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978-1-108-00896-9 - A History of St Catharine's College, Cambridge: Once Catharine Hall,
Cambridge
William Henry Samuel Jones
Excerpt
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PART I
THE HISTORY

Chapter I

SITE AND BUILDINGS

ST CATHARINE'S COLLEGE was founded in 1473 by Robert Woodlark, Provost of King's, whose life and work are given in Chapter II.

The site chosen by Woodlark for the new foundation was quite close to King's College. If one were to take Queens' Lane, the north wall of the Hall, and lines drawn at right angles to these from the centre of the lawn, the rectangle thus formed would probably include all the original buildings. Browne says that during the drought of 1877 "we saw very clearly on the grass of the College Court the lie of the Chapel walls and the corner buttresses; they extended about half way across the grass-plot from west to east, and about half way also from north to south".¹

Some preparatory steps were taken at least as early as 1459, for on 10 September in that year Woodlark bought two tenements in Milne Street, situated in the parishes of St Edward and St Botolph, between the tenement of John Rasour to the south and a tenement belonging to Michael House on the north. They abutted on a tenement of Corpus Christi (le George) to the east, and on Milne Street to the west. The northern boundary was 90 feet, the southern 107 feet 2 inches. The tenements were subject to a quit rent of 3 shillings a year payable to the Master and Scholars of Michael House.

Milne Street ("the street of the mills") was the old name of Queens' Lane, once one of the main thoroughfares of the town. The boundary between the two parishes passes through the entrance to the present D staircase. So there can be no doubt about the position of the original buildings, which, according to an entry in the College Register,² occupied the site of these two tenements, and of another, acquired 9 September 1460.

This third tenement was leased from the Master and Scholars of Michael House for 99 years, at a yearly rent of 8 shillings. The property was purchased in 1471. It is described in the conveyance as a tenement with a

¹ Browne, p. 14.

² *Register*, I, 119.

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garden, in the street called “Millestrete”, between a tenement of Robert Woodlark on the south and a tenement or hostelry called the Black Bull on the north. The Register says that on this site was built the Library.

On Michaelmas Day 1472 Woodlark acquired a lease of a tenement and garden to the south of the other properties, and separated from them by the brewery of John Rasour. The lease was for 99 years, renewable in perpetuity. It was granted by a chantry of St Mary and St Nicholas in the Church of St Clement.

The property, called “Wodhows” in the Register, was thirty-six and a half yards long by ten broad.¹ It had two chambers on the ground floor, and a garden. The lease describes it as in Milnestrete in the parish of St Botolph over against the White Friars (*erga fratres albos*), between Queens’ College garden on the south, and the property of John Rasour on the north.

This intervening property was not acquired till 1516, when it was bought for £50 from Alice Ray, widow of John Ray, a burgess of Cambridge.² The conveyance describes it as the “Inne called the Swanne” along with “a voyde Grownde lying and beyng byhynd the said Tenemente called the Swane”. The inn, together with the house on the south side of it, the acquisition of which is of unknown date, was sold in 1556 to John Mere for £50. Many years later these properties were repurchased for a much larger sum.

