The Landmark Trust

THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR, MAISON DIEU

History Album

Written by

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May 2025

The Landmark Trust Shottesbrooke Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3SW
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BASIC DETAILS

Part of	**The Maison Dieu, dating back to *c.*1203**
Mayor's Parlour built	**1860s-1880s**
Designed by	**William Burges, Richard Pullan & John Chapple**
Listed	**Grade I, & part of the site a Scheduled Monument**
Owned by	**Dover District Council**
Landmark tenure	**99-year lease**
Opened as a Landmark	**May 2025**
Maison Dieu restoration team 2022-2025 :	
Project managers	**Dover District Council**
Project consultants	**Kate Pinnock of Ingham Pinnock Associates**
Conservation architect	**Tom Gibb of Haverstock; also Rena Pitsilli-Graham**
Main contractors	**Coniston Ltd**
Paint analysis for DCC	**Hare & Humphries, also Hirst Conservation**
Paint Conservators	**Tom Organ & Arte Conservation**

Acknowledgments

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Generous gifts in wills from the late Mr Clive Mills-Hicks, the late Mr John Oliver, the late Mr Brian Raggett, the late Mr David Upton, and the late Mr Dennis Whitcombe.

The collective giving through the subscriptions of Landmark Patrons, Friends, and regular supporters.

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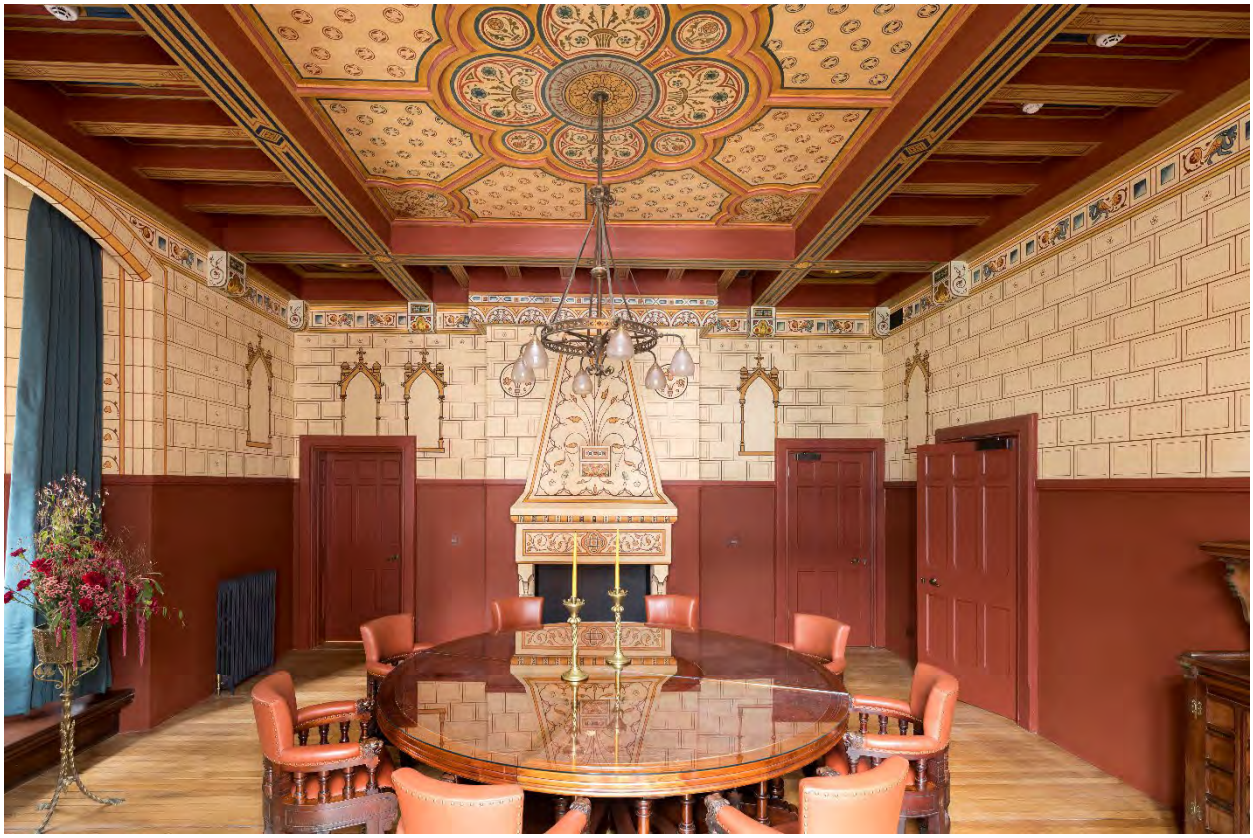
Research Acknowledgments

Thanks to Neil Burton of The Architectural Practice Ltd for permission to quote extensively from the Maison Dieu Conservation Management Plan (2020, commissioned by Dover District Council), which itself drew on Rena Pitsilli-Graham's Statement of Significance (2015).

Exterior of the Maison Dieu, Ladywell elevation. The Mayor's Parlour lies behind the large projecting oriel window.



Interior of the Mayor's Parlour, with Pullan's round table and chairs.

Summary

The Maison Dieu (or House of God) began as a monastery around 1200, offering 'hospitality for all strangers'. The surviving Stone Hall dates from the 13th century, and the lower levels of the tower a century later. After the Reformation closed the monastery, the site was used as a victualling store for the Royal Navy until the early 1830s, when it was acquired by the Board of Ordnance, who demolished parts of the shambling site. In 1834, they sold the remaining structures to Dover Corporation for conversion to use as a town hall, court room and gaol.

After years of delays, from 1859-61 the Stone Hall was restored by architect Ambrose Poynter, assisted by a young William Burges (1827-1881). Burges was an inspired choice for this medieval site. He lived and breathed the styles of the Middle Ages, with a sprinkling of eclectic external influences from the Continent and the Eastern Mediterranean. His biographer J. Mordaunt Crook summed up Burges's role in the Victorian Gothic Revival as 'the most dazzling exponent of the High Victorian Dream. Pugin conceived that dream, but never lived to see it. Rossetti and Burne Jones painted it; Tennyson sang its glories; Ruskin and Morris formulated its philosophy; but only Burges built it'.[1] The Maison Dieu was Burges's only civic commission and takes its place alongside his better-known buildings like Castell Coch and Cardiff Castle.

Poynter's eyesight was failing and by 1865, Burges was retained as chief architect for the Maison Dieu; there was much more to do. There were more delays and false starts on the part of the Dover Corporation, but in 1880, Burges submitted his plans for a law court, a fine assembly hall (the Connaught Hall) and sumptuous new mayoral rooms, working within and around the surviving medieval elements. However, in April 1881, Burges died unexpectedly after catching a chill from a ride in dog cart, before work had begun. Burges's brother-in-law Richard Popplewell Pullan proposed that he and Burges's principal assistant John Chapple take over the brief. Chapple had worked closely with Burges and both he and Pullan were both deeply immersed in Burges's design idiom. They completed Connaught Hall and implemented Burges's other proposals.

The structure and circulation pattern of the Mayor's Parlour suite, including the Minute Rooms on the floor above, are as designed by Burges. It is not clear whether their neo-medieval decorative schemes originate from Burges or Pullan or Chapple, but perhaps their styles were so entwined that this does not matter. The Maison Dieu is a more attenuated version of Burges's rich style, pared down from his artistically peopled interiors for rich personal clients, to a more simple decorative approach, one more attuned to the required mood of civic spaces, as well as to the Corporation's more limited budget.

[1] Joe Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (2014), p. 34.

Decorative details in the Mayor's Parlour. Executed by Richard pullan Pullan and John Chapple after William Burges's death in 1881, they convincingly evoke Burges's highly personal style.

Some of the richest interiors at the Maison Dieu are in the Mayor's Parlour. It was never intended as a domestic space, but rather for the Mayor to hold ceremonial council meetings at the round table designed by Pullan, with the circular-backed chairs with their lion-headed arms (now restored). The adjacent Magistrate's Retiring Room with daisies stenciled across its walls formerly led off the Stone Hall beyond, where the court sessions were held (today the Retiring Room is the Landmark kitchen). These rooms were conceived by Burges as the equivalent of privy chambers at a medieval court, for use at moments of civic and judicial ceremony and other important business, dignified by the high coffered ceilings and a tall, hooded stone fireplace.

Burges, Pullan and Chapple's collective transformation of this medieval complex to make it fit for late-Victorian civic use was highly successful, and it became the hub of town life for more than a century. In the 1980s, Dover District Council (DDC) relocated to more modern offices elsewhere. Connaught Hall continued to be used for events, but eventually dilapidation set in. In 2016, planning a major restoration project, DDC approached Landmark for help with a new use for the Mayor's Parlour suite after its restoration, to which we were glad to agree. In 2021, DDC began an £8.5m restoration scheme for Maison Dieu as a whole, assisted by their major grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

In consultation with Landmark, the Mayor's Parlour was restored by DDC as part of this overarching project. A transforming highlight was the painstaking restoration throughout of the 1880s decorative schemes by Arte Conservation on the basis of exploratory areas. Extensive paint trials were carried out to understand the original Burgesian decorative scheme. The trial areas were then covered in special protective Japanese tissue paper to ensure their survival, and the whole was scheme recreated, using stencils as the same technique as in the 1880s, using colours carefully matched to the originals. This leaves the original paint schemes safely intact beneath the layers of later paint. The wooden coffered ceilings were cleaned and regilded.

Many other original features remain in the Mayor's Parlour suite of rooms: the chimney pieces in the Parlour and Magistres' Retiring Room; tiled floors and some joinery. The men's urinal in the apartment is also original, thoughtfully placed close to the Parlour by Burges. The original council table and chairs (probably designed by Richard Pullan), now form a very grand dining set, on loan from DDC. On the second floor, bedrooms and bathrooms have been created in the generously proportioned the Minute Rooms, where clerks once toiled on the copious minutes required in the running of Dover's civic affairs. The medieval past, both real and imagined, still breathes through the Mayor's Parlour suite's re-purposed spaces, enhanced by this heady overlay from the imagination of the High Victorians.

A Timeline for the Maison Dieu

In the Middle Ages, the Maison Dieu ('God's House', pronounced here 'Maison Dew') was the generic name applied to religious foundations like this large grouping, which was latterly used as Dover's civic offices and its Town Hall until 1974. The Mayor's Parlour refers to a suite of ceremonial rooms created in the 1880s on the upper ground floor of the north side with its own entrance and a staircase to further rooms above. It was used by the Mayor for ceremonial purposes (he did not live here).

c. 1203	St Mary's Hospital, a Maison Dieu or monastic hostel for travellers and the needy, was founded by Hubert de Burgh.
Late 13th/ e14thC	Stone Hall built, also 14thC tower.
1534	Religious functions ceased as part of Henry's VIII's Reformation.
Mid 16thC	Used as victualling store for the Royal Navy.
Early 1830s	Acquired by the Board of Ordnance, some demolition.
1834	Remaining structures sold to Dover Town Council for conversion to new use as a town hall, court room and gaol.
1859-61	Restoration of the Stone Hall by architects Ambrose Poynter, assisted by William Burges.
1865-8	New gaol built onto north side of the Stone Hall.
1877	New gaol closed by Home Office.
1881	New gaol demolished. Burges designed Connaught Hall, but died in April before construction started.
1883	Richard Popplewell Pullan and principal assistant John Chapple built Connaught Hall to Burges's designs, including neo-medieval decorative finishes (including Mayor's Parlour).
1973	Maison Dieu listed Grade II.
1974	Dover District Council created after 1972 Local Government Act
Early 1980s	Dover District Council offices relocated to Whitfield
2016	Now in a dilapidated condition, the Maison Dieu listing upgraded to Grade I. Dover District Council asks Landmark to provide a new use for the Mayor's Parlour suite.
2021	Dover District Council began an £8.5m restoration scheme for the Maison Dieu, assisted by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
2025	Restoration completed; Mayor's Parlour opened as a Landmark.

Brief History of the Maison Dieu

The Mediaeval Period (1200-1530)

From Roman times onward Dover was an important place. In the Middle Ages it was the major embarkation port for the Continent, defended by an important castle. The buildings of the town included the wealthy Benedictine Priory of St Martin founded in 1131 and several substantial churches. The Maison Dieu (colloquially pronounced 'Dew', and also variously called Domus Dei, God's House or St Mary's Hospital) was originally a charitable and religious institution or hospital. It was founded around 1203 by Hubert de Burgh (d. 1243) for the maintenance of the poor and infirm, and to provide accommodation to the many travellers and pilgrims passing through Dover on their way to the Continent, or from the Continent to the shrine of the canonised martyr, Archbishop Thomas à Becket, at Canterbury. Hubert de Burgh, 1st Earl of Kent, was Chief Justiciar of England and Ireland, and from 1215 Warden of the Cinque Ports,[2] making him one of the most powerful men in the country under King John and then for his infant son and successor, King Henry III.

Mediaeval hospitals were a distinct type of institution, and there were many across the country. They varied in size and were staffed by a mixture of priests, monks and lay brothers, and sometimes nuns. Regular worship and the saying of masses for the dead were combined with the distribution of alms to the poor, hospitality for travellers and sometimes medical care. Some Maisons Dieu functioned like almshouses. In its later years, the Maison Dieu at Dover also provided accommodation for permanent residents, usually pensioners of the royal patrons. It was close to a freshwater spring dedicated to the Virgin Mary, in use until Dover got a piped water supply in Victorian times.

[2] The Cinque Ports are a confederation of five key coastal towns in southeast England (Hastings, New Romney, Hythe, Dover, and Sandwich). The alliance dates back to Saxon times, formed for mutual protection and trade.

Artist's reconstruction of the Maison Dieu as medieval hostel (DDC website)**.**

View of Dover made in 1538, part of a survey of the town made for John Thompson, the last Master of the Maison Dieu, who was also in charge of improvement works at Dover harbour. The Maison Dieu is bottom left looking church-like with the tower with its spire at its southwest corner. The Stone Hall is also apparent. (CMP, citing British Library, Cotton MS. Augustus I.i.23.)

This spring is still hidden under the pavement of the street to which it gave its name, Ladywell. When archaeological test pits were dug beneath the ground floor of the Mayor's Parlour in 2021 they often filled with water.

Little is known about the original buildings of the Maison Dieu. There was probably a large hall, which was the standard household unit at the time, but no record has been found of a separate chapel at first, there being plenty of other places of worship in the town nearby. Around 1227, a new chapel was built and dedicated by Henry III in the same year. This chapel has been identified as the eastern part of what was until the 1970s the Sessions Court in the Maison Dieu, although the form and extent of the original building are not fully understood. On the chapel's dedication, the patronage of the Maison Dieu was transferred to the Crown. Royal patronage increased the status of the hospital and brought grants and gifts of land to provide an income stream. It also brought the obligation to provide accommodation for monarchs, their court officials and their dependents when visiting or passing through this important port.

The Maison Dieu had many such significant visitors. In 1253 Bishop Richard of Chichester, a distinguished and energetic priest, came to Dover to consecrate a small mortuary chapel which had been built by the monks of St Martin's Priory to serve a burial ground for the poor, almost opposite the site of the Maison Dieu. This building, dedicated to St Edmund of Abingdon, still survives, 100 metres or so south of the Maison Dieu.

The Maison Dieu complex was enlarged and added to during the 13th century. In 1229 a new porch was added in front of the hospital; in 1275 there is mention of 'widening the house', and in 1278 license was given to lengthen the porch by 42 feet. Around 1300, the Stone Hall was built on the south side of the existing buildings, and linked to them by an irregular internal arcade of wide pointed arches.

