

## SOME MEDIEVAL HOSPITALS OF EAST KENT.

By WALTER H. GODFREY, *Secretary*

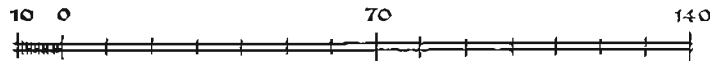
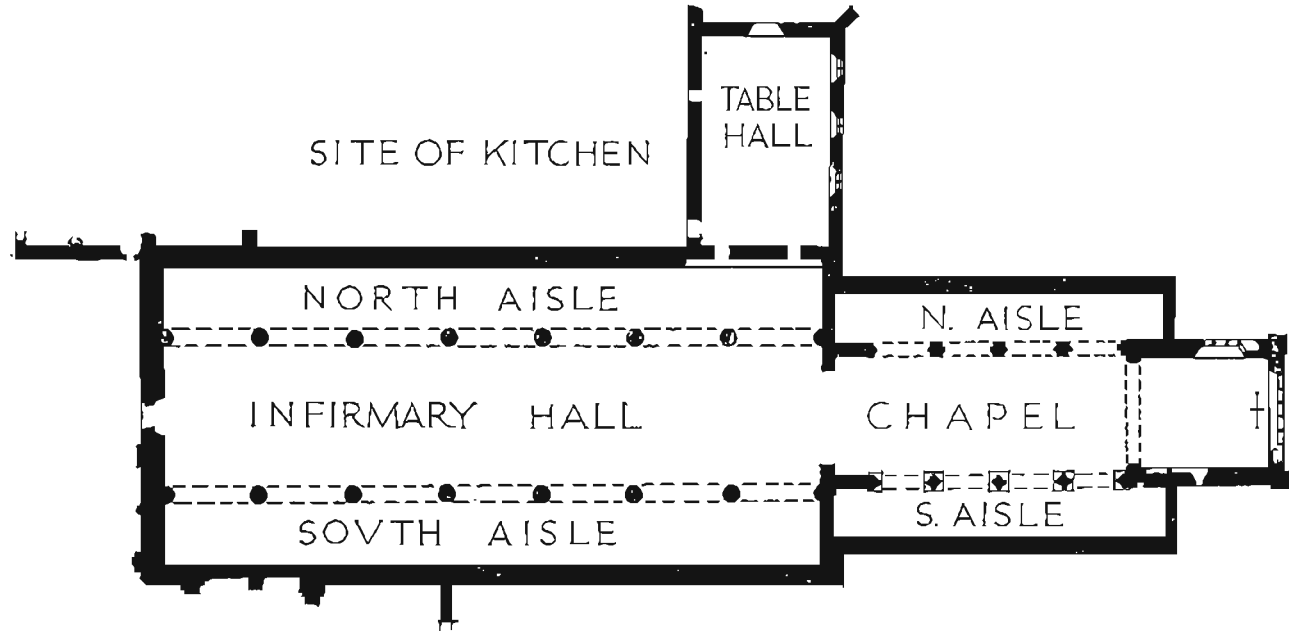
The refreshment and well-being of the soul as well as the body was part of the purpose of the medieval hospital—the free guest house for all who needed lodging, rest and succour. A chapel and a hall (infirmery hall) were therefore required as the minimum accommodation, and these were generally in close juxtaposition, in order that the chaplain might officiate in sight of those confined to their beds. To these two apartments some form of vestibule was necessary to provide for the reception and interviewing of applicants.<sup>1</sup> In the three elements of chapel, hall and vestibule we have the normal group which constituted the Hospital and the relative size of the first two depended mainly on the number of inmates for whom the hall was designed and on the amount of money the founder could spend on the chapel. At times the latter attained the proportions of a large church as in Bishop Henry de Blois' foundation of St. Cross, Winchester. In certain cases the chapel was omitted and the altar set against the east wall of the hall, but in the majority of hospitals the plan of the monastic infirmary was followed and the whole building resembled a parish church, where the nave equates with the hall and the chancel represents the chapel.

