

The Landmark Trust

THE COLLEGE History Album



Dame Thomasine's Percyvale coats of arms, as displayed on the foundation deed of her College.

Written in 2000, updated 2015 & 2023

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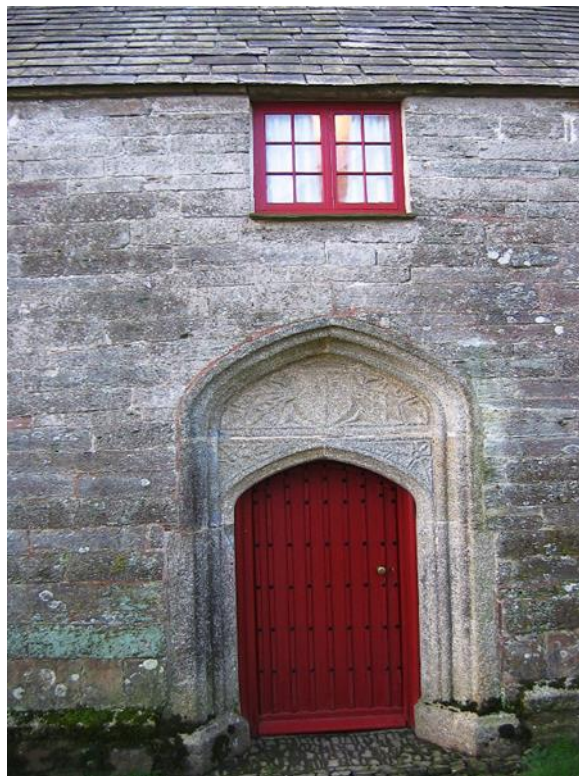
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KEY FACTS

Built	Early 16C
Acquired by Landmark	1976 from Mr Frederick Colwill
Restoration	Finished in 1979
Architects	Paul Pearn, RIBA
Contractors	Mr I F Barriball

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The College today, and the finely carved tympanum above its front door. When built, other buildings of a similar style and associated with the school formed a courtyard around what survives.

Summary

The College was built as part of a chantry school endowed by Dame Thomasine Percival, the widow of Sir John Percyvale (Percival), who was Lord Mayor of London in 1498. A 'chantry' was an institution where prayers were said for the souls of the dead, sometimes combined with education. The College has special significance as one of the earliest schools in England to be founded by a woman. Dame Thomasine founded her school in 1506, the same year that Henry VII's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort founded a school in Wimbourne (now known as Queen Elizabeth's School). The only earlier school known to have been founded by a woman is Lady Berkeley's Grammar School at Wotton-under-Edge (1384). Another reason for Landmark's interest is the similarity of certain features in its architecture with that of Wortham Manor, another Landmark property about 12 miles away on the Devon side of the Tamar.

Thomasine, whose maiden name was Bonaventure, was born in the village of Week St Mary around 1450 and there is a romantic story of her meeting of an eventual husband, a London wool merchant called Richard Bunsby, while tending sheep on the moor. The tale has been told by many Cornish writers, including Parson Hawker (in 'Footprints of Former Men in Far Cornwall', which is on the College bookshelf). However, more recent research has revealed that Thomasine was of gentler birth, one of five offspring to Joan & John Bonaventure. She perhaps went to London in service to the household of a wealthy merchant, as country girls often did as part of their upbringing. Her first husband was not called Bunsby but Henry Galle, and a tailor rather than a wool merchant. When he died in 1466, she re-married within the year to Thomas Barnaby, another tailor, but this was a short marriage as he died in 1467. At an unknown date she married for a third time, a third tailor, John Percyvale, whose ambition in City circles was noted by his contemporaries. In 1487 he was knighted and was elected lord mayor of London in 1498. He died in 1503, his will founding a grammar school in Macclesfield, where he was born.

This probably formed the template for Thomasine's school in her own Cornish birth parish, which she endowed in 1506. At Percyvale's death, she became a very wealthy widow, left as mistress of a 'mansion' in Lombard Street. Here she also housed and educated five 'alms-children', both boys and girls, as well as taking on apprentices. She had no children of her own, but clearly cared about the education of the young, and was conventionally pious, making her schoolmaster responsible for saying masses for her soul in the parish church of St Mary nearby, as well as for her husband and parents. This made her school a 'chantry school.' The foundation deed specified the stipend of the schoolmaster, who was to be a graduate of Oxford or Cambridge, and was assisted by an assistant teacher or muncible, and a laundress. The school's service buildings were set around a small quadrangle, rather like an Oxbridge college in miniature.

When Thomasine died in 1512, her will left the school to the discretion of her relation John Dinham of Wortham as 'he knoweth my mynde'. The school was

initially successful and valued by the community, but its chantry role fell foul of the new religious practices after Henry VIII's Reformation. In 1547, ten-year old Edward VI came to the throne with the reforming Duke of Somerset as his regent or Lord Protector. A 1548 Commission reported that the school was 'now utterly decayed by reason that it standeth in a desolate place and farre from the Market for the provision of the said Schollers'. At the decree of the Lord Protector, it was merged with one in Launceston.

From 1549-1725 the buildings were owned by the Prideau family, who sold them in the early 18th century to Thomas Pitt, first Lord Londonderry. His sister Lucy married the first Earl of Stanhope in the early 18th century, and the property came through her to the Stanhopes. The 7th Earl of Stanhope sold it in 1910, together with his Holsworthy estate. Mr Colwill, from whom Landmark bought it, had lived at the College all his life, as had two generations of the Colwills before him. Over the years, the buildings that remain of the former College had been partially demolished to suit changing uses, its materials used for other village buildings, but enough survives of the College to give us some idea of the imposing group that stood on the site in the reign of Edward VI.

Unfortunately there is nothing to suggest the form of the Tudor roof, floor beams and screen of the original building, but it is probable that they were as those at Wortham, Trecarrell and Cotehele, all buildings in the locality which were extended at the end of the fifteenth century or beginning of the next. The present roof trusses are not difficult to date and are of rough carpentry which the builders always intended to conceal above the ceiling, but it is probable that the first floor was inserted and the roof replaced in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century when the windows on the north elevation were also changed to wood casements and a culm oven built into the medieval fireplace.

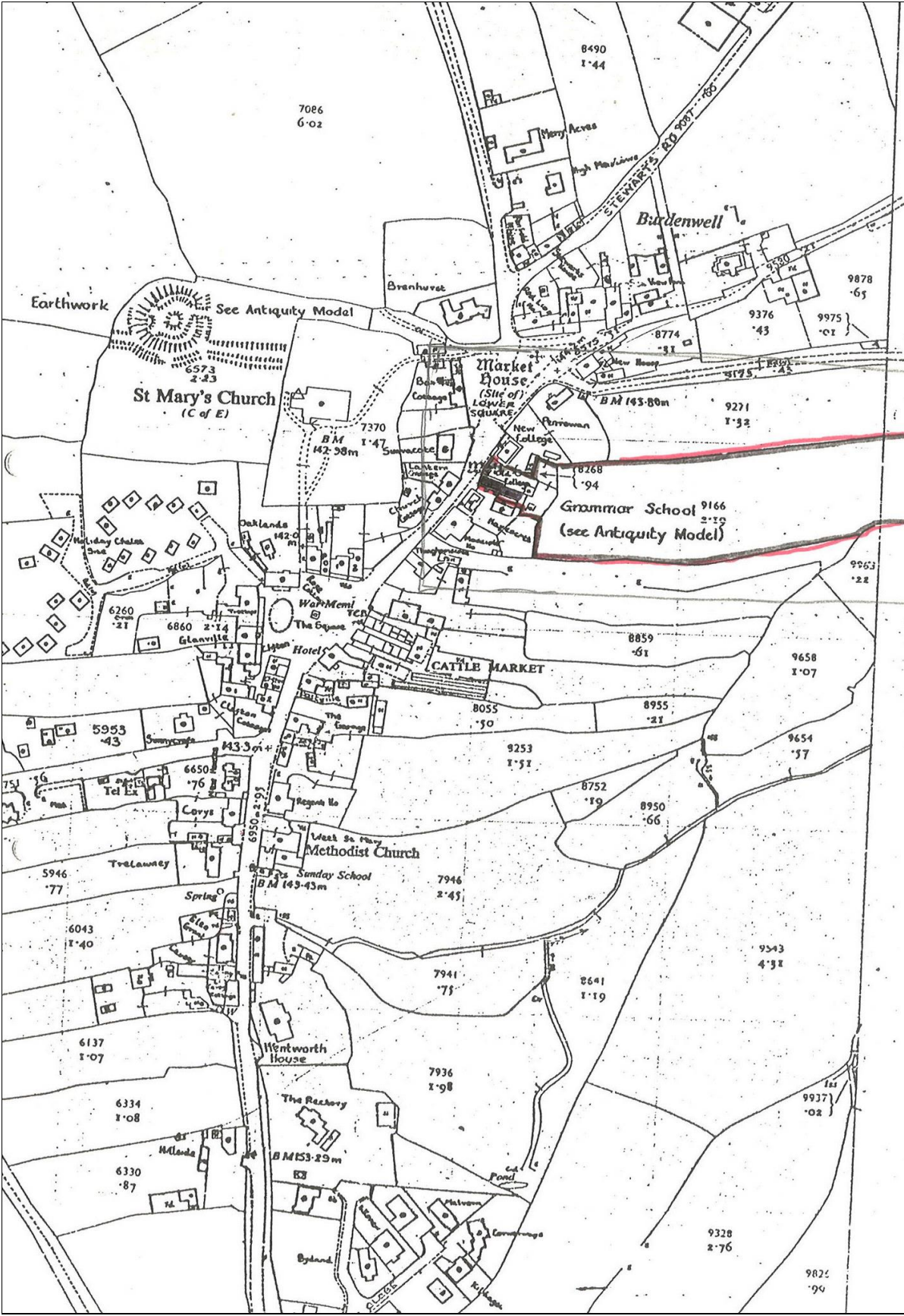
The Landmark Trust has removed the more recent partitions and staircase, repaired and reinstated those features of the early buildings which survived, and altered the accommodation so that people may come and stay, and enjoy the atmosphere of the College. The College consists of a large sitting-room, dining room and kitchen on the ground floor with a bathroom and three bedrooms on the first floor. The first floor was replaced slightly below the seventeenth-century level, so that the heights of the first floor window sills on the north side are still convenient, but because the original turret stairs were dangerously steep it was decided to lower the landing to about 2 feet it was merged with one in Launceston below the bottom of the granite jambs of the mediaeval arched doorway at the head of the stairs. The roof timbers were repaired and the roof covering of used rag slates was laid to continue the colour, texture and scale of other roofs on the neighbourhood.

