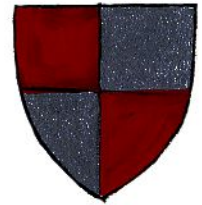


THE BIGGIN

BY

C A BERESFORD - WEBB



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A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

This work would never have been completed had it not been for the help given to me by the following people. Miss M. Kershaw, Curator of the Hitchin Museum and Miss M. Gadd her Assistant, who have allowed me the very full facilities of the Museum and their valuable time. The Trustees of the Hitchin United Charities and especially the Clerk to the Trust, Mr. Michael Hill, who have allowed me to examine the files and Minute Books of the Trust, as well as giving me permission to excavate the site adjoining the Biggin. The Very Reverend C. J. Wilson, D.J.M., O.S.B., Prior of Fort Augustus, for the many hours of his valuable time spent researching and translating at the Record Office and the British Museum. The Reverend C. Howarth, M.A., S.M., for his help in correcting the mistakes I made in my translations. To John McGregor, F.R.I.C.S., F.S.A., for allowing me to examine his reports on the restoration of the Biggin in 1958. My regular band of ' Diggers ' who have despite the appalling weather conditions carried out Herculean work on the Site and I hope will continue to do so. To the Old Ladies of the Biggin for the regular supply of Tea. To my wife Anne for her help in typing this manuscript and so patiently putting up with the collation of the information needed to complete it. Finally to the Local Council for their help and co-operation in holding up development on the site until the excavations have been completed.

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INTRODUCTION

THE GILBERTINES.

The Order of Gilbertines was founded by St. Gilbert of Sempringham, about the year 1130.(1). His original wish had been to found a monastery, but finding this impossible, he gave a rule of life to seven young women whom as children he had taught at Sempringham. He built for them a Convent to the North of his Parish Church at Sempringham and in this he received the support of Bishop Alexander of Lincoln. A year later the seven virgins of Sempringham made their profession.(2).

St. Gilbert appears to have been determined to copy the Cistercians as much as possible and listened often to the advice of the Abbot of Rievaulx. It was at the Abbot's suggestion that he instituted lay sisters to attend to the daily wants and needs of the nuns, and soon afterwards he added a company of lay brothers to do the rougher work in the farm and fields.(3). The latter he recruited from the poorest serfs in his Parish and estates.

For eight years the little community at Sempringham flourished and it was not until 1139 that the young order was increased by another foundation.(4). The Bishop of Lincoln gave to the nuns of Sempringham the island of Haverholm, near Sleaford in Lincolnshire, the site of one of the castles destroyed in the war between King Stephen and his Barons. From the deed it would appear that the nuns had by this time adopted the Cistercian Rule "as far as the weakness of their sex allowed." (5).

(1). Dugdale. Monasticon IV.2. p.ix. x.

(2). Ibid. VI. 2. p x.

(3). Ibid. VI. 2. p x. "Conversio Laicorum Fratrum."

(4). Ibid. VI. 2. p 947.

Also a series of chapters granted 'to God. S. Mary, and the Nuns of Sempringham.' Edited by Major Poynton. Genealogist Volumes XV and XVI.

(5). Dugdale. Monasticon VI. 2. p Viii.

The fame of Sempringham soon spread throughout the Eastern half of Britain and the Convent sent out several colonies to start and people new foundations. (1).

In 1147 Gilbert travelled to Citreaux in Burgandy to ask the Cistercian Abbot assembled there in Chapter (2) to take over the charge of his order, but this they refused to do as they would not consider the inclusion of women within the Order. (3). So Gilbert returned to England determined to add to each of his Convents a community of Canon Regular, who were to act as chaplains and spiritual directors to the nuns. To these he gave a Rule of St. Augustine. (4).

Each Gilbertine house now virtually consisted of four communities; one of Canons; one of Nuns; one of Lay Brothers and one of Lay Sisters. The popularity of the order was considerable, and for the next two years Gilbert was continually founding new houses on lands granted to him by the Nobles and Prelates. (5). These houses with the exception of Watton and Malton in Yorkshire, were in Lincolnshire and the Low Lying Fens. Thirteen houses were founded in St. Gilbert's lifetime, four of which were for men only. (6).

- (1). Dugdale Monasticon. Vl. 2. pp ix and x.
- (2). Rose Grahem. S. GILBERT AND THE GILBERTINES. p.12 note 52. "The presence of Eugenius iii fixed the date of this chapter. He was there on 17th Sep. 1147 (Baronius. ed. Pagi Vol.XLX p.4.) and he left for Rome in June 1147 (Mas Latrie. Tresor de Chronologie p. 1099)
- (3). Cistercian Statuets ed. Fowler. pp 46 and 51. Also see Rose Grahem S. Gilbert of Sempringham p.13. note 54.
- (4). Dugdale Monasticon Vl. 2. p. 96l. 'Bernard of Clairvaux and Gilbert were described in a bull of Innocent III as the two founders of the Order of Sempringham.'
- (5). Ibid. Vl. 2. p x.
- (6). Ibid. Vl. 2. p Xlv.



A CANON REGULAR OF THE ORDER OF ST. GILBERT

Reproduced from an engraving by W. Finden, after W. Hollar, in Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 1840-46, vol. vi, pt. 2, plate next after page 943

The whole order was ruled by the Master, or Prior of All, who was not the Prior of Sempringham. His authority was absolute and the year formed for him a continual round of visitations to the various houses. He appointed to the chief offices; received the profession of novices; affixed his seal to all charters and gave or withheld his consent regarding sales, transfers, building and the like.(1) He was chosen by the General Chapter assembled once a year at Sempringham on the Rogation days. The Prior, Cellarer and Prioress of each house had to attend these Chapters.(2)

St. Gilbert, finding that the work of visitation was too arduous, ordained that certain Canons and Nuns should assist him.(3) These also appeared at the General Chapter. A 'Priest of Confession' was chosen to visit each house to act as confessor extraordinary.

A Gilbertine Priory only had one Church, this being divided unevenly by a wall down the centre of the nave. The main part of the building was for the Nuns, the lesser part for the Canons. The latter only had access to the main part for the celebration of the Mass. Sometimes the Canons had their own Chapel but more often than not they had to make do with sharing the Church of the Nuns. The Convent always lay to the North of the Church, the Canons quarters usually lying to the South, except in the case of a single house when they took the position North of the Church.(4) The number of Canons to be attached to a Convent was fixed by Gilbert at seven, except where need demanded more.(5)

- (1) Dugdale, Monasticon Vl. 2. pp xxxi and xxxii.
- (2) Ibid. p 947. and Rose Graham, S. Gilbert of Sempringham p 49.
- (3) Ibid Vl.2. pp xxxiv. xxxvii.
- (4) Mattersey is an exception, see report on excavations in Arch. Journ. LXXXVII. 1930.
- (5) Ibid. Vl.2. p xlii.

One of the main difficulties that St. Gilbert found was in the government of the Lay Brothers. These were mostly rough and ready types who needed the control and guidance of a firm man, and it is not surprising that cases of insubordination and scandal have been recorded.(1) However, there were but few which is all the more surprising when one considers that the majority of the Gilbertine houses were for both nuns and canons.

From the foundation of the order to the dissolution of the monasteries, the Crown showed great favour towards the Gilbertines,(2) for being a purely English order they owed no allegiance to foreign superiors as did the Cluniacs and the Cistercians. All the Gilbertine houses were situated in England.

Notwithstanding the liberal charters granted by Henry II and his successors, the order had fallen into great poverty by the end of the 15th century. Henry VI exempted all its houses from payments of any kind - an exemption which could not and did not bind his successors.(3) Heavy sums had occasionally to be paid to the Roman Curia, and expenses were incurred in suits against real or pretended encroachments by the Bishops.(4)

- (1) Dugdale, Monasticon. VI. 2. pp xviii.
There were two main instances of scandal against the order, the first being related by St. Aelred, Abbot of Rievaulx and concerned a girl at Watton Priory who had been sent there to be brought up by the Nuns and became pregnant. The second concerned an open revolt, for a time successful by the Lay Brothers at Sempringham. The latter is recorded in detail in Rose Grahams, S. Gilbert of Sempringham.
- (2) Mss. Cotton, Claudius D. xi. f 28, see under charters one to four. Eyton's Itinerary pp 11 and 36. Also in Rose Grahams, S. Gilbert of Sempringham.
- (3) Rose Grahams, S. Gilbert of Sempringham. Chapter IV.
- (4) Ibid. Chapter V.

By the time of the dissolution there were twenty six houses. They fared no better than other monasteries and no resistance whatsoever was offered by the last Master of the Order, Robert Holgate, Bishop of Llanduff. He was a great favorite at court and was promoted in 1545 to the Archbishopric of York. The Gilbertines are described as surrendering 'of their own free will' each of the nuns and canons receiving 'a reasonable yearly pension'(1). Only four of their monasteries ranked among the greater monasteries as having an income of £200 per anum, and as the Order appears to have preserved to the end the plainness and simplicity in church plate and vestments enjoined by St. Gilbert, the Crown did not reap a rich harvest by its suppression.

St. Gilbert died on February 4th, 1189 at 104 years of age (2). He had spent the last 19 years of his life in retirement in one of his houses, having in 1170 given up the government of the Order into the hands of Roger, Prior of Malton (3).

Twelve years after his death and at the bequest of Hubert Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, he was Canonised by Pope Innocent III, (4) and his relics were solemnly translated to an honourable place in the Church of Sempringham, where his Shrine became a place of pilgrimage.

The habit of the Gilbertine Canons consisted of a black casoc reaching to the ankles, covered by a white cloak with a hood which was lined with lambs wool. The nuns were in white

- (1). Augmentation Book. 233 f. 32.
Rymer. Foedera Vol XLV. p 618.
- (2). Dugdale. Monasticon. VI. 2. p xxii.
- (3). Ibid. VI. 2. p xx.
- (4). Mss. Cotton. Cleopatra B. If. 137. Also Monasticon VI. 2pxxvii.

and during the winter were allowed to wear in choir a teppet of sheepskin and a black cap lined with white wool. The Scapular was worn by both Canons and the Nuns. (1).

The everyday life of the Gilbertines was hard - see Appendix A - and discipline within the Order was very strict. Yet despite this, the Order enjoyed tremendous popularity, especially during the 13th and 14th centuries. We have no detail record of how the Order suffered during the Black Death of 1347, but Rose Grahem states "The Black Death was disasterous to the Order of Sempringham". It is possible that at least half of its members perished and novices were not forthcoming to fill the empty places. In Gasquet's Henry VIII and the English Monasteries p.7., we read that 'None of the Monastic Orders ever recovered their full members or their spiritual effeciency' following the Black Death. In examining the evidence available for this period, and there is little enough that is really reliable, I fail to find the need for such pessimistic thought. The Gilbertines seem to have prospered as a result of the Death by the foundation of three houses, Poulton in Wiltshire, one in Staffordshire and in 1361, the Biggin in Hitchin .(2).

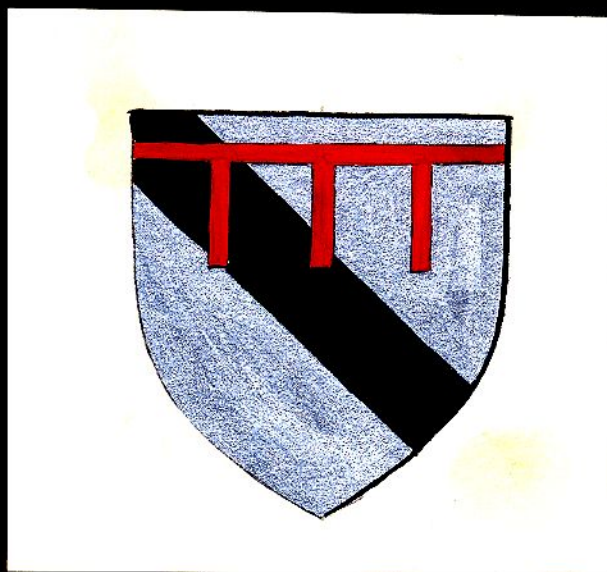
(1). Dugdale. Monasticon. Vl. 2. pxx.

(2). Rose Grahem. S. Gilbert of Sempringham. Ch. 2.

CHAPTER

ONE

THE BIGGIN 1361 - 1536.



The Arms of Sir Edward de Kendale, Lord of the
Manor of Hitchin

CHAPTER ONE.

The Gilbertines arrived in Hitchin in 1361 following a grant of land to them by the then Lord of the Manor, Sir Edward de Kendale. He granted to them a messuage and a toft to be built anew plus two acres of land called Berihorchard in the town of Hitchin.(1). This grant stipulated that it was for the support of three Canons of the Order, one of whom was to be Prior.

The land called Berihorchard stood in that part of the town which had suffered worst from the effects of the Black Death in 1349, and was bounded on the one side by Deadstrete now called Queen Street and on the other by the River Hiz. A more damp and unhealthy spot would have been hard to find in this area and it would have delighted the late St. Bernard's heart, for he it was who stated that "our fathers searched out all the damp and low lying lands and valleys wherein to build their monasteries; so that the monks being often ill and having death before their eyes, should not lead a careless life." (2).

So it was that in 1361, only twelve years after the Black Death, one of the last Gilbertine houses to be founded, was built in Hitchin.

From the humble beginnings of the first foundation larger and more prosperous things were to grow, for shortly after

(1). Inq. a.q.d. file 340 no. 4. See also in Appendix No.1.

(2). Works of St. Bernard ed. Mabillon. Translation by Eals Hodges, London, 1889.

two further grants were made to them. In 1363 Margaret de Kendale, wife of Edward de Kendale, granted to them the Church of Orwell, in Cambridge together with certain other lands.(1). but this adowment was never taken up, which is not really surprising as the permission was needed from the Bishop of the Diocese to appropriate a Church and in the 14th and 15th centuries bishops were unwilling to sanction appropriations unless a very strong case was made out. In 1372 another grant was made to the house by one William Rous, Chaplain. (2). This grant made over to the Order, eight messuages and 363 acres of arable land called the Pound House at Willan on the outskirts of Hitchin.

In his History of Hitchin, Reginald Hine says that "this was not enough for the Monks' needs and it was found that in 1400 the Free Chapel called the New Biggin in Hitchin was held on montgage to Sir Robert Turk". This assumption is not, however, based on fact and is simply a direct quote from the Victoria County History for Hertfordshire, Volume lll. The evidence for this claim is first made in V.C.H. and refers to an Inquisition taken at Buntingford (3) in 1400 on the death of Sir Robert Turk, which states that "Robertus Turk fiet verax patro cujusdam capelle vocat Bygyne in Villa de Hycchen." This quite clearly states that Robert Turk was the true patron of a certain chapel called the Biggin in the town of Hitchin. This is that he held the right of presentation to the chapel. The word held as appearing in the Victoria County History is **wrong**, and the words cannot betwisted into the "may mean that he held a mortgage on the place."

(1). Cal. Pat. Roll 37 Edw.111. Pt 1. m 37. See appendix No.1.

(2). Inq. a.q.d. file 377. No. 14. Appendix No.1.

Reginald Hine, History of Hitchin Vol.1. claims this to have been made on Edward de Kendale's behalf.

(3). Chancery Inq. p.m. Hen VI. file 23.m.36. Also Appendix No.1.

Various writers have accepted the existence of a mortgage to Sir Robert Turk and have even gone so far as to attribute the need for such a mortgage to the impoverished state of the house following the Black Death. As the house in Hitchin was not founded until twelve years after the Black Death, and by 1400 some fifty years had passed since this event, it is hard to imagine that it had any effect on the Gilbertines in Hitchin. The event that could possibly have affected this house during this period was the Peasants Revolt of 1381, which had considerable effect in the St. Albans area, but no evidence exists to show that the house in Hitchin suffered in any way.(1)

In 1402 the Pope granted to the Canons of Hitchin, the power to choose eight priests to hear the confessions and absolve penitents, who on the feast of the Annunciation between the first and second Vespers, visited and gave alms for the conservation of the Priory Church, and granted to such penitents the same indulgence as to persons visiting on the first and second of August, the Church of St. Mary of Portiunicula in Assisi.(2) In order that this grant could be made use of it

- (1) See the Peasants Revolt 1381 by P. Lindsay & R. Groves. Hutchinson, London. Pages 140 - 155.
- (2) Cal. Papal Letters. 1V. 349. also Annales of Ric. 11. and Hen. 1V. Trokeluse and Blaneforde, Chron. et Ann. Roll series 348. This grant refers to the Portiunicula Indulgence, the very existence of which is doubtful. The controversy over the original Indulgence is irrelevant here as ⁱⁿ 1402 the Indulgence had been declared certain and indisputable from the juridico - canonistic stand point. However, the dating of this grant is queried, as it was not until the 5th August 1480 that Pope Sixtus 1V extended the grant of the indulgence to other churches of the first and second orders of St. Francis. Either the Gilbertines were in very great favour with Rome or the validity of the grant is questionable. See Michael Bihl, Archives of Franciscan History, Vol 1. p.653 and notes from the Prior of Fort Augustus.

would have been necessary for the house in Hitchin to have supported more than three Canons. As excavations (1) have shown, the Biggin was approximately twice its present size in the 15th century, so it had since its foundation, grown considerably from the small community for three Canons. By this time it must have had the required number of Canons to permit the starting of a double house.

From 1402 until the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the history of this house is unknown. The Gilbertine order strictly forbade the writing of anything save religious books to be used in the Priory Church and as a result, our knowledge of their life during this time is very scant. We know that the Gilbertines dealt in wool and during the latter part of the 15th century the wool trade was in the doldrums. (2) Apart from this we know nothing of how the Biggin fared over the next century. Evidence abounds for some of the other Gilbertine houses, but no reference is made to or about the house in Hitchin.

(1) See Appendix No.5.

(2) See R.H.Shape, English Monastic Finance in the Later Middle Ages.
London 1926.

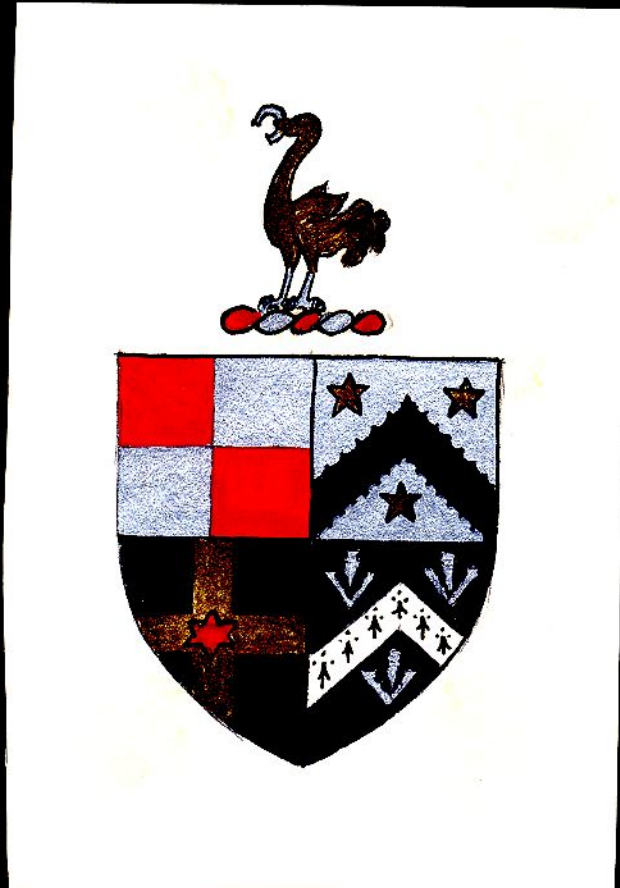
During their times at Hitchin we learn of the names of only two Canons who lived here. In 1472, John Sperhawke, his memorial brass can be seen in the Parish Church, left in his will that one Domini Williams of the Biggin should say Mass daily for thirty days on his behalf (1) and at the Dissolution we learn the name of the then Prior John Moulton, who was granted a pension.(2) Apart from these two references I have been unable to find any reference to ^{the} life of this community until 1521, when the lands at Willian were leased to Richard Yerdley.(3)

- (1) P.C.C. 19 Wartys. The Will of John Sperhawke. Also Hine, History of Hitchin. Vol.1.
- (2) L & P. Hen. Vlll. xiv (2) 1355. and Aug. Office Misc. Books 233 f.97. See Appendix No.2.(i).
- (3) East Herts. Archel. Soc. Vol. Vll. Pt.2. pp. 161-3.

CHAPTER

TWO

THE BIGGIN 1536 to 1968.



Arms of John Cocks of Broxbourne

CHAPTER TWO

The Gilbertine Order escaped the dissolution of the smaller monasteries in 1536, though it seems that at least one person in the employment of Cromwell did not know this, for we find that one Ralph Morrice in 1536 petitioned Cromwell for a lease on the house in Hitchin called the Biggin. (1) However, Cromwell could not see his way to granting the wish of his clerk, for the house stayed in the hands of the order at least until September, 1538 when the Master of All, Thomas Holgate surrendered the houses of the Order 'of their own free will.' (2). In October of the same year the Gilbertine house at Chicksands was given up (3), but unfortunately the surrender of the Hitchin house is not extant. The Commission who dissolved this house made no report

(1). L & P. Hen.Vlll. xi. 113. No.1479 and 1480. Apped.2.(ii).