There is evidence that the entire building was in medieval times looked upon as a church. In 1444 John Blakeman and Margaret, his wife, bequeathed a bed to St. John's Hospital, Coventry, to be occupied by an infirm person, which bed 'is to be placed in a part of the church of the said hospital, on the west side nere the door and nere the buttery there.'<sup>2</sup> It is probable that the frequent designation of these hospitals by the name of *maisons dieu* is no mere figure of speech. The unity of purpose in the two parts of the building makes it difficult at times to decide

<sup>1</sup> See *The Hye Way to the Spytell Hous* (1536), by Robert Copland.

<sup>2</sup> *Hospital of St. John Baptist, Coventry*, by W. G. Fretton, F.S.A.

*The* INFIRMARY ~ CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL ~



*Scale of Feet*

FIG. 1

definitely whether a surviving chapel had a hall attached or whether it accommodated the beds within its walls. In some cases each arrangement may have existed in the same institution at different times.

In addition to the central block of buildings there was separate provision for the hospital staff. This varied enormously not only on account of the size of the establishment, but also the form of its administration. In some cases the foundation provided for a single attendant nurse and a visiting chaplain, while in others a collegiate or semi-monastic fraternity served the inmates. It must also be remembered that hospitals were always changing, lapsed foundations were refounded, decayed institutions re-formed and the staff which was designed to assist others often became in time the sole recipients of the charity, and the hospital developed into a form of almshouse for their support.

Although the majority of hospitals were instituted for the relief of any applicant who could show his or her need, there were certain foundations for specific purposes, like that of the Poor Priests at Canterbury which will be noticed in this paper. There were also the hospitals set apart entirely for lepers, the lazar-houses of which Harbledown furnishes an example. The following brief notes will be mainly directed to show the remarkable group of hospital buildings which is preserved in East Kent, and which members of the Institute were enabled to visit at the Summer Meeting of 1929. These examples will be found to illustrate several important variations of the arrangement of chapel, hall and vestibule already noticed.

The prototype of the hospital plan is admirably shown on a large scale in the monks' infirmary of Christchurch, Canterbury (Fig. 1). The hall is aisled, the internal dimensions being 148 ft. by 66 ft.; the chapel also has aisles (total width 54 ft.) and has an aisleless sanctuary at the east end (total length 97 ft.).

The almonry and hospitiium of the Priory were situated at the entrance to the precincts just within the north gate of the city, and not far distant, outside this city gate, are considerable remains of Lanfranc's Hospital of St. John. The details of the latter building are described by Canon Livett in the Canterbury Meeting report (below) and