Background history – Thomasine Bonaventure

Week is an ancient settlement, as is evident from the prehistoric earthworks lying to the west of the present village. It was recorded in Domesday Book under the name of Wihc and valued at thirty shillings yearly. The word 'week' or 'wick', which forms a part of so many English place names, is an Anglo-Saxon form of the Latin vicus, or 'village', and Week would have acquired the additional 'St Mary' (from the dedication of its church) to distinguish it from other villages with similar names nearby.

At the time when Domesday Book was compiled (1086, or thereabouts) the manor was owned by Robert, Count of Mortain, a Norman nobleman who was one of the greatest landowners in England after the King, and the owner of around two-thirds of Cornwall. He acquired considerable amounts of land and property that had previously been in possession of the Church, and was immensely wealthy. The Count's tenant is named simply as Richard, a man who held about eleven manors of the Count in Cornwall, and was a notable horse-breeder. Little else seems to have transpired in this remote village between this record and the time of Thomasine.

Thomasine Percival's maiden name was Bonaventure. She was born in the village of Week St Mary in 1450 and a legend has it that she was a shepherdess on Greena Moor. At this time Cornish sheep were of considerable interest to London wool merchants: although they were small and their wool of correspondingly poor quality, Cornish wool was exempted from the export duty, and the later total export ban, that was applied in the late Middle Ages to protect the English wool industry.



The map of Week St Mary shows ancient field patterns that still hint at medieval strip farming

London merchants with Continental connections, therefore, would have made regular rounds of the moorland farms as part of the routine of their business. This gave rise to a legend surrounding Thomasine's good fortune in life. One such wool merchant was Richard Bunsby. According to Richard Carew's *Survey of Cornwall* (1602), published less than a century after Thomasine's death:

[Week St Mary] was the birth-place of Thomasine Bonaventure, I know not, whether by descent [descent] or event so called: for whils in her girlish age she kept sheepe on the fore-remembered moore, it chanced, that a London merchant passing by, saw her, heeded her, liked her, and begged herof her poore parents, and carried her to his home. In passage of time, her mistress was summoned by death to appeare in the other world, and her good thewes [strong constitution?], no less her seemely personage, so much contented her master, that he advanced her from a servant to a wife, and left her a wealthy widow. Her second marriage befell with one Henry Galle, her third and last with Sir John Percival, Lord Mair of London, whom she also overlived.

And to shew, that virtue as well bare a part in the desert [her good fortune, i.e.], a fortune in the meanes of her preferment she employed the whole residue of her life and last widowhood, to works no lesse bountiful than charitable: namely, repaying of high waies, building of bridges, endowing of maydens, relieving of prisoners, feeding and apparreling the poore &c. Amongst the rest, at this S. Mary Wike, she founded a chantrye and free-schoole, together with faire lodgings, for the schoolemasters, schollers and officers, and added twenty pounds on yeerely revenue, for supporting incident charges; wherein as the best of her wish was holy, so God blessed the same with al wished success, for divers the best gent. Sones of Devon and Cornwall were there virtuously trained up in both kinds of divine and humane learning. Under one Cholwell, an honest and religious teacher which caused the neighbours so much the rather and more to rewe, that a petty smack onely of Popery, opened a gap to the repression of the whole by the statute made in Edw. the 6 rainge touching the suppression of chanteries.¹

This romantic story of Thomasine's meeting with Richard and their eventual marriage, followed by the improvement of her position and fortune by two later marriages to wealthy City men, dates back at least to 1555 and has been re-told

¹ A chantry was a religious foundation for the saying of prayers for the souls of the dead, a practice outlawed at the Reformation and a useful brush to tar many an institution judged too loyal to the old Catholic religion.

by many other Cornish writers, including Parson Hawker (his vivid narrative appears in his *Footprints of Former Men in Far Cornwall*, which is on the College bookshelf). It appears with various degrees of embellishment online, with several different lifespans allotted to Thomasine, even though her will shows she died in 1512.

Sadly there seems scant basis for this charming tale of how Thomasine met her first husband, and nor was she of entirely humble origins. She was well connected on her mother's side since her mother and aunt were heiresses of a John Westlake, who was armigerous (entitled to a coat of arms, marking him of gentry status). Thomasine's maternal aunt, Elizabeth Westlake, was married to Nicholas Dinham of an important Devonshire family, the Dinhams of Lifton. Thomasine herself had two sisters and two brothers, John and Richard. John was chosen mayor of Launceston in 1512. Richard is probably the Oxford Graduate who became and rector of the parish church in Chelsfield in Kent from 1463 and a canon of Chichester from 1478. Their parents, Joan and John Bonaventure, were buried in Chelsfield and Thomasine's will included a cope, vestments, a chalice and a mass book to the value of £20 for the church at Chelsfield 'whereas my fader and moder lie buried.'

That Thomasine was not of lowly status does not rule out her going to London as a servant, albeit one of a gentler status within a wealthy household. More recent research² has revealed from the survival of the wills of Thomasine's three husbands that all were in fact London tailors, and that Henry Galle (d.1466) was her first, rather than second, husband. London tailors had wide-ranging contacts in the fifteenth century although none have been proven for Galle in Cornwall. More likely is that Galle met Thomasine through her brother Richard's friendship with Richard Norden, a prominent tailor, a master of the Guild of Merchant Taylors and another Lord Mayor of London, and a mutual friend of Galle's.

² For a synthesis, see Matthew Davies, 'Dame Thomasine Percyvale, "The Maid of Week" (d. 1512)' in C. M. Barron & A. F. Sutton, *Medieval London Widows* (1994)

The network of relationships is revealed through executorships and requests for prayers so it was perhaps for service in Norden's household that she left Cornwall for London. Both Galle and Thomasine's next husband, tailor Thomas Barnaby (d. 1467 – theirs was a very brief marriage) were parishioners of St Dunstan in the West in Fleet Street, a parish fully of wealthy tailors and potential customers. The 1460s saw several bad years of plague or 'sweating sickness' in London so perhaps both husbands fell victim to it. Both were at relatively early stages in their careers. Galle at least ran a very successful business: the household accounts of Sir John Howard, later duke of Norfolk, reveal that Galle's workshop was the largest single supplier of clothes to the Howard household in the mid-1460s, continuing to supply after Galle's death in 1466. Galle left Thomasine cloth to the value of £100 from his workshop, as well as the terms of his apprentices and £100 in cash, which might all suggest that he thought his widow capable of keeping the business going. At least one of Galle's apprentices duly transferred to Barnaby's service once Thomasine remarried. She was sole beneficiary in both their wills, fairly standard for middle-ranking craftsmen.

The date of Thomasine's next marriage to John Percyvale, another tailor and future alderman and mayor of London, is not known. Percyvale hailed from Macclesfield in Cheshire and may not have begun his career as a tailor – there is no record of his apprenticeship. His entry to the Guild in 1468 may have come about in part through his service in civic roles that brought contact with the tailors (he was serjeant-at-mace, an official who precedes the Lord Mayor, in 1457). Marriage to the wealthy widow of two tailors may also have helped with his admission to the livery company. In 1485 Percyvale was elected master of the Tailors Company, and this also enabled livery membership for Thomasine as his wife. In the same year, he became an alderman for his ward, part of the body that enacted the City's laws alongside the mayor. In 1487 he was elected sheriff and in 1487 was knighted by Henry VII.

