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Proceedings of the
SUFFOLK INSTITUTE
OF ARCHÆOLOGY

For 1968



VOLUME XXXI, PART 2
(published 1969)

PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY BY
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THE GUILDHALL, BURY ST. EDMUNDS

By MARGARET STATHAM, B.A.

In December 1966 the Bury St. Edmunds Borough Council met for the last time in the Guildhall. Although Bury did not become a chartered borough until early in the seventeenth century, such evidence as there is suggests that those of the townsmen who had been responsible for the town's affairs had been accustomed to meet at the Guildhall from the second half of the thirteenth century. It therefore seems appropriate that, after some seven centuries of use as a municipal building, an attempt should be made to record its history and architecture.

As will be seen from the plans (Figs. 22-3), the Guildhall consists of a porch which leads directly into the medieval hall. This has, in more recent times, been divided so as to give two large rooms on either side of a more or less central entrance vestibule. The room to the north is known as the court room while that to the south is the banqueting room. East of the court room is a range built in 1806/7 which contains, on the first floor, a room built as a council chamber, although it has not been used for this purpose since 1877. East of the banqueting room an outbuilding, now used as a workshop, still retains traces of its origin as a detached timber kitchen. Within the Guildhall there remains the larger part of the series of portraits of benefactors which was formed over the centuries, together with a few pieces of period furniture.

The early Guildhall

In considering the early history of the Guildhall it is perhaps best to start with a letter close of 1378.¹ This states that the Guildhall had been built many years before at the expense of the townsmen and that they provided for its maintenance by means of a levy imposed upon them by the alderman. It was used by them for holding councils and conferences, for the election of the alderman for the town's 'rule and reformation' and for assessing the tenth, fifteenth or other taxes granted to the king. This accords well with such earlier evidence as has come to light. The earliest literary reference to the Guildhall so far found dates from 1279, under which year the Bury Chronicle relates that Lords John of Cobham and Walter of Heliun came to the town and gave final judgement

¹ M. D. Lobel, *The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds* (Oxford, 1935), pp. 78-9, citing P.R.O., Close Roll, no. 218, m.10.

in the Guildhall against the goldsmiths and others of the town.² Then there is a record of the townsmen meeting here in 1290 to consider what action they should take concerning a dam which had been constructed by the Cellarer in the Tayfen.³ By 1292 there is evidence that it was the established custom for men to come to the Guildhall to take the oath to maintain the town and its customs.⁴ A little later, at the time of the outbreak of violence between abbey and townfolk in 1304, it appears that the townsmen were wont to hold what were described by the monks as 'illicit conventicles' at the Guildhall and that it was in use as the meeting place of the gild merchant.⁵ The street in which the building stands had already come to be known as Guildhall Street by 1295.⁶ These references show that even at this early date the Guildhall was used by the townsmen for the exercise of such civic privileges as were allowed them by the abbey—that it had, in fact, the attributes of a town-hall as much as those of a guildhall.

As in many monastic boroughs, succeeding abbots were loath to grant any great degree of municipal independence to the men of Bury. It is known that in Jocelin of Brakelond's time Bury was regarded as a borough⁷—although this later ceased to be the case as the legal 'tests' of borough status became more rigid—and that it had a thriving gild merchant. A little later this body appears to have attempted to take the municipal affairs of the town into its own hands and may have had hopes of acquiring a charter of incorporation from the Crown.⁸ By the first quarter of the thirteenth century it was the normal practice for the townsmen to elect an alderman, subject to confirmation by the abbot.⁹ It will be seen that, throughout the medieval period, the Guildhall was closely connected with this office. The construction of the building may therefore be placed with some confidence between the establishment of the office of alderman in the early part of the thirteenth century and the earliest known literary reference which occurs in 1279.

The inner entrance arch

The earliest surviving part of the Guildhall which can readily

² Antonia Gransden, *The Chronicle of Bury St. Edmunds 1212-1301* (1965), p. 67. Another early reference to the Guildhall dating from 1280-94 is possibly to be found in the same author's *The Letter Book of William of Hoo* (Suffolk Records Society, 1963), p. 54.

³ M. D. Lobel, *op. cit.*, p. 133, citing C.U.L. MS.Gg.4.4., folios 193-4.

⁴ Lord Francis Hervey (ed.), *The Pinchbeck Register* (Brighton, 1925), Vol. 1, p. 59.

⁵ B. & W.S.R.O., BA2/1.

⁶ B. & W.S.R.O., A4/1.

⁷ H. E. Butler (ed.), *The Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond* (1949), esp. pp. 72-82.

⁸ Lobel, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-82.

⁹ Lobel, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

be dated agrees well with the literary evidence outlined above. This is the inner entrance arch (Plate XIV) through which one passes from the porch into the entrance vestibule. The arch has three orders of colonettes and is richly decorated with dog-tooth decoration typical of the thirteenth century. The arch can be ascribed to the middle years of this century, and it is possible that other, less easily dateable, features have also been retained. These will be discussed below.¹⁰

The Guildhall and the struggle for municipal independence

Little has been found about the use of the Guildhall in the fourteenth century and nothing at all to suggest that any alterations or additions were made to the building at this time. Perhaps the turbulent years of the fourteenth century were not conducive to building activity on the part of the townsmen. Reference has already been made to a dispute between convent and town in 1304.¹¹ As early as 1327 the town was once more at loggerheads with the abbey, this time in perhaps the most serious of all the disputes between the two bodies. In the early stages of the rising it appears that the townfolk met at the Guildhall, no doubt to decide upon their plan of campaign, and subsequently the prior and a number of the monks were imprisoned there for several days. The outcome of this disturbance was that the townsmen lost all real hope of achieving municipal independence so long as the abbey of St. Edmund endured. At the height of the revolt they had extorted from the abbot a charter¹² for which he undertook to obtain royal confirmation. If this had been done, it would have been tantamount to a charter of incorporation. In the event, however, once order was restored, the charter was declared null and void, having been obtained under duress, and the townsmen were punished.¹³ Following the normal pattern in Bury—that as soon as royal control became weak, the men of Bury attempted to take advantage of the national situation to press their claims against the abbey—the Peasants' Revolt was marked by further violence in the town. On this occasion the townsmen again met at the Guildhall and succeeded in compelling the monks to hand over certain documents which concerned the town. These were retained for many weeks by the townsmen—no doubt at the Guildhall.¹⁴

¹⁰ See below, p. 131.

¹¹ Above, p. 118.

¹² T. Arnold (ed.), *Memorials of the Abbey of St. Edmund* (Rolls Series, 1896), Vol. III, p. 302.

¹³ For an account of the revolt, see M. D. Lobel, 'A detailed account of the 1327 rising at Bury St. Edmunds and the subsequent trial', *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxxi (1933), pp. 215-231.

¹⁴ E. Powell, *The Rising in East Anglia in 1381* (Cambridge, 1896).

Little now remains to be said of the Guildhall until one comes to consider the very considerable building activity towards the end of the fifteenth century. It is, however, worth recording that the Bury wills, which have survived with only one gap (save during the Commonwealth) from 1354, reveal that from time to time one of the burgesses left a small sum for the reparation of the Guildhall.¹⁵

The background to the fifteenth century developments

The major rebuilding of the Guildhall which took place in the second half of the fifteenth century probably reflects both the prosperity of the town at this period and an increased interest in municipal affairs. The prosperity of individual townsmen of the merchant class is abundantly illustrated by the wills of this period. These show that, for the time, they enjoyed a very high standard of living. Their houses were relatively large and well furnished and many of them owned considerably quantities of gold and silver plate. To a large extent this reflects Bury's position as one of the major cloth producing towns in East Anglia. It is not easy, perhaps, for those who know the town today to realise that it was once an important manufacturing centre and, so far as the evidence goes, appears to have also been one of the more populous towns in the country. In the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, taking the number of finished cloths stamped in each town as an indicator of prosperity, Bury, in 1457, ranked next after Hadleigh and Lavenham and above Ipswich and Sudbury.¹⁶ On a national level, it has not been possible to find figures to indicate Bury's ranking among the provincial towns in the late fifteenth century, but the tables given by Professor Hoskins place Bury thirteenth in 1377 with 2,445 taxpayers and twelfth in 1525-7 when £405 was paid in subsidy.¹⁷ It can reasonably be expected that Bury would have maintained its fourteenth century ranking or even stood a little higher.

A large number of guildhalls were either built or substantially modernised in the course of the fifteenth century.¹⁸ This very probably reflects the enhanced position of the merchant class at this time. The prevalence of churches wholly or partly rebuilt during this period—the so-called 'wool churches'—in districts such as East Anglia where the cloth industry flourished is often noted as a sign of the wealth and influence of this class. It seems reasonable to suppose that these same men would wish to provide

¹⁵ For example, John Osbern who left 10s. to the great hall called the Guildhall for its repair (B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Osbern*, f.1.).

¹⁶ G. A. Thornton, *A History of Clare, Suffolk* (Cambridge, 1928), p. 150.

¹⁷ W. G. Hoskins, *Local History in England* (1959), p. 176-7.

¹⁸ e.g. York, Norwich, Exeter.

their towns with guildhalls in keeping with their prosperity. In Bury, at any rate, it was from just this class, which can be proved from the wills to have given much money towards the rebuilding and adornment of the two parish churches, that those who are known to have been prominent in the affairs of the town (and likely, therefore, to have been concerned with the administration of the Guildhall) were drawn. Unfortunately, as we shall see, no evidence has been found to show who was responsible for the alterations which were made to the Guildhall at this time. These include the king-post roof and the porch, while it is very likely that the detached kitchen was either built or modernised at this period. It is even possible that the chamber range was added then to give the completely developed plan of the building but, as will be shown later, the evidence for the date of the building of this range is inconclusive.¹⁹

The king-post roof

Apart from some arch-braces in the court room, the late fifteenth century king-post roof is now hidden by later ceilings. It consists of ten bays, of which that at the north end is a modern replacement. The first truss from the south end, which marked the upper end of the hall where the dais would have been situated, is very ornate and has a moulded king-post. The other trusses, though elaborate in design, have mouldings only on the tie-beams. Lead can be assumed to have been the original roof covering from this time until its removal towards the end of the eighteenth century. There is no doubt whatever that originally the long side walls were both finished with parapets, although that on the east has now been removed apart from a few traces at the extreme north end of the building.²⁰

In describing the roof structure, it will be most straight forward to describe the lengthwise members first. Of the wall plate, little can be said for it appears that none of the original has survived. Between wall plate and ridge-piece, lengthwise stiffening is afforded by side purlins of triangular section. These would give a better appearance from below than purlins of square or rectangular section but may well have been weaker. Many of the scarf joints in the purlins fall mid-way between two trusses and have in many cases sagged and required repair in recent times. The ridge-piece itself,

¹⁹ See p. 152 below.

²⁰ For a comment on the use of lead as a covering for low pitched roofs with parapets see H. Munro Cautley, *Suffolk Churches and their Treasures* (Ipswich, 3rd edn., 1954), p. 111. The small remnant of the parapet on the east wall is of red brick, but there is no means of telling whether or not it is original. The change in the angle of the slope of the roof made when the open eaves were provided can be clearly seen at the back of the Guildhall.

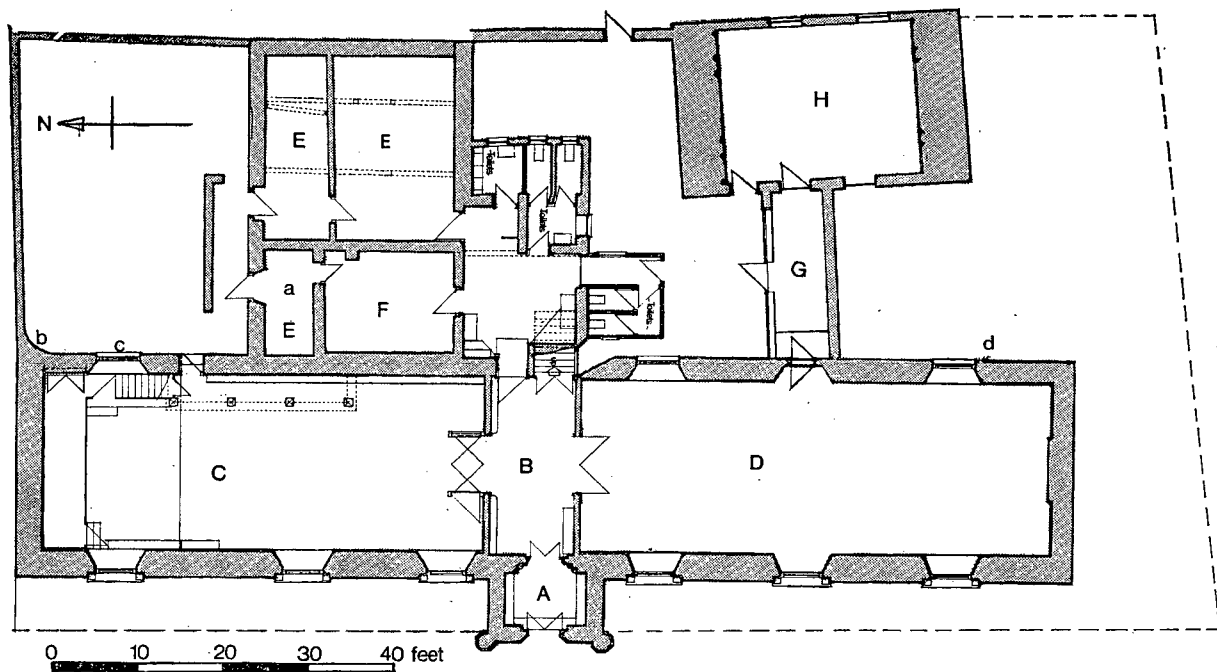


FIG. 22. Plan of ground floor.

