

The lost chantry college of Lingfield

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John Aubrey in his posthumously published Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey offered a brief description of the now-lost 15th century buildings of Lingfield College, noting in particular that the upper storey of the cloister block was 'of Brick and Timber'. It is suggested here that the use of brick at Lingfield was probably the earliest such in the Weald of Surrey in a high-status building, and that a source for the design may have been the cloister court provided by the de la Poles for their almshouse foundation at Ewelme in Oxfordshire.

Opposite the west end of Lingfield church stands an especially attractive early 18th century house known as 'The College', which occupies the site of the medieval chantry or collegiate foundation established in 1431 by Sir Reginald Cobham of Sterborough and his wife. The college was the only big intercessory institution of its kind called into being in Surrey in the last two centuries of the Middle Ages, the period when chantries and chantry colleges enjoyed their greatest popularity. Largely overlooked by scholars of late medieval religion, Lingfield College is an establishment amply deserving of fresh attention, not only in its own right but also because of the evidence that its lost buildings afforded the earliest instance of the use of brick in east Surrey.

Lingfield College affords a good example of a type of religious foundation, which became very common in the period after about 1300, namely the so-called chantry or 'secular' college. The term 'college' was widely employed in the Middle Ages to describe a priestly community dedicated to the offering of intercessory prayer, typically in a church specially appropriated for the purpose.¹ In most cases, the church that accommodated the college was a parish church close to the founder's main residence, rebuilt or enlarged in acknowledgement of its new status. Typically, the one freehold benefice was the benefice held by the head of the institution, while the chaplain-fellows, who were admitted by the head after consultation with the remaining chaplains, held their offices without any security but their good behaviour.²

The main function of the college chaplains was to pray for the safe passage of the founder's soul through purgatory. For many centuries it had been the teaching of the Church that the purgatorial pains of the soul could be foreshortened by the prayers and masses offered by the living faithful. In the period to the 12th century the offering of such intercession had generally been institutionalised in the greatest powerhouses of prayer of the time – the monastic foundations – whose inmates interceded collectively for their houses' benefactors, those buried within the walls, and all the faithful departed. However, from the early 13th century, as the monasteries began to suffer overload and the patron class diversified to take in groups looking for less standardised forms of provision, those wishing to arrange intercession took to endowing chaplains to say prayers specifically for their own souls and the souls of those named by them. It was precisely these small personalised foundations that went by the name of chantries. In its simplest form a chantry foundation could be no more than an occasion – the regular celebration by a chaplain of masses for a named individual or individuals at a side altar in a church; the celebration itself could be either fixed-term or perpetual.³ Where resources were quite ample, chantries could have a physical existence as chapels built onto the sides of churches, or constructed within churches as stone cages under the arcade of the central vessel. Many examples of the stone cage type of chapel are found in such major churches as Winchester Cathedral, Tewkesbury Abbey and Christchurch Priory.⁴

¹ For secular colleges in the late Middle Ages, see Burgess & Heale 2008.

² Hamilton Thompson 1947, 149.

³ Wood-Legh 1965.

⁴ Luxford 2011, 39–73.



Fig 1 The College, Lingfield, viewed from the east, showing the relationship of the house to the church and churchyard (Nigel Saul).

A small number of chantry foundations, among them the Lovekyn Chapel at Kingston upon Thames, founded in 1309, had a physical existence as free-standing chapels quite unconnected with other churches.⁵ In some parts of the country, especially in areas such as north Lancashire where there were very large rural parishes, chantry chapels might shade off imperceptibly into chapels of ease, which could also incorporate an intercessory function instituted by the builder or founder.

Secular colleges, such as Sir Reginald Cobham's at Lingfield, can therefore be seen in one sense as constituting simply the largest and most lavishly endowed of the wide spectrum of chantry foundations called into being in the Middle Ages. They were the chantry foundations set up by the very rich, the most socially ambitious, those who wanted to make a mark on the world. However, there is another way in which they can be made sense of in the context of trends in English institutional religion in the late Middle Ages. They were a response by the well-to-do to the need widely felt at the time to procure an 'increase in divine service' both nationally, in the chapels of the king's residences, and locally in parish churches. There was a widespread belief that the splendid and seemly celebration of the liturgy in an expanding number of centres was an essential prerequisite for procuring good order in the world and

⁵ Saul 2011, 85–108.



Fig 2 Lingfield church from the north, showing the projection containing the staircase to the former rood loft (Nigel Saul).

for drawing down the benefits of divine mercy on a devout people. Through the proper observance of the liturgy, humanity could find the most reliable way back to the wholeness and union with God, which they had enjoyed before the Fall but had since lost. Although individuals personally could gain from liturgical observance, as founders did from chantry masses, the emphasis in the period was always on the corporate aspect, which was seen as being uppermost in humanity's relationship with the Almighty. Investment in and celebration of masses, it was believed, would bring benefit to the whole body of the Church, indeed to the entire realm. In the period from the 11th to the late 13th century it had been through the founding of great monasteries that patrons had principally sought to achieve the 'increase in divine service'. However, in the late Middle Ages, when there was a desire for more flexible forms of organisation, which founders could mould subtly to their tastes, there was a shift of preference to so-called secular communities, institutions in which a master and canons would live together, the former possessed of common funds that he would disburse on behalf of the community, all offering up masses and prayers for the founder and those named by him and also for the whole body of Christian faithful.

The secular college was an institution that went through a slow and halting process of evolution in the medieval period. In the early to mid-12th century a number of colleges were established that can be seen, in retrospect, as prototypes of the later, fully developed college form. In 1123 Roger de Newburgh, earl of Warwick, founded a college in the church of St Mary at Warwick consisting of a dean and an unspecified number of canons, endowing the community generously with churches and lands in his gift.⁶ Early in the reign of Henry II

⁶ *VCHWarks*, 2, 124-9.

Henry de Blois, bishop of Winchester, established a college of four secular priests in the grounds of the episcopal palace at Marwell (Hampshire), charging the community with praying for the souls of the bishops of Winchester, the kings of England and all the faithful of Christ.⁷ In the 1160s Robert Beaumont, earl of Leicester, established a college of a dean, a sacrist and six canons in the church of St Mary de Castro adjacent to Leicester castle.⁸ At the end of the 12th century Archbishop Baldwin briefly established a collegiate community at Lambeth in the hope of freeing himself from dependence on the chapter and monks of Christchurch, Canterbury.⁹

