's, Hackington), Blean, Herne, Reculver, Swalecliffe (Chesterfield), and Whitstable.[1] Of these, the most important were those at Eltham Well Hall, which formed the family home, and Place House, St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, where the nearby church contains the family chantry chapel.[2]

Place House in the extra-mural parish of St. Dunstan's at Canterbury lay somewhat east of the parish church on the opposite side of St. Dunstan's Street.[3] Nothing remains of it apart from the brick entrance gateway, now set between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings, fronting onto the pavement.[4] John Roper's will mentions the 'pryncypall place, with the barnes, stables, courtlages,

[1] Anon., 'Archbishop Warham's Letters', *Arch. Cant.*, ii (1859), 149–74: 'The Will of John Rooper, Esq.', 153–74, *passim*.

[2] John Roper inherited Well Hall 'from his mother Margery, daughter and coheir of John Tattersall' and 'resided mostly at the mansion of it': E. Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, Canterbury, 1797–1801, re-issued East Ardsley, 1972, vol. 9, p. 35. For the Roper Chantry Chapel at Canterbury see: T. Tatton-Brown, 'The Roper Chantry in St. Dunstan's Church, Canterbury', *Antiq. Journ.*, xl (1980), 227–46.

[3] *Cf.* Hasted, *op. cit.*, 34: 'THE PLACE HOUSE, or *St Dunstan's place*, situated near the church, on the north side of the London road.'

[4] The building west of the gateway contains several bricks bearing the initials 'JWP', 'JC', 'HB', and 'GC', and the date 1776; I am grateful to Rupert Austin for pointing this out: pers. comm., 21 March, 1989.

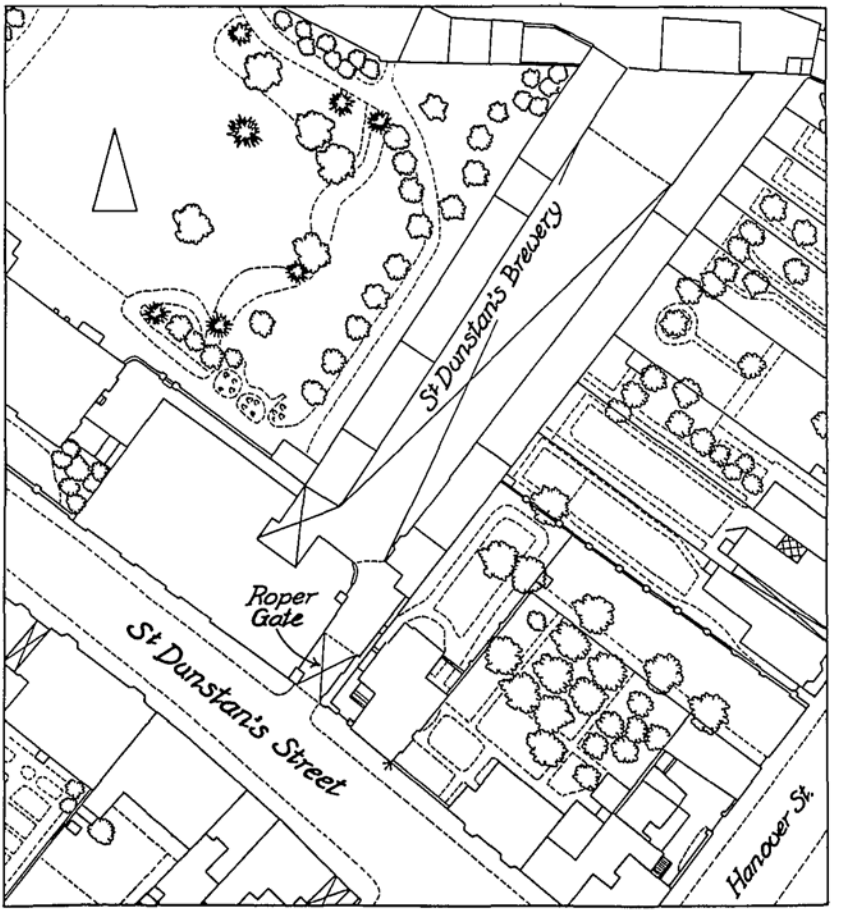


Fig. 1. Roper Gate, Canterbury: Location plan based on first edition Ordnance Survey, 1874.

and gardeyns, with theyr appurtenances, in the paroche of Saincte Dunstons without the walles of Caunterburye . . .',[5] but otherwise there is virtually no known documentary evidence relating to the site.

DESCRIPTION

The gateway occupies some 21 ft. (6.40 m.) of the street frontage. It is 1 ft. $6\frac{3}{4}$ in. (0.48 m.) thick at the bottom and $9\frac{1}{2}$ in. (0.24 m.) thick

[5] 'The Will of John Rooper, Esq.' (n.1), 156.

at the top, which is now some 27 ft. (8.23 m.) above pavement level; there is, however, some damage here.

At the bottom of the eastern side is a portion of brickwork 4 ft. 10 in. (1.24 m.) long at its maximum and 5 ft. 9 in. (1.76 m.) high. It is of red bricks measuring $9\frac{1}{2}$–$9\frac{3}{4}$ × $4\frac{1}{4}$–$4\frac{1}{2}$ × $2\frac{1}{4}$–$2\frac{1}{2}$ in. (24.1–24.8 × 10.8–11.4 × 5.7–6.3 cm.) with four courses occupying 12 in. (30.5 cm.). They have a rough texture with many (flinty?) inclusions and are laid in good English Bond. No black bricks are included. The top of the walling is finished by a saw-tooth course, a normal course of stretchers, and a slightly projecting course of headers. At its western end this string-course appears to have been brought to a straight edge, with a closer for this purpose in the projecting course of headers. The walling beneath, however, continues slightly further westwards. At its eastern side the walling is now keyed into a later stone buttress, some of the bricks having been hacked for this purpose. The more or less staight edge at the western side is also made up partly of hacked bricks.

