



<http://kentarchaeology.org.uk/research/archaeologia-cantiana/>

Kent Archaeological Society is a registered charity number 223382

© 2017 Kent Archaeological Society

## THE HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE OLD BISHOP'S PALACE, ROCHESTER

PATRICIA A. CLARKE

In the Cathedral Precinct at Rochester three adjoining houses face towards the cathedral. Standing behind their garden walls, they occupy the site of the medieval palace of the bishops of Rochester.<sup>1</sup> From east to west one is of brick, the other two are of ragstone, clunch rubble, flint and brick. These last two are reckoned to be remnants of the medieval palace itself and are referred to as the 'stone range' in this paper. Beginning at the east the three are now called Prior's Gate House, College Green and Southgate respectively.

Until now the history of the medieval palace has been told in bits and pieces. This article brings the history together and contributes further study, considering the medieval use of the palace, subsequent changes and the evidence for them. It proposes that the surviving range contained the great chamber and the chapel, with the privy garden just south of the chamber and a further range of private rooms between it and the western precinct wall (**Figs 1a and 1b**). Remains of an east wing were discovered by excavation in 1976 (see below) which is assumed to have accommodated the great hall. During the seventeenth century a new house, in brick (Prior's Gate House), was built on the southern part of the site of the great hall, whilst the chapel and chamber were converted to two (perhaps originally three) dwellings (now College Green and Southgate). Prior's Gate House, College Green and Southgate were brought up to date from time to time during the succeeding centuries, largely at the instance of the Twopeny family of Rochester.

The houses are aligned WNW-ESE, like the cathedral, but for convenience in this paper they will be treated here as lying E-W and the current house names will be used (**Fig. 2**).

### THE BISHOP'S PALACE AT ROCHESTER

The bishop and the priory shared the space south of the cathedral which,

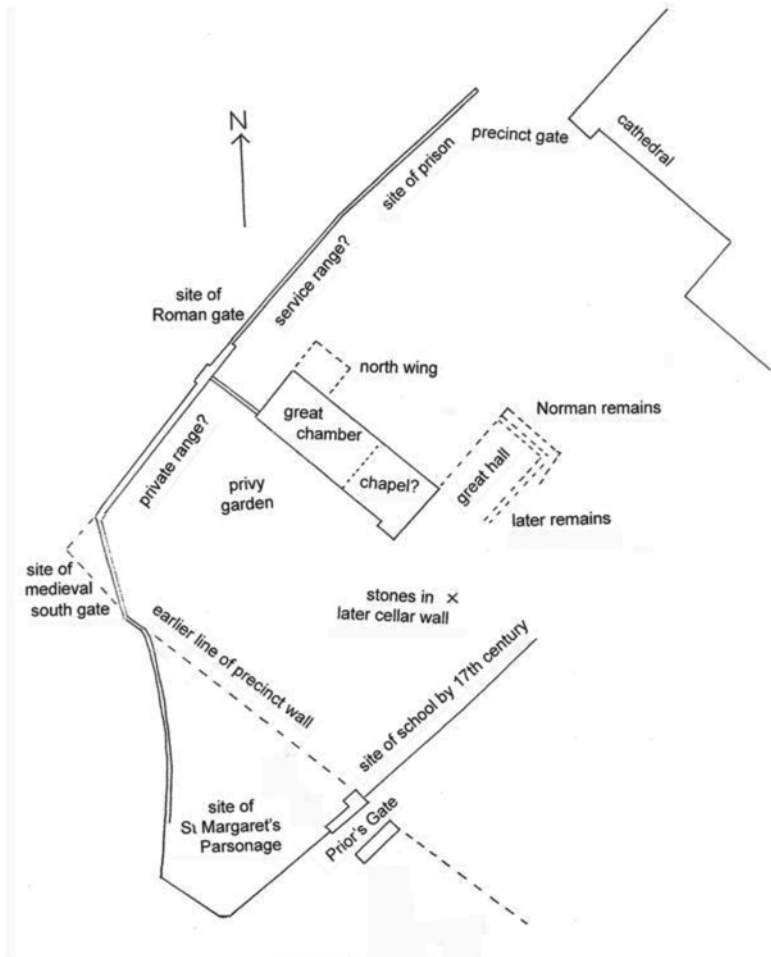


Fig. 1a Plan showing what is known of structures on the palace site prior to 1647. Drawn by P.A. Clarke based on OS map 1866 (see Fig. 1b opposite).

by the mid fourteenth century, had been enclosed by a wall. Much of the wall remains today. The episcopal precinct at the south-west probably had its origin in Bishop Gundulf's division of the cathedral property between bishopric and priory,<sup>2</sup> and the present roadway called The Precincts effectively marks the mutual boundary.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not Gundulf (1077-1108) built a palace, the earliest reference to one is to a rebuilding by

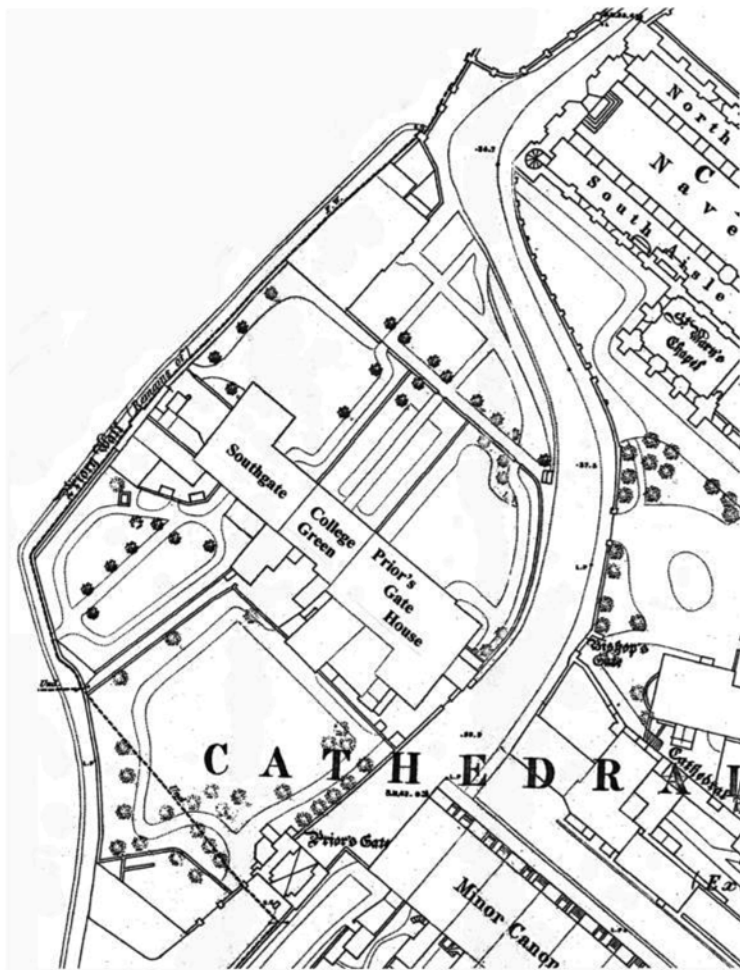


Fig. 1b Extract of OS Map 1866 (house name labels added).

Bishop Gilbert de Glanville (1185-1214) after the great fire of 1179.<sup>4</sup> No more is known until Bishop John Lowe (1444-1457) referred to his 'new palace at Rochester' in a document dated 1459.<sup>5</sup> An inventory was made in 1534 upon the attainder of Bishop John Fisher. The palace was appropriated by the Parliamentary Commissioners in 1647 and sold in 1649, but was restored to the bishopric in 1660.<sup>6</sup> Rochester seems to have been inconveniently placed in the diocese for access to and by its bishops,





Fig. 2 Aerial view of the palace site; extract from photo in R. Turcan, *Rochester through Time*, Amberley Publishing, reproduced with permission.  
© Photograph: Richard Smith.

so they also had houses at Bromley and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> After Fisher there is no documentary evidence of episcopal occupation in Rochester. Nor is there documentary evidence of the demolition of any of the bishop's buildings before 1760.

#### *Excavations revealing the original east wing*

Excavation has shown that the Roman wall underlies the north wall of the three houses, and that the Roman south gate was just outside the precinct wall at the west.<sup>8</sup> A limited excavation in 1976 revealed the foundations of at least two structures at the east end of the site, aligned roughly N-S, one twelfth-century, the other fifteenth-century. The earlier was Norman work of the early twelfth century, and has been interpreted as the possible porch or stairway of a first-floor hall. The walls of the fifteenth-century structure, which lay between this and Prior's Gate House, were built of similar materials and of a similar thickness to those of the surviving block. Part of a tiled lateral hearth, 4ft by at least 6ft, was found, set in the thickness of the east wall at its southern end, showing that 'the east wing

at least overlapped the existing block, contrary to what appears to have been the situation of the east wing in Harris' drawing (see **Appendix 1**). There was no excavation to find its southern boundary. The date of construction was placed in the fifteenth century and it was assumed to be an east wing of the bishop's palace.<sup>9</sup>

### *The stone block*

This contains the principal medieval remains, which comprise primarily the walls and roof of College Green and Southgate, which form the stone block or main range, and which is generally considered to have contained some of the important rooms. The question is, which ones?