The Stone Hall is a structure of the highest quality: from the detailing of the surviving mediaeval surrounds of the large windows on the hall's south side, it has been suggested that they may be the work of Michael of Canterbury, a mason who was also responsible for work at Canterbury Cathedral and St Stephen's Chapel at the Palace of Westminster.

The original function of the new building is unclear: it may have been a new great hall intended as a dining hall or for other secular uses, or it may have served a religious function. Sometime later, a tower was added at the southwest corner of the site, obscuring the westernmost window on the south side of the hall.

No records survive of any further significant building work for the next two centuries. This may have been because of a decline in revenues: the hospital petitioned the Crown for relief from poverty in 1325, although this was a common tax avoidance plea. The Maison Dieu continued to provide accommodation for monarchs and other important travellers passing through Dover. King Richard II, for example, lodged at the Maison Dieu in 1396. Perhaps because the Maison Dieu was under royal patronage the local population saw it as a royal establishment, and were therefore reluctant to provide further financial support through donations or bequests. When the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, made a visitation of the Hospital in 1511, the resident occupants then were the Master, called John Clerke, and just five male brethren.

The Reformation to the Early Nineteenth Century

Henry VIII's Reformation of the Church in England and Wales and parts of Ireland in the 1530s led to the closure and seizure of many religious houses and institutions, and the Maison Dieu was no exception. In December 1534, the Master and Brethren of the Maison Dieu signed the Oath of Supremacy, acknowledging

the king, rather than the pope, as the supreme head of the church in England. Shortly afterwards, the religious functions of the site came to an end.

The Reformation closures were preceded by a nationwide inventory and valuation of church property known as the Valor Ecclesiasticus made in 1535. The inventory of the Maison Dieu was taken in January 1535 by John Antony, an agent of the King's Viceregent, Thomas Cromwell. The inventory begins with an extensive list of plate, and of the vestments in the vestry, of which there were also a considerable number. It then goes on to list the moveable contents of the main rooms. Those rooms were named as:

> 'The vestry, the great chamber called the hoostrye [i.e. hostelry, which was clearly a dining hall with tables and benches], the little chamber within the hoostrye, one other little chamber, the chamber over the water, the chamber within that, another chamber within that, the chamber called Sir Peer's Chamber, the kitchen, the master's chamber, the master's stable and various outhouses.

Surprisingly, despite the quantity of religious plate and vestments listed in the inventory, there is no mention of any religious building apart from the vestry.

Eventually, the hospital was shut down and in 1544 its buildings were surrendered to the crown. These were adapted in 1552 to serve as a victualling office and yard for the Navy, a measure of the unsentimental attitude to formerly ecclesiastical buildings in the period. For the next 280 years the Maison Dieu served principally as an Admiralty store, with intervals of private occupation. Various inventories and written surveys give snapshots of the buildings in the 16th and 17th centuries.[3] Butchered beef and pork bones were found in archaeological test pits on the ground floor of the Mayor's Parlour in 2021 from these days. The joints of meat were packed in barrels of brine, to preserve them

[3] See the bound copy of the 2015 Statement of Significance in the Landmark bookcase for more details of these.

for use on long voyages at sea. Rock hard ships' biscuits and over 21 million gallons of naval beer were also made here. Victuals from Dover supplied ships fighting the Spanish Armada, Nelson's Navy and vessels exploring every ocean of the world.

A further survey of the premises was undertaken for Elizabeth I, titled: 'Dover, a view of Her Majesty's storehouse there called Maison Dieu taken the 12 Jan 1590.' The main buildings were described as follows:

> 'A little court of ¼ acre… upon the west side thereof is situate the mansion house containing of four great rooms with vaults under… a gallery on the south side of the said court leading from the house eastwards to a lodging house… A small yard on the south side of the gallery…A cloister on the east side of the yard…On the south side of the gallery is one very fair large building which in time past was part of the church 108 feet in length 27 feet in breadth; guard room and two large chambers one above another all of like length and breadth… On the west side of this said late church is a large room which was formerly an aisle of the said church containing in length 110 feet and in breadth 45' feet with a loft over part thereof containing in length 95 feet and in breadth 24 feet (part of the roof of the said loft is fallen down and the rest greatly decayed).'

It is hard to match this description with building as it now exists, but it seems clear that the 'fair large building' can be identified as the Stone Hall, which is about 27' wide. It seems the hall had already been subdivided horizontally to provide four floors of accommodation. There was also a line of buildings stretching from the Maison Dieu to the Mill on the River Dour and various other buildings beyond the river.

The original survey was a written description only but at some time in the nineteenth century (to judge by the handwriting) a drawing was made on the basis of the written description and the dimensions given. The drawing probably gives a fair idea of the relationship of the various parts of the complex at this date, although the size and shape of the Mansion House shown on the drawing is conjectural and no other evidence has survived for a building of this kind.

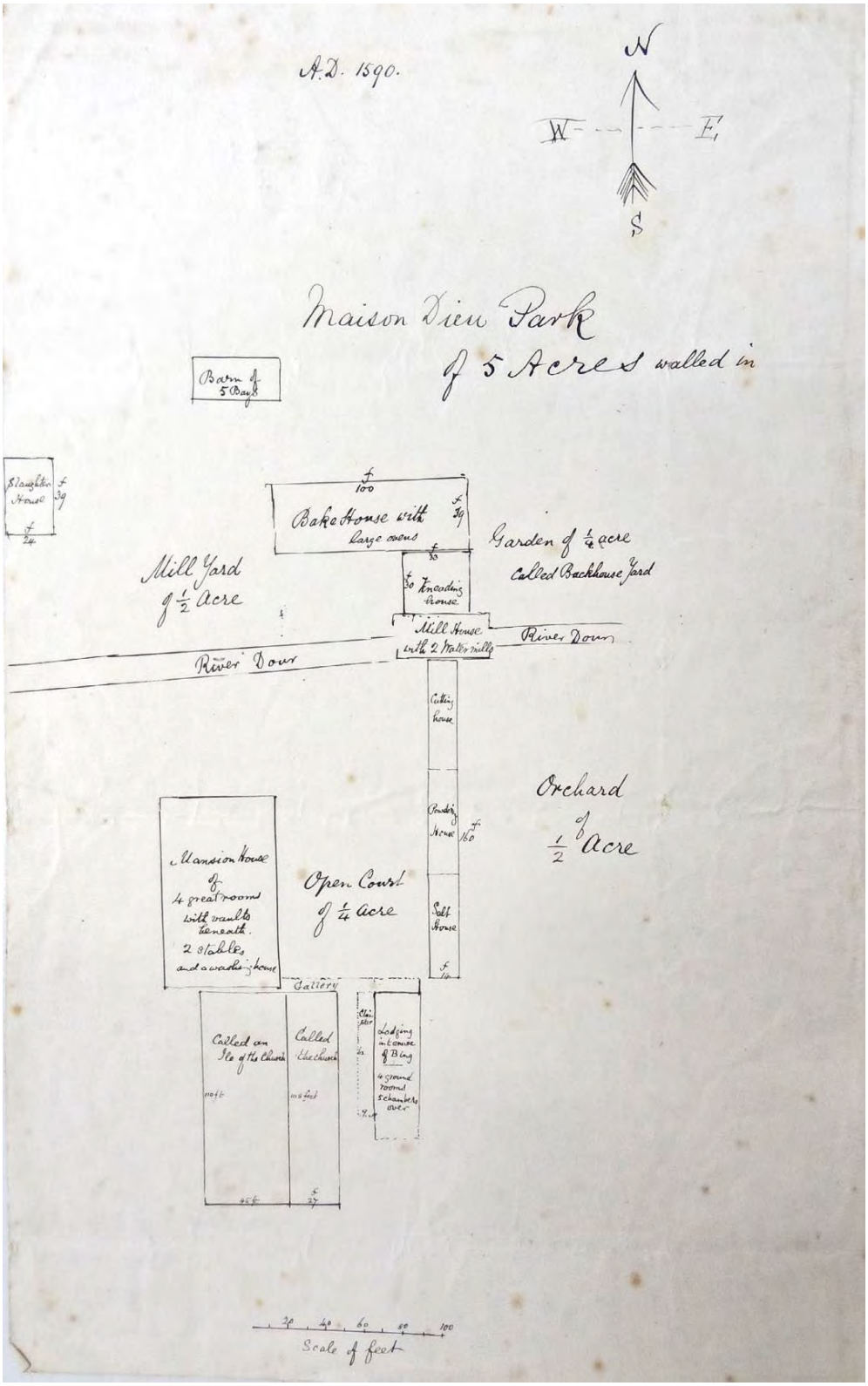
'Maison Dieu Park of 5 acres walled in'

'River Dover'

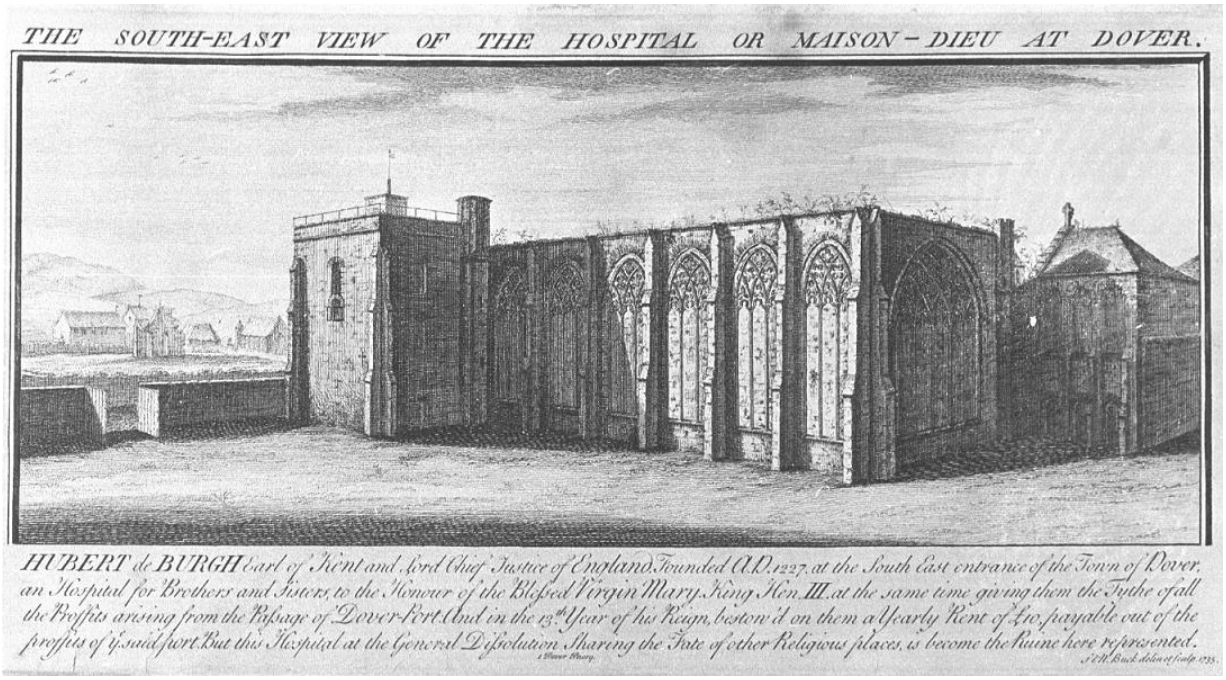
'Mansion House of 4 great rooms with vaults beneath'

'Called an Ile of the Church'

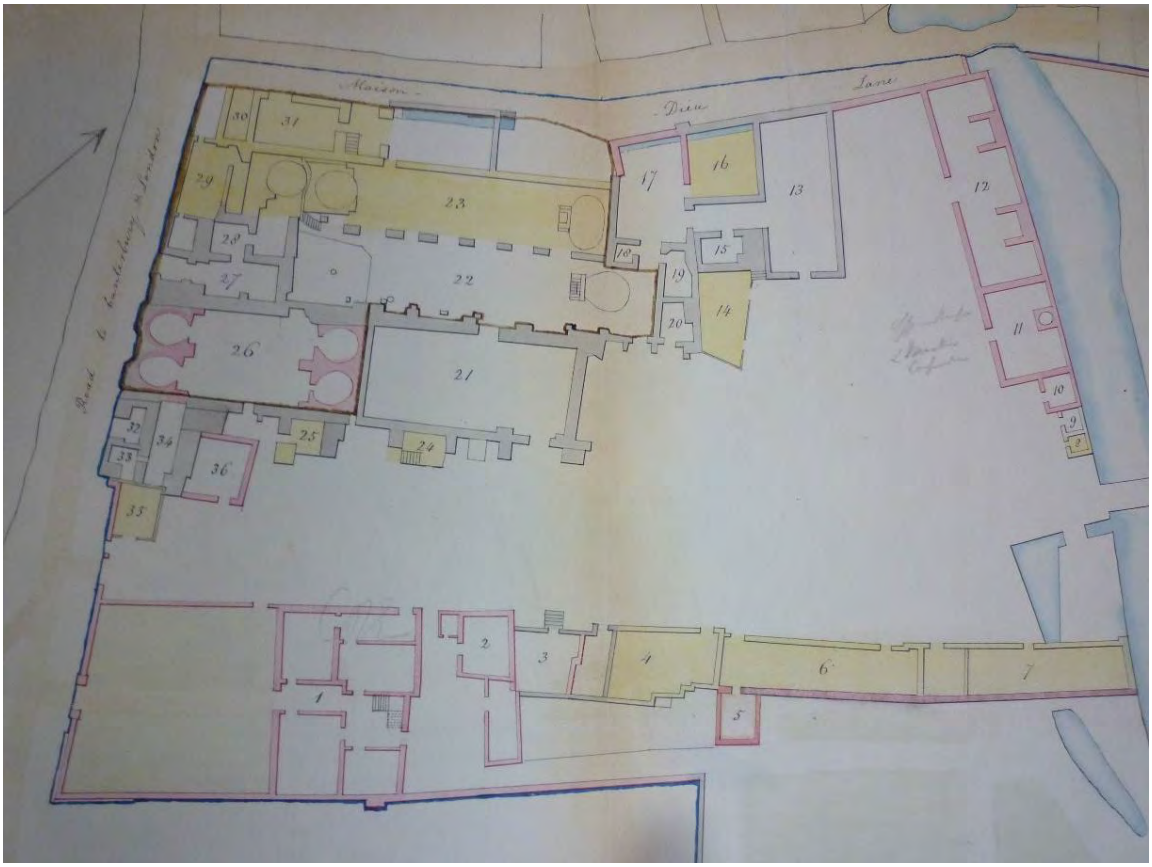
'Called the Church'



19th-century (?) plan, based on the 1590 written inventory of the Maison Dieu.



View of Maison Dieu from Buck's *Antiquities* (1735).



Ground floor plan of the Maison Dieu made for the Board of Ordnance in 1830.

(CMP, National Archives MPHH 1/691/5)

After the execution of Charles I in 1649, a survey was made in the following year for the Parliamentary Commissioners as part of the stocktaking of the former royal estate. In this case the survey was headed 'parcel of the possessions of Charles Stuart late King of England'.

Although the property was still part of the Crown estate, it appears that the storehouse function had ceased and the survey shows the property 'severed and divided' and occupied by a number of private businesses and individuals, including two maltsers (William Pepper and William Stokes), their drying houses and kilns and John Jarvis, a joiner. Outbuildings extended to the River Dour, where there were two water mills.