(2). Thomas Holgate, Bishop of Llanduff, was a great favorite of the Court and had a strong association with Cromwell. He was promoted to the Arch Bishopric of York in 1545. See Dict. Nat. Biog.

(3). See Victoria County History, Bedfordshire.

but sent the prior, John Moulton to report in person to the Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations (1) so we are denied the written evidence of the dissolution.

We do know that from Michaelmas, 29th September, 1538, that one Robert Marshall was in residence at the Biggin as a Bailiff of the Crown. (2) The Prior, John Moulton, was granted a pension of £4 per annum in the December of the same year. (3).

Robert Marshall was still living in the Biggin in 1544 when the property was sold by the Crown to John Cocks of Broxbourne (4) who was destined to become the Sherrif of the County in 1548, Member of Parliament for the County with Sir Ralph Sadlier in 1553 and Master of Requests to both Edward VI and Queen Mary. (5).

In 1535 the house and grounds were valued at £13. 16s., but over the years the property had been left to decay and in the Purchase Deed of 1544 we learn that the value had been reduced to £10. 17s. (6).

(1). Land Revenue Records. Bundle 66. No. 3.

(2). First Ministers Accounts. Hen. VIII. No. 1617.

(3). Aug. Off. Misc. Books. 233.f.97.

(4). L & P Hen. VIII. xix (2). 166(25). xx(2) and 496(44).
Cal. Pat. Roll 36 Hen VIII. Part 9. mss.20(24). See App.2.
Aug. Off. Particulars of Grants 36 Hen.VIII. 296(1).

(5). See Fig III opposite, for his Arms, taken from Visitation of Harb.

(6). Valor Eccl. (Rec. Com.) IV.276.

Lib. Reg. vel Thesaurus Rerum Eccl. John Bacon. p.519
Also see Appendix 2 regarding the description of the Biggin in 1536.

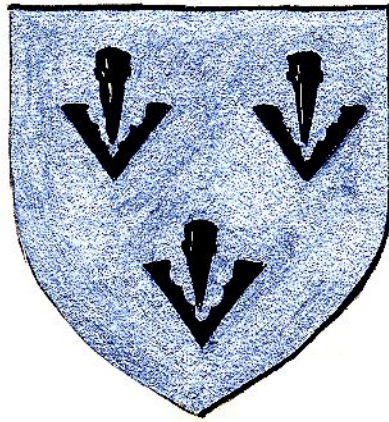
Many historians have drawn many different conclusions from the variation in the values even to the extent of claiming that John Cocks did not buy all of the Biggin. The Deed of Purchase, however, states quite clearly that he did buy all the Biggin, and the reduced value must be due to neglect and old age.

The next reference to the Biggin is found in the Will of William Croocar of Hitchin, who must have purchased the house off John Cocks. He died in March 1570 (1) and left the Biggin to his two sons, Thomas and William. He did not live in the house himself, but his son William did and it is he who carved his initials together with those of his wife in the panneling over the fireplace in the south western corner room, together with the date 1585.

William Croocar and his wife did not choose to live for very long at the Biggin, for on the 27th August, 1587 we find Robert Snagge of Letchworth writing from the Biggin (2) to Lord Burleigh, Lord High Treasurer of England. In this letter he describes the Biggin as "his poore house called the Biggin." The actual Sale Deeds were not exchanged until 1594. (3).

Robert Snagge, (4) is believed to have rebuilt the Biggin, but it would appear to be nearer the truth to say that he carried out certain alterations to the existing structure. (5). He died in 1606 and in his Will he left the Biggin to his sister Anne Dallison, widow of Edward Dallison of Cransley, in Northants. (6).

- (1). P.C.C. 11 Holney. 26th January 1570-1. Appendix 2 No.i.
- (2). British Museum. Lansd. Mss. 54. p.65. See Appendix 2. No. vi.
- (3). Feet of Fines. Trinity Term. 36 Eliz. See Appendix 2. No. viii.
- (4). Robert Snagge was the second son of Thomas Snagge of Letchworth Hall, and younger brother to Serjeant Thomas Snagge of Marston-Morteyne, Beds, who was speaker of the House of Commons. 1588-92. Nat. Dict. Biog. Vol.Llll.p.202.
- (5). See Chapters four and five. Hine claims this as fact, but unfortunately fails to supply evidence.
- (6). P.C.C. 31 Stafford. Also Appendix 3. No. ii.



Arms of Robert Snagge of Letchworth



Arms of Joseph Kempe of Hitchin

Sometime during the next 50 years the house and grounds passed into the hands of Joseph Kempe (1) who converted the building into a school, and from all accounts a very successful one at that.(2)

Joseph Kempe died in 1654 and in his Will he left the Manor House of the Biggin to his widow Annie with the proviso that in the event of her death it should pass into the hands of the Trust he set up, and used for the benefit of the poor.(3)

His wishes were not complied with for some time to come for shortly after his death we find his brother John Kempe had taken over the running of the Biggin school. In fact the school appears to have been still running at the end of the century.(4) On the 17th May, 1677, a new set of Trustees were appointed and the original document can still be seen at the offices of the Hitchin United Charities. About this time John Moore appears to have taken over the running of the school.

In 1723 the Overseer of the poor made a request to the Trustees to hire the Biggin for use as a Poor House.(5) The Trustees agreed, and further agreed that some of ' Kempes Widowes ' who were evidently living in the Biggin, should be employed whenever possible in Parish Work.(6)

- (1) See page V for details regarding Joseph Kempe.
- (2) Reginald Hine, History of Hitchin. Vol. 1.
- (3) P.C.C. 31 Stafford. copy of Will in Appendix No 3 (iii)
- (4) The Burial Register of the Parish Church. These record the burials of several pupils from the Biggin, the last two being William Walters, a boarder at Biggin school, buried 2nd Dec. 1665, and in 1698 Robert Shrib, a scholar at the Biggin.
- (5) Overseers Reports in the hands of Hitchin United Charities.
- (6) Ibid. Also unclassified documents in the Loftus Barham Collection at Hitchin Museum.



"THE BIGGIN," HITCHIN.

In 1812 the Biggin reverted to the Trustees, as the Overseers had succeeded in purchasing the Manor House in Bancroft for the use of the poorhouse. The Biggin was converted into a home for eighteen 'Old Widows' of the Parish in accordance with the details set out in Kemps Will. (1).

The Biggin is now administered by the Hitchin United Charities under a scheme approved by the Board of Charity Commissioners for England and Wales on the 19th June 1908. The freehold of the Biggin is vested in the Official Trustee of Charitable Lands and the scheme provides that the Charity shall be administered and managed by the Trustees of the Hitchin United Charities.

On the 9th October 1933, the Trustees decided that the time had come to find alternative accomodation to replace the Biggin, as the condition of the building was causing them considerable concern. (2).

At the time the Biggin still offered homes for eighteen old ladies, though only 17 of the rooms were used as the 18th had no direct light and was considered unsuitable.

In April 1939 the Charity Commission visited Hitchin and made a report to the Trustees on the Biggin. (3). They pointed out that in their opinion the building was not suitable for almshouses and that it should be sold in preference to restoring it, as funds available were considered insufficient for the task. They suggested that a public fund be started to raise money to the value of the Biggin when they would be prepared to authorise a transfer of the site to any body of trustees representing the subscribers or to the Urban District Council if they were willing

(1). P.C.C. 31 Stafford. Also Appendix.3. No.iii.

(2). See files of the Hitchin United Charities. (File No 1 (Maintenance))

(3). H.U.C. files No.1. Signed by Mr. Fox, Commission for the Charity Commission.

to undertake the administration. They further suggested that the Trustees should obtain a detailed valuation of the Biggin and all its fittings, including the panelling.

The War intervened and nothing further was decided over the Biggin until 20th January, 1947 when the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings wrote to Reginald Hine saying that they were very concerned at the state of the Biggin and alarmed to hear that it might well be pulled down. (1). Hine wrote to the Trustees and obtained a reply to the effect that the Trust did not know what to do about the Biggin and asking for any advice he might be able to give. They pointed out that in view of the state of the building, they were letting rooms remain empty as they became vacant. Before any advice could be given Hine died (2) and once more the matter was shelved.

On the 13th April 1951, the Biggin was declared a building of Historic interest under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 (3) and new life came into the question of its future. The Trustees approached the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings for their advice on the question of obtaining a grant to restore the building. The Society suggested that they contact the Chairman of their Technical Panel, John McGregor, F.S.A. F.R.I.B.A., and he would advise on what could be done for the Biggin. (4). September 1952 saw the first report from Mr. McGregor (5) and for the first time people started to realise that the old building could be restored.

(1). Files of Reginald Hine, Hitchin Museum.

(2). *Hine Committed Suicide in 1949.*

(3). H. U. C. files. Form H.B.15. dated 9th May, 1951.

(4). H. U. C. files. Vol. 2.

(5). See Appendix 4.

Letters were sent out to everyone concerned in a new fit of enthusiasm telling them of Mr. Mc.Gregor's findings, but not everyone was delighted. Mr. Derrick Seebolm, one of the Trustees, expressed the opinion that the Biggin was not worth saving; and the local Council decided at their weekly meeting that it was not a faesable proposition. All this came before the Trustees had even had a chance to meet and discuss the matter.

A special meeting was called for 2nd November, 1953, at the Town Hall where the Council were to meet the Trustees and all interested bodies. The Meeting decided nothing. (1).

On 17th November, 1953 the Sanitary Inspector made a report on the Biggin (2) and this very nearly condemned the building there and then. The old champions for demolition leapt to the attack again and at a meeting of the Trustees on 11th January 1954 (3) a motion proposed by Mr. Granham and seconded by Derrick Seebolm was passed unanimously that at the earliest possible date the Biggin should be emptied and that subject to the Charity Commission's approval, the property should be sold for the benefit of the Charity.

The Ministry of Housing, however, were in favour of trying to restore the building and suggested to the Clerk of the Trustees that he should get the Architect to provide more detailed plans for his proposed restoration and submit them to the various societies for a grant. They even hinted that the Ministry could be approached.

During all this battle for the Biggin, its one supporter on the Board of the Trustees was the Clerk, Mr. Peacock. He now contacted the National Association of Almshouses and their Secretary, Mr. L. A. Hackett, after examining the Biggin, decided

(1). Minutes of H.U.C. 1953.

(2). See Appendix 4.

(3). Minutes of the H.U.C. 1954.

to assist and it was through this influence that the Trustees were persuaded to withhold their decision to sell the Biggin until more enquiries had been made regarding the possible chance of restoration. The architect was re-instructed and the local press were informed of what was going on. For the next two weeks the local papers carried indignant letters from local residents, namely, R. Waldoek of West Hill, F. S. Eckett of Westmill, Mrs. E.M.B. Corbett of High Down House and the Secretary of the East Herts. Archaeological Society. (1).

On the 8th July, 1954 Mr. McGregor made his report on the Biggin together with details from his Survey of the site. On the 10th August, the Trustees met and agreed to the new plans (2) at the same time as the Council's Housing Committee met and agreed to them. (3) By this time everyone was trying to get in on the act and all sorts of societies as well as private people were trying to raise money from many unlikely sources. (4).

Another special meeting was called for the 27th September, 1954 at the Council Offices and as a result of this meeting the official go ahead was given for the restoration of the Biggin.

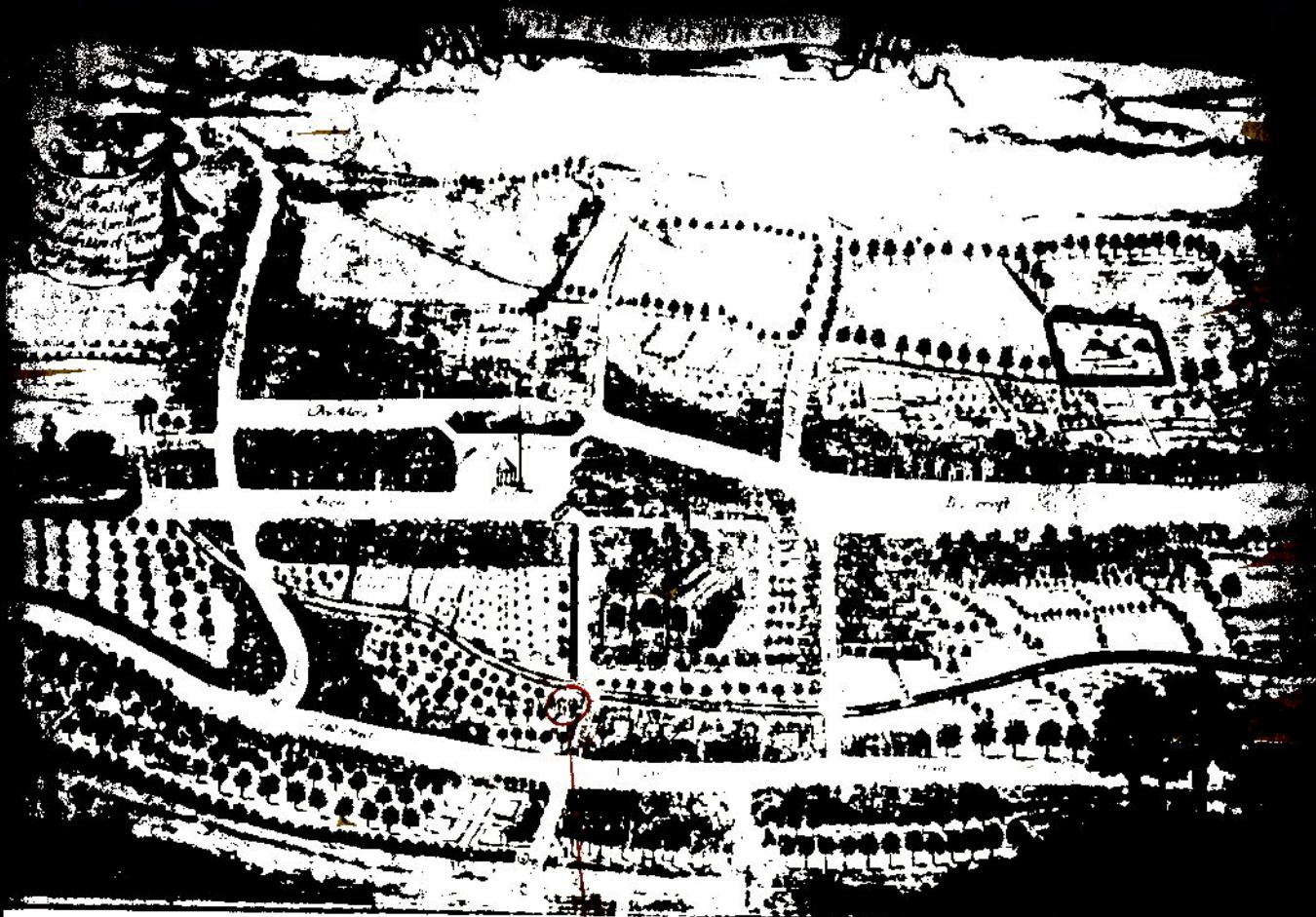
In 1958 the work started on the Biggin and at a cost of over £16,000 the old building was converted and restored to provide twelve self-contained flats. To-day the Biggin still complies with the wish of Joseph Kempe about supplying homes for elderly ladies, but to-day it costs them twenty shillings a week to live in the Biggin, whereas in his day they were paid 15/- a month. Things have changed in many ways over the years.

(1). H. U. C. files. Herts Express.

(2). Minutes of H.U.C. 1954.

(3). Minutes of Hitchin Urban District Council 1954.

(4). Even the Hertfordshire Sunday Entertainments Fund was suggested by one organisation as they had made similar grants before, H.U.C. Minutes. Vol. 2.



THE BIGGIN

Map of Hitchin, 1700

Drawn by Drapentier for Chauncy's History of Hertfordshire

CHAPTER THREE

In June 1968 I made a detailed survey of the existing building which I subsequently compared with the survey made in 1956 by Mr. McGregor. (1) From this, I discovered that the northern and southern wings were basically of 15th century construction and that further investigation could well lead to the discovery of the foundations of the old Gilbertine Priory.

First had to be considered the requirements of a community of at least 9 Gilbertine Canons and their attendant Lay Brothers, bearing in mind the demands of St. Gilbert for each priory to have a Church, Chapter House, Communal Dining Hall and separate quarters for the canons and lay brothers. (2)

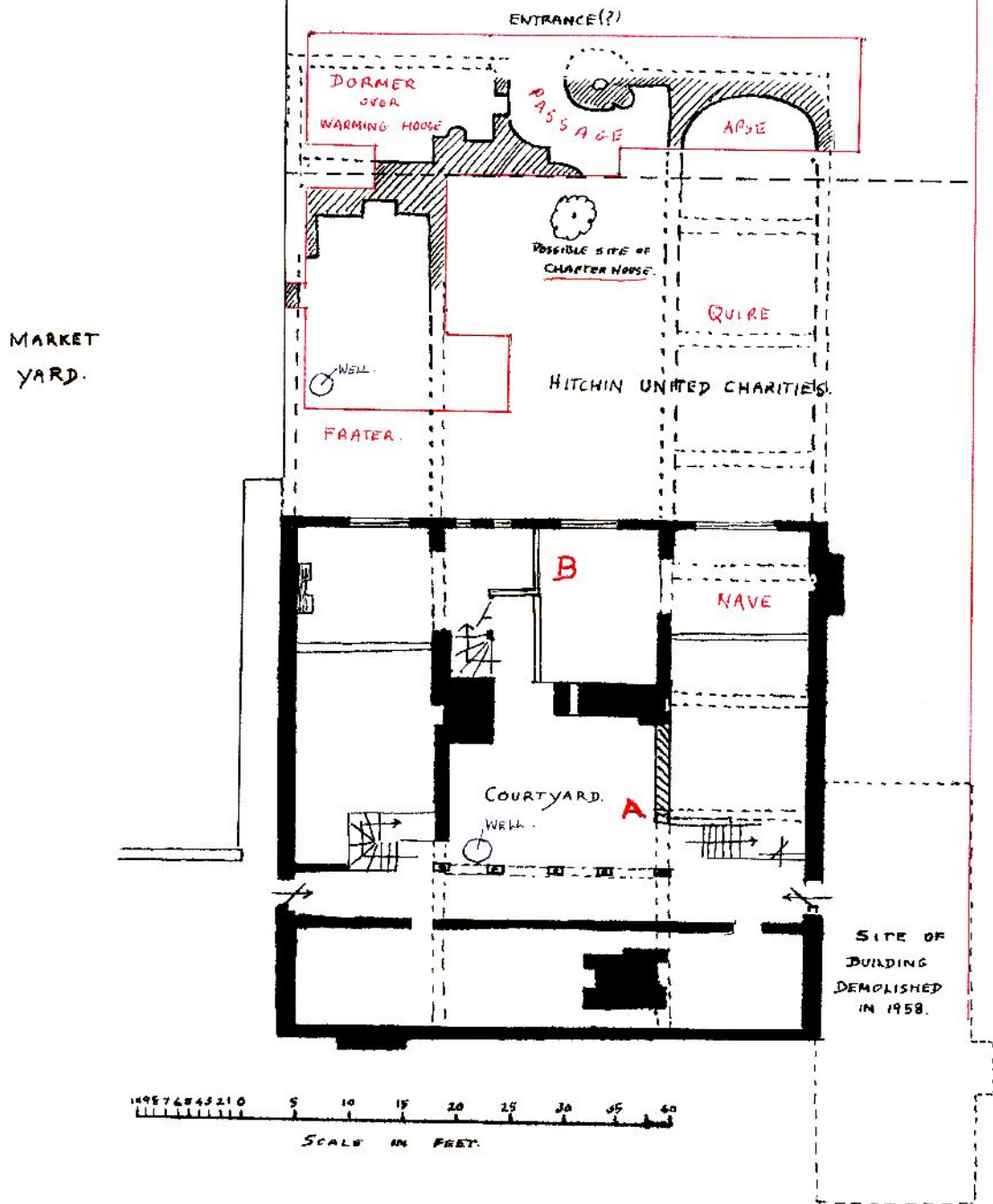
On examining the present building it is plain that this may well be suitable as a small manor house but it falls far short of supplying anything like the facilities that would have been needed for the community we know once lived here. (3)

Earlier in the year the Local Council had dug a four foot deep trench some six feet from the northern wall and running the full length of the building whilst laying drainage pipes. I examined this trench and no traces of foundations were to be seen. In 1958, when demolishing the 18th century building in the South West corner, no traces of earlier foundations were discovered. The eastern and western facades of the present building showed that the North and South wings had at one time extended further and I therefore concluded that if any further foundations were to be found then they had to lie either to the East or West of the present building.

- (1) A copy of this survey is on the files of the Hitchin United Charities, File No.2.
- (2) See Rose Grahem, S. Gilbert of Sempringham. 1908. Ch.2.
- (3) See page 9 of this work, Note 2.