The building material was randomly laid and there has been much infilling, modification and repair with smaller stone, flint, and galetting. The walls are 800mm thick at ground level, diminishing above and widening in the cellars.

Each of the four outer walls of the cellars has an internal batter, showing that the block was free-standing. Dressed stones in the Southgate portion hint at an opening in the south wall east of the present cellar entrance, corresponding with an external relieving arch, and perhaps another opening in the north wall east of the stack. A high opening at the west of this wall, with splayed sides and stepped sill, is probably early. There is no trace of vaulting in the cellars, so the flooring above must have been of wood. In the north wall is the projecting foundation arch of a stone stack, whose jambs have been extended in modern times with brick. (The two free-standing stacks are post medieval, mostly brick but incorporating stones, including one or two worked ones in the Southgate stack.)

Above ground the clearest visible features are in the west and south walls. At its eastern end the southern wall projects about 750mm southward at ground and (present) first-floor levels for some 1.50m. West of this is a wide, four-centred relieving arch, possibly for an opening at ground level. Then, at first floor level, comes a similar relieving arch with a square drip mould beneath it.

A shallow buttress with one offset rises to the height of the wall at about mid-point. West of the buttress two wide windows, extending through the present first and second storeys, are evidenced by part of their jambs and sills, whilst inside the house a depressed four-centred stone arch exposed in the second-floor corridor appears to be the head of the western example. The exterior of the west wall has the relieving arch and partial jambs of a similar window, possibly square-headed, at the same level.

The windows indicate principal rooms at first-floor level, and the square drip mould marks the position of a doorway at first-floor level, served by an external staircase, probably wooden.

There seem to be traces of window jambs, but no sills, in the north wall,

but the evidence is nowhere near as clear as in the south and west walls. The exterior of the east wall is concealed by Prior's Gate House, but inside there is no sign of a gable window, and the whole of the wall below it is rendered. None are to be expected if the east wing had extended across it to some degree, as excavation suggests.

The frames of three other blocked windows survive, almost complete, each of a small, single, arched light. Two are in the south wall, one just below the eaves, and east of the first floor doorway, the other close against the west side of the buttress at first floor level, its head slightly cut into by a modern window. However, this window is at the same time both so close to floor level, and so close to the large medieval window at its west, that the two cannot have co-existed. These two small windows must survive from an earlier phase. The third, and clearest, with a four-centred head, is within the gable of the west wall.

The roof of the block, framed in good quality oak, forms two distinct sections. The pitch conforms throughout to that of the gable walls.

The eastern part, wholly within College Green, consists of a closely spaced collar and rafter roof, halved and pegged, each of the twenty-two pairs of rafters having queen struts and braces beneath the collars forming a Tudor arch. There is no longitudinal stiffening nor division into bays. The stiffening is presumably provided by the concealed wall plates and the eastern stone gable wall.

The western part is a collar and rafter roof with tenoned purlins, divided into six bays by principal trusses with raked queen struts, many of them missing. The sixth bay is within College Green; it is unorthodox and has been much modified, perhaps in connection with the insertion of the stack and division into two dwellings, when the party wall was apparently placed beneath the sixth, and largely concealed, truss. The rafters are halved and pegged and the common rafters are pegged also to the purlins. The tie beams are cranked at the centre, their profile echoed in the ceiling of the top east room of Southgate. Tie beam 2, counting from the west, has been encased, and tie beam 3 has been removed, leaving the base of the principal rafters visible in the room below. The timbers are unadorned except for the inner wall-plate, which has a deeply moulded profile, and runs the full length of the walls, visible within the upper rooms of each house.

The stack in the north wall of Southgate is about 2.60m wide (E-W) and 2.00m deep (N-S) at ground level, the width diminishing on upper floors; the house plans suggest that it projected very slightly beyond the wall at the north. The ground- and first-floor hearths within the block are probably original features, though the two hearths in the north face of the stack present more difficulty. The top hearth within the main range is clearly post-medieval but has a wooden lintel with carved spandrels of late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century date.

There is currently a wooden staircase west of the north stack, in the thickness of the wall, turning at a couple of points. This may have been the site of an original stair linking ground and first floors, since no other site offers itself in the western part of the building. It is possible that there was once a staircase in the south-eastern recess of the eastern part, in College Green.

*The date and interpretation of the main range/stone block*

Several of the features listed above can be dated to the fifteenth century, namely the first-floor windows to south and west, the square-headed drip mould, both parts of the roof – the tenoned purlin makes its appearance in Kent about the middle of the century<sup>10</sup> – and the inner wall plate. All these accord with Bishop Lowe's oft-quoted reference to his 'new palace' in 1459. However, the great thickness of the walls and the three earlier windows confirm that the bishop did not create a new building during his episcopate (1444-1467) but refurbished an older one.

The stone block and the excavated east wing, marked by their lateral hearths as containing heated principal chambers, would have been the most imposing parts of the bishop's palace, which was of modest size overall. They formed two sides of a courtyard entered from the north-west stone gatehouse, a common medieval layout, and one would expect to find the hall and principal chamber in these ranges, with the rest of the private accommodation – secondary chambers, galleries, garden – beyond them to the south.

The later medieval foundations exposed in 1976 were well positioned to be those of the Norman and post-Norman great hall, entered from the outer courtyard, with its enclosed or lateral hearth correctly placed in relation to the entrance. It might have been a ground- or first-floor hall.

The detached stone range contained two large, unequal, units either side of an entrance vestibule or passage. The roof suggests that the dividing wall was beneath the sixth truss, where it still divides College Green from Southgate, placing the southern entrance and vestibule within the western part. There is no visible trace of dividing walls.

The western part has the characteristics of a great chamber – it is at first-floor level; the lateral hearth was correctly placed in relation to the entrance via the southern vestibule; and it has large windows which, like the vestibule entrance, gave onto what can be considered, from the location, to have been the privy garden, or court, and other private quarters. The garden would have been part of the existing garden of Southgate. The range therefore falls within the class of detached chamber blocks sometimes found at episcopal palaces, such as Charing and Harwell, and could, like them, have taken this form in the 13th or 14th century.<sup>11</sup>

The eastern part of the block was unheated; its south-east projection

was not a lateral stack though it might have contained either a staircase between ground and upper floors, or a connection to an adjoining building at the south or east, or, just possibly, a closet. The windows have not been identified. The roof echoes the profile of many fifteenth- and sixteenth-century chapels, and it is reasonable to propose that from the fifteenth century at least the upper room was the bishop's chapel. At the first floor, with close access to the great chamber, potential internal connection to the upper end of the hall, and access to other parts via the vestibule, it formed part of the private accommodation of the palace at its upper end. Moreover it was correctly orientated.

It is not possible to tell the use of the ground floor and cellars, nor the number of rooms there, except to say that the room beneath the great chamber, being heated, would have had some significant use, perhaps as a bedchamber or study.<sup>12</sup>

#### *Other medieval remains*

To the west of Southgate the house plans show a substantial wall, 600mm thick and one storey high, extending from the south-west corner of the block to the precinct wall, wholly concealed by nineteenth- and twentieth-century additions. It is in line with the south wall of the main range and might have divided domestic from service areas.

The stretch of western precinct wall between a metre or so south of the Roman wall and gate and the point where it bends south-east is 800mm thick, compared to 600mm elsewhere. There are two corbels in the precinct wall south of the concealed wall, their upper faces level with each other, and one was reported north of it.<sup>13</sup> They imply buildings against the precinct wall to north and south of the concealed wall.

As the most southerly corbel is 13,000mm away from the concealed wall, a range here might have been a long one, probably timber-framed and possibly two storeys high. Here, on the private side of the concealed wall, they would have been in a position comparable to private domestic buildings in royal residences, including Rochester castle itself. A range north of the wall could have been the one shown in Harris' view, which does not touch the concealed wall, but might have reached as far as the prison near the gatehouse. The prison was replaced by the Bishop's Registry in 1760 (see **Appendix 2**). There are three or four pieces of moulded stone in modern low garden walls at Southgate.

At Prior's Gate House the south wall of the cellar staircase, which is beyond the footprint of the seventeenth-century building, contains a small cluster of large projecting stones which might be a medieval remnant (Fig. 1). They could be part of the southern wall of the demolished eastern wing of the palace, or part of another structure to its south.

*The inventory of 1534*

The letters of Erasmus to Bishop John Fisher and the inventory of Fisher's possessions made in 1534 are the only documents to throw light on the accommodation.<sup>14</sup> The inventory lists 21 rooms, some of which may have been little more than closets, and five of which were probably service quarters. They are, in the order listed:

His owne bedd chamber	the litle chamber nexte the same
the great study within the same	chappell
chamber	the great chamber next the same
the north study	the olde dyning chamber
the south galerye	the halle
the chappell in thende of the south	the parlor
galory	the chamber nexte the same
the brode galary	Maister Wilson's chamber
the olde galary	the brewhous
the wardrobe	the cooke's chamber
the lytle study beside the	the keching
warderobe	the entre besides the kechyn
the great chappell within the same	
house	

The south gallery, broad gallery and old gallery are listed consecutively, and it is likely that at least one of them was above one of the others, since at that time a gallery was usually a long room. The listed sequence of great chapel, the little chamber next the same chapel, and the great chamber next the same fits the interpretation of the surviving block as containing a chapel, vestibule and great chamber, though this may be coincidence.