KEY TO FIGS 22 and 23.—A, The porch; B, Entrance vestibule; C, Court room; D, Banqueting room; E, Store room; F, Modern kitchen; G, Passage to former kitchen; H, Former detached kitchen; I, Minstrel's gallery; J, Evidence House; K, Balcony; L, Magistrates' room; M, Room built as Council Chamber, 1806. a, Presumed site of well; b, Masonry projection; c, Blocked doorway beneath present window; d, Outline of edge of former window; e, The hutch.

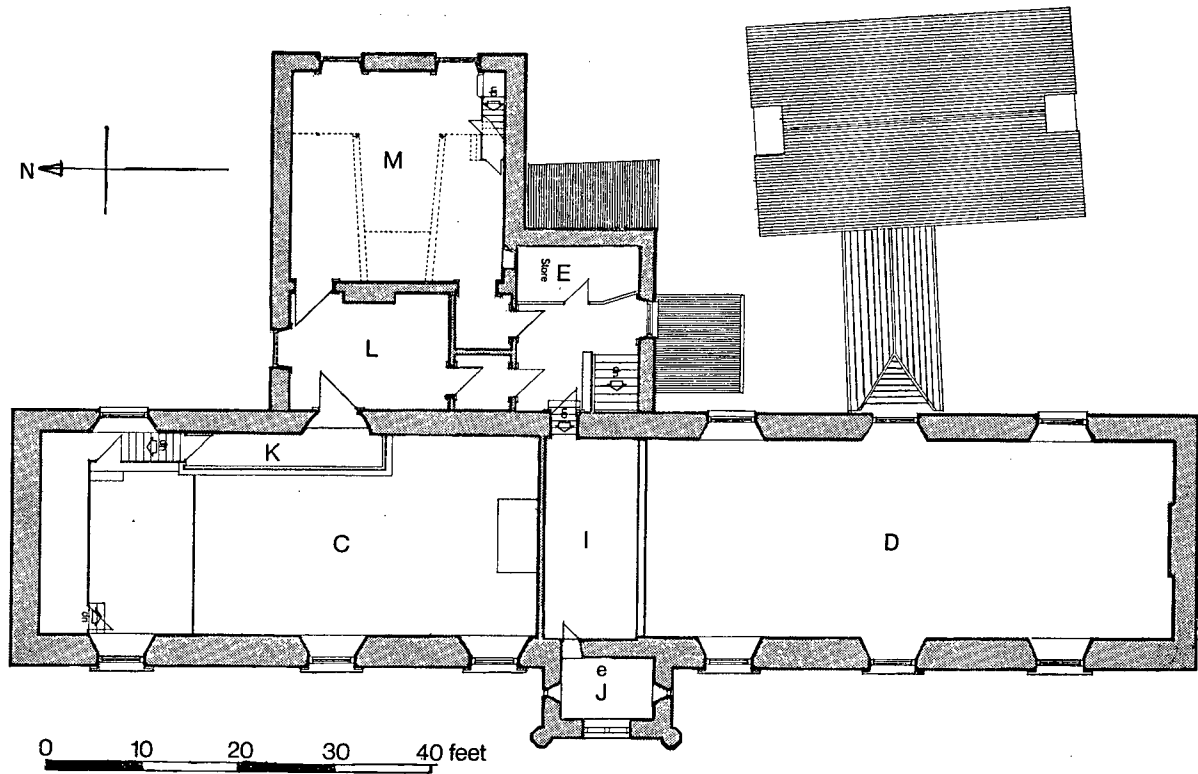


FIG. 23. Plan of first floor.

which is rectangular in section, is fitted below the apexes of the rafters.

The normal type of truss has a tie-beam with a pronounced camber. All the tie-beams were originally supported from beneath by wall posts which rested on stone corbels and were arch-braced to the tie-beams above. Including those on the north wall, five complete pairs of wall posts and arch-braces can be seen in the court room together with those forming the eastern part of a truss which is just past the present entrance to the room. Its counterpart on the west wall has been removed to allow for the insertion of the present sash window. The arch-braces belonging to the trusses above the banqueting room have been removed to allow for the coved ceiling, but the peg-holes into which they were once fixed are to be seen in the tie-beams. In some instances short lengths of the arch-braces appear, from the mouldings, to have been used to support the tie-beams above the present coved ceiling. It should be pointed out that all the tie-beams are above the ceilings and that the beam visible in Plate XIX is not part of the roof structure. It was probably inserted to give a sense of enclosure to the bench.

The cambered tie-beams, which are about 11 inches square, have ogee mouldings on the soffit, which is cut away to such an extent that the central rib is not more than about 3 inches wide. The trusses are placed at about ten or eleven feet intervals with six pairs of rafters between each truss except at the north end, where the first truss is about thirteen feet from the wall. This bay, which is now renewed, must have originally covered a cross passage which was formerly divided from the rest of the hall by a lath and plaster partition. Above the level of the present ceiling, this partition remains virtually intact and traces of it can be seen in Plate XIX between the wall posts and the arch-braces. It must have served to give some protection from the draughts created by the opposing doors at this end of the building which are marked on Warren's plan of 1742 (Plate XIII). The outline of the door in the east wall is still visible beneath the present window.

As will be seen from Plate XVI, in the normal form of truss the king-post is braced longitudinally upwards to the ridge-piece which it supports with long, curved braces. It is double braced downwards on to the tie-beam. The inner pair of braces on to the tie-beam is arched while the outer one is only slightly, if at all, curved. As they approach the tie-beam, these outer braces are halved into the queen-posts which rise from the tie-beam to support the side purlins. A wedge-shaped jowl is used on the inner side of each queen-post to reinforce the points where the queen-post meets the purlin and the purlin meets the rafter.

At the south end of the hall there is one truss which is quite

different from all the rest. Here the king-post is associated with bracing in the shape of large Saint Andrew's crosses. The king-post in this truss has a crisply moulded capital and base (see Plate XVII) between which the shaft is octagonal. From just above the capital there spring two pairs of braces, a short, stout pair which are morticed into the principal rafters of the truss and a longer, more graceful pair which are morticed into the ridge-piece. The unequal armed Saint Andrew's crosses on either side of the king-post are made up of two pairs of straight braces. One pair of braces (corresponding to the outer braces of the ordinary trusses) is morticed into the short braces which connect the rafters with the king-post just above the capital and then run parallel with the rafters to meet the tie-beam at a point between the queen-post and the wall. These are halved into a second pair of braces which rise from the tie-beam on either side of the king-post and meet the rafters just above the jowls of the queen-posts. The queen-posts of this truss are identical with those of the normal type of truss in the building having the outer pair of braces halved into them. The tie-beam in this truss is, however, straight and appears to be set a little lower than the others, though this may merely be due to settlement caused by the enormous weight which it supports. Much of the soffit is hidden by the ceiling of the room below, but at the outer ends, mouldings identical with those on the normal type of truss can be seen.²¹

Three types of joint are used consistently throughout the roof for distinct purposes. Braces are fixed to the members by mortice and tenon joints. Where two members cross, they are halved and pegged as, for instance, the outer straight braces are halved into the queen-posts. Lengthwise members, for example the side purlins, are joined by splayed scarf joints. In many cases the scarf joints in the side purlins which occur midway between trusses have sagged and necessitated extensive repairs.

The roof has been dated to the last quarter of the fifteenth century.²² Among the uniform scantling roofs of the south east of England parallels can be found for a roof such as this which has a king-post supporting a ridge and queen-posts supporting side purlins. The early fifteenth century nave roof of the church at Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire has this type of structure but, as is the case with a secular example above the hall of the fourteenth century Houghton Place, Sussex, it is not braced downwards on to the tie-beam.²³ It may even be that the curved braces which

²¹ Assembly marks have been found on each truss, the decorative truss at the south end being no. 1.

²² By Mr. J. T. Smith, Senior Investigator, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments.

²³ J. T. Smith, 'Medieval Roofs: A Classification', *Arch. Jour.*, cxv (1958), p. 114.

connect the king-post and the tie-beam should be regarded as a purely decorative feature. This roof has, however, despite its late mediaeval date, two features which relate it to a much older East Anglian building tradition. These are the queen-posts and the double braces. It will be recalled that this roof has at the south or upper end a truss in which there is a brace parallel to the rafters which is halved into the queen-post and is morticed into the curved braces which connect the king-post to the rafters. In the normal type of truss there is a corresponding brace which runs from the king-post to the tie-beam. This member shows every sign of being a descendant of the passing braces which have been noted in a number of thirteenth and fourteenth century aisled houses. This feature was noted at Fyfield Hall, Essex,²⁴ and a few examples have recently come to light in Suffolk, notably Edgar's Farm, Stowmarket²⁵ and Purton Green Farm, Stansfield.²⁶ In these early examples it is clear that the uniform scantling system of building required the doubling of members where additional strength was needed and had as a feature the use of long, straight braces which were halved into other members which they passed.²⁷ The other feature which links the late fifteenth century Guildhall roof with earlier roofs is the use of queen-posts. All the buildings mentioned above in connexion with passing braces were, of course, aisled. Naturally, at an early date, mediaeval carpenters sought means of dispensing with the arcade posts in order to leave the maximum amount of floor space clear. One way of achieving this was to place the entire aisled construction on the tie-beam. This technique was used at Merton College, Oxford, as early as 1300 when what amounts to a complete aisled structure was placed on a tie-beam high above the stone walls.²⁸ Similar treatment in timber houses has been noted in a number of instances in the eastern counties²⁹ and all the early hammer-beam roofs are designed on the same principal. A lingering memory of this kind of treatment appears to be retained in the Guildhall roof in the queen-posts which support the side-purlins. Regarded in this light, the queen-posts are akin to the arcade posts in an aisled structure. The old 'tie-beam' connecting them has, of course, by the late fifteenth century, disappeared.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

²⁵ J. T. Smith, 'A 14th Century Aisled House', *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxviii (1958), pp. 54-61.

²⁶ George and Sylvia Colman, 'A Thirteenth Century Aisled House', *Ibid.*, xxx (1965), pp. 149-165.

²⁷ Smith, *ut supra*, p. 60.

²⁸ Smith, 'Medieval Roofs: A Classification', p. 120.

²⁹ For example, Gate House Farm, Felsted, Essex and a building at Church Farm, Fressingfield, Suffolk, both of which are illustrated in Smith, 'Medieval Roofs: A Classification', pp. 121 and 122.

While noting these features which recall a building tradition found in some of the oldest surviving timber houses it must not be forgotten that the Guildhall is a stone building. It would, therefore, be reasonable to search for comparative features in the churches of similar date. King-post and ridge roofs have been recorded in the lowland areas of Britain, probably not dating from earlier than the fourteenth century, which are not, it must be noted, to be confused with the king-post and ridge roofs common in the northern and western areas of England. One of these which has, like the Guildhall roof, queen-posts as well as king-posts is at St. Stephen's Church, Ipswich. It is fairly low pitched with a short king-post and very much simpler in form than the Bury roof.

The detached kitchen

According to the first edition of Samuel Tymms' *A Handbook of Bury St. Edmunds* which was published in 1854 the Guildhall kitchen was then a timber framed building of the fifteenth century with good examples of the carved open windows of the period. There seems no reason to doubt Tymms' dating, although, unfortunately, no other description of the kitchen before it was substantially rebuilt, possibly between 1854 and 1864, has been found.³⁰ The only parts of the building as it now stands which might date from the fifteenth century are the bases of the chimney stacks, the upper parts of which have been rebuilt at a later date, probably in the latter part of the seventeenth century. The building is about 21 ft. 6 ins. by 34 ft. externally and 19 ft. by 18 ft. 6 ins. internally, the chimney stacks being nearly six feet from back to front. These are placed at the north and south ends of the kitchen and have fire openings about 8 ft. wide. At either side of the fire openings in the northern chimney are bread ovens some 3 ft. wide. The walls have in modern times been rebuilt in brick and the roof is also modern, though old tie-beams remain at either end of the kitchen.

As far as the documentary evidence goes, it can be assumed that there was a kitchen at the Guildhall by 1478 in which year it was recorded that guild feasts were wont to be held at the Guildhall.³¹ After the incorporation of the Borough in 1606 the Guildhall was the normal scene of the feasts held annually on the electing and then the swearing in of the new aldermen.³² It also seems possible that in addition to the roasting of aldermanic venison, the Guildhall kitchen was used to bake rye bread for distribution in doles to the

³⁰ The timber kitchen is not mentioned in the 1864 and later editions.

³¹ Lobel, *The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds*, p. 182.

³² Bury St. Edmunds Corporation Entry Books, *passim*. The feoffees, who normally feasted in January, preferred the Angel which may well have been better heated than the Guildhall.

poor.³³ The report on the Bury charities presented to the Finance Committee of the Town Council in 1839 states that the Guildhall kitchen was then occasionally used as a soup kitchen although only a few years earlier, in 1833, the feoffees had turned down a request that the kitchen should be made available to make good beef soup for the poor.³⁴ A spit rack, furnished with a spit, meat cage and turning gear which was removed from the Guildhall kitchen is now displayed in Moyses's Hall Museum. Early in the present century the kitchen was adapted for use as a mortuary, as is witnessed by the barred windows, and is now used as a workshop.

The Guildhall porch

The Guildhall porch is undoubtedly its best known feature and this part of the building alone has long been scheduled as an Ancient Monument. It is constructed of flint and stone with ornamental bands of brickwork on the front of the upper storey. The two side walls are of inferior workmanship and show signs of rebuilding.