More important as models for the kind of intercessory institution that was to become popular in the later Middle Ages are a group of colleges founded in the opening decades of the 14th century. The first and in some ways the most innovative was the college established in 1306 in his manorial chapel at Noseley (Leicestershire) by Roger de Martival, dean of Lincoln and later bishop of Salisbury. The college represented an expansion of an earlier chantry foundation made by the founder's father and provided for a community of three chaplains to celebrate divine service daily. The chapel stood in the grounds of the family manor house and was entirely separate from the parish church.¹⁰ Not far away, in Nottinghamshire, at Sibthorpe, in the 1330s a college was built up in stages directly in the parish church by a wealthy chancery clerk, Thomas de Sibthorpe, rector of Beckingham (Lincolnshire) and a native of the village. In origin an expanded chantry, like the Noseley foundation, it began life as a community of a warden and two chaplains and was enlarged in the 1340s to include another four chaplains.¹¹ As was commonly the case, the church was appropriated to the college and cure of souls in the parish was vested in its head. In 1339 another senior chancery clerk, John Gifford, canon of York, embarked on the process of establishing a college in his own parish church at Cotterstock (Northamptonshire), where he was rector, appropriating the benefice again, and providing for a community of a rector and no fewer than thirteen chaplains.¹² Although a remarkable number of these early collegiate foundations were the work of senior clerks in the civil service, by no means all of them were. In the years before the Black Death a group of colleges was established by wealthy members of the knightly class, among them Shottesbrooke (Berkshire), founded by Sir William Trussell in 1337, Astley (Warwickshire), founded by Sir Thomas de Astley in 1343 and Tormarton (Gloucestershire) founded by Sir John de la Riviere in 1344.¹³ Sir Thomas Astley, a retainer and close associate of the earls of Warwick, may have found his inspiration in the college at St Mary's, Warwick itself. De la Riviere, who had no traceable connection with any other founder, was a crusading enthusiast about to embark for the east, and may simply have been taking out maximum insurance for his soul.

The college at Lingfield can be seen in very broad terms as a product of these overlapping lines of development, an expression of the powerful late medieval instinct to seek protection against damnation through the endowment of intercessory masses. In another sense, Lingfield can be seen as belonging more specifically to a group of colleges founded by members of the warrior aristocracy, which found their inspiration in one college in particular – that of St George in Windsor Castle. In August 1348, a year after his triumphant return from France, Edward III had reconstituted the long-established chapel in the lower ward at Windsor as a secular college, simultaneously reconstituting the chapel of St Stephen in the palace of Westminster on closely similar lines. The plan was for each college to be served by an establishment consisting of a warden and twelve canons. Edward's vision was that the two colleges together would be dedicated to a single and indivisible purpose, that of praying in

⁷ Crouch 2001, 159–80, at 174.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Tatton-Brown 2000, 20.

¹⁰ Farnham & Hamilton Thompson 1922, 233–56. The chapel survives in the grounds of Noseley Hall.

¹¹ Hamilton Thompson 1947, Appendix V.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Saul 2002, 264–81; *VCHWarks*, 2, 117–19; Haines, 1966, 84–6, 305–6.

perpetuity for the wellbeing of ‘the king, his progenitors and his successors’.¹⁴ At St George’s a distinctive feature of the foundation was its intimate association with the king’s new order of chivalry, the Order of the Garter, established in 1348, the community of canons being enjoined to pray for the souls of the deceased Companion Knights, whose arms were placed as memorabilia in the chapel on their death. In the 60 or more years from its foundation St George’s College was to inspire a whole progeny of imitative secular colleges established by members of the higher nobility. The first of these was at Cobham (Kent), founded in stages by John, Lord Cobham from 1362, the second, Arundel, founded in 1380 by Richard, earl of Arundel, and the third Pleshey (Essex), founded in 1394 by Thomas, duke of Gloucester, Richard II’s uncle.¹⁵ Early in the next century came Fotheringhay (Northamptonshire) founded in 1411 by Edward, duke of York, and, in the Lancastrian period, Tattershall (Lincolnshire), founded in 1438 by Ralph, Lord Cromwell. The indebtedness of all of these collegiate establishments to Windsor can be seen not only in their organisational form but also in the architecture of their residential buildings. In nearly every case, the residential blocks in one way or another followed the model established in the Canons’ Cloister at Windsor, which was itself derived from Carthusian exemplars, of arranging separate residential units around a quadrangular cloister garth. In the case of Cobham, the indebtedness to Windsor was made all the clearer by the use, as in the castle, of a pentice or timber-framed covered walkway round the garth.¹⁶

The college that Reginald Cobham was to establish in 1431 at Lingfield may itself have been inspired by that earlier family foundation at Cobham. The Sterborough Cobhams, to whom Sir Reginald belonged, were a junior line of the Cobhams of Cobham, being descended from Reginald, son of Sir John Cobham ‘the elder’ (d. c. 1251), by his second marriage to Joan Neville. This line had acquired the Sterborough estate around the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries as a result of a marriage negotiated between a second Reginald, this Reginald’s son, and one of the daughters and co-heiresses of Sir William de Hever of Sterborough (then called Prinkham). In the partition of the Hevers’ lands that took place on William’s death Reginald was awarded Sterborough.¹⁷ Subsequently, he seems to have gone on to acquire the other part of the inheritance too.

It was in the lifetime of this Reginald’s son and heir, yet another Reginald, that the Sterborough Cobhams were to attain the height of their fame and prosperity, securing entry to the peerage and even eclipsing the senior line at Cobham in wealth and distinction. Reginald himself was to be one of the leading military figures of his age, a close friend of Edward III and one of the monarch’s leading commanders in the wars in Scotland and France.¹⁸ As a young man and a newly admitted knight of the household he had been one of the king’s accomplices in the latter’s seizure of power from his mother, Queen Isabella, and her lover, Mortimer, in the *coup d’état* at Nottingham castle in November 1330. Linked socially or by marriage to other young knights around the king, he took part in the campaigning in Scotland between 1333 and 1336 and in Flanders from 1338 to 1340. According to the chronicler Henry Knighton, on the eve of the battle of Sluys in June 1340 he and two other knights were employed in spying out the French fleet, which was then at anchor, advising Edward to delay engaging with the enemy until the next day.¹⁹ After serving against the French in Brittany in 1342, he took part in Edward’s expedition to Normandy in 1346, leading the English army across the Somme to Blanchetaque and playing a crucial role in the battle of Crécy, in which he shared command of the right flank with the prince of Wales. When the king’s army went on to besiege the port of Calais, he was appointed to

¹⁴ On St George’s, see Ormrod 2005; Burgess 2005; Saul 2005.

¹⁵ For these and the next two foundations, see Burgess & Heale 2008, 22, 115–16, 130–2, 255–9. For detailed discussion of Cobham, see Gibson 2005.

¹⁶ For the buildings of Cobham College, see Tester 1964, 110.

¹⁷ Saul 2001, 123–4.

¹⁸ For Reginald’s career, see *Ibid.*, 124–36.

¹⁹ Martin 1995, 28–9.

the delegation that negotiated the town's surrender. In the 1350s, after the lull in hostilities caused by the Black Death, he served with the prince of Wales in Aquitaine, in 1355 joining him on his devastating raid south to the Mediterranean, and in the following year acting as marshal of the army that won the great victory over the French at Poitiers. In the thick of the battle he took a valuable prisoner, the comte de Longueville, whose ransom was to net him a profit of no less than 6500 florins. Cobham's last experience of service in the field came in October 1359, when he crossed to France with the king on his failed expedition to take the city of Reims. He died two years later in October 1361, probably of the plague.

