

The History of Charterhouse and its Buildings¹ Anniversary Address 1990

by

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Sir Nicholas Pevsner, writing in about 1952, remarked that the Charterhouse would be one of the most important monuments of all London if it had not suffered so badly in the Second World War. He added that most of the architectural damage could be repaired and that the complex would then again convey a vivid impression of a large rambling sixteenth-century mansion of the kind that must have existed all round London.² What he did not say was that the excavations of 1948–9 carried out by Mr (later Professor) W.F. Grimes which preceded the rebuilding uncovered a great deal of information which provides us with a much more accurate plan of the destroyed monastery than was available until then. Furthermore, nineteenth-century alterations and distortions were eliminated in the course of the rebuilding and one has to agree with Arthur Oswald that ‘the compensations for the losses sustained in 1941 have been so great that . . . one can almost view the calamity as a blessing’.³

HISTORY

There are three periods in the history of the Charterhouse; that of the Carthusian monastery (1371–1537); that of the Tudor mansion (1545–1611); and that of the present foundation, the Hospital of King James in the Charterhouse (more commonly known as Sutton’s Hospital) (1611 to the present day).⁴

The story of Sutton’s Hospital has been often told. The primary source is a cartulary, or register, which was composed early in the sixteenth century by an unknown monk.⁵ The House of the Salutation of the Mother of God owed its origin to a great catastrophe, the Great Pestilence, or Black Death. When the plague reached England in the summer of 1348, and London early in the next year, there were insufficient cemeteries in the city to accommodate the dead, and a soldier and courtier named Sir Walter de Manny gave to the citizens an enclosed field, in area about thirteen acres, named Spital Croft, situated just north of the city walls, for use as a cemetery. He rented this land from the Master and Brethren of St Bartholomew’s Hospital, and subsequently purchased it. Manny was a distinguished soldier and a

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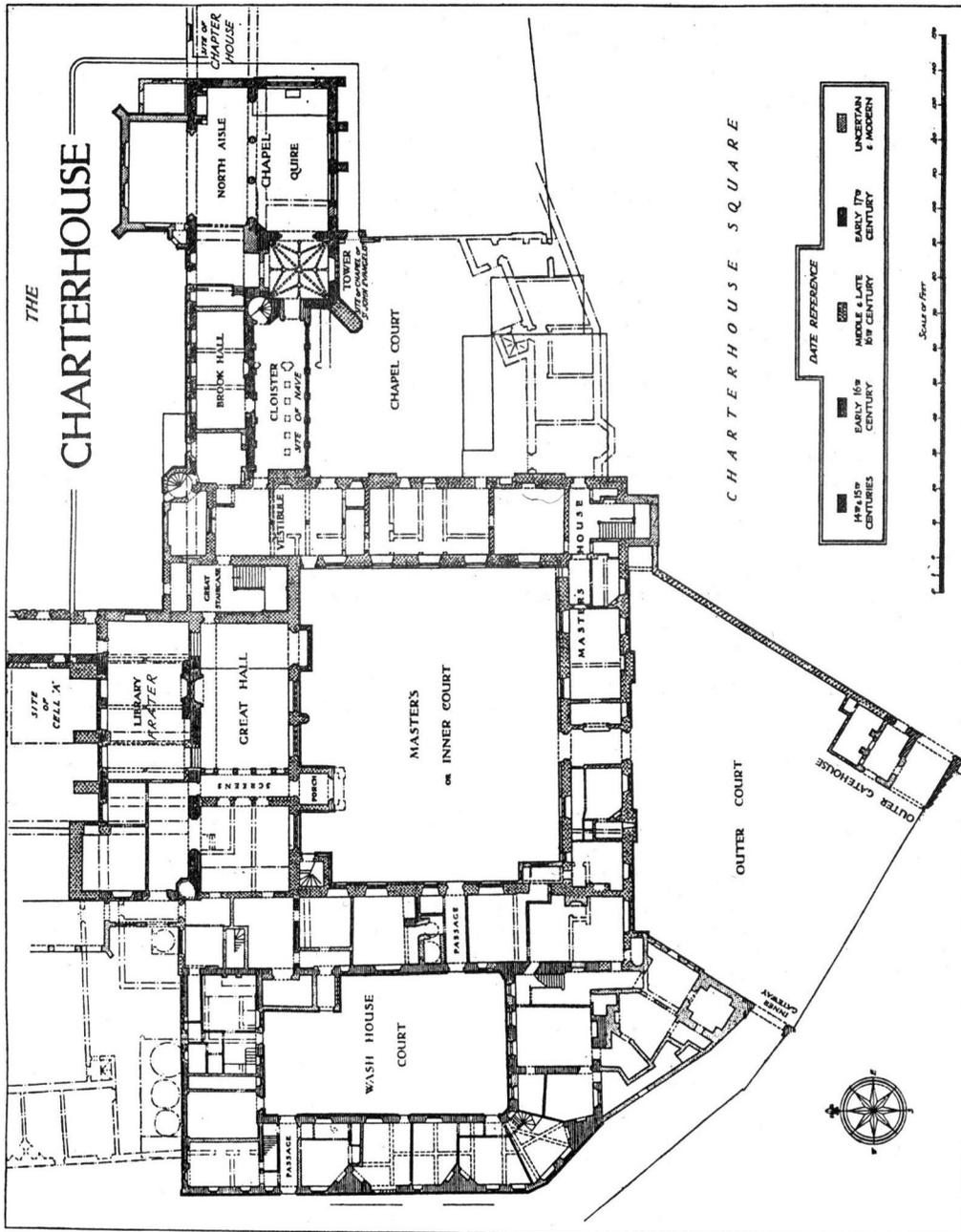


Fig. 2
 Plan of the monastery accepted until the excavations after the Second World War.
 From R.C.H.M. England, Vol. II, West London

man of some consequence—a relative of the Queen and one of the first knights of the Garter. He first came to England in 1326 with Philippa of Hainault when she came as the bride of King Edward III. The register states that the Count of Hainault entrusted his daughter to Manny ‘as to a father to be educated, because he seemed the most gentle among his people full of sanctity and grace’.

On the day that the burial ground was consecrated by the Bishop of London, Ralph de Stratford, the foundations were also laid of a chapel where masses were said for the souls of those buried there.⁶ Manny intended to institute a college of twelve priests but this plan was never carried out and, instead, provision was made for two hermits to look after the chapel. The next move appears to have been made by Michael Northburgh, Ralph’s successor in the see of London, who suggested to Manny that they should together establish a community of Carthusian monks there. Michael died before this intention could be carried out but he left in his will a considerable sum of money for the purpose. Manny then appointed the Prior of the Charterhouse of Hinton, Dom John Luscombe, to be the first prior of his monastery and, after initial difficulties, it was founded in 1371 as the fourth Charterhouse in this country. Various other pieces of land were added by Manny and others to the original burial ground until the full area required was consolidated.