Externally the porch is divided into three sections by horizontal string courses which run all the way round the structure. The lowest part of the front is faced with ashlar. Into this there is a doorway of which the arch is only very slightly pointed and which is set into a rectangular surround. Both doorways and surround have plain mouldings and in the spandrels there are two shields, the heraldry of which will be discussed below. The outer side of the oak door (apart from an obvious replacement at the bottom) is made of vertical panels which are in section like a low, very broad-based triangle. Moulded fillets cover the joints and the whole door is studded with large headed iron nails. It is battened on the inside and has hinges, handle and lock of heavy iron while an iron chain with a wedge at its end may well be all that remains of an iron closing bar.

Above the first string course there are alternating bands of knapped flint and small red bricks—three courses of flint lying between each band of two courses of bricks which are laid in stretcher bond. In the centre of the upper part of this section there is a two light window, the heads of which have very flat arches. The stones forming the heads look much newer than the rest of the window and may well have been renewed. Some support for this view is perhaps to be had from a view of the Guildhall (Plate XV*a*) taken in 1786 where the windows appear to be almost ogee headed. An eighteenth century cartouche depicting the arms of

³³ Suggested by an account of the duties of the receiver of the feoffment made c. 1623 (B. & W.S.R.O., ex H2/3/4).

³⁴ Printed copy in B. & W.S.R.O., H2/4/3.

Bury St. Edmunds now fills the space between door and window. Unfortunately there is no conclusive evidence from which to date this and it can only be suggested that the extraordinarily large payment of £23 17s. 0d. made to Thomas Singleton, a local stone mason and sculptor of some repute, in 1760 may relate to this.

Above the second string course there is a deep band of chequer board pattern made by alternating knapped flint with stone. The porch is finished with battlements, the three central merlons of which now have a quatrefoil while the parts joining the angle turrets are plain (Plate XV*b*). Comparison with Plate XV*a* will show that the porch is there shown as having only four complete merlons, each with a quatrefoil. In the same print the two angle turrets at the front corners of the porch also look as though they are rather higher than they are today. As there are signs of disturbance to the stonework of the battlements when seen from the roof of the porch, it is possible that the battlements have been rebuilt in comparatively modern times.

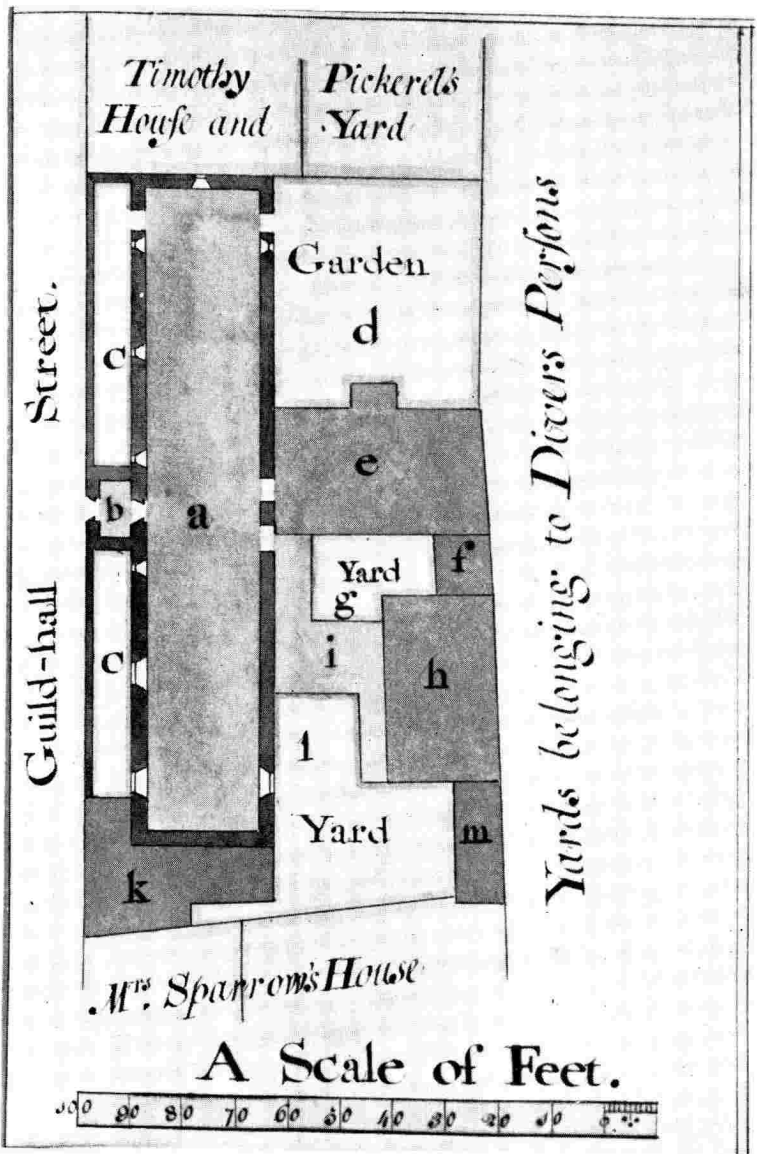
The workmanship of the side walls is much inferior to that of the front and not even the chequer pattern is properly carried out. They are built of flint and rubble in which there is mixed a fairly high proportion of dressed stone. As will be seen from Plate XV*a*, prior to the alterations of 1806 there was a high stone wall in front of the Guildhall. Signs of infilling in the walls confirm that the height of this wall was much as shown on the print, and the angle turrets have been renewed after the removal of the wall. Just behind the infilling in the wall, necessitated by the removal of the street wall, clearly defined straight edges of dressed stone can be seen. Similar straight edges, the line of which can also be traced inside the Evidence House, can be seen in the walls of the upper storey just behind the angle turret and terminating about a foot below the second string course where there is a horizontal line of dressed stones. It does not seem unreasonable to suppose from this that the side walls of the porch were originally part of an earlier porch which was incorporated into the present structure when it was enlarged and remodelled in the latter part of the fifteenth century.

The vault in the ground floor room of the porch is in section like a four centred arch and has ribs dividing it into six panels. Two circular bosses, enclosing shields painted with the same arms as in the spandrels of the outer door, cover the intersection of the ribs with the ridge rib, which is itself terminated at either end by semicircular bosses. Just below the lower ribs of the ceiling are narrow bands of decoration, similar to that to be seen in most buildings of the period, consisting of stylised flower motifs 2 inches square. A very similar treatment is used, for example, in the nave of the Cathedral Church of St. James at Bury. Narrow stone seats

run along both sides of the porch. The uncouth graphiti date from the autumn of 1967.

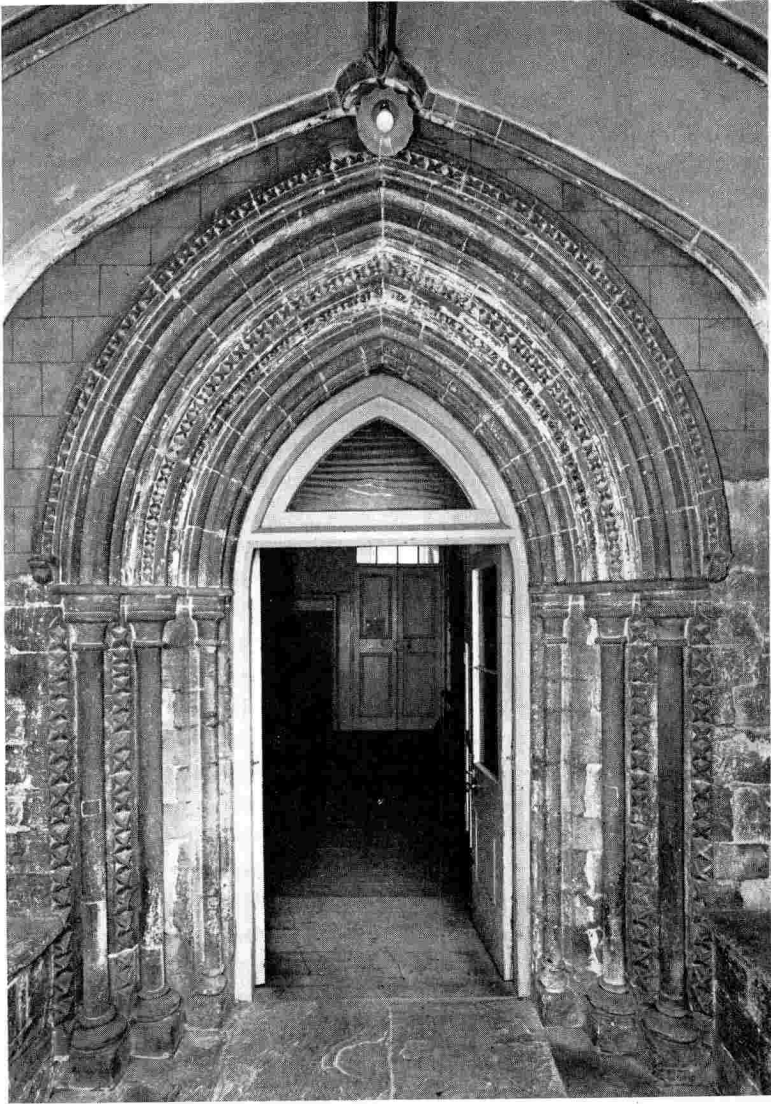
The room above the porch—the Evidence House—is entered from the minstrels' gallery in the banqueting room which is situated above the entrance vestibule. Before discussing the room itself, it should be noted that it seems inevitable that some form of gallery should have been built at the same time as the Evidence House to afford access to it. Part of this structure is very likely to be seen in a wall post and solid bracket at the north east corner of the part of the hall which now forms the entrance vestibule. The wall post has a stopped chamfer and closely resembles those of the roof which can be seen in the Court Room. The solid bracket is shaped like half of a four-centred arch. It is impossible to tell whether or not the other three brackets supporting the gallery are now hidden under plaster or, indeed, whether this one supports the present structure or is left over from an earlier gallery.

The Evidence House is entered through a small doorway in the west wall of the minstrels' gallery. Unfortunately, the stout oak door, with its variable but always considerable number of locks, which is so frequently mentioned in the records of the feoffees has now been replaced by a light, modern door. The room measures about 7 ft. by 10 ft. and is about 7 ft. 6 ins. high, its ceiling being, like that of the room below, four centred in section. In the thickness of the east wall, that is, just above the inner entrance arch, there is built what can best be described as an early wall safe. The oak door measures 3 ft. 6 ins. by 2 ft. 10 ins. and is reinforced with iron bands around its edges and dividing its surface into six panels. Large portions of the two lower side panels are covered with iron plates to protect the locks and the whole surface is studded with regularly spaced large headed iron nails. The four vertical iron strips are simply decorated with incised lines which connect the nail heads in a diamond pattern. The door is hinged to two iron bars, stoutly bound together, which measure 5 ft. 5 ins. by 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins. There is an iron ring in the bottom central panel which, if it were still possible to open the door, would fit into an iron hook fixed into the ceiling. The possibility that this safe is a clue to dating the porch will be discussed on page 133 below. The room is lit by two small windows in the side walls, which are glazed with very small diamond shaped panes, and the two light window in the front of the porch. This is glazed with slightly larger panes and some of the glass at the top of the window is greeny yellow in colour with a pitted surface. Each light of this window has a saddle bar about a third of the way down the straight edges below the head. The lower part of the southern light is made to open by means of an iron catch, the handle of which extends about half way across the window. This is decorated at the end with two loops—rather like the handle of a

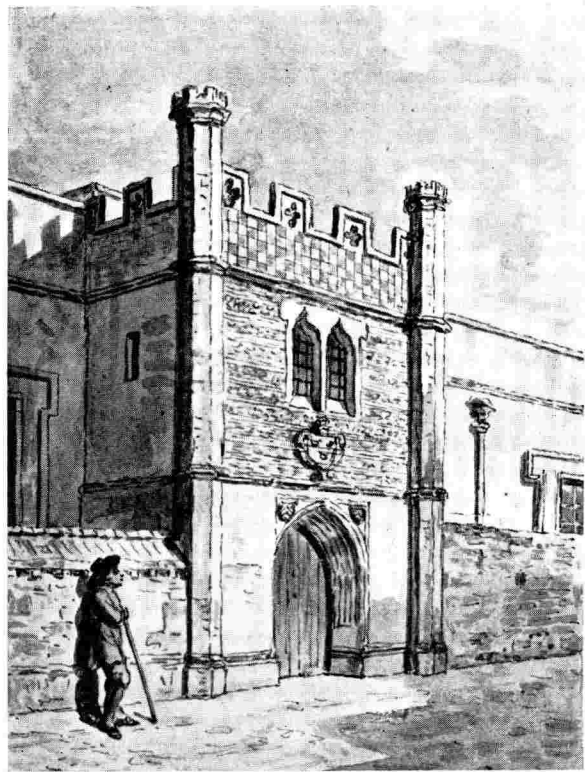


Bury St. Edmunds Guildhall, Warren's plan, 1742. Key: a, hall; b, porch; c, yards next the street; d, garden; e, offices under council chamber; f, an out house; g, inner yard; h, kitchen; i, passage into kitchen; k, hall keeper's dwelling house; l, hall-keeper's yard; m, hall-keeper's wood house.

PLATE XIV



The inner entrance arch.