The rest of the gateway is built from red bricks measuring 9 × 4 × 2 in. (22.9 × 10.2 × 5.1 cm.), four courses occupying $10\frac{1}{4}$ in. (26 cm.), and is laid in English Bond slightly less consistent than that described above. There are numerous black headers and a few black stretchers, some highly glazed and all apparently due to overfiring rather than to deliberate manufacture. For the most part they are included haphazardly, though they are occasionally used decoratively, as detailed below.

The principal feature is the entrance archway. The lower half of each jamb has been rebuilt; the upper half is continuous with the four-centred arch-head, with no capitals. The voussoirs of the arch-head are slightly tapered, probably by cutting or rubbing from ordinary fabric bricks. The jambs are made up of specials: an outer ogee-moulded brick, a central double-ogee or wave-moulded brick, and an inner ogee-moulded brick. The arch-head is contained within a square label of specials: bricks with a double-ogee on one side and a straight chamfer on the other side of one header-face. The vertical sections are doubly returned so as to run up contiguously, though continuing to a higher level. Some 2 ft. 6 in. (0.76 m.) above the horizontal member the verticals are returned outwards. All the shaped bricks used in these features show, by creasing and pitting, that they were moulded to shape before firing, although there are also chisel-marks indicating that they were given a final 'finish' *in situ*.[6]

[6] This point was brought to my attention by Rupert Austin, pers. comm.. 21 March, 1989.

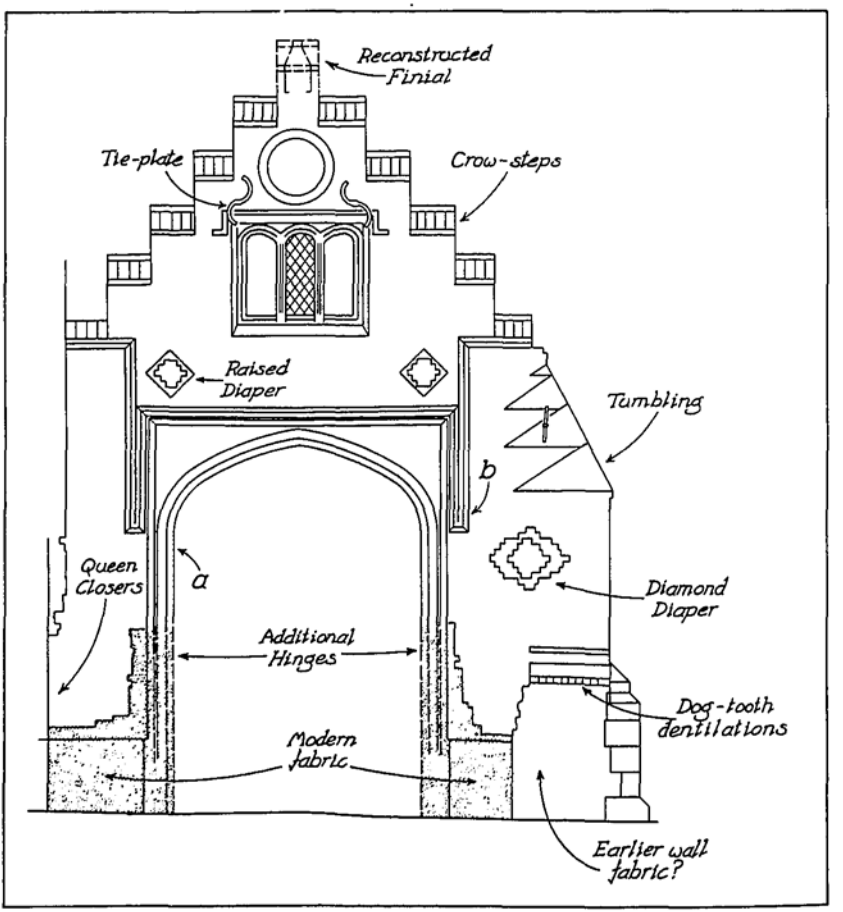


Fig. 2. Roper Gate, Canterbury: Principal features. See also Fig. 27, *Arch. Cant.*, cvii (1989), 361.

Immediately east of the east jamb is a consistent line of closers; there are closers, too, at the eastern side of the gateway. Between them, set fairly high, is a single seven-course intraspace lozenge of black bricks, mostly double-headers but with three stretchers included. Above this, one course projects slightly to the east and upon this is built the sloping offset, comprising tumbling-in of four triangles of diminishing size. The brickwork here matches that of the rest of the fabric, with which it is fully integrated; it is very well executed. At the top of the tumbling-in the brickwork is damaged.

On the rear (north) face of this buttress-like wall is a further lozenge of black bricks, similar to that on the front face.

Closers are not used against the west jamb of the archway, although they are used, in two vertical lines at different levels, further to the west. At the lower level they are used against a straight joint; at the higher level the brickwork is damaged. At a higher level still there is another straight joint, with closers used less consistently than elsewhere in the structure.

The foot of each side of the gateway has been rebuilt in nineteenth-century brick, and the present square brick plinth is part of this rebuilding.

Immediately above the label, and at each end of it, is a slightly projecting nine-course lozenge, its centre filled with black bricks.

At a higher level, and centrally placed, is a window of three uncusped lights within a frame made up of squinchons and with the sill sloping slightly more sharply. Jambs and mullions are composed of specials with a quarter-round (ovolo) moulding. The arch-heads are segmental and, curiously, those of the two side-lights are unbalanced. These two lights are filled with bricks and rendered; the central one is glazed, with diamond-leaded lights. There is a square label with return stops, all composed of slightly projecting normal bricks. Immediately above the window is a roundel some 2 ft. 1 in. (0.64 m.) in diameter, composed of radially-set headers and with its centre rendered.