In the register already referred to there is the statement that in the year 1371 Manny and Prior Luscombe made an agreement with a certain Henry Revell for building the first cell and beginning the Great Cloister.⁷ There are sound grounds for thinking that the name Revell is probably a scribe’s error for Yevele, the master mason who was employed at Westminster Palace and the Tower. This attribution is accepted by John Harvey and others.⁸ The completion of the cloister took more than thirty years.

By the nature of its vocation a Carthusian community is unlikely to have an eventful history except when it becomes engulfed in great national events. The London Charterhouse went its quiet way through the fifteenth century acquiring a reputation for sanctity and a silent spiritual authority which was to be one of the causes of its tragic end. We have an account of the last peaceful years of the priory written by a monk named Maurice Chauncy, the historian of the Carthusian martyrs,⁹ who was living there at this time. He does not conceal the fact that there were some monks who were unworthy, or unfitted, for the way of life, but the community was on the whole a happy and fervent one. When the Reformation came it was because of the community’s spiritual standing that Thomas Cromwell realized the importance of securing its submission.

The end came in 1537. Two years previously the prior, John Houghton, and the priors of two other Carthusian communities, Axholme and Beauvale, were tried for high treason, having refused to take the Oath of Supremacy of 1534, and were brutally executed at Tyburn. Chauncy describes how one of Houghton’s severed arms was nailed on the gate of the Charterhouse as a warning to the rest of the community; that the warning was not effective is shown by the fact that in the course of the next two years fifteen more of the monks and lay-brothers were martyred. The surviving monks were compelled to surrender the priory to the King in June of 1537 and it was finally suppressed in the following November.

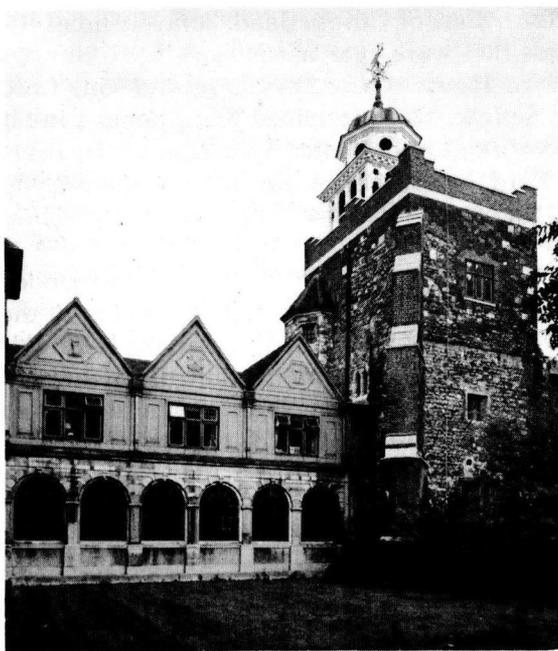
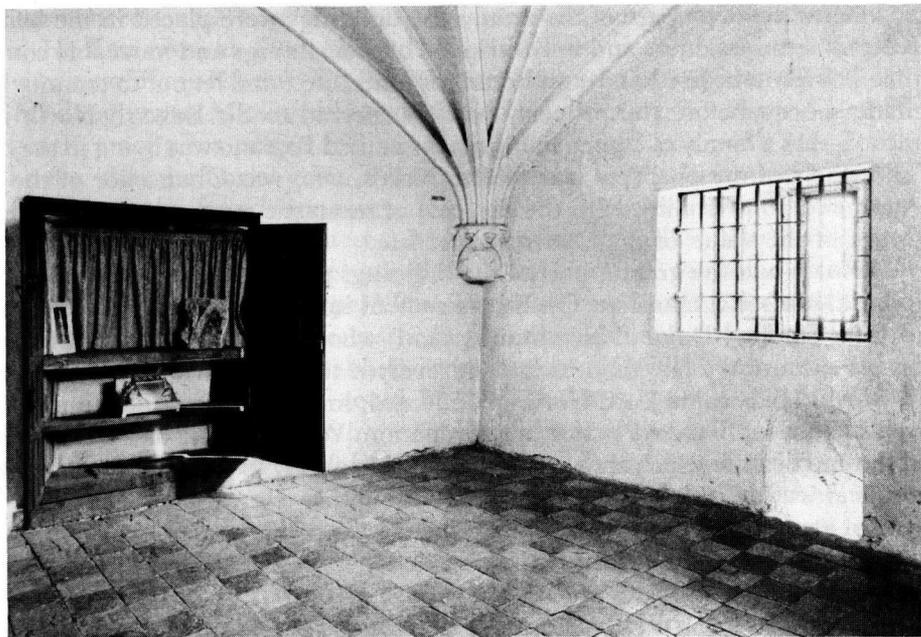
After the departure of the monks the buildings were placed in the hands of the King's Commissioners and were stripped of their fittings and moveable contents and turned over to be used as a storehouse for tents, etc., and let out to tenants. A survey made shortly before the property was transferred to Sir Edward North in 1545¹⁰ records that a family of Venetian musicians named Bassano was living in the buildings. The whole of the property was sold to North, who was Chancellor of the Court of Augmentations dealing with the disposal of monastic properties and therefore well aware of the value of the Charterhouse site.

North had the greater part of the buildings pulled down and the materials used to build himself a mansion. On his retirement in 1553 he sold the newly-built house to John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, who did not enjoy its use for long, and on his execution a few months later it reverted to the Crown and was granted back to North. He became Lord North in 1554 and, in 1558, entertained Queen Elizabeth in his house for five days before her coronation. When he died on 31 December 1564, at the end of a life which showed his remarkable ability to navigate through dangerous political waters, the property was sold to Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, who renamed it Howard House. He held it until his execution in 1572 after the exposure of the Ridolfi Plot which was hatched in the Charterhouse.