PLAN OF EXCAVATIONS AT THE BIGGIN, 1969.

H.U.D.C.



C. BERESFORD-WEBB.
BIRMINGHAM.
HITCHIN.

The close proximity of the River on the western side restricted the extent of any building in that direction, so I concentrated on the eastern side. After a close study of the reports from other excavations carried out on Gilbertine sites(1) I decided that in all probability the building would have extended for another 35 feet in this direction. I obtained the permission of the local Council and the Trustees to excavate. With the assistance of the Hitchin Museum and the active support of the Assistant Curator, excavations were started on the 4th September 1968. These excavations are still proceeding and an Interim Report on the finds can be found in the Appendix. It is from the evidence obtained during this work and the detailed survey already mentioned that I have been able to produce the plan on page VIII, showing the approximate area covered by the Gilbertine Priory.

The excavations have laid bare the foundations of the 15th century priory lying some forty five feet from the existing building and these foundations are clearly shown as being a continuation of the existing structure in the northern and southern wings.

The Church lay on the southern side of the building in accordance with the Gilbertine plan and consisted of a simple single aisled building measuring 80 feet in length and fifteen feet wide. It was built round a timber frame of eight bays, each bay being divided by two large wooden support pillars carrying a cambered tie beam.(2) The building lay on a rubble and mortar plinth some 8 inches high, which in turn lay on hardcore foundations some 10 inches deep. The Nave would appear to have terminated just beyond the existing building where the floor was raised a foot and the building continued into the canons Quire and Presbytery.

(1) See Arch. Journ. 'Excavations at Watton' LVIII. pp. 1-43.
Ibid. LXXXVII. 1930. pp 16-20 'Excavations at Mattersey.'
Journ. Brit. Arch. Soc. 3rd series V(1940) pp 73-101.
'Excavations at Sempringham.'

(2) See Chapter Five for drawings of Cross section.

The Church had a curved Apse (1) which is a strange feature for an English building of this date, but an explanation for it could be that the Gilbertines had discovered the way in which the weather causes such deterioration to the eastern facades of buildings in this part of Hitchin, and built this curved apse as a wind break.(2)

The interior of the Church would have been very plain and drab as the Gilbertines Rule clearly stated that no ornament, statue or painting should appear within the Church. Even the High Altar would have had only a simple wooden Crucifix and plain candle sticks.(3) The Church was lit by small square lights set high in the wall and some of these can still be seen in the existing fabric were they have been used as wall fillin during the 17th century.

The western end of the Church could well have had a Gallery which would have led to the Priors Lodgings in the South West corner of the site. (4) The remainder of the western wing would have taken up the lay Brothers quarters and Kitchens.(5)

- (1) The curved apse was a fashionable feature in continental Churches of this period and examples can be seen at Bourges 1266 Gerona (1312-47) and the Choir at Toledo (1226-38) and many other smaller churches. Either the Gilbertines in Hitchin were very advanced in the design or very backward for the plan is simular to that found in Saxon churches in Britain.
- (2) The waethering effect on the eastern facade of the present building is clearly visible to-day and this was only restored in 1958. The Parish Church on the opposite bank of the River has suffered in the same way as has the eastern facade of Hitchin Priory.
- (3) See Rose Graham, S. Gilbert of Sempringham , 1908.
- (4) This is of course presuming that the Gilbertine plan was followed. See Arch. Journ. 'Excavations at Watton.'
- (5) The position of the Kitchens and Lavatory would probably have been in the area mentioned as the well of the priory has since been discovered in the corner of the building just beyond the existing eastern facade and presumably the canons would have chosen to have had their drinking water drawn from a position higher than that chosen for sewage disposal.

The Western side of the building would have been the canons Frater built over an undercroft and in the North East corner was the Warming room with the canons Dorter over it. The stairs from the Dorter are clearly shown leading to a corridor which in turn would have entered the Church at a position below the Sanctuary and just above the Quire. The Chapter House has not yet been discovered, but will have lain either to the East or the West of this corridor.

Early in the 16th century fire appears to have destroyed the Eastern end of the Church(1) and possibly a large part of the Eastern range of buildings. By the time William Croocar came to live in the building in the second half of the 16th century the whole building must have been in a pretty awful state. (2) How much of the old Priory was actually standing at this time is not known, but during the period of William Croocar's occupation and the following years when the Biggin was owned by Robert Snagge, considerable alterations were made in order to turn it into a manor house. The Nave of the Church and corresponding length of the canons Frater was retained and converted, The Nave had a first floor installed which was supported by short wooden pillars attached to the main supports and further supported by brick walling. This was to make a first floor Great Hall. A building was erected along the Eastern side joining the two main wings and supplying a long Gallery along the full side. This was lit by three very fine Mullioned windows which are still extant.

The Northern range was probably converted into servants quarters with stabling in the undercroft and the old Western range of buildings were replaced by a new 'fill in' building which was allowed to abutt on to the centre courtyard, where it was supported by the wooden pillars from the centre of the Church. The Great Hall was pannelled as was the room in the South West corner and three new Chimney Stacks were built, two in the

(1). See Interim Report in Appendix. 5.

(2). The building was evidently in a 'ruinous state' in 1535 when Ralph Morris petitioned Cromwell for the House.

courtyard and one in the new 'fill in' building on the Western side. All the living accomodation appears to have been on the first floor, which is not surprising as the building must have been a very damp place lying so close to the river.

The Eastern fill in seems to have been built for the first floor only, so supplying a main entrance direct into the courtyard. The foundations of a driveway entrance have been discovered running from just under this fill in out to the Biggin Lane. (1).

Further alterations were probably carried out when Joseph Kempe became the owner in 163 and the building was used as a boarding school. How the building was altered we do not know, but I should imagine that a further space would be require for the pupils as well as the six servants and two assistant masters who were here during this time (2). It is quite probable that the Long Gallery was divided up and even the Great Hall.

The school was kept going here until 1723 (3) when the Trustees hired the building to the Overseers of the poor for the use as a poor house, and at this time it appears from the Overseers reports that "Kemp's Old Ladies" were still in residence. During this period extensive alterations were made to the building. The building which stood in the South West Corner until 1958 was built in 1730(4) and according to the accounts a new pump was installed in the courtyard and subsequently cost a great deal of money to keep it working.(5).

(1). See the Interim Report on the Excavations in the Appendix.5.

(2). See Kempe's Will for number of servants and the assistant masters employed. Appendix. 3. (iii)

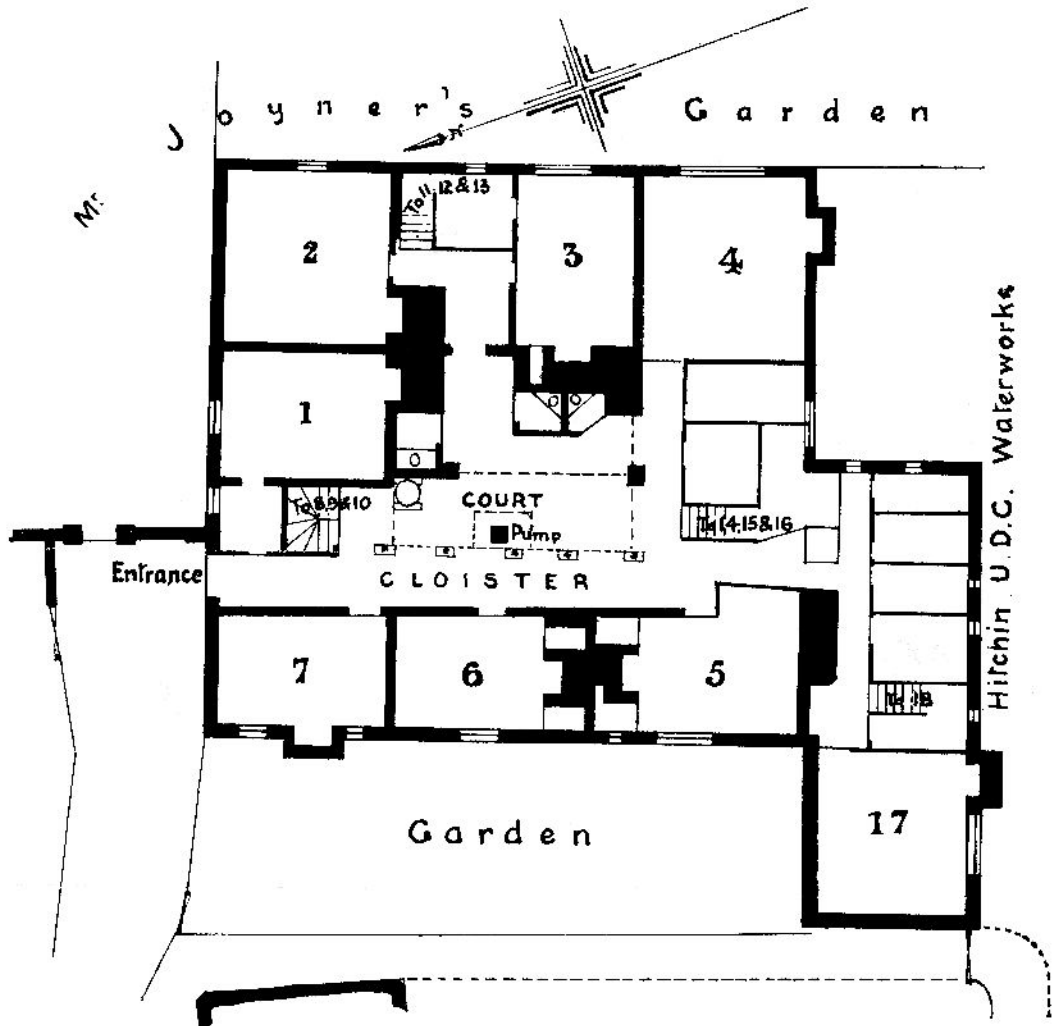
(3). See Chapter three.

(4). See Documents in the ^{MAN}Ban Collection, Hitchin Museum, HM. 3312. 9.

(5). Ibid. HM. 3312/10a-c.

In 1812 the Overseers purchased the Manor House in Bancroft for the use of the poor house and the Biggin was now converted to supply a home for 18⁶ old ladies or elderly widows of good and honest conversation. No major alterations were made to the building during this time and it is not until 1856 that any major work was carried out. This was caused by thieves removing the lead from the roof one night and this necessitated a new roof being fitted.

The Biggin remained virtually unaltered during the next 100 years until the major restoration in 1958. This restoration involved the demolition of the 18th century building in the South Western corner, the stripping of all the exterior walls of the lath and plaster covering, the removal of the 16th century stack in the courtyard and the converting of the building into twelve self contained flats comprising a bed sitting room, bathroom, kitchen and toilet. Much of the old pannelling was uncovered at this time, but it was found impossible to restore it all. The old ranges were removed and new tiled fireplaces were inserted. A comparison of two plans on page ~~1111~~, will show the extent of these alterations. Much of the brickwork was scraped out and replaced and unfortunately the old glass in the windows was for the most part replaced.

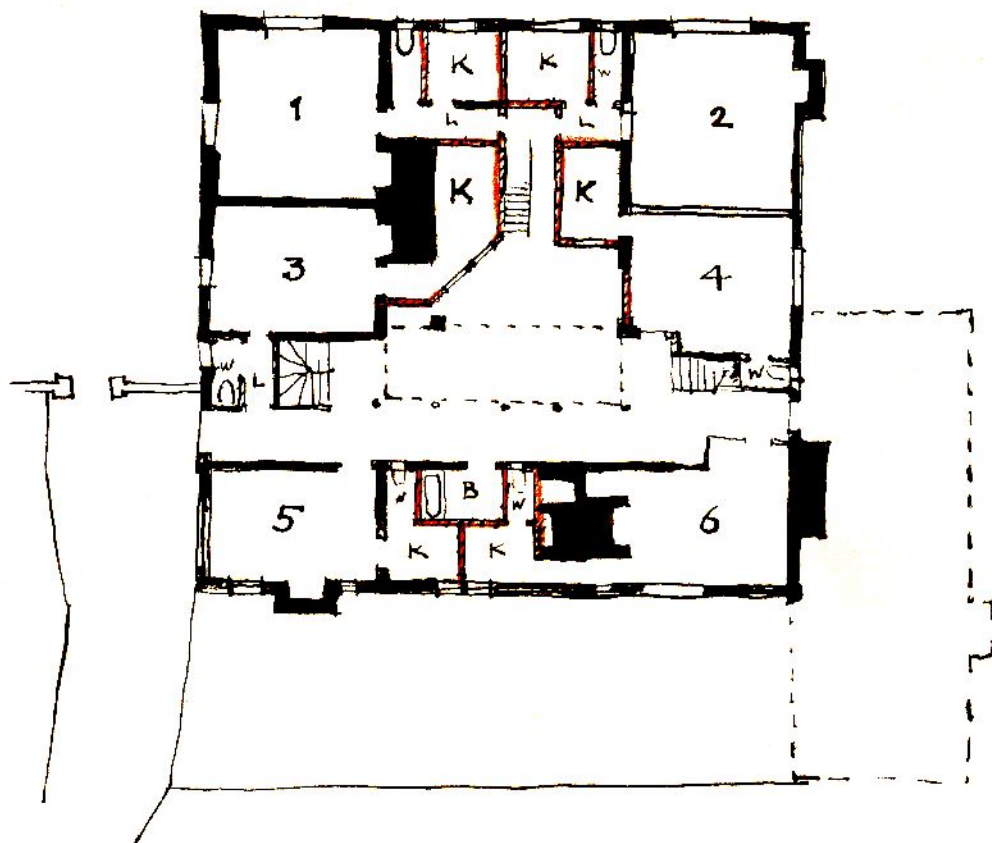


Scale of Feet.
 0 5 10 15 20 30 40 50

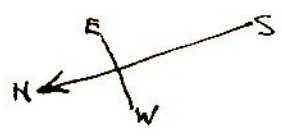
HITCHIN.
PLAN OF THE BIGGIN

1901

W. J. FITCH,
 HITCHIN.



THE BIGGIN HITCHIN
SUGGESTED RECONDITIONING.



JANN E.M. MACGREGOR
1952.

CHAPTER FIVE

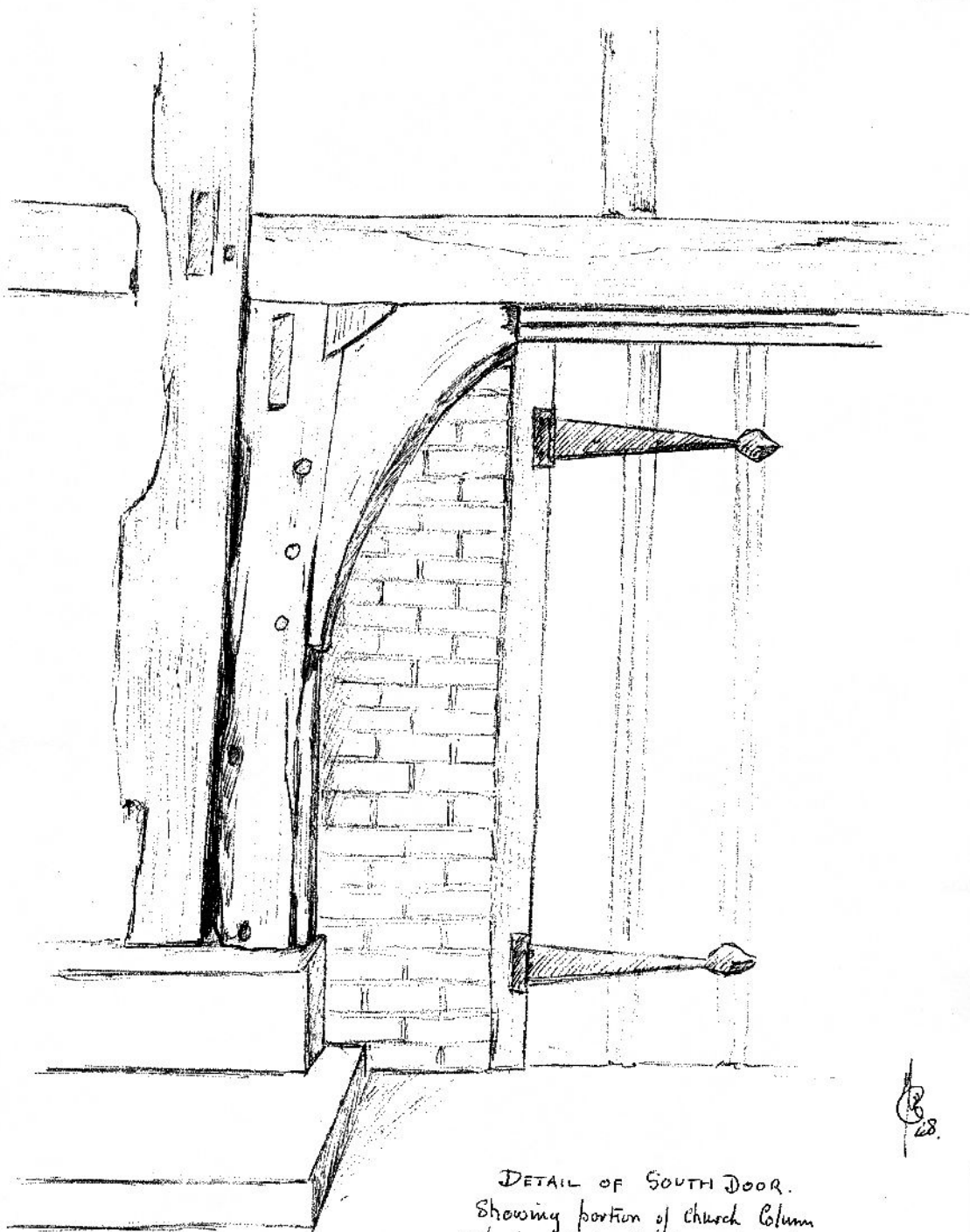
The Biggin is a small squat building situated on the Southern bank of the River Hiz between the Parish Church and Hitchin Priory. Now surrounded by Victorian buildings it is only visible in part between these structures and many of the local residents are quite unaware of its existence.

To-day the Biggin consists of an almost square range of buildings surrounding a central courtyard, and lying nearly foursquare to the cardinal points of the compass. It is basically a timber framed structure built on rubble and stone plinths and some nine inches of hardcore foundation which in turn rests on two feet of packed earth and chalk. Flooring throughout the groundfloor comprises of a layer some seven inches thick of packed chalk on the base of stone rubble. To-day only two flats on the groundfloor have wooden floors, these being on the Eastern side of the building, the rest of the floors being now of concrete with tiled surfaces. Before the restoration of the building, flat 2 still had the original brick tile floor laid on packed chalk.

The timber frame structure of the building is complex. The Northern and Southern ranges are of basically Mediaeval construction, whilst the two,fill in ranges of the Western and Eastern ends are of 16th century dating.