The usual tokens of a heated room, fire irons, are listed in only three places, the bedchamber, the great study within the same chamber, and the great chamber. This is not conclusive evidence of the number of rooms with fireplaces – the hall, for instance, has no fire irons though it did have a fireplace. If it was a first floor hall there may, by analogy with the surviving range, have been two superimposed fireplaces in the great hall block.

The great study was 'within' Fisher's bedroom, which means either 'enclosed within' 'or reached through'. If the bedchamber was in the heated room below the great chamber, the great study might also have been on the ground floor, perhaps in the extant north wing of Southgate (see below).

Fisher's library is not named. Only the great study and the north study had 'shelves to lay on boke'. In his 17th-century biography, Bailey<sup>15</sup> says the library was 'two long galleries full; the books were sorted in stalls, and a register of the name of every book at the end of every stall'. So it

seems that two of the three galleries listed served as the library, which Erasmus complained had 'thin walls' which let in through the 'crevices (an air) which is highly prejudicial ... I would rather choose a chamber that was well floored with wood, and wainscotted, for the exhalations which arise from a brick pavement needs to be very pernicious'.<sup>16</sup> Thin walls suggest that the library was more likely to have been in the vanished southern range(s) than in the surviving building.

Bailey continues, 'After his attairder his effects were seized, and his books filled thirty-two great fats or pipes, besides those that were embezzled away, spoiled, and scattered'. Only the occasional book is mentioned in the inventory, so they must already have been carted away.

Obviously much of the accommodation listed in 1534 was outside the hall and chamber blocks. There was probably more than the putative south-western range. Might the extant north wing of Southgate have been in existence? The evidence in it is contradictory, and the question remains open. It is discussed below under Southgate.

#### *Palace wing history after 1534*

Very few of the Bishop of Rochester's own records have survived, notably so regarding his palace. The Dean and Chapter's records contain a couple of references to his buildings, plus one or two useful ones relating to structures which bordered his premises.

Bishop John Fisher's political and intellectual connections brought several visitors of note to the palace. Erasmus of Rotterdam visited in summer 1516, and Sir Thomas More came here to see him.<sup>17</sup> Cardinal Thomas Wolsey stayed at the palace on his way to France in 1527,<sup>18</sup> and in 1529 Cardinal Campeggio, the Papal emissary sent to hear the cause of Henry VIII and Katharine of Aragon, also stayed at the palace.<sup>19</sup>

In the closing days of 1539, when Henry VIII called unexpectedly on Anne of Cleves while she was journeying to London, she is reputed to have been staying at the palace, but this is difficult to substantiate. The see was in vacancy at the time but the only specific reference is that she stayed at the Abbey of Rochester, which probably means the Priory, since it had not yet been dissolved.<sup>20</sup> Colvin refers to her stay at the abbot's house at St Augustine's, Canterbury, but does not mention Rochester.<sup>21</sup>

Henry VIII dissolved St Andrew's Priory in the following year, April 1540, and began to rebuild the former monastic buildings around the cloister for his own use as an overnight stop on journeys to Canterbury or Dover. Edward VI granted this rebuild to its official custodian, Lord Cobham, who sold it back to the Dean and Chapter in 1558, and either he or they pulled down the king's recent work.

In 1550 the Bishop, John Ponet, was described as having no episcopal palace, even though the king had confirmed the palace as property of the



bishops in 1542.<sup>22</sup> This is usually interpreted as meaning that the palace was unfit for use.

A lease of the stone gatehouse granted in 1596 by the Dean and Chapter says that it abutted south upon 'the way, Brickwall and grene before the pallace of the lord Bishop of Rochester'.<sup>23</sup> The green is still there, but did the wall separate it from the roadway, or from the building, which has been the case for at least two centuries? By 1631 the long sliver of the grammar school and its north garden lay between the eastern boundary of the palace and Prior's Gate.<sup>24</sup>

King James I is reported to have stayed at the bishop's palace in August 1606 while his guest, Christian IV of Denmark, rested at the house of Peter Bucke, identified as Eastgate House.<sup>25</sup> Many years later, in 1635, three visitors from Norwich described the palace as 'little, yet . . . handsome and lively', and found there an 'armoury' confiscated from a local lord by the bishop at James I's behest.<sup>26</sup>

In 1647 the palace was confiscated by Parliament and sold on 27th September 1649 to Charles Bowles and Nathaniel Andrews for £556 13s. 4d. At the Restoration in 1660 it was returned to the bishop.<sup>27</sup> When the palace was confiscated in 1647 the Commissioners' Return set out that it comprised:

the scite of the Palace containing one great messuage called the Palace wherein the Bishop's Court is held, estimated 12 perches, four rooms in the tenure of Bathe, a gallery divided into 2 rooms and 4 chambers; and the ward, a prison, wash-house, kitchen, three rooms, one orchard being a rood of ground, and one garden of ten poles, John Walter, steward, with the office of bailiff and bedle to all the manors except Bromley, and the keeping of the gaol granted by patent for life.<sup>28</sup>

It is not clear whether 'the great messuage called the Palace' comprised any of the other rooms and gallery mentioned, nor whether the medieval eastern wing was still standing, but parts of the premises enumerated in the inventory of 1534 seem to have disappeared by this time and others to have been reorganized. Some of the buildings had clearly given way to the orchard. As to the Bishop's Court, both the great chamber and the room beneath would have been suitable for holding it. A document of 1826 refers to the palace being 'demolished in the Great Rebellion'.<sup>29</sup>

The one rood (quarter of an acre) which the orchard occupied in 1647 is roughly the area of the combined south gardens of Southgate, College Green and Prior's Gate today. If that is where the orchard was, it would mean that most of any southern buildings had gone by then.

The ward, prison, wash house, kitchen and three rooms may, because of the known location of the prison just north of the gatehouse, have stood against the western precinct wall, perhaps forming the range depicted in the view of 1719 (see Appendix 1).



In 1717 it was the Dean and Chapter who, 'according to Custom', registered Edward Beck as the bishop's bailiff, beadle and prison keeper.<sup>30</sup> In 1741 they noted that the stone gate and porter's lodge above were ruinous, and ordered demolition in 1744, the site then to be paved and the precinct limits to be marked by posts (removed in 1877). The wall of the adjoining Provost of Oriel's house had to be reinforced following the demolition.<sup>31</sup>

The bishop's prison on the other side of the gate was probably in a similar condition, and as his court withered in the eighteenth century, the building was demolished at the instance of Bishop Pearce and replaced by the Bishop's Registry Office in 1760.<sup>32</sup>

The first direct reference to the palace itself after 1660 is in *The History and Antiquities of Rochester and its Environs*, printed by T. Fisher at Rochester in 1772, and written, it is thought, by Samuel Denne. A footnote at page 100 says that the palace is 'Now inhabited by Mr. Twopenny, Mrs. Chapman, and others' and the subscribers to the volume include Mr W. Twopenny, of Rochester, Mr W. Twopenny, junior, and a Miss Chapman.

Next in date is a plan of the cathedral precinct made for the Dean and Chapter by Daniel Alexander in March 1801.<sup>33</sup> The palace site, labelled 'Leasehold under the Bishop', is left blank, but an accompanying explanatory note describes it as 'three houses held of the Bishop under a lease for lives, and those young ones' (the lease for lives was a common expedient used by ecclesiastical institutions). It continues that in 1800 the Dean had considered buying for the Chapter the reversion of the lease for lives, and replacing the three houses with two, which seems to have been seen as the way forward, but had decided it was uneconomic. The school and schoolmaster's house are categorised as 'a very ancient and inconvenient building'. The Registry is labelled 'Mr. Twopeny's Office'.

The Twopeny family of solicitors was significant in Rochester from at least 1767, and probably much earlier, since both William Twopeny, senior (viv.1790, probably the Mr Twopeny mentioned in the History) and his bride's family, the Soans, were resident in the cathedral, or Dean and Chapter's precinct, not the bishop's precinct, at the time of his marriage on 30 November 1754. He appeared in the Chapter records on 25 November 1767, and in 1777 became joint Chapter Clerk with William Stubbs. Members of the family served as Chapter Clerks jointly and successively until 1840, and also acted as Auditors to the Chapter, and as Registrars to the Diocese and Archdeaconry. Their principal place of business was the Registry, certainly so in 1801, and perhaps earlier, the firm remaining there until the later twentieth century. In 1830 Edward Twopeny took George Essell into partnership and the business continued, its name changing with successive partners. The chief partner was usually the Chapter Clerk.

Then comes a group of deeds ranging from 1805 to 1859, involving the bishop and the Twopeny family. They were listed in 1873 during

the re-endowment of the Dean and Chapter and marked as including the three houses, the sites of St Margaret's Parsonage and the school, and the Bishop's Registry and the green before it. The deeds themselves, mostly leases, have been lost, and only the dates and the names of the parties now survive, the earliest being a lease of 1805 by the bishop to Edward Soan Twopeny (1765-1809), a younger son of William, senior.<sup>34</sup> In view of this the Twopenys were almost certainly the leaseholders in 1800, when the Dean considered purchase.

