

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

19 OCTOBER—7 DECEMBER 1908.

WITH

Communications

MADE TO THE SOCIETY

MICHAELMAS TERM 1908.

No. LII.

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(SEVENTH VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)



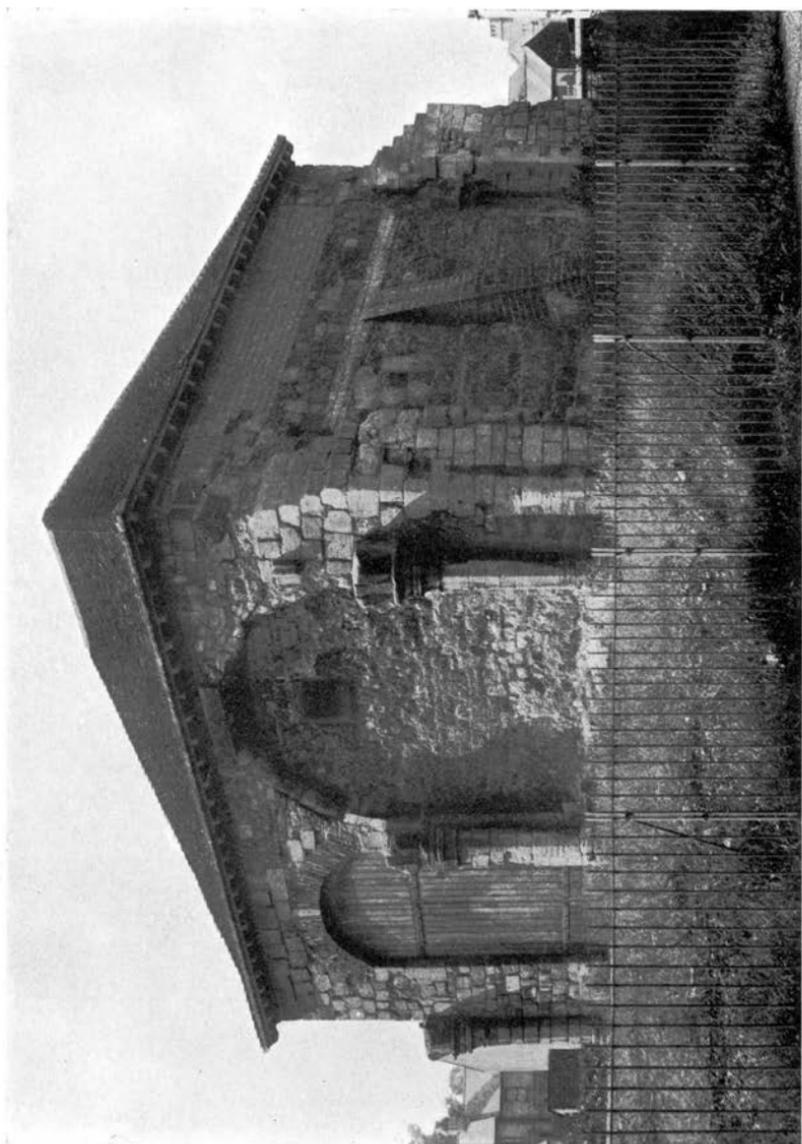
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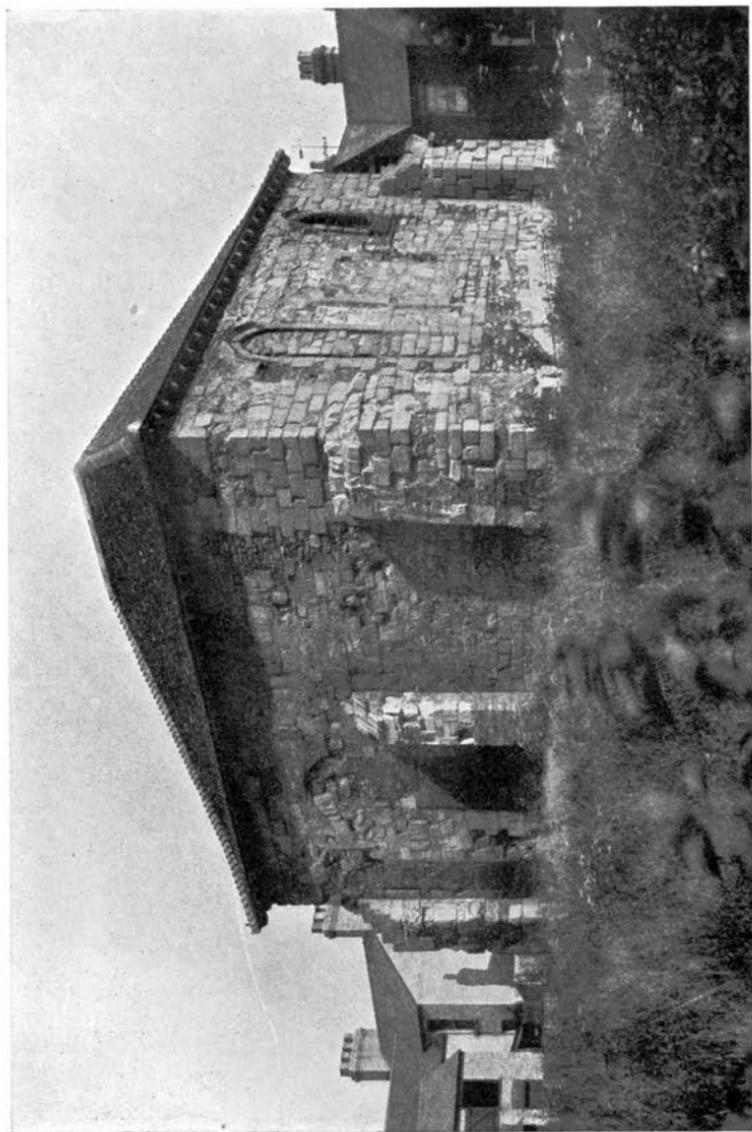
LONDON: G. BELL AND SONS.