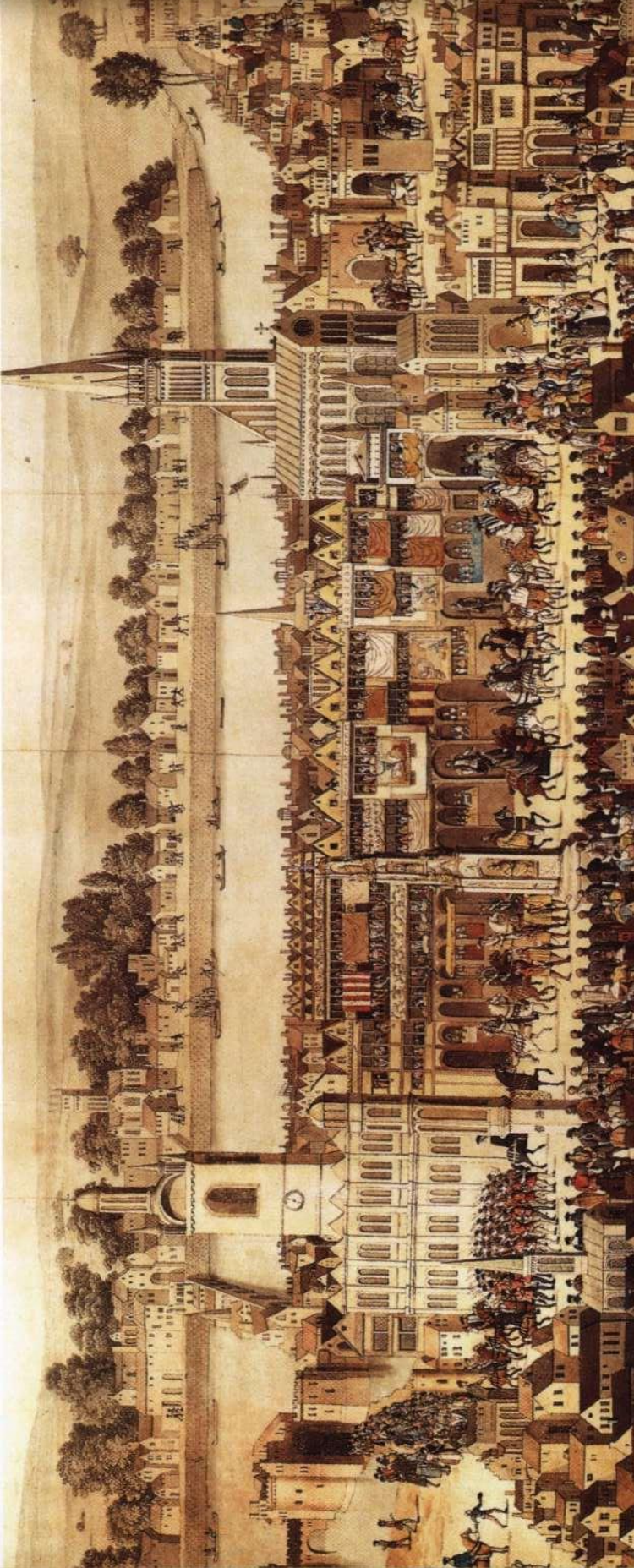


A late-medieval tailor's workshop.

Percyvale was nominated for mayor as early as 1489 and again in 1493, when *Great Chronicle of London* recorded that he failed due to the 'hote apetyte which he had yerely to that office', a reservation that was repeated when he was finally elected to the office in 1498, apparently with the support of the king.

John Percyvale was clearly an ambitious man, the first tailor to become mayor. He must have been part of the rise in ascendancy for the craft as a whole, which culminated in 1503 when Henry VII granted them with a charter that allowed them to call themselves *Merchant Tailors*, with new rights and privileges that other companies complained threatened their own. Percyvale also had significant other interests, for example gaining licenses to export 500 quarters of corn and import 100 gallons of wine from Gascony.

Thomasine was a very wealthy woman when Percyvale died in 1503, appointing the archbishop of York as one of his executors. That the archbishop of Canterbury took on the same role for Thomasine at her death is indication of the elevated circles these rich merchants moved in. Soon after Percyvale's death, she was 'pardoned' a forced loan of £1,000 (almost £700,000 in today's money) imposed on her by the government at a time when Henry VII was at his most rigorously parsimonious. The couple also owned property in London, enough for Percyvale to leave twelve messuages in Lombard Street to the Tailors' Company to found a chantry in St Mary Woolnuth, augmented by five more from Thomasine five years later to increase the priests' salaries and establish an anniversary for herself. The Company was able to derive a decent profit from the rents, even after the salaries had been paid. From Thomasine's own will we learn that she lived in a 'mansion' on Lombard Street, where her servants were allowed to live for up to six months after her death provided they 'lye in the grete chamber over the gate and none other chamber'.



Lombard Street in the sixteenth century, on the day of a grand procession. Thomasine's life in London was very different from her early years in Cornwall.

That the house had a gatehouse further reinforces a sense of her status, and she also had a private chaplain, Robert Wolf, to whom she left her 'litell salt of silver and gilt which I was wont to be served with daily at my borde.' He also got an annual salary of £10 for seven years, to sing mass daily for Thomasine's, her husbands' and her parents' souls.

Her interest in education is also apparent in the active role she took in education of five poor children within her own household, three boys 'which I have brought up out of almes' and two girls, 'maide children which I have also brought up.' Her will disposed that all five should have 'mete [food] drynke & lerning' to an age when they could be apprenticed or found a position by her executors. At twenty-one the girls were to receive 10 marks (probably towards marriage) and the boys five marks. As Thomasine had no recorded offspring, they were effectively her own adopted children.

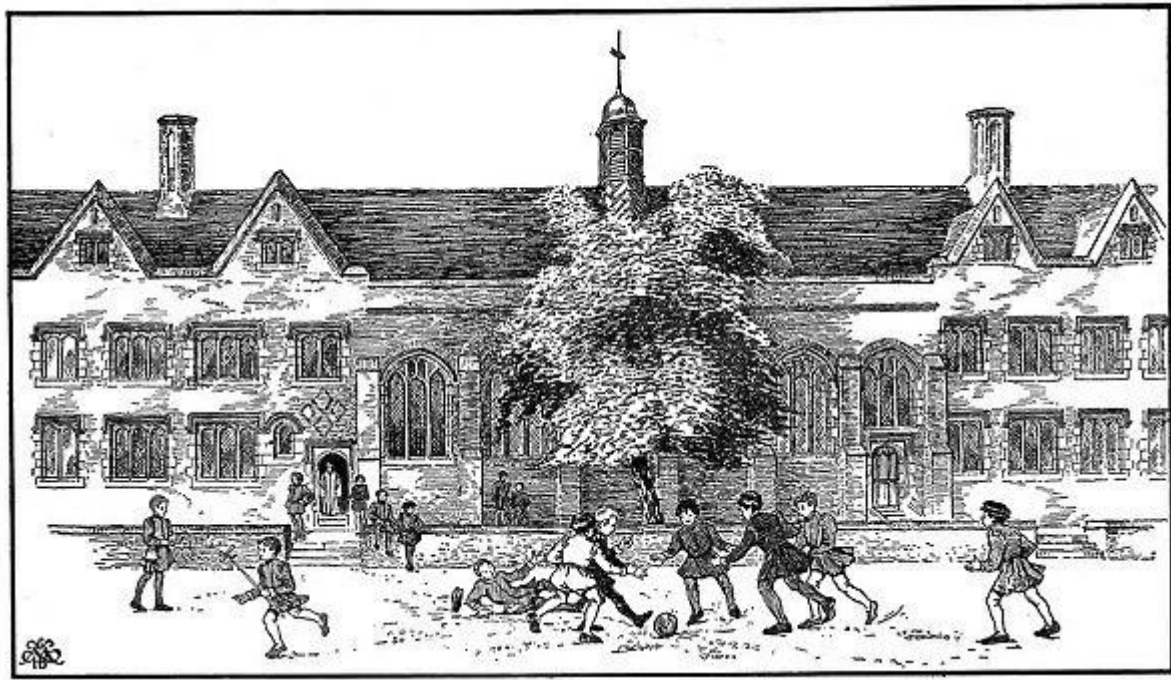
Percyvale's own school was founded soon after his death in 1503, a chantry school in Macclesfield. He claimed to have been 'much stirred' to this project by his executor Thomas Savage, archbishop of York and a fellow Cheshire man. In Macclesfield, averred Percyvale, there were 'copyous plenty of Children ... and vertue right fewe Techers and scolemaisters'. Its founding deed expresses his concern that 'many children for the lak of such techyng and draught in conyng [learning] fall to lldenness And so consequently live disolately [dissolutely] all their daies.' The scholars in his school were to pray daily for his soul. The school was first established in the Savage Chapel of Macclesfield Parish Church, only to be threatened by the Duke of Northumberland's closure of chantries under Edward VI. However, Edmund Sutton, nephew of one of Sir John's former friends, convinced the Duke of the need for a school in the town. It was re-founded under a new charter in 1552 as 'the free Grammar School of King Edward VI', today an independent school, King's School Macclesfield.

At this date the foundation of schools was still relatively unusual, and Thomasine is the earliest non-noble founder of one; the only other female founders before 1506 appear to have been the king's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, who announced her intention to build a free school for the general public of Wimborne in 1497, founded at her death in 1509 as Wimborne Grammar School; and, much earlier in 1384, Lady Katherine Berkeley in Wootton-under-Edge. Overseeing the execution of the provisions of her husband's will must have served Thomasine well in setting up her own school, and she used many phrases from the Macclesfield deed of foundation in her own (dated 10th July 1506).