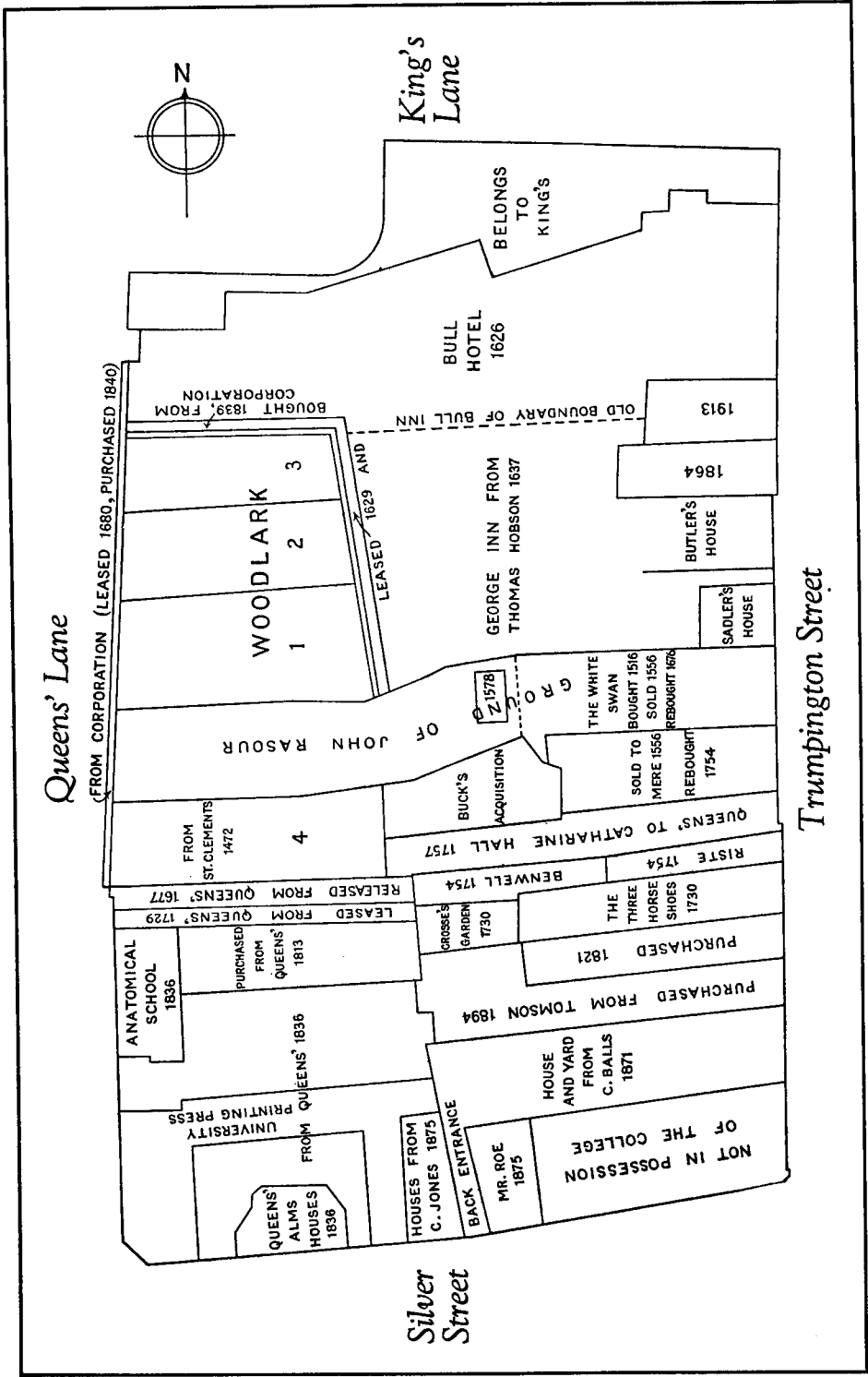
On the site of the first three properties Woodlark built his little college. It was quadrangular, with the Chapel at the south-east corner and the Library apparently at the north-east. The entrance was from Milne Street at the point where now is the entrance to D staircase. It was probably of two storeys, and built of wood and stone. This may be inferred from Woodlark’s reference to stone-cutters, and to the timber he had collected long before building was begun.³

¹ The length was the measurement from east to west, the breadth that from north to south.

² *Register*, I, 91.

³ *Memoriale Nigrum*, fol. 50, “Memorandumque . . . de meremio empto in certis domibus framiatis emptis de Sturgyn et alterato a Coroton usque ad Hornyngsey et recariato Cantebrigiam ad fabricam aulae praedictae diu ante fabricam predictam remanente.” There is doubt as to the correct extensions of contracted words in several places, but the meaning is in no place uncertain.