Furthermore, an important extract from the lease of 9 December 1826 was copied by A.A. Arnold (Chapter Clerk 1889-1901) in the margin of his own copy of Rye's article.<sup>35</sup> It concerned, he quoted, 'All those 4 tenements now and for many years past made into and used as 3 tenements situate in the Bailiwick or Precinct of the Palace Court of the Bishop of Rochester ... which were erected and built in the place where the Palace of the Bishop of Rochester stood, till the same was demolished in the Great Rebellion'. He confirmed that the lessees for lives in 1826 were Mrs Susanna Twopeny (widow of Edward Soan) and her son, Edward, that 'the office near' was included (that is, the Registry), and that on 3 February 1827 they bought the reversion of the lease from Bishop King, for £1,270 13s. 0d.

Susanna the widow sold her share to her son Edward (bap. 1795, viv. 1870) on 7th May 1836, and he straightway raised a mortgage upon the premises (10 May 1836, repaid 30 May 1859). On 29 July that year he bought from the Dean and Chapter the site of St Margaret's Parsonage 'lately taken down', which was contiguous at the south-east, though not hitherto part of the bishop's precinct. Just over a year later, on 2 October 1837, he bought from them a long strip of land north of the parsonage lying between his grounds and the present roadway at the east, which had been the site of the grammar school and its long garden. The parsonage site plan of 1836 marks the 'grammar school' as still adjoining the Prior's Gate tower, but there is no mention of it in the deed of 1837.<sup>36</sup> Edward Twopeny now owned the whole of the site encompassed by The Precinct and Boley Hill.

On 6 April 1870 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners bought all the freeholds from him for £3,500, having resisted paying the £4,400 he wanted in 1867, and in 1873 they were included in the re-endowment of the Dean and Chapter. College Green and Southgate were subsequently let on leases of varying lengths, until the freehold of Southgate was sold in 2008. In 2011 the freehold of College Green was advertised for sale.

Is it possible to suggest which owners or lessees were responsible for the changes prior to the acquisition by the Dean and Chapter in 1873? Firstly, the replacement of the old east wing with Prior's Gate House, and the conversion of the stone range into two or three dwellings must have been the work of either Bowles and Andrews between 1649 and 1660, or the bishop after 1660. The north wing may have been part of this phase.

The key to the major alterations of the eighteenth century is the rebuilding of the Bishop's Registry in 1760. A decrepit prison by the front wall would surely have discouraged potential lessees, so its rebuilding looks like part of a scheme to refurbish and update the stone block. It may have comprehended also the alterations to the facade of Prior's Gate House. In the author's view this phase is more likely to have been carried out by the bishop at the time, Zachary Pearce, than by an incoming lessee. The lease for lives probably originates here.

The initial lessee was probably the William Twopeny who married in 1754, and was resident in 1772. The bishop's lease of 1805 to William's younger son Edward Soan Twopeny confirms the view that this family held the lease for lives. The Twopenys therefore, as long leaseholders, would have been responsible for the next changes, namely the shifted staircase and refitted middle room at Southgate (William Twopeny senior, perhaps). Either he, or more probably his son Edward Soan, was responsible for the new staircase and salon at Prior's Gate House. To Edward, son of Edward Soan, who came of age as head of the family in 1816, are attributable both the single-storey extension at Prior's Gate House, where his younger brother David (1803-75, the only Twopeny to have these initials) helpfully left his mark, 'DT 1817', on a brick (**Fig. 3**), and also the similar conversion of the north wing at Southgate. The new



Fig. 3 Prior's Gate House: the initials of David Twopeny, 1817.  
Photo P.A. Clarke.

east wing of Prior's Gate House and the south hall of Southgate, with its associated service range, were his last works. The door, windows and balustrade at College Green can be attributed to him or to his father.

What of the fourth tenement? The expression 'those 4 tenements now and for many years past made into and used as 3 tenements' looks like one of those legal phrases carried forward from deed to deed. Expressed in this way it usually connoted contiguous buildings, so the building against the west precinct wall shown in the 1719 view could be counted out. Perhaps the stone range and north wing had formed more than two units. At any rate, the four had been reduced to three before the plan of March 1801 was made, and the most obvious occasion was the granting of the original lease for lives.

As to the occupiers, while the Twopenys were leaseholders the best house, Prior's Gate House, was probably always the residence of their senior members, the other premises being let, or used by junior branches. One of the witnesses to William Twopeny's marriage in 1754 was named Catherine Chapman. Perhaps she was the other resident mentioned in 1772, and may have been a relative.

After Edward Twopeny moved away about 1841 the occupant of Prior's Gate House was usually the Chapter Clerk or the chief partner in the firm or a canon. The occupiers of College Green and Southgate included mainly cathedral officials, canons, army officers, and ladies of independent means. Col William Dooner, C.B.E., at Southgate c.1902-1911, was Mayor of Rochester in 1905-6. Perhaps the most distinguished resident was George Payne (1848-1929), lessee of College Green from 1889 to 1920, archaeologist, and founder and first director of Eastgate House Museum, where he is commemorated by a tablet in the porch.

#### ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS OF PRIOR'S GATE HOUSE AND THE STONE BLOCK

##### *Prior's Gate House (Fig. 4)*

Prior's Gate House occupies part of the site of the east wing and so presents a rough date by which that wing must have gone. Today it is a complex building of two storeys and some attics, but its core is an L-shaped seventeenth-century house whose main range lies E-W, contiguous with the stone block, and has a short rear wing at the south-west. The present material is red brick, of several periods in mixed bond, though weatherboarding conceals the upper parts of the south west wing.

The core has two storeys and attics. The roof of the main range has six bays divided by paired principal rafters with collars and tenoned purlins, the collars straight except for that in the western pair, which is cambered. There is ridge boarding in parts. It is independent of the adjoining stone range even though the western truss was not closed and abuts the gable

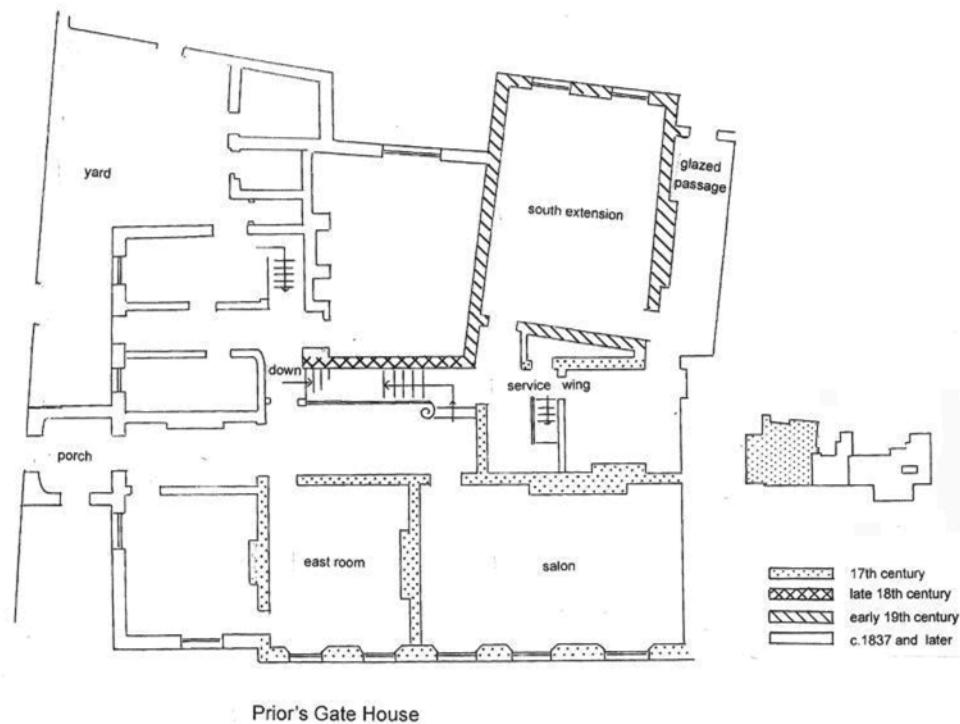


Fig. 4 Prior's Gate House: plans based on those for the proposed conversion of 1978. By kind permission of Rochester Cathedral.

of College Green. The eastern truss is hidden. Along the north pitch there were six little gables, their north faces flush with the main north wall. The western cheek of the fourth gablet from the west is still in situ. There has been a great deal of subsequent alteration and repair, so that the roof is full of later bracing and propping timbers; some of the original timbers are reused pieces. The main stack, laid in English bond, separates the fourth and fifth bays, counting from the west. There were three rooms to each floor in this range, each served by a hearth. The attic was divided into two or three rooms. No original windows or joinery remain.

The roof of the south-west wing is largely obscured by a brick wall containing a stack at the junction with the main range, but is of rafter and purlin construction, jointing not observed, and ceiled to collar level. There were two floors of one room each and an attic. It was probably the service wing, with the kitchen at the ground floor, where it is now, and in which the chimney breast is concealed. Two narrow and parallel gables adjoin the wing at the east, probably roofing a stair wing. The location of the entrance is not known.

The cellars are contemporary with the core building but they lie beneath the east-west range only, with the access now beneath the present main staircase, which is outside the core. The walls have no batter. They are of stone blocks, generally about 9in. or less, and red brick. The supporting arches of the stacks are of brick. There is a small window high in the north wall, and three brick-lined keeping-holes east and south in the section east of the stack.