1909

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The Cellarer's Checker, Barnwell Priory. North-east side, at corner of Beche Road and Priory Road.



The Cellarer's Checker, Barnwell Priory. North-west side.

Thursday, 10 December, 1908.

OLD HOUSES IN CAMBRIDGE.

On the above date 53 members of the Society took part in an excursion to some of the older buildings in the town. The thanks of the party are due to Mr T. D. Atkinson, who described very clearly the architectural features of the fragment of Barnwell Priory and the School of Pythagoras. His description is incorporated in this account of the excursion.

THE OLD ABBEY, BARNWELL.

The first house visited was that known as the 'Old Abbey,' which stands at the corner of Abbey Road and Beche Road. It bears the date 1678 on one of its chimney stacks, and it seems to contain no work of earlier date than the seventeenth century. Many of the rooms are panelled, some with oak. In the cellar is the entrance, now blocked up, to a passage which, according to legend, led to Jesus Collège—the old nunnery of St Radegund—and even to Ely! The cold light of reason shews this to be most probably an old-fashioned large brick drain.

The various carved and moulded stones, from the old Priory buildings, dug up in the grounds of this house, have been built up into two arches in the garden in order to preserve them from further decay.

THE CELLARER'S CHECKER, BARNWELL PRIORY.

The next building visited is the sole remaining fragment of the once prosperous house of Augustinian Canons, founded in 1092 by Picot, Sheriff of the County, and Hugoline his wife, and known as the Priory of Saint Giles and Saint Andrew at Barnwell. The Canons, placed originally near Saint Giles'

Church, were removed to the present site in 1112¹. This room is in the earliest Gothic style, and may therefore be said to date from the end of the twelfth century or from the beginning of the thirteenth. In its original state it must have been a singularly beautiful room. It is ceiled with four bays of stone vaulting springing from a central column. It was lighted by two lancet windows on the west side; these are of two lights each, and they are divided vertically by a transom. The jambs are a good deal hidden by the brickwork which now blocks up the windows, but from what is visible it would appear that the upper part of the windows above the transom had glass fitted into a wood frame which was fixed into a rebate on the outer part of the jamb, and that there was also an inside shutter.