Cobham's distinguished career in arms brought him election to the Garter in 1352 and summonses to parliament from 1347 to his death. In 1343 he had married Joan, daughter of Thomas, Lord Berkeley, another leading captain, a match that seemed destined to cement his family's position in the peerage. However, in the generation that followed the family's position began to slip dangerously. Reginald's son, yet another Reginald, was still a boy when his father died, and a long minority followed, weakening the family's lordship and perhaps contributing to a depletion of its resources. A further difficulty was that by the time young Reginald came of age in 1370 the glory days of English arms were over and the opportunities for a young knight to win a great reputation much diminished. In their thrusts into France in the 1370s and 1380s the English enjoyed little long-term success, the French refusing to give battle, and hostilities petered out in stalemate in 1396. Reginald's record in arms was a perfectly respectable one for a knight of his day: he served with John of Gaunt on his *chevauchée* in 1373 and he took part in Arundel's expedition at sea in 1387; his achievements were insufficiently distinguished, however, to secure him a permanent position in the peerage and he was not summoned after 1372.²⁰ To some extent Reginald's marriages provided compensation for his personal disappointments, for both were highly distinguished. Reginald's first wife was Elizabeth, daughter of Ralph, earl of Stafford, and his second Eleanor, daughter and co-heiress of John, Lord Maltravers, and widow of Sir John Arundel. The latter bride was an extremely wealthy lady, bringing with her half of her father's estates and a handful of dower manors from her first marriage. Reginald, in consequence, was considerably richer than his father. Unfortunately this second batch of lands did not stay in the family, and in the next generation the process of decline was to accelerate. Reginald's son and heir, yet another Reginald, who was to succeed his father on the death of the latter in 1403, was never summoned to parliament. In his lifetime, the family sank back into the ranks of the gentry from which just under a century before they had risen – very superior gentry of the rank of banneret, not knights bachelor – but gentry nonetheless.

With this background in mind, there is a case for interpreting Reginald's foundation of Lingfield College as a defiant affirmation of rank, a means by which the Sterborough Cobhams could proclaim their distinction in county society. The establishment of a college, as opposed to a mere chantry chapel in a church, was an act almost consciously magnificent in conception, calculated to associate the family with those in the higher aristocracy who could afford such bold and expansive gestures. Reginald's plans for his foundation, as anticipated in the licence awarded to him in March 1431, were nothing if not ambitious. He provided for a community consisting of a provost or master, five other chaplains, four clerks and thirteen almsmen – all of them obliged to pray for the good estate of the founders and their kin in life and their souls after death. At the same time, he secured permission from the Crown to alienate lands to the value of £40 per annum, the minimum annual income expected of a knight, to endow the foundation.²¹ The advowson and rectory of the church, which had both been held by Hyde Abbey, Winchester, since before the Conquest were appropriated to the college.

Reginald's plans for the rebuilding of Lingfield church itself were on a scale to match the size and lavishness of his foundation. Retaining from the old fabric only the tower and

²⁰ For this Reginald's career, see *Ibid.*, 136–41; Cokayne *et al* 1910–59, 3, 353–4.

²¹ *CalPR* 1429–36, 146–7. Since the statutes for the college have not survived, this licence constitutes the main source for the founder's intentions for his foundation.



Fig 3 Tomb monument of Sir Reginald Cobham (d. 1446) and his wife, Anne, in the chancel, Lingfield church (Tim Sutton).

spire and the north chancel arcade – the latter built in the 1360s by his grandmother – he created a hall church of two aisles of equal height west of the tower and three east of it, the north aisle of the same width as the central vessel, constituting in effect a parallel nave. It is possible that the north side was conceived as the parishioners' church. On the evidence of the pier mouldings and window tracery it seems that a London mason was the originator of the design.²² The building was lavishly fitted out with stalls for the chaplains, pierced wooden screens around the chancel enclosure and, in the north aisle and perhaps elsewhere, a rich scheme of painted decoration. The paintings, partly uncovered in the course of a 19th century restoration, are now lost, but the stalls and the screens remain.²³ The founder also provided for an extensive glazing scheme to fill the windows, the remaining fragments of which are now brought together in the south chancel window. As so often in aristocratic collegiate churches, heraldry figured prominently in the decoration, both in the stained glass and the woodwork.²⁴ On the death of the founder in 1446, his widow commissioned a

²² Nairn & Pevsner 1971, 347, point out the similarity to the church of St Olave, Hart Street, London. Another parallel is found in the south chapel of Bletchingley church, where the same three-light windows with segmental heads are employed.

²³ For the paintings, which were uncovered in the course of a partial restoration in 1845, see l'Anson & Way 1858. The presence of the paintings, which were probably quite extensive, explains what appear today as the large expanses of blank walling in the church: actually, these were not blank. Likewise, the wooden roofs, which are of depressed wagon form, would also have been painted.

²⁴ Peatling 1930, 55–7. Aubrey, 1718–19, 3, 59, records the following partial inscription in the east window of the chancel: 'Orate pro animabus Domini [...] fundator huius [...]', a form of words which suggests that there were kneeling donor portraits above. For the chancel misericords, see the illustrations in Flower 1864, opp 149.

magnificent alabaster monument to them both, which stands in the middle of the chancel, the traditional position for a founder's tomb.²⁵

In the splendid surroundings of this church the liturgy would have been celebrated with all the richness and colour that the resources made over by the founder would have made possible. The community of five chaplains and four clerks, who constituted the establishment, would have been easily big enough to meet the requirements of the Sarum Use observed in the church.²⁶ With as many as five chaplains provided for, the number of celebrations of Mass could be maximised, while the inclusion of a body of clerks would have made possible the development of polyphonic settings of liturgical texts. Clerks – the predecessors of today's lay clerks – were skilled men in minor orders who were recruited specifically to perform the new and more complex settings expected by patrons in the late Middle Ages.²⁷ At Lingfield on major feast days and for the major offices they would probably have performed from the gallery above the rood screen, to which access was gained from the circular stair in the outer wall of the north aisle.²⁸ In a sense the whole church was conceived as one great liturgical space dedicated to the increase of divine service. In this respect the church was no different from – indeed it was probably an advance upon – the collegiate church that John, Lord Cobham, had established at Cobham. Reginald would almost certainly have been familiar with the sister foundation of the senior branch of the family in Kent. The Cobhams were a clannish brood, held together by strong horizontal solidarities, and accustomed to relying on one another in such capacities as witnesses to legal transactions.²⁹ The senior branch had died out in the male line in 1408 on the death of John, the 3rd lord. However, the 3rd lord's grand-daughter, Lady Joan, kept up the Cobham name and maintained relations with other branches of the family.³⁰

In the most general terms, then, it is possible to establish a context for the college at Lingfield in the wave of collegiate foundations of the previous three-quarters of a century, and in the foundation at Cobham in particular. For all the importance of these influences it would be a mistake to suppose that these institutions provide the sole context for an understanding of Lingfield. There were other influences at work, the more important of them rooted in the culture and religion of the Lancastrian court. These are especially significant in helping to explain some of the more singular aspects of Reginald's foundation.

It is especially relevant in this connection to note that Reginald chose to make provision in his foundation for the support of almsmen. According to the licence granted to him in 1431, in addition to the clerks, the college was to include thirteen 'poor persons', who were to pray perpetually for the founder and his kin.³¹ No provision of this sort appears to have been made at Cobham in 1362 or indeed at any of the other collegiate foundations of the 14th century with the conspicuous exception of Henry of Lancaster's foundation of the Newarke at Leicester.³² This remarkable interest in involving the poor as intercessors for the rich appears to have been an innovation of the early 15th century, a by-product of the

²⁵ The monument is one of a group of three commissioned in this period from a workshop in the south of England, most probably in London, easily distinguishable from the mainstream alabaster tomb monuments of the Prentys and Sutton workshop of Chellaston, near Derby, which dominated the market in the midlands. The other two monuments in the group are those of John, earl of Arundel (d. 1435) at Arundel (Sussex) and Lady Margaret Holand (d. 1439) and her two husbands in Canterbury cathedral.