In the eighteenth century the north wall was altered, or rebuilt, and raised to conceal the attic, which was fitted with four shallow casement windows between two blocked ones, all within camber-arched recesses (the eastern window frame is later). The five windows in each of the lower storeys are irregularly spaced, hornless sashes in revealed frames beneath cambered arches. At some point the second window from the east on the first floor was shifted westward. There is a plat band between ground and first floors, and another below the parapet.

Two important changes were made late in the eighteenth century, or possibly at the start of the nineteenth, lending some grandeur to the house. A spacious entrance hall and staircase were built in the south-east angle, and a salon was formed from the two western rooms of the ground floor.

The staircase, lit from the south, is broad, with quarter landings at head and foot, a large curtail step, a cut string with brackets, three stick balusters to each shallow tread and an oval handrail. The cellar entrance is beneath them. The south wall was carried up to a parapet to conceal the roof, and logically the entrance to the house should have been placed in the east wall of this extension. The first staircase, now become the secondary one, rising from the first floor, has similar sticks and handrail, and slim columnar newels.

To create the salon, the ceilings of the two western ground-floor rooms were raised some 400mm, and that of the floor above likewise, which exposed the base of the third principal rafter in the north wall of the bedroom. As a result of the lift the two first-floor rooms at the west are two steps higher than the rest, and the attic above them was rendered unusable. The east attic room remains.

New access to the attics at each side of the main stack was made from the secondary staircase. Rafters in the south pitch of the main range replaced at this time have the neatly incised assembly marks characteristic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The remodelled ground floor room has a perforated cornice moulding of acanthus and lotus leaves below a perforated egg-and-dart style band. The low chair rail has cyma moulding, while the door has a highly moulded architrave. There is no panelling. The hearth was moved from the stack at the junction with the south-west wing to the middle of the south wall. The fireplace surround is of dark grey and white veined marble with roundels at the corners, of the pattern so popular c.1800-1840. The edges of the chimney breast are rolled.

The eastern ground floor room also has a moulded cornice, though simpler, and a similar chair rail. The chimney breast edges are rolled and here is the only other extant fireplace in the main range, with a simple wooden surround, late nineteenth-century grate and tiled slips.

All the north windows were furnished inside with bi-fold panelled shutters in two leaves each side, with light holes at the head. Some have the later elliptical shutter bars. The ground floor windows were enlarged, and have rather deeper voussoirs and narrow glazing bars. The fittings and decor of staircase and salon indicate a very late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century date.

These changes may or may not have encompassed the subdivision of the first-floor middle room east of the main stack, and the shifting westward of one of its windows. The western part of the room is still entered through the eastern, and the axial beam of the original room is still visible through each.

Early in the nineteenth century a single-storey extension with a low pitched slate roof and dark pink bricks was joined to the south-west wing. Near the south corner of the west wall, eleven courses from the ground, is a brick bearing the carved initials DT and the date 1817 (see above).<sup>37</sup> There is a pair of symmetrical floor length windows at the south, with thin glazing bars, triple-fold shutter panels in two leaves each side, with ogee moulding and high quality, elegant fittings, including elliptical bars. The cornice is of flattened reeds. The white marble fireplace surround has panelled fluted jambs and lintel, with oval rosettes in the corners. The lobby between extension and principal staircase has long and short panelling with ovolo moulding, very common from 1750 to 1850.



There soon followed a major addition in the form an eastward-facing entrance wing of red brick with slate roofs built across the eastern end of the house on part of the site of the King's School, dateable to 1837-40 (see above). The ceiling level is higher than in the older part, making its first floor a step higher. The asymmetrical facade is five windows wide; the second ground-floor window from the south was briefly converted to a door in the twentieth century, the northern one is blind. The upper windows have rising shutters. The northward-facing upper window is blind. A shallow service wing is set back at the south, with an attached single-storey kitchen reaching to the 1817 wing, but fitting so tightly that the latter's eaves had to be trimmed back to make room for the new roof slope. The door between the kitchen and the stair hall of the earlier part has been blocked.

The south wall of the service wing is, at ground-floor level, composed of stonework, chiefly flint, closely set, with an admixture of other stone towards the top. This is such a surprising feature to find in an otherwise smart and neatly pointed brick block that it is hard not to wonder if it is a relic of the grammar school buildings or walls.

By 1866 an entrance porch had been added to the house, with a front wall of reclaimed stone and there were stone stables at the south-east corner of the site where St Margaret's Parsonage had stood (see above). Sometime during the twentieth century they were taken over by the King's School.

Prior's Gate House was divided into three dwellings in 1978, in the course of which several openings were closed or made. A partition was set between the west end of the principal staircase at both ground and first floor level, and all parts west became Flat 3, except the attics, which were boarded off. Another partition at the east end of the stairs divided off all parts south of the east porch at each floor, which became Flat 2, contained within the south part of the east wing, and with a new staircase. The remainder was Flat 1.

In 2001 Flats 1 and 3 were recombined as the Deanery. The porch wall became unsteady and was taken down in 2008, its mock-Tudor door being used as the external door of a new glazed passage west of the 1817 wing. At the same time a large stretch of the stone wall either side of the porch was rebuilt.

### *The medieval block; College Green and Southgate*

After the Restoration the principal floor of the surviving range was divided into two storeys throughout and the roof probably ceiled off. The building was divided vertically at the wall below the putative sixth truss, and a brick chimney stack with back-to-back hearths inserted in each part to heat each floor. A half-winder staircase was built against the north side of each inserted stack, and thus two houses of three floors and classic



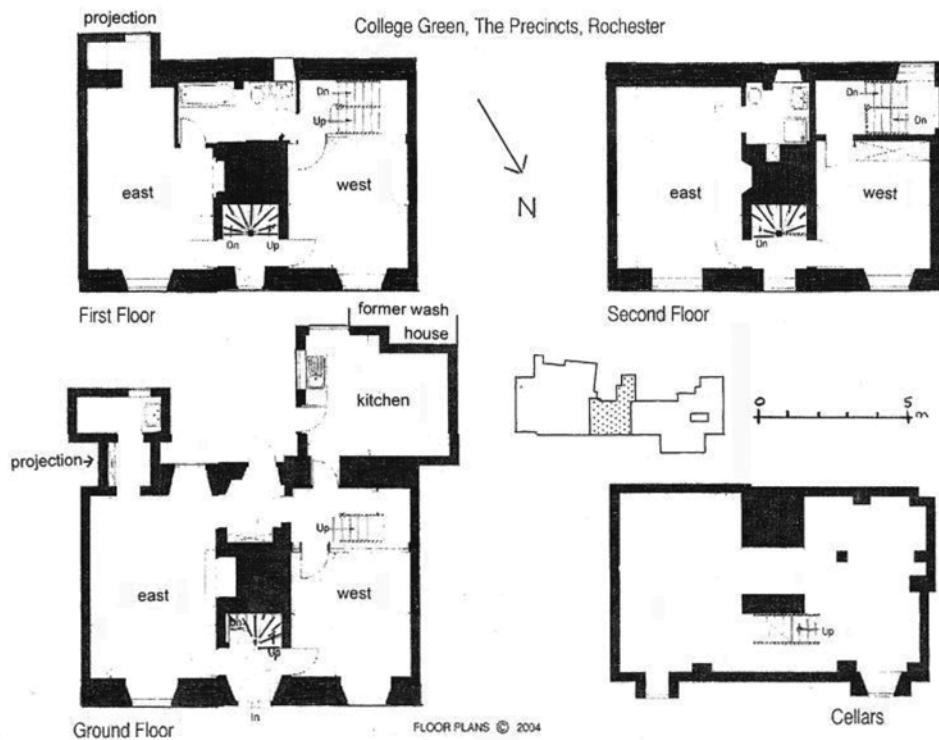


Fig. 5 College Green: plan based on estate agents' drawings. By kind permission of Calcutt Maclean Standen.

lobby-entry plan were created.<sup>38</sup> The rooms were probably through from front to back, with closets south of the stack. The primary dating evidence is the lobby plan, the stairs, the chimney bricks, and the small wainscot panelling which is found in each house. Once the large windows were blocked no identifiable medieval window remained in use. The present window openings at the north very likely date from this time. Most of the south and west windows are within the probable area of the large medieval ones, but they have been renewed or created many times and are difficult to date.

There is no trace of the 'C17 staircase with heraldic beast on the newels' mentioned in Pevsner, *West Kent* (1969), p. 467, which seems misplaced.

In *College Green* the original staircase still exists, though with an early nineteenth-century balustrade at the top (**Fig. 5**). Some of the wainscot panelling survives in the ground- and first-floors west. Two doors of like panelling in the top east room are probably original to the house though not necessarily in their first positions.

The stone fire surrounds at ground and first floor east, both damaged, are of late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century date, rather inappropriate to a house of this type and date (see **Appendix 3**).

Neither of the ground-floor rooms was suitable to be the kitchen, which was almost certainly where the single-storey kitchen is now, at the south-west, its (blocked) hearth back-to-back against the still-existing hearth and stack of the attached outhouse. The outhouse hearth resembles very closely indeed those in the travellers' rooms of Watts Charity in Rochester High Street, which are reckoned early seventeenth-century. At College Green the stack has been partly repaired and the walls of outhouse and kitchen much renewed, but they may be relics from the time of conversion. The kitchen extends a few feet westward across the rear wall of Southgate.