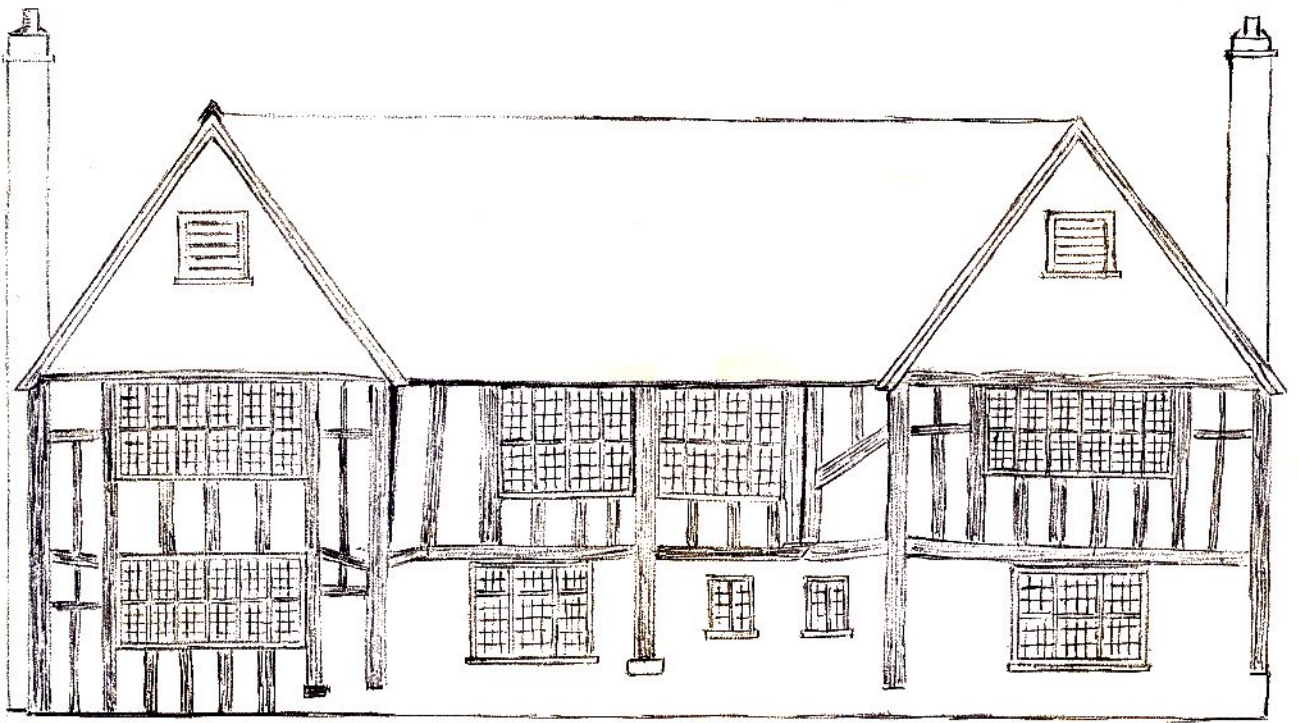
The Southern range, we know, was the Nave of the 15th century Gilbertine Priory Church (1) and is built round a

(1). See Appendix No.4 (iii)

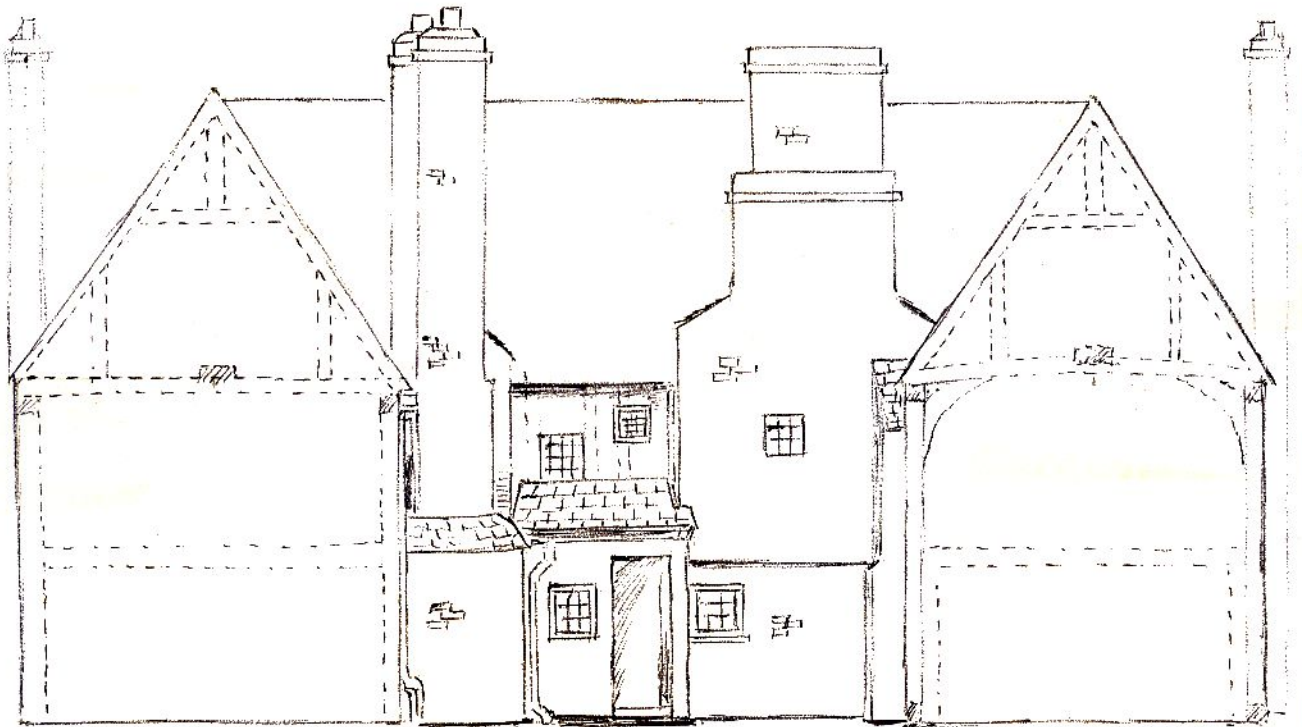


DETAIL OF SOUTH DOOR.
Showing portion of church Column
with spindle for Cambered Roof Beam

C.B.
28.



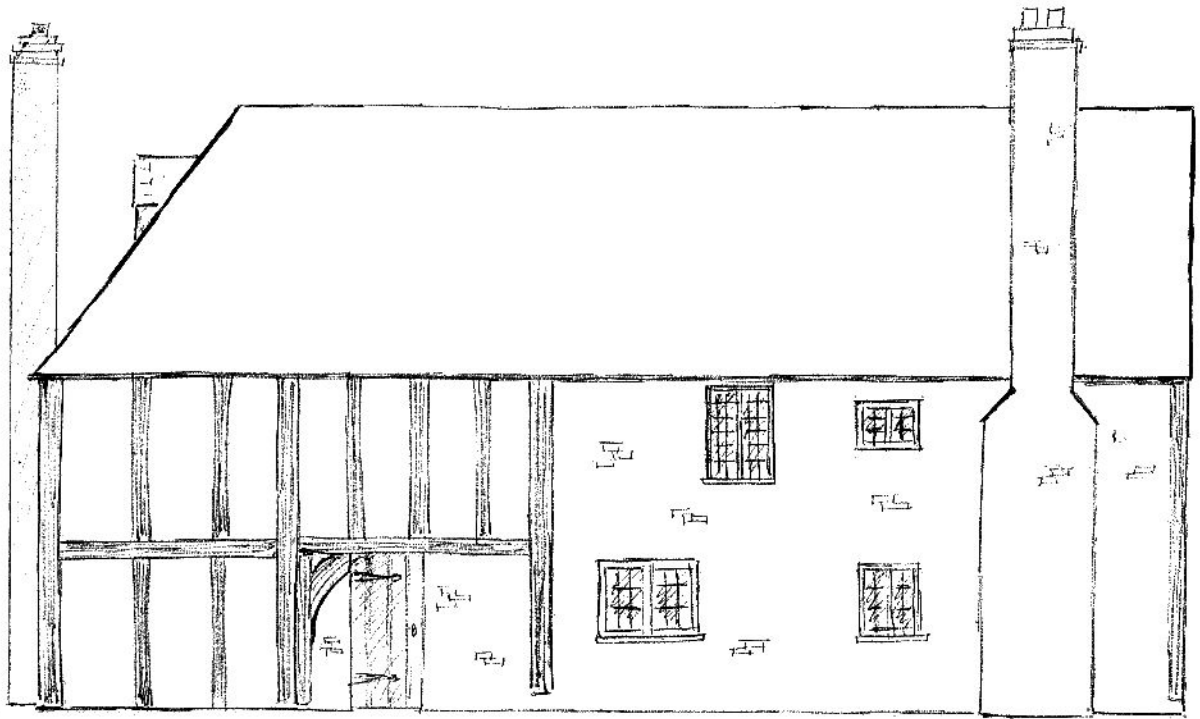
EASTERN FACADE



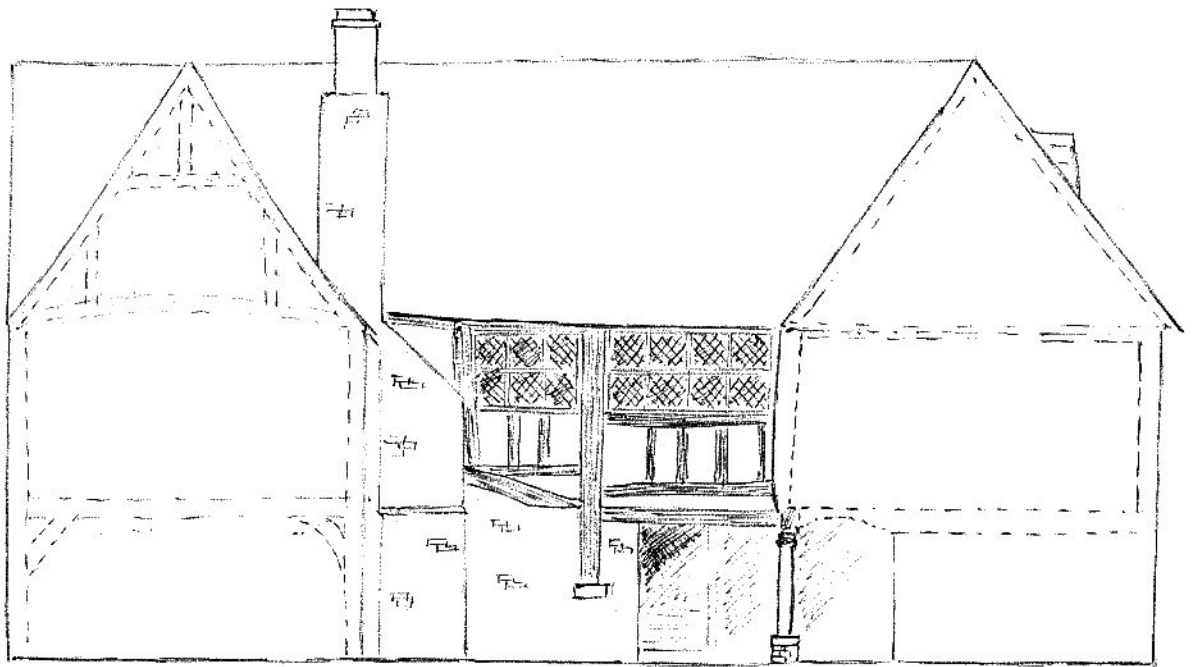
EASTERN RANGE FROM COURTYARD

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8
 16 FEET
 SCALE

16



SOUTHERN ELEVATION

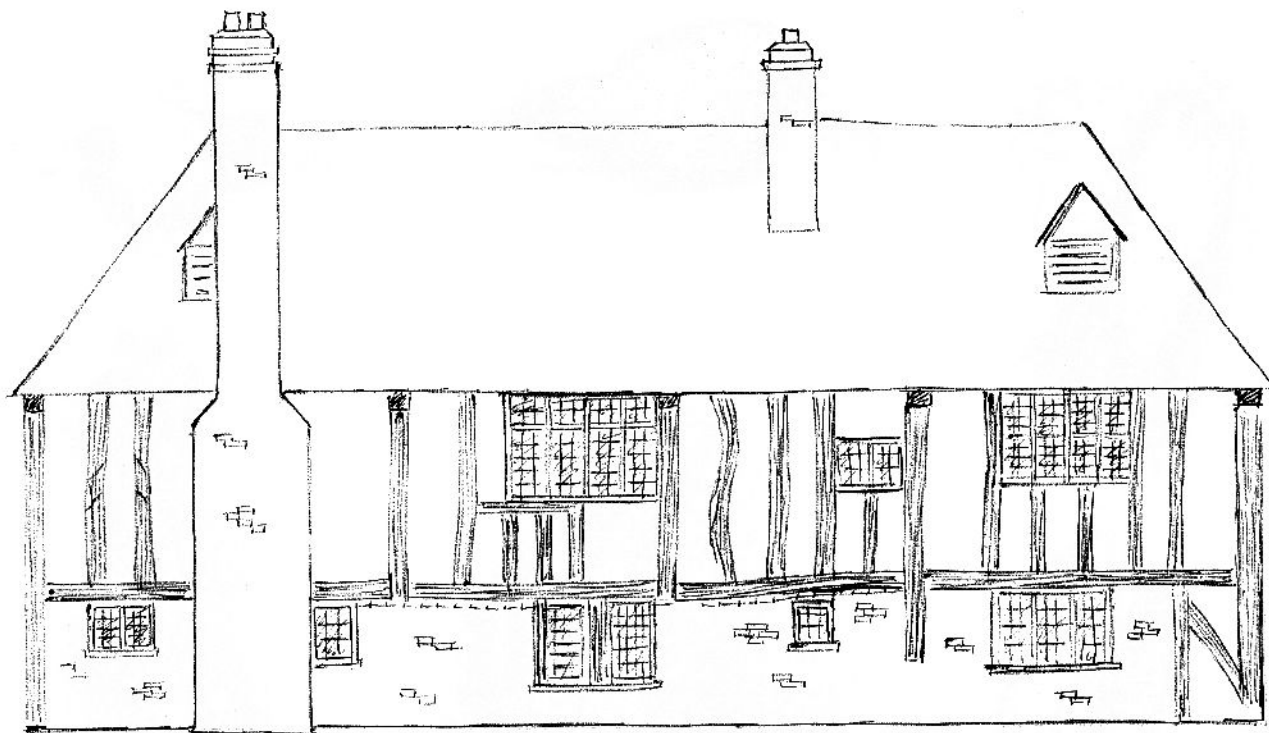


SOUTHERN RANGE FROM COURTYARD.

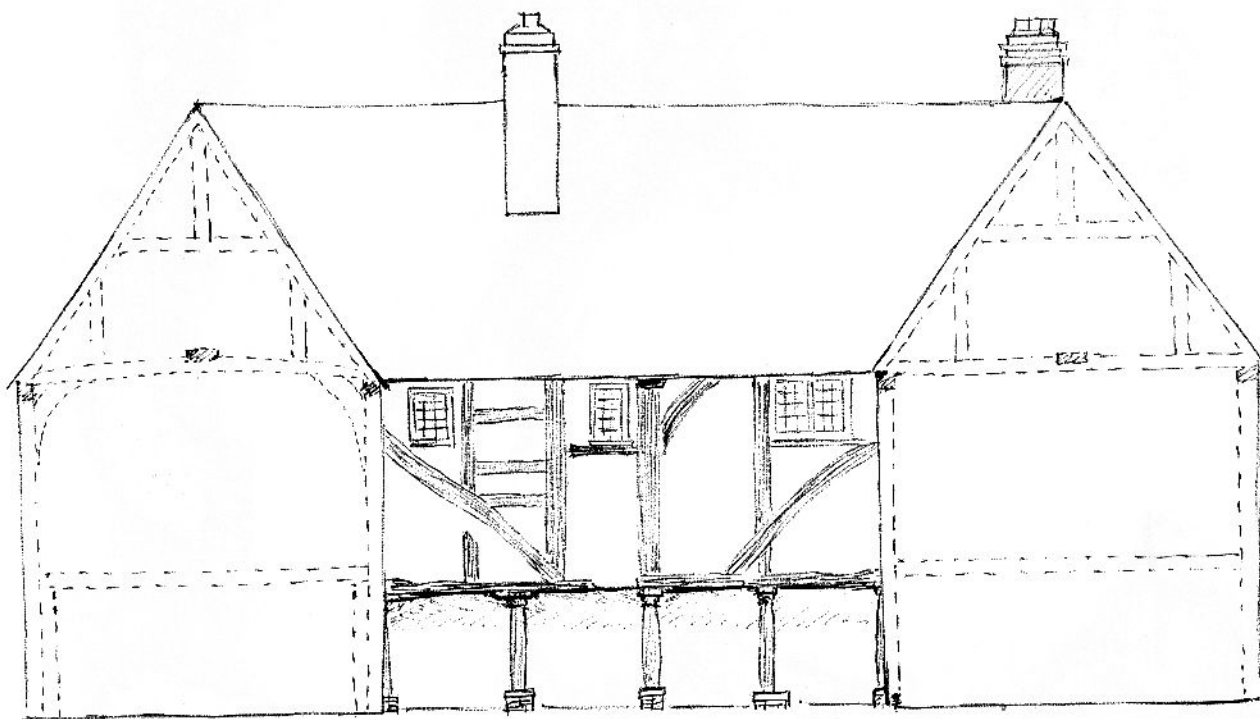
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 16 FEET

SCALE

165



WESTERN FACADE.



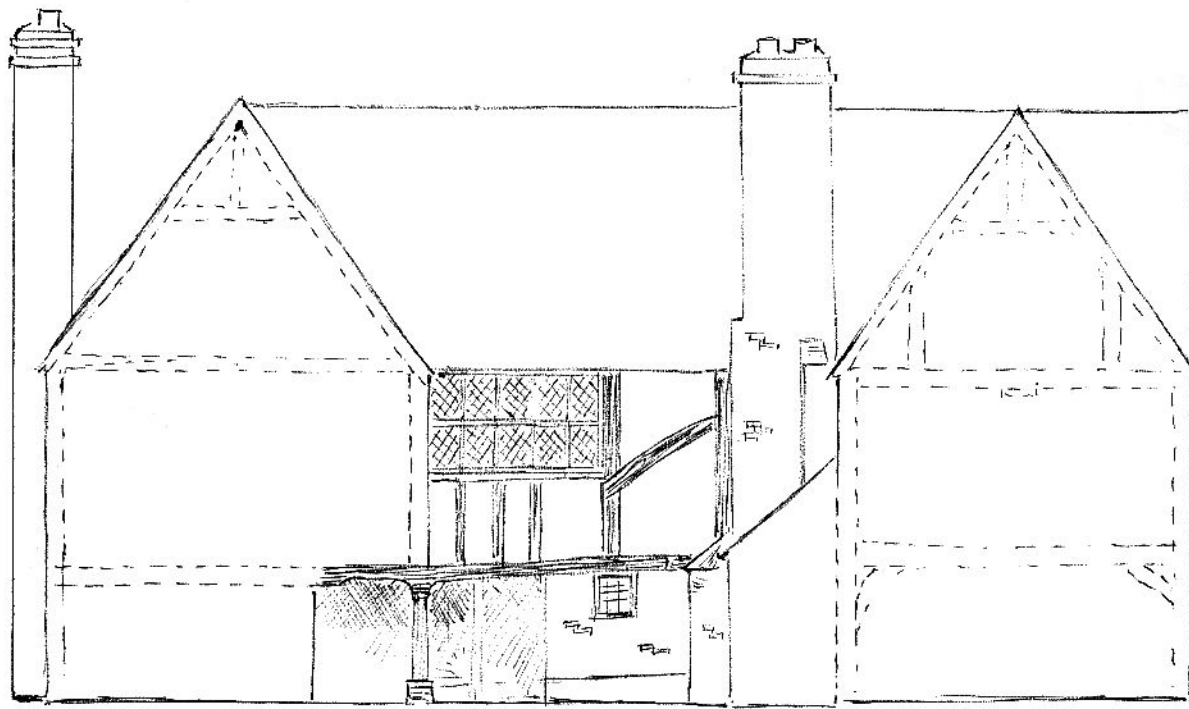
WESTERN RANGE FROM COURTYARD

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 16 FEET
SCALE.

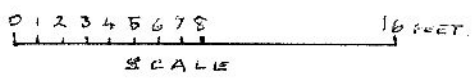
Handwritten signature or initials.



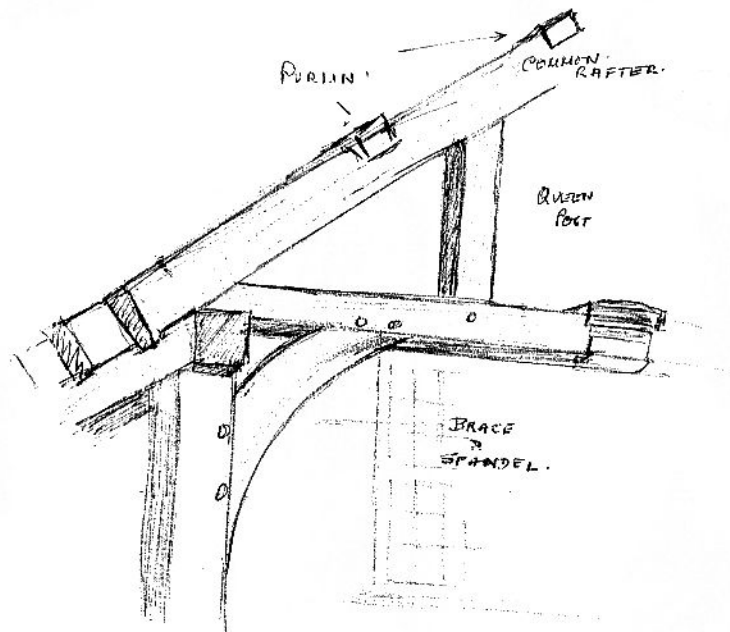
NORTHERN ELEVATION



NORTHERN RANGE FROM COURTYARD

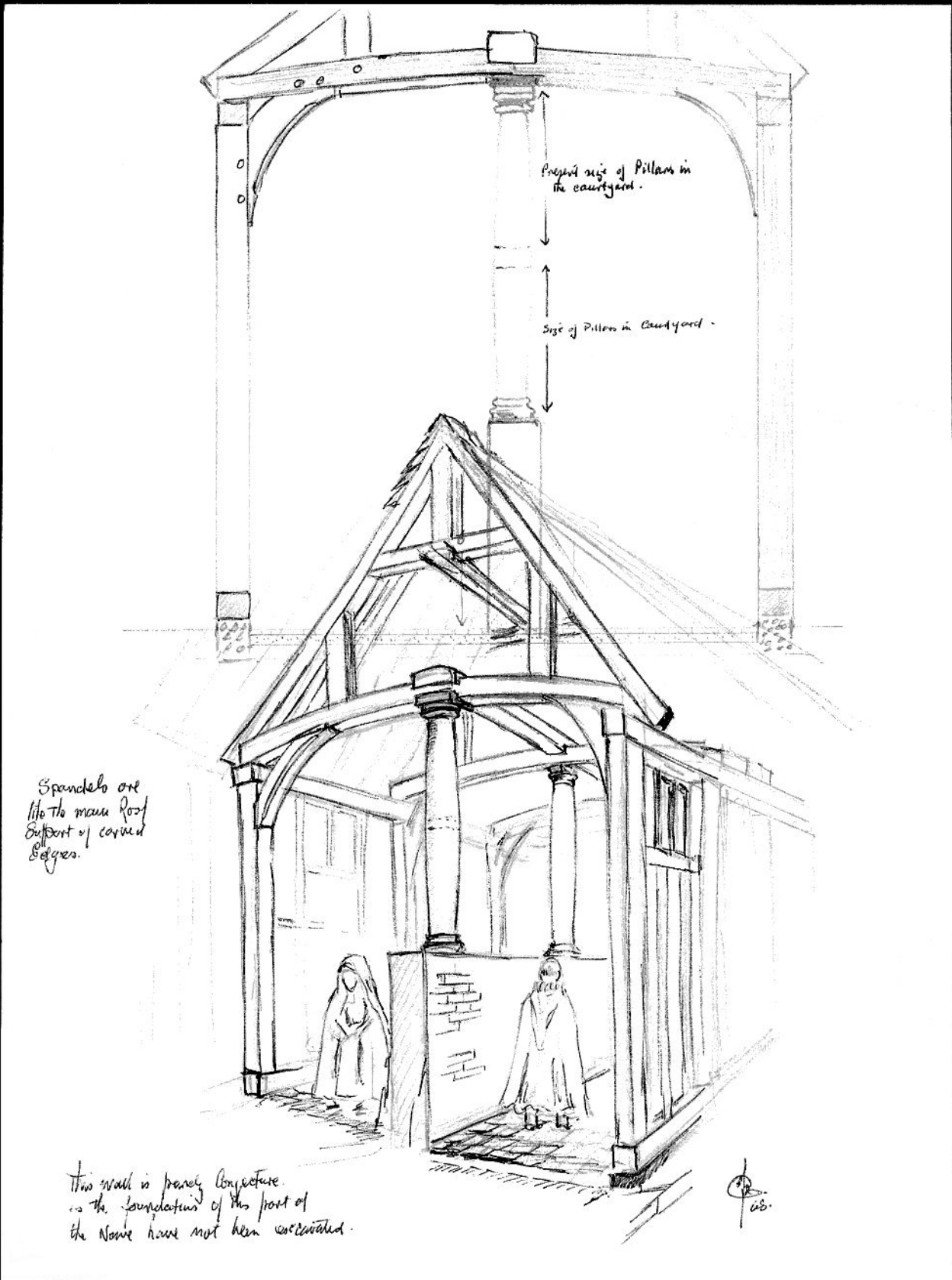


C.P.S.