Norfolk's eldest son, Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel, was allowed to retain possession of Howard House but did not reside there, and let it to the Portuguese ambassador. At Philip Howard's death in the Tower the property reverted to the Crown and was leased to George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, a favourite of the Queen, whose glove, set with diamonds, he 'wore ever in his cap'.¹¹

In 1601 the Queen granted Howard House to the Duke's second son, Lord Thomas Howard, later created Earl of Suffolk. He entertained King James I in his house for several days when he came down to London after his accession. In 1611, by which time he had been appointed Lord Treasurer, he was in need of money to build the palace of Audley End, and sold the house to Thomas Sutton, a rich merchant, to whom he was already in debt.¹²

Not a great deal is known about the origins and character of the man who founded the Hospital of King James in the Charterhouse. As is only to be expected in the case of an immensely wealthy self-made man who deliberately shunned the limelight, myths grew abundantly about him, some of which are demonstrably the product of piety rather than scholarly accuracy. Of his almost mythological wealth there is no doubt, and certain other facts are well established. He held the office of Master of the Queen's Ordnance in the North, and when he relinquished that and came south he married a rich widow, Elizabeth Dudley, whose dowry increased his already considerable fortune. This had been acquired partly by speculation in coal while he was in the north.¹³ He had been able to acquire the leases of the rich mines of Whickham and Gateshead in Co. Durham in the following way; as a result of the political ineptitude and, perhaps, the timidity of the Bishop of Durham, the Queen had extracted the leases of these mines from his see and had released them to Sutton. However, it was not to prove as successful a coup as Sutton had hoped because the merchants of Newcastle, who controlled the local coal trade, refused to admit him to the freedom of the city, without which he was excluded from the trade in coal,

**Fig. 3**

(Top) The squint seen from inside the Treasury
(Above) The squint seen from outside the chapel tower; note the circular hole above the lowest window

and he soon sold the lease. As for his subsequent career, Thomas Fuller in his *Worthies of Lincolnshire* states that he was a merchant in London and gained great wealth, and the particular reference in the early constitution of his Foundation to decrepit sea-captains as beneficiaries of his charity suggests that he was concerned with foreign trade.¹⁴

There is evidence to be found in the archives of Sutton's Hospital, the Public Record Office and elsewhere of another of Sutton's activities; namely the lending of money. Indeed, it was by this activity that he acquired some of the estates with which he endowed his foundation. He died a few days after he had obtained the Letters Patent from King James which authorized him to found his hospital and school, and he bequeathed to the foundation the greater part of his vast fortune.

Sutton's will was immediately contested by his heir-at-law, his nephew Simon Baxter, and by relatives of his wife, but he had foreseen trouble of this nature and had made provision for there to be a powerful group of sixteen Governors—'persons distinguished either by their high birth, dignified situation, or splendid talents'—among whom were included the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor, to ensure that his intentions were carried out. There were, and still are, Royal Governors in addition to the sixteen. This provision proved at the very outset to be a wise one and the Governors were able to resist the attacks, although they thought it wise to offer the King a legacy of £20,000 for the building of a bridge at Berwick-on-Tweed. The first formal meeting, or Assembly, of the Governors was held on 30 July 1613.

Sutton's foundation was exceptional in two respects; its magnitude and its dual nature, although in neither was it unique. It consisted of a hospital, or hospice, for the care of eighty elderly men, and a school for forty poor scholars. Sutton's intention was that the elderly men, who were called pensioners or brothers, should be 'gentlemen by descent, and in poverty'¹⁵ and this condition was laid down in the regulations of 1627, which were confirmed by Charles I although modified during the Civil War. This condition for eligibility has usually been observed over the years, but there have been periods when the Governors spread the net more widely, rather to the disapproval of some of the Brethren who were thus qualified. The other limitations were as to age and financial situation. Sutton's avowed aim was to enable men who had lived active and useful lives in conditions of prosperity and comfort but had, through no fault of their own, fallen on hard times to finish their days in the kind of circumstances to which they had been accustomed.

The forty scholars were to be 'fed, clothed, and instructed in classic learning, writing and arithmetic at the sole expense of the Charity'.¹⁶ They were to be of age between ten and fifteen years. Exhibitions were provided at Oxford and Cambridge and those who did not wish, or were unfit, to go to the university were apprenticed to a suitable master.

The appointments of pensioners and scholars were made by the Governors, the right to nominate being exercised in rotation. This right of patronage was one of the things that made the position of Governor of Charterhouse always much sought after. Sutton's foundation aroused much interest and admiration at the time; Thomas Fuller described it as the 'Masterpiece of Protestant English Charity' and Sutton as

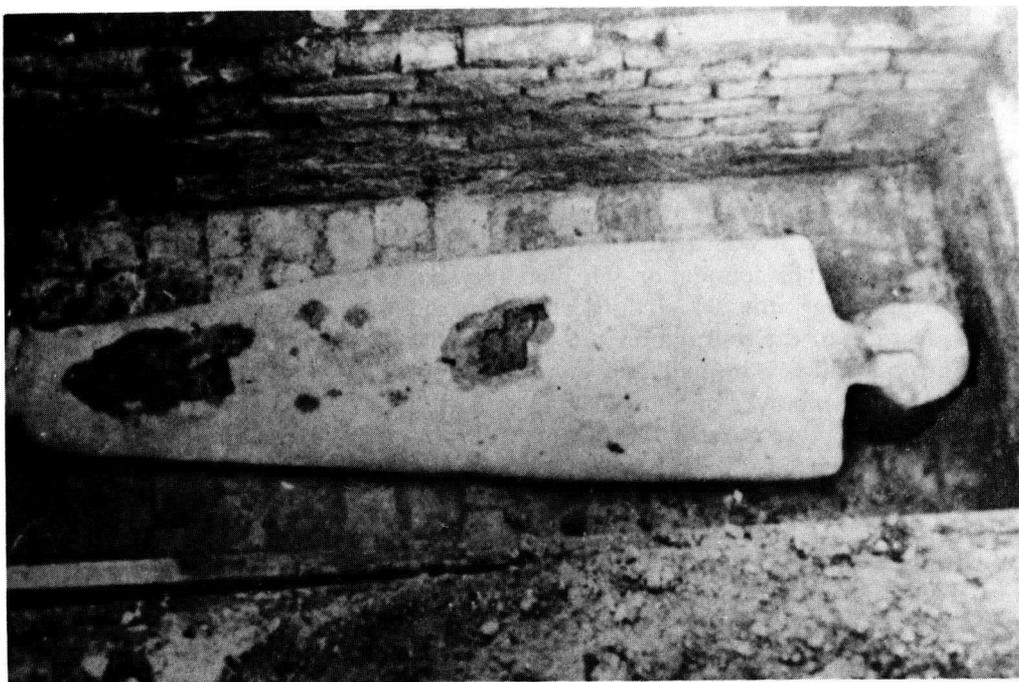


Fig. 4

Sir Walter de Manny's grave when opened in 1947

'peerless in all Christendom'.¹⁷ The entire direction of the establishment was in the hands of the Governors and, under their authority, the officers, the chief of whom was the Master, who was always to be a Governor,¹⁸ followed by the Preacher and the Schoolmaster.