She too cited a lack of teachers that led children to 'fall to idleness and diverse other vices' and a need for priests for the parish church. Nineteen feoffees (trustees) were appointed, of whom four were to act as governors for appointing the priest who was to be schoolmaster and other employees. As at Macclesfield, the priest was to be 'sufficiently learned in Gramer Graduated in one of the universities of Oxford or Cambriege So that he be a maister of Arte or a maister of Grammar atte least.' His duties were to teach the children, free of charge, and to say mass daily along with other services, praying for her Thomasine's soul and the souls of her parents, her three husbands and their parents, in the parish church of St Mary. Accommodation was to be provided for both master and his scholars. Interestingly, the language used for the scholars is gender neutral making it unclear whether girls too were allowed to attend. The charity commissioners of 1546 recorded with similar ambiguity that 'they that list may sett their children to borde there & have them taught freely.'

Her foundation deed drawn up, Thomasine took her time over opening her school or college (more or less synonyms at the time), making sure first that its endowment was secure. She had already made a start: in May 1506 she bought the manor of Simpson and 200 acres of land in Holsworthy, Devon for £220. The lands were handed over to three trustees, who were to hand them over to her feoffees at her death. On 6th November 1508, Thomasine secured a royal licence

for the foundation of a chantry school in Week St Mary and on 1st December 1508, granted its first schoolmaster, John Andrew, possession of the manor of Simpson. Andrew came with good credentials and was himself an example of the educational path such schools enabled. He had been educated at Winchester College (founded 1382 by Bishop William of Wykham to address the shortage of priests after the Black Death) and then at New College, Oxford, and then returned to Winchester as an usher or assistant teacher. Thomasine's school deed also allowed for a the manciple (who looked after the provisions) and a laundress.



Tudor schoolboys letting off steam (here at Birkhampsted Grammar School, Herts, founded in 1541).

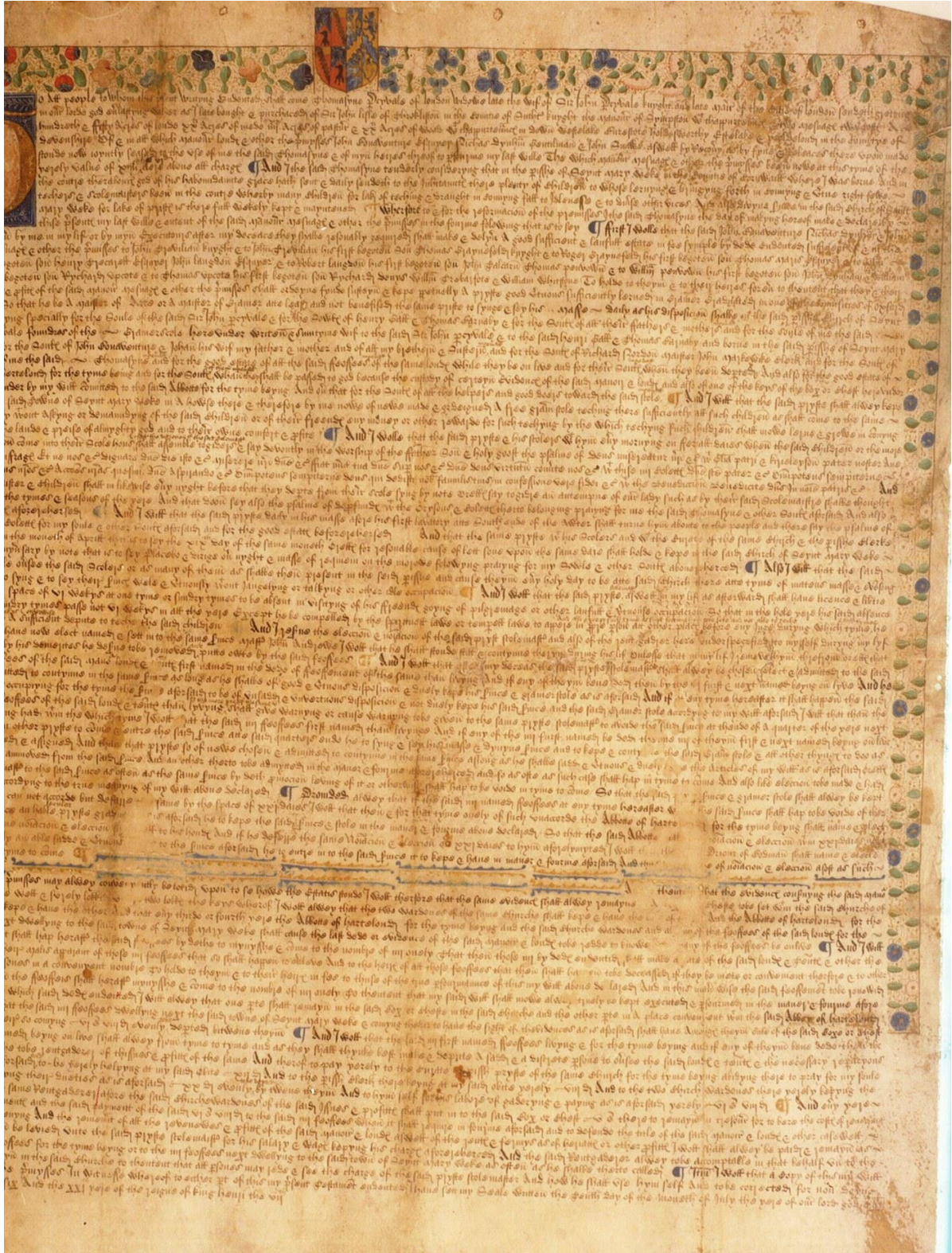


This is 'Shakespeare's school room' at the (renamed) King Edward VI's School in Stratford-upon-Avon, restored in 2016. The school was endowed in 1482 by Thomas Jolyffe, a chaplain of the Guild of the Holy Cross, a religious guild that also took on civic responsibility. This schoolroom was housed within the Guildhall, which contains rare wall paintings of images associated with the Guild, suppressed for religious reasons under Edward VI. As in so many other cases across the country, the monarch gave his own name to the school instead of its founder's.

The College schoolroom was no doubt a smaller version of a similar set up, the scholars seated at small desks and the master instructing from his own larger chair and desk at one end of the room. It may also have had wall paintings of some kind.

This deed, astonishingly, is still in existence and you can see a reproduction of it here in the College (at the time of writing it hangs on the wall above the kitchen fireplace). The photograph shows the illuminated Deed of Endowment of a Chantry, Obit and Grammar School at Week St Mary by Dame Thomasine Percival, dated 10th July 1506. It is surprisingly easy to decipher, but it can also be read in ordinary print in P L Hull's paper, reprinted from the Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall, 1973, page 43, which is on the bookshelves. The deed has something of a history of its own. In 1972, its provenance still obscure, it came up for sale at Sotheby's. The buyer intended it to go to the United States, and therefore it had to come before the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art. They refused to let it go. It is now in the county record office in Truro (as MS AD.405).

At the same time, building work must have been going on. What remains of The College today is only a fragment; originally there would have been dormitories, a refectory and other service buildings around a courtyard, almost like a miniature monastery. Today's Landmark would have been built as a conventional medieval open hall with screens passage and service rooms beyond, and was probably the hall rather than the schoolroom itself, rather like a miniature version of those that survive in Oxbridge colleges. Unfortunately there was nothing left to suggest the form of the Tudor roof, floor beams and screen of the original building, but it is probable that they were as those at Wortham, Trecarrell and Cotehele, all buildings in the locality which were extended at the end of the fifteenth century or beginning of the next. elevation were also changed to wood casements and a culm oven built into the medieval fireplace.



The foundation deed of Thomasine's school,

The present roof trusses are not difficult to date and are of rough carpentry which the builders always intended to conceal above the ceiling, but it is probable that the first floor was inserted and the roof replaced in the late 17th or early eighteenth century, when the windows on the north.

The school was up and running, then, by the end of 1508. Thomasine made her own will in the same year, perhaps fearing she had not long to live, but she continued to train apprentices, bring up and educate her alms-children and run her large household on Lombard Street for another four years. Her will left her chantry and the grammar school to his discretion of her cousin John Dinham of Wortham Manor (another Landmark property - John had married Thomasine's niece, Margaret Westmanton. The will required Dinham 'to see every thinge concernynge the same to be parfite and sure as nigh as he can according as he knoweth my mynde.'

Thomasine was not unique as the wealthy widow of a London guildsman, competently running a large household and elements of his business and leaving her own bequest of plate to the Company of Merchant Taylors ('a standing cup, gilt with a cover and a columbyn on the pomell'). She obviously shared her last husband's interests in education and business and developed them further during her nine years of widowhood. While it was London that provide the context for the wealth and adult life, and for all the Cornish legend of her romantic meeting with her mysterious wool merchant has little basis in fact, she clearly never lost touch with her birth parish and Cornish roots.