After the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Maison Dieu was taken back by the Crown and returned to use as a victualling store. In 1665, a handsome new house was built to the south of the mediaeval hospital to serve as the residence of the Victualling Agent. The Victualling Yard was frequently mentioned in Admiralty records. Buck's engraving of the south side of the Stone Hall published in 1735 shows the building in a state of picturesque decay but still retaining its window tracery. The footprint of the buildings on several maps (including examples from 1737, 1756 and 1805) shows that the outline of the main complex (the Stone Hall, the large building to the north of it and the chapel, now the Sessions House) changed little during the period. Earlier maps show two long ranges extending from the Stone Hall and the Agent's house down to the river but the more northerly range had gone by 1805. It is clear that during its time as a victualling yard the Maison Dieu premises were used for baking and brewing, as well as for storage, and were operated in conjunction with another yard on the harbour quay.

No doubt this yard saw a great deal of activity during the Napoleonic Wars, but after the end of the war in 1815 the Navy was considerably reduced in size and there was perhaps less demand for the Dover victualling yard. In 1830 the yard

was transferred from Admiralty ownership to the Board of Ordnance for use as a store for armaments, and a survey was made of the buildings by the new owners.

This 1830 survey itself is now lost, but the plan attached to the survey survives (see page 15) and shows what is presumably the lower ground floor with very considerable subdivision of the main spaces and a number of large kilns, ovens and vats. The minutes of the Ordnance Board for July 1830 record the view of their surveyor that 'the buildings, which have been for many years neglected, will require considerable repair', which they estimated would cost over £900.

A block plan produced for the Board of Ordnance in 1832 shows that some demolition had already been carried out by that date; the buildings north of the Stone Hall were much reduced in area and the buildings fronting High Street, which may have included the remains of a mediaeval porch, were removed. This plan also indicates how the various spaces were used; the Stone Hall was an engineer's stores and a store for case and grape shot, the large space to the north was a carriage shed with a store over it, the tower rooms served as engineers' offices, and the commanding officer occupied the 1665 Victualling Agent's house with its outbuildings and large garden.

Despite its renovation works, it appears that the Ordnance Board soon found the accommodation unsuitable or surplus to their requirements and in 1834 the whole site was put up for sale by auction. An initial proposed sale to a private buyer fell through, and in 1835 the buildings were sold to Dover Town Council. Before the 1830s, Dover Town Council was housed in the Guildhall or Court Hall in the Market Square, which had been built in 1606.

A plan of the lower ground floor of the Maison Dieu and adjacent buildings from the 1834 sales particulars.
(National Archives MPHH 1/691/12-13).

A Old Buildings
B Sawpit Shed
C Forge
D Privies
E Carpenters Shop
F Cottages
G Wash houses
H Privies
I Timber yard
J Wooden shed
K Foreman's Office
L Waggon Shed
M Plumbers Shop
N Double Coache House
O Cow House
P Stabling for 3 Horses & Offices
Q Dwelling house
R Tool house
S Green house
T Summerhouse

By 1833 the Council was already discussing their need for additional accommodation for meetings, for a larger Court House for the Quarter Sessions and for a gaol. With some imagination, their declared intent was to repurpose the rambling and battered Maison Dieu for their new town hall.

The six large windows of the Stone Hall were by now largely bricked-up, as were the windows on the north side and a tower at the southwest corner. The sales particulars show the ground floor of the hall divided into four rectangular spaces. The kilns and vats shown on the 1830 plan had presumably been cleared out and it is unclear whether the Stone Hall still had the upper floors which had been inserted in the past. There were various small accretions on the south side of the Stone Hall and on its northern side was a long structure terminating at its eastern end in a narrower building with three small buttresses, which had once been the chapel and later became the Sessions Court.

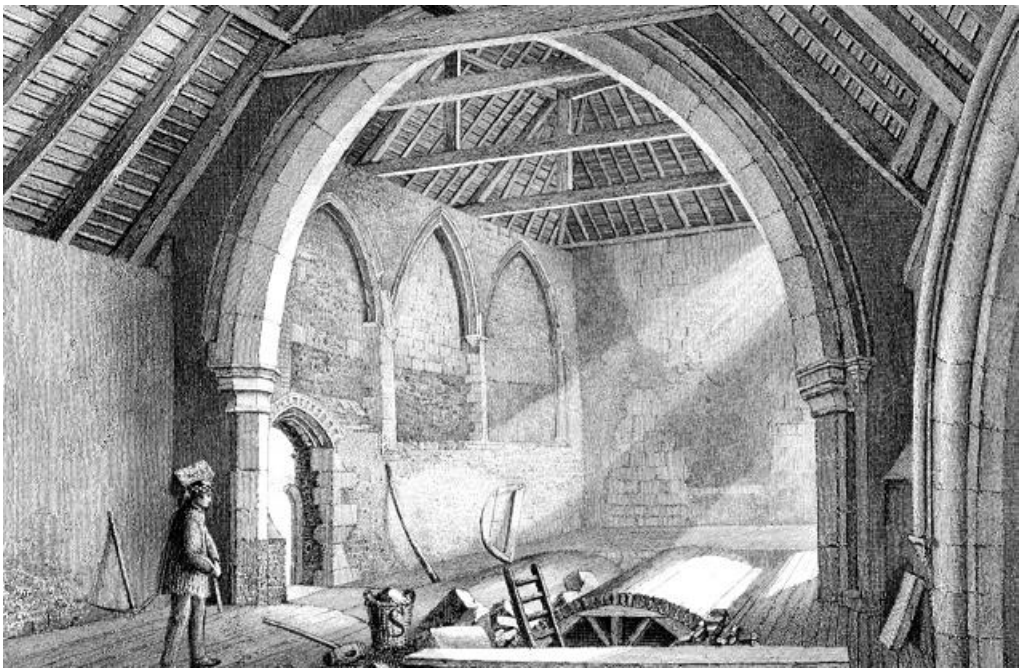
Dover Corporation: Re-use and Restoration (1835-1861)

Once Maison Dieu had been acquired, a special committee was convened to oversee the conversion of the building. In May 1835, it reported that, 'your committee have had general plans laid before them prepared by Mr Hardwick, and one by Mr Youden, for the interior arrangement of the Sessions House and the various rooms connected therewith, which they recommend as generally well-adapted for the purpose intended.' In July the committee resolved to accept Mr. Hardwick's plans, presumably Philip Hardwick (1792-1870), the distinguished London architect who had designed Waterloo Crescent for the Dover Harbour Board in 1834 and was just then supervising its construction. However, his involvement with the Maison Dieu is not recorded in other accounts of his career so the extent of it is unclear.

There are a number of surviving plans, undated but probably from the mid-1830s, showing proposals for the conversion of the Maison Dieu. None is signed and it is

not entirely clear which one, if any, was followed, but the broad scope of the conversion work is clear enough. The whole of the ground floor level of the Stone Hall and the building on its north side was to be filled with small cells for prisoners. At first floor level the whole of the Stone Hall was to be made into a single space, reached from the street by a new first floor western entrance up steps. It appears that it was originally intended that the Stone Hall should serve as the court room but in the event the old chapel at the east end of the hall was fitted up as the court room or Sessions House, while the hall functioned as a large lobby, with a number of rooms leading off it on the north side for the jury, witnesses and magistrates. There are apparently no surviving plans showing the Sessions House in its original form but it is at least possible that the court fittings which still survive are the original ones dating from the 1830s.

For nearly twenty-five years after its purchase by the Town Council, the interior of the Stone Hall remained largely unrestored, although it was in constant use. In 1839 the Council resolved that it would be desirable to restore the Hall. There are drawings of this date for restoration work signed by Mr. Edmunds of Margate, but apparently nothing was done, presumably for lack of funds. Nine years later, in 1848, various works of maintenance were carried out by George Thomas Parks, which included the renewal of plasterwork in the Sessions House, but the Stone Hall remained unimproved, its windows still partially bricked-up. In 1849 the Council appointed a Restoration Committee and began a public fundraising campaign to restore the Stone Hall.



1830s (?) drawing showing new brick vaults being inserted under the mediaeval chapel to carry the new prison cells. The chapel later became the Sessions Court.
(Dover Museum)

Views of the prison cells in 2022 during restoration.

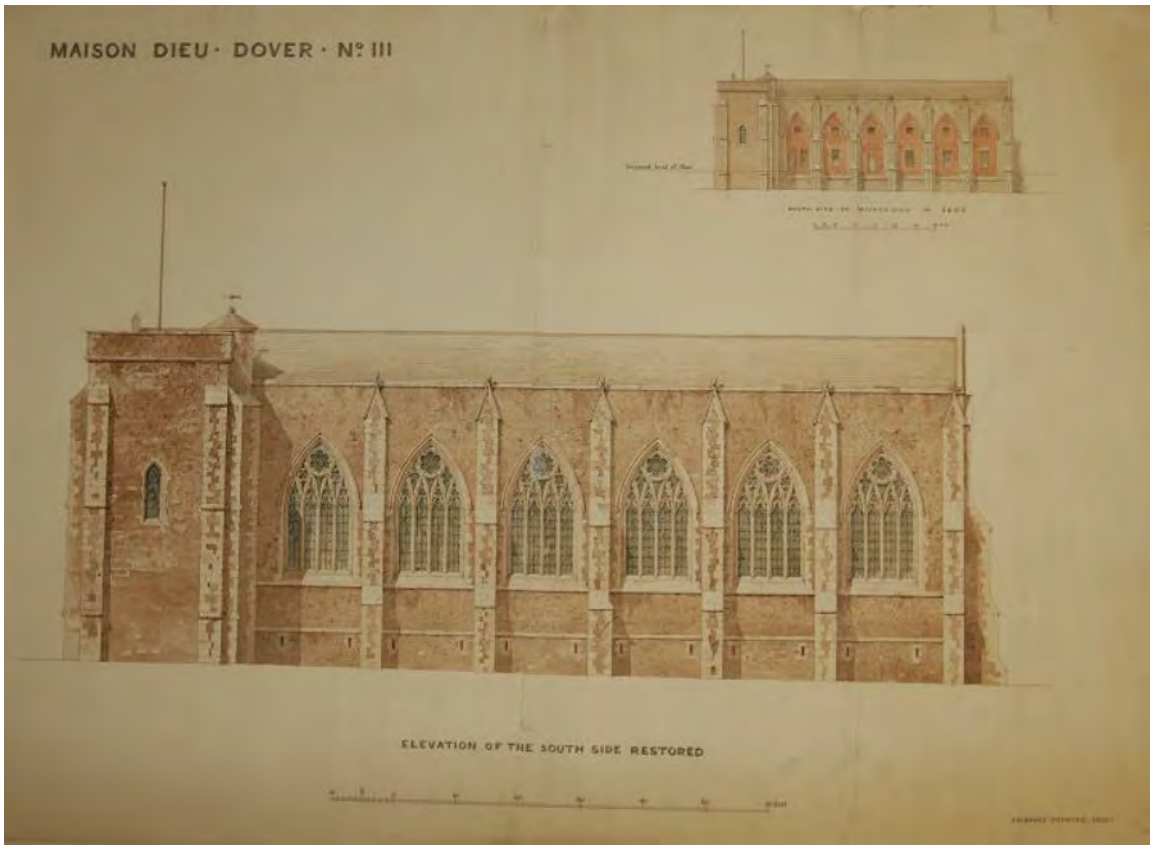
The interior of the Stone Hall looking west before Poynter's restoration in the 1850s.

(CMP, Illustrated London News, 20 January 1855)

By 1859 enough money had been raised to start the work and the Home Secretary had approved the raising of a loan. Mr Mackenzie, a local man, was appointed as principal contractor. In May 1859 he was asked to quote for the restoration of the roof in stained deal 'according to the plan prepared by Mr Poynter' and he was also asked for a report on the condition of the north wall of the Stone Hall, which at this date contained traces of large, blocked windows. But Poynter's sight was failing and in September, William Burges, then in his early 30s, was appointed on his recommendation to prepare full working drawings. As Poynter's eyesight deteriorated, Burges gradually took over the direction of the work.

William Burges (1827-1881) was one of the most colourful of Victorian architects, akin to Augustus Pugin in his intensity and *joie de vivre,* and his desire to re-conjure life in the Middle Ages. There the similarity ends: the two men shared a passion for the Gothic but took different approaches to it. Pugin was antiquarian, religious and obsessed with form. Burges took delight above all in colourful design in many forms, including the Byzantine, Egyptian and classical as well as the Gothic. Above all in his work, he sought colour and imagined narratives. It was the romance of buildings that captivated Burges, and that he sought to transmit in his own prolific designs for architecture and in the decorative arts, becoming the arch-proponent of the Gothic Revival in the High Victorian era. A fuller biographical sketch of Burges follows in the next chapter.

Despite the usual tensions between Burges as executant architect and the contractor Mr Mackenzie, the restoration of the Stone Hall was successfully carried out, broadly to Poynter's designs. It was re-roofed and the exterior of the hall was refurbished, the carved ornament to Burges's designs. The tracery of the west window was renewed and the large windows on the south side of the hall were unblocked and given new tracery following Poynter's design, which differed from the original window tracery shown on the Buck engraving of the 1730s.



Drawing by Ambrose Poynter showing the proposed new fenestration of the Stone Hall and (inset) the existing fenestration in 1852.
(CMP, Dover Museum)

The new windows were also shorter than the originals because of the prison cells inserted at ground floor level in the 1830s. The lower parts of the walls were re-faced with ashlar stonework below a moulded stone string at cill level with carved ornament and painted stone shields. The upper part of the north wall was repaired and given a false front of studwork. It is not clear how much of the mediaeval fabric of the upper wall, which had large clerestorey windows, still survives. The upper internal wall surfaces were plastered and decorated with military trophies and framed paintings under the supervision of the London decorating firm of J G Crace & Son (who had also been Pugin's decorators). Burges designed the ornamental brackets for the gas lights below the paintings and also two large iron ornamental lamp standards for the eastern end of the hall.

The main restoration works were finished by the end of 1861 but the stained glass windows were installed successively between 1860 and 1873. These windows were designed by 19-year-old Edward Poynter, the son of the architect, and later a distinguished pre-Raphaelite painter and a friend of Burges. The windows depict episodes and figures from the history of Dover, an increasingly popular historicist approach for windows and murals alike at the time. The earlier of these windows were made by Wailes of Newcastle (who had also made and designed the west window); the later windows were made by Heaton, Butler & Bayne.

The Stone Hall was first restored by Ambrose Poynter in the 1850s, with William Burges completing the work as Poynter's eyesight failed.