²⁶ By way of comparison, there were ten to eleven chaplains at Cobham, six at Irthingborough, three at Noseley, three rising to seven at Sibthorpe, and Lingfield's complement of five at both Tong and Shottesbrooke.

²⁷ Bowers 2001, 171–214.

²⁸ A noteworthy feature of the church is its good acoustics.

²⁹ Nichols 1841, 327, 339, 343.

³⁰ There is evidence that interest was also shown in the college by the Cobhams' neighbours, the Gaynesfords of Crowhurst. There was Gaynesford heraldry in the church and a request for intercessory prayer for a member of the Gaynesford family in a window of the hall of the college: Aubrey 1718–19, 3, 59, 64–5.

³¹ *CalPR*, 1429–36, 146–7. The significance of the number thirteen, which was often chosen for companies of almsmen, was the Biblical precedent of the twelve disciples and Christ.

³² Hamilton Thompson 1937, 11–40.

practice of paying poor bedesmen to attend the funerals laid on for the aristocracy. The initiative appears to have been taken by patrons associated in some way with the court, perhaps in conscious emulation of Duke Henry's foundation. The earliest instance of the poor being included appears to be afforded by Ralph, earl of Westmorland's, expansion of a chantry foundation at Staindrop (County Durham), in which an almshouse was to be established for six esquires, six gentlemen and six other poor people; that was in 1408.³³ Three years later, in the statutes that she drew up for Tong College (Shropshire), Lady Isabel Pembridge made provision, in addition to the warden and clergy, for thirteen poor almspeople.³⁴ Three years after this again, yet another founder, Edward, duke of York, made provision in his own college, that of Fotheringhay, for a *hospitium* – a whole household of the worthy poor – their number unspecified. Finally, in 1422 Archbishop Chichele, a man at the heart of the Lancastrian establishment, in the college that he founded at his birthplace, Higham Ferrers (Northamptonshire), likewise made provision for the poor – in this case in the form of a bedehouse for twelve poor men.³⁵ To this background, the arrangements that Reginald made at Lingfield for inclusion of the poor can be seen as standing in an evolving tradition of investing the college with a charitable function, the idea being to extend help to the poor provided that they in turn helped the rich by remembering them in their prayers.

In one, more distinctive, respect Lingfield can be seen as linked to the cultural tastes of the Lancastrian court, and this involves a consideration at last of the matter of its buildings. In his notes on Lingfield church and college, written probably in the late summer of 1673 and which were to form the basis of his posthumously published *Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey*, John Aubrey penned the following description of the buildings:

Near the Church Yard stood formerly a college erected by Reginald Lord Cobham and dedicated to St Peter [...] I have seen no remains of any religious house so entire as this is. The first storey is of freestone. Above that the Buildings are of brick and timber. Within the College is a little Square Court and round that a Cloyster for Conveniency of walking for the priests here. Here is a convenient and handsome Hall and parlour. Above the Priests' table remains the (old fashion'd) Canopy or Arching of Wainscot; as is yet at Lincoln's Inn Hall in London. In one of the windows in this place is this Lemma, 'Auxilium Mihi Semper a Domino'.³⁶

In the absence of any evidence to indicate later reconstruction of the fabric, it must be assumed that the buildings Aubrey described were those commissioned by the founder, or at least by the founder and his widow, in or after the 1430s. If this assumption is correct, then Lingfield College must be accounted the earliest recorded brick building in the Weald of Surrey and one of the earliest brick buildings in the county outside the Thames Valley.

The outlines of the history of the use of brick in medieval England have been traced by John Goodall, the late Nicholas Moore and the contributors to the *History of the King's Works*.³⁷ It is by now clearly established that brick had been in continuous use and production in England since the late Roman period, its technology being akin to that employed in the

³³ Cullum 2008, 151.

³⁴ *VCHShropshire*, 2, 131–3.

³⁵ For Fotheringhay and Higham Ferrers, see Goodall 2002, 248.

³⁶ Aubrey 1718–19, 3, 64–5. The passage as published follows very closely what Aubrey wrote in his notes, omitting only, after 'Lincoln's Inn Hall', 'at Bradenstock Abbey in Wilts and was in some Colleges in Oxford'. Aubrey's notes from Lingfield are Bod Lib, MS Aubrey 4, fos 154–6 in the old numbering, and fos 71r–72r in the new. Aubrey undertook his perambulation of Surrey between July and October 1673, although he continued to revise the manuscript until 1692: Matthew & Harrison 2004, 2, 907–11 (by Adam Fox). Aubrey mistakenly stated that the college was staffed by 'priests of the Carthusian Order' (Aubrey 1718–19, 3, 64–5) and was followed in this error by Manning & Bray 1804–14, 2, 353, Flower 1864, 149, and Leveson-Gower 1880, 229. The error is entirely without foundation, and the staff were secular chaplains, not monks.

³⁷ Goodall 2011, 348–54; Moore 1991; Brown, Colvin, Taylor 1963, 282, 291, 906, 999, 1001.

creation of roof and floor tiles. Levels of production of the material appear to have been low before the 15th century, and for the very largest projects bricks were usually imported from the continent. Between 1276 and 1283 Edward I imported no fewer than 350,000 bricks from Flanders for major building works at the Tower of London, and later in the 1280s another 120,000 to construct a wall between the Tower and the City of London.³⁸ By no later than the 13th century, brickmakers in Flanders and across Germany had developed the technical capability to make millions of identically proportioned bricks in a single season. In England, by contrast, bricks were almost always made in irregular shapes and their use was limited to parts of houses and minor fortified buildings.

Only at the beginning of the 15th century did brick come into its own in England as a fashionable material in high-status architectural projects. In north Surrey an important early example may be afforded by the walling of the so-called 'guardroom', or great chamber, of the archiepiscopal palace at Croydon, reputedly built by Archbishop Arundel before 1410, although neither the attribution nor the date are secure. More certainly, after 1414 Henry V made use of bricks from Calais in his extensive rebuilding of the ruined former royal palace at Sheen (now Richmond), combining it with stone and using the brick especially in partly ornamental features such as chimneys. At a much later stage of the campaign bricks made locally at Petersham were used too.³⁹ Around the same time Henry's brother, Thomas, duke of Clarence, likewise made use of brick in the works that he undertook at his manor of Woking. According to an account roll in Westminster Abbey for building operations at the site supervised by the prior of Newark, the sum of 14s 10d was spent on the carriage of brick (*brike*) to the Woking works. At Syon, across the Thames from Sheen, large quantities of brick – possibly imported – were used between 1426 and 1431 on the building of the vast new Bridgettine nunnery, founded by Henry V. Further afield, in Hertfordshire, Cardinal Beaufort was using brick from around 1427 at his lavish new manor house of the More near Rickmansworth. All these projects attest to the growing popularity of brick in high-status buildings by the first quarter of the 15th century. With its adoption shortly afterwards by Henry VI as the principal building material for the domestic and residential ranges of his magnificent new foundation of Eton College, its place as the most fashionable building material in the south-east of England was assured.