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The Site and its Acquisition

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The early statutes refer to the Tower, where the Treasury was. It would certainly be near the Lodging of the Master, who was its Keeper (*custos*). If the not unnatural assumption be made that the Hall, Kitchen and Buttery have remained roughly on their present site since the foundation, there remain as possible sites for the Tower the corner by the Library and the corner by the Chapel. It does not appear possible to decide definitely between the two sites, but as our old records closely associate the Master's rooms with the Library there should perhaps be given a slight preference to that corner of the Court.

The question now presents itself: which were the rooms reserved for the use of the Master? Willis and Clark mark as the Lodge that part of the College now occupied by the Screens, but G. F. Browne, in a charming *Historical Sketch* prefixed to the first edition of the *Year-Book and Register*,¹ shows good reason for believing that a great part of the Lodging was on the east side of the quadrangle. The extant evidence is to be found in the statutes and in two inventories.

The Founder's statutes reserve for the use of the Master:

- (1) The "chief" chamber (*camera principalis*);
- (2) The "better one over the Hall" (*melior super aulam*);
- (3) Another room between the last and the Library (*alia camera intercepta inter praedictam cameram et librariam*).

Freedom of choice, however, is left to the Master, in case he should find it convenient to make other arrangements.

In the Edwardian statutes the rooms assigned to the Master are:

- (1) The "chief" bedroom over the Hall;
- (2) A bedroom between this and the Library.

In the inventory made by the Fellows in 1623 to protect themselves against possible dishonesty on the part of the Master, the following are specified as the rooms of his lodging:

- (1) The Master's great chamber;
- (2) The Master's bed-chamber;

¹ Compiled by the Rev. W. T. Southward and Messrs R. R. Conway and F. M. Rushmore, Cambridge, 1902.

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- (3) The chamber next the Library;
- (4) The gallery;
- (5) The “old rome at the stayers foote leadinge to the Library”.

There is another inventory in the first Audit Book, dated 19 October 1636. This mentions under the heading of the Lodge:

- (1) The outward chamber;
- (2) The great chamber;
- (3) The chamber next the Library;
- (4) The entry next the bed-chamber;
- (5) The bed-chamber;
- (6) The gallery.

It is interesting to note that the first item in the list of College property in the great chamber is “I Wainscott Portall at y^e Entrance into y^e Chamb Libra”.

“The other facts we know”, says Browne, “about this (north) side are, that the Hall had a chamber over it, that the Library was upstairs, and that there was a chamber between it and the chamber over the Hall.”

“Now the whole length of the east side of the original College, intercepted between the north side and the south side, was 54 or 55 feet. The suggestion that the Master’s gallery or principal chamber ran along the length of this side, no doubt on the first floor, with a window at the south end looking into the Chapel,¹ seems very natural. The entrance to his lodgings was presumably at the north-east corner of the quadrangle, and his guest chamber on the ground-floor below the gallery, perhaps leaving a covered entry to the Chapel between its southern end and the Chapel; the rest of his rooms were on the north side, one over the Hall, another, still on the first floor, between that and the Library, and another on the ground-floor at the foot of the steps up to the Library. These steps may have been his private way to the Library, a convenience which other Masters had. For the two first-mentioned guest rooms he turned to the right when he entered from the Court; for the others he turned to the left.”

¹ We know that there was a “windowe looking into y^e chappell”, and Browne remarks that “we can scarcely think that the Chapel would be commanded from any room except one in the occupation of the Master”.

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If this reconstruction be accepted, Kitchen, Buttery, Hall, Library and Master's Lodging occupied two sides of the quadrangle, leaving for students' chambers the other two sides, which would give about eight sets.