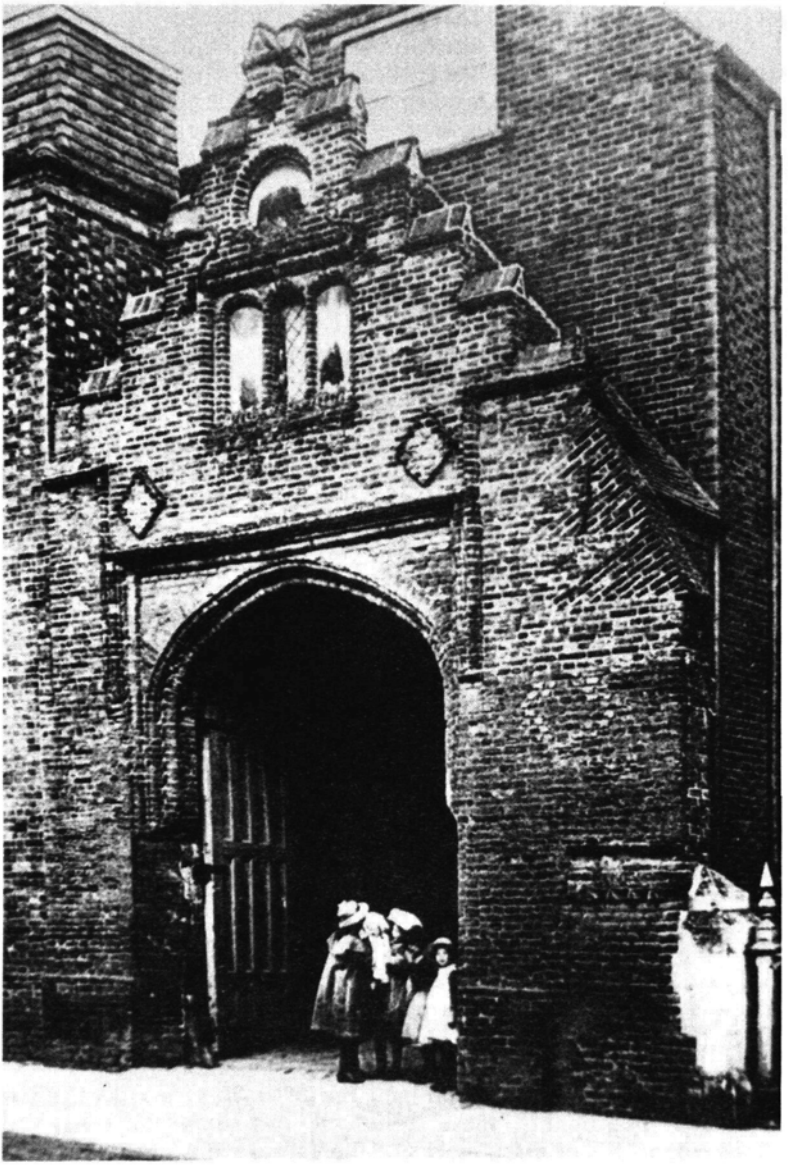
The gable is crow-stepped with five steps each side; the top is damaged, although its original form is known from a nineteenth-century photograph (see below). The coping of each step comprises a slightly projecting course, to both north and south, a sloping portion of bedded stretchers, and a single course of stretchers at the top. There is a number of replacement bricks in the copings, and traces of a harder mortar.

There are three anchor-irons on the face of the gateway, two S-shaped and one straight: they do not respect the brickwork features.

At the rear of the gateway are two irregular-shaped portions of brickwork, with closers at the angles, serving as buttresses to the gateway structure. These buttresses contain the stone blocks for the hinge-pintles of the gates. Those at top and bottom are regular blocks, well set in the brickwork and are probably primary. The central stones are less regular and the brickwork around them is mutilated: presumably, these stones are secondary. They may be replacements for primary blocks or the earlier gates may have been hung on only two sets of pintles.

From the rear of each buttress a thin section of brickwork runs for

PLATE I



Roper Gate, Canterbury: Nineteenth-century photograph, courtesy of Canterbury Museums Collection.

a short distance north-eastwards. These probably represent sub-buttressing rather than the walls of a building behind the gateway: they are brought to a proper finish with no signs of hacking away.

The wooden gates themselves, which are not primary, are described as follows by Rupert Austin: each leaf, 'comprising twelve panels, is framed by stiles, rails and munting pieces, mortice and tennoned with wooden pegs. Diagonal bracing, concealed behind the panelling, lap joints with the rails and muntins. Loose panel mouldings, mitred at the corners, with simple cavetto profile, are set below the surface of the framing into each panel. / A wicket gate in the [eastern leaf] provides additional restricted access. The principal ironwork appears to be contemporary with the gates, plain strap-hinges bolted to the top and bottom rails locate on gudgeon pins sunk into the splayed reveals of the archway. Additional hinges have been added to the middle of the [leaves] with further pins inserted into the reveals. Square-headed and threaded bolts secure most of the ironwork (Wrought-iron threaded bolts were introduced in the late [seventeenth] century . . .). Once closed, a locking bar and staple secured the main gates; a latch with looped handle holds the wicket gate.'[7]

DISCUSSION

(i) *Phases of Construction*

It is clear that the portion of brickwork at the foot of the eastern side of the gateway is earlier than the main structure: it is of bricks of different texture and of larger size, and laid in a rather more consistent English Bond than that of the rest of the structure. The only decorative element is the use of a saw-tooth, a feature which does not occur in the main structure. Moreover, the bricks at the west end of this portion of brickwork have been hacked to bring them to a straight line before the later gateway structure was built against and above the earlier walling. It is not of course clear how long an interval there was between the two phases of construction.

Phase I: The Phase I work comprised a wall represented by the surviving fragment topped by the saw-tooth course, an ordinary course, and a slightly projecting course of headers. It is, of course,

[7] R.W. Austin, 'Roper Gate', survey notes held by Canterbury Archaeological Trust and published in '1989 Interim Report', *Arch. Cant.*, cvii (1989) 360–63, Fig. 27.

impossible to tell whether this string formed the top of a low wall or whether it was the top of a plinth to a higher wall, although the former possibility seems intuitively more likely. Interestingly, the three courses of the string are brought to a straight line at its west end, with a closer in the topmost course, although the lower portion of walling appears to have continued further westwards. The significance of this is not clear.