The School's demise

Thomasine's school was a success at first, but it would last only fifty years or so before being moved to Launceston, caught up by changes at a national level. The Commissioners of 1546 assigned to enquire into chantries, hospitals, colleges, free chapels and similar establishments were enthusiastic about the school, reporting that 'ye sayde Chauntrye is a great comfort to all ye countries [counties], for yt they yt lyst may sett their children to borde there and have them taught freely, for ye wch purpose there is an house and offices appointed by the foundation accordingly'; and that 'divers of the best gentlemen's sons of Devon and Cornwall were educated there'. William Cholwell is named as the schoolmaster, aided by an unnamed muncible.

By now, however, the practice of saying prayers for the souls of the dead had been outlawed by Henry VIII's recast Protestant regime. In the years immediately after Thomasine's death, great religious change was afoot throughout Europe, whose echoes were heard even in remote Cornwall. Concern had long been expressed about the integrity of the Catholic Church, whose increasing wealth and power had led it into political involvement and a bankrupting of its spiritual life.

In Germany, Martin Luther and others mounted a vigorous attack on the papacy, and in particular the corruption and abuses within the system. For example, the reformers strongly opposed the notorious 'indulgences' system, whereby the faithful were told that payments made to the Church might free them, or their departed friends, from the pains of purgatory: the Pope, declared Luther, had no authority over purgatory. The new Protestant religion also asserted that a person found salvation by good deeds in their own lifetime, rather than through the

ongoing intercession of priests through confession and posthumous chantries, (the name itself well encapsulates the medieval practice of chanting prayers).

From this starting-point the Reformation spread rapidly across Europe, but in England it was taken up as much for political as religious considerations. Henry VIII, passionately in love with Anne Boleyn and longing for a son and heir, was infuriated by the Pope's refusal to grant him a divorce from his first wife Catherine of Aragon, who had given him one daughter only. In 1534 he repudiated the authority of the Pope and established the Anglican Church, with himself as its supreme head. He set out on a programme of religious reform: in the years that followed the English monasteries and abbeys were dissolved, and their lands and property were confiscated by the Crown and sold.

In 1547, Henry died and was succeeded on the throne by his ten-year old son Edward VI, under the regency of the fiercely Protestant Lord Protector, Edward Howard, Duke of Somerset. Suppression of the chantries now followed the dissolution of the monasteries, including chantry schools where religion and education were inextricably mixed. In 1548 a less sympathetic Commission endorsed Cholwell as 'a man well learned and a greate setter forthe of Gods worde' but reported that the school at Week St Mary was 'now utterly decayed by reason that it standeth in a desolate place and farre from the Market for the provision of the said Schollers'.

However, it is not clear that Richard Carew's 'petty smack onely of Popery' was alone responsible for the school's closure. Apparently, it was the citizens who suggested that school be moved to Launceston just seven miles away, as 'thys ys a very meate place to have the foundacion of the said scole removed unto.' So, by order of the Lord Protector, the chantry buildings were seized and sold in

1549. The mancible George Spry and his wife Alice, the laundress, were pensioned off and the rights of the feoffees towards the school and its master taken away. Cholwell was taken on as a teacher (though not master) at Launceston and was still teaching there in 1556. While the schoolmaster's activities in offering prayers for the departed Thomasine and her family was a ritual that displayed conventional piety now outlawed, it seems equally that the high standard of education envisaged at school proved unsustainable in a parish which recorded only 150 at holy communion.

After the school had closed, those of the former College buildings that remained were partially demolished to suit changing functions, and also to provide materials for other village buildings: dressed granite jambs, stone heads and even tympani (the carved stones infilling the space between a lintel and the arch above it) can be seen built into the walls of many neighbouring cottages.



**The alphabet tree from a
German woodcut 1490**

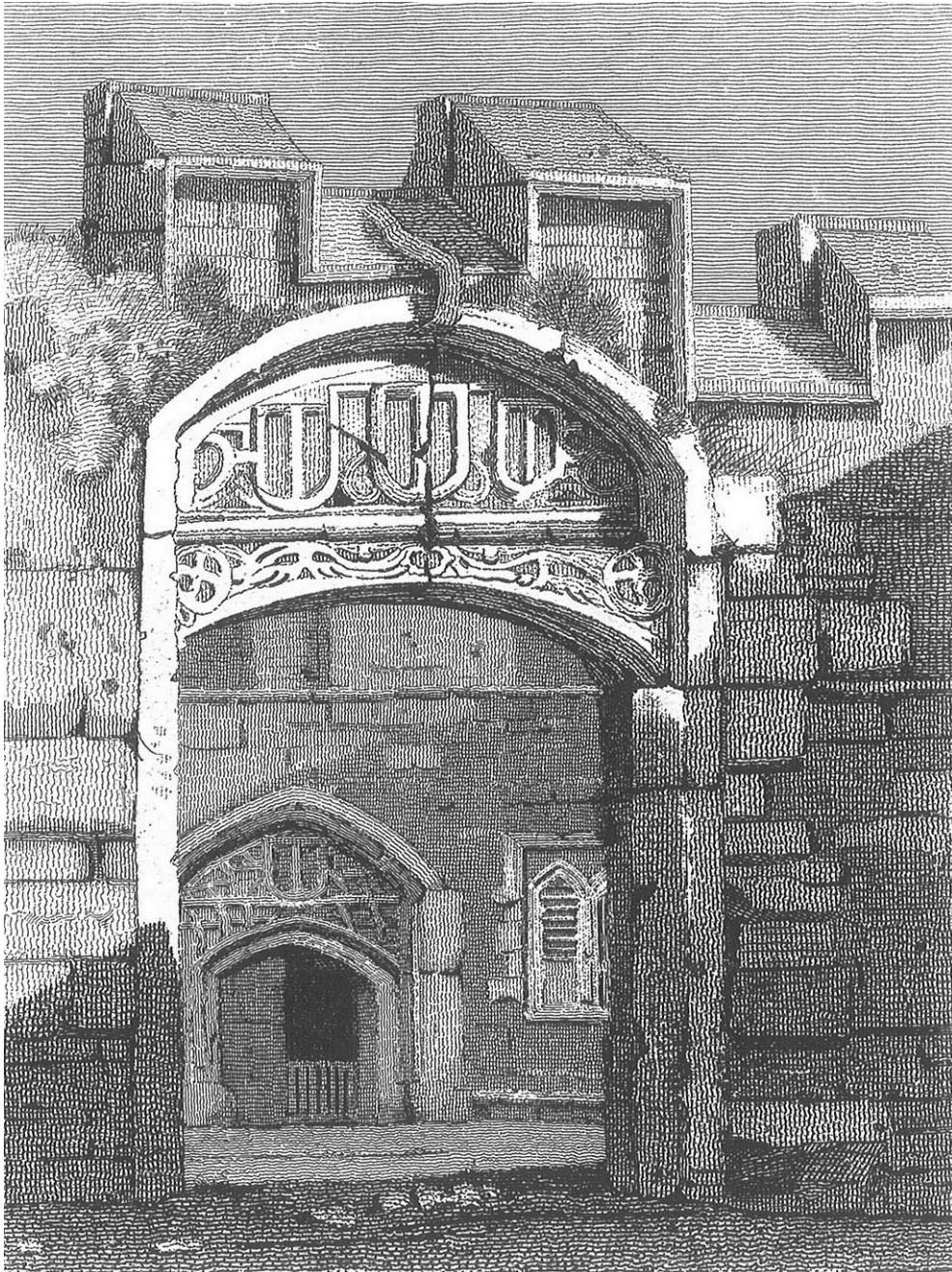
The College after the Reformation

Of the four hundred and twenty odd years between the closing of the school and the Landmark Trust's purchase of the building, we know very little. Between 1549 and 1725 it was owned by the Prideaux family and was part of the Manor of Simpson. A rental of Week St Mary dated 1709 -1728 mentions 'Scholler's Park' and 'dwelling house Schollar's Park', presumably referring to the building we know as the College.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Prideaux family sold up to Thomas Pitt, first Lord Londonderry. In 1712 his sister Lucy married the first Earl of Stanhope, a distinguished soldier and diplomat in the reign of Queen Anne, and the property came through her to the Stanhopes.

In 1811 a property described as 'reputed and taken to be or have been the College and School House and now commonly known by the name of the College Tenement consisting of a Dwelling House Garden, Courtlage and Meadow together with Common of Pasture on Hartham Greenamoor and Westwood', presumably the College and its surrounding land and grazing rights, was leased to a man named William Clifton by one Richard Cory.

By 1838 part at least of the property had passed into the hands of Henry Clifton, who may well have been William's son. In his will, dated 3 March 1838, Henry left his wife Dorothy an annuity of £8 a year and 'the Parlour and Parlour Chamber with the southern part of the garden ... as far as the first apple tree with a House to keep a Pig in ... with a right of way through the House or otherwise to the Court and Garden for the term of her natural life.' His son, another Henry, then a minor, inherited the property on reaching his majority. Henry senior died less than three weeks later, on 22 March.



The original entrance to the courtyard of the college (from a print in the British Museum)

Within two years, young Henry had come of age, and shortly afterwards Dorothy relinquished to her son her life interest in those parts of the property bequeathed to her by her husband's will.