The extensive use of brick in this series of buildings associated with the court in the lower Thames Valley supplies us with a general context for its use in the college accommodation at Lingfield. It is unfortunate, however, that in the absence of antiquarian sketches of the lost buildings, we cannot be certain how or in what way the Lingfield accommodation was related to the high-status architecture of the court. It may be that the use of brick in the college quadrangle extended no further than providing the nogging for an upper storey otherwise of simple timber-frame construction. However, there is a distant possibility that something more ambitious may have been involved. Such a speculation is suggested by the precedent afforded by the architecture of a major intercessory institution, the plans for which Cobham and his wife may have been aware of. This was the great almshouse complex known as God's House, founded by William de la Pole, earl (later duke) of Suffolk and his wife Alice, Chaucer's grand-daughter, at Ewelme (Oxfordshire).

On 3 July 1437 the two de la Poles, friends and courtiers of the young Henry VI, secured a mortmain licence from the king to institute a grand intercessory complex on the south Oxfordshire manor, which Alice's mother had brought to her family. Their scheme envisaged the creation of a community consisting of two chaplains and thirteen poor men, all of whom were to pray in perpetuity for the good estate of the founders while they lived and for the safety of their souls after death.⁴⁰ God's House was essentially a grandiose, if modified, form of chantry, its combination of institutionalised intercession and assistance for the poor almost

³⁸ Salzman 1952, 140.

³⁹ For the examples in this paragraph, see Goodall 2011, 349–51, and Woolgar 1993, 615–6.

⁴⁰ *CalPR 1436-41*, 80. It is worth noting that the number of almsmen – thirteen – is exactly the same as at Lingfield.

precisely mirroring the arrangements at Lingfield and a host of other chantry and college institutions of the Lancastrian era.

What is significant about the de la Poles' foundation is the architectural character of its buildings and the material of which they were constructed. At the heart of the complex, which lay on the eastern fringe of Ewelme, between the church on one side and the school on the other, is a set of almshouses broadly corresponding in character to the college buildings at Lingfield, Cobham and elsewhere. These are constructed in the form of four ranges around a courtyard, the east and west ranges longer than those on the north and south sides, with a pentice running along the internal face of all four to provide a continuous walkway around the garth. The idea was to provide a set of thirteen almsmen's cottages, a dining hall for the community, and a set of lodgings for the master – a portfolio of accommodation corresponding in all essentials to that required by a college. The building materials used in the almshouses at Ewelme significantly included brick. Structurally, the four ranges are of timber-frame construction, and erected within an encircling rubble wall. Brick is used on the inner or cloister side of the ranges as a decorative infilling of the framework, the bricks arranged in a variety of plain, herringbone, chevron, diagonal and triangular designs, and the skyline is punctuated by high brick chimneys. Likewise constructed of brick are the ranges to the north and west of the almshouse quadrangle containing the schoolmaster's house, the offices, and the school hall itself. A further connection with Lingfield is provided by the very idea of a walkway around the garth. Aubrey specifically draws attention to this feature at Lingfield: 'within this college', he wrote, 'is a little Square Court and round that a Cloyster for Conveniency of walking for the Priests here.'⁴¹ The covered cloister or pentice walk is a feature of a number of brick and timber-frame buildings in the Thames Valley associated with the patronage of Henry VI's courtiers. Besides Ewelme, two others stand out – Ockwells Manor, Bray (Berkshire), built by Sir John Norreys, and Christ's Hospital attached to St Helen's church, Abingdon, with which William de la Pole had a connection.⁴² Other 15th century collegiate buildings, such as St William's College, York, normally lack such a feature.

The similarity of the Ewelme buildings to those at Lingfield, at least as far as we can visualise the latter from Aubrey's description, is so close as to prompt the question of whether the Lingfield accommodation could actually have been influenced by that at the Oxfordshire complex. Any answer to this question is bound to turn on the matter of which of the two sets of buildings was constructed first. On the evidence of dates of foundation, there can seemingly be little doubt: the buildings at Lingfield, somewhat awkwardly for any hypothesis of their priority, came before their counterparts at Ewelme, the licence for the former institution having been awarded in 1431, and that for the other in 1437. The date on which medieval mortmain licences were issued, however, affords at best only a very imprecise guide to when the buildings to which they relate were actually constructed. On some occasions the licence was issued well before building work commenced and on others only after plans were already well advanced. It is possible that a chronological anomaly of this sort may have occurred in connection with the two sets of buildings under consideration here. In the case of Lingfield, there are one or two telling pieces of evidence that indicate that Reginald, for all his ambition, was slow in seeing his plans for the college carried into execution. Especially significant is the evidence of delays in the handing over of the landed endowment to the college. By the terms of his licence from the king, Reginald was entitled to acquire and alienate properties to the value of £40 per annum.⁴³ Almost immediately the advowson and rectory were appropriated to the foundation, providing it with a substantial part of its endowment. At the same time the Cobhams' house in Southwark, overlooking the priory, worth around 20s per annum, was also handed over.⁴⁴ But then, for a long time

⁴¹ Aubrey, 1718–19, 3, 64.

⁴² For these buildings, see Goodall 2001, 97–8.

⁴³ *CalPR* 1429–36, 146–7.

⁴⁴ For the Cobhams' house at Southwark, referred to by Lady Joan Cobham in her will in 1369 as her 'inn or hostel', see Dawson 2010, 233.

afterwards, nothing else happened. Not until after Reginald's death in 1446 did his widow begin to take steps to complete the endowment.⁴⁵ In 1449 she and her co-feoffees secured a licence to alienate to the college the manors of Hexted and Billeshurst, both in Lingfield, including or comprising five messuages two water mills, 128 acres of land and 16d rent.⁴⁶ On the same day and by the same licence her stepson, Sir Thomas, confirmed the separate alienation of three messuages and 38 acres of land together extended at £12 per annum, to which the institution was entitled by the terms of the licence issued back in 1431.⁴⁷ The fact that Sir Thomas was driven to make this confirmation suggests that the original grant had, for some reason, not taken effect and that the college had been unable to enter into possession. The hypothesis receives support from the fact that it was not until 1452 that his mother's alienation of Billeshurst was completed.⁴⁸ In the light of these indications of delay in the execution of Sir Reginald's plans, caused perhaps by cash-flow problems resulting from expenditure on the church, it is perfectly possible to suppose that the college buildings were not erected until the 1440s, even the late 1440s, temporary accommodation being provided for the clergy in the meantime. At God's House, Ewelme, on the other hand, the evidence points to precisely the opposite state of affairs: namely, relative speed in the execution of plans. Preparations for the establishment of the almshouses were under way as early as 1433, when – four years before the issue of the mortmain licence – properties were being acquired and handed over in readiness to the community.⁴⁹ Given the enormous financial resources at the disposal of the de la Poles, it is far less likely that there was a delay in construction than at Lingfield. Taken together, these considerations do at least allow for the possibility that the Cobhams' plans, both physical and institutional, could have owed something to those entertained by the de la Poles at Ewelme. At the very least, the two foundations are likely to have owed their shared character to a common set of architectural ideas circulating at the Lancastrian court.