The outhouse was probably a wash house or brew house. Other single or double extensions like this pair are still recognizable elsewhere in Rochester, for example at 150 High Street and 23 Crow Lane, and a detached wash house still exists at Southgate (see below). The records of the Dean and Chapter refer to the wash houses of two prebendaries' houses near the Chapter House in 1744.<sup>39</sup>

The north door and north windows were replaced early in the nineteenth century. The door case has plain concave brackets beneath a finely moulded cornice and a shallow shelf hood. The cast iron fireplace at the second floor east dates from the same period, or perhaps the 1840s, and may be part of the same work. The western fireplaces have subsequently been blocked or removed. The newel post and balusters at the top landing date from this time or a little earlier.



Fig. 6 Southgate: plan based on estate agents' drawings. The stone walls are the thicker ones. By kind permission of Strutt & Parker LLP.

There is no information about later changes until soon after the death of Mrs Philbrick in 1973, when the rear staircase was inserted, borrowing light from the western rooms, and the first-floor closet was converted into a bathroom.<sup>40</sup> The kitchen was modernised, and many of the six-panelled doors are also recent.

*Southgate* has a more complicated structural history than *College Green* (Fig. 6). As it is now the house with its north wing has an unusually large number of rooms (the same as in Prior's Gate House originally) but even without the wing it was larger than *College Green*. Each floor has one room east of the stack and two rooms west (which will subsequently be referred to as east, middle and west rooms). Wainscot panelling survives in the first-floor middle room and in the south wall of the passage which was cut through this room later. The panelling was probably more extensive once, as at *College Green*. The obvious position for the kitchen is the western ground-floor room, with its very large hearth and proximity to the service yard, the natural place for which was west of the house. The remains of a well were discovered there during a kitchen extension in 1991. It cut into the Roman wall, and was described as modern, though the archaeologist considered the remains to be eighteenth-century.<sup>41</sup>

The north wing, however, has many contradictory features. It consists of a single two-storeyed bay whose exposed eastern wall plate and southern tie beam suggest a building originally timber-framed. The walls are now brick, of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century date. The roof is post-medieval, having softwood rafters, a ridge board, and some re-used timbers, including the north collar and the unsecured east purlin. Every third pair of rafters has nailed vertical timbers, either to prop them or to hold the ceiling joists. The ceilings are higher than those in the main block. There is a hearth at each level in the northern face of the stack of the main range, and a third-floor hearth has been added to the south side of the stack. This is blocked now but above it is a carved lintel of wood which has a Tudor arch within a peaked frame, and carving in the spandrels, with different detail at each side, grapes in the western, a flower in the eastern. The arch and the foliate carving point to a late fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century date.<sup>42</sup> Within the roof the chimney bricks are seventeenth- or early eighteenth-century. Access between the wing and the main block seems to have been west of the stack.

The wing remains an enigma. Was it a medieval structure, much altered later? The hearth openings at the north could perhaps be of fifteenth- or sixteenth-century date, even though so few fire irons are listed in the 1534 inventory, while the differing floor levels could reflect a wish to avoid repeating the low ground floor ceiling of the main range, and access west of the stack would have been suitable for the private end of the chamber block. Moreover, the carved lintel, not quite wide enough for the

great chamber hearth or the one below, might have fitted the ground-floor hearth of the northern wing, and maybe the upper one.

The wing could have been added during the transitional and undocumented period between the middle of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and been comprised within the description of 1647. Was it built at the time of conversion to dwellings? It is hard to see why such a wing would have been placed at the frontage of what appears, after the Restoration, to have been a modish terrace. Even with the advantage of adapting an existing stack, it seems an unsatisfactory state of affairs. As the only access to the main range was west of the stack perhaps it was a service wing with a kitchen at the ground floor, like the rear wing of Prior's Gate House. A nineteenth-century document suggests that at some time prior to 1800 the three present houses may have comprised four (see above) though it is impossible now to deduce the arrangement.

A good deal of eighteenth-century work survives, possibly of one phase, but more likely of two which closely succeed, or even overlap, each other. The first involves the north door and middle room, the second the repositioning of the staircase. The north door has a pediment supported on simple consoles, over a shouldered architrave which breaks upward in the middle and has broad ovolo moulding. The north sash windows have exposed frames, and their internal shutters seem to be the original ones, pairs of non-folding leaves with two columns of three plain panels in each, hung on H-hinges. There is a panelled chimney piece in the ground floor middle room. The panelling has ovolo moulding and is in two heights, divided by a chair rail with torus moulding between a pair of double cymas. It, and the cornice, continue along the northern wall of the room, now divided off as part of the north hall, respecting a wall cupboard in the void of the blocked window. The fire surround has the same shouldering and broad ovolo moulding as the north door, a style not usually found after about 1760-70, except for later revivals. (Later in the century the hearth was updated with a hob grate and a duck's-nest basket, the oldest grate original to the house.) The Bishop's Registry on the green, built 1760, has an almost identical fire surround, and the same type of moulding survives in parts of The Old Deanery, which was remodelled about the same date. All these features are of a piece with each other, and there is no reason to consider them other than genuine, and dateable to *c.* 1760.

The half-winder staircase was removed and replaced by a new one, of two separated flights, set against the south of the stack in the former closet space, the infilling of the former south window being cut back at the first floor to allow a landing. The lower flight extends into the middle room, and is straight and even, except for a quarter turn at the top step, while the steeper upper flight begins with a turn. The shafts and newel of the balustrade to the lower flight are Tuscan, while the handrail has

a deep grip of seventeenth-century type, needing a deep newel block to accommodate it. A later eighteenth-century date might be suggested for the balusters. The history of ownership does not favour it being a late nineteenth-century fancy.

On the upper floors the spaces of the half-winder stair, one of whose posts is still visible at the top floor, and of the original landings, were converted to closets, and incorporated into the bedrooms only in the twentieth century. The doorways of these closets remain their original width. At the first floor, the south doors of the east and middle bedrooms were reset to fit the new stairs, and their cases have broad ovolo mouldings matching those of the north door and the middle fireplace. The use of these mouldings might mean that the repositioning of the stairs was concurrent with the installation of the north door and middle hearth.

The removal of the half-winder enlarged the entrance lobby and allowed wider doorways into the rooms at either side. The opening into the middle room is very wide, and is fitted with a frame of broad ovolo moulding, whose northern jamb is laid over, and not fitted, to the chair rail, which appears to be the original. The frame is clearly later. There is no trace of a door. This phase might have been part of the 1760 works, or subsequent to them, but the detail places them earlier than the nineteenth century.

The eastern room, apart from the fully panelled north window, has the dado panelling with ovolo moulding preferred later in the century, and a six-panelled north door. The southern door is a replica, though is probably in the original position in the former closet space.

Upstairs, an empty door case in the first floor corridor shows that the western room was entered through the middle room as well as from the secondary staircase. The door itself was later reused in the new south doorway of the western room. The arrangements at the second floor were probably similar, though only the north jamb of the south middle doorway remains. Communication through rooms was normal practice before Victorian times.

Early in the nineteenth century the downstairs room of the north wing was refashioned, and extended eastward to give direct access to the middle room east of the stack. The new access involved blocking the north window of the middle room, part of which was left as a wall cupboard, and cutting through the old wall. The opening to the north wing was stepped back at the east, making it wider than the doorway itself. The dark rose brickwork of the ground floor, ground length windows with their triple-fold shutters and fine ogee mouldings, repeated in the doors and door case, match those of the 1817 wing at Prior's Green House, and date it to the early nineteenth century. The white marble fire surround it then had might have been similar also.<sup>43</sup> The present wooden fireplace, a fine late eighteenth-century example with applied mouldings of swags and figures, was brought here in the twentieth century (see below). Behind the western door is a heavy

'baize' door, in place by 1876, separating the service quarters.<sup>44</sup> Bearing in mind the heightening of ceilings at Prior's Gate House, it is possible that the ceilings in the north wing were raised at this time.

The long south hall was either contemporary with these improvements, or quickly followed, to judge by the brickwork and the window opening in its east wall. The glazing has border panes with etched pink glass. It provided a covered link to the service quarters north and south and to the door in the west wall.

Also dateable to the early nineteenth century are the French window in the east room, with its shutters and associated panelling, the fire surround there, of white and grey veined marble, reeded, with corner roundels, and also the hob grates of the first and second floor middle rooms.<sup>45</sup>

The link between north wing and middle room altered the hierarchy of the downstairs rooms. The north wing became the chief reception room, its lofty proportions making it more elegant than the low-ceilinged ones elsewhere, whilst the middle room became a large reception hall, with wide entrance and featured staircase – its extension into the room perhaps occurred at this time. At this point, if not before, the west room of the main range became the kitchen, and a corridor was formed out of its south part to allow access from the erstwhile middle room to the new south hall. This was the situation shown in the 1876 inventory.<sup>46</sup>

Should the broad ovolo moulding of the wide frames in the north hall be seen as a concession to harmony of style, or a sign that the conversion to a hall dates to the eighteenth century? The author prefers the former, because a link to the north wing, before the wing was extended eastward, would require a very awkward arrangement.