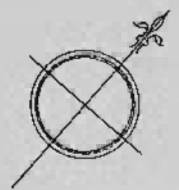
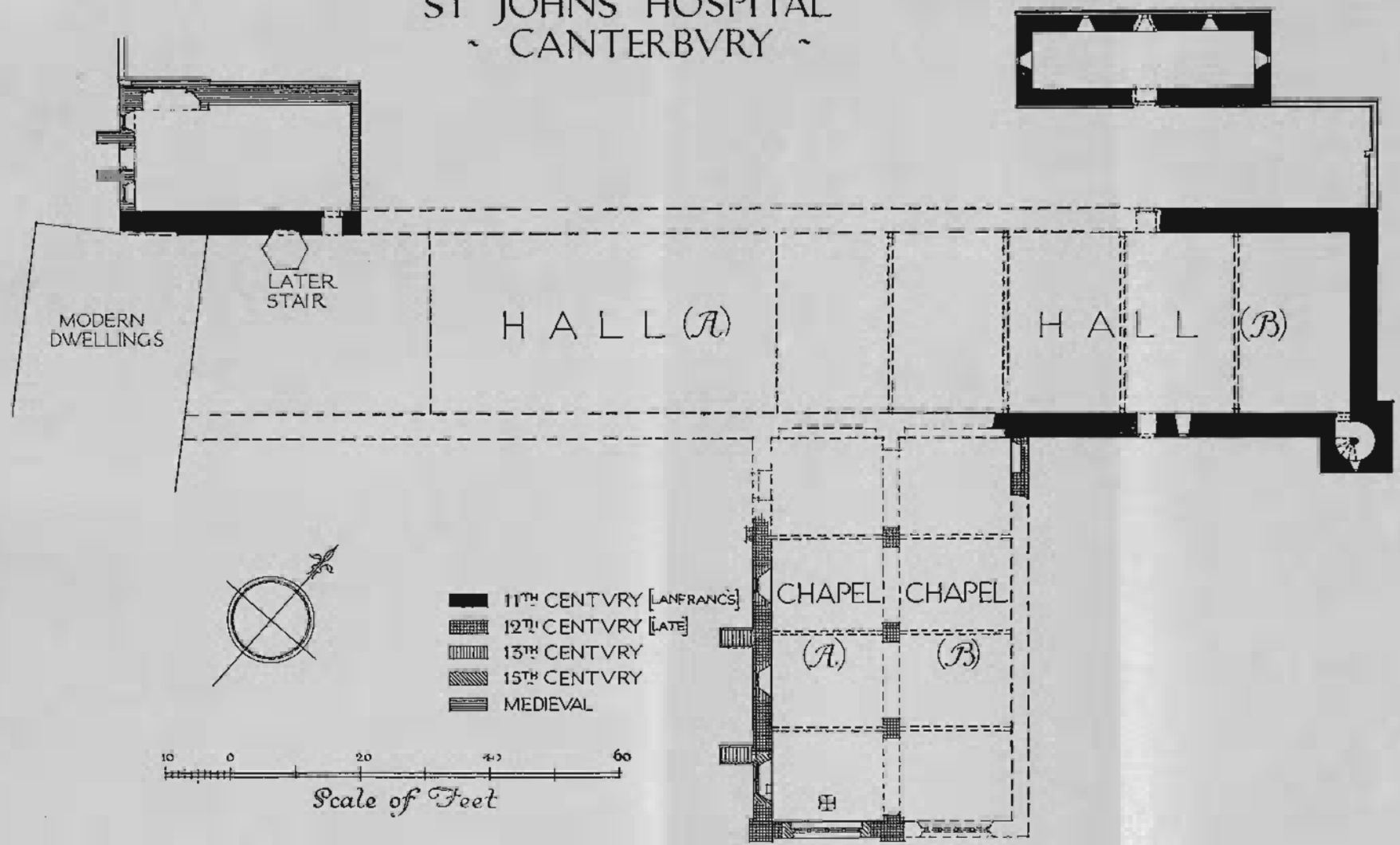
it is sufficient to point out here the peculiarity of the plan (Pl. i). Lanfranc's endowment was for both sexes, 30 of each, and he designed to keep the men and women apart. To this end he seems to have built a long hall (probably 150 ft. long and 28 ft. wide), capable of division into two parts, and to have placed a double-aisled chapel at right angles to it in the centre of one side. Each aisle would thus communicate with one half of the hall. The south section of this chapel (*minus* its western bay) seems to be represented by the existing chapel which possesses a rebuilt late twelfth-century (blocked) arcade on the north, and thirteenth-century windows in its south wall. The remains of Lanfranc's hall are shown on the accompanying plan, and the original twelfth-century door to the chapel (now fixed in the west wall) is shown in the annexed engraving (Pl. ii) to have been in the western bay of the south wall. It will be seen that the general arrangement comprises three-fourths of a cross and approaches the plan of the large cruciform hospitals found in Italy. In the latter it is customary to have an altar under the crossing as well as that in the chapel, and there may have been one here in an antechapel between the two wards.

The Hospital of St. John has an interesting Tudor gatehouse on the street which no doubt marks the site of the original porter's lodge. On the other side of the road was the Church of St. Gregory and a college of chaplains to serve the hospital.