Some of the original iron bars to keep out intruders still remain. Below the transom there was probably an inside shutter and no glass². The recesses of the windows were carried down nearly to the floor to form seats. In addition to these windows there was a small loup on one side, and perhaps on both sides, of the fire-place. The fire-place, now blocked, had formerly a sloping hood springing from a stone lintel which was carried on corbels.

The corbels have now been removed, and the lintel has been set back on the jambs.

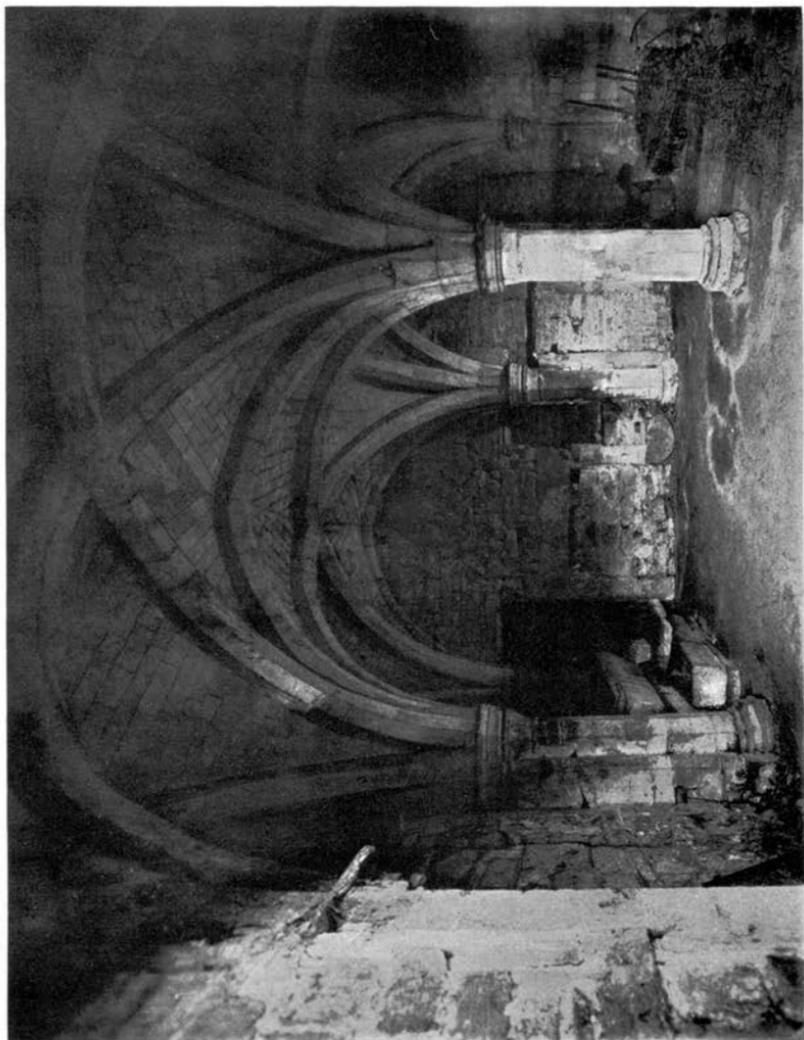
From this description it will be seen that the room was well warmed, well lighted and well ventilated, in fact, that it was one in which comfort and privacy were carefully considered.

These facts afford the only clue we have as to the use for which the room was intended.