The only evidence of service quarters outside the stone block and north wing before the nineteenth century is the small single-storey brick building set against the west wall of the south garden, now used as a study, which almost certainly originated as a wash house or brew house of the type found at College Green and other places in Rochester. It probably dates from the eighteenth, or just possibly, seventeenth century.<sup>47</sup>

The south hall provided a link to the wash house, the service rooms and the door in the west boundary wall, new perhaps. Its north wall incorporates the very much earlier concealed wall, and the floor rises westward with the slope of the land. The skirting board moulding is carried down to the floor at the door openings, a sign that they are the original ones, and therefore that the similar, though shorter and initially single-storeyed, service range built against the northern side of the wall was part of the hall scheme. This northern part was the butler's pantry in 1876<sup>48</sup> and the entry was through the eastern opening in the hall. At first the opening in the western end gave into the side yard with its well.

A wall closing off the kitchen yard from the north garden appears on the OS 25in. map of 1866, as also does a small extension north of the



butler's pantry which does not appear on later maps but might have been the butler's bedroom, mentioned in 1876 but not in 1897. In 1876 there was an outside WC for the servants near the wash house. By 1896 the wash house was in use as a library.<sup>49</sup>

Between 1876 and 1897 a narrow service range was built against the northern yard wall, with access from the door by the secondary stairs. It was described as a scullery in 1897 and shown on the 1898 OS map. The 1876 inventory also refers to a small conservatory against the French window, and three wine bins in the cellar.

Within the house, Victorian susceptibilities would have made the corridors on the first and second floors necessary. By 1876, though probably much earlier, there was an indoor WC on the first floor, apparently at the west which would have needed corridor access.<sup>50</sup> Logically its plumbing would be associated with that of the pantry, but no extension for it is shown in Baker's sketch of 1886. When the first floor corridor was made the south window of the middle room was blocked and made into the present wall cupboard, but the seventeenth-century panelling alongside it was left, isolated, in place.

In 1897 several improvements were made at the request of the incoming leaseholder, Austin Budden. The ground floor of the north wing was extended westward, and the old west wall was made into an internal archway; at the first floor a bathroom was installed over the butler's pantry (by then the housemaid's pantry), with the WC separate within it at the west end; at the top floor the ceiling of the middle room was raised by removing the third tie beam.<sup>51</sup>

Information about twentieth-century modifications comes primarily from Mrs Sally Sinden, lessee from 1989-2002,<sup>52</sup> and Canon Paul Welsby, Cathedral Property Steward and resident during the 1970s-80s.

In his leaflet on Southgate, Canon Welsby referred to the presence at the top floor of the carved lintel ('part of an oak fireplace'), and implies that the second-floor bathroom and separate WC were formed out of the west bedroom about 1963.<sup>53</sup> This left room for the corridor to dogleg through to meet the secondary stairs. He later told Mrs Sinden that the late eighteenth-century fireplace in the north wing had come from the old Deanery east of the cathedral after it ceased to be the Deanery.<sup>54</sup>

Mrs Sinden said the Bouchers, resident c.1939, moved the kitchen into the western extensions and reincorporated the corridor into the west room, which was then combined with the middle one to form the present lounge; the half glazed screen was inserted to separate the north hall. The sale brochure of 1988 shows that a brick fireplace had replaced the kitchen range of the inventories, with a chimney piece patterned on the middle room example. Panelling on the south, west and north walls of this room could be genuine or twentieth-century replication of the eighteenth/nineteenth-century ovolo moulded type.



Mrs Sinden found all the fireplaces had been blocked, except those in the ground floor east room and north wing, but she uncovered them, except for the first floor west. She replaced the brick fireplace in the former kitchen with a wooden one, which was replaced again by the present stone one after it was burnt in an accident subsequently to 2002. It was she who exposed the four-centred window head in the south wall of the second floor. She thought the carved lintel had come from elsewhere in Southgate.

Between 1989 and 2002 she extended the kitchen along the west precinct wall to form an enclosed courtyard, but left part of the west wall exposed behind glass doors; for this a WC adjoining the western entry into the south hall had to be removed. The shower room was added to the west end of the first floor bathroom between 2002 and 2009

### Conclusion

The imposing range of the old palace of the Bishops of Rochester has been modified many times. The great change from medieval palace to dwellings was probably the work of the bishops, as were the improvements of 1760, but its present condition owes much to just one family, the Twopenys of Rochester. And there it stands, still within its ancient precinct, looking across the small green to the cathedral, as it has done since medieval times.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the following people for their willing help: for access to premises, the Dean and Chapter of Rochester (in particular Sue Malthouse), Peter and Susan Stawowski, Barbara Deeprose, Ruth and Ian McLeod; for archives, the staff of Medway Archives in Strood and of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners in Bermondsey; for information, Sally Sinden, Edward Bates, Barbara Deeprose, Graham Keevil, Alan Ward, Sarah Pearson, Tim Tatton-Brown.

### Appendix 1 The documentary evidence

The earliest illustration of the palace is the view in John Harris' *History of Kent* (1719) (Fig. 7). The purpose of the view is to show Rochester and Strood, with the cathedral and major civic buildings glorified, and as a result the remaining town buildings are cramped and distorted. The work should be regarded as a guide, not as an accurate depiction. The 1719 view is described in the statutory listings of 1950 and 2001 as showing 'a long range with end, not cross, wings. That to the E(ast) has gone, the W(est) wing survives'. By 'the long range' is presumably meant the existing

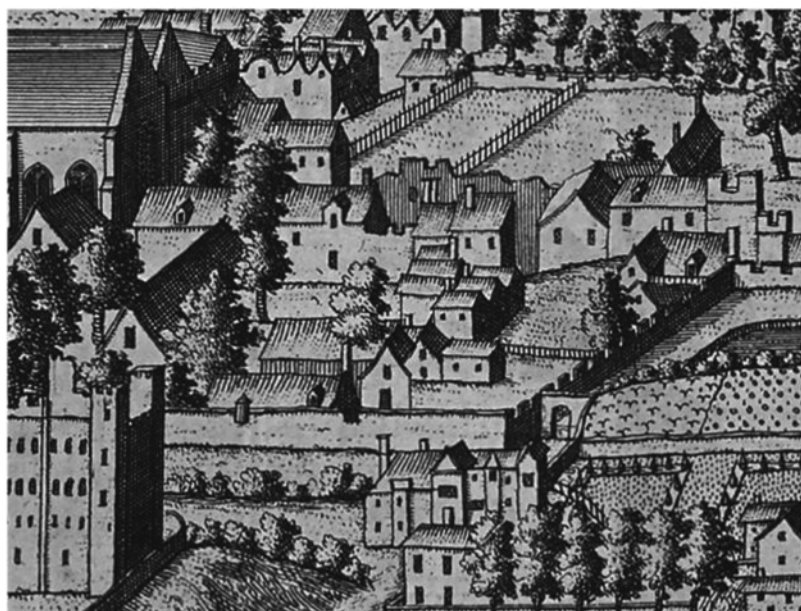


Fig. 7 Detail of the bishop's palace from John Harris's History of Kent 1719.  
(British Library ref. B.L. 192.f.2.)

stone block, the west wing being its northward extending wing. St John Hope's description of the view is more accurate: 'the bishop's palace is shown with a western wing, standing at a right angle to the existing block, but not overlapping it, against the wall bounding the street. The same view apparently shows a similar wing on the east'.<sup>55</sup>

In the drawing the E-W range has a window in the gable, and this should be the existing stone range. Against its south side is a similar E-W range, but set back eastward, with its own attached wing at the south (might this be the King's School?). At the eastern end of the stone range is a northern building at right angles, but apparently not attached, its wall unlike any other wall shown, being windowless and seemingly boarded (vertically hatched). At the western end of the stone range is another northern building, apparently unattached, with a dormer near the south and a south gable stack. This 'wing' seems to be built against the west wall of the precinct and is probably the one referred to by St John Hope. The existing north wing of Southgate, attached and without dormers, is not represented.

There is no other useful map or picture. Speed's Map of 1610 shows a row of houses along the east boundary of the precinct only; Almond's



Fig. 8 Southgate and College Green, rear view in 1886, H. Baker, *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XVII (1887), opp. p. 67.

‘View’ of 1685 shows houses only along the north boundary;<sup>56</sup> James Collin’s map of 1700 shows some houses towards the south;<sup>57</sup> John Spice’s Survey of 1710 shows houses on the north and west boundaries only;<sup>58</sup> George Russell’s map of Rochester in 1717 shows only the gatehouses and two other, detached, houses.<sup>59</sup>

Herbert Baker’s drawing of the south front of Southgate and College Green in 1886 (**Fig. 8**) generally accords with what is known, except that the western stack is misrepresented as breaking through the ridge of the main range when it actually breaks the ridge of the north wing.<sup>60</sup>

There is a postcard c.1930 showing the south wall of Southgate and College Green (**Fig. 9**). The outline of a first-floor chamber window is visible above the bush and another between it and the buttress, and also a single-light window left of the buttress overlapped by a large window and a later framed window, and another adjoining the top right window at its left side, in College Green. The kitchen and former wash house of College Green is at the right, part of the south hall of Southgate at the left.