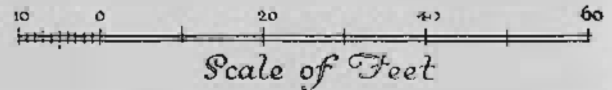
Lanfranc's other foundation at Harbledown which is also described by Canon Livett (below, Canterbury Meeting report, with plan) was a leper hospital and as such the dwellings of the inmates were no doubt detached cottages. There is evidence however that the church, which followed the normal plan of those attached to lazar-houses, was in medieval times divided by a screen running from west to east, a circumstance that recalls the founder's rules concerning the separation of the sexes.

A building of very great interest is St. Thomas' or Eastbridge Hospital, in Canterbury (Fig. 2). The foundation was ascribed by Archbishop Stratford to Thomas a Becket himself and it was no doubt in existence before his martyrdom. Its importance increased with the pilgrimages to his shrine and to this circumstance it owes its present dedication. The hall, with a west aisle of five bays of late

# ST JOHNS HOSPITAL ~ CANTERBURY ~



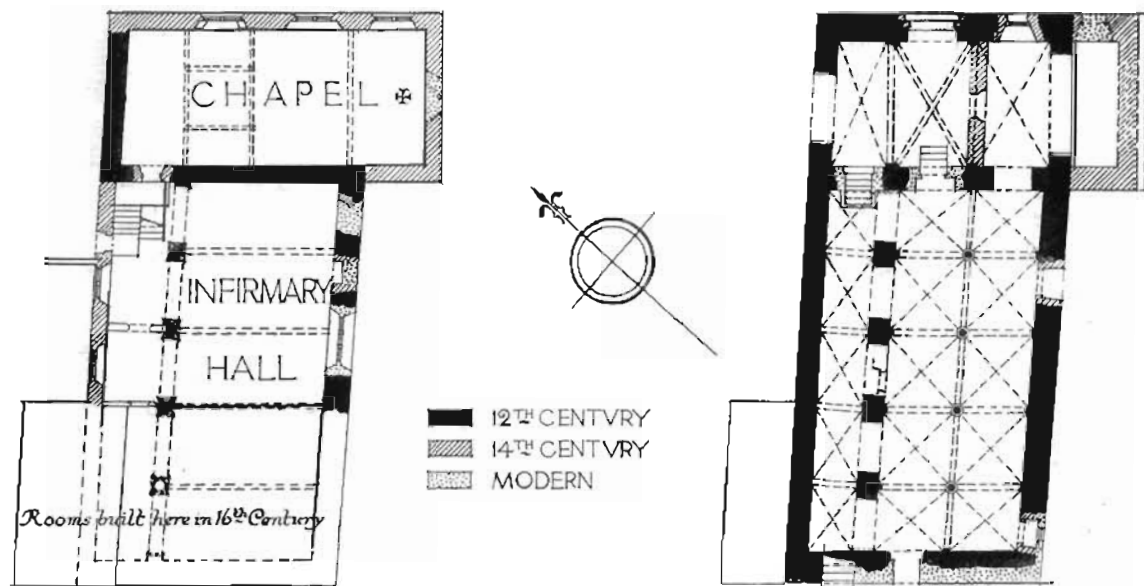
- 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY [ANFRANC'S]
- ▨ 12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY [LATE]
- ▧ 13<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY
- ▩ 15<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY
- MEDIEVAL





HOSPITAL of ST THOMAS A BECKET  
CANTERBURY

*Kings Bridge*



*First Floor Plan*

*Ground Floor Plan*

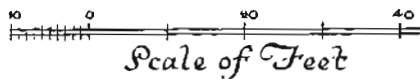


FIG. 2

twelfth-century date, is on the first floor, over a vaulted undercroft, the columns of which have curious circular bell-capitals. The hall and undercroft stand at right angles to the chapel which lies parallel to the street, also on the first floor and over a vestibule having three bays of plain groined vaulting. The chapel was enlarged towards the east in the fourteenth century and rebuilt with a range of three new windows on the street front. At the same time a new door was inserted within the original entrance arch (which remains) and the centre bay of the vault was strengthened by diagonal ribs. It is not clear whether there was an opening, other than a door, between hall and chapel, but the remains of a fine wall-painting of the late twelfth century on the dividing wall on the hall side may mark the position of a hall altar.