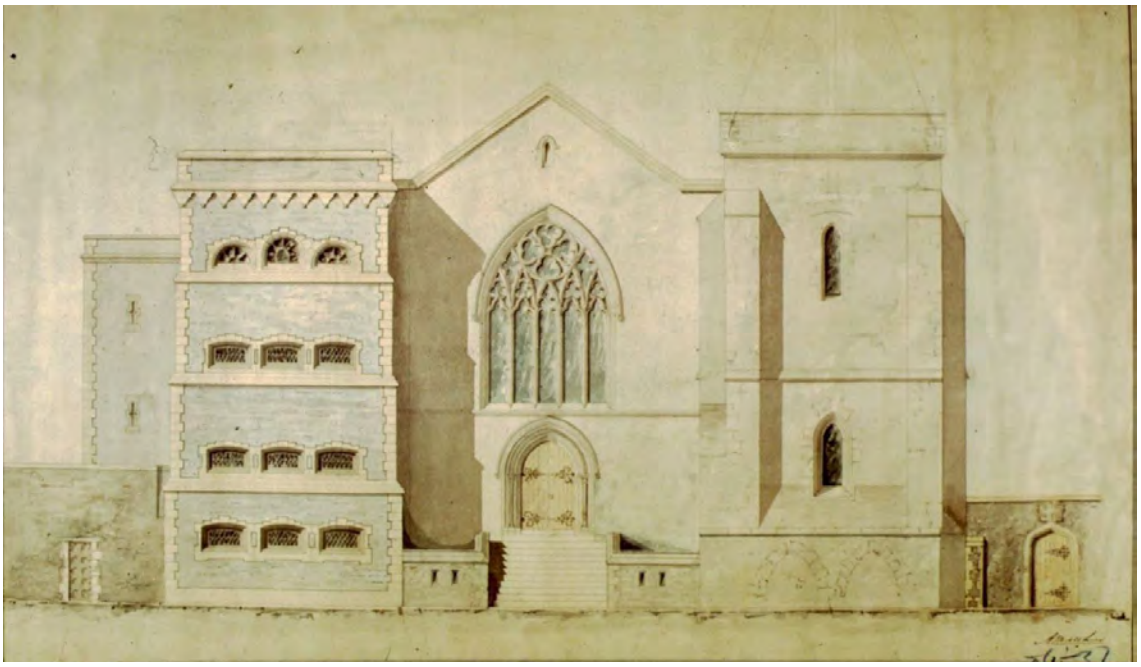
Example of stained glass in the Stone Hall, as designed by Poynter's son, Edward. Here, Charles II lands in Dover 25 May 1660 from exile to regain the throne.

Dover Corporation 1861-1877: The New Gaol and Council Chamber

In 1864, only three years after the completion of the restoration of the Stone Hall, the Council was informed by central government that the gaol in the lower ground floor of the Maison Dieu was unfit for purpose. The 1865 Prison Act set out new rules for how prisoners were to be housed, fed and treated and forced the closure of a number of the smaller Borough prisons near Dover. In 1866 a Gaol Committee was formed and in June, the Borough Surveyor, John Hanvey, presented plans of proposed alterations and enlargements of the Maison Dieu building to provide the required prison accommodation to meet the new standards.

Hanvey's plans proposed taking down all the buildings north of the stone hall and replacing them with four tiers of cells in a new building. On the main street front was to be a new tower containing a kitchen, infirmary and warders' rooms. To compensate for the removal of the magistrates' rooms on the north side of the hall a new room (originally called the Substituted Room, later the Council Chamber) was to be built at the south east corner leading out of the Stone Hall, with cells beneath it.

Much of the site of the Maison Dieu was still at this date encircled by a stone wall. The enclosed area to the south of the Stone Hall was to be a yard for the exercise of female prisoners (with a round-ended observation room which still survives). In the walled yard to the north of the new gaol building was to be a large treadmill, housed in a building of its own. Strange though it may seem to us today to have such penal activities going on so integrated with the seat of civic government, Hanvey's plans were approved. Building work began in May 1867 and by November 1868, the new gaol building was finished and occupied.



John Hanvey's 1866 elevation drawing showing the west front of the Maison Dieu with the new gaol tower to the left.
(CMP, Dover Museum)

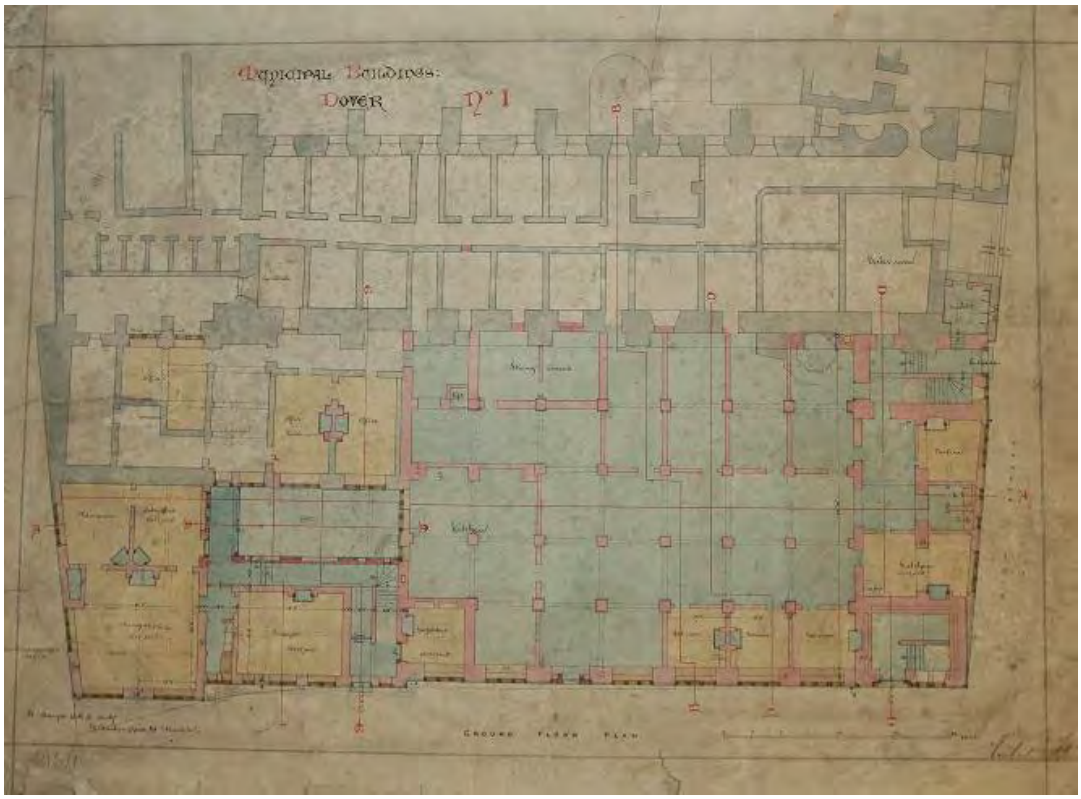
The Council Chamber, designed by Borough Surveyor John Hanvey in the late 1860s. The stained glass windows were installed over the next decades, all designed by W Horatio Lonsdale and made by the firm of Heaton Butler & Bayne.

Much care was taken over the fitting up of the new Council Chamber which was overseen by a special committee. The architectural elements of the room including the heavy panelled pointed ceiling with its carved corbels supporting the main cross beams, the stepped triple traceried Gothic windows in the south end wall and the two marble chimneypieces in Gothic style are presumably the work of John Hanvey, but were clearly influenced by the style of William Burges. Elaborate furnishings of oak upholstered in Utrecht velvet were made by the local firm of George Flashman & Sons.

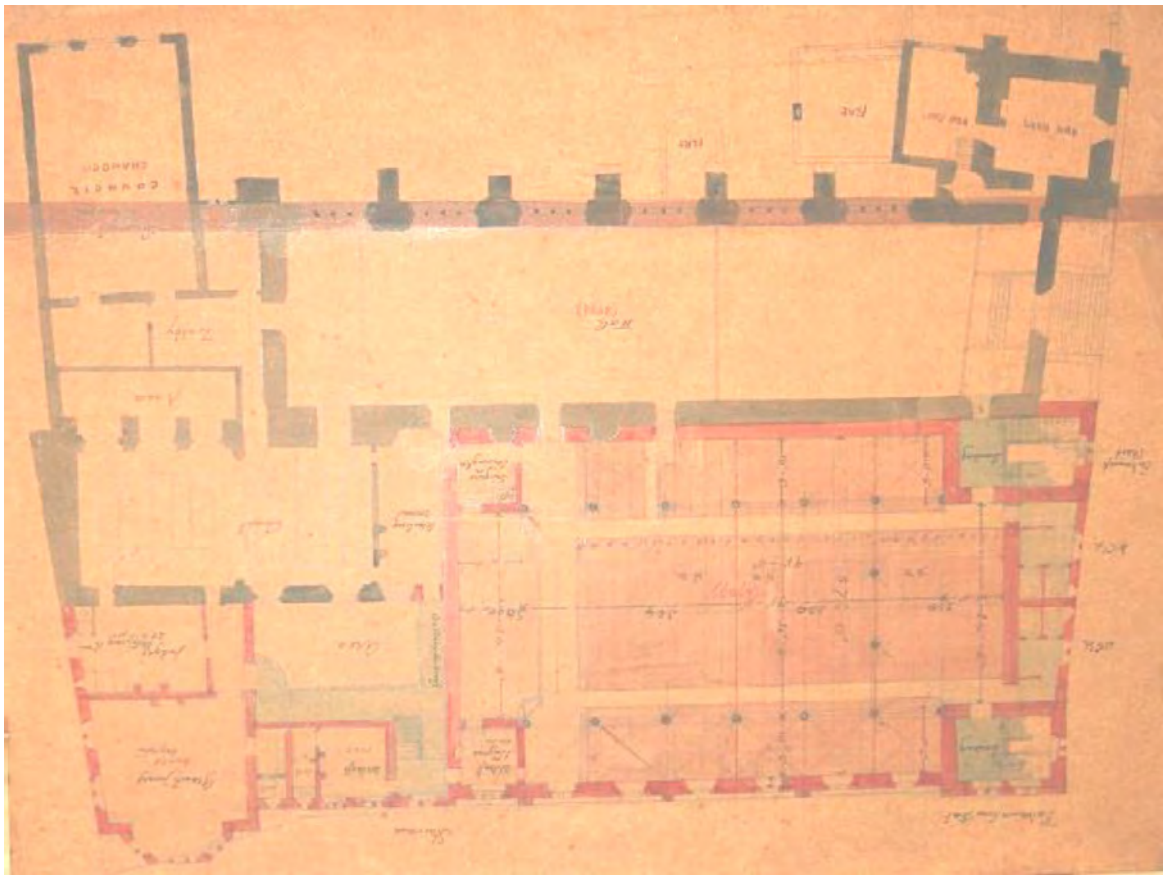
By 1863 J. P. Seddon reported 'the vigorous design of Mr Burges… is visible in the nervous ironwork in the doors, the grotesque animals forming the label terminations (which are *grotesques* of right good sort, and not the caricatures or monstrosities as too usual now-a-days), and in the noble gasolier standards on the dais, as well as in the thoroughly Medieval carvings above.'

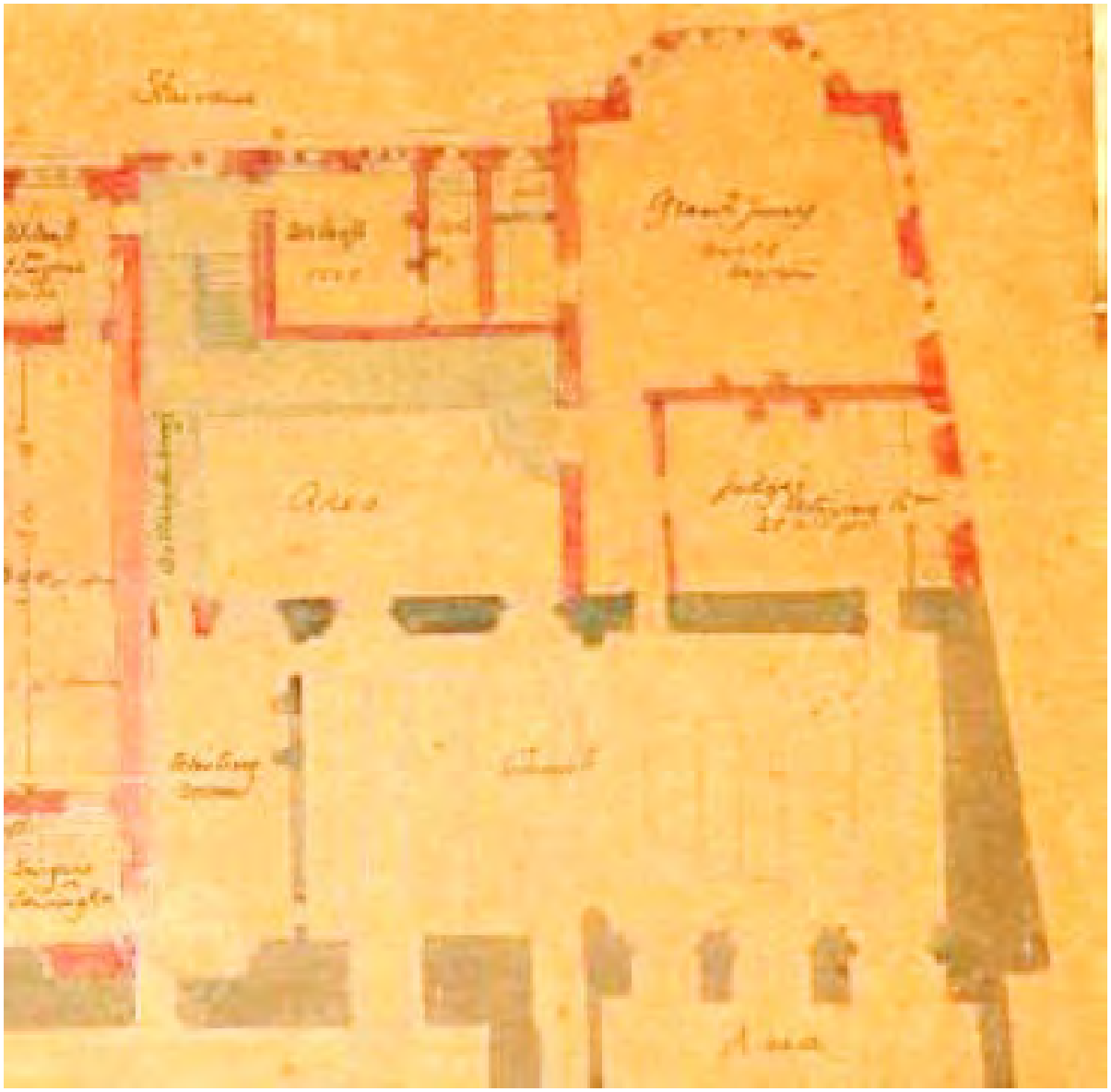
The traceried windows in the south wall of the Council Chamber were originally clear-glazed but by the end of the century they had been filled with stained glass depicting the Kings of England. The centre window was installed in 1883, the west window in 1891 and the east window in 1892. All the windows were designed by W Horatio Lonsdale and supplied by the firm of Heaton Butler & Bayne.

Whatever its merits as a prison, Hanvey's new gaol was an ugly building, and his tower on the street front was brutal in appearance. The building did not survive for long. Nine years after opening the gaol was taken over by central government under the Prisons Act of 1877 and immediately closed and then left empty until its demolition in 1881.