What lends support to this set of suggestions is the evidence of the remarkably exalted social and political connections enjoyed by the seemingly obscure Sir Reginald and his wife. For a mere gentleman, Reginald moved in circles more appropriate to the blue-blooded aristocracy than to one whose family had suffered the precise loss of that quality. It is possible that the noble connections cultivated by Sir Reginald's father and grandfather help to explain the distinguished company that he kept. His grandfather had married the daughter of a great landed magnate, Thomas, Lord Berkeley of Berkeley Castle. Both of his father's two wives were noble – his second, Reginald's mother, being the daughter and co-heiress of John, Lord Maltravers, and his first, the daughter of the earl of Stafford. Although he was himself rarely employed on public business, Reginald appears to have enjoyed the favour of the king and his court.⁵⁰ From 1436 he was entrusted with the keeping at Sterborough of the most senior and valuable of all the prisoners taken at Agincourt, none other than Charles, duke of Orléans.⁵¹ Socially, Reginald was brought closer to the court in the 1420s by the marriage of his daughter Eleanor to Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, Henry VI's uncle. Eleanor, who had served as a lady in waiting to Duke Humphrey's first wife, Jacqueline of Hainault, and was later to be his mistress, became the duke's second wife after the annulment of his marriage in 1428. Especially important in relation to his plans for the college are the connections that Reginald forged through his second marriage. Sometime before 1427 he took as his wife

⁴⁵ Reginald died on 21 August 1446: *CalIPM*, no 589.

⁴⁶ *CalPR*, 1446–52, 240–1. Billeshurst was the main manor in the centre of Lingfield parish.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁴⁸ SHC: K63/8/10: licence by Anne, widow of Sir Reginald Cobham, empowering her feoffee, John Elmbridge, to assign the manor of Billeshurst to John Swetcock, master of the college, dated 1 March 1452.

⁴⁹ Goodall 2001, 23, 31. Goodall suggests that the almshouse quadrangle was probably completed by 1442.

⁵⁰ The extent of Reginald's involvement in public business is represented by his regular appointment as a justice of the peace in Surrey and his nomination as a commissioner to raise a loan in Kent in 1440: *CalPR* 1429–36, 625; *CalPR* 1436–41, 504, 591; *CalPR* 1441–46, 479.

⁵¹ Nicolas 1833, 178.

Anne, daughter and co-heiress of Thomas, Lord Bardolf, widow of Sir William Clifford, and sister-in-law of Sir William Phelip KG, who by virtue of his marriage was to assume the title Lord Bardolf.⁵² This was a match that opened up a whole range of connections for Reginald. Through Anne's mother, Amice, a daughter of Sir Ralph Cromwell, he became connected with her descendant Ralph, Lord Cromwell, Henry VI's treasurer and the future founder of Tattershall College. More importantly, through her brother-in-law, Sir William Phelip, an East Anglian landowner and veteran of the French wars, and Henry VI's chamberlain in the 1430s, he became acquainted with none other than the duke of Suffolk himself, a neighbour of Phelip's in East Anglia and by now a rising figure at court.⁵³ At first Phelip and Suffolk were rivals territorially, both entertaining designs on the Bardolf inheritance, the former as co-claimant to the inheritance through his wife and the latter as farmer of it by grant from the crown. However, from 1437, once Suffolk had surrendered the farm, the two men became associates, and in a reorganisation of the administration of the duchy of Lancaster Suffolk became steward of the northern parts and Phelip the equivalent official in the south.⁵⁴ A notable by-product of their new warmth was their apparent hatching of a pair of religious initiatives they appear to have brought to fruition at the same time. Simultaneously on 3 July 1437, by letters issued at Kempton Park, Suffolk secured a royal licence to establish his chantry almshouse complex at Ewelme, and William Phelip a like document for the establishment of a chantry in his local parish church at Dennington (Suffolk).⁵⁵ There can be little doubt that de la Pole, as a leading counsellor of the king, was the prime mover in securing the licences. The fact that he was acting in concert with Phelip and that the two men were contemplating broadly similar foundations points to the friendship between them and the identity of their religious outlook. All this is of relevance to an understanding of developments at Lingfield. Through William Phelip, Lord Bardolf, Cobham and his wife gained access to Suffolk, and through Suffolk and his circle they picked up knowledge of the religious and architectural tastes of Henry VI and his courtiers.

All this brings us back to the use that Cobham and Suffolk were to make of brick in their respective building projects. Suffolk almost certainly gained his awareness of the potential afforded by this prestigious material from its employment at Eton College, where he had acted as general supervisor, overseeing the building plans and signing off payments to masons and bricklayers.⁵⁶ Brick was the principal material used in the building of Cloister Court, the front quadrangle of the school. Alerted to its possibilities by the architectural splendour of the new foundation, Suffolk was moved to use it in his almshouse complex at Ewelme. Cobham's connections with Suffolk, forged through William Phelip, suggest that it may well have been from Ewelme that he picked up the idea of incorporating brick in his own buildings at Lingfield.

Aubrey's description of the college, therefore, allows us to go a long way not only in visualising something of its external appearance but also in attempting an evaluation of its importance in the context of the broader architectural currents of the time. Above all, Aubrey helps us to identify the almshouses of God's House at Ewelme as a possible design source for the college, in addition to the buildings of the sister foundation at Cobham.

With the buildings now entirely lost, it is impossible to say how or how far their internal arrangements would have compared with those of other collegiate establishments of the same period. Valuable insights into the room sequence and the main contents of the rooms are afforded by two inventories dating from the early and mid-16th century that survive in the archives of Loseley House, near Guildford. William More, the owner of Loseley, had taken over some of the property of Sir Thomas Cawarden, who acquired a grant of the college at the Dissolution. The earlier and shorter of the two documents was drawn up in

⁵² Cokayne *et al* 1910–59, **3**, 354.

⁵³ For Bardolf, see Cokayne *et al* 1910–59, **1**, 420–1.

⁵⁴ Matthew & Harrison 2004, **43**, 991–2 (by Helen Castor); Castor 2000, 88–92.

⁵⁵ *CalPR*, 1436–41, 78, 80.

⁵⁶ Goodall 2002, 251.