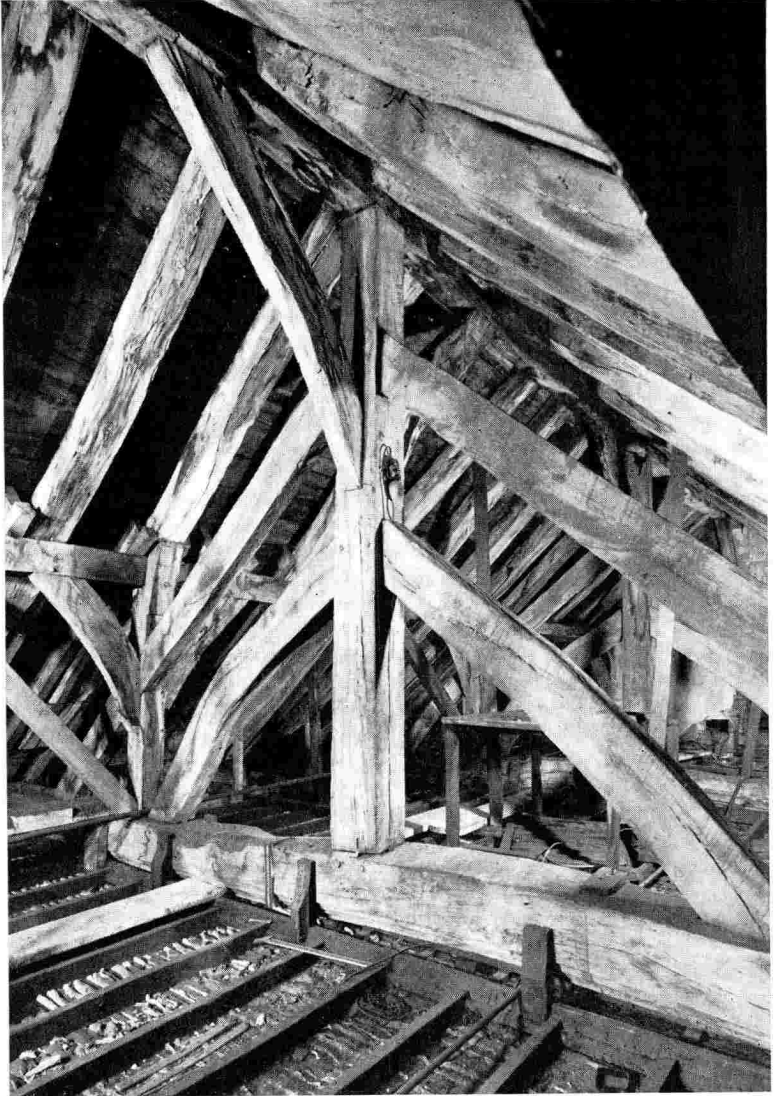


a. The porch from the north-west, 1786.



b. A recent view of the porch from the south-west.

PLATE XVI



Normal type of truss.

pair of scissors—and a decorative finial. On the outside the window is protected by a stout iron grill.

As its name suggests, the Evidence House was for many centuries used as a strong room for the storage of the muniments of both the Guildhall Feoffees and the Bury St. Edmunds Corporation. Many of the documents were removed in the course of the nineteenth century. It was, however, only in 1937 that the room finally ceased to be used for this purpose. The remaining documents were then removed to the Muniment Room in the Borough Offices on the establishment of what is now the Bury St. Edmunds and West Suffolk Record Office. The oak press in which the documents used to be stored has now disappeared.³⁵ The feoffees' book contains a number of references to the disposition of keys to locks on the door of the Evidence House itself.

The development of the Guildhall to c. 1500

From the foregoing account it appears that a guildhall has stood on this site from at least the middle years of the thirteenth century. The richness of the architectural treatment of the inner entrance arch, which survives from this period, suggests that this has always formed part of the principal entrance to the building. Although it has obviously been recut, there is nothing to suggest that it has ever been reset. Signs that there was an earlier, probably smaller, porch, parts of which were incorporated into the present one when it was remodelled towards the end of the fifteenth century, have already been noted. It is on the whole unlikely that these were the only parts of the thirteenth century building to be retained when it was altered in the fifteenth century. Probably some at least of the walls of the hall also date from this time but there are now no features visible which point conclusively to a thirteenth century date.

It is equally possible that features of the late fifteenth century rebuilding may also have been obscured by modern alterations. For example, the timber-framed chamber range, which was demolished in 1806, may well have formed part of this work. On Tymms' evidence³⁶ the detached timber kitchen, now very much altered, can be considered as part of the same phase of building activity. The porch was remodelled and the hall re-roofed.

It is quite clear from the roof that, whatever internal or external alterations it has seen, the hall itself has not changed in size since it was re-roofed at the end of the fifteenth century. The king-post roof was tailor made to fit the hall as it is now. Its dimensions are, externally, about 27 ft. 6 ins. by 124 ft. 6 ins. and, internally, about

³⁵ *Historical Manuscripts Commission, 14th Report, Appendix, Part VIII* (1895), p. 121.

³⁶ See above, p. 127.

21 ft. 6 ins. by 119 ft. The east or back wall of the hall has not been faced with brick and is built of mortared flint and rubble which was, as far as can be seen, laid in regular courses. Including internal panelling, this wall is about 3 ft. thick; the front wall is not quite so thick and may have been cut back when the brick facing was carried out in 1806.

The fenestration of the hall has been completely modernised in the eighteenth and later centuries. There is, indeed, a small window, now blocked up, in the north gable end above the level of the present ceiling which may be of an early date. Unfortunately, for purposes of dating, it has been filled with modern material from a point below the springing of the head. The main evidence for the position and size of windows prior to the eighteenth century alterations is to be found in Warren's ground plan made in 1742 (Plate XIII). Here the hall appears as one long, narrow room. In the part which is now the court room there are three small windows at the front of the building and two equally small ones, one in the north wall and the other at the north end of the back wall. Another small window is shown in what is now the banqueting room close to the porch but there are three much larger ones at the south end, two at the front of the building and one at the back. In most cases it appears that the windows shown on this plan have been enlarged to form the present sash windows while the infilling necessitated by the blocking of the window in the south east corner of the banqueting room can be seen on the back wall. Another window, apparently at first floor level, is mentioned in the specification for the rebuilding of the council chamber in 1806; this was where the door from the magistrates' room to the balcony is now.³⁷

In addition to the main central entrance, it seems likely that there must have been from the fifteenth century an entrance passage at the north end of the hall. The two opposing doors are shown on Warren's plan and one can still be traced under the window which is now in that place on the east wall. It is very tentatively suggested that this cross passage may have originally led to an external staircase at the back of the building. At the north-east corner of the building there is a projection which seems to be part of the original building. At right angles to the wall, it extends to a height of about nine feet at which point three pieces of dressed stone protrude from the flint and rubble wall. Beside and above these there are distinct signs that a former opening in the wall has been filled in. Although, unfortunately, all the evidence is of late date, it does not seem impossible that, before the eighteenth century alterations, at least part of the hall may have had two storeys. This is far from conclusive as it could have referred to the

³⁷ *E*x H2/3/3.36, printed as Appendix III, below.

rooms under the Council or Great Chamber but it is perhaps more likely to refer to the hall. The rooms under the chamber were probably used for domestic purposes. On 21 December 1752 the Guildhall feoffees agreed that Samuel Cumberland, administrator of the goods of Philip Beart, deceased, might have the liberty to sell the latter's goods by auction in the Guildhall *below stairs* from 12th to 30th January following. A fairly large space which could be used for storage somewhere in the Guildhall can probably be assumed. There is a sixteenth century reference to pageant floats being stored there³⁸ while there are frequent references which suggest that building materials far beyond those required for repairs to the building itself were conveyed to, and presumably stored at, the Guildhall.³⁹

Apart from the cross passage at the north end and the gallery in the middle affording access to the Evidence House, little can be deduced about the internal arrangement of the hall. From the elaborate roof truss at the south end we know that this must have been the upper end where, no doubt, was the dais for the alderman. Possibly the larger windows at the south end shown on Warren's plan reflect an attempt to elaborate this end of the hall, which may have been part of the fifteenth century alterations. There may well have also been a shallow fireplace in the south wall. The present chimney stack is of the same eighteenth century date as the fireplace which it serves. None of the roof timbers show smoke blackening so, if the hall was heated at all, there must have been a chimney here. When the room was under repair in 1961, a few floor tiles of pink, grey and buff colour, mainly 8 ins. square but some about 15 ins. square were found under the wooden floor in the banqueting room close to the door.⁴⁰ Oyster shells were found in the south east corner of the same room.⁴¹

The 'common hutch' as a clue to dating the porch

Much more will have to be said later about the charity founded by John Smyth, who died 28 June 1481, to provide for the payment of town taxes. At this point it is only necessary to note one of the clauses of his will which reads:

Also I wyll that the money thereoff every yere clerely receyvvd be put and reservid in a hoche or in a nothir

³⁸ B. & W.S.R.O., H1/1/15.

³⁹ B. & W.S.R.O., H2/6/2.1, p. 28 has, for example, 'It was ordered that five hundred bourd taken from the Guildhall by Mr. Barber longe since should be demanded of his executrix to be redelivered thither againe.'

⁴⁰ West Suffolk Local History Report 62/6 (Typescript copies, B. & W.S.R.O. and Bury St. Edmunds Public Library).

⁴¹ Information from Mr. L. E. H. Payne.

convenient place after the discrecon of the said alderman and burges' and feoffes for the tyme beyng in the stede of an alderman faylyng so that it be turned ne putt to no odyr use but over to the execucyon and fulfylling of this my last wyll as they wyll answeare afore the Jugement of Our Lord Jhu' Christ at the day of dome etc.⁴²

It has already been pointed out that from a very early date the Guildhall was regarded as the centre of all civic activities in the town. It must now be remembered that John Smyth's bequest was for essentially municipal purposes and that the feoffees of his will, as will be shown in greater detail later, had for many centuries a very close interest in the Guildhall. Indeed, from 1569 until 1893 they were to own the building and it is almost certain that they had some interest in it before that. It would not, therefore, be at all surprising if the first feoffees made arrangements for the security of the money arising from this bequest in the Guildhall. Some of the Bury wills of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries suggest that this was indeed the case. It is further suggested that the safe built into the wall of the Evidence House may well have been provided to enable the feoffees to comply with the clause in John Smyth's will quoted above and that this in turn necessitated the alterations to the porch towards the end of the fifteenth century.

The earliest reference to what was known as the hutch or the common hutch in the Guildhall is to be found in the will of Margaret Odeham (*d.* 1493) who was the first of many benefactors to augment the endowments of the feoffees of the will of John Smyth. Her will says:

Also I wyll that my said feoffees in the londes and hows above seyde have the keypyng of the dedys concernyng the same, the terrere wyth that oon part of thys indentur to be putt and kepte in the hutch of the Gyldehalle.⁴³

The will of John Hovyll, which was proved 6 March 1515/16, makes it quite clear that the brethren of Candlemas gild kept the

⁴² The Registered copy of John Smyth's will is to be found B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Hawlee*, f. 304. This version, printed by Samuel Tymms, *Wills and inventories from the Registers of the Commissary of Bury St. Edmunds and the Archdeacon of Sudbury* (Camden Society, 1850), has a number of obvious omissions. More accurate copies of the original indentures which form this lengthy will are to be found among the feoffees' records in John Woodward's Register (B. & W.S.R.O., H1/6/1). This and all other quotations from Smyth's will are taken from an English translation of *c.* 1500 (B. & W.S.R.O., H1/2/1) which, from the other contents of the book, seems likely to have been the version which was read out annually before the assembled feoffees.

⁴³ B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Pye*, f. 8.

money arising from John Smyth's bequest in the Guildhall. In his case he used the hutch as a safe deposit for a document which was apparently designed to ensure the eventual proper disposition of goods which he had entrusted to the abbot and convent for safe keeping:

I wyll also that the seid 60 li. in money, the 18 spones of sylver (whiche I have govyn to my seid 3 sones) with all the deeds concernyng my seyde 2 tenements and howses be delyveryd to my lord abbot of Bury, the prior and convent of the same monastery, by indenture under the comen seall, ther saffly to be kepide in ther vestry to be redylyvered to my seid childryn whan they fortune to come to there seid ages accordyng to this my wyll, the which indenture by convent seall I will shalbe delyveryd and leyd in the comen hocche of the Gildehalle in Bury wherin the bredryn of Candelmesse gilde kepe the money that longeth to the towne of Bury aforesaid, and I will that the gilde shall have therefor 20s.⁴⁴

A little later still there is an instance of a testator directing that money should be kept in the hutch until the beneficiary came of age. William More, yeoman, whose will was proved in 1553, has the following clause:

And I wyll the sayd vi marcs so to her bequethyd remayne in the hutche beyng in the Gyldehall of the sayd town of Bury untill the said Alys shall come to the sayd age.⁴⁵

Some sixteenth century accounts, covering the years 1520–1530, of the Candlemas gild also throw some light on the chest or hutch. This gild very soon came to have an interest in the lands left to the town by John Smyth and these accounts relate to the revenues from Smyth's bequest. Instead of ending with the usual formula that so much remained in the hands of the accountants at the end of the year a number of these accounts end by saying that there remained so much to be put into the chest, or the common chest. From the same accounts, it also appears that there was in the hutch a copy of the will of John Plandon, proved in 1491, in which he had entrusted the viewers of the will of John Smyth to ensure that his heirs carried out certain charitable bequests.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Hoope*, f. 21.

⁴⁵ Samuel Tymms, *A Handbook of Bury St. Edmunds* (6th edn. with additions by J. R. Thompson, 1891), p. 103.