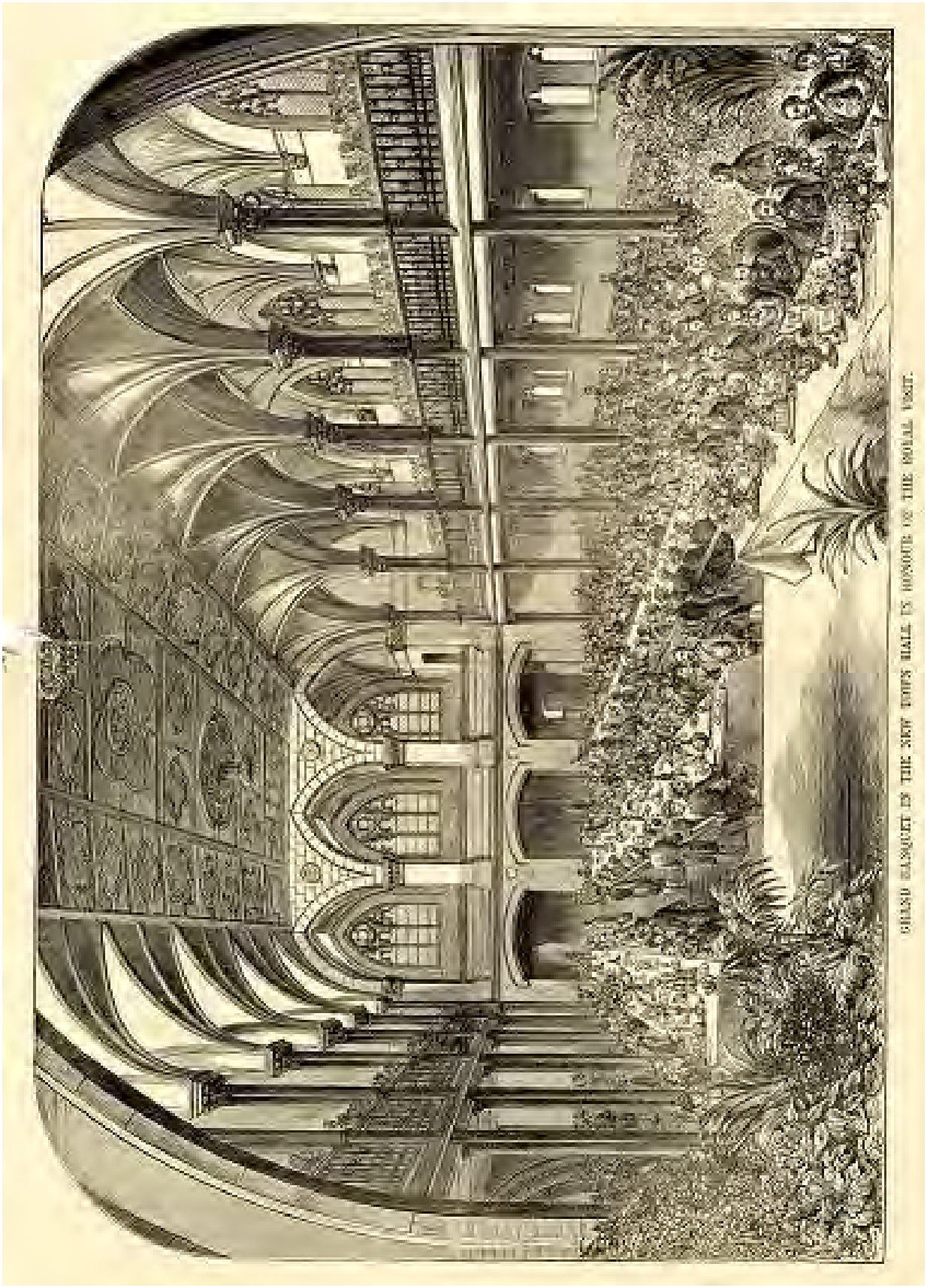


Proposed plans for the ground (top) and first floors of the improved layouts in 1880, believed to be Burges's preliminary plans. (CMP, Dover Museum)





Detail of the first-floor on the 1880 plan, showing Burges's proposed layout for the Mayor's Parlour suite, the Parlour itself originally intended for use as the Grand Jury Room, as labeled here.



The interior of the newly completed Connaught Hall (*The Dover Standard* 19th July 1883)

1880-83 The New Town Hall and Connaught Hall

In 1880 Dover Town Council resolved to replace the redundant and empty prison buildings with a new building containing offices for the council, additional rooms for the court and a grand assembly hall on the site of the original pilgrims' hall. They were perhaps spurred into action by the fact that both Hove and Hastings were planning elaborate new town halls at this time. The Council approached William Burges directly to design the new building, presumably on the strength of his earlier work on the Stone Hall and his national reputation, which was by now considerable.

Burges accepted the commission and in March 1880 he submitted rough plans (see preceding pages) and a preliminary report explaining how he proposed to meet the council's requirements. He also made proposals for new police station accommodation below the Stone Hall, re-using some of the old cells.

There was some local opposition to the proposals because of the cost, but after a delay of a year Burges was authorized to begin the working drawings on 1st March 1881. Two months later he was dead. A few days after his death, his brother-in-law Richard Popplewell Pullan, an independent architect closely associated with Burges and also his executor and principal heir, wrote to Town Clerk Wollaston Knocker (son of former Mayor Edward Knocker) that, 'the drawings and estimates of the Dover Assembly Rooms ordered of Mr Burges are in an advanced state.' Pullan proposed that he should complete the commission, in collaboration with John Starling Chapple, who had been Burges's principal assistant for over twenty years. Both Pullan and Chapple were deeply steeped in Burges's idiom and practice, and Pullan's proposal was accepted. By July 1881 the preparatory work was complete and detailed contract plans had been drawn up. Works began in August 1881 and the main fabric of the building was completed in 1883. The great assembly hall was named after the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, who opened it with great ceremony on 14 July 1883.

The newly built Town Hall and Connaught Hall
(*The Builder,* 14th January 1883)

The Maison Dieu *c.* 1883.
(Historic England Archive)

All the accommodation required by the council was provided in the new building. On the upper ground floor in the north east corner adjacent to the Sessions Court (which colonized the former medieval chapel, as consecrated by King Henry III in 1227) were the Mayor's Parlour (originally intended as the Grand Jury Room), the Magistrates' (or Judges') Retiring Room (today the Landmark kitchen, with the bell for summoning witnesses still in one corner), and a room for witnesses (today the sitting room). Below these were offices for The Borough Surveyors and Inspectors of Nuisances (what we would call environmental health officers). To the west was the new Assembly Room – the Connaught Hall - with galleries on the north, south and west sides. Beneath the hall at street level were kitchens, a strong room, storage space and accommodation for the hall keeper. The old cells beneath the Stone Hall were retained with a police station at the west end and the tower served as the Police Superintendent's residence. Burges's plans suggest that the old prison buildings were completely removed, but comparison with earlier plans suggest that some of the walls of the prison may have been incorporated in the new work.

Little provision had been made in Burges's specification for internal decoration and none for furnishing. Burges's original estimate had only allowed £123 for all the painting work in the entire new building. In February 1883 Richard Pullan wrote to the Town Clerk Knocker suggesting that he might prepare drawings of suitable decoration for the main rooms. Pullan and Chapple's designs were shown to the Council in April or May, with a cost estimate of 'about £500', which was grudgingly accepted.

Today, it is chiefly Burges's name which has been brought to the fore in relation to the restored Maison Dieu, but it is clear from the Council minutes that Pullan and Chapple prepared many drawings for the decorative work. In most cases, it is perhaps more accurate to describe the late-19th-century incarnation of the complex as 'in the style of Burges.' None of Pullan and Chapple's drawings is known to survive but contemporary accounts and paint conservation has shown

that the pair were so steeped in their friend and master's style as to make the painted and stencilled decoration of the Connaught Hall, and the main rooms and circulation spaces, much like Burges's own work. The decorators were Messrs Campbell & Smith.

Pullan also prepared sketch designs for the furniture of the most important rooms, including the Mayor's Parlour and the Magistrates' Room. His 'Specification of materials etc.' dated March 1883 covers two tables including one round table, the Mayor's chair, two window seats, six small chairs and 17 circular chairs. The chairs were to be of walnut and upholstered in Morocco leather. Unfortunately, Pullan's drawings do not survive but the furniture still exists and bears a close family resemblance to furniture designed by William Burges for Cardiff Castle and the Tower House on Melbury Road in Holland Park, London. Pullan's furniture was made by Messrs Cobay Brothers of Hythe, while Flashman's of Dover, who had made the furniture for the Council Chamber, were commissioned to provide 1,000 chairs for the Connaught Hall.

When first built the Connaught Hall and offices were all lit by gas. The smaller rooms and passages had lights on wall brackets. Connaught Hall itself had two large and innovative 'sunburners' (a sort of lantern) in the ceiling, designed both to provide light and to create an updraught to improve ventilation.

The Art School designed by J. S. Chapple, added to the east end of the Maison Dieu in 1894.

Dover Council Ownership: The Last Century 1885-2019

There were no major additions to the buildings of the Town Hall/ Maison Dieu after the completion of the Connaught Hall in 1883, and the building settled into its intended role as the civic heart of the city.

In 1894, it was decided to introduce electric lighting into the Connaught Hall. The Council invited John Chapple to supply sketches and an estimate for a large chandelier in the centre of the ceiling and smaller chandeliers at the corners. Electrification then proceeded in stages; the Council Chamber in 1895, the Mayor's Parlour and Magistrates Room in 1898, the Stone Hall in 1899 and the basement in 1901. In the Stone Hall the existing gas brackets on the side walls, designed by Burges himself, were adapted to electroliers, but the two large freestanding gasoliers were left to burn gas. As a result of the electrification of the Connaught Hall the sunburners in the ceiling became redundant as light fittings, but they were retained in working order for a time to provide forced ventilation.

The Council also commissioned Chapple in 1894 to provide a design for a new Art School, to be erected immediately to the east of the Town Hall. Chapple's building is in the same Burgesian Gothic style as the Town Hall and is faced with the same knapped flints with stone dressings. It is no longer an art school and now in separate ownership. The two buildings are physically connected and the Ladywell Street elevation of the former Art School reads as a continuation of the Town Hall building.

In 1902 a large new organ was installed at the back of the stage at the east end of the Connaught Hall. Made by Norman & Beard of Norwich, the organ was presented to the town by Dr Edward Astley, a local doctor, for use in concerts and religious services. Installing the organ required the removal of a large pointed arch which originally formed the principal feature of the east end wall of the hall

and a balcony beneath the arch. Two small rooms at the east end of the galleries were also adapted to house some of the organ pipes.

In 1904 an iron canopy was erected over the steps leading up to the main entrance to the Stone Hall. The canopy appears in many photographs of public events, but appears to have been removed at the start of the Second World War. While the Maison Dieu was in use as a Town Hall the interior decoration was periodically refurbished. The Council minutes suggest that redecoration took place approximately every fifteen years and it appears that work was carried out in 1898, 1911 and 1924.

After the First World War, King Albert of Belgium presented Dover with the Zeebrugge Bell, as a token to commemorate the Zeebrugge Raid, a Navy action with the Royal Marines on 23 April 1918 which aimed to block the port of Zeebrugge, then being used by German U-boats. The raid only hampered German shipping movements for a short time and caused heavy British casualties, but it was celebrated as a British victory. The Zeebrugge Bell had been seized from the Belgians and used by the Germans to give warning of British attacks. In 1924 the bell was mounted on a timber cradle straddling the balcony in front of the Connaught Hall beneath the Maison Dieu clock and overlooking Biggin Street, with a commemorative inscription beneath. The bell is still rung every St George's Day.

By the middle of the twentieth century Victorian design and decoration had become very unfashionable and after the Second World War all the original stencil decoration was painted over with a much-simplified scheme. The date of the overpainting is uncertain but it may have been done in 1949 when alterations were made at the west end of the Connaught Hall to provide new cloakrooms and lavatories beneath the gallery.

In WW2 the area around Dover was called Hellfire Corner, because it was constantly bombed and shelled. The Maison Dieu narrowly escaped the fearful bombing and shelling, not least when the fire station opposite suffered a direct hit. Happily, the cross-Channel shell did not explode, but a scrap of shrapnel from the incident is still embedded in the surface of the round table in the Mayor's Parlour. Dover Museum in Market Square did not escape either, and after the war, the museum's collection was moved to the ground floor of the Maison Dieu, with some storage in the tower. In February 1949 it was agreed to widen the doors in Ladywell and to insert the oak doors from the St James' Old Church. The word 'MUSEUM' was inscribed above the entrance. The Museum remained in the Maison Dieu until 1989, when it moved back to the Market Square.

In 1971, the Courts Act abolished Quarter Sessions Courts and Assizes Courts, and replaced them with a single Crown Court. As a result, the Sessions Court room in the Maison Dieu was no longer used for trials, though it continued in use for some time as a coroner's court. The passage of the Local Government Act in 1972 led to the formation of Dover District Council in April 1974. The Maison Dieu then passed into District Council ownership, which, in the early 1980s, moved into new headquarters at Whitfield. Confusingly, Dover Town Council remained next door on Biggin Street, in the building known as Maison Dieu House. The main complex of the Maison Dieu continued in community use for a range of uses, but parts of the building fell into poor condition.

Meanwhile, the Mayor's Parlour had had various uses over the years besides being a ceremonial space for the mayor, including use as a meeting room for the Dover Choral Union and Kent Coal Board, for piano exams, and as a changing room for pantomimes performed in the nearby Connaught Hall.
By the 21st century repairs and upgrades were badly needed. The position of toilets, storage spaces, entries, exits and disabled access no longer met today's needs. The building was operating at a significant loss annually, met by Dover District Council. With increasing pressure on Council finances, the time came to

act. Several years of scheme development and funding raising took place, masterminded by regeneration consultancy, Ingham Pinnock Associates. Having seen our work at A. W. Pugin's house, The Grange in Ramsgate, they first approached Landmark in 2016 to explore whether we could help by providing a use for the Mayor's Parlour suite. The main DDC project team would do all the works to Landmark's specifications as part of their wider restoration of the whole site, leaving only the furnishing of the Mayor's Parlour to be done by Landmark.

The partnership had the advantage of enabling Pullan's magnificent round table and chairs to remain in the Parlour. Additional access for the general public could be provided on open days. Given the pedigree of the building and its interiors, Landmark was delighted to be involved. An enabling £4.27m grant to DDC from the National Lottery Heritage Fund was confirmed in 2022, matched by considerable further funding from the District Council, Dover Town Council, The Dover Society and the Wolfson Foundation towards a total project cost of £9.1m. The many valuable contents of the site had to be cleared before work could begin, the opportunity being taken to carry out conservation work on many of the invaluable paintings and furniture housed in the building. Under the direction of architects Tom Gibb of Haverstock and Rena Pitsilli-Graham, DDC's main contractors Coniston Ltd began work in October 2022 and the Maison Dieu's restoration was completed in April 2025.

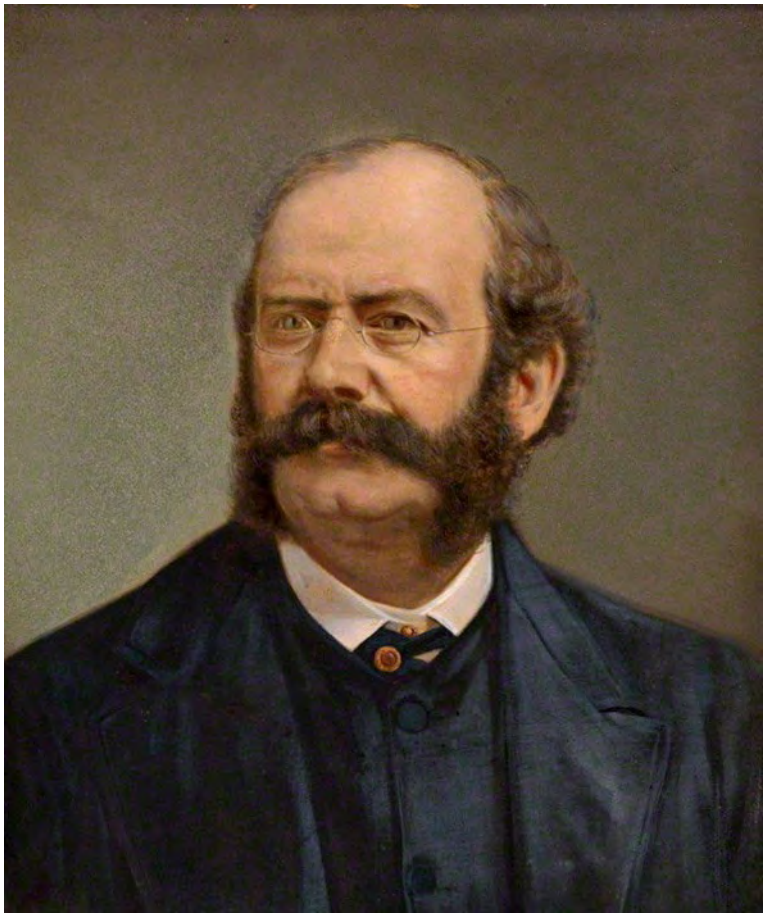
Brief biographical sketches of the Mayor's Parlour architects

William Burges

William Burges (1827–1881) was one of the most characterful and flamboyant of the Victorian architects and designers. Burges came from an extended nonconformist family of prosperous builders, engineers, and contractors. His father Alfred was a prosperous civil and marine engineer, and a partner in Walker and Burges Ltd, a leading government contractor in civil engineering. William Burges's private income meant he was less constrained in his architectural practice than most other architects (at his death in 1881, after a lifetime of aesthetic extravagance, his estate was still worth £40,000, over £2 million today).