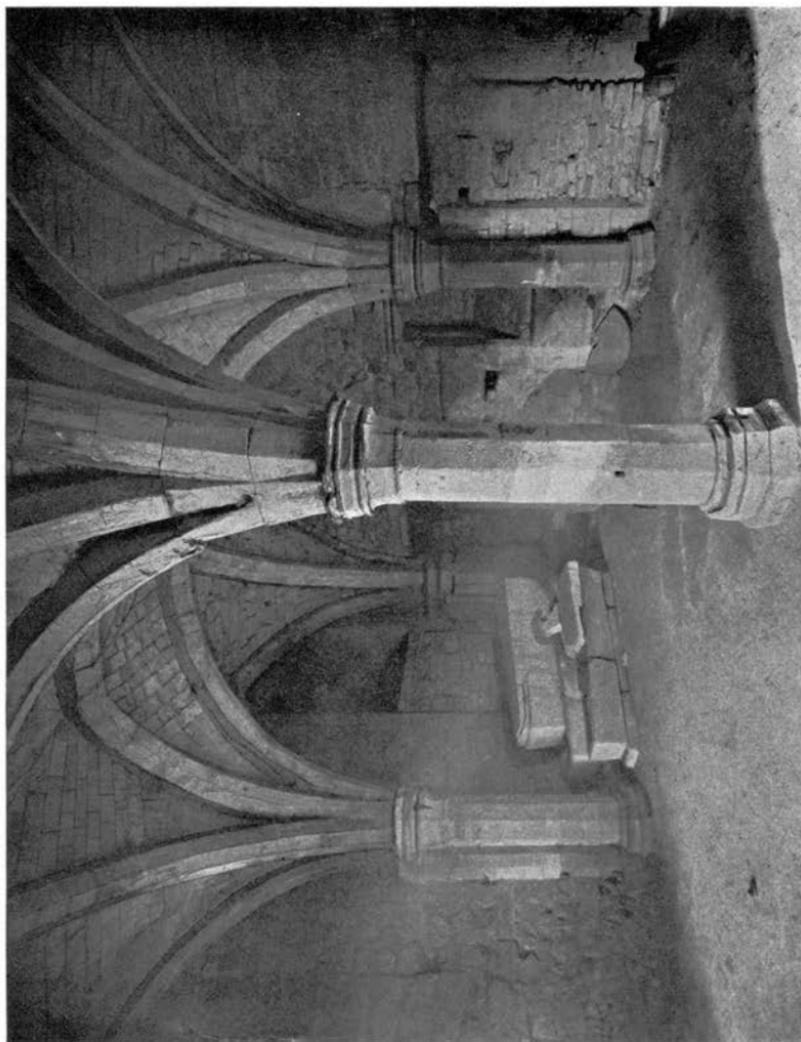
In the conjectural plan of the Priory laid down by Mr W. H.

¹ See a paper on the architectural history of the Priory by Mr J. W. Clark, with a plan and sections of the remaining fragment, and a conjectural plan of the whole Priory in the *C. A. S. Proceedings*, Vol. VII. (New Series, Vol. I.), p. 222; and *The Observances in use at the Augustinian Priory of S. Giles and S. Andrew at Barnwell*, edited by J. W. Clark, M.A. (Cambridge: Macmillan and Bowes, 1897).