Two thirteenth-century hospitals were visited by the Institute at Dover and Ospringe, both of which owed a great deal to King Henry III, and each is known by the name of *maison-dieu*. It seems likely that the port of Dover possessed a hospital from early times. In the reign of King John this was refounded by Hubert de Burgh, justiciar of England and defender of Dover Castle. Subsequently Henry III took the foundation under his special care and gave it grants and privileges. It was dissolved in 1544 and handed over to the Admiralty for the purpose of a victualling yard. The surviving buildings were purchased by the town in 1834 and were incorporated in the Town Hall (Fig. 3). They have recently been restored under the advice of H.M. Office of Works.

It is probable that the hospital was originally of the normal infirmary plan, with perhaps a timber hall and a stone-built chapel like St. Mary's Hospital, Chichester. Three bays of the chapel still exist in a restored form<sup>1</sup> and they seem to indicate that it was either on the first floor or that there were two chapels, one above the other. If the latter conjecture is right the first hall would also have been of two storeys like St. John's Hospital, Sherborne, and Wigston's Hospital, Leicester. In the fourteenth century the hall was evidently rebuilt and the wide aisle or secondary hall, which now remains, was raised upon the

<sup>1</sup> See engraving by Buck reproduced here. Pl. iii.





ST. JOHN'S HOSPITAL, CANTERBURY, SHOWING THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CHAPEL IN 1784  
From *Bib. Top. Brit.* i (as bound in the library of the Soc. of Ant.), no. xxx, facing p. 193.