More, perhaps, than other architects it helps to have a sense of Burges's personality in setting out to consider his work. We have a clearer sense of his uninhibited personality through his friends' recollections and his own writings than any Victorian architect except perhaps Pugin. A hedonist, he was a life-long bachelor, playful and clubbable. His biographer Joe Mordaunt Crook finds his sense of humour 'childish and ingenuous, impish, almost Chaucerian. He seems to have been, alternately, as gleeful and as bumptious as an overgrown schoolboy'. Burges was largely apolitical and his approach to religion was social and aesthetic rather than theological: he valued the established church and social hierarchy as indispensable patrons and guarantors of the arts rather than for any more societal or religious justification. He was also an enthusiastic Freemason.

To his friends he was always 'Billy' Burges: a lovable crank, but a genius, and an all-round good fellow. As a schoolboy, William Rossetti recalled, he was already 'excessively short-sighted', with 'a chubby face like a cherub on a tombstone'. In a *carte de visite* of the 1860s, he dressed up in doublet, hose, and liripipe, taking on the persona of a medieval court jester.



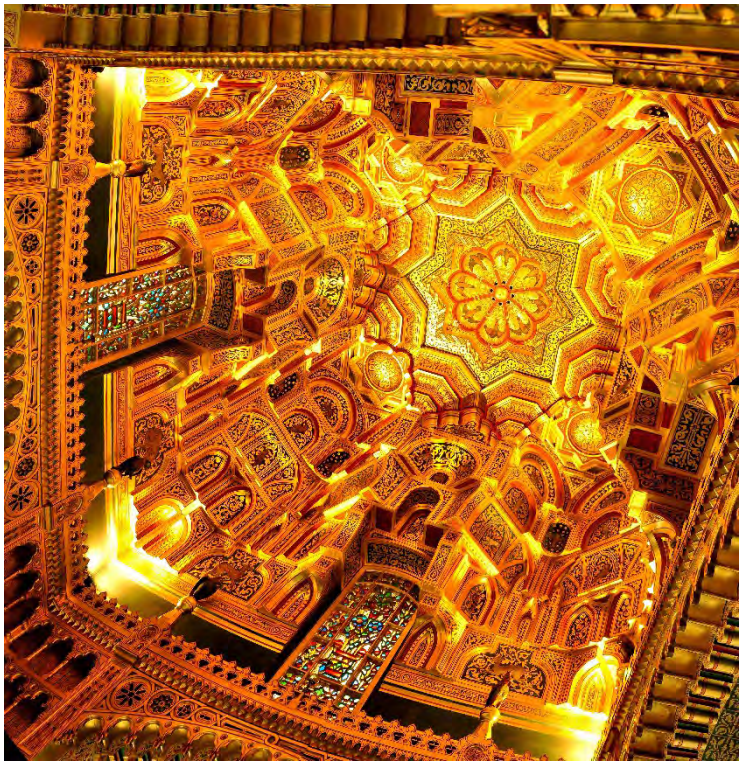
William Burges in jester garb in the 1860s,
and a portrait painted in 1881, the year of his death.
(Henry Van der Weyde (1838-1924) - National Portrait Gallery, Wikicommons)

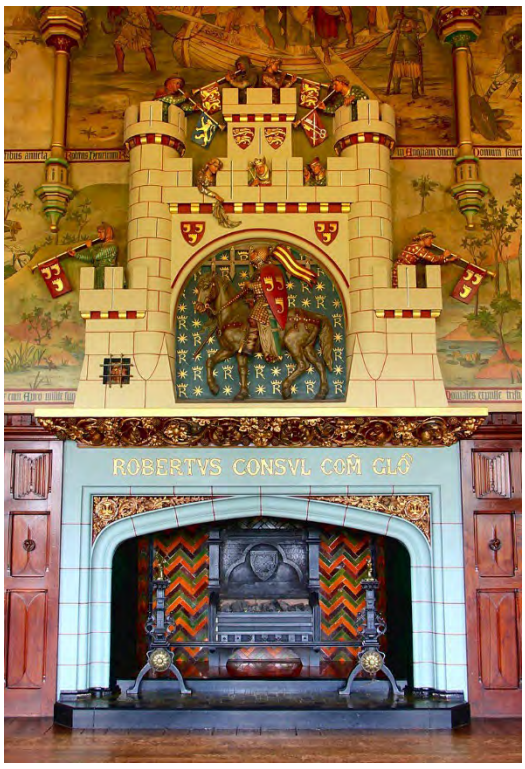
'He used to give the quaintest little tea parties', recalled Sir Edmund Gosse, 'the meal served in beaten gold, the cream poured out of a single onyx, and the tea strictured in its descent on account of real rubies in the pot … His work was really more jewel-like than architecture, just because he was so blind, but he had real genius I am sure.' 'Ugly Burges who designs lovely things', wrote Lady Bute in 1873; 'isn't he a duck'.

Burges was educated at King's College School in London, where his art master was probably the artist John Sell Cotman. Burges stayed on at King's College to study engineering as an undergraduate but left after one year. Perhaps helped by his father's contacts in government circles, in 1844, aged 16, he began articles in the office of the architect Edward Blore, surveyor to Westminster Abbey and 'Special Architect' to William IV and Victoria. The strongest initial influence on his developing style was A. W. N. Pugin, the great pioneer of the Gothic Revival whose own house, The Grange in Ramsgate, was restored by Landmark in 2002-5. On Burges's fourteenth birthday, his father Alfred Burges had given his son a copy of Pugin's *Contrasts* (1841), a polemical blasting of contemporary architecture in comparison with the wholesomeness and craft of the Middle Ages. This had a profound effect on the young Burges, even if his own work was to be more eclectic and less scholarly and religious in its inspiration than Pugin's. He served on Pugin's memorial committee in after the latter's early death in 1852.

After five years with Blore, Burges moved on to Matthew Digby Wyatt's practice. Digby Wyatt became secretary for the Great Exhibition of 1851, on which Burgess assisted him. Digby Wyatt championed the commercialisation of good aesthetics through good manufactured art for public use. His influence set Burges on a path which shaped much of his career, in which he was to play such a key role in the High Victorian renaissance of the applied arts.

At Cardiff Castle, Burges embellished Henry Holland's Georgian Gothick range with fanciful towers.





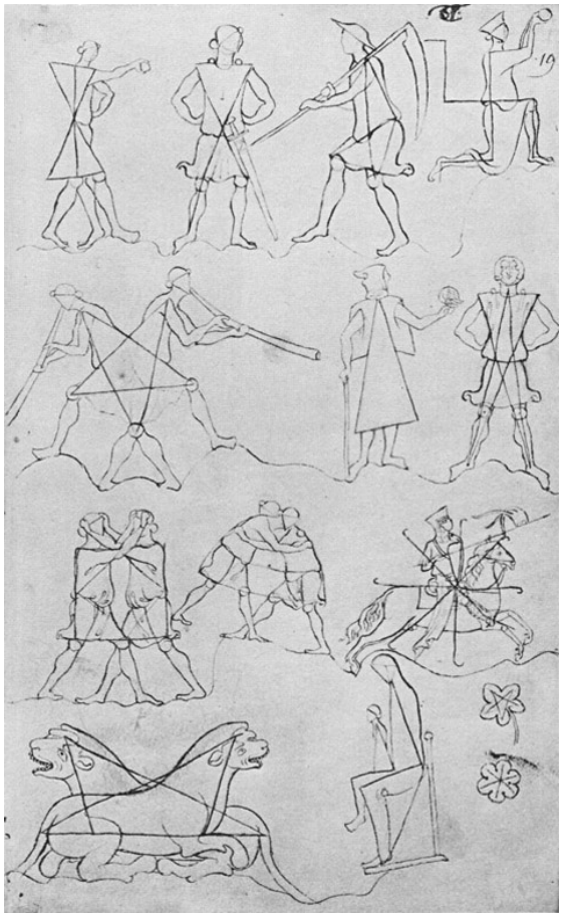
Interiors at Cardiff Castle: ceiling of The Arab Room in the Herbert Room, on which Burges was working died in 1881 (left) and a chimney piece in the Banqueting Hall.
(All photos Wikicommons).

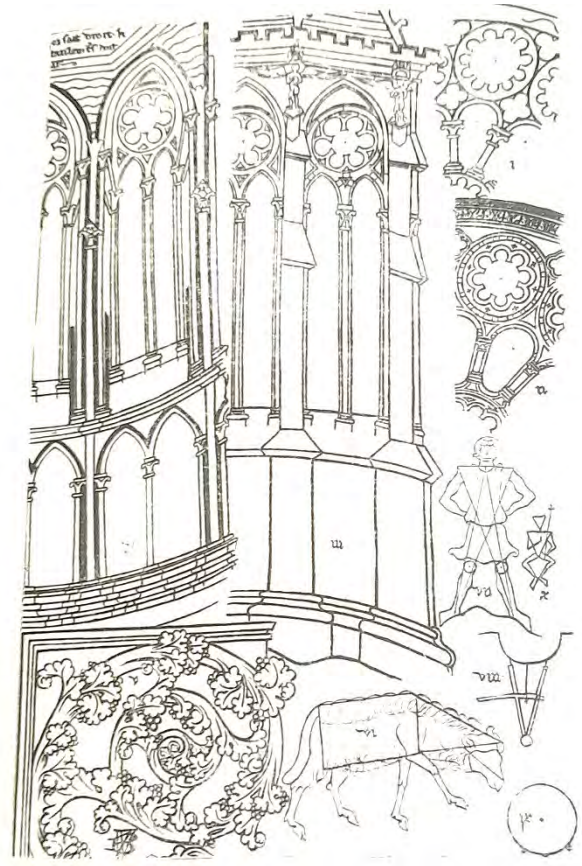
Burges also formed an informal partnership from 1851 with a fellow enthusiast for Gothic, Henry Clutton (who was nevertheless a more eclectic and prolific architect of country houses[4]). This worked well at first, but the pair fell out in 1856 and Burges set up by himself at 15 Buckingham Street just off The Strand. Many of his professional relationships similarly ended with a falling out, Burges being too fond of having his own way.

Meanwhile, Burges had also found time to travel extensively once he came of age in 1848. He regularly spent time in Europe: northern and southern France, Italy and Sicily, Greece and Turkey, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, and Spain, while also embracing from afar the arts of Japan, India, Scandinavia, and North Africa. During the 1850s and 1860s he built up an international reputation as a medieval archaeologist, all the while developing his own highly personal style, an eclectic fusion of French, Italian, Arabic, Japanese, Pompeian, and Assyrian sources onto English Gothic. Burges was especially intrigued by the Islamic permeation of Gothic, and by pagan survivals in Christian art. He published widely on archaeology in these years, and initially became known primarily as an archaeological writer. It was perhaps also on his travels that he became an opium user, which helped fuel his creative fantasies. Towards the end of his life, he escaped into a world of architectural fantasy, concentrating on decorative design.

That however, came later. From the outset, the 13th century was Burges's particular passion. 'I have been brought up in the 13th century belief, and in that belief I intend to die' he declared in 1876.[5] He found in Early French — rather than Italian or English Gothic — the most promising template for a new Victorian style, admiring especially its 'boldness, breadth, strength, sternness and virility'.[6]

[4] Including Shuttleworth House in Old Warden, Bedfordshire, whose estate holds two other buildings restored by Landmark, Queen Anne's Summerhouse and Keeper's Cottage.
[5] *The Builder*, Vol. 34, 1876, p.
[6] *The Builder*, Vol. 19, 1861, p. 403.





Pages from Wilars de Honecourt's 13th-century sketchbook (top) and Burges's re-drawn compilation of the same for *The Builder* in 1858 (left). Burges was much influenced by Honecourt's style of draughtsmanship.

Burges based his resolutely two-dimensional style of draughtsmanship on the famous sketchbook of Wilars de Honecourt in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. For his more visionary drawings, he took Albrecht Dürer as his model. The bulk of these drawings, as well as scores of architectural notebooks, are now preserved in three collections: at Cardiff Castle, in the drawings collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and in the prints and drawings department of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Burges's career was diverse but cut short by his early death and he completed relatively few buildings, only taking on commissions that pleased him. Indeed, it is intriguing that he agreed to take over from Ambrose Poynter the relatively mundane commission of a new town hall for Dover Corporation in 1861, his only civic commission. Perhaps he saw the 13th-century origins of the Maison Dieu as a means to embrace his favourite period. His first major commission in his own right was St Fin Barre's Cathedral, Cork in 1863 at the age of thirty-five, where his style sprang forth already full formed. From then on, he applied the same vocabulary to his architectural projects with increasing subtlety and gusto. He described himself as an art-architect, placing equal importance on all the arts and crafts to bring the medieval interior to life, always shot through with his own visual jokes and puns. Apart from Lille Cathedral, most of his more ambitious schemes remained unexecuted or unfinished.

Such missed opportunities meant Burges was able to put his whole being into those projects he did undertake. At Cardiff Castle (1866+) and Castell Coch, Glamorgan (1872+), at Cork Cathedral (1863+), at Christ the Consoler, Skelton (1870–76), and St Mary, Studley Royal (1870–78), both in Yorkshire, and in his own London home, Tower House, 9 Melbury Road, Kensington (1875–81), Burges combined an unerring sense of mass with his insatiable relish for ornament.

Castell Coch after Burges's 1870s recreation, and the original medieval ruins in 1808 (Julius Caesar Ibbetson. Wiki commons).

By assimilating the 13th century and mingling it with Renaissance, Pompeian, Japanese, Assyrian, and Islamic work, and then adding a touch of personal fantasy, Burges created a new style that captured the *zeitgeist* of the High Victorian era, one that contemporaries called Burgesian Gothic. He was notorious for going over budget, but in the 18-year-old John Crichton Stewart, 3rd Marquess of Bute since the age of 6 months, Burges found his ideal client, as obsessive about recreating a vision of the Middle Ages as he was, and with bottomless pockets thanks to Welsh coal. Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch were their masterpieces. Both revived existing medieval buildings. Ruinous Castell Coch was analysed in 1850 by an outstanding Victorian scholar of archaeology, George T. Clark, and Burges aimed to restore its 13thC appearance. To contemporary eyes, this project was not a fantasy but a work of archaeological re-creation that also brought the building back into use, albeit fitted out with modern services and conveniences. Today's archaeologists might disagree, but in 1884, Clark thought it 'in strict accordance with what has been ascertained about the original structure.' Castell Coch, playfully delightful as well as earnest, stands today as a monument to Victorian antiquarianism, testifying to the rapidly changing attitudes towards historic monuments in late-19th century.