The provision of a new school in London quickly led to a demand for commoner places, and from the earliest days the Schoolmaster was allowed to take both boarders and day-boy pupils who were not on the Foundation. The Governors accepted no responsibility for those pupils who were not on the Foundation until well into the nineteenth century. One result of the attitude of the Governors is that before 1769 records were kept only of scholars, or Gownboys. The number of pupils seems to have been about 150 except in a period of ten years, early in the nineteenth century, when it increased to 431, only to fall drastically to below 100.¹⁹ Once established the Foundation flourished, although there were difficult times during the Commonwealth due to lack of funds and interference by Parliament. Both the Preacher and the Schoolmaster were removed from office because of their Royalist sympathies.

By the nineteenth century conditions were becoming increasingly difficult for the school due to the expansion northwards of London and the gradual decline of the area into slum conditions, and the possibility of moving was already in the air



Fig. 5
Leaden *bull*a of Pope Clement VI
(1342-52) from Manny's grave

when the report of the Public Schools Commission was published in 1864. Charterhouse was one of the four London schools to be scrutinized, and the report recommended a move out of London. There was considerable opposition among Old Carthusians, but the headmaster, William Haig Brown, carried the day and in 1872 the school was transferred to a new site at Godalming, in Surrey. At the same time the two parts of the Foundation were partially separated, each being given its own autonomous Board of Governors. Part of the London property was sold to Merchant Taylors' School, which, in its turn, moved out in 1933, and was replaced by the Medical College of St Bartholomew's Hospital. Most of the original buildings were retained by the Foundation, only the playing fields and later buildings being sold.

The removal of the school brought a period of decline to the other half of the Foundation. Its site was reduced and the income from the endowments was now equally shared with the school and, at the same time, the long agricultural depression was causing a serious reduction in rents, upon which the Foundation depended. One result was that the number of Brothers was reduced. However, by the first decade of the present century confidence and stability were renewed.

During the night of 10-11 May 1941 a large part of the Charterhouse was gutted by fire caused by incendiary bombs. Thus, a national calamity, like the Black Death which led to the founding of the monastery, led to the rebuilding and restoration of the present buildings. The work was carried out by the firm of Seeley and Paget. The senior partner, Lord Mottistone, was in charge of the work; this was a fortunate arrangement because his deep interest in the history of the buildings led to the recovery of the plan of the monastery. At his suggestion the Governors invited Mr (later Professor) W.F. Grimes, then of the London Museum, to undertake excavations to

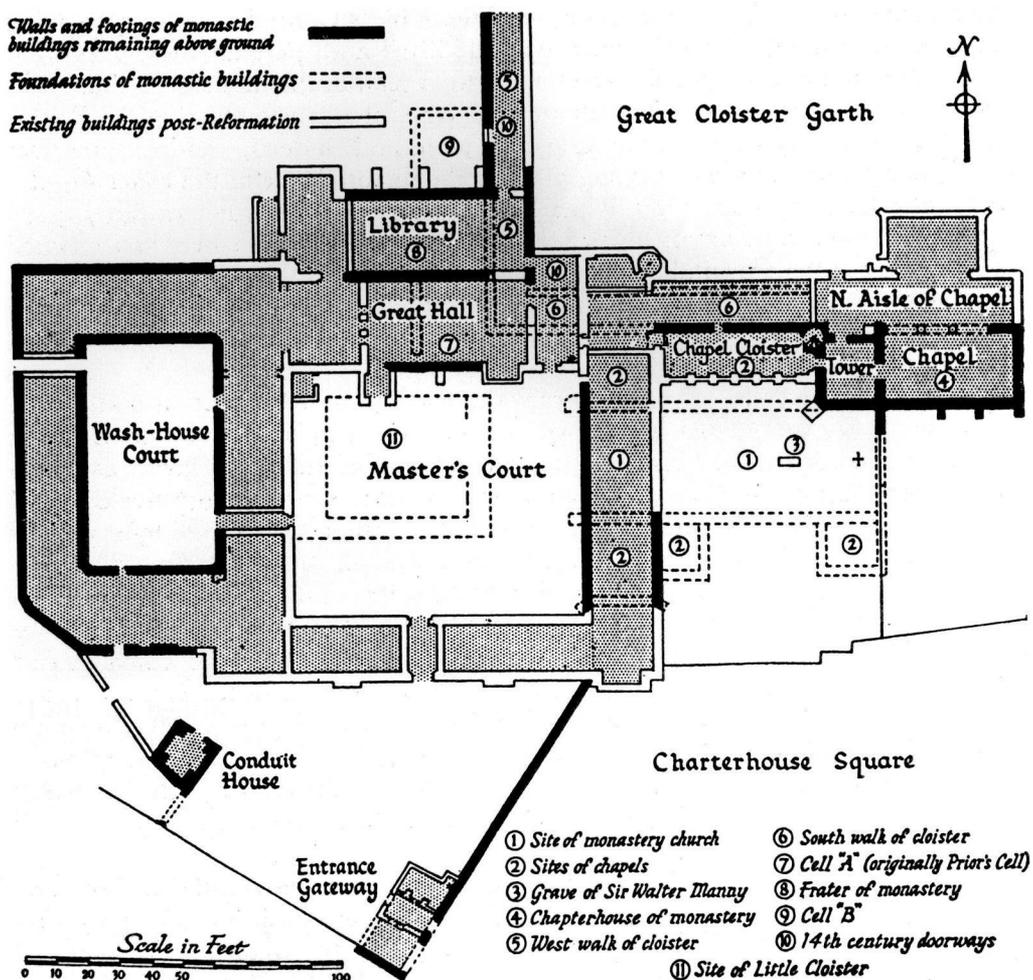


Fig. 6

Plan of the monastic church and other buildings incorporating discoveries made after the Second World War.

After Oswald, A. (1959)

follow up discoveries made by the builders. In 1951 the Brothers, who had been moved to the country in 1941, returned to take up again their life in the Charterhouse.

MONASTIC BUILDINGS

We turn now to consider the buildings of the Charterhouse. Although the monastic buildings were destroyed almost completely after the suppression in 1537, we are fortunate to have a fair amount of documentary evidence. As well as the cartulary, or register, already referred to above (page one), there is a memorandum by a certain

William Dale dated 1538;²⁰ a declaration of the King's Commissioners concerning the goods and chattels of the Charterhouse (1538);²¹ and, perhaps most important of all, a plan of the water supply which includes a plan of the monastic buildings.²² This last item was given a date of about 1500 when it was examined at the British Museum, but it may be a copy of an earlier plan, and, indeed, another copy does exist. It was presumably the working plan for the maintenance of the water supply, which dates back to about 1430, when John Ferriby and his wife, Margery, gave to the monks land in Islington which contained springs. An agreement was reached with the prior of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, and the prioress of the nuns of the Blessed Mary of Clerkenwell, for the water pipes to be laid across their land; the plan recorded the course of the pipes, both outside and inside the monastery, on a long roll of parchment 9ft 11in by 1ft 8½in.