BUCK'S VIEW OF THE MAISON DIEU, DOVER

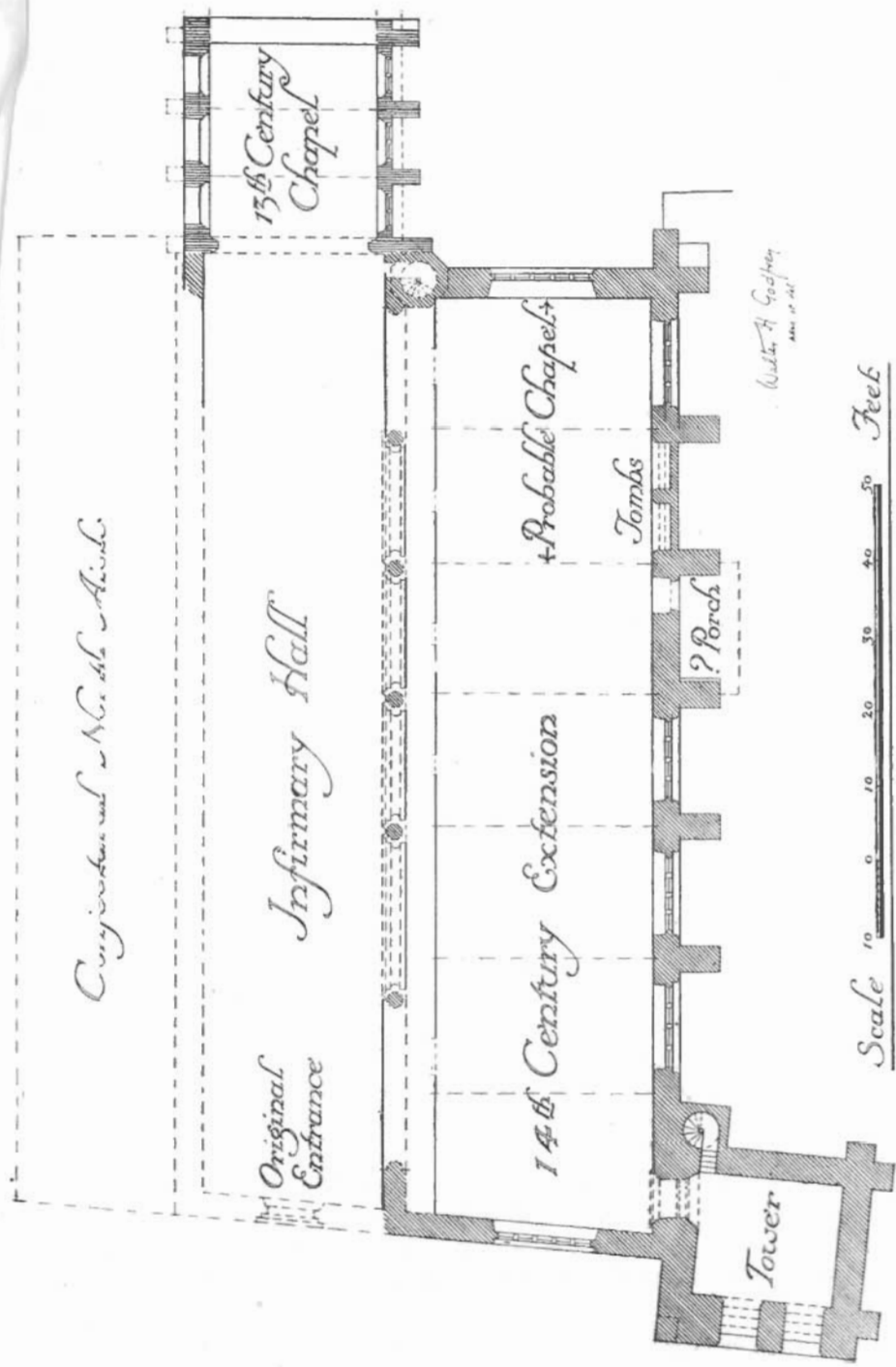


FIG. 3. THE MAISON DIEU, DOVER

south side. The latter was separated from the main building by a stone arcade of large proportions, now partly buried in the walls of the adjoining Connaught Hall and obscured by the raising of the floor level some 12 ft., which completely conceals the piers and their capitals. The two eastern bays of the fourteenth-century hall were no doubt screened off to contain an altar; in the second bay were found two stone coffins, under wall arches, one of which has its original coffin lid. Attached to the south-west angle of the building is a tower over the vestibule, the two arches of which (one for ingress and one for egress) are now blocked. It is worth recording that Henry III granted the hospital land for enlarging its vestibule. The chief altar was dedicated to St. Mary in 1227 and a second altar was consecrated in 1253 to St. Edmund by Richard de Wych, Bishop of Chichester, in King Henry's presence. Richard, who was afterwards canonised, died at the hospital on this visit.

The principal buildings of the Hospital of St. Mary, Ospringe, which were on the north side of the Dover Road, have disappeared. It is reputed to have been founded by Henry III and was dissolved in 1516 when, with its revenues, it went to Margaret of Richmond's foundation of St. John's College, Cambridge, which was itself built on the site of an earlier hospital. All that remains at Ospringe<sup>1</sup> are two small buildings of the thirteenth or early fourteenth century, which stand on the south side of the road, each side of a stream, now Water Lane (Fig. 4). They were evidently similar in plan, each having a door in the gable-end facing the street, with a small rectangular window on either side. The longitudinal walls of the buildings were also pierced at regular intervals with the same type of window. The door and front windows of the western block have been taken down, but the stones are in safe keeping and the upper part of the building has been extended in the sixteenth-century with a timber first floor which now houses the Roman pottery excavated in the neighbourhood. The two buildings seem to have served as casual wards, in use perhaps while the hospital was building, and later, as accommodation for travellers or possibly for cases requiring isolation. There is

<sup>1</sup> For the account of the buildings see *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xxx and xxxviii.

in the rear of the western building an interesting timber cottage which had a continuous gallery or clerestory beneath the eaves. I am indebted to Mr. William Whiting for the accompanying illustration.