Phase II: The Phase II work comprises all the rest of the gateway, including the rear buttresses, as described above. The copings of the crow-steps, though they are renewed, are of the normal type for crow-stepped gables and gateways and may safely be assumed to follow the primary pattern. The damaged top is shown complete in a nineteenth-century photograph,[8] and even if renewal had taken place by this time it is likely, again, that the primary form was followed: a coping was placed at right-angles to the topmost step and coping and was supported on four slightly projecting courses of plain bricks.

Although the disposition of the principal features of the gateway is symmetrical, it is unlikely that the overall structure was symmetrical in appearance, despite a drawing to the contrary.[9] There is no reason to think that the tumbling-in on the east side is other than primary; but there was certainly no equivalent in the corresponding position on the west, for sufficient of the wall survives here for the 'tails' of any such tumbles to be present. Instead, however, there is normal straight coursing here. Further, the position of closers – which are consistently used in the building – enable the locations of primary straight edges to be established. At the extreme west side of the extant walling there is a vertical series of closers indicating a straight edge – in fact, the present straight edge where the nineteenth-century wall abuts – some 3 ft. 9 in. (1.10 m.) west of the arch-jamb, and thus not corresponding to the termination of the structure at the east. These closers continue to a height of about 7 ft. (2.10 m.) above present pavement level and thereafter are set some 6 in. (15 cm.) further east. Towards the top they are used slightly less consistently. Two interpretations of this are possible. Either the gateway terminated at this point with a slight 'step' in the walling some 7 ft. (2.10 m.) above present ground level; or the walling continued further eastwards with a smaller (pedestrian) archway through it. The lowest closers would then indicate the jamb of this archway, whilst those set back a little would indicate the presence of an arch-head and perhaps a moulded brick string which would have been returned at

[8] Late nineteenth-century photograph in the archive of Canterbury Museums.
[9] Nineteenth-century drawing in the archive of Canterbury Museums.

this point down the wall-face. Elsewhere in the structure closers are not associated with the arch-head and string; moreover, the straight edge against the later butted walling shows no signs of moulded bricks such as one would expect an entrance to possess. The former of these two possibilities is, therefore, the more likely.

Gateways of this kind were erected at a number of secular houses in Kent and represent a departure from the full gatehouse structure, with or without projecting turrets. If such gatehouses were an expression of *appareil féodal*, the 'one-face' gateways have given up all pretence of defensiveness whilst maintaining an impressive approach to the house. They were built either, as here, with crow-steps (Milner Court, Sturry; the Tiltyard Gate, Eltham Palace) or with a straight top (Hales Place, Tenterden; Whorne's Place, Cuxton). These examples all date from the sixteenth century, but the type continued into the early seventeenth century, as at Northbourne Court, although its final 'domestication' had already been achieved in the small version in front of 'The Old Cottage' at Bickley, dated 1599.

(ii) *Background: The Brickwork in its Context*

The progress of medieval and Tudor brick is strikingly different in Kent from what it is immediately to the north in Essex and in eastern England north of the Thames generally. Brick was used as a minor material in vaults at Allington Castle *c.* 1280 and at Horne's Place Chapel, Appledore, probably of *c.* 1366. Of not much later date are the chapel and a secular building of uncertain purpose at Grench Manor, Gillingham. The bricks in the fabric of Salmestone Grange, Margate, claimed by Lloyd as thirteenth-century,[10] may be so or may represent later patching. Most of those mentioned are in a muddy yellow/buff fabric, like those of the west wall (all that survives) of Midley Church on Romney Marsh, perhaps of the fifteenth century. All or most may have come from the Sandwich area, which produced such bricks for a long period and which had its own municipal brickyard at least by the third quarter of the fifteenth century, situated in Sandown Manor to the east of the town.[11] Equally, however, some of them may have been imported. Red bricks were used for minor additions to Dover Castle – for example, the fire-place in the Avranches Tower, probably in the fifteenth century. By the

[10] N. Lloyd, *A History of English Brickwork* . . . , London, 1925, re-issued Woodbridge, 1983, 56, 89, 96, 106, 388.

[11] T.P. Smith, *The Medieval Brickmaking Industry in England 1400–1450*, BAR British Series 138, Oxford, 1985, 31 with refs.

first half of the fifteenth century red bricks were being used for display in the Dent-de-Lion gatehouse at Garlinge (dated on heraldic evidence to before 1445), though here they are combined with cut flint in a series of bands across the face, a transposition into brick of a Kentish feature in ashlar and flint seen best in the churches at Newington, near Sittingbourne and Cliffe-at-Hoo. The first use of brick as a material in its own right, with stone dressings, is perhaps Wickham Court at West Wickham, after 1469, though a more magnificent example is provided by the gatehouse at Lullingstone Castle, all in brick and now dated to 1497.[12] If more remained than the footings of Scadbury Park at Chislehurst, we would probably have an example of fifteenth-century display brickwork at least equal to Wickham Court and perhaps surpassing it.

At this time, on the other hand, the royal palace at Eltham was still hiding the brickwork of its Great Hall behind ashlar facing, though other buildings there were of exposed brickwork, whilst at Ightham Mote the fifteenth-century gatehouse tower has ragstone on its front face and exposed brick only on the less visible sides. The probably fifteenth-century drum-towers of the Sandown Gate at Sandwich were of red brick in Header Bond, but this was completely plastered over, presumably to give the impression of stone.[13] Clearly, brick was not acceptable by everyone, a situation that we shall also observe in Canterbury.

Successive archbishops of Canterbury played an important rôle in establishing brick within the county, as elsewhere: first with brick additions to Charing Palace at the close of the fifteenth century, then at Otford, Ford, and Bekesbourne. Archbishop Warham, the builder of Otford, was also responsible for the very different, indeed anomalous, church at Smallhythe, *c.* 1516, where all is in red brick and the tracery patterns are of a Netherlandish type. The remains of entrance gateways of (just?) pre-Reformation date at Boxley Abbey are a reminder that the monasteries may have played a more important part in spreading the use of brick than present remains suggest, but secular builders also played their part in the sixteenth century – at the now largely lost Shurland near Eastchurch (probably by 1532) on the Isle of Sheppey, for example; at the contemporary Roydon Hall at East Peckham; or, later in the century, at Eltham Well Hall. At Whorne's Place, Cuxton, a magnificent brick barn,

[12] For this revised dating of the Lullingstone gatehouse see: S. Pittman, *Lullingstone Park: the Evolution of a Mediaeval Deer Park*, Rainham (Kent), 1983, 37.