A Carthusian monastery differs from those of other orders in that each monk has his own separate cell, set in a walled garden, where he spends the greater part of his life in solitude engaged in contemplation, prayer and study. The layout as shown in the water-supply plan (Fig. 1) conforms to this, there being twenty-five cells, all but two being marked with a letter of the alphabet, ranged round the four sides of a great square, or cloister garth, with a covered walk all round. On the south side of the Great Cloister is the church, which has a spire, and the Chapter House at its north-east corner. The sacrist's cell lies between the church and the south cloister walk and there is a stair turret between it and a two-storey building which housed the Treasury on the first floor. Beyond the south-west corner of the Great Cloister is another smaller cloister, on the north side of which lies the prior's cell. The main incoming water-pipe feeds into a conduit tower situated in the middle of the cloister garth, and pipes leading from it distribute the water to the cells and the cistern of the lavatory in the south cloister walk. The monks' frater lay between the prior's cell and the second cell (B) on the west side.

There is no indication of the position of the quarters occupied by the lay-brothers, or *converses*, whose duty it was to look after the monks and keep the administration working. However, early in the sixteenth century, after the water supply plan had been drawn, another courtyard was built on the west side of the Little Cloister providing quarters for them as well as new domestic offices, such as the brewhouse, stores and laundry. A new cell for the prior and three additional little cells were built east of the church at about this time, presumably because there was pressure to admit more young recruits. Because all Carthusian monks were in priest's orders, sufficient altars were required in the church to enable them to celebrate the mass. These were located in several chapels which were arranged round the body of the church and in the Chapter House and its vestibule.

The evidence of the water-supply map would seem to be clear enough, although there is room for uncertainty over detail due to illegibility caused by wear, but there were problems. It had always been assumed, perfectly reasonably in the absence of other evidence, that the chapel of the present foundation was formed out of the choir of the monks' church. If this were the case the nave of the church would have extended westward to cover the area of the present so-called Chapel Cloister. This was the accepted plan (Fig. 2)²³ until the restoration work after World War II and the

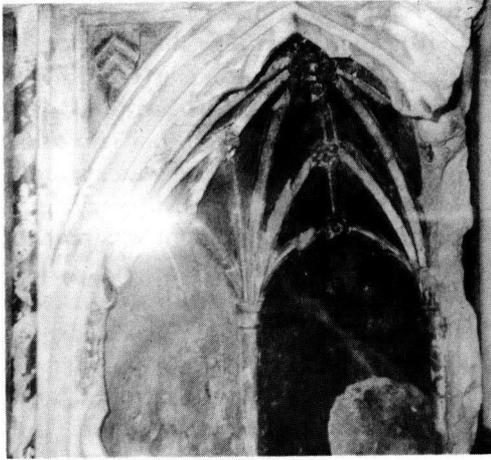


Fig. 7
Fragment of Sir Walter de Manny's tomb

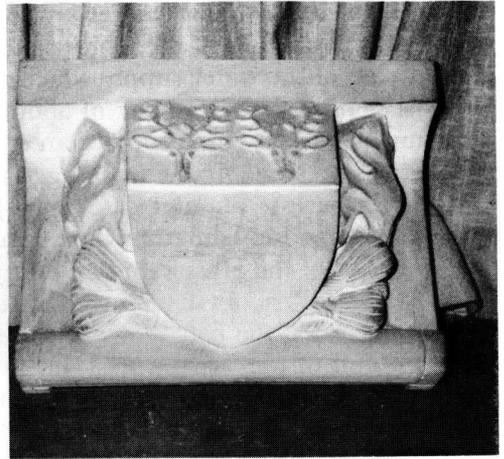


Fig. 8
Arms of Sir John Popham carved on to a stone found built into a buttress in the Master's Court

accompanying excavations uncovered evidence which disproved it; Lord Mottistone's workmen discovered the remains of the south-west corner of the inner wall of the cloister-walk under the floor of the present Great Hall, thus establishing precisely the line of the south cloister-walk. This new position was several feet south of that in the plan accepted at the time, and it became clear that if room was to be left for the sacrist's cell, which the water-supply plan showed lying between cloister walk and church, the church would have had to be further south.

The architects began to speculate that the present chapel was not, after all, the choir of the church, but the Chapter House, and that the church had lain south-west of it under what is now called Chapel Court. This solution of the problem was supported by an ingenious piece of detective work, after the discovery of a blocked-up squint in the south wall of the Treasury which, it will be remembered, was situated above the vestibule of the Chapter House. The squint would probably have looked directly down on to the high altar. Lord Mottistone wrote:

it occurred to my partner and me that conclusive and dramatic proof would be given to our theories if it were possible to locate and identify the grave of Sir Walter de Manny, the founder, since his body was known to have been buried in 1373 in the centre of the choir of the Church at the foot of the high altar steps in accordance with his directions.²⁴ (Fig. 3)

The workmen dug in the area indicated west of the suggested position of the high altar and uncovered a stone- and brick-lined tomb containing a lead coffin shaped like a man (Fig. 4). The coffin contained a male skeleton and a lead seal, or *bullā*, (Fig. 5) of Pope Clement VI (1342-52). It is known that Clement VI did, in fact, issue a licence to Manny in 1351 granting him permission to select a confessor for

Fig. 9 (Right)
Surviving doorway of a monk's cell
in the Cloister



Fig. 10 (Below)
Washhouse Court; originally the
lay-brothers' quarters



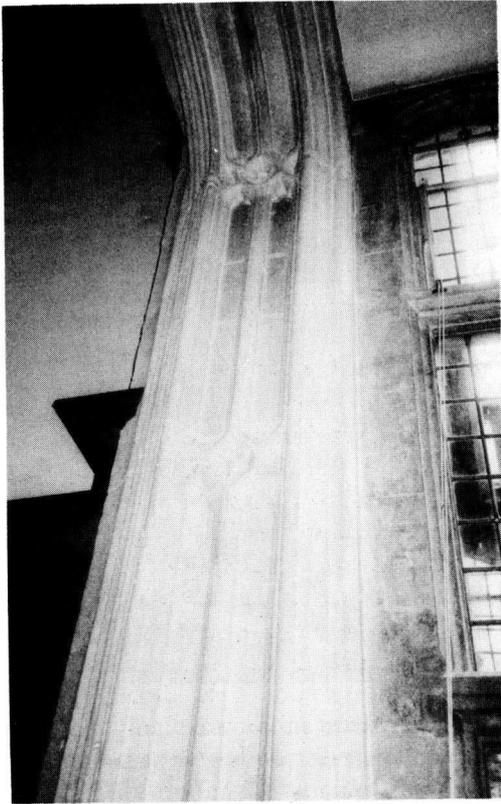


Fig. 11
Arch in the Great Hall showing carved stone
in soffit which may have been re-used from
earlier building.