S. E. CORNER ROOF SUPPORT.
Biggin.

128.



timber frame with eight wooden support columns of oak, joined by longitudinal beams across the top of them which support the common rafters. On top of these beams rest five cambered roof beams which in turn are joined by a solitary longitudinal centre beam running the full length of the building. This beam rests on the top of the cambered beams, which in turn are supported by curved spandels in each corner. The diagram on pageXII. shows a cross section of this range and it will be noticed that the first floor in this range is of a later date and rests on separate timber and brick supports. The common rafters of the roof rest directly on to longitudinal beams at the top of the main support columns and are supported by two Queen Posts with an additional roof beam some six feet above the main cambered beam, which in turn supplies a secondary King Post. The whole structure offers five bays some fifteen feet wide and twelve feet in depth, the measurements being taken from the centre of each column. The exterior wall of this range from the South doorway to the Eastern end is now encased in brick, while the inner wall of the courtyard is virtually hidden by the two fill in wings. What is still visible of this wall is mainly of 17th Century construction with the exception of the one main column which is still visible. The S.W. corner is in part original and was hidden by the adjoining building that was demolished in 1958. The South doorway, see figure XI , shows one of the main columns now cut down to make a support for the first floor, and still having attached to it the curved spandel. Traces were found of the longitudinal beam which used to act as plates for the main support columns, but these are not now visible. Originally the wall fill in supports were fixed between the two main longitudinal beams and some of these are still to be seen in the South West corner of the building.

The centre of the cambered roof beams have a strange wooden platform in the centre of the concave side which would seem to have taken the top of a support pillar. If this was the

case then the wooden pillars in the courtyard which support the abutting Western range could well have been the ones used. The pillars were examined, proved to be different in circumferences with two of them being five inches wider than the other three at the ornate heads of them, whilst the cut off bases are almost of identical circumferences when allowing for the pillars being originally nine feet long. (1) It is quite probable that they were joined and used in support of the centre roof beams in the Nave, even though they would have had to have been stood on a centre wall some six feet high. (2) This is not as improbable as it may at first seem, as the central dividing wall was a feature of the Gilbertine Churches (3) and even though it was not a double house it is quite likely that the partition would have been needed in much the same way that it was needed in other monastic churches open to the public. (4) We certainly know that the Priory Church here was open to the public (5) and the Gilbertines were very particular about their Canons meeting members of the general public.

The far Western end of the Southern range differs slightly from the rest of this range in so far as the Church appears to have terminated at the point marked A on the plan number VIII and in this end the first floor appears to be of original dating.

- (1). See Appendix. diagram No XVII.
- (2). See diagram number XVII.
- (3). See Arch. Journ. LVIII, pp 1-34. Excavations of a Gilbertine Priory at Watton, Yorks and also Arche Journ. Excavations at Sempringham.
- (4). See Rose Graham, An Essay on English Monasteries p. 91 Several instances can be quoted of partitioning in monastic churches open to the use of the general public.
- (5). See page 9. , Chapter ONE. "Portinacula Indulgence."



EAST FRONT OF THE BIGGIN

Whilst the main support beams are still extant in this corner, many alterations have been made, including the sawing in half of one of the cambered roof beams, to accomodate the Western fill in. Many stange and obviously out of place timbers are used and many filled in tenons and peg holes appear in the old timbers.

The basic structure of the Western fill in is complicated. In the centre of it one of the cambered roof beams from the now demolished end of the Church has been used, but the longitudinal beam we saw used in the Southern wing is here joined under the beam and the weight has proved too much for the joint over the years; as a result it is now separated from the roof beam and is only kept up by a very complex arrangement of beams and brick supports.

The first floor in this range is supported from the courtyard by the cylindrical wooden columns already mentioned and a brick wall which runs the full length of the building. A very substantial brick chimney stack has been built into the centre of this part and to-day this stack plays a major role in keeping the whole from collapsing.

The Northern range is like the Southern range, basically of Mediaval construction and like its parallel opposite it is built round a timber frame with ten main timber columns joined by longitudinal timbers across the top. Roof beams, this time perfectly flat divide the building into four bays measuring 16 feet wide and twelve feet long. The structure differs from that in the Southern wing in that the first floor is of Mediaval construction and the floor support beams are set into the main columns. Also the main roof beams are not supported by spandals. Again brickwork now covers the major part of the external wall but a visit to the Garret will show the timber structure of the building quite clearly. The roof structure is identical with that found in the Southern wing and the junction with the Western range is particularly interesting as the old roof beams

and some of the rafters at this end are still in tact and clearly show that the roof originally continued without any junction.

The staircase in the North Western corner of the courtyard appears to be in its original position, but of course many repairs over the years make it difficult to find any of the original timber.

The Eastern range is without a doubt the worst part of the whole building and it is so badly constructed that it is almost a pity that the architect did not have his way and have it demolished and rebuilt. ⁽⁴⁵⁶⁾ At the moment it leans out at an angle of 15 degrees from the vertical and like the Western range it has one of the enormous cambered beams wrongly fitted, which is in danger of collapsing. Here the efforts to support it have not been as successful as in the Western range and it is only a matter of time before more major repair work will be needed.

The whole of the Eastern facade is of late 16th century dating and its one redeeming feature is the very fine mullioned windows which appear on the first floor. Originally these lit the long Gallery of Robert Snagge's Elizabethan Manor, whilst to-day they have been relegated to offering draught and light to kitchens.

The inner wall of this range is almost completely hidden by chimney stacks and what little shows (1) is of little interest.

It would appear that this fill in was originally for first floor only and it could well be that in Snagge's day the main entrance to the building would have been under this wing. A drawing of the building appearing in Cussans History of Hertfordshire shows the courtyard taken from under the first floor and there is no trace here of any walling on the groundfloor whilst the first floor appears from the drawing to have been supported by a pillar very similar to those supporting the Western side.

Certainly it was found in 1958 when restoring the building

(1) See Diagram on page X11.

That the early timbers used in this part appeared to be entirely for the benefit of the first floor and alterations of a later date showed that this part had originally another use. It was also found when digging at point B on the plan when putting in an inspection chamber for the drains, that there was a paved flooring once running under this wing which was considered to be of the type usually found used for outside courtyards. (1)

Many of the first floor rooms on the Southern side contain wood panelling of late Elizabethan dating and that in the room in the South West corner appears to be of early 16th century dating and bears the carved initials of William Croocar and his wife, together with the date 1585. Reginald Hine believed this to have been of Mediaval dating, but the considered opinion of the architect who carried out the alterations was that it was more in keeping with the date carved on it than of an earlier period. (2).

Inside the South door on the wall is a rather fine example of late 15th century carving which either came from a window or screen. It bears a remarkably close similarity to that found in the screen in the Parish Church both in size and design, but exactly where it came from and what its original use was we do not know.

Unfortunately the old well was filled in at the time of the restoration of the building and cemented over without examining it in any great detail. At the same time the old hand pump was removed from the side of the courtyard.

- (1) The chalk flooring was rather loosely packed and showed traces of cobble stones having lain on the surface.
- (2) See letter from Mr. McGregor dated 11th September 1968, now in the files on the Biggin at Hitchin Museum.

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A P P E N D I X

Part One

- (i) Inq. a.q.d. file 340. No. 4.
- (ii) Cal. Patent Roll 37 Edw 111. pt.1. m.37.
- (iii) Inq. a.q.d. file 37~~0~~ No.14.
- (iv) Chancery Ing. p.m. Hen.VI. file 23. m.36.

Part two

- (i) Aug. Office Misc. Books 233 f.97.
- (ii) L.& P. Hen Vlll xi. 113 No.1479 and 1480.
- (iii) First Ministers Accounts. Hen Vlll No.1617.
- (iv) Pat. Roll 36 Hen.Vlll. part 9. mss.20(24)
- (v) Aug. Office, Particulars of Grants.
36 Henry Vlll. 296(1).
- (vi) British Museum. Lands. Mss. 54. p 65.
- (vii) Feet of Fines. Herts. Tr. 36 Eliz.

Part three

- (i) P.C.C. 11 Holney. Will of William Croocar.
- (ii) P.C.C. 31 Stafford. Will of Robert Snagge.
- (iii) P.C.C. 452 Alchin. Will of Joseph Kempe.

Part Four

- (i) H.U.C.files. Sanitary Inspectors Report.
- (ii) H.U.C.files. Architects Survey Report.
- (iii) Interim Report of the Excavations at the Biggin.

A P P E N D I X - O N E

(i)

Inquisition a.q.d. file 340 No.4. Grant of Edward
de Kendale to the Master of Sempringham. Biggin.

Edwardus Rex. Rogero de Wolfreton, Escactori suo in comitatio Hertford salutem. Praecipimus tibi quod..... inquiras si sit ad dampnum nostrum aut aliorum si concedamus Edwardo de Kendale quod ipse unum mesuagium unum toftum et duas acras terrae vocatas Berihorchard in Hiche dare possit et assignare magistro de Sempringham et tribus canonicis ordinis sancti Gilberti quorum unus Prior nominetur habendum et tenendum eisdem magistro canonicis et successoribus suis canonicis pro inhabitatione sua and successorum ar suonum canonicorum in eadem villa de Hiche de novo construendo et ad divina pro anibus celebris memoriae domini Edwardi ruper Regis Anglia sic.

Translation: Edward King of England, Lord of Ireland and Aquitaine, to his beloved Roger de Wolfreton, Escheator of County Hertford greetings. We order you to enquire diligently by the oath of good and true men of your county whether it would be to our hurt or prejudice if we should give leave to Edward de Kendale to give and assign a message, a toft and two acres of land called Berihorchard in Hiche to the Master of Sempringham and three canons of the order of St. Gilbert of whom one shall be named prior to have to hold to the same Master, Canons and their successors for their inhabitation that and their successors canons in the same town of Hiche to build anew and for celebrating divine service for the souls of the Lord Edward of famous memory lately King of England our father and Isabel lately Queen of England our mother and for the souls of Robert de Kendale and Margaret his wife and of all those faithful deceased every day for ever. Myself at Westm. Nov 15. 35 Edw. lll.

Inquisitio Capta apud Hicche die veneris proxima post festum sanctae Katerine Virginis anno regni regis Edwardi tercii 35 per Sacramentum juratorum qui dicunt super Sacramentum surn quod non est ad dampnum nec prejudicium domini Regis nec aliorum licet dominus Rex concedat Edward de Kendale quod ipse unum messuagium urum Toftum et duas acras terrae vocatas Berihorchard in Hiche dare possit et assignare magistro de Sempringham et tribue canonicis ordinis sancti Gilberti quorum unus Prior nominetur habendum et tenendum majistro canonicis et successoribus suis pro inhabitatiome sua et successorum suorum Canonicorum in eadem villa de Hiche de novo construendum et ad divina pro animabus celebris memorie domini cebris memorie domini Edwardi te.

Translation: Inquisition taken at Hiche by oath of John le Cokes, Wm. Pacy, Thos. Permonter, Wm. Smyht, Robt. Walmesford, Ric. Russel,

John Ordewy, John Freeman, Luke Piou, Ric. atte Mede, John Bret and Luke Baker Jureres. On the Firiday after the feast of St. Katherine the Virgin, 35 Edward 111., they say upon oath that it is not to the damage of he King and others in the grant to Edward de Kendale that he may give to the Master of Sempringham and three canons of the order of St. Gilbert of whom one shall be named as Prior to have to hold to the same Master, Canons and their succesors for their habitation that and their successors canons in the same town of Hiche to build anew and for celebrating divine servace for the souls of the Lord Edward of famous memory lately King of England our father and Isabel lately Queen of England our Mother and for the souls of Robert de Kendale and his wife Margaret and all those souls deceased. And they say that the said Messuage are held from the Lord King in chief and parcel of the Manor of Hiche which manor is held from him by the service of one and a half Knights fees. They say that the said Toft and land are worth 2s. per annum and the Mnaor of Hiche £20 per annum and remains in the hands of the said Edward and is sufficient to enable him to perform his dñe service after the goft to the monks.

All taken from the Inquisition a.g.d file 340 No. 4.

A P P E N D I X - O N E

(ii)

Cal. Patent Roll 37 Edward III. Pt.1. m 37. Together with
translation note from Father Wilson.

Per omnibus ad quos ... salutem. Sciatis quod cum nuper per
lras nuras potentes de gra nura spoli et per finem vigirti librae
quem Margareta que fuit ux Rberti de Kendale fecit nobiscum
concesserum et licenciam dedes im per nobis et heredibus eidem
Margarete quod ipsa unam rodem t're in Orwell et advocacium acclea
eisdem ville dare posset et assignare ditcus nober in xeo custodi
capelle ti petri in ecctea pochiali de Hiche et tribimus capellanis
divina in eadem ecclia per anima Roberti de Kendle quondam veri
sui ac animat antecesson suore et omneui fidelui depinetore rec et
nos ad rogatu dilci et fidelis noi Edwardi de Kendale fil et
heredis pedcore Roberti et Margareta qui ducas bras nominus eo quod
duci licencia nois nondu est executata ac estam alias tras n'ras
sibi per nos de executue licencie p'dce postmodu factus nober in
canonileas nober rondu vestituit cancelland concessimas et
licenciam dedimus per nober et heredibus nois per facto Edwardis
quod ipse pedcam rodam t're cu petin in Orwell at Advocaceom
ecclie eisdem ville de Orwell dare possit assignarie magro ordinus
de Sempringham et priori et canonicus de Hiche cujesdem ordinus in
co. Hertford tend et tenure updem magro priori et canonicus et
successoribus suis divina in poriratu perdos per anibus eisdem
Edwardi et antecessor suore et omni fidelui defunstoru celebratus
iuxta ordindcorem perfati Edwardi in hoc parte faciend impetene
et eisdem magro Priori et canonicis quod ipsi t'ram illam et a
advocatatum perducam a perfacto Edwardi recipere et eccliam illam
appropriare et cam sic appropriatam in per prios usus tenure
possit sibi et successoribus seuis perdicis sicut perdue est
impetuum tenere persentui.

Cal. Pat. Roll 37 Edward 111. Pt 1. m.37.

" The Patent Roll 37 Edward 111.pt 1. m.37. states as a fact
that the licence to Margaret de Kendale had not been executed
and was returned to the Chancery to be cancelled. No reason is
given for the licence not having been executed and as it is not
recorded it is not possible to do more than guess what the
reason was." Copy of letter received from Father Cuthbert
Wilson, D.J.M.,O.S.B., after he had carried out the research
at the Record Office on my behalf.

" The King to all to whom etc., Greetings. Although we of our special grace and for 20 marks which Wm. Rous. Chaplain has paid to us we have granted and given leave for us and our heirs as much as is in us, to the same William that he may give and assign 8 messuages, 363 acres of arable land and 3s rent, to our beloved in Christ the Prior and canons of Hyche of the Order of Sempringham there lately by our beloved and faithful Edward de Kendale, Knight, founded by our licence to have and to hold to them in aid of their support for ever, and to the same Prior and canons that they may receive and hold the premises. Likewise we have given leave, the statute of mortnam notwithstanding, not willing that William or his heirs or the Prior and canons by reason of the said statute be molested by us or our ministers. Witness the King at Westminster July 14th."

Inq. a.g.d. file 3777. No. 14.

A P P E N D I X - O N E

(iv)

" Inquisition taken at Buntingford in County Hertford the Wednesday before the feast of St. Hilary the Bishop. 2 Henry 1V The Jurors say that Robert Turk, Knight, held (with many other properties) 11 cottages, 15 acres of arable land all in the Parish of 'Hycchen' from the manor of ' Hycchin' worth 2 marks per annum by the service of a suit of court every three weeks and they say that he was the true patron of a certain Chapel called Bygyngge in the Town of Hycchin. He died the Monday after the feast of the birth of the Lord last past. Joan daughter of the same Robert whom John Waleys Esquire married is his next heir and is of the age of 26 years."

Chancery Inq. p.m. Hen. 1V file 23. No 36.

A P P E N D I X - T W O

(i)

" The King to all to whom etc., Greetings. Whereas the late monastery of Byggyng in Hutchyn now dissolved whereof John Mouton at the time of dissolution and long before was prior. We wishing a reasonable annual pension or worthy promotion to be provided for his support know ye that we grant to him an annual pension of 4 pounds for the term of his life or until he shall be promoted to a benefice of the same or higher value.

Witness Ric. Pyche, Knight, at Westminster. Dec. 20. In the 30th year of our reign.

AUGMENTATION OFFICE Misc. Books. Vol. 233. Fo 97.

A P P E N D I X - T W O .

(ii)

L. & P. Hen. Vlll xi. 113. 1479 - 80

RAUF MORICE TO CROMWELL

My deutie of most humble comendations to your good Lordshipp remembred. It may please the same to be advertised, that considering with myselfe the great and manyfolde busynes and causes in whiche your lordship specially at this tyme doth duly travell about the kings graces waightie maters, I thought it to moche displeasor or rather an extreme iniurye unto your lordship to comber you with small seuts, saving that I thought agayne that Hercules labours semed but mere trifles in respecte of your contynuall travaile yf it be treu that all wisemen writith, that the valiantnes of wisdom passith so farr the robuste strength of the bodie. Wherefore being fully persuaded that paynefulnes in doing good ys very pleasor unto your lordship and having also no dispaire of your lordship's good mynde towards me, I am ones agayne come unto your lordship with myne olde seute consernyng the Ferme of Biggyng in Hechyn in the furderance whereof I have devised a supplication unto the Kings Maistie in myn aion name, to the entent, that after the matier be thereby ones attempted, I should not nede to put your Lordship to further cumberance than by your good and favorable wourde to preferre the same. Whiche I moste humblie beseche your good lordship that I may have, or do I counte myselfe no better than a castaway, my chaunce in sutes hath hetherto ben so evill. The copie of the said supplication I have sente unto your lordship to thentent that the effect of my petition may the better appeare unto your good lordship. Thus Almyghtie God preserve your lordship in moche honor and felicitie.

Your lordships Bedisman to command.

(Sgd) Rauf Morice.

(Endorsed)

To the right honorable and
his singular good Lorde my
Lorde Privie Seale.