Burges counted most of the leaders of the Pre-Raphaelite movement among his friends, and he employed a number of peripheral Pre-Raphaelites for his mural decoration, stained glass, and painted furniture. William Morris, with his developing socialist principles, was more of a rival than a friend; but Burges was very close to the pioneering architect and furniture designer Edward Godwin, at least initially. Dante Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, John Millais and many others of their circle all worked under Burges's direction at various times, and many of them acknowledged a considerable debt to Burges in establishing their own careers. Working with several of these artists, in 1858-9 Burges conceived the earliest and most striking examples of painted Gothic (or Pre-Raphaelite) furniture: the Yatman Cabinet, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Great Bookcase, now at Knightshayes, Devon.

Example of Burges's designs for stained glass, showing George, Duke of Clarence and Isabell Neville (entrance hall to the apartments at Cardiff Castle).

Decanter designed by Burges (V&A) and a brooch by him, which came to light on the BBC's *Antiques Roadshow.*

With the help of Saunders, Lonsdale, and Weekes, in the 1870s Burges turned his attention to producing stained glass of great originality and brilliance, matching the finest work of Morris & Co. Burges also excelled in two fields Morris never entered: jewellery and metalwork. Unlike the work of Pugin and Morris, Burges's designs for furniture, stained glass, and metalwork were bespoke objects, never intended for commercial production, another reflection of his privileged financial condition. Many of the finest items are now in the V&A and the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery in Bedford.

The clubbable Burges participated in many artistic coteries: the Hogarth Club, the Medieval Society, the Arts Club, and the Foreign Architectural Book Society among them. He was also a prominent—if eccentric—figure in a number of the more obviously professional groups: the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Archaeological Institute, the Architectural Museum and Architectural Exhibition Society, the Architectural Association, and the Ecclesiological Society. For the last of these he organized the Medieval Court in the International Exhibition of 1862. His 'pre-Raphaelite furniture' made a great impression, not all of it positive. Such painted pine seemed crude to many and the Court was less well-received than that of 1851, not everyone appreciating such wholesale gothicisation: the art critic of *London Society 2, 1862,* wondered why the mania was so popular, particularly in the 'modern age':

> 'It is a curious and interesting epidemic – this 'moyen age' mania in our island at the present time: when and how did it first arise? From Pugin's ashes or the writings of Ruskin. How has it gained such hold on the hearts of Young England? We see evidences of it now, more or less, in every church, in every home, in every shop we enter. It is pointing our windows, and inlaying our cabinets, and gothicizing the plates we eat from, the chairs on which we sit, the papers on our walls. It influences the binding of our books, the colour of our carpets, the shape of our beer-jugs, picture-frames, candlesticks – what not? As we strolled into the court devoted to the exhibition of Messrs. Morris and Co.'s medieval furniture tapestries, &c., who could have believed that it represented manufactures of the 19th century – the age, par excellence, of cog-wheels and steam rams and rifled cannon? Six hundred years have passed since the style of yon cabinet was in vogue.

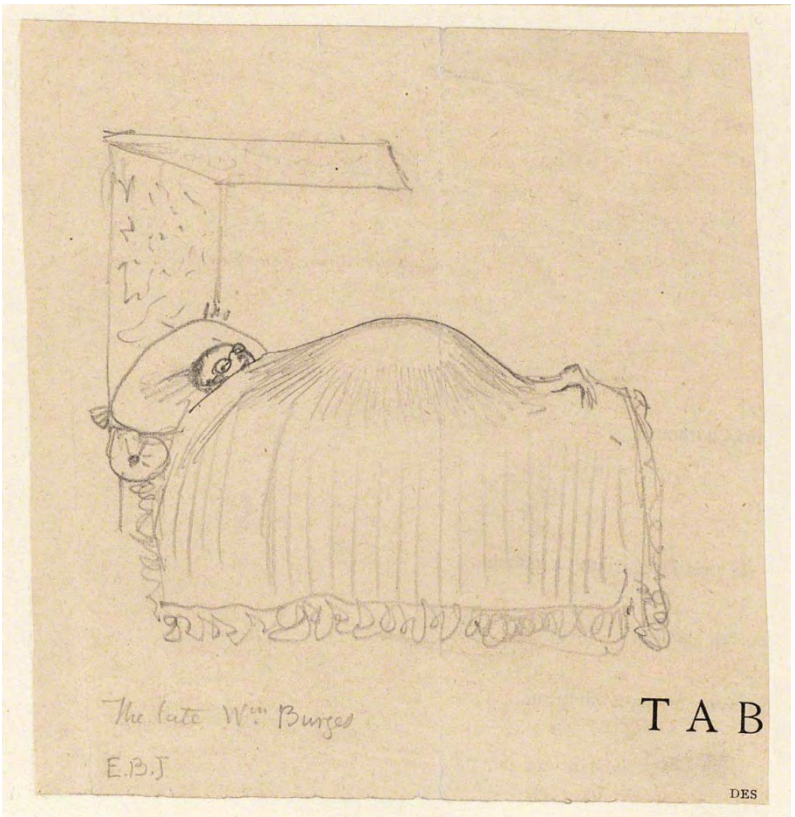
Many of Burges's young artist friends contributed to his Great Bookcase (1859-62). Being painted pine, it was poorly received when it was exhibited at the International Exhibition in 1862. Today, it is considered one of the most important pieces of Victorian furniture to survive

Burges's bohemian manners seem to have kept him out of the Royal Academy until just before his death—he was elected ARA in 1881— but he was much in demand as a lecturer. Besides numerous articles and essays he published *Art Applied to Industry* (1865) and *Architectural Drawings* (1870). He was an omnivorous, almost manic, collector, and would bequeath many items—armour, ivories, illuminated manuscripts—to the British Museum.

On his last visit to Cardiff, on 28th March 1881, Burges took a long ride in a dog cart and got very cold. Half paralysed for three weeks, Oscar Wilde and the artist Rex Whistler were almost his last visitors. Edward Burne Jones sketched his deathbed. Burges died at Tower House on 20th April, and is buried in Norwood cemetery, in the tomb he designed for his mother.

An affectionate portrait of Burges by Edward Poynter, done in 1875,
(Wikicommons)

Burges's bedroom at his own Tower House.



The Pre-Raphaelite artist Edward Burne-Jones's sketch of Burges on his deathbed (ArtUK).

Richard Popplewell Pullan

When Burges died 20th April 1881, with only outline proposals for the Maison Dieu in hand, his outstanding commissions were taken over by the archaeologist and architect Richard Popplewell Pullan (1825–1888). Pullan was Burges's brother-in-law, and with his wife Mary (Burges's sister) he inherited both Burges's architectural practice and his home, Tower House in Melbury Road, Kensington.

Pullan was born at Knaresborough in Yorkshire, the son of a solicitor. He was educated at Christ's Hospital and on leaving school, was articled to Richard Lane, architect and surveyor, of Manchester, along with Alfred Waterhouse. In Manchester, Pullan studied old missals and illuminated manuscripts in Chetham's Library, Britain's oldest public library. There he became interested in medievalism, developing a passion for heraldry and polychromatic decoration. Later, he also designed extensively in stained glass. He was a prolific writer on architectural matters and read a number of papers at meetings of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

In October 1854, Pullan travelled to Sebastopol and made sketches and models of the contours of the district which was under siege. When he returned home he exhibited a model of the country and the fortifications about Sevastopol, establishing his credentials as a reliable surveyor of aracehology. In February 1859, Pullan married Mary Leschallas Burges (1828–1890), the beginning of his long association with Burges. The Pullans had no children. In the same year, Pullan travelled to Italy where he studied church architecture. On his return, Pullan, like Burges, helped Sir Digby Wyatt with the polychrome decoration of the Byzantine and medieval courts of the Crystal Palace for the International Exhibition in 1862.

The Medieval Court at the 1862 International Exhbition at the Crystal Palace, which Richard Pullan helped Matthew Digby Wyatt design.
(Illustrated London News, 30th August 1862)

The Lion of Cnidas, discovered by Pullan in modern-day Turkey, today in the British Museum.

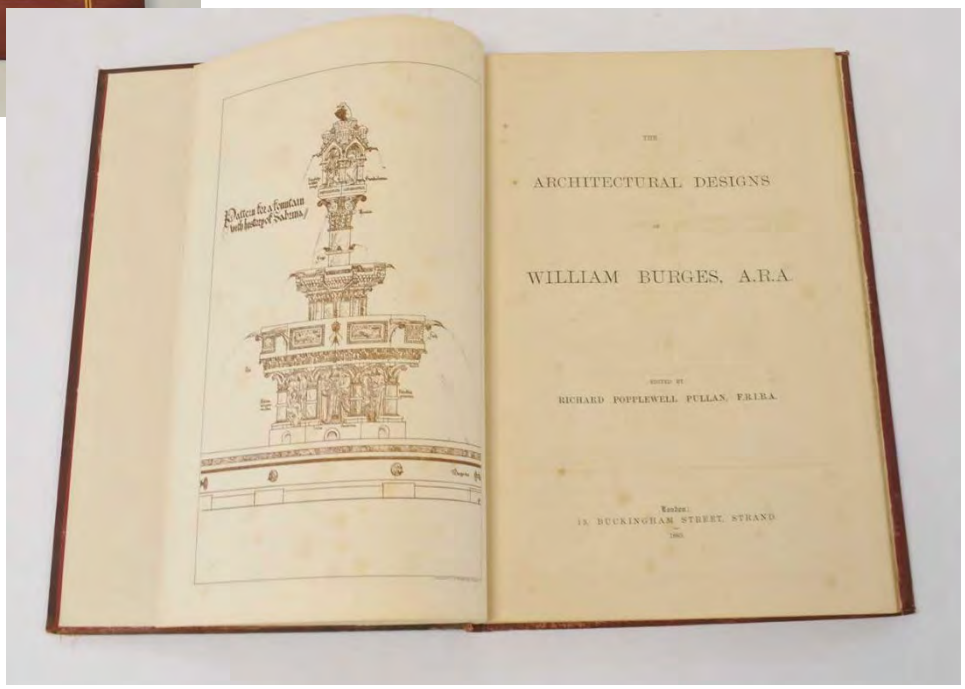
Through the next twenty years Pullan was appointed to survey several high-profile and scholarly excavations in Greece and Asia Minor through the next twenty years, his wife Mary often accompanying him on his travels. At Bodrum mausoleum in August 1857, he not only measured the architectural remains alongside its discoverer Charles Newton, but also attempted its restoration, following descriptions of it by Pliny the elder, Hyginus, and Guichard.

On Newton's instructions Pullan then went to Cnidus, where he discovered a gigantic figure of a lion, 10 feet long and 6 feet high, weighing, with its case, 11 tons. He sent it to Britain, and it is now in the Elgin room of the British Museum. He made a restoration of the tomb which the lion had crowned, a survey of the principal sites in the island of Kos, and drawings of the remains, published by Newton in *A History of Discoveries at Halicarnassus, Cnidus, and Branchidae,* by C. T. Newton, M.A., assisted by R. P. Pullan (1862–3). During these years, Pullan also visited most of the Byzantine churches in Greece and Asia Minor, and published several accounts of the sites he encountered there. He was a fellow of the Societies of Antiquaries and of the Dilettante, and a member of the Royal Archaeological Institute, all of whom commissioned his archaeological services.

Throughout, Pullan managed to combine his archaeological explorations with heading a good London-based architectural practice at 15 Clifford's Inn, London. He was a fellow of the RIBA from 1861 and competed in many architectural competitions, but won few. His principal executed works were churches at Pontresina in Switzerland and Baveno in Italy, and the conversion of Castel Aleggio, between Lake Maggiore and Lake Orta, into an English Gothic mansion. The church at Baveno is octagonal in plan, and of the Lombard type, and was built for the engineer Charles Henfrey in the grounds of his villa. A drawing of its coloured decoration as designed by Pullan was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1882, but most of his time seemed to be devoted to archaeological surveying and publishing his findings. Apart from familial ties, then, he was not an obvious successor for Burges's architectural practice.

It was Pullan who wrote to the Dover Corporation suggesting that he and Burges's assistant, John Starling Chapple, should complete the work in hand. He published several folios of Burges's drawings between 1883 and 1887, which further immersed him in his brother-in-law's style. Pullan hoped to retain the patronage of the 3rd Marquess of Bute for the unbuilt Byzantine church at Troon - subsequently built at Galston - but the chemistry was not there. The Marquess found him 'rather a brute' and appointed Robert Rowand Anderson instead.

A long-term sufferer from bronchitis, Pullan died in Brighton, on 30th April 1888.



***The Architectural Designs of William Burges,* published posthumously by Richard Pullan in 1883.**

John Starling Chapple

John Starling Chapple (1840–1922) was a stonemason and architect who worked as Burges's devoted assistant and office manager. In this capacity, he was an indispensable contributor in working alongside Pullan to complete Bruges's unfinished architectural projects. Chapple cared deeply for Burges and one of the executors of his will. When Burges died, Chapple wrote 'a constant relationship...with one of the brightest ornaments of the profession has rendered the parting most severe. Thank God his work will live and ... be the admiration of future students. I have hardly got to realize my lonely position yet. He was almost all the world to me'.

Chapple was born in Exeter, the son of a carpenter. After moving to London in his teens, he worked with Burges from the 1850s until the latter's death in 1881. Chapple helped Pullan publish Burges's drawings, and with William Frame, another long-term member of Burges's office, he completed several of Burges's unfinished commissions, including Castell Coch and Cardiff Castle, where he was responsible for the design of much of the furniture, including the elaborate suite in Lady Bute's bedroom. It is hard to tease out Pullan's and Chapple's individual contributions at the Maison Dieu between 1881 and its completion in 1883, but Chapple undoubtedly played his part even if he is less well-known today than Pullan.

His eyesight failing, Chapple retired in 1911. He died in Barnet in 1922.

Lady Bute's bedroom at Cardiff Castle, the furniture designed by John Starling Chapple.

The Mayor's Parlour apartment in detail

The apartment is situated in the northeast corner of the Maison Dieu grouping, with its own entrance from Ladywell. Like the Connaught Hall, this area was designed in plan in 1880-1 by Burges, and the architectural features and overall configuration are therefore of great importance.

The Landmark accommodation on the first floor floor is centred on the Mayor's Parlour itself (now the Landmark dining room), a space more intimate and jewel-like than the mighty Connaught Hall and arguably the most splendid interior among so many in the Maison Dieu. It is shown on Burges's 1880 plan as the Grand Jury Room but has served for most of its life as the Mayor's Parlour, a chamber for ceremonial robing and meetings around Pullan's massive, Arthurian round table with chairs to match. The chairs, on loan from DDC, have been restored and reupholstered. The Mayor's Parlour communicates with the Magistrates' Retiring Room (today's kitchen), accessed by a corridor which wraps round two sides of the northern courtyard. Directly above is the Minute Room and Minute Offices (the bedrooms and bathrooms today).

It was beyond the scope of the restoration works to uncover and retrieve all the late-Victorian painted decoration through the site, but this is one of the rooms to be faithfully recreated, as described below. The deeply-coffered ceiling and its original finishes survived, although was dirty and the original paintwork had flaked away. The walls had suffered decades of dull municipal overpainting. The chandelier is thought to date from 1898 when electricity was installed in the Mayor's Parlour and is possibly designed by John Chapple.