~ HOSPITAL of ST. MARY ~ OSPRINGE ~

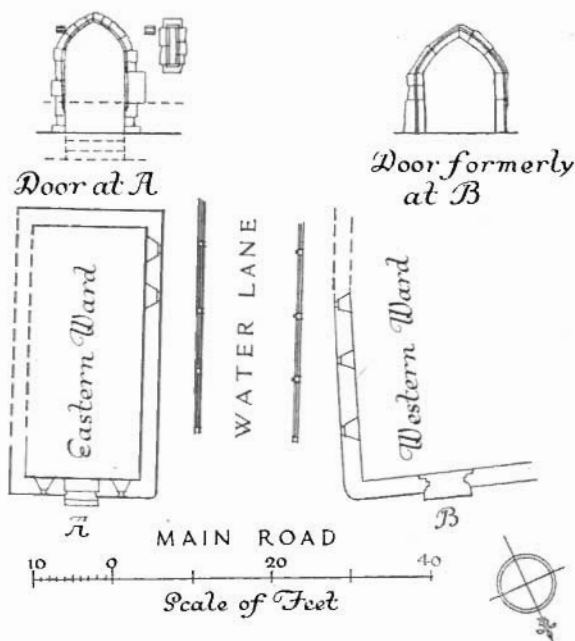


FIG. 4

Of several hospitals at Sandwich, that of St. Bartholomew retains a very beautiful and interesting chapel (Fig. 5). Founded probably early in the thirteenth century, it developed later into an almshouse, the principal domestic buildings of which have been swept away. I can find no evidence of an infirmary hall and since the present building consists of nave, chancel and a large chapel to the north of, and larger than the chancel itself, it may well be that the nave accommodated the hospital folk in the first instance. The building has been very much restored and the arch

between nave and chapel is modern ; a tower or turret on the south side of the building has been pulled down. Under the arcade between the chancel and chapel is a recumbent mailed figure of Sir Henry de Sandwich, lord warden of the Cinque Ports.

## The HOSPITAL of ST BARTHOLOMEW-SANDWICH

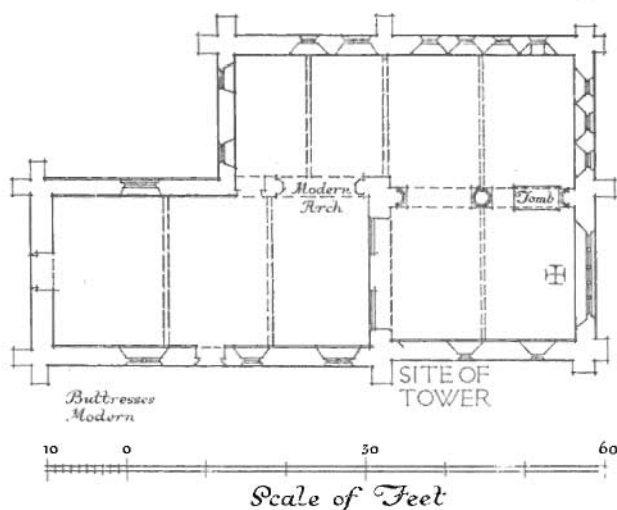


FIG. 5

In the churchyard of St. Peter's Church, Sandwich, has been re-erected the stonework of the chapel window of St. Thomas' Hospital, founded by Thomas Ellys in 1392.