RAUF MORICE TO CROMWELL

Lest I should not seme my singuler good lorde a very negligent seuter and like unto one that nothings attall doth esteeme the favor and benevolence of so noble a man, I repute it no less than my dutie (knowing specially your lordshipp's good mynde towards me) thus contynually to crave of your lordshipp, as I do for the furtherance of myn old seute concerning the ferme of the Selle in Hyohyn namyd Byggyngs, trusting that yo^r lordship doth rather herein consider my very necessitie than any other vayne request or petition. For havng both wyf and children yerly growing unto a more nombre and without any certentie of lovyng as yet, I am compelled and dryven thus shamefully to seke for thair necessitie in asmoche they now lyve more in danger of other than by myn own provision. And I assure your lordship that besides the example of your goodness daily declared unto dyvers and many travailing with thair penne and industrie in this moste happie worlde of goodly refermation I am the more encouraged to followe my said sute consideringe that the kynges maiestie ys of that most excellent liberalitie and bowtiousnes that his grace delighteth ever more to recompence (et hoc non sive amplissimofoenore) for suche thingis as his graces pleasor is to have or command. Nowe than foreasmoche as his highnes pleasor was about ii yeres paste, than Hawkyns of the garde should have the ferme of the parsonage of Ofpringe in Kente which before his gratious pleasor so knowne was granted unto me by the Mr. and felowes of Sainste Johnes in Cambridge by the which also I do yerely forbear xx^{vi} nobles towards my poor living. I doo firmly trust and hope through your good lordship's favourable wourde to have the Kynges Magestic my singuler and good soveraigne lorde for the same. Agayne I do lesse mistrust my said seute herein considering the thing for which I do serve ys but of the yerly reve~~ive~~ive of xiiiiⁱⁱ or thereaboute in the king's graces books of surveying. Whereof the moste parte standeth in ruinouse tenements so that fewe or none makith any seute for the same. And therefore my humble petition is that it will please the kinges magestic of his graces most accoustumable liberalitie and boutiousnes in recompence of the premisses and in consideration of my poor service done in his highnes affaires committed unto my lorde my M^r from tyme to tyme for the space of theis vii yeres paste, to graunte me a lease of the said Sell named Byggyngs

xx^{ti} nobles under under the rent surveyed. Of deutie I can aske nothing at all for that I naturally owe unto my prince during my life only constrayned by very necessitie. I seke buy for deformed Sia leaving faire Rachell unto others who hath done longer or better service than I (meaninge thereby that a small lying is competent enough for my vocation, For the whiche neverthelesse both I and my poore wyf and children shall not only (over and besides our naturall duties unto the Kings Majestie) among other innumerable, both older and yong daily receyving benefits at his gracious handes. Pray for the long preservation of his highnes estate to contynave in moche honor and prosperitie, But also for the furtherance of the same be at your Lordshipps Commandement during our lyves.

It would so please your good Lordship to declare your pleasor concernyng the premisses unto myn olde acquayntance and frend Mr. Arnes, Your servante I were mucche bounde unto your Lordship for beyng dayly and hourly busyes in wrytyng aboute the ordynances of the kynges highnes Collegis, I cannot do my deutie myself unto your Lordship as I woulde in this behaulf.

Your lordship's bedisman,
(Sgd) Rauf Morice.

(Endorsed) Rauf Morice to my S. p. S.

(Addressed) To the right honorable and
my singuler good Lorde my
Lorde Privie Seale.

A P P E N D I X - T W O

(iii)

The Accounts of Robert Marshall, Bailiff of the lands of the late Priory of the Biggin. March 30 Hen. Vlll to Mar. 31 Hen. Vlll

He renders account of 40s of farm of a certain messuage built within the town of Hichen called Barkesdalles Place situated in Brankecroftstrete between the messuage of Wm. Pygotte on the one side and the messuage of Lucy Winters on the other together with 2 acres of land in Brankecroftstrete and elsewhere in the fields of Hichen demused to Robert Snedall by an indenture made to Richard Copcott whereof the date being May 23rd of Henry Vll to hold and enjoy the said messuage to the said Richard for 99 years And 5s from the farm of a tenure in Brankecroftstrete within the town of Hichen in the tenure of Robt. Knight. And 5s for the tenure of Thos. Pyttesworth. 5s for the farm in the tenure of Peter..... And 5s Barfott and 1s another Clement.... 6s 8d. another Robt. Persone. 14s for the farm of another great tenement there in tenure of William Thell. 8s rent in the strete called Dedestrete within the same town in the tenure of Wm. Gynne. 8s for the farm of another tenn^t. Thos. Wattes. 6s 8d. Wm. Atkinson 6s 8d John Sped. 6s 8d James..... 6s 8d Jn. Walker. 3s John Monk. 3s Hen. Woddeland. 16d Mary North, widow. 4s Ric. Block, 5s Garden plot in the tenure of 40s for the farm of a great tenement or messuage with garden in the tenure of Hen. Warne.

Then follows a list of property in 'Wyllion.'

Farm of the site of the late priory in cocupation of the accountant 20s.

Requesites of the Courts. Nil.

Sales of Wood, nil. Decays and Deceased rents and repairs nil.

Total of all allowances and payments £15. 17. 10d. Accountant only 22s of which 20s is the fee 2s is allowance for a clerk in writing this account.

Extract from Ministers Accounts Henry Vlll. No. 1617.

A P P E N D I X

2 (iv)

Patent Roll 36 Henry VIII part 9 m 20(24)

Patent Roll 36 Henry VIII part 9 m 20(24)

The King to all to whom ets.. greetings. Know ye that we fore the sum of £298, 18s 7d of lawful money of England paid to the hands of the Treasurer of the Court of the Augmentations of the Revenues of or Crown to our use by our beloved John Cokke, esquire, for which we confess that we are fully contented and satisfied etc. of our special grace and of our certain knowledge and mere motion have given and granted and by these presents we do give and grant to the aforesaid John Cokke the whole house and scite of the late Priory of Byggyng in our countie of Hertford, now dissolved and all our houses, buildings, yards, orchards, gardens, pools, fishponds, land and soil and our hereditaments whatsoever with all their appurtenances being within the scite, enclosure, ambit, circuit and precinct of the said late priory, and also all that our messuage and tenement called Barckers Dalles Place, with the appurtenances, formerly in the tenure of Richard Copcott and now on late in the tenure or occupation of Robert Snedall or his assigns, situate and being in Brankecroftestrete in Hychyn, in our said county of Hertford, viz, - between the messuage now or late in the tenure of William Pygott, on the one side and the messuage of Lucy Wynter on the others side. We do give also and for the consideration aforesaid by these presents do grant to the aforesaid John Cokke all those our 3 acres of land, with the appurtenances formerly in the tenure of the said Richard Copcott and now or late in the tenure of Robert Snedall or his assigns, lying and being in Hychyn aforesaid, in our said county of Hertford to the said messuage called Barkers Dalles Place belonging and pertaining, and all our houses, buildings, stables, chamber, shops, cellars, solars, curtilages, gardens, vacant grounds, entries easements, and hereditaments whatsoever with the appurtenances in Hychyn aforesaid in any manner belonging and pertaining and with the same messuage and tenements being demised or let. And also all and singular those our eighteen messuages gardens and tenements to the same messuages and tenements and also our eighteen gardens to the same messuages adjacent with all their appurtenances now or late in the several tenures of Robert Knight, Thomas Crowley, Ralp Thorpe, John Smyth, John Greene, Robert Pereson, William Thelle, Walter Gynne, Thomas Wattes, William Atkinson, John Spade John Fydler, John Walker, John Monke, Henry Woodland, Mary North, Richard Block, Robert Marshall and Henry Waryne or their assigns or of any of them, situate, lying and being in the said Hychin, in our said countie of Hertford, and our one piece of land called " a Garden Place" with the appurtenances now or late in the tenure of the said Robert Marshall or his assigns in Hychin aforesaid, and also all and singular our houses, buildings etc., whatsoever with all their appurtenances in Hichyn aforesaid to the said scite, messuages, tenements and gardens in the aforesaid Hichyn in any manner belonging or pertaining etc.. Which said messuages, tenemets gardens and other all and singular the premises above expressed and specified, with all their appurtenances, to the late Priory

of Byggyng once belonged and pertained and were parcel of the possessions thereof. Here follows details of ther land grants made in Hertfordshire. Which said scite of the said late Priory of Byggyng and the aforesaid tenements etc., in Hichyn are now extended at the clear value of £10. 11s. 8d. To have hold and enjoy the aforesaid scite of the said late Priory of Byggyng and the aforesaid tenements, cottages, gardens, curtilages, shops et., To the aforesaid John Cokke, his heires and assigns forever. To hold of us and our heirs as of the Manor of Hychyn in the county of Hertford by fealty only, and rendering yearly to us, our heirs and successors of and for the aforesaid scite of the said late Priory of Byggyng, and for the said " le garden Plotte " in Hichyn aforesaid 2s 6d, and for the the said messuage and other premises now or late in the tenure of the said Robert Snedall 4s., and for the aforesaid messuage and garden in Hichyn aforesaid now or late in the tenure of the said Henry Waryne 4s., and for the aforesaid tenements and gardens and the other premises in Hichyn aforesaid now or late in the several tenures of Robert Knight etc.. 3s.8d., and for the aforesaid tenement and garden in Hichyn aforesaid now or late in the tenure of William Thelle and the aforesaid garden in Hichyn now or late in the tenure of the said Robert Holland 21d., and for all the aforesaid other tenements, gardens and the other premises above expressed and specified in Hichyn af aforesaid 12d., of lawful money of England to be paid to the Court of the Augmentations of the Revenue of our Crown at the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel every year for all the rents services and demands whatsoever thereafter to us, our heirs or successors in whatsoever manner to be rendered paid or done etc.. In witness whereof etc..

Witness: Katherine Queen of England and our general Governor of the same, at Hampton Court, the 18th day of Aug.

By the King himself by virtue of a commission to the Queen.

A P P E N D I X

2 (v)

Augmentation Office Particulars for Grants. 36 Henry VIII
Taken from File 296(1)

Augmentation Office, Particulars for Grants, 36 Henry VIII.
Taken from File 296.

Memorandum, dated 1st August 1544, that I John Cokke of Broxborne in the Countie of Hertford, gent., desyre to purchase of the Kynges Ma^{tie} the lands, tenementes and hereditaments specyfyed w^t in the particulars hereunto annexed amountynge to gether in the hole to the clere yerely valewe of twentie syx poundes tenn shelynges and Syx pence, the tenthe not deducted. In wytnesse wherof I have subscribed this byll w^t my hand and putt my seale the fyrste day of Auguste in ye XXXVI yere of ye Reygn of ouer soverenge Lord Kyng of England, Henry ye Eight by the grace of God Kyng of Fraunce and Ireland, defender of the faythe and in Earthe of the Church of England and off Ireland the supreme Hedd.

Per me Johannem Cokke.

Parcela terrarum et possessionum nuper prioratus de Byggyngne infra villam de Hychen in comitata Hertfordie.

Firma cujusdam Mesuagii edificati infra villam de Hechyn predicta vocati Barkers Dalles place ut scituatur in Brankecroftestrete inter Mesuagium Willelmi Pygott ex una parte et Mesuagium Lucia Wynter ex parte altera, unacum tribus acris terre in Brankecroftstrete et alias suis pertinentiis in Hechyn predicta sic dimisi Roberto Snedall per indenturam factam cuidam Ricardo Coppecott cujus data est xxiii die Maii anno regni Regis Henrici septimi septimo. Habendum et tenendum et gangendum Mesuagiom predictum cum omnibus suis pertinentiis prefats Ricardo Coppecotte et assignatis suis a Festo sancti Michaelis Archangelli proximo futuro post datam dicte indenture usque ad finem termini iiii xix anno estunc proximo sequentium et plenarie complendorum. Reddendo inde per annum.

XI^s

Firma unius tenementi cum gardino adjacenti scituati et jacentis in Brankecroftstrete infra villam de Hychin predicta in tennura Roberti Knight de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.

V^s

Firma unius alius tenementi cum gardino ibidem adjacente in tenura Thome Crowley de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] V ₅
Firma unius alius tenementi cum gardino ibidem adjacente in tenura Thome Tytteworth de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] V ₅
Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino adjacenti in tenure Johanus Smyth de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] VIII ₅
Firma alterius tenementi cum gardino adjacenti in teura Johannis Greene de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] VII ₅
Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino adjacenta in tenura Roberti Persone de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] VI ₅
Firma alterius magni tenementi ididem cum gardino et aliis suis pertinentiis in tenura Willelmi Helt de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] XVI ₅
Firma alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino adjacenti in vico vocato Dedestrete infra eandem villam in tenura Walteri Gynne de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] VIII ₅
Firma unius alius tenementi cum gardino adjacente ibidem in tenura Thome Wattes de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] VIII ₅
Firma unius alius tenementi cum gardino adjaceate in tenura Willelmi Atkenson de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] VI ₅ VIII _d
Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino adjacente in tenura Johanis Speda de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per annum.	] VI ₅ VIII _d
Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino adjacente in tenura Johannis Fydler de anno in annum Reddendo inde per annum.	] VI ₅ VIII _d

Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino
adjacente in tenura Johannis Walker de anno in
annum. Reddendo inde per annum. VI s VIII d.

Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino
adjacente in tenura Johannis Moncke de anno in
annum. Reddendo inde per annum. III s

Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino
adjacente in tenura Johannis Moncke et Henrice
Woodland de anno in annum. Reddendo inde per
annum. III s

Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino
adjacente in tenure Mariene Northe de anno in
annum. Reddendo inde per annum. XVI d.

Firma unius alius tenementi ibidem cum gardino
adjacente in tenura Ricardi Block de anno in
annum. Reddendo inde per annum. III s

Firma unius le gardeyn plott ibidem in tenura
Roberti Marshall de anno in annum. Reddendo
inde per annum. V s

Firma unius magni tenementi sive mesuagii cum
gardino ibidem in tenura Henrici Warine de anno
in annum. Reddendo inde per annum. XI s

Firma Scitus nuper prioratus predicti cum
omnibus ortis, pomariis, gardinis et aliis
suis pertinentiis infra scitum, septum, ambitum
circuitum et precinctum dicte nuper lomas in
occupacione et tenura Roberti Marshall de anno
in annum. XX s.

Memorandum the premisses ben no parcell of any Manor of the
Kinges and doue lye betwin the towne of Hychen aforesaid
whiche is VIII myles or therabouts from any the Kinges
Houssez, Forestes, Chaces or Parkes reserved for the accesse
of his grace.

Item, what Fyne or Incombe hath or will be gyven for the
premyssez or any parte therof I know not.

Item, there benn former particulars made of the premysses
and delyvered to one Fletewoode, whiche wer made and delyvered
accordingly by vertue of ye former warrents to me dyrected.

Examinator per me, Thomam Mildemaie auditorem.

xvi. die Maii anno xxxvi Regis Hen. viii,
pro Johanne Cock.

Item, certeyn tenementes, cotages and Houses in Ichyn..
x.li. viii.s. vii.d.

Decima inde xxix.s.
Which~~w~~ rated at x yeres purchas dothe amounte to the som of
cxxxiiii.l. vi.s. i.d.

Item, three acres of lande rated at xii.d. the acre..... iii.s.
Whiche rated at xx.L. yeres purchase dothe amounte to the sume
of..... iii.l.

And then thee hole is... cxxxvii.l. ix.s. ix.d. to be paid all
in hande.

Memorandum, the Kinge muste discharge the byer of all
Incumbrances except leases, and except all suche charges as
the Farmers thereof arre bounde to paye.

Item, iii houses parcell seynt Bartylmewes... x.l. xiii.s. iii.d.

Whiche rated at xiii yeres purchase dothe amount to the sume of
cxxxviii.l. xiii.s. iii.d.

Item, certeyn landes in Parwiche parcell of Gracedewe...
xxvi.s. viii.d.

Item, iii toftes of lande called Poplers. ii.s.

Whiche ii severall parcelles amounte yerely to xxviii.s. viii.d.

Whiche rated at xx yeres purchase dothe amounte to the sume of
xxviii.l. xiii.s. iii.d.

And to the hole some that the said John Cokkes must paye for all
premisses..... ccliiii.l. xii.s. ix.d. to be paid all in hande.

Memorandum, the Kinge must discharge the byer of all
incombrances except leases and except all such charges as
the Framers is bounde to paye.

A P P E N D I X - T W O

(vi)

To the Right Hon. my Especiall
good Lord the Lord Treasororef
England.

..... Gods Grace while I lyve and hereafter. For that I coulde
not fynde tyme and go^r Lo. leysure at my laste beinge wythe you
I am thus overboulde by these tres herewith to trouble you for
whiche I moste humblye crave pdon, and daylie praye to the
Almyghtie for yo^r Lo pservaciun and goode successe, in all hono^r
to the glory of God, the good of this realme, and yo^r owne ever
lastinge comforte, and so I reste yo^r Lo. readye in all service
at my porehouse in Hitchin this xxviith of Auguste 1587.

Yo^r Lo. most bounden

Rt. Snagge.

British Museum. Lands. Mss. 54. p.65.

A P P E N D I X - T W O

(vii)

" This is the final agreement made in the court of the Lady the
Queen at Westminster in Trinity term the 36th year between Robert
Snag Esquire plaintiff and Thomas Coker and Eden his wife concerning
the manor of Byggyn and a messuage, two gardens, three orchards,
three acres of land and 30s rent in Hytchin, Ipollettes, Preston
and Wylmondley. Whereof a plea of coverant was summoned between
them viz that Thos and Eden acknowledged the said manor and tenements
to be the right of Robert as those which he had of the gift of Thos
and Eden and they quitclaimed them to Robert and his heirs and will
warrant them to him and his heirs for ever against all men. And for
this agreement Robert gave £80 to Thos and Eden."

Feet of Fines. Herts. Tr. 36 Eliz.

Last will and Testament of William Croocar.

In the name of God Amen and in the yeare of our Lord God 1570 the xxvjth day of January in the thirteene eere of the Raigne of our Sovereigne lady Elizabeth by the grace of god Queene of England ffrance and Ireland. Defender of the faithe etc. I William Croocar of Hittchyn in the Countie of Hertford yoman, being of sick of boddie, but hole of mynde, thanke be gyven to Almighty God, do ordayne and ake this my last will and Testament in manner and form following. Ffirst I bequeath my Sowle to Almighty God and my boddie to be buried in the Churche tard of Hitchyn aforesaid. Item I will and bequeathe to Willm my Sonne the howse that I knowe dwell in withe the appurtenances to him and his heires for ever and that all manner of moveables within and about the said howsse therein conteyned to remaine to the use of the said Willm and Thomas Croocar, and to be divided at the discreyson of the forsaid Willm and Thomas. Item I will and bequethe to Thomas and Willm my Sonnes the howsse called the Byggin, and the pasture withe the appurtenances thereunto belonging with moveables and unmoveables whatsoever they be hereunto appertaining to them and to the heires of them bothe for ever. Item I wyll to Thomas my sonne a howsse and a shoppe in the Markett place that Richard Brunsall and ffather lawrans now dwelleth in to hym and hys heires for ever. Item I give to Willm my Sonne iii acres of free land, lying in Hytchin ffield Walswoorthe ffield and little Wymmly ffyld to him and his heires for ever. Item I gyve to Willm my Sonne, the Close called the Park to him and his heires for ever. Item I gyve unto Luce my wyfe lx pounds uppon condition, that is to say yf the said Luce do deliver upp all suche Interest or Title whiche the said Luce hath or ought to have by way of marriadge into the handes of Thomas and Willm my Sonnes that then the said Luce to have the said lx pounds or els the the aforsaid three skore poundes to remayne unto the foraid Thomas and Willm and their heires for ever paying unto the sayd Luce iii pounds vi pounds viii pounds. Item I gyve unto the childe of Luce my wyfe which she now goeth withe xx pounds whereof xv pounds remains in the hands of Mary Parrys mother to the said Luce, towards the bringing off the said Childe. And also other xx pounds I give unto the said Childe, to be dilivered unto the said Luce yf yt be a mane Childe at the age of xxi years and yf yt be a Woman childe to be delivered at the age of xviii years. And yf yt happen the said Child to depart without charge of Keepinge then I will the said xl pounds to remayne and be equally divided amongst ny Sonnes. Item I gyve to Willm and Edward the Sonnes of Thomas Cookar, unto either of them vi pounds. xiii pounds iiiii pounds. Item I gyve unto Thomas, Willm, Titus and Isaack my Sonnes all obligations, bills of

Covenauntes and leasses whatsoever they be, the leasse of Holwell excepted unto Thomas and Willm only and all manner of debtes not bequeathed, equally to be divided amongst them. All other goodes moveables and unmoveables not bequeathed I will and bequeath to Thomas and Willm my Sonnes whome I ordayne and make my Executors.

Thiese being Witnesses Richard Chambers, John Huckell, Robert Lyon, John Cowper and George Elmer Clark.

Proved at London 24th March 1570 by Thomas and William Coocar executors in the said will named.

P.C.C. 11 Holney. 26th January 1570-1.

The Last will and Testament of Robert Snagge. P.C.C.31 Stafford.