Two years later, Henry and his wife Grace were evidently in need of money, and raised a loan on their property from one Ann King. Ann died in 1843, leaving all her possessions to a man named Edward Shearm. Henry Clifton, perhaps still in need of funds, sold the College to Thomas Hockin Kingdon (who may have been a family friend, for a man named G B Kingdon had witnessed the signatures on William Clifton's lease of 1811). Kingdon paid off Henry's outstanding debt to Shearm and also paid Henry £153.6s.6d. Kingdon's daughter Hannah, the wife of Rev. Thomas Green Simcox, inherited the College on Kingdon's death in 1853. In 1872 Thomas and his wife sold it on to Thomas Prower. Attached to the conveyance was a document executed by two men asserting that Hannah had been examined by them and did fully understand the intent and contents of the conveyance, and that she did freely execute the Deed. One may wonder if there was some suspicion that she might have been acting under pressure from her husband, or perhaps that she was thought not to be of entirely sound mind.

After many changes of ownership, by 1913, the property passed back to the Kingdon family again when it was bought by Clement Boughton Kingdon of Stamford Hill in the county of Cornwall. At the time it was tenanted by a man named John Colewill or Colwill. When Kingdon sold it for £375 in June 1928, the purchaser was John's son George Reginald Colwill. George Colwill lived there for the rest of his life (although in 1950 it is recorded that part of the building was used as a police station). It is pleasant to speculate that there might be some family link between the Colwills and the Tudor schoolmaster Cholwell, but sadly there is absolutely no evidence for such a connection.

Soon after George's death in 1975 a fortuitously passing Landmarker noticed that the College had been put up for sale and was struck by the elaborate granite doorway and the indications that here was a part only of something that had been much larger and of remarkable interest. The sharp-eyed visitor sent a photograph of the building to the Trust, who thereupon bought the house from George's brother Frederick, also of Week St Mary, who was acting as his personal representative. In Landmark's early years, when still funded by our founder's Manifold Trust, such purchases were not uncommon. Today, and as Landmark has no endowment, purchase is generally only possible when external funding is available to cover the acquisition costs.



The College before restoration showing Mr Colwill's shed



The College before its restoration by the Landmark Trust

The College then and now

Enough survives of the College to give us some idea of the imposing group that stood on the site in the reign of Edward VI.

The Courtyard

Originally the College was the central building in a large courtyard. You entered it from the north, ahead of the present front door. In the courtyard was the well, which is contemporary with the house. To your right as you came in you would have seen the castellated wall much the same as it is now, though it was then rather longer. On either side of the door there would have been gothic windows like the ones in the south wall; probably two to the right and several to the left, because the school building extended considerably further to the left than it does now and would have joined up with the west side of the courtyard, where there is now nothing but a farm gate.

The castellated wall has been repointed but not otherwise changed. The little door may perhaps have been the entrance to some very steep stairs leading to the school bell at the top of the wall; but this is by no means certain. One of the stones in the doorway has been dressed the wrong way round; perhaps it came from somewhere else.

In the corner between the wall and the house there used to be a lean-to shed where Mr Colwill, the previous owner, carried on a small seed business and kept his stock. You can see the mark, where it was, on the wall.

The outside view

The similarity of the granite dressings of the windows, with the slightly ogee form of the head of the lights, and the arch of the porch doorway to those at Wortham Manor has already been mentioned. Other details also suggest that the same designer and craftsman were used on the two buildings, possibly under the direction of Thomasine Percival's cousin and heir John Dinham, he who 'knoweth my mynde' according to Thomasine. The granite plinth with the single course of dressed ashlar in brown sandstone immediately above it and the remainder of the walls in coursed freestone, the tympanum over the entrance doorway, the stair turret with its granite quatrefoil window and the lintel of the chimney piece are all features that can be seen in the house at Wortham that John Dinham enlarged in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, probably to provide accommodation for his son William on his marriage. There are similarities, too, between the beautiful granite chimney with its scalloped cap on the south elevation at the College and that at Trecarell, just south of Launceston, which was built at about the same time.

The roof of the College was originally either thatch or else, more likely, small pegged slates. The slates that are on the roof now are what are known locally as 'rag' slates. They are roughly trimmed, the lower ones larger than the rest, and are fixed directly on to the rafters, not on to battens. They were on the building before the Landmark renovation: the builder for the restoration, Mr Barriball, lived next door to the College at the time.



**One of the triple windows in the south wall of the sitting room
(inside and out) before the restoration**



Unfortunately nothing remains to suggest the form of the Tudor roof, floor beams and screen of the original College building, but it is probable that they were similar to those at Wortham, Trecarrell and Cotehele, all buildings in the locality that were extended at the end of the fifteenth century or beginning of the sixteenth. The present roof trusses are not difficult to date and are of rough carpentry that the builders always intended to conceal above the ceiling. It is probable that the first floor was inserted and the roof replaced in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, when the north wall was rebuilt from above the granite plinth and the windows on the north elevation were changed to wood casements (they are typical of a Cornish manor house of that period).

If you walk round the building, look upwards. On the side facing the road, the top of the gable was in a bad state and had to be rebuilt during the renovation. The south side has a very fine chimney stack, beautifully built with a granite chimney, and a rounded wall with a small quatrefoil window containing the staircase. Further along there are two blocked gothic windows; originally these had more of the College behind them, but now they have cart sheds. At one time there must have been a farm building constructed against this wall: you can see the mark where the floor joists went.



The sitting room before restoration



The east bedroom above the kitchen



The passage along the north side of the first floor



The staircase, now gone

Inside the College

The sitting room is the old schoolroom. Originally it was open to the roof, but the ceiling was put in in about 1700, at the same time as the north wall was rebuilt. That ceiling cut across the tops of the gothic windows, and, in order to avoid this, the present ceiling has been made to slope upwards in front of them. The window on the north side furthest from the door was blocked up when the Landmark Trust took over; when it was unblocked, a carved bench end contemporary with the house was found in the window opening. The fireplace has been restored in its original shape. In the seventeenth century a bread oven had been built into it on the left-hand side, and more recently the whole thing had been walled up and a modern fireplace inserted. The old lintel stone was removed, but fortunately the moulded corners were still there and the lintel has been replaced with a beautiful piece of granite from Mr Piper's Quarry, Minions, near Liskeard. Above the fireplace is a relieving arch, which is very typical of early houses in the area. On the ground, the stone surround is as it was originally on the left; on the right it has, for some reason, been pushed nearer to the fire. The floor is slate, which is what the school room floor would have been, though the slates are new.

The kitchen floor is two inches lower than it was originally, as can be seen if you look at the mouldings at the base of the original doorway on to the stairs. The fireplace is a nineteenth-century one in the gothic style, made of Polyphant stone. It replaces an undistinguished modern one.

The first floor was replaced slightly below the seventeenth-century level, to ensure that the heights of the first floor window sills were still convenient. The staircase was originally extremely steep; it probably led to a first floor dormitory

above the present kitchen. In order for Landmarkers to be able to use it safely it had to be rebuilt less steeply; hence the door high up in the wall on the first floor and the little landing. At the time of the renovation the west wall was leaning inwards by about eighteen inches (45 cm) and had to be stabilised by the insertion of a steel framework.

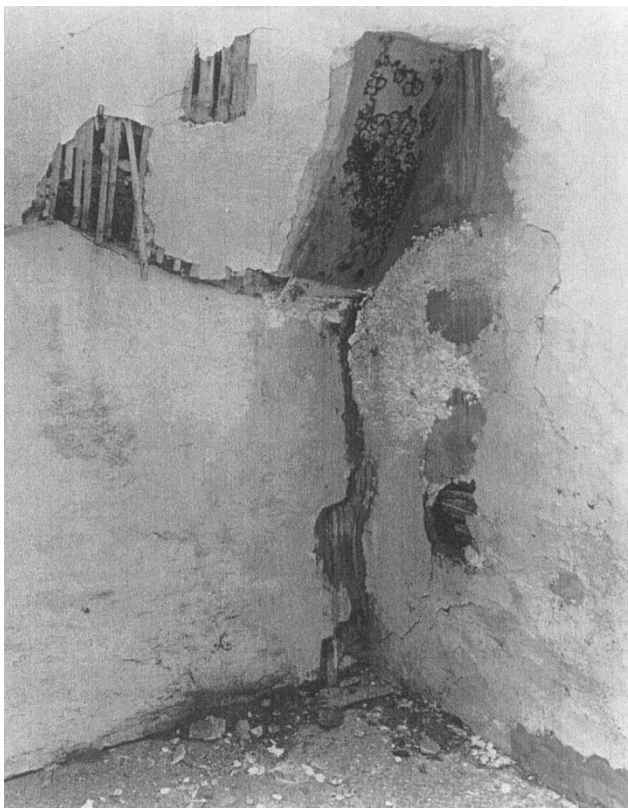
The changes on the first floor can be seen most easily by looking at the 'before' plan (see below); a modern fireplace was taken out of the east bedroom and the partitions were altered.