The inventory of 1513 in the Register clearly states that the College was built on the southern two of the three tenements purchased by Woodlark, and the Library on the one to the north. These statements make it at least likely that the Library stood out from the rest of the buildings, and as it was certainly upstairs, the ground-floor may have been occupied by the cloisters which are so hard to fit in the original plan.¹

The Chapel and Library were not completed at the opening of the College, probably for want of funds, as the benefactions of William Cotte and Clement Denston were intended to be devoted to the completion of these two buildings. The William Taylard bequest (26 Oct. 1505) of £100 was for the "building, repair and maintenance" of the College.² Dr Thomas Greene, Master of the College, gave (29 April 1517) £10 "towards a new structure of four chambers to be built on the south side of the College".³ Alice Lupsett, widow of Thomas Lupsett, goldsmith, of London, gave (5 August 1523) £10 for the same purposes as William Taylard.⁴

These benefactions appear to show, not only that the original buildings were incomplete and without due provision for their maintenance and repair, but also that the need of new chambers was pressing. It is hard indeed to understand why this should be so. If the rule of "two in a set", laid down by Woodlark for Fellows, were applied to Fellow Commoners and students of lower rank, the original buildings would have accommodated at least sixteen, besides the Master. In 1558, when the College had not only established itself but increased in size, it mustered but eighteen, including the Master.

Perhaps it was becoming convenient, even at this early date, to allow a separate chamber to each Fellow. Even though the Edwardian statutes contemplated two Fellows to each chamber, it might be considered wise to retain this regulation when it was possible, and perhaps desirable, to adopt a more

¹ Fuller, p. 168, calls the College "complete in chapel, cloisters, library, hall etc." The order of the buildings is perhaps significant.

² *Register*, I, 18.

³ *Register*, I, 64. The number 4 confirms the estimate of 8 in the original building.

⁴ *Register*, I, 32.

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generous policy in assigning rooms. Certainly Marmaduke Monson in 1577 had a set of rooms to himself.¹

Be this as it may, a range of chambers called Greene's Building was built on the Milne Street front to the south of the original quadrangle, on the site acquired in 1516.

John Cragge, the business Fellow of the College during the second half of the sixteenth century, built a "gallery"² opposite Greene's Building and extending southwards from the Chapel. This was pulled down in 1611 to make room for a new block of chambers called the Claypoole Building. This addition to the structure of the College is noteworthy in at least two respects. In the first place there is the original contract with John Atkinson, which enables us to reconstruct the building with tolerable certainty; in the second place it shows that the College was beginning to find in students' chambers a profitable investment.

The building is to be two storeys high, each storey being nine feet from floor to ceiling, and the breadth eighteen feet from the inside of the brick wall to the outside of the ground sill in the lower rooms, and the second storey as broad as the said brick wall will allow it to be. The rooms are to be six in number, with partitions for study and bed-chamber, and there is to be a case of stairs without the building, of such convenient size as to carry to each room a fair pair of stairs. Each room is to have a fair bay window on the College side; at the end there is to be a bay window, and convenient lights on the other side by clerestories. The builder is to take down and use "the gallerie w^{ch} M^r Cragge buylt and now standeth in the said Coll: to his owne proper use comodity and behoofe, with all thappurtenances". The whole work is to be completed within twenty days after the next Michaelmas, and the builder is to be paid £60 at once, and 100 marks on 22 October.

The amount of cash paid for this building was £126. 13s. 4d., and of this Sir John Claypoole found £120. By an indenture dated 31 December 1613

¹ *Register C*, and p. 227.

² It is not known to what uses this gallery was put. The need was present, however, as is shown by the mention of a gallery in the inventories of 1623 and 1636. It is possible that it was used as a common room on the occasion of a feast. *Aula sive parlura* is a frequent expression in our old documents; perhaps the gallery served as a *parlura*.

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he gave to the Master and Fellows the aforesaid sum “for and toward the edifying and erecting of certain lodgings and chambers in the said College or Hall commonly called the New Buildings”. The Master and Fellows on their part are to maintain two scholars out of the rent, allowing each one half of £5. 6s. 8d.