In the name of God Amen. I Robert Snagge of the Biggen neare Hitchin in the countie of Herts esquire, of sane memorye and good healthe (God be blessed for yt) revokinge all other willes doe make and ordaine this onelie laste will and Testam^{te} in manner and forme followinge. Touching my person that is to be dissolved by deathe I remytte my soule to God that made yt ymmortall and my mortall bodey to the erathe whereof yt was made in hope throughe the merytts of Christe Jesus my alone Savyour to be againe the same man in the generall resurrection that I am nowe all synnes and blemishes wasshed and wiped oute by the blood of that lambe and then to lyve for ever in his eternall kingdome wth him as one of his Saintes whereof I have assurance by faithe w^{ch} I professe in that forme that is sette downe in the articles agreed upon in the Parlyamente the thirteenth yeare of her Ma^{ty} raigne as the publique profession of the Church of Englande (whereof I am a member) and consente therewith therein and accordinge to the creede called the Apostles Creede lykewise professed in this oure Church. And toudhinge a memory all of my friends that I ever founde kinde and constante and forgevinge and foregettinge the unkyndenes of the reste I doe appointe and will to the moste honourable and Reverend Father in God John by Gods providence Archebishope of all Englande S^r Edmonde Anderson Knighte Lorde cheife Justice of the Common pleas Julius Cesar Doctor of the Lawes one of the masters of the requestes to her Ma^{ty}, Edwarde Cooke esquire her Ma^{ty} Attorney Generall, Thomas Fanshawe esquire her Ma^{ty} remembraucer in her courte of Exchecquer, John Sparlinge Sergeante at Lawe, John Brograve her Ma^{ty} Attorney of the Duchie, George Rotherham Esq my adopted brother my familier from his childehood and to Mistris Elizabeth Snagge widdowe late wife to my brother Sereant Snagge suche sevall legacies or remembrances as in a Schedule annexed to that Coppie of my will that shall agree herewith remaynenge withe me shall be appointed or set down w^{ch} persons I especyallie remember at my deathe for that they never changed their affectyons towards me for any prefermente of theirs nor faulte of meyne of w^{ch} sorte of kinde and unchangeable frendes Anne Dallison widdowe my sister I have founde moste kinde and constante faithfull and true. Wherefore I doe hereby ordaine her my sole executrix of this my laste will and Testamente desiringe her to paye trewly all such debtes as shall be true debtes any waye owinge by me at my deathe to any, and to reforme this my will to my foresais frendes in suche forme as in the daide schedule shalbe appointed, and burye my bodie in a comely maner withoute any suyscion or solemnitie in some Church wherein Christe is served and there accordinge to the order of this Church of Englande for that I hope to rise againe amongst the reste of the Christians and be glorified withe Christe Jesus as one of his Church in the greate daie of the Lorde. And for the love and kyndenes that my said sister Dallison hath

allwaies borne to me one lie of all my kynne and for her due executinge of this my will (with which I trust her onely) I will and bequeathe to my saide sister Dallison my mannor house or capitall messuage called the Biggin where I dwell neere Hitchin and all my Freehoulde landes Tenementes and heredytamentes whatsoever to her and her heires for ever which mannor house or messuage is holden of the mannor of Hitchin by the rente of Two shillings, five pence in soccage and not in capite. And also I doe hereby geve, appointe, will and dispose my cappiehoulde land called Lymberley peece in Letchworth to her and her heires accordinge to the Custome of the Mannor of Shepall whereof yt is hollden whereof I made a surrender to the use of suche persons and in suche sorte as I shoold expresse in my will. And I will to her to dispose at her will and plaisr all my goods and cattelles unbequeathed my debts beinge payde, and this rememberances in the foresaid scedule bestowed uppon mynfrendes aforesaid. In Wytnes whereof I have herewith sett my hand and seale the Eighte and Twentithe dage of Auguste in the yeare of the Lorde, One Thousande Fyve hundreth nyntie and nyne in theis presentes of theis whose names be hereunto subscribed by their own hands whiche never gearde the same read of me Robert Snagge, Francis Gregorye, Roberte Dallison, Leonarde Pattinson, John Cave and John Mellowes.

Probate 14th May, 1606, to Anne Dallison executrix named in said Will.

Will and last Testament of Joseph Kempe.

In the name of God Amen. The 17th day of July in the yeare of our Lord 1654. I Joseph Kempe of Hitchin in the Countie of Herts, Gentleman being all this time sick in bodie but of sound and perfect memorie praised be God for the same, Doe make and ordaine this my last Will and Testament in manner and form following. First I bequeath and Committ my Soule unto God who gave it and my bodie unto the earth where it was made to be buried in such seemly sort as my Executrix hereafter named shall thinke fitt untill the General day of resurrection beleiving to be saved both in bodie and Soule through the death and perfect odedience both active and passive of my blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus and only by his merritts doe expect everlasting joy and of that part and postion of Wordly goods and Estate which it hath pleased God to lend me I dispose as followeth. Item. I give and bequeath unto the porre people of Hitchin aforesaid the summe of five pounds of current English monie to be Disposed amongst them all or immediately after the time of my burial att the descretion of the Overseers of the poore for the time being. Item. I give and bequeath unto Annie my Dear and Loving Wife all those of my lands Tenements and hereditaments sett lying and being in the Feilds bounds and Parishes of Godmonchester inthe Countie of Huntingdon with the appurtenances to have and to hould unto her the said Annie my Wife and unto her heires and assignes for ever. Alsoe I devise and bequeath unto her the said Annie my Wife for and during the tearme of her naturall Lyfe all that my mansion or Mannor house comonly called or known by the name of the Biggins situate and being in Hitchin aforesaid and whereas I now dwell with all houses, orchards, yards, gardens, waies, easements, luitrents priviledges proffitts Commons and Commodities thereunto belonging and also I doe devise and bequeath unto her the said Annie my Wife for and during her naturall Lyfe all those my one and thirty acres of arrable be it more or lesse as well free as Coppichold which I lately purchased of Robert Papworth gentleman and of William Willis lying and being in the feilds and Parishes of Hitchin aforesaid which said Coppieould or Customarie Lands is holden by Coppic of Court Roll of the Mannor of Hitchin aforeaid I having lately made a surrender of the said Coppieould Lands to the use of my Will according to the Custome of the said Mannor and further my will and meaning is that the said Annie my Wife shall have power to dispose by her last Will and Testament of the rents, issues and proffitts of the said messuage and Lands before mentioned for and during the space of two whole yeares next after her decease. Item. I give forgive and bequeath unto Susan Tappenden widdowe my deare and loving Sister the summe of one hundred pounds of Currant English monie and also all such other monies which shall happen to be due unto me by her the said Susan above that summe at the time of my decease. Also I give unto her the said Susan my lesser silver Tankard and further I devise and bequeath unto her the said Susan Tappenden for and during the tearme of her naturall

life all that my Customarie or Coppieould Messuage in Hitchin aforesaid which I did lately buy and purchase of Richard Swanson with the Malting House buildings barns, stables and other outhouses orchards, yards, gardens, waies, easements, proffitts Commons and Commodities thereunto belonging with thappurtenances now in the tenure of Charles Raynes the younger and the widdowe Hobbs or their assignes and which is houlden by Coppie of Court Roll of the Mannor of Hitchin aforesaid, I having lately made a surrendor of the said Messuage with thappurtenances to the use of my Will according to the custom of the said Mannor. And further my Will and meaning is that if before named Annie my Wife shall happen to survive and outlive the said Susan my Sister that immediately from and after such the decease of the said Susan the said Messuage and premises with the apputenances shall goe and descend and in such case I doe hereby devise and bequeast the same to goe and dssend unto the said Annie my Wife for and during the remainder of her naturall life also the desposed of two years rent thereof after her decease. And after the death and decease and the several deceases of them the siad Susan my Sister and Annie my Wife (the two years proffitts before devised by this my Will to be desposed by the said Annie my Wife as aforesaid excepted) I doe give and bequeath unto Ralph Skinner of Hitchin aforesaid Gentleman, Robert Draper, Francis Audley, James Turner, Jeremie Carter and Nataniell Hobbs all of Hitchin in the aforesaid Countie of Hertford Yoeman, all thet my Mansion and Mannor house Commonly called the Biggin before mentioned and also these my one and thirtie acfs of land in Hitchin aforesaid as well Coppieould as Freehold and also all that Customarie Messuage with Thapputenances before mentioned in the tenure of Charles Rayner the Younger withall and singular the outhouses buildings, barnes, stables, Malting house orchards, yards, gardens, waies, easements, quitrents, Royalties, proffitts, privilidges, Commons and Commodities unto the said Mansion house Messuage and other the Lands and premises fre and Coppieheld and unto every of them belonging or in anie wase appertaining and the reversion and reversions remainder and remainders of the said Mansion house Called the Biggins and of the said one and thirtie acres of Land and of the said Malting house all and singular other the premises with appurtenances to have and to hould unto them the said Ralph Skinner, Robert Draper, Francis Audley, James Turner, Jeremie Carter and Nataniell Hobbs and to their heires for ever Nevertheless on Trust and Confidence in them reposed then they and the Survivors or Survivor of them and the heires and assignes of the Survivour of them and such person and persons to whom the estate in Trust shall or may be from time and tymes hereafter renewd and continued their hieres assignes and succeeding feoffees or some of them doe and shall yearly and every yeare (after the said Mansion house Messuage Lands and premises shall happen to descend and come unto them

the said feoffes or Trustees before named according unto the true intent and meaning of this my last Will and Testament or unto the survivor of them or their heires lay forth and bestowe the summe of ten pounds of Currant English monie amongst ten poor ancient or middle aged women whoe are and shall be of Honest Conversation and such as have in their former tyme been diligent in some honest calling during bodilie abilitie and after disabled. And that to be paid Quarterlie to every such wooman by five shillings the Quarter out of the rents issues and proffitts of the said messuages Lands and Premises and from tyme to tyme to be altered and given to others as my said Trustees friends or their successors in their said Trust for the tyme being or the greater number of them shall thinke fitt during the Worlde and also doe and shall from thence forth during the Worlde yearelie and everie yeare bind and put forth fower poore children out of the Parish of Hitchin aforesaid to be Apprentices in some honest Vocation withe the summe of twentie pounds more of like Currant English monie out of the rents issues and proffitts of the Messuages Lands and Premises before mentioned to be bequeathed in Trust for the said intents and purposes and my will and meaning is that all such supusages of rent and rents as shall from tyme to tyeme and at all tymes after the Trust before mentioned shall Commence to be acted in according to the true intent and meaning of this my Will all lawfull and needfull Charges and dibursements about Taxes separations or other incidents ovasions to the Messuages Lands and Premises before mentioned in Trust belonging or which may fall or belong thereunto or unto the said Trust as shall yearlie arise or be made of the same Messuages Lands and Premises over and above the disbursments before mentioned shall be from tyme to tyme and at all tymes after be employed to other pious and charitable uses as the feoffees before named or their survivours or survivour of them or the heires or assignes of the survivour of them and their successors for the tyme being in the said Trust or the greater number of them shall thinke fitt. And my Will and meaning is that the said Trustees and their successors shall once within everie two yeares from tyme to tyme render a true and just account unto the Churchwardens and Overseers of the poore of Hitchin aforesaid or unto such others as they shall from tyme to tyme thenke fitt to render such accounts unto the performance of their said trust according to the true meaning of this my Will. And further my will and meaning is that when anie two of them my said trustees friends before named shall happen to die or depart this life then the survivours of them shall with the consent and advice of the Church Wardens and Overseers of the poore of Hitchin aforesaid for the tyme being renew the said Estate to the Messuages and Premises aforesaid to and with such new Feoffees as they the greater number of them shall thinke fitt and agree upon and see the said Estate to be from tyme to tyme by and with the consent

of the Survivours and Survivours of them or the heires and assignes of the Survivours of them renewed and Continued to to succeeding Feoffees to act in the said Trust according to the said trust and according to the true meaning of this my last Will and Testament to the end of the World and my will and meaning is and I doe hereby will and devise the summe of forty shillings to be dispended on a Convenient Dinner by the said Feoffees and their successors in the same Trust out of the rents issues and proffitts of the Messuages Lands and Premises before mentioned at the tyme of the rendring of their said accompt and soe from Tyme to tyme. And also I doe bequeath unto them my said Feoffees and their successors in the said trust all such writings roubles rent roubles evidences muniments Coppies of Court and Escripts whatsoever as belong unto the Messuages Lands and premises before intrusted by this my Will bequeathed to be delivered unto them the survivours or survivor of them all the tyme of the Communiut of the said trust to be entered in the first writings to be joyntly locked upp betweene them in some strong chest for that purpose to be provided with their successive bookes of account and renewed Deeds of Feassment in the Church or some convenient roome about it. Item, I give and bequeath unto my sister in Lawe Helen Kempe Widdowe, the Relict of Edwin Kempe my brother deceased all these my Messuages and Tenements in Hitchin aforesaid situate and being in a Certain streete there Commonly called Tyler Streete and next adjoining to Maltmill Lane with their and everie of their apputrinances for and during the terme of her naturall life which said premisses are now in the tenure and occupation of her the said Hellen Kempe, William Groute, Thomas Pearson and Hills or their assignes with the barnes yards and outhouses thereunto belonging and whereas John Mattocke Esquire hath heretofore settled and Conveyed to divers Feoffees in trust certaine Closes and Lands in Hitchin aforesaid for and towards the maintenance of a free Schoole in the same towne whereof I having taken Consideration and Conceiving the same to be a needfull and a pious worke. Therefore for the better encouragement thereof I doe give and bequeath unto the before named my Trustie and loving friend Master Ralph Skinner, Robert Draper, Francis Audley, James Turner, Jeremie Carter and Nathaniell Hobbs and unto their heires and assignes after the decease of the before named Hellen Kempe my sister in Lawe all that messuage and those Tenements last before mentioned and the yards barnes and out houses to them belonging with thappurtenances and the reversion and reversions remainder and remainders thereof with their and everie of their

Appurtenances to have and to hold unto them the said Ralph Skinner, Robert Draper, Francis Audley, Jame Turner, Jeremie Carter and Nathaniell Hobbs and unto their heires and assignes for ever nevertheless on trust and Confidence in them reposed to the intent and purpose that they and the Survivours or the Survivour of them or their heires and assignes of the Survivours of them or their successors shall from tyme to tyme imploy the rents issues and proffitts of the said Messuage and Tenement with Thappurtenances the Charges of reparations taxes and other neccesitous disbursments deducted to and for the better maintenance of the said Schoole and for the teaching and instruction of six poore Children of Hitchin in Literature and good learning as they the said trustees or the Survivours or Survivour of them or the heires or assignes of the Survivour of them or their successors in the said Trust shall thinke fitt and also to the intent that they and their heires and the heires of the Survivour of them shall from tyme to tyme as occasion shalle require renew the said Estate in the Messuage and Premises aforesaid to such new Feoffees as they or the Survivours or Survivours of them or the heires or assignes of the survivour of them in their or his discretion shall thinke fitt with such future provision as shall be thought fitt for the continued renewing of the said Trust and performance thereof according to the true meaning of this my Will through all future Generation and my will and meaning is that all such writings and evidences as doe concern the said Messuage and Tenements shall be delivered and yealded upp And I doe hereby devise and bequeath the same to be delivered unto the said Trustees or the Survivours or S Survivour of them or the heires and assignes of the Survivour of them as the time of the Commencement of the said Trust to be locked upp and kept with the renewed Feoffments which shall hereafter be made of the said Estate in manner as aforesaid. Item, I give and bequeath unto the fower Daughters of my sister Susan Tappenden before named, that is to say unto Elizabeth Tappenden, Alercie Tappendan, Susan Tappenden and Sarah Tappenden unto either of them one hundred pounds apeece to be paid unto them severally and respectively att their severall and respective age and ages of eigheteene years or the dayes of their severall marriages which shall first happen and alsoe my will and meaning is that my Executrix hereafter named shall immediatly after my decease pay and allow unto the said Susan Tappenden my sister or unto anie others by her directions and appoyntment for and towards the maintenance and education of her said children the lawful yearly interest of two their said Legacies untill the same shall respectively become due by this my Will. Item I give and bequeath unto the fower daughters of Helen Kempe my sister in Laws before named. That is to say unto Elizabeth Kempes, Mary Kempe, Ann Kempe and Hellen Kempe unto either and everie of them one hundred pounds and my will and meaning is that their severall and respective Legacys shall be severally and respectively

paid unto them and everie of them all theire severall and respekt
ive age and ages of eighteene yeares or att the dayes of theire
severall marriages which shall first happen and further my will
and meaning is that my Executrix shall yearly pay and alowe unto
Elizabeth Kempe my neice before named the yearly summe of three
pounds and no more untill her Legacie before mentioned shall be
respectively due and payable by this my Will and also my Will and
meaning is that my Executrix hereafter named may have the education
and bringing upp of the before named Mary Kempe and Ann Kempe
my neices untill theire severall and respective Legacies shall
respectively due and payable by this my will for which soe doing
my will is that my said Executrix shall pay or allow nothing
for or in Lieu of the said Legacies and also my Will and meaning
is that my Executrix shall pay and allowe unto the before named
Hellen Kempe my sister towards the maintenance of Hellen Kempe
my Neice her younger daughter the yaerly interest for his Legacies
before mentioned untill the same shall be respectivelie due by
this my will. And for further my will and true meaning is that if
anie of my neices before named shall happen to die before hir or
theire Legacies or Legacies shall be respectively due by this my
Will thet then and in such a case her or theire Legacies or
Legacies so dying shall goe and discend unto het or theire
surviving Sisters or sister att the tyme of payment thereof before
mentioned. Item I give and bequeath unto my halfe sister Mary now
wife of..... Farmer fifty pounds to be paid unto her by my E
Executrix hereafter named within three monthly next after my
decease. Item, I give and bequeath unto my loving friend and
assistant Master..... Biker the summe of thirtie pounds to be
paid unto him or his heires within three months next after my
decease. Item, I give and bequeath unto my loving friend and
Neighbour Daniel Draper the summe of five pounds to be paid unto
him within three monthly next after my decease. Item I give and
bequeath unto William Darper his sonne monie sufficient to buy
him a Sirers Gown att his first admission into any Colledge inthe
University of Cambridge. Item I give unto him one yearly stipend
of fiftie shillings by the yeare for and during the first fower
yeares after his aid Admission and residence there. Item my Will
is and I doe hereby devise and bequeath unto my loveing Kinsman
William Sell of Godmanchester the rents issues and proffitts of
that land of mine which he hath now in occupation for and during
the tearme of five years next after my decease. Item I give and
bequeath unto my Kinsman Mary Dawes the wife of John Dawes of
Norwich the summe of twenty poundes to be paid unto hir or hir
heires within three moneths next after my decease. Item I give
and bequeath to my late servant Susan the now wife of Thomas
Hindall the summe of three pounds, And unto Master Bradshaw my
Servant twentie shillings and unto Alice Moulden my Servant
fortie shillings and unto Elizabeth Fisher my servant twenty
shillings and unto Sarah Beard my servant twenty shillings and

unto the nowe Wife of Richard Dellowe who was my late servant thirtie shillings theire said severall legacies to be severally and respectivaly paid unto them and everie of them within three monthes next after my decease. Item I give and freely forgive unto William Willis my late servant all such depts as are or heretofore were due by him the said William Willis unto me before the named Joseph Kemp. All the rest and residue of my goods and Chattels unbequeathed my depts paid and my Legacies discharged and payed my funeral expences alsoe discharged and this my last Will and Testament trulie performed I give and bequeath unto Anne my deare and loveing Wife whome I doe nominate ordain and appointe to be the only sole Executrix of this my last Will and Testament hoping that she will have a speciall Care faythfullie to performe and discharge the same And I doe nominate and appoynte and earnstlie desire my loveing brother in Lawe Master John Luke and my loving Neighbor Robert Draper to be the Overseers of this my Will and I doe desire them to be assistant unto my Executrix from tyme to tyme as need shall require in the managing of her business and estate and to do theire best indevours to see this my last Will faythfullie performed and I give and bequeath unto either of them for theire paines therein to be taken ten pounds a piece to be paid unto them within one yeare next after my decease. Item my will and meaning is that when my Legacie's shall be all paid and discharged and immediatly from and after the Messuages Lands and Tenaments herby bequeathed to the severall Trusts withinmentioned shall descend and come to the Trustees within named or mentioned according to my Will that then my Will shall be delivered into the hand of the said Trustees or theire Successors together with the writings before mentioned. In witness whereof I the said Joseph Kempe have unto this my last will and Teastament contained in Twelve sheets of paper subscribed sett my hand and seal the day and yeare first above mentioned.

Signed Joseph Kempe.

This Will was signed and sealed and published in the prescense of us; Nath. Wells, Henry Kingsley, William Papworth, William Fuller, Careu Spencer, George Draper.