Neighbouring houses

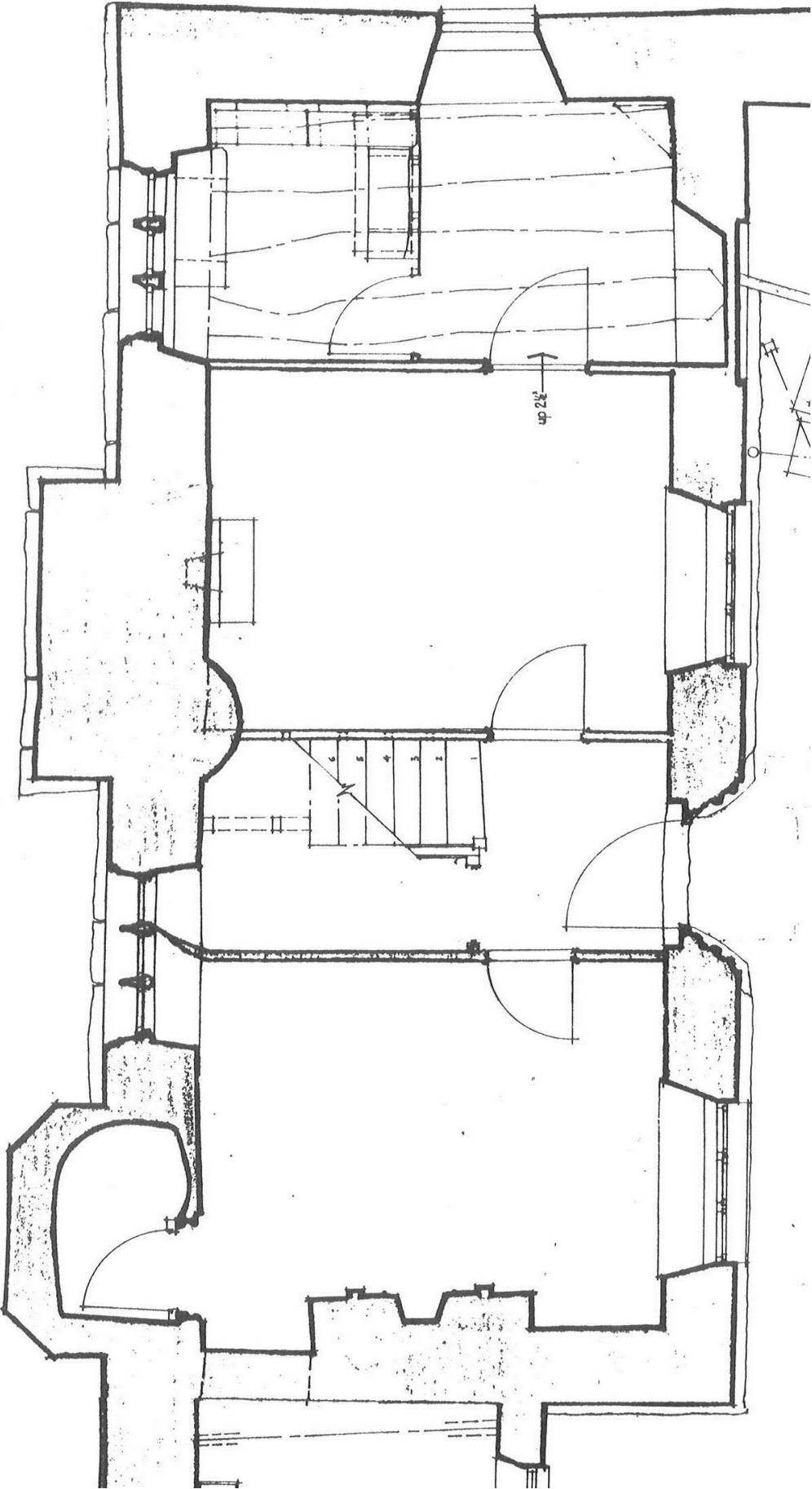
The house behind the College, to the south of it, on the road, dates from the same time and may perhaps have been the school room. The house on the road to the north has stones from the demolished part of the courtyard embedded in its walls, but it is a much later building.



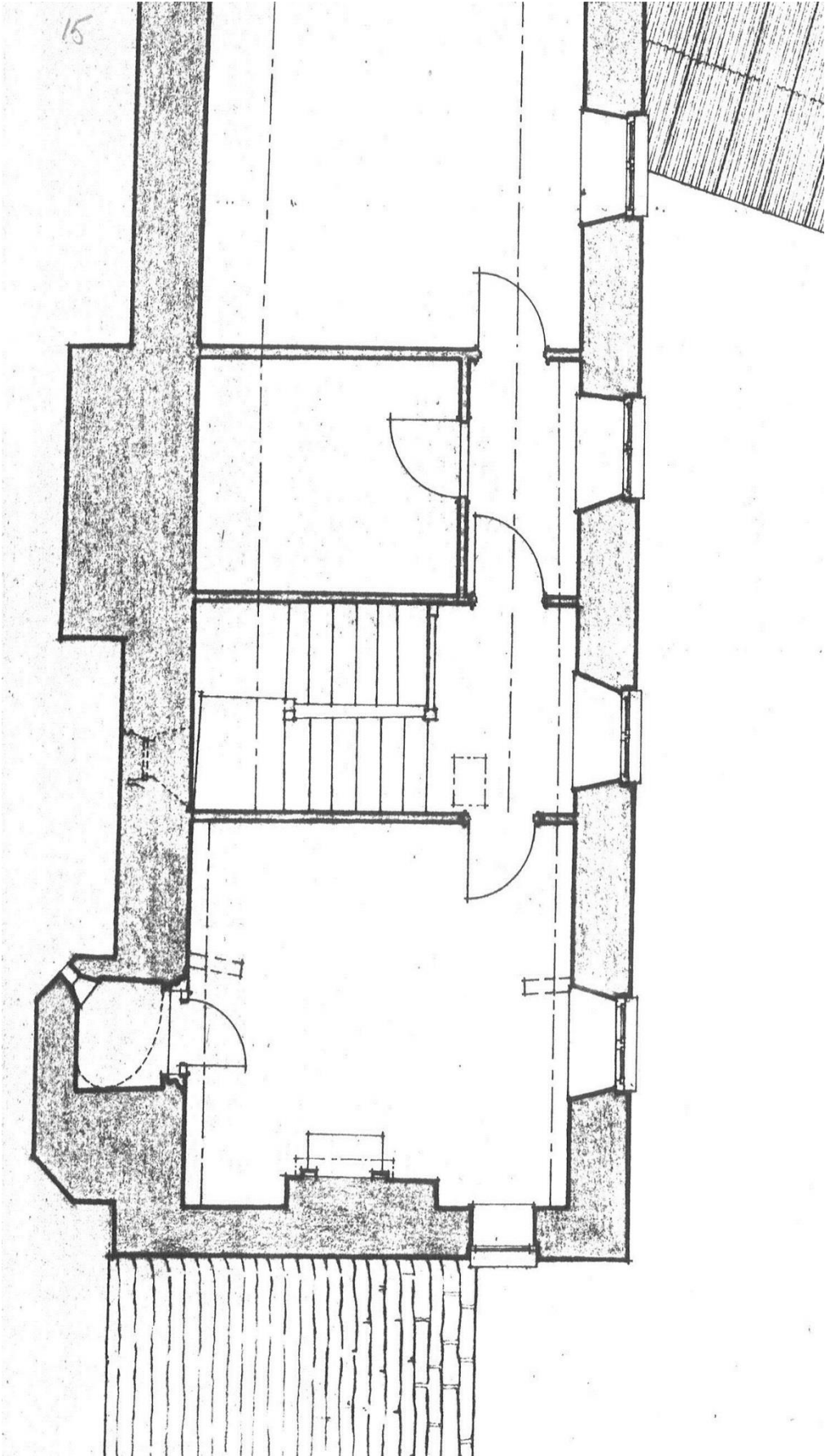
The sitting room fireplace before the partitions were removed during restoration



The bedroom ceiling before restoration: a glimpse of the original building structure



Ground Floor Plan before renovation



First floor plan before renovation

Education in Medieval England

Education has always existed in Britain in some form, and from the fourteenth century onwards England was home to a variety of schools run by parish clerks, religious foundations and craft guilds. But in the early part of the fifteenth century, English education was to some extent in the doldrums. The foundation of Winchester College in 1382 and that of Eton College in 1440, both designed to prepare young men of the upper classes for entry to university, had done little for the children of the working classes and tradesmen.

The early informal parish schools offered a basic education to children of ordinary people, and taught them to read, to learn prayers and psalms, and 'the Ten Commandments, the seven deadly sins and the seven sacraments'. Teaching a pupil to write also involved teaching him how to use a penknife to cut a quill so that it exactly suited his hand, and how to adjust the thickness of the ink to suit his needs ('piss in it if it be too dry'). Some did more: one Yorkshire school also taught accountancy, in the belief that local youths were better suited to worldly employment than to the priesthood. Literacy increased steadily from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, and the English language steadily began to replace Latin in legal and official documents, and this was said to be due to the shortage of competent 'masters of grammar'.

Grammar schools like the College, on the other hand, drew their pupils from the more prosperous sections of society, and expected them to be able to read and write before they were admitted. Some had a preparatory school attached where children could acquire these skills if their parents were unable to teach them. They taught their pupils Latin and Greek in preparation for university entrance (French, once part of the curriculum, had died out during the

fourteenth century) and became a kind of finishing school for the sons of gentry. Little formal education was available for their daughters.

Schooling was not in general free (the College was an exception), nor was it particularly easy. Classes were large and might begin at six in the morning and continue until six in the evening with short breaks for food. Holidays were brief and the masters believed whole-heartedly in corporal punishment.