The Poor Priests' Hospital, Canterbury, is a fourteenth-century building of considerable interest (Fig. 6). It was in existence in 1224 when the Greyfriars lodged here on their arrival at Canterbury, and Alexander, master of the Hospital, is recorded as a benefactor to Greyfriars in 1225. It was surrendered to the Crown in 1575. To the north is a chapel of which the windows are blocked and its roof is in a somewhat mutilated condition. A piscina survives in the south wall in a room assigned to the doctor who visits the clinic and welfare centre installed here. There was probably

# POOR PRIESTS' HOSPITAL CANTERBURY

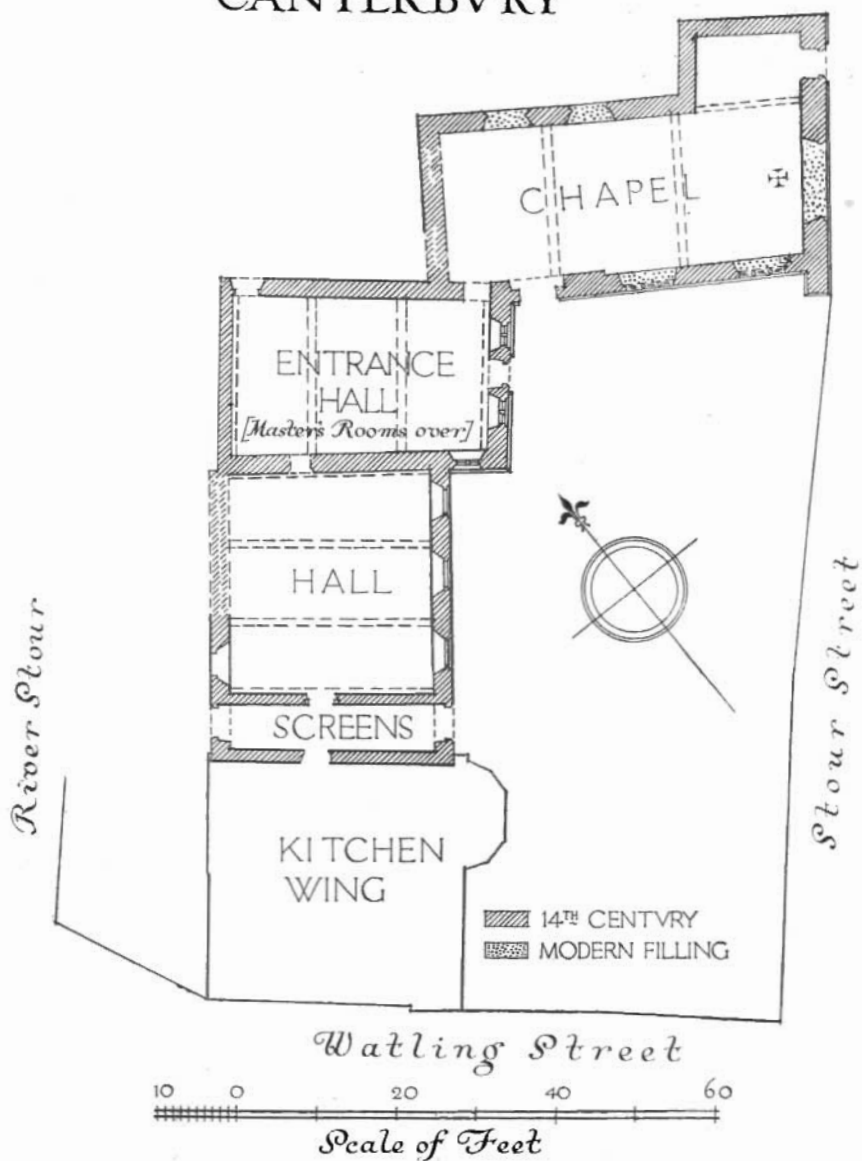


FIG. 6

a hall adjoining this chapel originally, but late in the fourteenth century a two-storey building was raised on the south side of the chapel at its west end, and south of this a hall of four bays was erected, which still exists with its screen, screen passage and doors, and also some part of the kitchen wing. The two-storey building corresponding with the solar of the normal medieval house was doubtless occupied on the first floor by the master of the hospital, where a good two-light traceried window looks east. The ground floor may have been a vestibule or Common Room.