the purpose of final absolution and remission of sins²⁵ and it was probable that the document would have been buried with him. This was convincing evidence that the body was that of Manny and that the position deduced for the high altar was correct. The coffin and its contents, including, one is glad to know, the *bull*, were reburied with a short service. Professor W.F. Grimes subsequently excavated the foundations of the church and located some of the chapels associated with it and part of the west wall which was found to have been incorporated in the east side of the present Master's Court (Fig. 6).²⁶

We can gain some idea of the appearance of the church from the existing documents. It must be remembered that part of it, probably the choir, was built as the chapel of the burial ground in about 1350, and that it may have been enlarged after 1371. We know that the belfry had a great clock which was reported as having been sold after the suppression. The interior was certainly panelled, as indeed were the monks' cells; over the high altar there was a reredos of carved bone (perhaps ivory) with the story of the Passion, and below it an alabaster carving of the Holy Trinity and other images. There were several decorated tombs, the quality of workmanship of some of which can be gained from the fragments that survive; two

fragments from Manny's tomb (Fig. 7) and a stone bearing the arms of Sir John Popham (Fig. 8) (see below).²⁷ Recent excavations carried out for the Museum of London by Mark Barrett in the north-east corner of the Medical College uncovered another piece of carved stone which is likely to have come from the church.²⁸ This is of good workmanship and some of the colouring survives, including traces of gilding, which suggests a monument of some affluence. The plate and ornaments amounted to 279 ounces of silver gilt, 64 ounces of parcel gilt and 104 ounces of white silver. There is mention of one vestment of white velvet ornamented with angels and set with pearls.

Although little remains of the Great Cloister we have sufficient evidence to know its dimensions; a large part of the inner wall of the west cloister walk still stands and it includes the doorway of Cell B (Fig. 9), complete with food-hatch, and there are doorways of two other cells on the east side (one in the anatomy department of the Medical College). The north-east corner of the walk was uncovered during the rebuilding of damaged buildings in the Medical College after the war. Part of the floor of the south cloister-walk, with matrices of monumental brasses still in position, was also found.²⁹ The foundations of Little Cloister were uncovered.

The only substantial part of the monastery, apart from the Chapter House, that still stands is the lay-brothers' courtyard, which is still in use as the administrative part of the Hospital (Fig. 10). It was built at the beginning of the sixteenth century and completed less than twenty years before the suppression and has good Tudor decorative brickwork. At about the time that the construction of this courtyard was begun the young Thomas More was studying at Lincoln's Inn and living near the Charterhouse in order to be able to take part in the religious observances of the community.³⁰

TUDOR HOUSE

We now turn to Sir Edward North's house. Faced with the choice of adapting the monastic buildings or destroying them and starting anew, he chose mainly the latter alternative. The greater part of the monastery was swept away, only the Chapter House and the lay-brothers' courtyard being left more or less intact. The building materials so obtained were used to construct a typical courtyard house of the period, occupying the area that was previously the south-west corner of the Great Cloister and the Little Cloister.

His new Great Hall was on the north side of a new courtyard which was considerably larger in area than the Little Cloister that it replaced. The upper storey of the range of buildings on the south side of this new courtyard was occupied by a long gallery. Before the post-war investigations it was believed that North's Great Hall was originally built in monastic times and merely adapted by him. This was partly due to misunderstanding of a statement made by Dom Maurice Chauncy, writing in about 1547, that North *de ecclesia triclinium suum fecit*,³¹ which was taken to mean that he converted the church into his dining room. However, evidence discovered during the restoration leaves no doubt that material from the demolished church was used in the building of the dining hall; when a damaged buttress on the south side of the hall was being repaired a piece of masonry bearing the arms of John



Fig. 12

The Great Hall, looking towards the Elizabethan screen

Popham (see above p. 12) was found, coming almost certainly from the chapel which he is known to have endowed in the church. So we must accept the alternative interpretation of Chauncy's statement; that is, that North used the *material* of the church to build this dining room. The Great Hall has an oriel window the soffit of the arch of which is decorated with carved stone-work which may possibly have come from the church. Oswald suggests that the hammer beams and other timbers of the roof may also have been re-used from monastic buildings.³²

We know that the Chapter House was not demolished and the question arises whether this was because it was intended to use it as a chapel. We have no evidence that this was the case, probable as it is, and, indeed, there is evidence that the long gallery was used, on at least one occasion, for a service. At the time when the Portuguese ambassador was living in the house, in 1576, there was a disturbance when an officious Recorder of London, accompanied by a sheriff, appeared at the gate and demanded to be admitted, as he suspected that Englishmen were present at a mass being celebrated there. The porter, being, we are told, 'a Portugal, a testy little wretch', slammed the great gate on the Recorder's leg, causing him considerable pain. The party forced its way in and up to the long gallery, where the Recorder's suspicion was confirmed. There was then a brawl and the ambassador subsequently protested to the Queen, who threw the unfortunate Recorder into prison.³³

When the Duke of Norfolk purchased the house, which then became known as Howard House, alterations were made to the Great Hall (Fig. 12). The fine wooden screen, in English Renaissance style, was introduced (it bears the date 1571) and the roof was raised and the upper range of windows added. The Great Chamber (Fig. 13) was perhaps formed for North by inserting a floor in the upper part of the frater, but the decoration of this fine room was certainly due to Norfolk, for the heraldry of the ceiling is exclusively Howard. The upper section of the splendid chimney-piece is also probably of this date (Fig. 14), but the Royal Arms of Charles I and the arms of Thomas Sutton were certainly added later, perhaps in 1626 when it was repaired by Rowland Buckett, who inscribed his name on the back of the oval panel. The lower section is by a different, and later, hand than the upper, and was probably also the work of Buckett. Two of the panels have scenes depicting the Annunciation and the Last Supper; it is interesting to speculate whether the former looks back intentionally to the monastery, which was dedicated to the Salutation. The chimney-piece escaped irreparable damage in the war and was beautifully restored by Robin Ashton, but the ceiling was more or less destroyed and had to be largely reconstructed. The Great Chamber was extensively restored in 1838 when the ceiling which was sagging badly was fixed back into place and the chimney-piece restored. It is possible that the cornice, which does not match the rest of the ceiling stylistically, dates from this time.³⁴

During Norfolk's occupation the west cloister-walk was roofed with a vaulting of fine brick-work (Fig. 15). This served the dual purpose of providing a covered way from the house to the real-tennis court and providing a terrace walk above. To judge from the irregular line where the brick joins the stone build of the wall, the latter was in a ruinous state in 1571. One wonders why the wall was left standing at all in this area after North's demolition. The new terrace-walk would have looked



Fig. 13
The Great Chamber

down over a formal garden which occupied the former cloister garth and can be seen in a print of 1755 (Fig. 16). The cloister was used as a thoroughfare by the school and an exceedingly rough game called cloister football was played there.