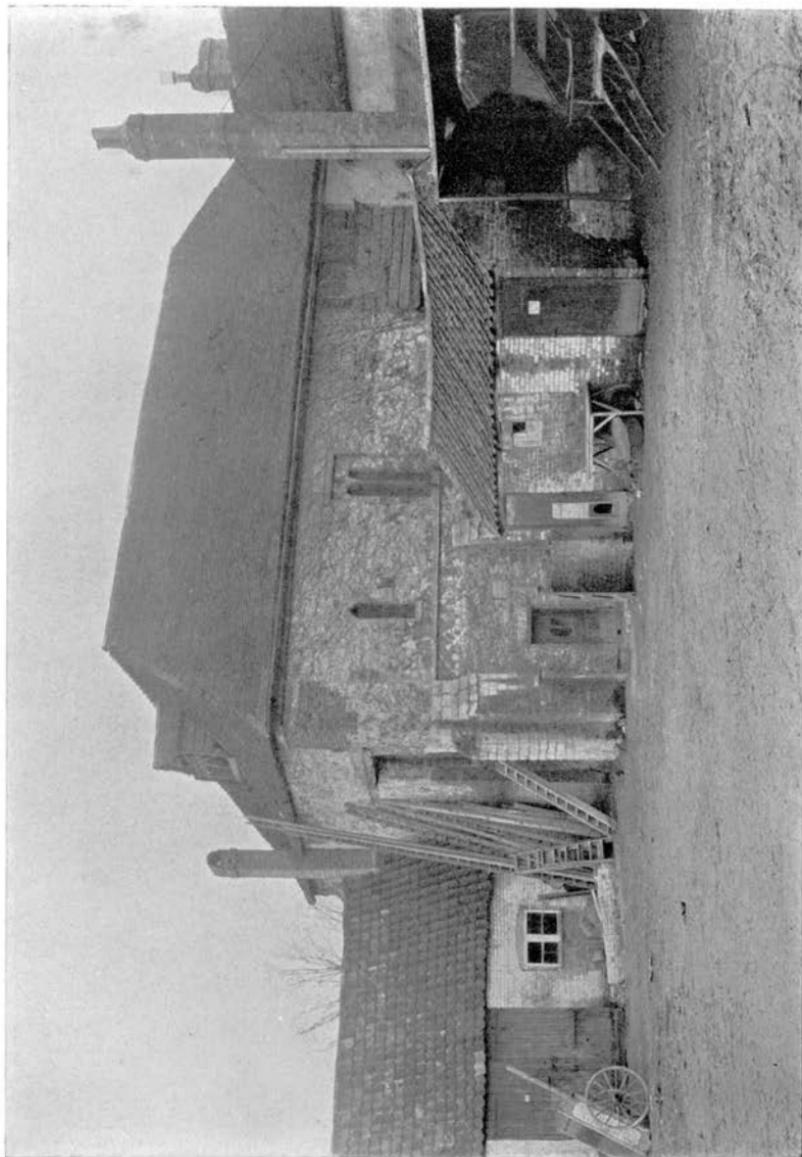
² This interpretation of the evidence differs somewhat from that which I gave in a full description of the building quoted in Mr Clark's paper referred to above. T. D. Atkinson.



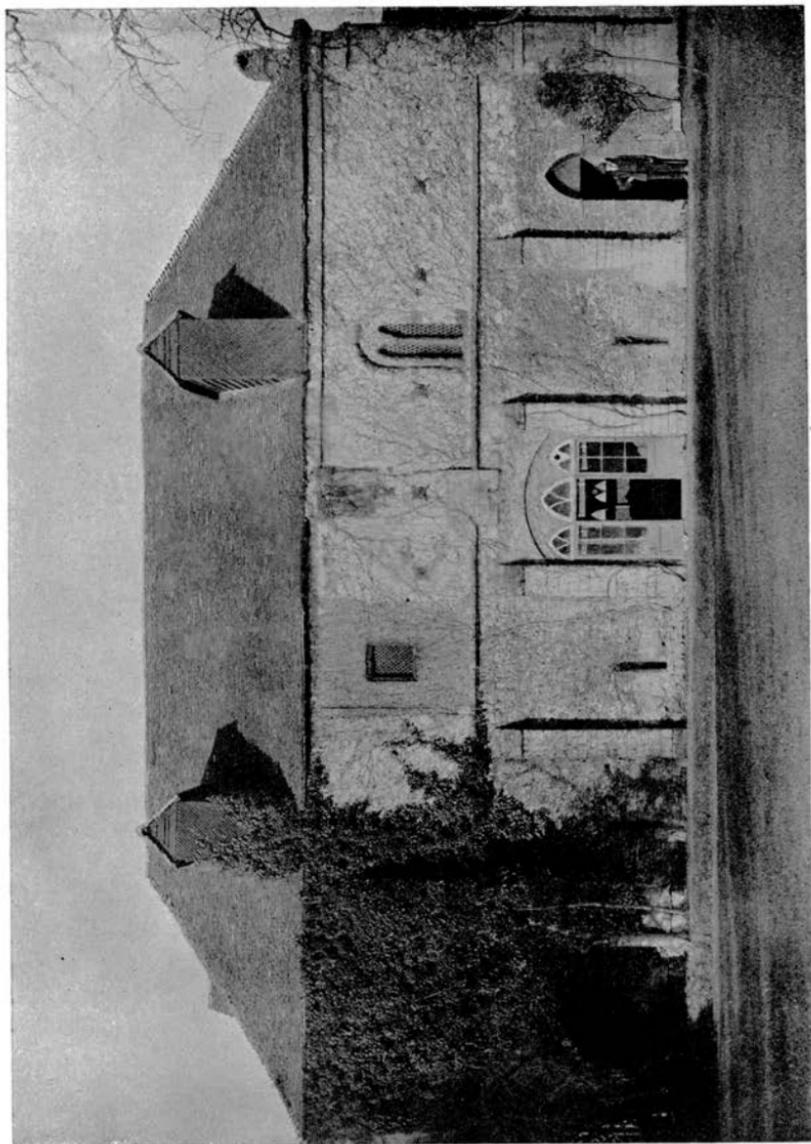
The Cellarer's Checker, Barnwell Priory. Interior.