[13] This is known only from excavation: T. Tatton-Brown, 'The Sandown Gate at Sandwich', *Arch. Cant.*, xciv (1979), 153–5.

now demolished, was built along with other brick buildings.[14] Royal works included alterations to the dissolved Dartford Priory using red brick.

The situation in Canterbury is similar to the general Kentish situation, with brick used at first only for minor features such as the vault-ribs of the Blackfriars' frater, the patching to the rear face of 'Meister Omers' (now part of the King's School),[15] the nogging to the timber-framed building behind the present façade of 8 High Street (Dewhurst's), and for drains at St. Augustine's Abbey.[16] Much of this is in the small buff Sandwich-type bricks, though at the nearby Tonford Manor, Thanington, a few red bricks were used to create diaper patterns against a dark flint background. When brick was admitted to the Cathedral in the late fifteenth century – for the Bell Harry Tower and the gable of the North Transept – it was understandably and not at all regrettably clad in ashlar facing. The same scheme was followed in the early years of the sixteenth century at the Christ Church Gate and, by the City, in the rebuilt Burgate.[17] It may be at about this time, too, that the brick buttress was added in naked brickwork to the old Lavatory Tower within the Infirmary Cloister of the Cathedral. Henry VIII's work at the post-Dissolution St. Augustine's Abbey was in red brick, which had already been used, with stone dressings, for the Roper Chapel at St. Dunstan's Church (*c.* 1524), where brick is also used for the brick vaults below. By the second half of the century the Palace Gatehouse and the upper part of a staircase in the Archbishop's Palace were being built in brick, and in *c.* 1570 Sir Roger Manwood erected a magnificent piece of display brickwork in red brick at the Manwood Almshouses, Hackington, as he did, perhaps a little later, in yellow brick at Sandwich Grammar School (now Manwood Court). The careful laying of the bricks and the use of properly placed closers suggest that his South Transept at St. Stephen's, Hackington (built at about the same time) was not originally rendered as it is now. The almshouses (and the Sandwich School) are notable for their use of crow-stepped gables, which also occur on buildings of perhaps about the same time in

[14] There is a photograph of this magnificent barn in D. Church, *Cuxton: A Kentish Village*, Sheerness, 1976, 45.

[15] This and the next example were first drawn to my attention by Tim Tatton-Brown, in conversation.

[16] P. Bennett, 'Rescue Excavations in the Outer Court of St. Augustine's Abbey, 1983–84', *Arch. Cant.*, ciii (1986), 99–100.

[17] P. Bennett and M. Houliston, 'Burgate', in Canterbury Archaeological Trust, *Canterbury's Archaeology 1987–1988*, Canterbury, 1989, 24–6, with a contribution on the documentary evidence by T. Tatton-Brown, 27–8.

Broad Street and at the Dane John Manor. By this time, too, brick was being used for fireplaces and stacks in relatively humble houses, like those excavated at St. Martin's Hill.[18]

It is within this context that the Roper Gateway needs to be viewed. In particular, display brickwork of this sort is not to be expected, in Kent, much before the opening decades of the sixteenth century. This judgement may be confirmed by an examination of the individual elements of the gateway.

(iii) *Saw-Tooth Coursing and the Date of the Phase I Brickwork*

Decoration by means of a course of bricks laid diagonally to give a saw-tooth effect was used from an early date (the thirteenth century) within the 'Brick Gothic' region of northern Europe. It was introduced into English brickwork, apparently, at the Beverley North Bar in 1410 and at Prior Overton's Tower, Repton, Derbys. (now part of Repton School) after 1437. In both buildings, interestingly, their use is combined with other features of undoubted north European derivation – the shield-shapes in brick at Beverley and the trefoiled arches at Repton. They were not, however, a common feature before the sixteenth century. Within Kent there are several examples dating from that century: across the top of the gateway at Whorne's Place, Cuxton, of the Tiltyard Gate at Eltham Palace, and on the low wall adjoining the gateway at Hales Place, Tenterden, for example; those beneath the coping of the wall on the north side of the churchyard at Sturry are rebuilt but may follow a late sixteenth-century original. All this, combined with the late admission of exposed brickwork at Canterbury, suggests that the Phase I work of the Roper Gateway is not to be dated before the sixteenth century. In *c.* 1524 the Roper Chapel at nearby St. Dunstan's Church was erected in red brick. This is different in character from the Phase I work of the gateway, having stone dressings and no moulded brick features. The bricks are different in texture and size, although it is notable that both buildings use large bricks, those of the chapel being even larger than those of the gateway: $9\frac{3}{4}$–$10\frac{1}{4}$ × $4\frac{1}{4}$–$4\frac{7}{8}$ × $2\frac{1}{2}$–$2\frac{3}{4}$ in. (24.8–26.0 × 10.8–12.4 × 6.4–7.0 cm.). A broadly similar date, that is sometime in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, may be suggested for the Phase I work at the Roper Gateway, though a somewhat later date cannot be ruled out.

[18] J. Rady, 'Excavations at St. Martin's Hill, Canterbury, 1984–85', *Arch. Cant.*, civ (1987), 157.