Queen Elizabeth was entertained in the Great Chamber by Lord Thomas Howard in January 1603, shortly before her death, and when King James I came down to London in the following May and stayed in Howard House for a few days, he held an investiture in this room at which he created 133 knights. In 1687, by which time it had become the Governors' room, there was a dramatic scene when the Governors declined to elect King James II's nominee, one Andrew Popham, to be a Brother because he was a Roman Catholic, and therefore ineligible; one of their number, Jeffreys, the Lord Chancellor, stormed out of the Assembly in a rage.³⁵



Fig. 14
The Chimney-piece in the
Great Chamber

SUTTON'S HOSPITAL

When the property became Sutton's Hospital fewer structural alterations were necessary than in North's time. We shall concentrate our attention mainly on the chapel, the only substantial building still surviving which was much altered at this time. The accounts relating to the costing of these building activities, preserved in the archives of the Hospital,³⁶ throw much light on the operations and provide the names of the principal builders and other craftsmen involved.

Two surveyors, Ralph Symons (or Simons) and Francis Carter, tendered plans to the Governors and the latter was the successful candidate. Symons had done much work at Cambridge in particular at Emmanuel and Sidney Sussex Colleges, both of which, like Sutton's Hospital, were adaptations of earlier buildings. He had also worked at St John's and Trinity. Carter, whose early training was as a carpenter, had worked with Symonds at Trinity, where he was responsible for the woodwork. In 1611 he became clerk of works to Henry, Prince of Wales. While he was working at Charterhouse he was appointed chief clerk of the King's Works for life. He was associated with Inigo Jones in a number of projects, which included the Whitehall Banqueting House.

This account of the two surveyors illustrates a tendency to be noted throughout the history of Sutton's Hospital; that the Governors, who, as has been explained above, were men of considerable standing, and, furthermore, had a very rich endowment to support them, were usually satisfied only with the best, as they saw it, and employed the best people to do the work. The master mason, Edmund Kinsman, who undertook the stone-work by contract, was an important London man, master of the Masons' Company in 1635. The chief bricklayer was Richard Brayman and the principal carpenter Richard Hudson.

In order to make the Chapter House into the chapel it was necessary to enlarge it. This was done by adding a north aisle, three round-headed arches on Tuscan pillars being made in the existing wall. The ceiling is decorated with a geometrical plasterwork design with small pendant bosses at the crossings of the strapwork and greyhounds' heads at the angles. The greyhound's head, which is Thomas Sutton's crest, is frequently repeated on the pew-ends and elsewhere. The pews were carved by James Ryder and the joinery of the pulpit was by Thomas Herring and Edward Mayes and the ornament by Francis Blunt. The fine screen in front of the organ loft (Fig. 17)

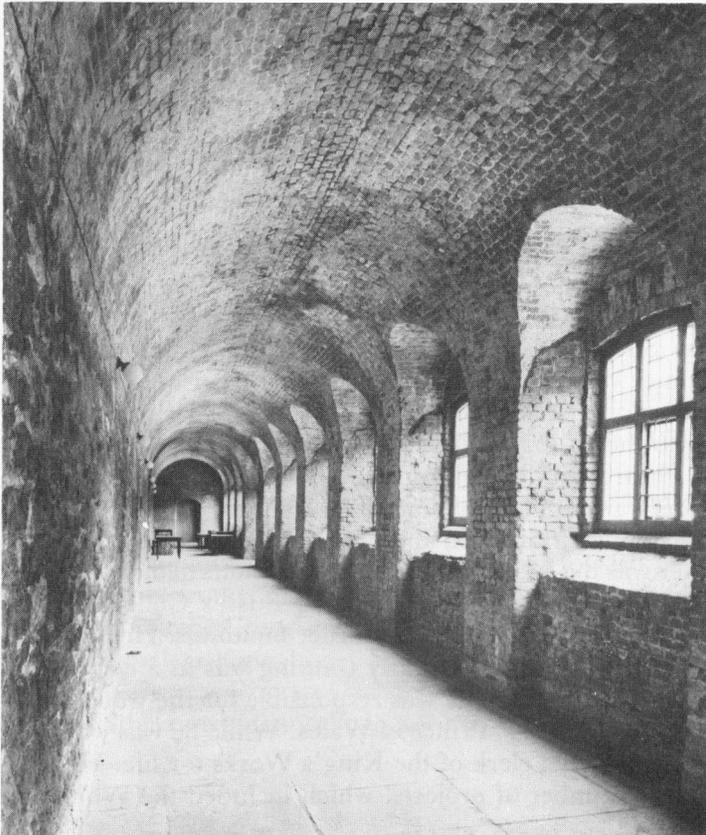


Fig. 15
The Cloister, showing
the Elizabethan
vaulting

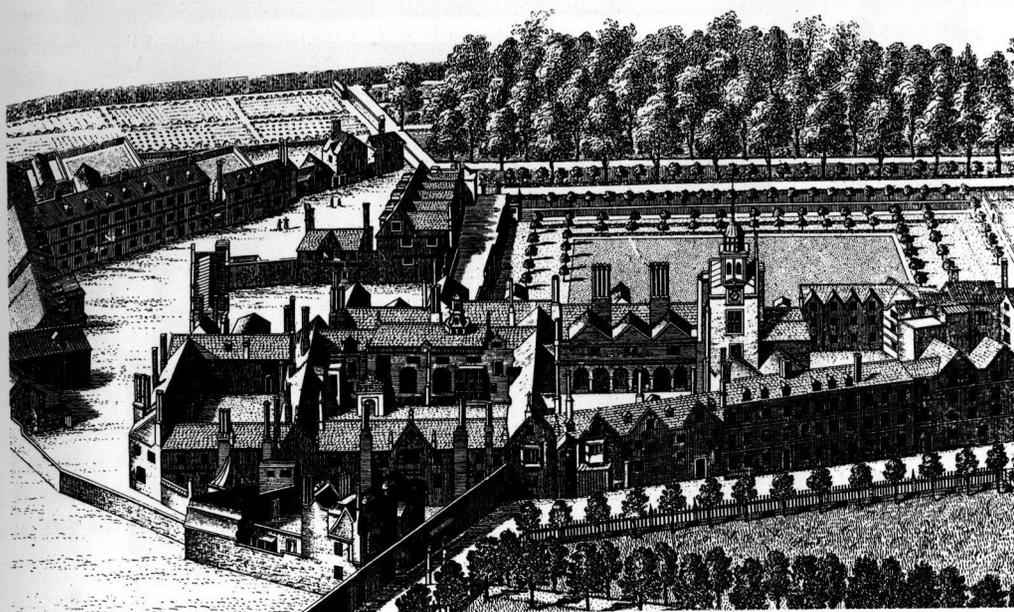


Fig. 16

View of Charterhouse from W. Maitland's *History and Survey of London* (1756)