The Cellarer's Checker, Barnwell Priory. Interior.



Pythagoras School, from the north.



Pythagoras School, from the south.

St John Hope and reproduced in Mr Clark's paper and in his *Observances*, it is called the Cellarer's Checker. The checkers of a religious house were the exchequers or offices in which the heads of departments kept their accounts and administered their affairs. A checker, like the National Exchequer, was so called from the check cloth which covered the table and was used with the help of counters in making up reckonings.

This building is thought, therefore, to be the office of the Cellarer, to whom was entrusted the entertainment of guests, and who was consequently one of the most important of the *obedientiaries* of the house.

'THE VICARAGES,' MOUNT PLEASANT.

Driving from Barnwell to Castle Hill, the party then inspected 'The Vicarages.' This is a house of, perhaps, some 130 to 150 years old. It is now divided into three cottages, the middle and the eastern ones containing features of interest.

The lower front room of the centre cottage is of panelled oak, with pictures painted on the frame-like panels. This room has been covered entirely with wall-paper, though, fortunately, in such a manner as to preserve the paintings beneath. In the easternmost cottage some panelling and two good fireplaces of late eighteenth century date still remain.

One of the most interesting features of this building is the site upon which it stands and which it helps to preserve. It has been erected on the edge of the sloping bank which formed the defence, on the western side, of the enclosure of the Norman Castle.

The road outside runs along the bottom of the ancient fosse.

PYTHAGORAS SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE.

(The property of Merton College, Oxford.)

Pythagoras School came next on the itinerary.

This mediaeval building is a simple parallelogram running roughly north and south, with a wing projecting from the south end of the west side, thus forming an L-shaped plan. The

wing was, continued westwards in later times (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) to a considerable length, and forms a picturesque range terminated by a curved brick gable, now supported by two immense buttresses.

The original building seems to date from the latter part of the twelfth century. It consisted of two stories. Like many other houses of the period, the principal room was on the upper floor, with the kitchen offices below. Instances occur at Ely, e.g. the Deanery, Canon Kennett's house, the house of the Head Master of the King's School.

The lower storey was covered with vaulting carried on a row of columns running down the centre of the building. It was entered by a doorway, now blocked, at the north end. It was probably used for store-rooms only, for the original windows are mere loopholes; there seems to be no evidence as to the position of the kitchen. Larger windows were inserted on the west side in the fifteenth century; one of these remains.