⁴⁶ Bodleian Library MS. Suffolk b.1., folios 8–28v. The Registered copy of Plandon's will is B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Pye*, f. 17.

Unfortunately the indenture annexed to the will of Margaret Odeham in which the earliest reference to the hutch is found cannot be precisely dated. The date copied into the Probate Register is obviously wrong as internal evidence shows that the document was drawn up after the death of John Smyth in June 1481 and almost certainly after the provisions of his will, such as the annual reading of it, had begun to be carried out. It must, however, have been made before 20 January 2 Richard III (1485), when a re-feoffment of the Odeham properties was made, and, in reciting the original deed, the scribe marked the error by inserting the words 'evidentia apparet' above the date.⁴⁷ If it is correct to suppose that the Guildhall porch was remodelled to provide strongroom accommodation required for the proper implementation of John Smyth's bequest to the town, the work must have been carried out after his death in June 1481 and some time prior to January 1485.⁴⁸

The heraldry of the porch

It was hoped that the heraldry of the Guildhall porch would be useful in testing this hypothesis. There are four shields in the porch, two in the spandrels of the outer door and two on the ceiling bosses, on each of which is depicted the same coat of arms. It is possible that the present colours are not quite correct owing to the tendency of colours to fade and metals to tarnish but, for what it is worth, the coat as it now appears can be blazoned thus: *or, a chevron gules between three eagles displayed sable, membered gules*. It is virtually certain that this coat must have been borne by the person who paid for building the Guildhall porch or, perhaps, an alderman of Bury during whose term of office the porch was built. Unfortunately, it has so far proved impossible to identify this coat of arms. A reference to the same coat has been found in a MSS. book of church notes compiled by Tom Martin (1697–1771) who noted a coat in St. Mary's church, Bury St. Edmunds, 'on a seat near Baret's tomb' which he blazoned as '*. . . a chevron between three eagles displayed sable membered gules*.'⁴⁹ This at least helps to give the coat a local connexion and some association with St. Mary's church. It ought, perhaps, to be pointed out that John, or Jankyn, Smyth, who is so closely connected with the Guildhall, bore *azure, a bend between seven billets or*.

⁴⁷ B. & W.S.R.O., H1/1/48. The incorrect date of the making of Margaret Odeham's will is 12 January 1478.

⁴⁸ A chest removed from the Evidence House to Moyse's Hall Museum has also been identified with the chest which Jankyn Smyth ordered to be provided. It seems to be of the type described by H. Copinger-Hill, 'An Armada Chest', *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxiv (1946), pp. 30–31, but rather more complicated.

⁴⁹ B. & W.S.R.O., Ac. 1183, p. 179.

The ownership of the Guildhall

It has already been noted that the Guildhall was built and maintained at the expense of the townsmen. This would inevitably lead them to regard the building as their own property or, at least, to consider that it was an adjunct to the office of alderman. However, the Guildhall can hardly have been owned by them. What evidence there is suggests that the abbot or sacrist allowed the townsmen to have their Guildhall in return for an annual rent. A few references to this subject have survived from the 1470's which are instructive in illustrating the tension felt between abbey and town on the subject. The version of the town customs drawn up in 1470 stated that the alderman owned ('habet') the Guildhall throughout his term of office.⁵⁰ It may well mean no more than that the alderman was responsible for the Guildhall during his aldermanry. It would probably be fair to assume that the right to have a Guildhall, like all privileges of a municipal nature, was tolerated rather than encouraged by the abbey. Later in the same decade, probably in 1478, it is rather surprising to find that in the course of a dispute between abbey and town the townsmen claimed that the alderman should receive certain rents from obedientiaries of the abbey towards the cost of repairing the Guildhall. It is significant that the complaint implies that the upkeep of the Guildhall was a duty incumbent upon the alderman:

Whereas ye Alderman ought to have towards repairing ye Guildhall and keeping of his port certain quit rents—viz. 8s. 3d. per annum of ye Sacrist, Almoner and Hospitaller of ye monastery and 1 sold. and xd. quit rent, these rents having long been and are detained by supportation of ye abbot and his officers against right and conscience.⁵¹

The abbot's reply to this complaint, which shows every sign of being a fair statement of the facts, makes it clear that in his eyes the Guildhall was intended purely as a meeting place for the guilds. Perhaps it was inevitable that, at a time of dispute between abbey and town, the alderman and burgesses were not mentioned in this connexion:

Item as to the IIInd article the seid abbot saith that the yeldhall of the said town apperteyneth to the seid abbot as in right of this house and not unto the men of the town of

⁵⁰ N. M. Trenholme, 'The English Monastic Boroughs', *The University of Missouri Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1927), p. 98.

⁵¹ Trenholme, *op. cit.*, p. 103. For the dating of this document see Lobel, *The Borough of Bury St. Edmunds*, p. 161.

Bury but that by lycence of thabbot or sexteyn men of the town of Bury have held the seid gildehalle to hold in there gildes and gildefests and for none other cause paying yerely for such lycence had a certeyn rent etc. and that it apperteyneth not to the alderman to have such rent of the sexteyn almoner nor hospitler of the seid monastery of Bury as it is supposed in the said article . . .⁵²

No evidence has been found to show how the money required for the extensive work carried out at the Guildhall in the latter part of the fifteenth century was raised. It is unlikely that the abbey, as owner of the building, would have been prepared to meet the cost. Had the money been raised from contributions from the townsmen as a whole it would be reasonable to expect this to be reflected in a series of bequests in the Bury wills.⁵³ If we are to look for an individual, there is no more likely person than John Smyth. It is true that there is no direct evidence that he provided the money for rebuilding the Guildhall, but there is a strong tradition that he gave the Guildhall to the town. He cannot have given it in the sense of having given the town a legal title to the building but, as we shall see, it would have been very much in character had he paid for the building work. There is often a germ of truth in traditions of this kind and this might well be what happened in this case.

John Smyth and his feoffees

Although John Smyth is usually referred to in Bury by the familiar form of his name, Jankyn, this was not, of course, used in formal documents of the fifteenth century. The combination of the most commonly found Christian and surnames often makes it difficult to be certain that a reference is to this John Smyth. However, mainly from his will and the heraldry which was formerly in St. Mary's church, there are a few clues which, if followed up, may ultimately enable us to work out the life story of Bury's pre-eminent benefactor.

The date of John Smyth's birth is not known. His parents, of whom nothing is at present known save their names, were called John and Hawise. From the heraldry which was formerly on his

⁵² Lobel, *idem*, p. 182. The decree in Star Chamber terminating this dispute in favour of the abbot is printed *Monasticon*, III, p. 168.

⁵³ Not all the Bury wills have been searched but extensive sampling has failed to reveal any such series. Mr. Oswald has, however, pointed out in his article on Simon Clerk in John Harvey, *English Mediaeval Architects*, that the missing Bury register, Herdman, which is known from extracts made by Sir Symonds d'Ewes (Brit. Mus. Harl. MS. 294, folios 156-9) related to wills proved between 1483 and 1491. There is, alas, no evidence connecting Clerk or other master masons who were among the early feoffees with building work at the Guildhall.

brass in St. Mary's church it is probable that his wife Anne's maiden name was Roche. John and Anne had two children, a son who was also called John and a daughter called Rose. One passage in Jankyn Smyth's will suggests that his son might be expected to try to upset his will. Otherwise nothing more has been found out about him so far.

From the will, reinforced by the heraldry which was formerly in the north chancel aisle of St. Mary's church, it is thought probable that Jankyn's daughter Rose may have married Richard Yaxley who was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the county of Suffolk in 1465. Rose had died before her father's death in 1481, but Jankyn left substantial bequests to the children of Richard Yaxley and his wife Rose.⁵⁴

So far it has not been possible to determine what Jankyn Smyth's occupation was. In deeds he is described as 'gentleman' until *c.* 1457, thereafter as 'esquire'. There is, however, ample evidence that he was very prominent in local affairs. Although there are a number of gaps in the list of those who held the office of alderman of Bury in the fifteenth century, the name of John Smyth occurs no less than seven times between 1423 and 1461. It may perhaps be doubted whether it was Jankyn Smith who was elected alderman in 1423 on the grounds that this term is so much earlier and isolated from the later terms, but it is by no means impossible. There is little, if any, doubt that it was Jankyn who was alderman in 1442, 1443, 1444, 1455, 1460 and 1461. In addition, it appears from the townsmen's complaint of *c.* 1478 that Jankyn Smyth was elected for a further term in the early 1470's but that for some reason which cannot now be ascertained the abbot refused to confirm the election.⁵⁵ During his lifetime Jankyn Smyth was responsible for building the two chancel aisles of St. Mary's church. The north chancel aisle is known to have been finished by 1463 when the building of the south chancel aisle was already contemplated.⁵⁶ The latter is known to have been completed by the time Jankyn Smyth made his will in December 1480, but may well have been finished much earlier, perhaps by 1469. In this year a bequest was made for the adornment and re-dedication of the high altar so it is reasonable to assume that by then the sacrarium,

⁵⁴ For the Smyth heraldry which was formerly in the north chancel aisle of St. Mary's church at Bury and on the Smyth brass (now in the Lady chapel) see B. & W.S.R.O., Ac. 1183, pp. 182, 184 and Samuel Tymms, *An Architectural and Historical Account of the Church of St. Mary, Bury St. Edmunds* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1854), pp. 55, 161n. and 186. For Smyth's will, see n.42 above.

⁵⁵ Lobel, 'A list of the Alderman and Bailiffs of Bury St. Edmunds from the twelfth to the sixteenth century', *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxii (1934), pp. 26, 27. For the term 1442-43 see *Cal. Pat. Rolls, Hen. VI*, Vol. iv, p. 199. For the abbot's refusal to confirm Smyth's election see Trenholme, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

⁵⁶ Will of John Baret, B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Hawlee*, f. 95.

which is also attributed to Jankyn Smyth by reason of the similarity of the architectural style, was complete.⁵⁷ The south chancel aisle would surely have been finished before the sacrarium was built. There can be little doubt that Jankyn Smyth also promoted building activity at the College of Jesus which he founded during his lifetime and for which, in accordance with his will, his executors obtained a charter of incorporation on 5th November 1481.⁵⁸ The date of Jankyn Smyth's death, 28 June 1481, is given in some verses written in his praise which are here quoted in full:

John Smyth

The which John this lyvelode hath yoven, passid to God he is
 On the Peter's evyn at midsomer as Godys wyll is
 In the yere of Our Lord M^cCCCCLXXX and oon.
 Late us all of charite pray for the soule of John.
 We put yow in remembrance that ye shall not misse
 The keypyng of his dirige and also of his misse
 On the Peter's evyn is wyn ye dirige xal be seed
 And on the Peter's evyn the masse with many a good beed.
 We put yow in remembrance all the othe hav maad
 To come to the dirige and the messe the soules for to glaad.
 All thenhabitants of this town arn bound to do the same
 To pray for the soul of John and Anne ell' thei be to blame.
 The which John aforerehersyd to this town hath be full kynde,
 CCC marc for this toun hath payd, no peny onpayd behynde.
 Now we have informyd yow off John Smythis wyll in wrytyng
 as it is
 And of the greet gyfts that he hath govyn, God bryng his
 soule to blys. Amen.⁵⁹

After making provision for the commemoration of the day of his death, which is mentioned in the lines quoted above, the main provision of Jankyn Smyth's bequest to the town is that, out of the revenues of the land he left in feoffees' hands for the benefit of the town, there should be:

reservyd and keypyd savely and suerly by the said alderman
 and burges and feoffees for the tyme beyng to that entent

⁵⁷ Tymms, *St. Mary's*, p. 55.

⁵⁸ *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1476-85, p. 259. The building which stood on the site of the College of Jesus in College Street was demolished in the spring of 1968. It appeared to have been completely rebuilt in the 17th century.

⁵⁹ B. & W.S.R.O., H1/2/1. The same date is given twice by John Woodward in his Register, B. & W.S.R.O., H1/6/1, pp. 21 and 30, where he gives his source as the 'Red Booke pag' 32'. On page 22 of his Register Woodward described the Red Book, which cannot now be traced, as 'an Ancient booke in the [Evidence] house'. The lines here quoted may well have been used as a bidding prayer at the Commemoration Service.

that whansoever and howoftsoever in tymes to come the abbey of Bury Seynt Edmund schalbe vacant of an abbot be the deth off the abbot and a new abbot theire after his deth schall lawfully be chosyn I wyll thanne that of the sayd issues and profites be payd to the sayd new abbot for the time beyng as moche as may be reservyed and keypd thereof into a satisfayon and a recompensacon of a certeyn summe off mony wont of custom to be payd to the newe abbot by the inhabitants of the sayd toun of Bury Seynt Edmund . . . Also yf any thyng thereof remayne over the said charges I wyll that it be applyed and disposid to the payments of tenthis and fyftens taxis tallagys and of alle odir maner charges the which xalbe exact and put to the burg⁷ and comynalte of the sayd toun of alle and syngler forsayd chargys.⁶⁰

The payment of the sum of 100 marcs (£66 13s. 4d.) on the accession of each new abbot had long been regarded as an oppressive burden by the townsmen and must have been a topical issue during the time that Jankyn Smyth was involved in the affairs of the town for new abbots had been appointed in 1446, 1453, 1469, 1475 and 1479. Indeed, in about 1478 the townsmen had complained of this imposition in the following terms:

Whereas ye Abbots claim of ye townsmen upon ye decease of an Abbot C marks wch. is an importable charge, they crave to have it remitted.⁶¹

There is little wonder than Jankyn Smyth's bequest was so greatly appreciated.⁶²

For the first time the alderman and burgesses had an income from which to meet the 'task', as the payment of 100 marks to the new abbot was called, and other taxes which were imposed upon the townsmen. By making use of the feoffment whereby a number of persons, in this case twenty-four, held land to the use of or, as we should say, in trust for, a third party, the alderman and burgesses, Jankyn Smyth had circumvented one of the major disabilities of the townsmen of Bury at this time—their inability to own land in common as they were not a body corporate. Most likely the first feoffees were all closely involved in the affairs of the town. A number of them are known to have held the office of alderman and it was

⁶⁰ B. & W.S.R.O., H1/2/1, f. 2v.