It was discovered through exposing test areas that the 'stonework' walls and chimney hood in the Mayor's Parlour were lined-out red on cream in stylised imitation of ashlar, into which were set blind pointed niches with painted gothic tracery. It is believed these once held paintings of personifications the civic

Virtues, such as Fortitude, Temperance, Wisdom and Justice, encouragement to the mayor and his council to uphold the highest standards in public office.

Whimsical wyverns (two legged dragons) parade around the cornice, and butterflies and parrots perch on the stone corbels. Parrots were second only to dogs in Burges's love of the animal world: he designed a sarcophagus for a friend's dead parrot, with 'She was a gentle bird' as epitaph). The whole scheme has the simple, clean lines so characteristic of Burges's work, and of High Victorian gothic as a whole. Gone are the shadow lines and detail of Regency gothic; now the Middle Ages were imagined differently. Burges was dead by the time this room was painted, and had allowed a wholly inadequate budget for painted decoration, but there is no doubt that Pullan and Chapple knew their master's mind well enough to reproduce his style with convincing verisimilitude.

Leading off the Mayor's Parlour along the street elevation is a short corridor with a WC (also part of the Burges design and still with its original urinal), originally the main circulation corridor linking the Ladywell entrance to the Mayor's Parlour. It too had painted decoration originally. Here and elsewhere, the panelled doors with chamfered stiles and rails, and their ironwork, are all part of Burges's scheme, as executed by Pullan and Chapple.

This corridor leads to a room marked on Burges's 1880 sketch plan as a room for witnesses waiting to appear before the Sessions Court. In the 1920s, it was used as the Artistes Room, for those appearing in the Connaught Hall. Walls and ceiling originally also had painted decoration. This is now the Landmark sitting room.

The room behind the Mayor's Parlour, which originally lead off from the Sessions, or Police, Court, is shown on Burges's plan as the Judges' Retiring Room, and on a 1924 plan as a Magistrates' Room, and is now the converted as the Landmark kitchen. The decorative scheme, which includes a simple daisy motif running

across the walls, has been painstakingly revived, as has its beautiful coffered ceiling.

Returning to the Ladywell entrance stairs, these lead up a further storey to a corridor serving the rooms of the former Minute Room suite, where clerks once toiled keeping records of the Council meetings. This upper corridor, all part of Burges's circulation plan and whose floor tiles are original, had much simpler painted decoration than the ceremonial rooms below, now revived. It backs onto the organ enclosure in the Connaught Hall on one side and on the other, has a view of an enclosed courtyard.

The suite of good-sized Minute rooms now serves for the two Landmark bedrooms and their bathrooms. Doors and their furniture are mostly original. The double aspect corner bedroom is marked in 1880 as 'Petty Jury offices' and in 1924 as the Muniment (archives) Room. It is thought that portraits of past mayors hung from picture rails in this room. The smaller bedroom was designated simply as an office in 1880, but in 1924 was called the Mayor's Room, perhaps in use as his private office. The secret views from the windows of the Minute Rooms across the roof slopes of the Maison Dieu are glimpses of gothic delight.

Restoration of the Mayor's Parlour

For once, Landmark was only involved with the restoration of the Mayor's Parlour in a consultative way, since the restoration works were carried out by Dover District Council. The story of the restoration of the wider site belongs to them, and is told fulsomely elsewhere in the Maison Dieu. This apartment was just a small part of that comprehensive programme of repair, refurbishment, re-wiring and decorative finishes carried out throughout the complex over a four-year period, a mighty project indeed.

The approach taken to the original 1880s decorative schemes where revealed throughout the site was, after detailed record photography of the trial areas, to cover them over with a protective layer of conservation-grade Japanese tissue, before recreating from them scratch in 2023-4 using the original paint colours and techniques. This was a more pragmatic and conservative approach than attempting to reveal them all. Wall paintings conservators from Arte Conservation used plastic stencils laser-cut by computer (Victorian stencils would have been made from waxed card or tin sheet), but otherwise the techniques were the same as those used by their Victorian predecessors.

To make the daisy design in the Retiring Room, for example, a template was carefully taped to the wall, then a small amount of paint applied, again and again (a bit like hammering), to build up the layers, with a thick flat-ended stencil brush (a technique known as stippling).

Self-closing fire doors were insisted upon by DDC (something Landmark usually tries to avoid through equivalent, but less obvious, fire safety measures). Many of the doors are therefore new, but carefully crafted to replicate the appearance of surviving originals.

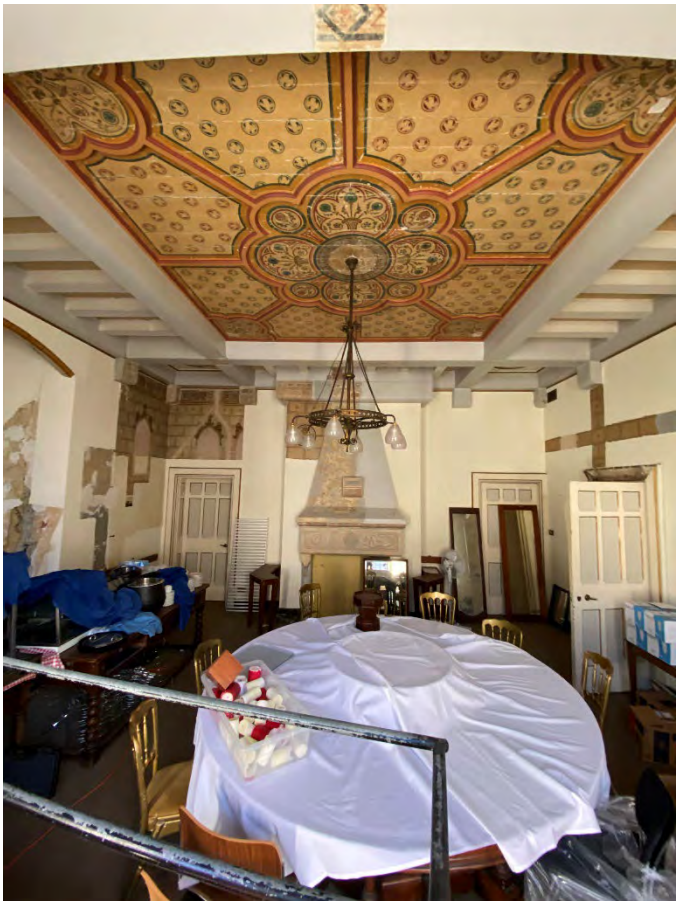
The original 1880s plans for the Mayor's Parlour included a special toilet known as a Thunderbox for the use of the mayor and special guests. The original Thunderbox was a portable toilet, often taken on military campaigns by high-ranking British army officers. Later versions were plumbed into houses and public buildings and a working replica has been recreated in the Mayor's Parlour suite.

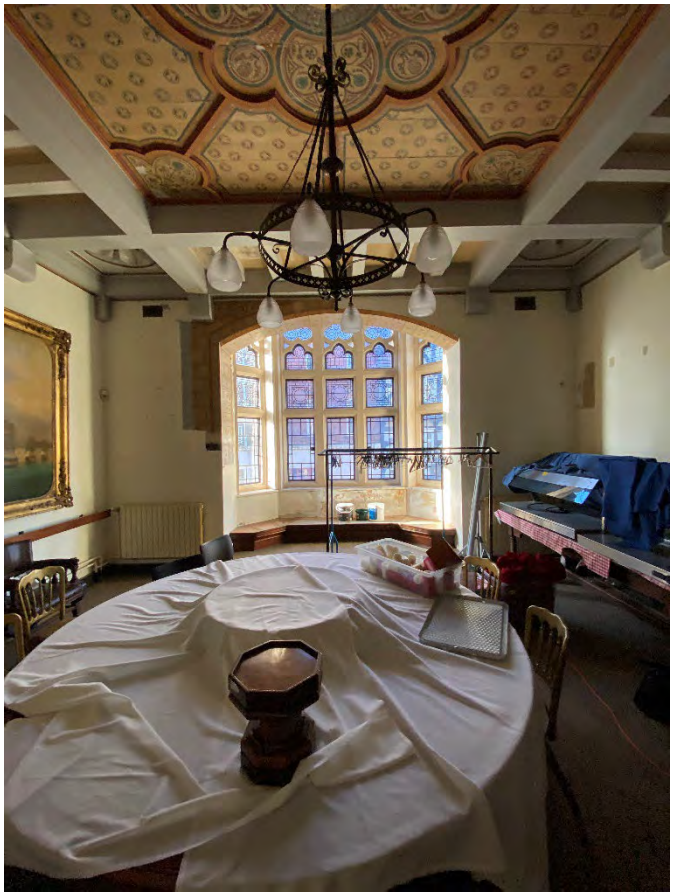
In common with the rest of the site, the apartment was entirely re-wired and new heating installed. Landmark's in-house joiner Mark Smitten made the new kitchen units, adopting Burges-style detailing. The bathrooms are also newly created.

The inner courtyard as seen from the upstairs corridor was considerably tidied up during the restoration, removing metal walkways and a former extension used as a kitchen, with an unsightly extract chimney. This courtyard has been reinstated as one of the most expressive examples of Burges's gothic vision on the whole site.

The following pages give a flavour of the transformation they effected in this small corner of the enormous Maison Dieu site.

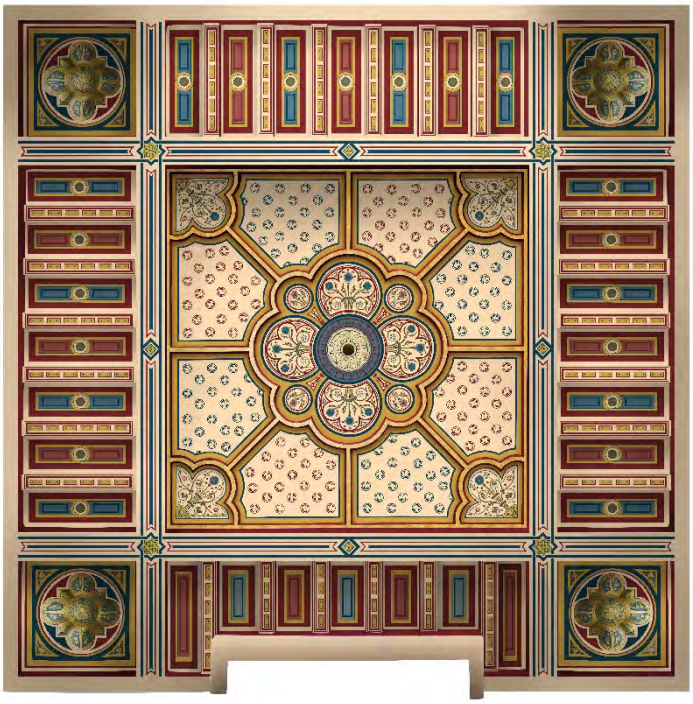
The external site setup in November, 2023.





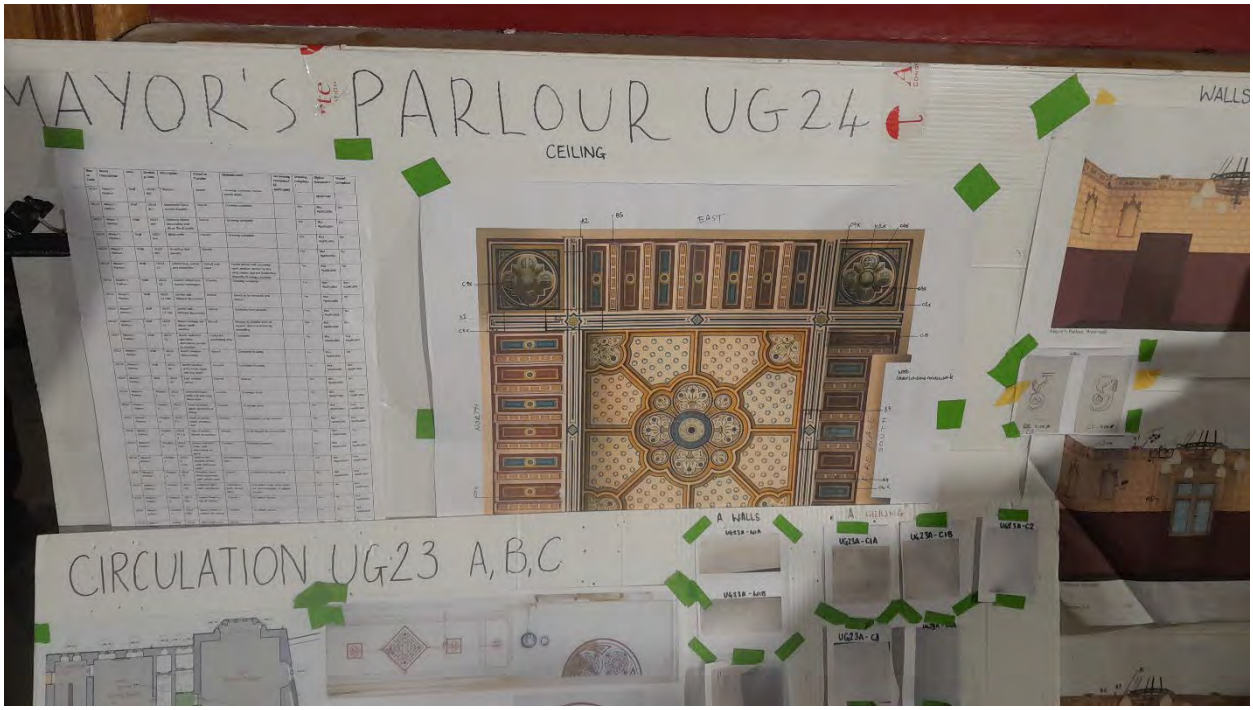
The Mayor's Parlour in 2021. Paint analysis and trial removals had already been carried out and gave a promise of what was waiting to be revealed. The massive table was too large to get out of the building, so had to be boxed in during the works (below).

The original 1880s' decorative scheme lay hidden beneath later paint layers, but the colours had faded or leeched out.



The promise of things to come: digital reconstruction of the Mayor's Parlour decorative scheme.

Work underway on the mayor's Parlour decorative scheme, November 2023. Before starting, the conservators created numerous reference panels. Meticulous on-site reference notes were essential.



All surviving paintwork on the ceilings was carefully revealed and cleaned using special poultices to draw out the dirt. Only then could touching in begin.

As originally, stencils were used to ensure regularity in the scheme.

The Magistrates' Retiring Room before work began, now the Landmark's kitchen. Vertical stencils of the daisy runs were used by the paint conservators to ensure the regularity of the setting out.

The urinal and WC before restoration, thoughtfully allowed for by Burges for witnesses and councillors.

First-floor corridor and north east courtyard before work began.

Pullan's chairs for the Mayor's Parlour with their carved lion-headed arms, made by Cobay Brothers of Hythe, were in poor condition. Restored, some are now back in use around the dining table.

Where needed, new door furniture was matched as closely as possibly to surviving originals.

The construction of the Mayor's Parlour table revealed. It is made of American walnut. Note too the piece of WW2 shrapnel embedded in its surface, a fragment from a cross-Channel shell, fired from a big German gun on the coast of France, that crashed through every floor of the fire station opposite, without exploding. It was a a narrow escape for the Maison Dieu. The fire station still has a WW2 air raid siren on the corner of their roof (visible from the bedrooms).