A Codicill annexed to this. Twenty fourth of July one thousand six hundred and fiftie fower. Whereas the within named Joseph Kempe have by this my last Will bequeathed unto fower daughters of the within named Susan Tappenden my sister unto either of them one hundred pounds apeece to be paid unto them and everie of them severallie and respectivelie as within my further will and meaning is that my Executrix as within named shall pay unto Susan Tappenden or her assignes for and towards the maintenance and education of her said children and alsoe to and for her own better livelyhood the interest of everie of her said childrens legacies yearly and

every yeare within three monthes next after my decease untill their severall Legacies shall severally and respectivelie become due and payable by this my Will after the rate of five poundes in the hundred anie thing before herin contained to the contrary thereof in anie wise not withstanding. Item, My further will and meaning is and I doe give and bequeath unto my loveing Friend and assistant Master Richard Swansey five poundes of Currant English monie to be paid unto him by Executrix within three monthes next after my decease. Alsoe I give and bequeath unto Elizabeth Martyn my late servant Thirtie shillings to be paid unto her within three monthes next after my decease In witness whereof I have hereunto sete my hand and seale The day and yeare above written.

Signed Joseph Kempe.

Signed and witnessed by, Nath: Wells, Nathaniell Hobbs.

Probate granted of Will and Codicill st Westminster the 9th October 1654, to Anne Kempe the relict and sole Executrix named in the above will.

The Seal depicts the arms: Gules three garbs or within a bordure sable. Crest a falcon ppr. Armed gules

Will of Joseph Kempe. P.C.C. 452. Alchin

17th November, 1953.

The Biggin Hitchin.

I have to report that during the past few days I have inspected the above premises, which generally comprise 18 rooms used for human habitation on the ground and first floors. Six of the eleven first floor rooms and one of the ground floor rooms were unoccupied at the time of inspection. I am of the opinion that the building is unfit for human habitation and is not repairable without at least a partial demolition and rebuilding of the structure. Following is a summary of the inspection and general defects:

1. Condition of Walls. Brick and lath and plaster. The brickwork and pointing is perished and defective in many places. The West wall is caving dangerously near room 16(1st floor). The North and South Walls are bulging whilst the lath and plaster portion of the east wall is leaning out badly.
2. Condition of Roof. Tiles. Defective timbers and tiles(loose and missing). Sinking in several places. Defective brickwork, pointing and flashings of chimney stacks. Defective eavesgutters and rainwater pipes.
3. Condition of Floors. Wooden. Defective in almost every room. With the exception of one room all the floors of the eleven first floor rooms slope badly whilst many are sinking and insecure.
4. Condition of Windows. Leaded type, generally in worn out condition and allowing rainwater to penetrate in a few rooms.
5. Condition of Doors. Fair condition.
6. Condition of Staircases. One is twisting and the woodwork of the three staircases is in a generally worn out condition.

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| 7. Condition of Plasterwork. | Majority of plasterwork throughout the rooms is in a poor condition. The ceiling plaster in most of the rooms is very uneven and sinking, especially on the 1st floor. |
| 8. Air Space. | Satisfactory. |
| 9. Ventilation. | Most of the rooms are poorly ventilated because of the lead type windows. Rooms 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 on the ground floor have the following ceiling heights 6' 2", 6' 7", 6' 5", 6' 3", and 6' 0". whilst room 17 on the first floor has a ceiling height of 6' 7". |
| 10. Darkness. | Three of the rooms are dark. Gas provided for artificial lighting. |
| 11. Dampness. | No damp proof course. Rising dampness in the majority of groundfloor rooms. |
| 12. Sanitary Accommodation. | Three water closets provided in the Yard. |
| 13. Water Supply. | Main Supply. One tap outside in the Courtyard. |
| 14. Sinks. | None provided. |
| 15. Washing Accommodation. | No provision. |
| 16. Preparation and Cooking of Food. | Gas rings and Kitchen ranges (some old in type and worn out). One room has a Gas Cooker belonging to the occupier. |
| 17. Food Stores. | No provision. |
| 18. Paving or draining of Courtyard and Passage. | Courtyard of brick and concrete in fair condition. |
| 19. Drainage. | Drainage to main sewer. |

It will be noted that it is the shell of the building which is in a worn condition, i.e., defective and dangerous walls, defective roof timbers and tiles, defective and sloping wooden floors, worn out condition of plasterwork and low ceiling heights; all due to the age of building.

Signed. Senior Sanitary Inspector

To: The Committee;
The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings,
55, Great Ormond Street, W.C.1.

Gentlemen,

The Biggin, Hitchin.

I visited this building on your behalf on the 12th September, 1952 and made an inspection of the majority of the rooms.

The structure is timber-framed and portions are mediaeval although the greater part dates from the 16th and 17th centuries.

The building was used for charitable residential purposes in association with the Church from very early times and as almshouses for the last four centuries.

It has been much altered in its long life and the historical development is not easy to decipher.

It is probable that the mediaeval part consisted of Rooms No. 1, 2, 3, and 4 on the attached plan and the part between, while the range 5 to 6 was added in the 16th century.

In its present condition, it is definitely not suitable for habitation and the sanitary arrangements are most inadequate and ill-conceived; on the other hand, it is perfectly possible to recondition the timber-framed structure. All things considered, I feel that the retention of the building for its present use is most desirable and the attached sketch plan indicates the lines on which I would suggest a scheme could be worked out.

I suggest that the additional buildings on the south side should be demolished, confining the building to the simple square form.

The central room on the first floor is not now used and a passage has been formed along the east side, leaving only a small window on to the courtyard.

The plan, therefore, shows the central chimney stack dispensed with and the central room on both floors given up to a new staircase and domestic offices. The central room on the west side is also so sacrificed.

It would then be possible to provide 12 habitations, 6 on each floor, each consisting of main bed-sittingrooms, kitchinette and W.C. There would also be one bathroom on each floor.

It is obviously impossible to estimate the cost of such reconditioning without detailed information, but I feel that £400. 0. 0. per habitation or say £4,000 to £5,000 for the 12 should suffice, which is probably a third of the cost of building the same number new.

Yours sincerely,

Signed JOHN E. M. MACGREGOR.

JEMM/AM/717.

17th September, 1952

INTERIM REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS AT THE BIGGIN.

The Biggin is a square shaped building standing almost foresquare to the cardinal points of the Compass. It is situated on the southern bank of the River Hiz between the Parish Church of St. Mary and Hitchin Priory.

The building is a timber framed structure with wattle and daub fill and partial brick facing. The northern and southern sides are basically of 14th century construction with many alterations of later dating.

A detailed survey of the present building revealed that both the northern and southern wings at one time extended further in an easterly direction and subsequently it was decided to carry out excavations in this area.

Permission was obtained from the Trustees and the Hitchin Urban District Council, and the excavations were started on the 4th September 1968. The Hitchin Museum gave every assistance and the Assistant Curator joined in the digging. I have been very fortunate in having a small group of very keen and competent workers on the site who have carried out herculean tasks with the minimum of cursing and persuasion for which I am very grateful.

The condition of the site has remained almost static over the last three hundred years and there is no record of any building having been erected on the site during this period.

From the level of the existing foundations the ground rises some three feet over a distance of thirty two feet and a further twelve inches over another eight feet. This area has over the years served as the gardens for the Biggin and the cottages near by and at the time the excavations were started, was considerably over grown.

All finds and records of the site will be deposited with the Hitchin Museum subject to the consent of the Trustees, and the final report will be published.

Summary.

The site from the point of view of cultural sequence is basically simple. From the foundation level to the present surface there are only three date levels. These levels have, however, been greatly disturbed over the years by constant cultivation.

Top soil varies in depth from a mere two inches near the Biggin wall to as much as 19 inches at the eastern extremity of the site. There is a layer of sub soil of a sandy type, containing mortar and rubble covering the whole site, some 7 inches thick. Below this and resting directly on the foundations level is a layer of brick and mortar rubble varying in depth according to the state of preservation of the remaining foundations.

In parts of the site the layer of building rubble resting on the foundations is as much as seven inches thick whilst in other parts it is only a couple of inches thick. On the level of the foundations is a layer of black top soil with traces of past vegetation, which is some twelve inches in depth and lies on top of the chalk level.

The top three levels of the site have no structural remains save for a chalk flooring some 7 inches thick, which was discovered near the eastern facade of the present building. This chalk floor rests on top of the foundations which are in a decayed state in this area.

The 14th century foundations were discovered at the same level as the foundations of the existing building and include the curved apse of the church on the southern side of the site. The flooring of the Church comprised of a layer of packed chalk lying on a stone base. Traces of red brick floor tiling were found on the surface of the chalk. This was of a course and plain type and measured nearly two inches in thickness. The wall foundation plinths have been uncovered and are in a very decayed state. These consist of an 8 inch deep, mortar and stone base resting on a rubble and hardcore platform some 9 inches in depth. Traces of two post hole were discovered in the South East corner of the site but due to the weather have not as yet been cleared.

On the northern side of the site a similar flooring construction has been uncovered and this is adjoined by a stone and hardcore base showing definite traces of use as a fireplace. Between these two areas the mortar outlines of walling were found, but in a very advanced state of decay. These show a passage with a hard packed earth floor and the circular markings and post hole of a staircase.

If the Gilbertine Plan was followed on this site(1) then the position of the Church would be in its proper place. The passage would presumably connect the Church, Warming house and Canons Dormer with the Chapter House. The latter building has not as yet been traced.

Dating of the floor levels is based on the discovery of 16th century pot sherds on the surface of the floor in both the northern and southern areas, and under the chalk flooring of the Warming House, early 14th century pottery sherds were discovered.

The majority of the finds have been of 17th and 18th century dating and earlier pottery is scarce. No coins have been found save for a George I. halfpenny which was found twelve inches above the flooring in the Church end.

(1) See 'The excavation of a Gilbertine Priory at Watton.' by W.H.St.John Hope and H.Brakspear. Arch. Journ. LVIII.

A very large number of metal finds have been made but these are all in a very decayed state due to the dampness of the ground. These are at the time of writing, being cleaned and examined and at this stage it is not possible to state whether or not they are dateable.

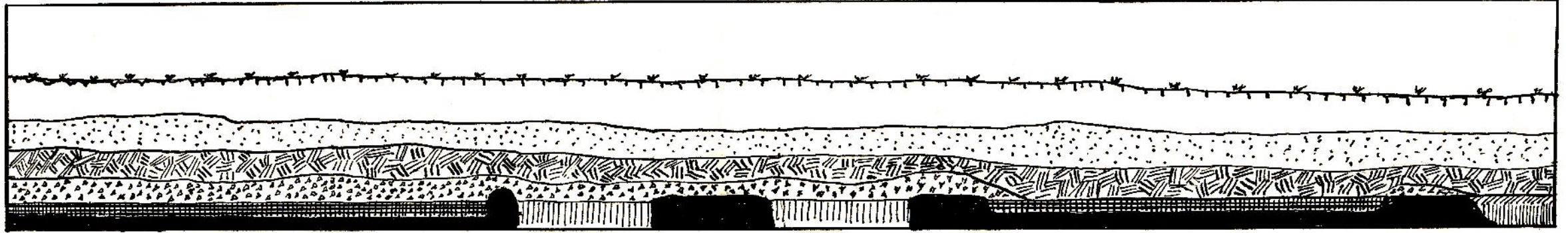
The adjoining plan of the site shows the extent of the excavations to date together with the foundations so far uncovered. The eastern side is still being excavated and work has just started on the large baulk between the main trench and the Biggin, marked as the second phase.

A full list of the finds together with dating material will be published upon completion of the excavations this summer. I have unfortunately to finish on this site before the end of July, as the council need it for the use of a Car Park.

EASTERN TRENCH WALL STRATA.

NORTH

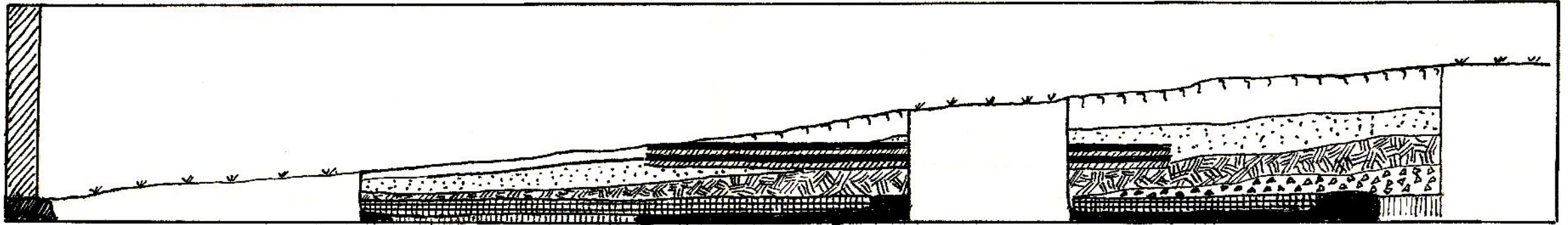
SOUTH



NORTHERN TRENCH WALL STRATA

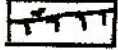
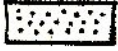

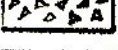
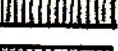


BIGGIN WALL.

EAST.

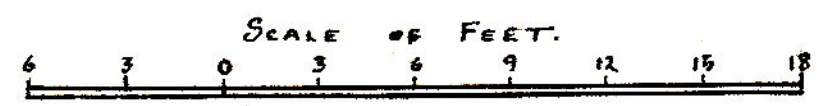
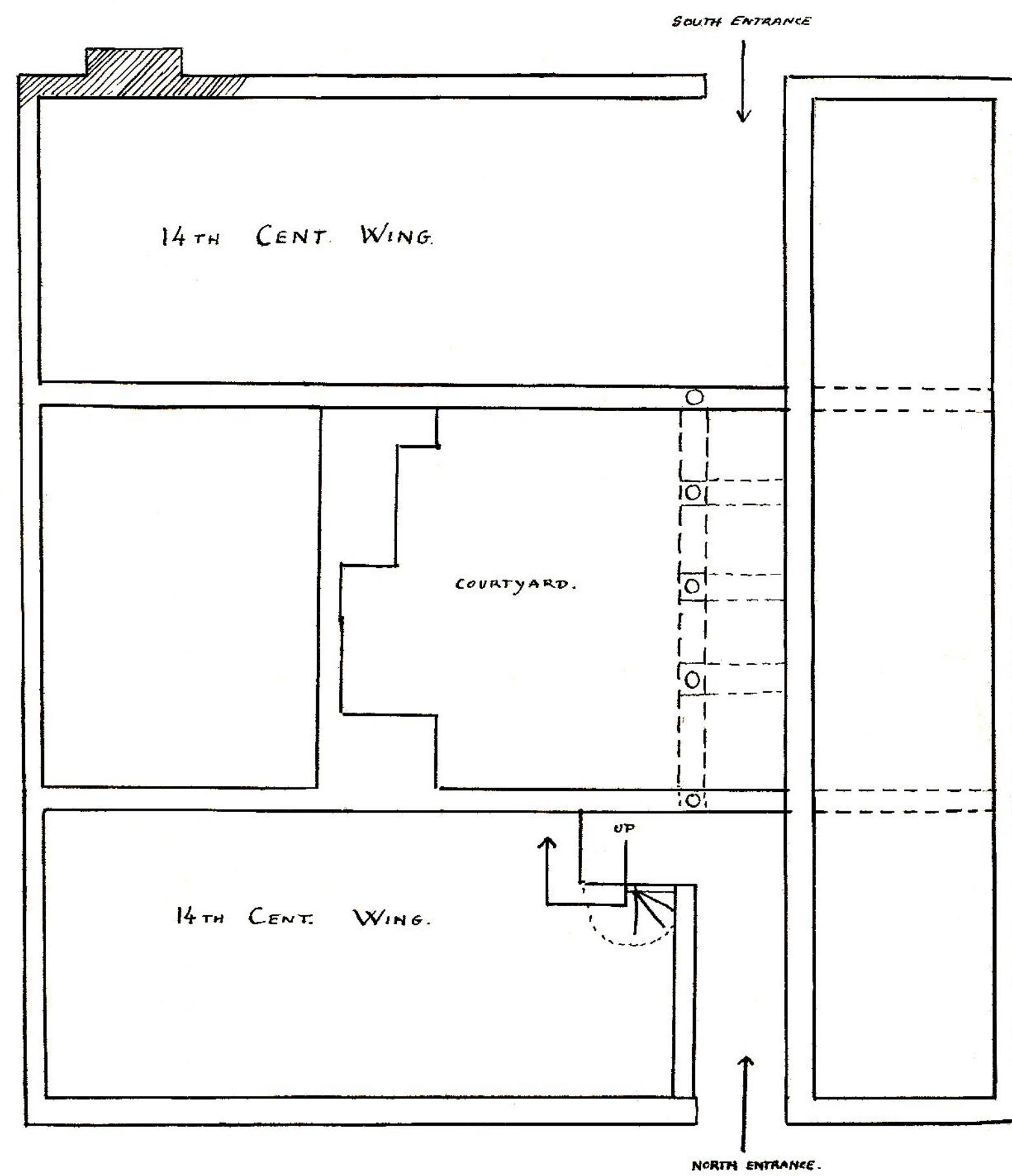
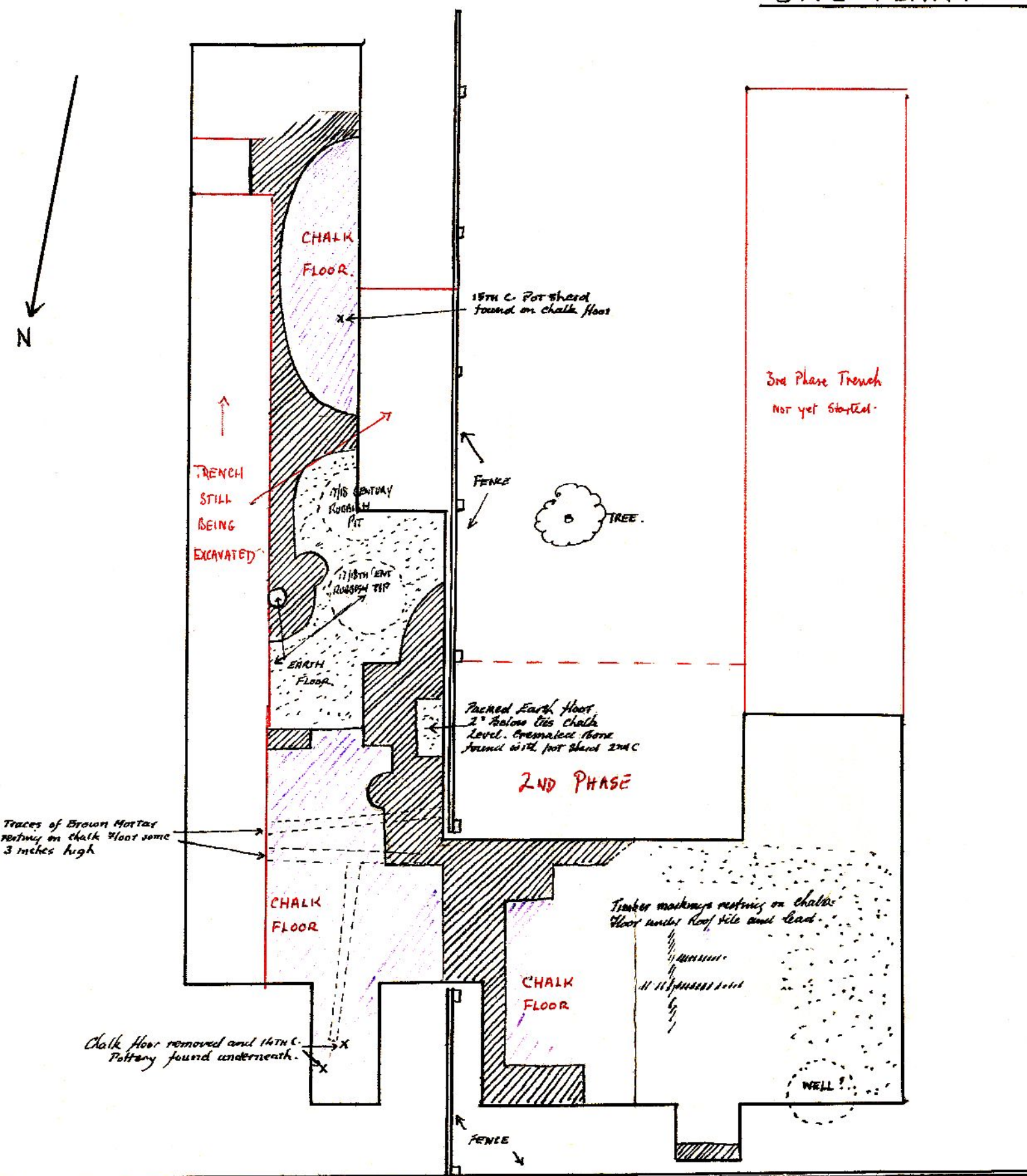


SCALE



-  = MODERN SURFACE
-  = SANDY SUB SOIL.
-  = MORTAR, RUBBLE AND SOIL.
-  = BUILDING RUBBLE.
-  = PACKED EARTH FLOOR.
-  = PACKED CHALK FLOOR.
-  = BUILDING FOUNDATIONS.

SITE PLAN. BIGGIN EXCAVATIONS. (INTERIM.)



- KEY.**
- HARDCORE WALL FOUNDATIONS.
 - PACKED EARTH FLOOR.
 - PACKED CHALK FLOOR.