⁶¹ Trenholme, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁶² Could the line '300 marc for this town hath payd' mean that Smyth had paid the task for the town on three occasions during his lifetime?

probable that many, if not all of them, were members of the Candlemas gild.⁶³

This gild was no doubt influential and was not infrequently entrusted by testators with the supervision of charitable payments.⁶⁴ From the will of John Gardener (the father of Stephen Gardener, Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor under Mary⁶⁵) who died in 1506 it appears that it had a connexion with St. James' church:

Item I bequeth to the seid chirche of Seynt James a cope of the value of 10 li. and I will the priest of Candelmesse gilde for the tyme beyng shall alwey wer the seid cope in procession at suche tymes as it shalbe occuppyed.⁶⁶

Membership seems to have been much sought after and there is the following interesting passage in the will of John Hedge (*d.* 1504):

The brotherod of Candylmess gyld shall have 2 galownys of wyne yeerly be the space of 12 yeers compleet upon thys condycion that my brother Robert Hedge may have the good favour of the brethern of the seid gyld and to be takyn as on of them in tyme to come in the seid fraternyte.⁶⁷

This gild very soon became involved in the administration of John Smyth's bequest. For some reason that cannot now be determined, the place of the alderman and burgesses soon came to be taken by the alderman, dye⁶⁸ and auditors of the Candlemas gild. This happened within a few years of Jankyn Smyth's death, as is shown in the will of Margaret Odeham who left money for a priest to say mass for the prisoners in the gaol and to provide them with fuel:

Also I wyll that the same feoffees the whyche arn and hereafter shall be in the hows, londes and tenementes yoven to the town of Bury by John Smyth, esquir, shall also in lyke wyse be enfeoffed in all my londes and hows above reherysyd, wyth the appurtenaunces, and the alenacion of that oon

⁶³ Tymms, and others who followed him, probably mean the Candlemas gild when the term 'Corporation gild' is used. The latter term has not been noted in original sources.

⁶⁴ *e.g.* John Baret and John Plandon.

⁶⁵ Stephen Gardiner was one of four auditors in the Candlemas gild in 1528-9. See Arthur Oswald, 'Stephen Gardiner and Bury St. Edmunds', *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxvi (1955), p. 55.

⁶⁶ B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Pye*, f. 196.

⁶⁷ B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Bk. VI*, f. 146.

⁶⁸ 'Dye' is a term believed to be peculiar to Bury and cannot be precisely defined.

always to folowe that othyr. Also I graunt to the seyd feoffes and brethren of Candyldmass yilde every year on Candyldmess day iis. of mony to drynk in wyne, and I wyll the resydue of yssues and profytes of my seyd londes be delyd in almesse and other dedes of mercy.⁶⁹ Also I wyll the alderman, dye and auditours of the sayd Candyldmesse yilde have suervysion, governaunce and eleccion of the preest and also of all the yssues and profytes of the seyd londes and hows aforseyd, and the seyd feoffes shall make an oothe to fulfyll thys my wyll afore rehersyd before thoo persones and feoffees which arn sworn to the wyll of the sayd John Smyth.⁷⁰

It is also clear from Margaret Odeham's will that Jankyn Smyth's will was read each year before Candlemas gild, although nowhere in his will is the Candlemas gild mentioned.

A series of accounts of the supervisors of the lands left to the town by John Smith and two later benefactors, William Fysshe and Margaret Newhawe, have survived from the years 1520-1535.⁷¹ Jankyn Smyth had provided that 'four provyd men and abyll of the sayd feoffes' should be chosen each year by the alderman and burgesses, or by the feoffees should there be no alderman. These four were to receive the rents arising from the lands left to the town and to make every year an account thereof to the alderman and burgesses. From the references to the Candlemas gild in Margaret Odeham's will which have already been mentioned, it will come as no surprise that in these accounts we find that the four supervisors are making their account to auditors appointed by the gild of the Purification. After administrative expenses, the cost of obits and the repairing of properties had been met out of the rents received, any money which was left at the end of the year was, as has already been mentioned, to be put into the chest. If any money was taken from the chest during this period, these accounts make no mention of the fact. The first payment mentioned in the earliest account is the sum of 10s. 8d. for 'prysts and clerks lyghts and ryngyng at the Annyversary keypyng of John Smyth Esquier and William Fysshe hoc anno'.⁷² This sum recurs in each account, although William Fysshe soon seems to have been forgotten. This first account also indicates

⁶⁹ This clause may mark the origin of two elements which now form part of the Jankyn Smyth Commemoration, the distribution of a shilling to the feoffees' almspeople during the service and the 'cakes and ale' ceremony held at the Guildhall afterwards. The Candlemas doles were noted in the 1839 report on the Bury charities (H2/4/3) when it was suggested, incorrectly it is believed, that the name was a corruption of 'Christmas' doles.

⁷⁰ B. & W.S.R.O., Prob. Reg. *Pye*, f. 8. For the date of the making of this will, proved 8 Nov. 1492, see p. 136 and n. 47 above.

⁷¹ Bodl. MS., Suffolk b.1., folios 8-28v.

⁷² *Ibid.*, f.8.

that the fee paid to the clerk of the gild included the sum of 4d. for reading John Smyth's will.⁷³ The accounts also contain some references to payments made for the repair of the Guildhall. In two years, those ending at Michaelmas 1525 and 1527, the sum of 16d.⁷⁴ is entered as paid to the Guildhall for reparations. This may perhaps, if the repair of the Guildhall was still largely paid for by means of a levy imposed by the alderman, represent the sum at which the feoffees, as property owners, were assessed for this purpose. Both these sums appear in the main part of the account among the ordinary expenses of the supervisors. In the year ending at Michaelmas 1525, however, after the total in hand at the end of the year had been arrived at, the customary sum of £1 6s. 8d. was allocated to the incoming supervisors but, instead of the remainder being placed in the chest in the normal way, the very large sum of £5 6s. ½d. was given to Henry Dance and Henry Powle for the repair of the Guildhall.⁷⁵ Unfortunately, it is not known what office was held by these two gentlemen, nor the nature of the repairs required to the Guildhall in this year. It is a far greater sum than was spent on the repair of any of the properties owned by the feoffees in any one of the years covered by these accounts. It seems probable that the cost of repairing the Guildhall was regarded as a burden on the townspeople which could properly be ameliorated by a substantial grant from the revenue of John Smyth's bequest for the payment of town taxes.

It also seems virtually certain that there is a reference to the Guildhall in the account for the year ending Michaelmas 1523, in which is recorded the payment of 2s. 9d. for a table of the feoffees' names hanging in the hall.⁷⁶ Rather less certainly, some items in the account made up to the Purification (2nd February), 1532 may also relate to the Guildhall.⁷⁷ They appear in the account among legal and administrative expenses after the total for repairs to the properties forming the endowment has been given. Board for the new doors had cost 5d. and a dressing board for the kitchen 9d. The same account also contains the earliest reference to a dinner for the feoffees, ten shillings being provided towards its cost. Dinners were later to become a prominent feature in the social life of the feoffees and soon led to allegations of the misappropriation of charity money. A sixteenth century settlement of the affairs of the charity set down that dinners were only to be had when provided for in benefactor's wills, although I have not yet found a reference to provision for a dinner.⁷⁸

⁷³ *Ibid.*, f.9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, f.16v. and f.18v.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, f.16v.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, f.14.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, f.24, 24v.

⁷⁸ B. & W.S.R.O., H1/6/1.

The purchase of the Guildhall from the Crown, 1569

It was not long before first the abbey of St. Edmund and then the gilds and chantries were dissolved. Apart from the rent charge which provided for the *obit* there is no evidence to suggest that, whatever its connexions with the Candlemas gild might have been the rest of the lands left to the feoffees by Jankyn Smyth were seized by the Crown. This is reasonable enough, for the land had been left to the use of the alderman and burgesses for secular purposes. From the heading of a rental made in 1558 which relates, *inter alia*, to Smyth's lands it appears that the feoffees were still at that date commonly known as the brethren of Candlemas gild.⁷⁹ From the same year there has survived a note of rents which were payable for the reparation of the Guildhall.⁸⁰ The properties concerned included the tenement at the south end of the Guildhall which (or a later building on the same site) was the hall-keeper's residence until it was demolished in 1815, a plot of gaden lying to the north and east of the Guildhall, a tenement in Garland Street and two pieces of arable, one in Risbygate Street and one at 'Stontwarr' bridge. Unfortunately, the document is only a draft and one or two street names have been omitted. Some of the amounts payable are also wanting but those which are given add up to 47s. 6d. The hall was also used at marriages and the sum of 12d. as revenue from this source was entered and then deleted. At the foot of the note is the heading of an inventory which was unfortunately not made. Certain pageants, that is, the floats on which the plays were performed in the Corpus Christi day procession, are expressly excluded from the goods which should have been listed.⁸¹

At this time the feoffees can have had no title to the Guildhall. There is little if any doubt that the Guildhall should have been surrendered to the Crown on the dissolution of the abbey as one of its possessions. On the other hand, the Guildhall had been built and, as far as the evidence goes, maintained by the townsmen by whom it was used for a variety of purposes. Although it is not clear how it was managed, the Guildhall remained in the effective control of the townsmen. However, the position was rectified when, on 6th July 1569, Elizabeth I granted to Edward Grimston and William le Grice, among other properties which had been con-

⁷⁹ B. & W.S.R.O., H1/1/14.

⁸⁰ B. & W.S.R.O., H1/1/15.

⁸¹ The ordinances of the woollen and linen weavers drawn up in 1477 (B. & W.S.R.O., B9/1/2) show that a portion of fines for breach of the ordinances was devoted to the 'sustentation and maintenance of the pageant of the Ascension of our Lord God and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost as it has been accustomed of old time out of mind yearly to be performed to the worship of God, among other pageants in the procession on the feast of Corpus Christi'. The same ordinances show that this craft gild met at the Guildhall.

sealed, the message or tenement 'commonly called the Guildhall lying and being in the place called the Guildhall Street in Bury aforesaid with all the houses buildings structures lands rents hereditaments etc., recently before this time being for the treating of the common profit and use of the burgesses of Bury aforesaid'.⁸² The abbey of St. Edmund was one of the dissolved bodies whose former possessions are mentioned as being included in the grant. On the following day all these properties were re-conveyed to Sir Nicholas Bacon, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, and others who were then the feoffees of the town lands of Bury St. Edmunds.⁸³ From this date the Guildhall remained the property of the feoffees, who, by the later part of the seventeenth century, came to be usually known as the Guildhall Feoffees, until they handed it over to the Town Council in 1893.⁸⁴

The Guildhall between 1569 and 1768

The feoffees' minute books, which begin in 1590, and the series of receiver's accounts, which begin in 1738 with some accounts for odd years before this, provide the principal source of information for repairs and alterations to the building in the modern period. There is no suggestion that any major alterations were undertaken between 1569 and 1768 but the references from these years help to fill out the picture of the Guildhall before it was modernised so as to look very much as it does today.

There is little doubt that throughout this period the Guildhall remained the normal meeting place of the feoffees, although there are occasional references to meetings being held at the Angel, which they had acquired in 1557.⁸⁵ The minutes of the governors of the Grammar School, which also begin in 1590, show that at that time and for some years afterwards the governors' meetings were held at the Guildhall and also that the charter and title deeds of the school endowments were kept in the Evidence House.⁸⁶ After the incorporation of the Borough in 1606 the Corporation normally met at the Guildhall too and their muniments were also stored in the Evidence House where, from time to time, they became inter-mixed with those of the feoffees.⁸⁷

The relatively large sum of 33s. 7d. was paid to Boydon, the plumber, in 1595 for mending the Guildhall. This could well mean that the lead roof covering had required attention in that year.

⁸² B. & W.S.R.O., H1/6/1, f. 109ff.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ B. & W.S.R.O., H2/7/1.2.

⁸⁵ Tassell's gift, see B. & W.S.R.O., H1/6/1, p. 128.

⁸⁶ B. & W.S.R.O., E5/9/202.1.