(iv) *Diaper and Other Uses of Black Bricks*

Diaper in darker bricks – usually black or almost so and often glazed – is another feature derived from north European precedents. Introduced during the early fifteenth century, it rapidly spread as a decorative device to otherwise plain brick walling, and reached its highpoint in the decades either side of 1500, when elaborate schemes – sometimes incorporating actual pictures – were used, as at Kirby Muxloe Castle, Leics. (1480–84, unfinished), Hatfield Old Palace, Herts. (1480–90), the Deanery Tower at Hadleigh, Suffolk (1489–90), the Archbishop of Canterbury's Palace at Croydon (from 1486), or Bermondsey Priory (early sixteenth-century).[19] At the Roper Gateway it is used only sparingly: there is a single lozenge on the front face and another on the rear face of the buttress at the east side. In addition there is a solid lozenge on the raised brickwork lozenge each side of the gateway above the arch-head string. There is no evidence that there was a lozenge on the west side of the front face balancing that on the east: even if surface glazing had flaked off (unlikely in any case here since the black bricks are burned rather than given a surface glaze) it should still be possible to locate the lozenge from the bonding pattern, and this cannot be done. To be sure, a recent discovery at Hampton Court Palace has confirmed that diaper was sometimes painted on, irrespective of the actual bonding pattern,[20] as indeed was to be expected from a comparison of the extant elevation drawing for Second Court at St. John's College, Cambridge, with the actual brickwork there.[21] On the Roper Gateway, however, there is no trace of such paint and, more significantly, some of the black bricks included in the relevant area of the west side of the gateway would have interfered with such a painted lozenge.

The explanation for such patterns used to be that they were invariably created from overfired bricks, this providing a useful means of avoiding wastage. Close examination of many bricks by R.J. and P.E. Firman, treating them as geological samples, has, however, shown that they were often produced deliberately, the ends

[19] Known from an early illustration, reproduced in J. Schofield, *The Building of London from the Conquest to the Great Fire*, London, 1984, 139, fig. 115.

[20] I am grateful to Paul Drury for drawing this to my attention.

[21] A coloured facsimile of Ralph Symons' drawing is included in R. Willis and J.W. Clark, *The Architectural History of the University of Cambridge . . .*, Cambridge, 1886, vol. 2, between 256, 257, fig. 7; a black-and-white reproduction is included in A.C. Crook, *From the Foundation to Gilbert Scott*, Cambridge, 1980, pl.IV; *cf.* R.C.H.M., *An Inventory of . . . the City of Cambridge*, London, 1959, vol. 2, 194b: ' . . . the entry in the accounts for "painting" the brickwork is perhaps significant in this context.'

being dipped into sand prior to firing.[22] The black bricks of the Roper Gateway, on the other hand, seem to be accidental products: glazing is extremely irregular and many of the bricks are clearly quite badly burned. Moreover, it is difficult to understand why flared headers should have been deliberately produced only to be used in the haphazard manner of the Roper Gateway, whatever may be the case with such buildings as those listed in the previous paragraph. Connected with this, is the question of how far the patterns were laid down by the master craftsman/architect, on behalf of the patron perhaps, and how far they were an, as it were, spontaneous contribution by the bricklayers. When the designs form a proper decorative scheme one may suppose that they were stipulated in advance of building, and this is confirmed, at least for the late sixteenth century, by the St. John's College drawing. Moreover, when a 'meaningful' design is included – Hastings' badge of a *maunche* or sleeve at Kirby Muxloe, the Cross Keys of St. Peter at Croydon Palace – one may suppose that they were included at the behest of the patron. When, on the other hand, they occur more or less randomly, even inconsequentially, like those on the south face of Queens College, Cambridge, and those on the Roper Gateway, it looks very much as if they were included at the whim of the bricklayers. Further, diapers and the like are often included only on the 'show fronts' of buildings, as on the fifteenth-century chancel of Bardney Church or the sixteenth-century(?) nave of Goltho Chapel, both in Lincolnshire, whilst on the Roper Gateway one is hidden away on the rear face of a buttress – again suggesting the whim of the bricklayers.

The solid black lozenges within the slightly projecting lozenge shapes just above the label, on the other hand, are more likely to have been planned from the beginning, as the projections themselves must certainly have been.

(v) *The Arch*

Moulded brick arches, four-centred and often set within a square label, as here, were introduced during the fifteenth century, the earliest example in Kent probably being that of the Lullingstone Castle gatehouse, now dated to 1497.[23] The wave-moulding of the Roper Gateway is a common enough late medieval/Tudor form and in itself has little diagnostic value. The same is true of the label

[22] R.J. and P.E. Firman, 'A Geological Approach to the Study of Medieval Bricks', *Mercian Geologist*, 2, 3, 1967, 309.

[23] For this date see n. 12, *supra*.

moulding, although the elaboration of the label itself, folding back upon itself at the sides, is perhaps a sixteenth- rather than a fifteenth-century conceit. Unfortunately, the bottommost portions of the jambs are missing. From surviving examples, it is likely that the plinth bricks continued across the canted portion of the jambs and perhaps across the intrados section. The plinth bricks would thus have formed an effective stop to the mouldings, with or without any additional stops.

(vi) *The Window and the Roundel*

Since this is a 'one-face' gateway, not the front wall of a gatehouse proper, the inclusion of a window within the gable is a nice conceit – there was no chamber to be lighted behind it! This perhaps suggests that the designer was thinking in terms of the gable-end of a brick building rather than of a gateway. In this respect the Roper Gateway differs from the sixteenth-century crow-stepped gateway at Milner's Court (Sturry Court; King's School Junior School), Sturry, where there is a stone plaque, framed by squinchons, within the gable. Uncusped lights to windows begin in the fifteenth century – notably, in stone, at Tattershall Collegiate Church, Lincs., where they are perhaps of the 1450s. They are found in brick at Hatfield Old Palace, Herts., in 1480–90 and, in both brick and stone, at Wainfleet School, Lincs., of 1484. But they are chiefly a sixteenth-century device, seen in Canterbury, for example, in the chapel added to St. Dunstan's Church (the Roper Chapel) and that added to St. Mildred's Church – both in stone. There was no essential reason for the use of uncusped lights in *brick* windows: both tracery and cusping were quite feasible in brick as well as stone, as a number of Essex churches show, and the reason for its widespread adoption at this time must be one of fashion. The Roper Gateway window is of extremely simple form, with close parallels in some of the outbuildings to Hales Place, Tenterden (*c.* 1530 and later) and, most tellingly, at Brungar's Farm, Leigh Green, near Tenterden, also of the sixteenth-century: here the three-light window is set within a crow-stepped gable and has, as at the Roper Gateway, a sunk roundel above it, in the topmost portion of the gable. The ovolo moulding of the window would also fit the sixteenth century. The lack of balance in the arch-heads of the two side-lights is puzzling. The square label with returned stops is rudimentary in being constructed from ordinary fabric bricks projected slightly, where one might have expected something rather more elegant using moulded bricks. The four-centred label over the sixteenth-century archway at Milner's Court, Sturry, however, is constructed in the same way.