This two-class system of education: primary education in local vernacular schools, and a preparation for higher education through the grammar schools, has remained astonishingly persistent in England through the subsequent centuries.

By the time the College was founded, schooling was in a state of flux. Gutenberg's invention in the middle of the fifteenth century of a printing press that used moveable type (a machine that remained almost unaltered in principle until the late twentieth century), and the subsequent explosion of printed books, had revolutionised the classroom. (The author of the anonymous Latin textbook *Exercitium Puerorum Grammatiale*, published in Cologne in 1491 and long in use in European schools, notes how at last each student could have his own book and the teacher and pupils no longer had to scream themselves hoarse yelling out the text: the comment provides one of the very few contemporary clues as to the nature of life in a classroom of the time.)

The Renaissance, or rebirth of learning, had begun in Europe in the mid-fourteenth century and swept across the continent in the following 100 years. With the rise of humanist thought, scholars had become increasingly interested in the Greek and Latin classics rather than the Bible and theological

commentaries upon it, and with the development of learning through understanding rather than by memorising (the practice in many of the religious schools). The classics moreover provided educationalists with their models of literary style.

One of the greatest scholars of the Renaissance was Desiderius Erasmus (born in the Netherlands in about 1469, died 1536), an educational reformer whose influence became particularly strong and gradually spread across Europe. He was the first editor of the New Testament, and the close friend of Thomas More. He saw knowledge as falling into two principal divisions: the knowledge of 'truth' and the knowledge of 'words'. Whilst the former was the more important of the two, the latter had to be acquired first, in order fully to appreciate the former. It was, he believed, easier to acquire a knowledge of 'words', i.e. grammar, by studying Latin; it was easier to learn Latin and Greek side by side than to try and study them independently, he said. He also viewed the teaching of manners as an essential part of education. He wrote extensively upon his educational views, both in philosophical terms and in homely language too, in the widest sense. Parts of his *Colloquia* are reproduced in this album. He never forgot his own schooling for the severe discipline intended, he said, to break a boy's spirit.

He was clear, however, that the classical culture he so valued was likely to benefit only the children of the leisured upper classes, though religious instruction should be available to all. But the masses, he believed, could have no part in higher education since their aim was to acquire occupational skills only. (He had no use for democracy, it should be said.) The Reformation, led by Martin Luther (1483-1546) laid renewed stress on education, but with a different emphasis. Luther believed strongly that all Christians, women as well

as men, must learn to read and understand the Bible for themselves, and hence needed to be able to read the Bible in their own language. In his sermon on *'Keeping Children in School'*, he warned parents that *"God has not given you your children and the means to support them simply so that you may do with them as you please You have been earnestly commanded to raise them, for God's service."* Even children who had to work for their parents in trade or in the fields should, he declared, be enabled to attend school, even if only for a few hours a day.

Like Erasmus, he remembered his own school experiences with loathing; in 1524 he wrote with relief of the progress that had been achieved:

'Today, schools are not what they once were, a hell and purgatory in which we were tormented with casualibus and temporalibus, and yet learned less than nothing despite all the flogging, trembling, anguish and misery.'" He argued for more funding for schools and libraries, for financial support for needy students and for hardworking teachers to be adequately paid. "When schools flourish," he averred, "things go well and the church is secure. Let us make more doctors and masters. ... When we are dead, where are others [to take our place] if there are no schools? God has preserved the church through schools.'

It was against this background that, only a year after Luther's death, the Chantries Act was passed in England, now a Protestant kingdom (the term 'Protestantism' was itself less than 20 years old). It was its sponsors' intention not merely to confiscate the properties and estates of the chantry foundations, but that these funds should be diverted expressly for use in education, and this principle may have underlain the move of the grammar school from Weck to Launceston, though whether the transfer of funds ever actually took place is not known.



Compulsory education – a German illustration 1516

Annexes

Erasmus: the Colloquia

These essays, published in 1511, summarised some of Erasmus' educational views. The following brief extracts are a sample of the 'lighter' passages:

The School-Master's Admonitions

You seem not to have been bred at Court, but in a cow-stall; you behave yourself so clownishly. A Gentleman ought to behave himself like a Gentleman. As often or whenever anyone that is your Superior speaks to you, stand straight, pull off your Hat, and look neither doggedly, surlily, saucily, malapertly nor unsettledly, but with a staid, modest, pleasant Air in your Countenance, and a bashful Look fix'd upon the Person who speaks to you; your Feet set close one by t'other; your Hands without Action: Don't stand, titter, totter, first standing upon one Foot and then upon another, nor playing with your Fingers, biting your Lip, scratching your Head or picking your Ears: Let your Cloaths be put on tight and neat, that your whole Dress, Air, Motion and Habit, may bespeak a modest and bashful Temper..

Don't be a prittle prattle, nor Prate apace, nor be a--minding any Thing but what is said to you. If you are to make an Answer, do it in few Words, and to the Purpose, every now and then prefacing with some Title of Respect, and sometimes use a Title of Honour, and now and then make a Bow, especially when you have done speaking: nor do you go away without asking Leave, or being bid to go.....

When you speak, don't speak fast, stammer or speak in your Throat, but use yourself to pronounce your Words distinctly and clearly. If you pass by any

ancient Person, a Magistrate, a Minister or Doctor, or any Person of Figure, be sure to pull off your Hat, and make your Reverence. ... When you are at a Feast, behave yourself cheerfully, but always so as to remember what becomes your Age: Serve yourself last; and if any nice Bit be offer'd you, refuse it modestly; but if they press it upon you, take it, and thank the Person, and cutting off a bit of it, offer the rest either to him that gave it to you, or to him that sits next to you. If any Body drinks to you merrily, thank him, and drink moderately. ... Look pleasantly upon him that speaks to you, and be sure not to speak until you are spoken to. If any Thing that is obscene be said, don't laugh at it, but keep your Countenance, as though you did not understand it. ... Be courteous to your Companions that are your Inferiors; traduce no Body; don't be a Blab with your tongue, and by this Means you'll get a good Character, and gain friends without Envy.

Courtesy in Saluting

It is courteous to make Use of a Title of Relation or Affinity, unless when it carries something of a Reflection along with it, then indeed it is better not to use such titles, tho' proper, but rather some that are more engaging, as when we call a Mother in Law, Mother; a Son in Law, Son; ... a Sister's Husband, Brother; a Brother's Wife, Sister. And the same we should do in Titles, either of Age or of Office. For it will be more acceptable to salute an ancient Man by the Name of Father, or venerable Sir, than by the Surname of Age. God save you Lieutenant, God save you Captain, but not God save you Hosier or Shoe--maker. ... Old Men salute Young Men that are Strangers to them by the Name of Sons, and young Men again salute them by the name of Fathers or Sirs.

Scholastic Studies: The Boys going into the School (a dialogue)

A: *What makes you run so?*

B: *What makes a Hare run before the Dogs, as they use to say?*

A: *What Proverb is this?*

B: *Because unless I am there in Time, before the Bill is called over, I am sure to be whipp'd.*

A: *You need not be afraid of that, it is but a little past five. Look upon the Clock, the Hand is not come to the half Hour Point yet.*

B: *But there is something else that I am more afraid of than that, I must say by Heart a good long Lesson for Yesterday, and I am afraid I can't say it.*

A: *I am in the same Case with you; for I myself have hardly got mine as it should be.*

B: *And you know the Master's Severity. Every Fault is a Capital one with him: He has no more Mercy of our Breeches, that if they were made of a Bull's Hide.*

A: *You say very true, and for that Reason I have often wish'd he had a Palsy in his Arm.*

B: *It is not pious to wish ill to one's Master: it is our Business rather to take Care not to fall under the Tyrant's Hands.*

A: *I could easily lay aside Fear, if I were out of Danger; but who can be at Ease in his Mind, that is in so much Danger?*

B: *I confess so; but we are not in Danger of our Heads, but of our tails.*

John Wesley at Week St Mary

John Wesley, clergyman turned open air evangelist, led the Methodist revival within the Anglican Church during the eighteenth century. For many years he travelled from end to end of Britain, usually on horseback and often with a book in his hand, preaching wherever he went. His ecclesiastical superiors disapproved of his evangelical activities, but he ignored this in his determination to continue 'bringing the Word' to the working classes. His intractability in this matter led to the foundation of the separate Methodist Church, though Wesley to the end of his life considered himself an Anglican minister.

Wesley was particularly active in Cornwall, and visited the county on several occasions. The following extracts from his journal record visits he made to Week St Mary:

June 18th, 1745. Being invited by the Rector of Week St Mary (about 7 miles from Gennis) to preach in his church, we went thither in the afternoon. I had not seen in these parts of Cornwall either so large a church or so large a congregation.

Monday, Sept. 15th, 1746. A guide meeting us at Camelford conducted us to S. Mary Week. ... It was the time of the yearly Revel, which obliged me to speak very plain.

Sunday, 2nd October, 1757. I rode to Mary Week. A large congregation was gathered there. The house stands in the midst of orchards and meadows, surrounded by gently rising hills. I preached on the side of a meadow newly mown.

October, Monday 27, 1762. I rode to Mary week. It was a kind of fair-day: and the people were come from far and near for wrestling and other diversions. But they found a better way of employing their time: for young and old flocked to Church from all quarters.