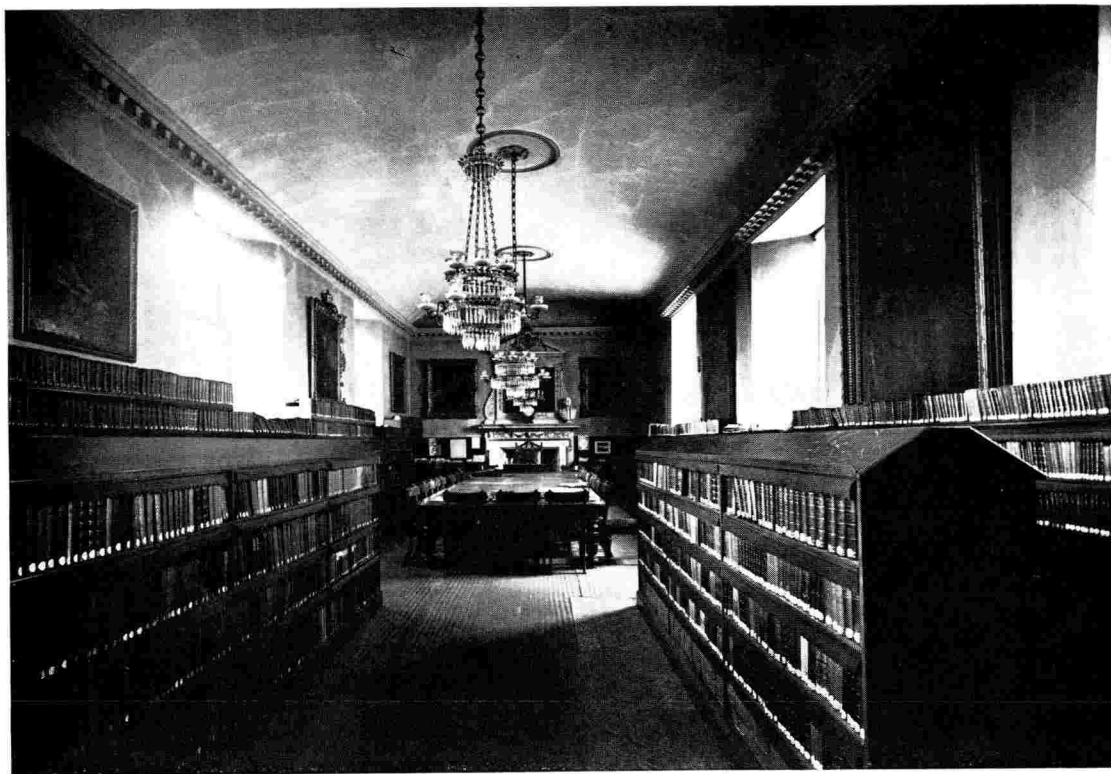
⁸⁷ Many of the earlier records of both Corporation and Feoffees have endorsements made by John Sothey when he sorted the records in 1660.

PLATE XVII



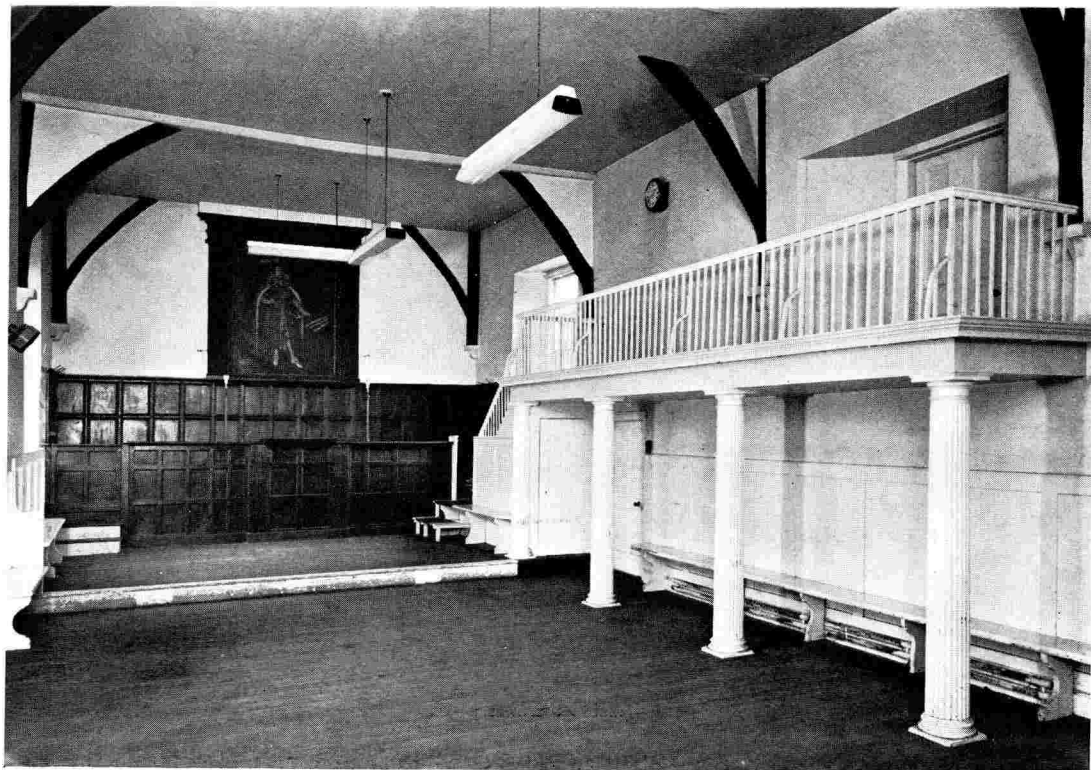
Truss at south end of hall.

PLATE XVIII



The banqueting room as it appeared at the end of the last century.

PLATE XIX



The court room.

Another early account, that for 1603, provides the earliest reference so far discovered to the Guildhall chamber. Inglethorpe, the porter, was made an allowance for fires in the chamber. The same account records a payment of 12s. for 16 sacks of coal 'layed into the Guildhall for those that ware sikke'. This entry suggests that the Guildhall was being used as a pest house in a time of plague. Possibly some extra work was done in 1606 over and above routine maintenance to fit the Guildhall for use by the newly formed corporation, for the sum spent in this year, £31 16s. 8½d., was very high indeed. A further entry in the same account shows that 52s. was paid for 'a dowsen of quishens (cushions) for the Guildhall and for lether to lyne them and for fethers to stoppe them and for working of them'.⁸⁸

To what extent the Corporation contributed towards adapting the Guildhall for use for the courts and meetings is not clear from the surviving accounts. However tempting it might be, for instance, to suppose that some of the considerable sums spent by them on carpenters' work might relate to the Jacobean panelling now in the court room there is no indication in what buildings, in most cases, the work is done. The Chamberlains' accounts for 1610⁸⁹ reveal that 23s. was spent on the Guildhall bell. It is just possible that the king's arms, for which 20s. were paid in the same year, may be those which are still in the court room.

Two inventories made in the second half of the seventeenth century, one of which is printed as an appendix to this paper, indicate the number of rooms which there were in the Guildhall and, from the items listed, a few additional facts about the building can be deduced. It seems certain that the room called the green chamber must have been on the first floor of the chamber range which was pulled down in 1806. Apart from the kitchen, this room and the great chamber are the only two which can certainly be assumed to have been heated—it will be noted that a fire pan and tongs are listed in both rooms. It seems from Appendix III that when the alterations of 1806/7 were carried out an old flue was retained. The most likely explanation of this is that the chimney stack which formerly served the chamber and the green chamber was retained and that it is, in fact, that in the wall dividing the magistrates' room from the council chamber of 1806 on the first floor and the kitchen from the rear storerooms on the ground floor. During the eighteenth century, it is possible that the green chamber was used as a private room for the alderman, as it appears from some of the surviving vouchers that the hall-keeper was regularly allowed two fires for the alderman.

⁸⁸ B. & W.S.R.O., ex H2/3/4.

⁸⁹ B. & W.S.R.O., ex D6/4/1.

It is almost certain that there was furniture in the Guildhall which was the property of the corporation, and so excluded from the inventories of the feoffees' possessions. Only thirty chairs are noted in the great chamber, while there were thirty-seven members of the corporation, plus the town clerk, recorder and a few assistant justices who were not corporation members for whom seating must have been provided. The map which is noted as hanging in this room has been lost but it is probable that the five pictures listed can be identified with some still remaining in the collection of the Borough Council. Two of these are in all probability the copies of portraits of Jankyn Smyth and Thomas Bright the elder, another outstanding benefactor of the town who died in 1587. According to Samuel Tymms these portraits were purchased by the feoffees in 1616 at a cost of £3 3s. 4d.⁹⁰ Rather less certainly it is suggested that the other three pictures which were in this room could well have been the portrait of Edmund Jermyn (*d.* 1570), which now hangs in the Guildhall banqueting room, and two seventeenth century portraits of unidentified subjects which are now at the Borough Library.⁹¹

The site of the kitchen is well known and the contents need no comment. Presumably the various larders, the pantry and the steward's room must have been fitted into the space under the council chamber, which is described as 'offices under the council chamber' on Warren's plan of 1742. Although a large area close to the kitchen was covered at this time, it is clear from the document printed as Appendix II that this area was not at that time enclosed. The well in the yard was very probably on part of the site of the small store room which opens off the modern kitchen. There is a large stone slab fixed into the floor there which is marked on the plan. It would, of course, have been in the yard before the re-building of 1806.

It is impossible to determine whether the wainscot room was in the chamber range or whether it formed part of the hall. It is likely enough that the panelling which is now on the north wall of the court room and which forms the bench may well have been re-used from the wainscot room in its present position.

The contents of the hall which are noted in the inventory are of some interest. The portrait of James I is undoubtedly that which now hangs on the north wall of the court room. Like the portraits

⁹⁰ Samuel Tymms, *A Handbook of Bury St. Edmunds* (6th edn., 1891, with additions by J. R. Thompson), p. 105. Tymms' source for this statement has not been located.

⁹¹ For the possibility that the Jermyn portrait is a modern copy replacing the original see S. H. A. Hervey, *Rushbrooke* (Suffolk Green Books, 1903), p. 421. The two portraits which are now at the Bury St. Edmunds Public Library are Cat. Nos. 48 (which is dated 1624) and 85.

of Jankyn Smyth and Thomas Bright it was bought by the Guildhall feoffees in 1616, when they paid the then enormous sum of £40 to Mr. Fenner the painter.⁹² The royal arms still hang in the court room, over the door from the entrance vestibule. These date from the reign of James I, although the initial J has been later altered to C, on the evidence of the motto *Exurgat Deus Dissipentur Inimici* which was used on the coins of the reign.⁹³ There is an inscription round the frame of these arms, thickly covered with brown paint, of which only 1616—presumably the date—can be deciphered with any certainty. The odd letters which can be made out elsewhere suggest that the inscription is in Latin rather than English, but it is impossible to get at the meaning in its present state. The frames and the slightly later classical surrounds of both the portrait of James I and the royal arms are identical in design. There are brackets on either side of the surround of James I's portrait, into which the borough maces could be fitted when the courts were in session.

The few late sixteenth century accounts which have survived among the feoffees' records contain a number of references to the purchase and repair of arms and armour. From 1590, when their minute books begin, the town armoury was at the Guildhall and, from the inventory, it appears that it was stored in the hall.⁹⁴ It will be noted that no armour is mentioned in the inventory. It can have been of no practical use by this date and in 1686 the receiver was ordered to sell the old armour from the Guildhall.

An entry made on 6 May 1699 makes it clear that the tankards in the hall were leather fire buckets:

Ordered that Mr. Receiver repaire the tankards belonging to the Guildhall being 22 and that hee make up the number of thirty tankards for the common use of the inhabitants in case of fire.

The only additional part of the Guildhall which was mentioned in the inventory of 1689 was the garret. This had been referred to a few years earlier in an entry reading:

Ordered that Mr. Receiver doe sell the great pott at the

⁹² Samuel Tymms, *ut supra*, p. 104. 'Mr. Fenner', the painter, has not yet been identified.

⁹³ H. Munro Cautley, *Royal Arms and Commandments in our Churches* (Ipswich, 1934), and the additional note on the arms of James I, *Suffolk Churches and their Treasures*, p. 201.

⁹⁴ *e.g.* 30 Dec. 1606 when it was ordered 'that there shuld be demaunded of Sr. Robert Jermyn Knight sixe corseletts with their furniture which he hadd from the Guildhall'. B. & W.S.R.O., H2/6/2.1, p. 28.

Guildhall and the old armor and make the best of it, and also the lumber on the vance roofe.

This is of some interest in so far as the peculiarly East Anglian word vance is used in preference to the more usual garret for a roof space used for storage. Probably the hall would have had a ceiling put in by this date and there are no means of telling whether the garret was above the hall or the chamber.

Although there is no mention of fire pan, tongs, cob irons, bellows or other items which are usually noted in rooms which had a fireplace, it seems incredible that there should have been no means of heating the hall. It has already been pointed out that there could have been a shallow medieval fireplace at the south end where the present fireplace is. Some confirmation for this view is to be found in the Hearth Tax returns of 1674⁹⁵ when the Guildhall was taxed for seven hearths. Four of these can be accounted for in the kitchen—one each for the two fireplaces and two for the bread ovens. Two more must relate to the great chamber and the green chamber, leaving the seventh for the hall.

The final modernisation, 1768–1807

Apart from some minor additions to the back of the building in the present century the Guildhall attained its present layout and appearance during the forty years between 1768 and 1807. Unfortunately there are no minutes between 15 January 1767 and 23 August 1771 during which time the feoffment was being renewed. The feoffees' account book, however, makes it plain that during these years very considerable sums of money were spent on work at the Guildhall under the direction of Mr. Grigby and Mr. Allen, two of the surviving feoffees. There is little doubt that the major work carried out at this time was the replacement of the small, early windows shown on Warren's plan of 1742 by the present sash windows and the division of the hall into the two rooms which it contains at present. More than £250 was spent on the Guildhall alone in the years 1768–1771 while expenditure on building work at the Guildhall and other places, the exact amount spent on the Guildhall itself remaining unspecified, remained at a high level until 1775.