The two side-lights may have been infilled and rendered from the first, possibly with leaded lights painted onto the rendering. Indeed, it is even possible that the central light was similarly treated, and was glazed only when the later building behind was joined to the rear of the gateway.

The roundel above the window is now plastered and perhaps always was. The similar example at Brungar's Farm, near Tenterden, has already been mentioned, and there is another in the straight-sided gable of the entrance range of Sissinghurst Castle, dating from *c.* 1535.

(vii) *Crow-Steps*

Crow-steps are another of those features introduced into English brick building during the fifteenth century but not very widely used before the sixteenth. They may occur as gables proper or a crow-stepped crenellations to parapets. The earliest instance is on the parapets of the Beverley North Bar of 1410, whilst in the period 1436–46 they were used on a gateway at the Ewelme Almshouses, Oxon. Like the Beverley Bar, the Ewelme gateway shows North European influence, for its trefoiled blank arch follows a type established in both Belgium and the Netherlands. Later in the century a number of examples occur: Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk (*c.* 1482), Hatfield Old Palace (1480–90), and the gatehouse of Jesus College, Cambridge (*c.* 1496). Their introduction into Kent would seem to begin with the gable-ends of the church at Smallhythe (*c.* 1516), interestingly, as we have noted, showing North European influence in its brick tracery patterns. Several examples exist from the mid- to late sixteenth century and from the early seventeenth century, though, sadly, what must be regarded as the most impressive in Kent, and arguably in England, on the great barn at Whorne's Place, Cuxton (mid-sixteenth-century), was wantonly destroyed in 1925.[24] In Canterbury itself crow-steps were used on a house in Broad Street and on the Dane John Manor as well as on the Manwood Almshouses of 1570, where they occur both on the end-gables and on the smaller dormer gables.

Moulded brick copings were sometimes employed, more particularly in East Anglia, or occasionally stone copings might be used, but by far the commonest method, in Kent and elsewhere, was to have a bottom horizontal course of stretchers, bricks face-bedded at an

[24] Church, *op. cit.*, 43; the materials were 'transported to Petersham Road, Richmond' and 'used to construct a sham Tudor house, priest hole and all!'

angle to form a truncated triangle, and one or two courses of stretchers to serve as a cap, just as on the Roper Gateway. The triangular ends were filled with pieces of brick cut (more or less) to shape. The central topmost step sometimes matched the others as on those added to the building which is now Wickhambreaux Post Office, but more frequently some form of finial was added; in the gable-ends of houses this might be a real chimney-shaft whilst in other cases a false chimney-shaft was added. The 'obvious' arrangement on the Roper Gateway, with a coping placed at right-angles to the principal coping, seems to be less common than might have been expected.

(viii) *Tumbling-In*

The tumbling-in on the eastern buttress is in some respects the most interesting feature. There is no reason to regard it as other than primary, which makes it an early example of this kind of construction, which derives from Netherlandish prototypes and seems to have been adopted as much for its decorative effects as for any practical purpose it may have had. Certainly it involved more work than the more usual method of finishing a gable or buttress off-set, which involved no more than the cutting of the end bricks in each course to the appropriate angle. Tumbling-in is sometimes regarded as exclusively a seventeenth-century and later feature, but there *are* earlier examples. Some early sixteenth-century churches in Essex have tumbling-in to form the buttress off-sets, for example at Sandon, whilst early examples in gables occur on Lovell's Hall, Terrington St. Clement, Norfolk, of 1543, and in Kent and slightly earlier on the entrance range at Sissinghurst Castle of *c.* 1535. In Canterbury, they were in use for buttress off-sets by 1539, when the north wall of St. Augustine's Abbey nave was heightened in red brick as part of the building of Henry VIII's palace.

(ix) *The Date of the Phase II Work*

As has been remarked above, the affinities of the Roper Gateway lie more with gable-ends to four-square buildings than with crow-stepped gateways such as that at Milner Court, Sturry. Such gables occur first in Kent at Smallhythe Church in *c.* 1516, though without the window, the roundel, or the tumbling-in of the Roper Gateway. The latter two features occur in a (straight-sided, not crow-stepped) gable in the entrance range to Sissinghurst Castle by *c.* 1535. The closest parallel, however, is the gable-end to Brungar's Farm, Leigh Green, near Tenterden. Unfortunately, the date of this building is

not firmly established and estimates have varied: Nathaniel Lloyd placed it, and others basically similar, in the period 1530–40;[25] Kenneth Gravett cites this but adds that 'it is possible that they are a little later.' Of Brungar's Farm in particular he conjectures that it may once have been partly timber-framed, like Bax Farm, Tonge;[26] Jane Wight gives the date '*c.* 1540';[27] whilst John Newman suggests, less specifically, the 'mid-C16':[28] there seems, however, no reason for the extreme caution of Ronald Brunskill and the late Alec Clifton-Taylor, who place it in the 'Late 16th–early 17th century'.[29] A date in the middle decades of the sixteenth century is perhaps most likely.

A similar date – say in the period 1530–60 – is likely for the Roper Gateway. The four-centred arch, the uncusped window-lights, and the mouldings are all consistent with such a dating although, on their own, insufficient to establish it. The absence of any Renaissance detailing is not at all worrying at this date: indeed, the surviving range of Roper's Eltham Well Hall is similarly without Renaissance elements. Well Hall may date from as late as 1568 – unless the armorial date plaque in its north face is indeed a later insertion; at any rate, the building cannot be earlier than the death of Margaret Roper at Christmas 1544.[30]

The Gateway, on such a dating, would be the work of William Roper, whose biography permits further speculation as to the more precise dating of the structure. John Roper, William's father, died in 1524. William was slighted in the will.[31] We do not know the reason

[25] Lloyd, *op. cit.*, 152, 269, 422.

[26] K. Gravett, *Timber and Brick Building in Kent*, London and Chichester, 1971, 24.