1524 and lists ‘the goods, chattels, debts and ready money’ of the recently deceased master of the college, John Robson.⁵⁷ It mentions just two rooms, the master’s chamber and the founder’s chamber. The latter, which contained a fine bed and furnishings, was presumably kept in readiness for visits by members of the founder’s family and other important guests. The second list, compiled in 1544 in connection with the surrender of the college, and surviving in two versions, contains a much longer list of rooms. In one of the versions the following rooms are listed: the parlour; the buttery; the hall; the buttery by the kitchen; the dry larder; the kitchen; the wheat larder; the master’s chamber, the ‘chamber next’; the ‘next chamber’ again; the cool house; the storehouse; the next chamber; the chamber ‘next the chayer bed’; the butler’s chamber; the brewhouse; the maltloft; and finally the little chamber.⁵⁸ In the other version, probably compiled by a different clerk, there are minor variations and some of the rooms are taken in a different order. At the beginning the hall is visited directly after the parlour, the buttery is visited at the end, and mention is made of a gallery in the wing overlooking the churchyard leading to the little chamber.⁵⁹ It is tempting to suppose that the order in which the rooms were listed in these documents reflects the order they were entered by the surveyor and his clerk, as they went round. The parlour, with which both lists open, and was likewise to be mentioned by Aubrey, was presumably very close to the hall, and close to this in turn, because meals were served there, it may be assumed, were the service rooms, principally the kitchen and larders. After these rooms would have come the main residential chambers, which are listed one after the other, with a couple of store rooms apparently interrupting the sequence. The residential rooms were presumably the chambers occupied by the five college chaplains. If the arrangements established in the Canons’ Cloister at Windsor were followed at Lingfield, each chamber would have been of two storeys, the ground floor a general purpose space, and the upstairs room, accessed by an internal stair, the chief residential apartment.⁶⁰ At the end of the sequence, and perhaps slightly separate from the main buildings, were more service rooms or outbuildings. The gallery mentioned in one of the lists was presumably a connecting corridor at first floor level perhaps immediately above the pentice.

The Dissolution inventory gives the impression of a set of apartments that was both well appointed and reasonably well furnished right down to the college’s last days in the 1540s.⁶¹ The impression of a flourishing community, still actively committed to the duties with which it had been charged by the founder, is one confirmed by two separate sub-lists in the inventory. In the first of these, a catalogue of the contents of a chest in the little chamber, is listed a set of mostly older, perhaps by this time disused, vestments, but also a scattering of newer-sounding altar cloths and vessels.⁶² In the other document, entitled a catalogue of ‘books and ornaments in the church’ – and so presumably an inventory of the contents of the sacristy – were listed all the best vestments in the college’s possession, the ones still in regular use. There were four full sets of these – that is to say, sets of both copes and mass vestments – and six loose copes in addition.⁶³ All the vestments were described as being of red or blue velvet or blue silk, and one of the copes was said to be adorned with orphreys of gold. This last item probably formed part of the set of vestments bequeathed to the college by Sir Thomas Cobham in 1471, which he described as being of ‘blew cloth of gold’.⁶⁴ A small number of

⁵⁷ Leveson-Gower 1880, 230–5.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 236–45.

⁵⁹ Craib 1913, 86–90.

⁶⁰ Crook 2013, 78–82. As Crook shows, the Latin ‘camera’ can describe a two-storey dwelling as well as a single room.

⁶¹ Although the rooms were reasonably well equipped with the necessities of life, it is important to stress that the clergy certainly did not live in luxury. In both the parlour and the hall the hangings and the carpet were described as old: Craib 1913, 87.

⁶² Leveson-Gower 1880, 240–2; Craib 1913, 90.

⁶³ Leveson-Gower 1880, 243; Craib 1913, 91.

⁶⁴ TNA: PROB 11/6/36, fo 14r.

service books figured in the two lists as well, among them a legendary, three graduals and some antiphoners. In his will, made in August 1445, the founder had left the sum of £80 to the college for the purchase of books and vestments.⁶⁵ The evidence suggests that the money he bequeathed had been wisely spent. The clergy were magnificently arrayed. There can be little doubt that the college was more than well equipped to achieve that ‘increase in divine service’, which was the principal justification for its existence. Right down to the time of the act of surrender in 1544 it maintained its full complement of chaplains and clerks.⁶⁶ Even the injunctions issued in 1532 for the better regulation of the college insisting, among other things, on the eating of meals in common can be taken in a positive sense to indicate the continued vigilance of the master.⁶⁷ The fact that the history of the college, like that of many such institutions in the late middle ages, was so uneventful should be taken as evidence, not of failure, but rather of success.

When Henry VIII’s break with the Roman curia came in the 1530s, and in its wake the rejection of purgatory and the apparatus of intercession, it was clear that the college’s days were numbered. Edward Culpeper, the master, negotiated a private surrender of the community on 26 April 1544, a year before the passing of the Chantries Act, which provided for the general surrender of all ‘colleges, free chapels, chantries, hospitals, fraternities, brotherhoods, guilds and stipendiary priests having perpetuity for ever’.⁶⁸ In the first half of the 1540s the heads of a number of chantry or college communities negotiated agreements for the voluntary surrender of their property, to stave off what might be a worse fate if surrender were delayed and then enforced.⁶⁹ The master of the college at Lingfield, deciding not to await the final blow from the government, took advantage of this route of ‘anticipatory dissolution’. He was probably well aware that the value of the college might make it attractive to rapacious courtiers. Nine years earlier, in the valor of 1535, its annual income had been estimated at £75, a not inconsiderable sum for an institution of this kind.⁷⁰ Among the community’s properties were the manors of Hexted in Lingfield, in Surrey, as well as Squerryes in Westerham and Hoothlight in Lamberhurst, both in Kent.⁷¹

The college was to be in the king’s hands for only a very short time. Just a month after the surrender it was granted to Sir Thomas Cawarden, master of the king’s revels, steward of Anne of Cleves and, locally, steward and keeper of Bletchingley Place.⁷² The speed of the transfer strongly suggests that a deal of some sort had probably been struck between Culpeper and the grantee before the surrender. In 1560, after Thomas’s death, it was sold by his nephew and heir, William, to one of Queen Elizabeth’s courtiers, another local lord, William, Lord Howard of Effingham. The fact that the buildings were left standing suggests that they may have been adapted for residential use, albeit probably use of an intermittent nature. In the early 18th century such fabric as remained was demolished by either the Howards or their tenants to make way for the present distinguished house, which perpetuates the name ‘college’. The ownership of the Howard family came to an end in 1776, when the trustees of Ann Bristow, widow of the seventh Lord Howard, disposed of the property after her decease.⁷³

⁶⁵ Flower 1864, 150; Nicolas 1826, 1, 246–7. The founder provided for the building of a sacristy on the south side of the chancel.

⁶⁶ A list of the priests, clerks and servants of the college to whom stipends were paid at the time of the surrender records five priests (one of them unnamed), four clerks and seven servants, all paid varying amounts (SHC: K63/8/11). This list is printed below as an appendix. What is unclear is whether almsmen were maintained until the Dissolution.

⁶⁷ Craib 1913, 82–3.

⁶⁸ *LFPD*, 19, i, 261.

⁶⁹ Kreider 1979, 154–64.

⁷⁰ *VCHS*, 2, 127–8.

⁷¹ Manning & Bray 1804–14, 2, 353.

⁷² For the grant, see *LFPD*, 19, ii, 380; and for Cawarden’s career, Bindoff 1982, 1, 599–602. Cawarden’s tomb monument survives in the chancel of Bletchingley church.

⁷³ Haywood & Hazell 1933, 27.



Fig 4 The Hayward Library, Lingfield (Nigel Saul).

Today, the main building of the former college still extant is a Wealden-style house on the north side of the churchyard, saved and restored in 1896 by the architect Charles Forster Hayward and currently used as a public library. The property is of timber-frame construction and consists of a central hall, later divided into two floors but now opened up again, and two rooms at each end, the upper ones overhanging the lower. Precisely what function the building served is unclear. It has often been described as the college guest house, but there is no evidence that it was referred to as such before Hayward called it so in the 1890s.⁷⁴ A more plausible possibility is that it was the house of the master of the college. Another possibility again is that it served as a church house or hostelry and was built by the college but used principally by the parishioners.