The bulk of the money spent in the first four years of this period was on carpenter's work, about £150 in all. This in all probability represents the panelling of the banqueting room, frames for the new sash windows and the carpenter's work in connexion with the coved ceiling in the banqueting room. This room (Plate XVIII)

⁹⁵ S. H. A. Hervey, *The Suffolk Hearth Tax Returns for 1674* (Suffolk Green Books, 1905), p. 56.

is entered from the entrance vestibule by double doors which are fielded, panelled and raised. Unlike the identical doors into the court room, these have now lost their original door furniture. The door surround has a shouldered architrave and is decorated with 'bead and reel' and other Palladian motifs. At the further end of the room there is a richly decorated fireplace and overmantel with a broken pediment. The break in the pediment is filled with a representation of the Borough arms in the rococo style. The arms, stylistically, are perhaps a shade later than the fireplace itself which is very much in the manner of William Kent. The decorative motifs found on the door case are repeated on the fireplace together with a number of others. In the centre of the fireplace is a classical head set in the centre of a swag of flowers and foliage. The walls are panelled below the level of the windows and the room has a coved ceiling with a dentil cornice. No doubt the decoration on the fireplace was originally pricked out in gold for the sum of £1 16s. 8d. was spent on gold leaf in 1768. The £6 19s. 8d. paid for crown glass is in all probability the glass for the new sash windows. The space above the entrance vestibule forms a minstrel's gallery, perhaps placed a little too high for the proportions of the room as a whole. The banqueting room was redecorated by the feoffees in 1817, in which year the Corporation agreed to provide new furniture for it.⁹⁶ From this year date the set of eight regency dining chairs, the three chandeliers (which have lost their tulip shaped shades since the photograph was taken) and the fire basket, which is lyre-shaped in section and has brass animal masks.

It seems likely that it was in the period of building activity in the later 1760's and just after that the cross passage at the north of the court room was removed. There is little doubt that the sash windows date from this time and it seems unlikely that they would have left the old doors and not treated the façade as a whole. There is no evidence at all as to when the north end of the court room was arranged as it is at present but there is no reason why this should not have also been done at this time. Some rearrangement of the doors from what is now the entrance vestibule, which are marked on Warren's plan, would have been required at this time and it may be that the oblique line of the wall of the banqueting room where it joins the chamber range was necessary to provide a door where the window on the stairs is now.

In 1785 the lead roof covering was removed from the Guildhall and replaced by slates at a cost of £73 3s. 0d. The feoffees agreed later in the same year that the lead should be given to James Moore, a plumber, but presumably the lead was still at the Guildhall until March 1788 when a reward of £10 was offered to any person

⁹⁶ B. & W.S.R.O., D4/1/5.

discovering the person or persons who stole and bought the lead from the Guildhall. Although it was ordered in 1785 that the front of the north part of the Guildhall should be built, that is, faced, with white Woolpit brick, there are no payments of any size to a bricklayer in that or the succeeding years. It appears that the work was not carried out until 1806. The sketch of the Guildhall made in 1786 suggests that at that time the building was stuccoed.

On 21 February 1806 the feoffees resolved that the Guildhall council chamber should be rebuilt. Unfortunately in recent years a number of writers have taken this to mean that the mediaeval hall, the southern part of which was used as a council chamber from 1877 to 1966, was rebuilt. Apart from facing the front wall, very little was done to the two rooms in the hall at this time.

The council chamber was, of course, in a wing projecting east from the court room. It was a first floor room and its position is given by the description of the area marked 'e' on Warren's plan as 'offices under the Council Chamber'. Very little is known about the former chamber range. The earliest reference so far found to it is in an account for the year 1603.⁹⁷ It appears from the document printed as Appendix II that it was a timber framed building. An order of the feoffees dated 29 March 1686 reads:

Ordered that the Receivour doe make the Greate Windowe in the Guildhall Chamber more ornamentall and convenient for such a chamber and more fitt for Publique Meetings . . .

This, taken in conjunction with the projection which is clearly shown on its north wall in Warren's plan, suggests that an oriel or bay window may have formed one of its architectural features. The chamber is known to have been heated from 1603 and may have shared a chimney stack with the green chamber. Before the south part of the hall was converted into a banqueting room, portraits of benefactors were hung in this room.⁹⁸

The present range of buildings is basically that which was built in 1806. The south wall (excluding a modern addition) follows the line of the former building for some two-thirds of its way to the rear boundary wall, providing space for the staircase and a passage leading out into the yard. The ground floor store rooms, one of which is now used as a kitchen, need no comment. At the top of the stairs there is a large landing, part of which, containing a fire place, has been partitioned off to provide another store room, and from which there are doors leading into the two rooms mentioned in the specification. The larger of these, which is now

⁹⁷ B. & W.S.R.O., *ex* H2/3/4.

⁹⁸ B. & W.S.R.O., D4/1/3 f. 389r.

the Girl Guide headquarters, was the former council chamber and had, originally, a central, octagonal sky light which has now been blocked. It has two windows on the east wall and there are two blanks on the north wall. In 1815, when the rain was already coming in through the skylight, it was ordered that these two blanks should be opened. Possibly this work was never carried out. The room was much altered and fitted with a gallery when it was converted for use as the 'ops' room of the Observer Corps. West of the former council chamber is the magistrates' room which leads onto the balcony in the court room (Plate XIX). The balcony with its reeded pillars is the only attractive feature of the work carried out at this time.

As far as can be determined from the surviving documents the only other alteration made to the medieval hall at this time was the long overdue provision of 'a door to pass the dinner through'—the hatch beneath the central window in the back wall of the banqueting room.

The wall which had formerly stood in front of the Guildhall was also pulled down in 1806. It is clear from the specification that most of the building stone used for the new council chamber, which is largely flint and rubble with a fair proportion of dressed stone in it, came from this wall. Other building stone was found from the Bridewell. The east wall of the late Norman dwelling house which is now Moyse's Hall Museum had fallen in 1804 and some of the stone which was left over after this had been rebuilt was re-used in the new council chamber. In return an oak window from the Guildhall was re-used at Moyse's Hall, while timbers from the old chamber were used as floor joists at Moyse's Hall and other properties owned by the feoffees. It is probable that the two lead glazed casement windows in the passage which now connects the former detached kitchen to the banqueting room may have been part of the old chamber which were re-used when the passage was enclosed in 1806. The bundles of surviving vouchers show that this and other passages which, it was proposed, should be enclosed to avoid the necessity of providing store rooms under the new council chamber were, in fact, enclosed although the new chamber was built over store rooms.⁹⁹

In 1815 the house which had for a long time been used as the hall-keeper's residence and which stood at the south end of the Guildhall was pulled down and the south wall and part of the south end of the front wall were faced with Woolpit brick. The house in Whiting Street which adjoins the back of the Guildhall was then converted into a house for the hall-keeper and an office for the receiver of the Guildhall feoffment.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ B. & W.S.R.O., H2/3/3. 30-38.

¹⁰⁰ B. & W.S.R.O., H2/3/3. 43-45.

From 1848 until *c.* 1904 the banqueting room was used by the Bury and West Suffolk Library. When, in 1877, the council chamber built in 1806 became too small for the meetings of the Town Council, this room was also used for the public meetings of the Council. Plate XVIII shows the room as it looked after 1877 and before the library was dispersed early in this century. In addition to providing a meeting place for the Town Council and other official and semi-official organisations, the Guildhall has been put to a variety of uses over the years. Some of these have already been mentioned. It has been used for auction sales and exhibitions of paintings, for concerts and lectures, for amateur and professional drama, as a soup kitchen and as a Savings Bank. Countless local organisations have, at one time or another, met in the Guildhall. One of these was the West Suffolk Archaeological Institute (known, from 1853, as the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology) which held its first quarterly meeting in the Guildhall library on 8 June 1848.¹⁰¹

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank the Bury St. Edmunds Borough Council for permission to publish this account of their building and to use their muniments where relevant; the Guildhall Feoffment Trust for permitting extensive use of their records; Mrs. Sylvia Colman, Miss Joan Corder and Mr. J. T. Smith for much help on specialised points; Mr. H. C. Wolton, who first aroused my interest in this building; Mr. J. W. H. Knight for constant interest and encouragement; and my husband, with whom this paper has been discussed at every stage. Any errors which remain in the text are, of course, my own responsibility.

Plate XIII is reproduced, by kind permission of the Trustees, from the account book of the Receivers of the Guildhall Feoffment, 1738–1832; Plate XV*a*, by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum, from a drawing in the Craven Ord Collection (Add. MSS.8986, f. 78); Plate XV*b*, from a block kindly loaned by the Bury St. Edmunds Borough Council; Plate XVIII, from a negative in the Jarman Collection in Bury St. Edmunds Public Library. All other plates are reproduced, by kind permission, from photographs in the National Monuments Record. The plans are reproduced by kind permission of the Borough Engineer and Surveyor, Mr. G. S. Standley, and were drawn by Mr. Shepherd and Mrs. Austin in his office.

¹⁰¹ Leslie Dow, 'A short history of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History', *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxiv (1948), p. 130.

APPENDIX OF DOCUMENTS

I

The inventory printed below is the earliest of two late seventeenth century inventories which were entered into the feoffees' book, the second one being made on 30 October 1689. The only additional room mentioned in 1689 was the garret, the contents of which are referred to in the text (p. 149). Otherwise the changes are insignificant.

From B. & W.S.R.O., H2/6/2.1, p. 130.

8 October 1672

An inventory of the goods, howseholdstuffe and utensills belonging to the Guildhall Feoffees now in the keeping of Abraham Perryman, Hallkeeper.

In the Hall

King James his picture, the King's armes, 14 escutcheons in round frames, 6 tables with benches and formes, the benches and formes at the upper end of the hall matted, 1 eight square cupboard to sett glasses upon, a carpet to the upper table, a long iron to hang scales upon, the materials for the pound, 3 dozen of tankards, 6 musquets with firelocks, 4 other musquets, 4 swords, 4 pair of bandileers.

In the Great Chamber

One great table, a livery cupboard, 5 pictures and a mapp, 30 leather chaires, a pair of cobirons, fire pan and tonges and bellowes, 6 large cushions and 10 lesser cushions.

In the wainscot roome

A table and forme and carpet and seates round, 2 chamber potts.

In the green chamber

A table, a carpett and two formes, cobirons, firepan and tonges, darnix.

In the entry from the hall to the kitchen

5 shelves and an old dresser bord.

In the kitchen

14 spitts, 1 fireforke, 2 paire of racks, a leading dripping pan, 5 shelves, a pound for the cookes to worke in, 4 dresser bords, a forme, a brassepott, a trewit, 3 ovens, 2 oven leads, a cowlrake.

In the wet larder

One powdring tubb, one dresser bord, 2 alestalls, 4 shelves.

In the dry larder

A dresser bord, 6 shelves, a kneading trough.

In the pantree

A bing for bread, a dresser bord, 8 shelves.

In the steward's room

One table, one bench, one forme, 3 candlesticks.

In the wine cellar

An alestall, 2 shelves, 1 dozen knives.

In the yard

A leading cisterne, a bucket and rope to the well.

II and III

These two documents relate to the rebuilding of the council chamber in 1806. The plans mentioned in II have not survived.

II

From B. & W.S.R.O., H2/3/3.36

Undated

Survey of the Council Chamber in the Guildhall,
Bury St. Edmunds

The state of the room is considered too dilapidated to admit of repair being serviceable for any length of time. The timbers of the floor as far as can be seen appear to be substantial and good. The sills however are in many places decaying on which account it would be imprudent to rebuild upon them. As the rooms or sheds under the Council Chamber appear to be of very little or no use, I would recommend to the Trustees to take the whole down level with the ground and to rebuild two new rooms for which purpose I have subjoined a plan and section. The entrance from the ante room to the Council Chamber is proposed to be by folding doors and grooves in the partition for them to slide into so that occasionally the two rooms may be laid into one. The Council Chamber to be lighted by a large lanthorne skylight, the ceiling to be domed and recesses may be made as described in the plan for the preservation of the Corporation records. The ante room to be lighted by sashes and, in order to prevent it being overlooked, the sashes

may be glazed with ground glass. The sky light as well as the sashes should be patent metal.

The estimate for erecting these rooms as described amounts to five hundred and twenty pounds, which is calculated upon the supposition that the ground is clear. The materials of the present rooms together with the wall next to the Guildhall Street (which would be an improvement to the town to remove) after the expense of taking down is deducted, are estimated to be worth fifty pounds. The cost therefore of carrying this plan into execution may be said to be four hundred and seventy pounds.

Henry Wilkins,
Architect.

[In a different hand]

Should it be thought necessary to raise the rooms one storey in order to preserve the conveniences under, it will incur the further expense of 168£.

Mr. Wilkins is, however, of opinion that the requisite conveniences may be obtained by enclosing the space opposite the kitchen, which is already covered, and by erecting a lean-to in Ward's garden for the purpose of a coal house. It will not be found inconvenient to abolish the rooms under the present Council room and, the new Council room being on the ground floor, will be found preferable on many accounts. The expense of erecting a lean-to and enclosing the space alluded to so as to render it convenient for the purposes required will be about £60.

III

From B. & W.S.R.O., H2/3/3.36.

Endorsed: 1806, Guildhall,

Bury St. Edmunds.

To raise the Council Chamber on brickwork seven feet from the ground, adding a vestibule and a gallery for the Grand Jury supported on four columns with rail and balusters, making a door into it where the window is at present, cutting a fire opening in the old wall and leading the flue to the present one, will increase the former estimate £259. But if sufficient building stone and bricks can be obtained from the Bridewell and the present building to erect the new rooms, and the present floor joists used again, it will reduce the estimate £120. It is considered that the roof and sides of the present Council Room will be sufficient for the bond timbers and lintels of the new therefore no sum is allowed for them.

The Institute is indebted to the Friends of the Bury St. Edmunds Museums for a grant towards the cost of publishing this paper.