[27] J.A. Wight, *Brick Building in England from the Middle Ages to 1550*, London, 1972, 294.

[28] J. Newman, *The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald*, Harmondsworth, 1969, 544.

[29] R. Brunskill and A. Clifton-Taylor, *English Brickwork*, London, 1977, 107, Fig. 111.

[30] For the suggestion that the plaque with the date 1568 is perhaps later see: B. Cherry and N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 2: South*, Harmondsworth, 1983, 305, replacing N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 2*, Harmondsworth, 1952, 460, where, however, the suggestion is *not* made. A. Glencross, *The Buildings of Greenwich*, Greenwich, 1974, 34 dates the building to 'the first half of the sixteenth century' and adds '(although a coat-of-arms [*sic*] set in the wall is dated 1568)'. R.C.H.M., *An Inventory of . . . London*, vol. 5, *East London*, London, 1930, 103, accepts the 1568 date. At the north-east and south-east angles are brick plaques bearing the initials 'WR' for William Roper; there is no 'M' for Margaret, which there surely would have been had the building been erected before her death at Christmas 1544. For Margaret's death: E.E. Reynolds, *Margaret Roper*, London, 1960, 123.

[31] R. Marius, *Thomas More*, London, 1985, p. xv; for the will see n.l, *supra*.

for this, although it is just possible that it was because of his enthusiastic espousal of Lutheranism for a period.[32] At any rate, the matter had to be settled, in William's favour, by a special Act of Parliament as late as 1529.[33] William, presumably, could not have started building work before the latter date. Moreover, by the time of Thomas More's execution in 1535, Roper, as he himself tells us, had been 'continually resident in his [More's] house by the space of sixteen years and more,'[34] that is from *c.* 1518, three years before his marriage to More's eldest daughter Margaret on 2 July, 1521. This residence would have been first at The Old Barge in Bucklersbury, London, and then in More's new house at Chelsea from *c.* 1523, though 'no doubt, with visits to his family home at Well Hall, Eltham.'[35] Even after More's death the Ropers continued to live at Butclose – part of the More property which he had bequeathed to them – until after Margaret's death at the end of 1544.[36] In April 1547, William Roper and William Rastell (More's nephew) leased Crosby Place, London, from More's old friend Antonio Bonvisi.[37] This was a quite extensive set of buildings, including brick in its undercroft, and Roper 'seems to have made it his town house or office . . . . Well Hall . . . was the family home, and the children [the Ropers had five] would probably live there.'[38] The London connect-

[32] For Roper's temporary espousal of Protestantism we are entirely dependent on N. Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More*, available in (Ed.) E.E. Reynolds, *Lives of Saint Thomas More*, London, 1963, 100–103. Unfortunately, Harpsfield's chronology is often muddled – possibly (in this case) because Roper, who must have told him the story, is chronologically muddled in his own *Life*: W. Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More, Knight*, available in (Ed.) Reynolds. Harpsfield states that Roper 'was a marvellous zealous Protestant' at the time of his marriage to Margaret More, that is in 1521; this came about because, amongst other things, Roper 'got him to a Lutheran Bible . . .'. Now, the latter did not appear until September 1522. Accepting Harpsfield's first statement as correct, Reynolds, *Margaret Roper*, 31, suggests that the Bible involved must have been the Lollard Bible. But, as Richard Marius observes, it is difficult to believe 'that More would have allowed his beloved daughter to marry a heretic': Marius, *op. cit.*, 314. Roper picked up his Lutheranism by association with the German merchants of the Steelyard, so that it is not at all improbable that he obtained a copy of Luther's Bible (nor that he had sufficient German to read it); in that case he would have been a Lutheran *after* his marriage to Margaret, around 1522 to 1523 – that is, precisely at the time when Roper senior was making his will, which is dated 27 January, 1523 (n. 1, *supra*).

[33] 'The Will of John Rooper, Esq.', (n. 1), 149.

[34] Roper, *Life*, p. 3 (of Reynolds' edition).

[35] Reynolds, Introduction to *Lives*, p. vi.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. vii; Reynolds, *Margaret Roper*, 61, 113.

[37] *Ibid.*, 126; Reynolds, Introduction to *Lives*, p. vii. For Crosby Place, which survived until 1907, when the hall was carefully removed to Chelsea, where it still stands, see: Schofield, *op. cit.*, 123–4.

[38] Reynolds, *Margaret Roper*, 126.

ions were clearly important, and in his will dated 10 January 1577 he expressed the wish to be buried at Chelsea 'in the vault with the body of my dearly beloved wife . . ., where my father-in-law, Sir Thomas More . . . did mind to be buried.'[39] In the event, however, when he died on 4 January, 1578, it was in the family vault at St. Dunstan's, Canterbury, that he was buried. Understandably, Roper – a staunch Roman Catholic following his flirtation with Lutheranism – fared well during the reign of Mary I and was Member of Parliament for Canterbury in 1555 and 1558 (and for Rochester in 1554).[40] The first of these dates provides the most likely occasion for Roper to develop the Canterbury estate, and it is probably significant that in the same year Roper (together with Rastell) was made a Freeman of the City of Canterbury.[41] Interestingly, it was about this time (1556–57) that Roper was in close communication with Nicholas Harpsfield in connection with the latter's *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More*. Harpsfield had returned from exile in Leuven (Louvain) on Mary's accession, and in March 1544 was made Archdeacon of Canterbury. (He was deprived under Elizabeth I in 1559 an died in the Fleet Prison on 18 December 1575.)[42] It is likely that it was whilst Roper was in Canterbury that Harpsfield interviewed him for his forthcoming work on More.

A dating in the 1550s, as suggested here – albeit tentatively, as it must be – is entirely consistent with the considerations adduced above on the basis of the Gateway's architectural character.

[39] *Ibid.*, 140; Reynolds, Introduction to *Lives*, p. vii.
[40] *DNB*, *sub nomine*; Reynolds, *Margaret Roper*, 130.
[41] *Loc. cit.*
[42] *DNB*, *sub nomine*; Reynolds, Introduction to *Lives*, p. viii.