## Appendix 2 The Bishop’s Registry

The registry was constructed in 1760 on the site of the bishop’s prison, just north of Southgate. The original building seems to have contained



Fig. 9 Postcard c.1930 showing south wall of Southgate (right) and College Green. By kind permission of Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Couchman Collection.

a small heated room each side of the main entrance, and a larger room, presumably the writing room, also heated, at the south. Some plain panelling of eighteenth- to nineteenth-century date remains in the entrance. The fireplace surround in the small south room, now a lobby, is shouldered and has the same broad ovolo moulding as is found in Southgate and the Old Deanery. The fireplace in the writing room is Victorian. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries other rooms were added at the west, including a basement strong room, and a staircase. More recently rooms have been fitted into the space behind the pediment, and the writing room has been partitioned. The building is still owned by the Dean and Chapter.

### Appendix 3 Provenance of the Fire Surrounds in the Stone block

The carved Tudor lintel at the second floor of Southgate and the two stone fire surrounds in College Green and Southgate present problems of provenance (**Figs 10 and 11**). There is no information about them in the Episcopal or Chapter archives.

The Tudor lintel predates the conversion of the building. It is too narrow



Fig. 10 College Green, fire surround east ground floor. Photo P. Stawowski.

for the first floor opening, but might have fitted the ground floor hearth, the width of whose opening is not known, if it were smaller. It is too wide for the inserted stack. No inventory mentions it specifically though it appears from its condition never to have been covered and could not have gone unnoticed if present. Marble surrounds elsewhere were noted. The first documentary reference is in Paul Welsby's undated leaflet, which notes 'on the top floor ... can be seen ... part of an oak fireplace', and it is mentioned in the sale brochure of 1988.

At College Green, the stone fireplaces seem anachronistic for the second part of the seventeenth century, and they are too narrow to have come from Southgate. They, and the Tudor lintel also, may have been reclamations from nearby demolitions, for W.B. Rye noted in 1887 that a fireplace from the old demolished grammar school was built into an outside wall nearby about 1840 (this was the wall rebuilt in 2008). Such reclamations are most likely to have occurred before about 1890, for no insertion is mentioned either by George Payne of College Green, antiquary and resident 1889-1920, or Canon Welsby, Cathedral Property Steward, who reported the insertion of the Adam fireplace, both of them alert to these things.



Fig. 11 Southgate: the Tudor lintel. Photo P. Stawowski.

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> There is another building in Rochester, often called the old palace, and now known as Bishop's Court, which stands in St Margaret's Street. Its history lies outside this article.

<sup>2</sup> T. Tatton-Brown, 2006, 'Topography and Buildings of Medieval Rochester', in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Rochester*, BAA, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> See BL Maps; K. Top. 17.8.1 and 2, a plan of the Precinct of Rochester Cathedral by Daniel Alexander, March 1801.

<sup>4</sup> G.M. Livett, 1895, 'Medieval Rochester', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XXI, 42.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> W.B. Rye, 1887, 'The Ancient Episcopal Palace at Rochester and Bishop Fisher', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XVII, 66-76.

<sup>7</sup> At Halling, Stone by Dartford, Trottiscliffe and Kippington (Sevenoaks) – see A.J. Pearman, G.A. Tait and H. Percy Thompson, 1918, 'Residences of the Bishops of Rochester', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XXXIII, 131-51.

<sup>8</sup> A.C. Harrison and D. Williams, 1979, Excavation at Prior's Gate House, Rochester 1976-77', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xcv, 19; A. Ward, 2001, 'Boley Hill repaving, Rochester', *Canterbury's Archaeology 1998-99*, 23rd Annual Report of the CAT.

<sup>9</sup> A.C. Harrison and D. Williams, *op. cit.* (see note 8).

<sup>10</sup> S. Pearson, 1994, *Medieval Houses of Kent*, HMSO, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1.

<sup>12</sup> It has been suggested that the cellar was the original ground floor and that the surrounding ground was thereafter raised by dumping. However, the cellar walls are indeed cellar walls and the immediate topography shows that the palace would have had to be built in something like a pit to allow such a ground floor. The cathedral and its cloisters were on lower ground.

<sup>13</sup> A. Ward, *op. cit.* (see note 8). It is not now visible. (Ward also points out that very early flintwork, laid in a 'semi'-herringbone pattern and overlaid by a later medieval quoin, is still visible at the foot of the outer western precinct wall now forming part of the former Registry.)

<sup>14</sup> Letters & Papers, Foreign & Domestic, Henry VIII, vol. 7: 1534, 557.

<sup>15</sup> BL, 4902.b.34; Thomas Bailey, D.D., 1655, *Life and Death of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*.

<sup>16</sup> BL; C.55.g.2 Rochester, W.B. Rye, Collections for a History of Rochester, and the neighbourhood, Appendix 10 (a), folio 91.

<sup>17</sup> W.B. Rye, *op. cit.* (see note 6).

<sup>18</sup> George Cavendish, n.d., *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> BL; C.55.g.2 Rochester, W.B. Rye, *op. cit.* (see note 16).

<sup>20</sup> C. Wriothesley, *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, from A.D. 1485 to 1559*, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> H.M. Colvin, *The History of the King's Works*, vol. IV, 1485-1660, Part II (1982), p. 3. The placing of footnote 38 in Antonia Fraser's, *Six Wives of Henry VIII*, is unfortunate.

<sup>22</sup> Pearman *et al.*, *op. cit.* (see note 7), 131-35.

<sup>23</sup> Medway Archives, DRc/Elc 146.

<sup>24</sup> Medway Archives, DRc Aoh 1; Lease of Dean and Chapter to Michael Chapman, Schoolmaster, 20 July 1631. The site was incorporated into the former palace site in 1837.

<sup>25</sup> W.B. Rye, *op. cit.* (see note 16).

<sup>26</sup> W.B. Rye, *op. cit.* (see note 6).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* The bishops of Rochester's manors are shown in *An Historical Atlas of Kent*, 2004, p. 49.

<sup>29</sup> G.M. Livett, *op. cit.* (see note 4), 44-5.

<sup>30</sup> Medway Archives, DRc Ac 05.

<sup>31</sup> Medway Archives, DRc Ac 507, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> W.B. Rye, *op. cit.* (see note 6), 68.

<sup>33</sup> BL Maps; K.Top. *op. cit.* (see note 3).

<sup>34</sup> Ecclesiastical Commissioners, ECE/7/1/44118, part 3-4, no. 393a.

<sup>35</sup> G.M. Livett, *op. cit.* (see note 4), 44-5.

<sup>36</sup> Medway Archives, DRc Ele 166/1A; DRc Ele 167/1A.

<sup>37</sup> The author is indebted to Barbara Deeprose for bringing this to her attention.

<sup>38</sup> A similar winder still exists at 23 Crow Lane.

<sup>39</sup> Medway Archives, DRc Ac 07, fo.3.

<sup>40</sup> Personal information from Edward Bates, Cathedral Administrator and Chapter Clerk, and resident 1978-88. Perhaps the occupation from 1889 to 1973 by George Payne and then his daughter, Mrs Philbrick, accounts for the lack of change.

<sup>41</sup> Letter 15.7.1991 to County Archaeological Officer, Kent County Council from P. Bennett, and personal comment from Alan Ward.

<sup>42</sup> See in this connection P.S. Barnwell & A.T. Adams, 1994, *The House Within*, HMSO, pp. 96-100; S. Pearson, *op. cit.* (see note 10), p. 104.

<sup>43</sup> Medway Archives, DRc/Egz 138, inventory 7.10.1876 – perhaps like the one in the east room of Southgate.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* Medway Archives, DRc/Egz 138, inventory 7.10.1876.

<sup>45</sup> The shelf of the marble fireplace is a modern replacement – information from Mrs Sally Sinden.

<sup>46</sup> Medway Archives, DRc/Egz 138, inventory 7.10.1876.

<sup>47</sup> Medway Archives, DRc/LP42/3 and 4. The inventory of 1876 lists it as a wash house. It was proposed to restore the pretty chimney in 1895, but it may not have been done.

<sup>48</sup> Medway Archives, DRc/Egz 138, inventory 7.10.1876.

<sup>49</sup> Medway Archives, DRc/Eg2 177/5/1, inventory 2.10.1897.

<sup>50</sup> The block was connected to the main drain in 1871. ECE/7/1/36696, letter 23.1.1871.

<sup>51</sup> Medway Archives, DRc/LP42/79; DRc/Eg2 177/5/1, inventory 2.10.1897; Mrs Sinden 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Mrs Sinden 5.8.2011.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Welsby, 'Southgate, The Precinct, Rochester, part of the former Bishop's Palace', undated leaflet.

<sup>54</sup> In 1959, see 'Rochester Cathedral Conservation Plan Part 2 – The Gazetteer', p. 75. Another, matching almost exactly, is still to be seen in the Cathedral Tearooms in part of the Old Deanery.

<sup>55</sup> W.J. St. John Hope, 1900, 'The Architectural History of the Cathedral Church and Monastery of St Andrew at Rochester II, The Monastery', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XXIV, 1-85.

<sup>56</sup> BL, C.55.g.2 B(iii).

<sup>57</sup> BL, C.55.g.2 B(ii).

<sup>58</sup> Survey of Rochester, BL MSS/Addl/5222.art.5.

<sup>59</sup> Shown in Rochester Cathedral Conservation Plan, Part 1, p. 10.

<sup>60</sup> W.B. Rye, *op. cit.* (see note 6), 68.