The number of students had greatly increased during the past fifty years, and was about to increase still further, so that more accommodation was becoming a pressing necessity. About the same date there was built another block of chambers with the £100 left by Mrs Rosamond Payne for “the purchase of land or rent in fee simple for the maintenance of one or two scholars in Catharine Hall”. The recipients are to maintain two scholars, paying to each five marks a year. The money was made over to the College by James Frampton, executor to Mrs Rosamond Payne, by an indenture dated 4 July 1610, but it is not known when the Payne Building was put up nor where it stood. “Ross: Paynes Court” is mentioned in the Bursar’s accounts for 1624–5, but the rooms were probably built at least twelve years earlier. As to the position, Willis and Clark suggest that the block ran westward from the southern end of the Claypoole Building. If this view be adopted, there was a small quadrangle to the south of the original buildings, the sides of which were formed by Greene’s Building, the south side of the original quadrangle, the Claypoole Building and the Payne Building. The four sides enclosed the College Garden, in which was the Dove-house.

The period following the completion of the Claypoole Building owes much to the enterprise of Thomas Buck, Fellow, Bursar, Esquire Bedell, and University Printer. The site east of the Claypoole Building was not in the possession of the College, with the exception of a piece west of the Chapel and of a small piece purchased in 1578 for £5.¹ During the period 1622–4 Buck, by much skilful manoeuvring, managed to bring within the control of the College practically the whole of what is now the south-east quarter of the grass-plot. The details are obscure to a degree, but the main facts are clear enough. On 24 October 1622 Buck obtained a lease of the property to the

¹ See *Register*, 1, 79, where power of attorney is given to John Cragge to take possession of part of the “Hay House” in Cambridge. This was part of the White Swan tenement.

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south of the Swan, and on 15 June 1624 leased to the College the western half of it. At the expiration of this lease the College in 1648 obtained another from Cornelius Archer, who had acquired the property in 1623. It was finally bought by the College on 3 May 1662 for £30.

On 14 October 1622 Cornelius Archer conveyed to Thomas Buck for £6. 13s. 4d. a little piece of ground towards the north 2 feet in breadth, towards the south 3 feet 9 inches in breadth, and in length from north to south 20 feet 3 inches; also one other piece of ground, on the north side in length 11 feet 7½ inches, on the south side in length 12 feet, and in breadth throughout 10 feet. On 5 August 1623 Thomas Hobson conveys to the College a small parcel of ground on which a wall and stack of chimneys were built.

Somewhere on the area now controlled by the College, probably next to the Claypoole Building, a new range of buildings was in progress in October 1622, for the conveyances referred to in the last paragraph speak of the “new building now erecting towards the west” and of the brick wall and chimney stacks “lately erected and builded”. The whole made up the New Court, which included what are called Archer’s Court and Buck’s Court. The Fellows of this period referred to this court as “the back Court by Archer”, “the Court behind the chappell”, and perhaps “the Pump Court”. The rent paid to Buck was £3.¹

The accounts also mention the “Old Buildings”, the “Court next y^e Streete”, the “Little Court”, the Garden and the Cloisters. An attempt must be made to identify these, although certainty in some cases is not possible.

The strip of land leased from the town of Cambridge in 1629 is said to lead to the old building. The College accounts have the following entries:

- 1637–8 For mending the Storehouse wall next y^e bowling
greene etc 00. 02. 07
- 1683–4 y^e old building at y^e end of y^e chappell.
- 1688–9 the old building at the end of the chappell.

¹ Accounts for:

1623–4	To M ^r Bucke for the yeares rent for y ^e ground of y ^e New Court	3.	0.	0
1628–9	For the rent of the court behind the chappell	3.	0.	0
1630–1	For rent of the backe court by Archer	3.	0.	0
1631–2	For rent of the back court by Archer’s house	3.	0.	0