The upper floor was reached by an outside staircase at the north end. The original door is still used, and one or two windows of the original work, or of only slightly later date, remain. Immediately under the sills of these windows, inside the building, there is a string-course—shewing a consideration for appearances. There seems to have been a fire-place in the middle of the east wall; there are indications of this inside, and there is a projection outside which appears to be the remains of a chimney-stack.

The roof is entirely modern.

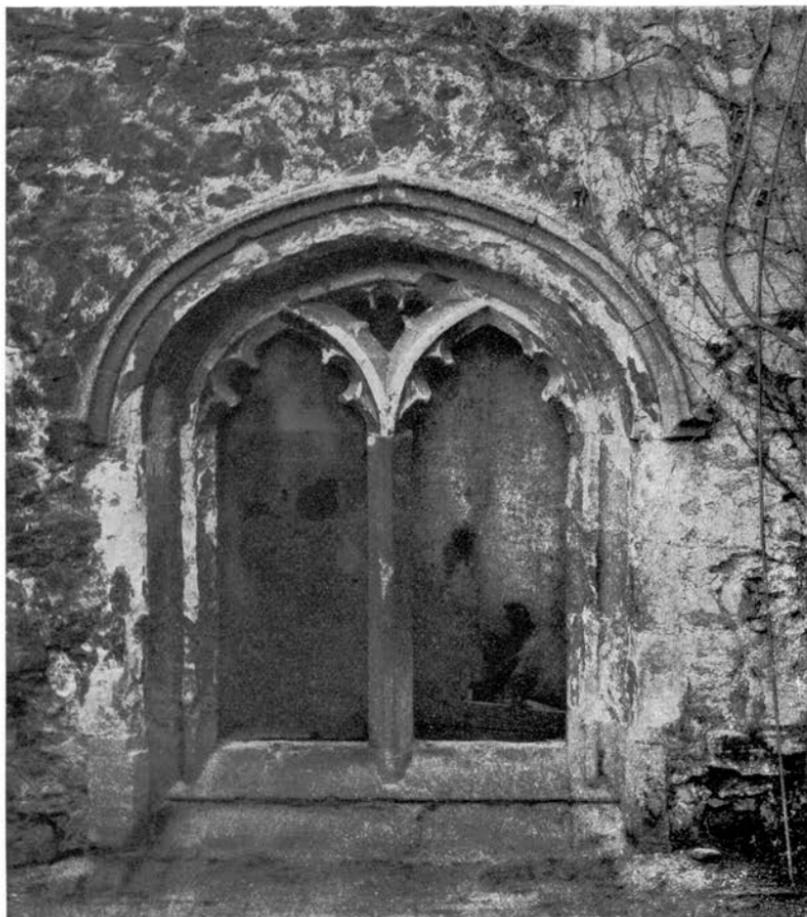
The building was lengthened, or its south end was rebuilt, in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries; the diagonal buttresses prove this. The west wing was probably added at the same time.

There were, of course, formerly gables. A hipped roof like the present one was never used in the Middle Ages. The large gap in the west wall, now filled with shutters, is no doubt modern; its splayed jambs appear to be the jambs of two of the original windows.

This interesting building might yield fuller results if a thorough investigation were made.



Doorway. Pythagoras School.



Pythagoras School. Window on north-west.



Oak-paneled room in yard beside the premises of Messrs Macintosh & Son, Market Hill

THE TRUE BLUE INN, SIDNEY STREET.

The next place of interest was the True Blue Inn. This was probably erected towards the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth century. It contains a good deal of carving of Jacobean date in the rooms of the lower floor, and is altogether of quaint construction.

MARKET HILL.

The last house visited was one down the yard beside the premises of Messrs Macintosh and Son. This small house has some fine carving round the panelled room on the lower floor.

The mantel-piece, beautifully carved, though now thickly encrusted with paint, was well worth inspection.

This house was originally part of the Angel Inn. It is worthy of note that the ironmonger's business now carried on by Messrs Macintosh and Son has been continued on these premises without a break from the year 1688.

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