Although of 15th century date, the building is considerably later than the main college buildings, which Aubrey described in his note. A dendrochronological analysis made in 2005 established that it was constructed in or very close to 1474.⁷⁵ The date is a surprising one, coming as it does at a low point in the fortunes of the college, shortly after the extinction in the male line of the founder's family. Sir Thomas Cobham, the founder's son and the last male representative of his line, had died between April and July 1471. His eldest son, Reginald, having predeceased him, his estates were carried in marriage by his infant daughter Anne to Edward, son of Sir Thomas Burgh of Gainsborough (Lincolnshire).⁷⁶ Since the cost of constructing a substantial building of this sort is one that the master of the college would have looked to the patron to bear, it is hard to see who would have paid when the patron was an absentee and under-age lord in Lincolnshire. A possible solution to the problem is found

⁷⁴ I am grateful to Janet Bateson for this information.

⁷⁵ Moir 2006.

⁷⁶ Matthew & Harrison 2004, **12**, 289–91 (by Peter Fleming).

in a list of bequests made in the will of Anne's father, Sir Thomas. Near the beginning, in the course of detailing bequests intended for the wellbeing of his soul, Sir Thomas provided for this sum: 'And to the reparacion and making of ye body of ye foresaid chirch of saint Peter unto my said college £20.'⁷⁷ The wording employed by the testator makes it clear that the purpose for which the money was bequeathed was the undertaking of essential repairs to the church. In that case, a difficulty immediately arises because, although the sum was a very considerable one, there is no obvious work in the fabric that can be associated with the 1470s or the years shortly afterwards. In the light of this difficulty, it may not be too fanciful to suppose that the money was diverted to a quite different end, namely the construction of this fine Wealden dwelling on the edge of the churchyard.

Of the main college buildings themselves, the only significant part now visible above ground is the lower section of a stretch of the main front, which survives today as the boundary wall separating the garden of 'The College' from the churchyard to its east. Surviving to a height of about 1.60m, the wall is of rough Wealden stone and has a broad chamfer 26cm high and beginning 1.04m from the ground. The break in the wall for the gate, 1.37m in width, almost certainly marks the original entrance gate to the college as the corners on each side are moulded. It is difficult to estimate how far the front originally extended, as today it is cut off at both ends. On the northern side it presumably went no further than the sharp drop to the adjacent modern property, which almost certainly marks the edge of the platform on which the medieval fabric was built. In the southern direction, the extant stretch of wall from the entrance gate to the beginning of a modern brick wall extends to 10.63m in length. The south-eastern boundary of the college may well be represented by the present footpath from the churchyard to the village, a hypothesis suggested both by the boundaries marked on the 1607 map of the parish and by the presence of some medieval stonework in the footpath wall.⁷⁸ In the garden of 'The College' is a small stretch of walling running directly east-west, which may represent the tidied-up remains of the inside wall of the south range of the quadrangle.

Within 'The College', and below ground, a little recognised survival from the medieval fabric is provided by the cellar that appears, on the evidence of the Wealden stonework, to be the cellar of the original 15th century building. Today much altered and repaired, its space is currently broken up by modern internal sub-divisions. At its greatest extent the cellar measures 7.88m north-south and 5.18m east-west. It appears originally to have been rectangular and it would have lain below the western range. No architectural features can today be made out.

Behind 'The College', and at right angles to its rear wing, are the remains of a structure known as the bakehouse, which appears, like the 'guest house', to have been an ancillary building of the college. The greater part of the fabric was demolished in 1971 to make way for a new residential development and what is visible today constitutes little more than the lower part of stretches of the north and west outer walls, much repaired and with modern fenestration inserted in them. On the evidence partly of these fragments and partly of the limited photographic record, the building appears to have been of brick and timber-frame construction of late 15th or early 16th century date. Its unfortunate destruction, however, means that any extended discussion of its function or likely date of its construction is now impossible.

Although the buildings of Lingfield College are now largely lost, at least above ground, it is evident from Aubrey's description that they were once of considerable size and splendour. There can be little doubt that they should be accorded a significant place in the history of Surrey's medieval domestic architecture. As at Fotheringhay, Tattershall, and most of the other secular colleges of the 15th century, it is today the church that is the principal surviving relic of the medieval fabric. No less than the lost domestic buildings, this remarkable structure

⁷⁷ TNA: PROB 11/6/36, fos 14r.

⁷⁸ A copy of this map is in Lingfield public library.



Fig 5 Remains of the entrance gate to the former college, now the garden gate of The College, Lingfield, showing mouldings on the corners (Nigel Saul).



Fig 6 Remains of the entrance front of the former college, now the boundary wall of The College, Lingfield, looking north on the churchyard side (Nigel Saul).



Fig 7 Ornamental wall in the garden of The College, Lingfield, incorporating the remains of an internal wall fronting onto the quadrangle of the former college (Nigel Saul).



Fig 8 Remains of the building known as the bakehouse, now part of The College, Lingfield, viewed from within (Nigel Saul).

should be accorded an important place in the history of Surrey's medieval architecture, especially given the relative rarity of mature Perpendicular in the county. Last, but not least, mention should be made of one other surviving witness to the church's role as host to a great intercessory institution – the extensive series of brasses of the masters and chaplains of the college in the chancel floor. Appropriately, these lie very close to the tomb monument of Sir Reginald and his wife, whose generosity had called their community into being.

APPENDIX

Surrey History Centre, K63/8/11

Stipends paid to the chaplains, clerks and servants of Lingfield College, *c* 1544

Onera predicti magistri racione presbiterorum clericorum et servientium suorum necessariorum qui nunc existent in collegio predicto pro stipendiis suis a festo Sancti Michaelis usque ad festum Annunciacionis Beate Marie

In primis domino Johanni Hanson pro dimidio anno	xl s
Item domino Johanni Waller pro dimidio anno	xxxiii s iiii d
Item domino Henrico Wodeward pro uno termino	xvi s viii d
Item domino pro diversas septimanas	xi s viii d
Item domino Johanni Grene pro uno mense	

Clerici

Item Ricardo Rowle pro dimidio anno	xx s
Item Francisco Wygg pro dimidio anno	xiii s iiii d
Item Payn pro dimidio anno	xiii s iiii d
Item Ricardo Morice pro dimidio anno	vi s viii d

Servientes

Item Petro Harlekynden pro dimidio anno	xxi s viii d
Item Edmundo Worshey pro dimidio anno	xiii s iiii d
Item Johanni Coke pro dimidio anno	xiii s iiii d
Item Ricardo Holdesmyth pro dimidio anno	xx s
Item Morgano Morice pro dimidio anno	xv s ii d
Item Blondell pro dimidio anno	viii s
Item Alicie Halmone pro dimidio anno	viii s
Summa	xii li viii s vi d

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MS Aubrey 4 Aubrey's manuscript notes of his perambulation of Surrey, forming the basis of his posthumously published *Natural History and Antiquities of the County of Surrey*
- SHC: Surrey History Centre, Woking
K63 Howard of Effingham papers, documents relating to Lingfield College
- TNA: The National Archives, Kew, London
PROB 11/6/36 will of Sir Thomas Cobham

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