is possibly of a slightly later date and it, and the gallery above, were moved from their original position at the west end of the south aisle in 1841.³⁷ It is a fine example of Jacobean, or Caroline, carving; the two panels on either side of the central cartouche are striking examples of the depiction of perspective. The communion rails and altar table with thirteen legs are of Jacobean date, but some of the panelling and other woodwork is later. There is a door in the panelling to the right of the altar table which when opened reveals a niche, or piscina, set in the medieval wall.

The most striking object in the chapel is the tomb of Thomas Sutton, situated at the north-east end of the north aisle, which was the joint work of Nicholas Johnson (or Janson) and Nicholas Stone (Fig. 18). The latter was one of the leading Jacobean monumental sculptors. In his notebook he writes:

In November 1615 Mr Janson in Southwark and I did set up a tomb for Mr Suttone at Charter hous for the wich we had 400£ well payed but the letell monemont of Mr Laws was included the wich I made and all the carven work of Mr Sottons tombe.³⁸

In the receipt for the final payment he records that he and Nicholas Johnson and Edmond Kinsman received full payment for making, furnishing and gilding and setting up the monument. It is clear that Stone did all the carving; Johnson was responsible for the design and probably also for the execution of the architectural part of the work. Kinsman, as we have seen, was the master mason responsible for other stonework



Fig. 17
Screen and organ loft in the chapel

in the chapel. The materials employed for the monument are alabaster for the body of the work and black marble for the columns and inscription panel. The effigy of Sutton, of painted alabaster, lies on an altar slab, under a canopy, and above him, on the back of the recess is an inscription tablet supported by two figures in plate armour, which possibly refer to his early military career. Above the tablet is a skull supporting an hour glass between figures of Time and a child blowing bubbles, representing youth and age. Above the canopy is a long narrow sculptured panel depicting a scene—which is difficult to interpret—of a man standing in a pulpit addressing an audience of men and youths. Above this is an achievement of arms surrounded by emblematic figures and surmounted by a figure of Charity with young children. The wrought-iron railings surrounding the tomb were executed by William Shawe and are of the same date.

The little monument referred to by Stone is situated above the screen at the west end of the south aisle, but this can hardly have been its original position if the other, larger screen, now in the north aisle, was there, because it would have been hidden. It consists of a half-length figure of John Law, Sutton's friend and executor, and in the broken pediment at the top there is a figure of a child blowing bubbles seated



Fig. 18
Monument to Thomas Sutton in the
chapel (1615)



Fig. 19
Monument to John Law in the
chapel (1614)

astride a skull (Fig. 19). The tablet resembles an earlier one by Stone of Anne Bennet at York, but whereas Law's has angels on each side, that has harpies. The Sutton tomb is one of Stone's earliest works, executed two years after he returned to England from Amsterdam where he worked under Hendrik de Keyser.

This is a convenient point at which to mention other monuments in the chapel. One, dated 1818, is to Edward Law, Lord Ellenborough, Lord Chief Justice (1750-1818) who was a scholar of the school and Governor of Charterhouse. As a barrister he defended Warren Hastings in his impeachment trial. The monument is by Sir Francis Chantrey. Another, by John Flaxman, dated 1811, is to Dr Matthew Raine, Schoolmaster. A small monument high up on the south wall of the north aisle (Fig. 20) is to the fourth Master, Francis Beaumont (1624); it is a curious but attractive work though treated rather dismissively by Pevsner.³⁹

An additional floor was built over the vestibule, now the antechapel, to produce the present tower which was capped with a bell-frame and cupola, and a massive buttress built at the south-west angle to strengthen the structure. The first floor became the strong room, or evidence room, and it was during the restoration of this that Lord Mottistone uncovered the squint which led to the discovery of Manny's tomb.



Fig. 20
Monument to Francis Beaumont in the
chapel (1624)



Fig. 21
The Great Staircase which was destroyed in 1941

The present Chapel Cloister which joins the chapel to the rest of the buildings was constructed at this time, but the storey above was restored after the war.

The Grand Staircase on the east side of the Great Hall, which was totally destroyed in 1941, is usually attributed to the Duke of Norfolk. There was certainly a staircase there in 1571 as it figures in the account of the Ridolfi Plot, but the one in question, which is well-recorded in photographs and paintings (Fig. 21), and was one of the glories of the Charterhouse, was of Jacobean date to judge from the style of the balustrade and of the decoration of the carved newell-posts bearing Sutton's crest.

A chimney-piece, made by Kinsman, was inserted in the Great Hall. This is of Caen stone and is decorated with cannon and powder kegs, made by Jeremy Winkle, which commemorate Sutton's tenure of the office of Master of the Queen's Ordnance in the North. Kinsman also made the fireplace in the adjacent room on the north side of the hall, which was once the scholars' dining room. The accounts include items concerning the provision of Pensioners' quarters and the Master's Lodge. In the eighteenth century the house which stands to the west of, and extends over, the main gate was built by the physician of the Hospital to replace an earlier house which occupied the same position. The date 1716 and initials SH can be seen on a rainwater

head. The arch of the gate and the doors are of fifteenth-century date and the porter's lodge Victorian. By the nineteenth century the quarters occupied by the Pensioners, which had been constructed in the monastic barns and other buildings, were in such a bad state of repair that the Governors decided to replace them with modern buildings. These, which are named Pensioners' Court, were started in 1824-5 and are usually attributed to Edward Blore, an architect who had already made a reputation for himself and was to become better-known still when he was appointed to complete Buckingham Palace after Nash was dismissed for extravagance. There is evidence, however, that the surveyor and architect of the Hospital, Redmond William Pilkington, was directly responsible, probably under Blore's general supervision. It is significant that in 1827 Pilkington exhibited under his own name at the Royal Academy a drawing that was described as a view of the new quadrangle being erected at the Charterhouse⁴⁰ which implies that he was responsible for the design. The new buildings were in a plain Tudor style which is characteristic of Blore's work. R. W. Pilkington succeeded his father, William, who, as surveyor until 1824, was probably involved in the preparatory work on the project. He, William, built a fine new schoolroom that was completed in 1802.

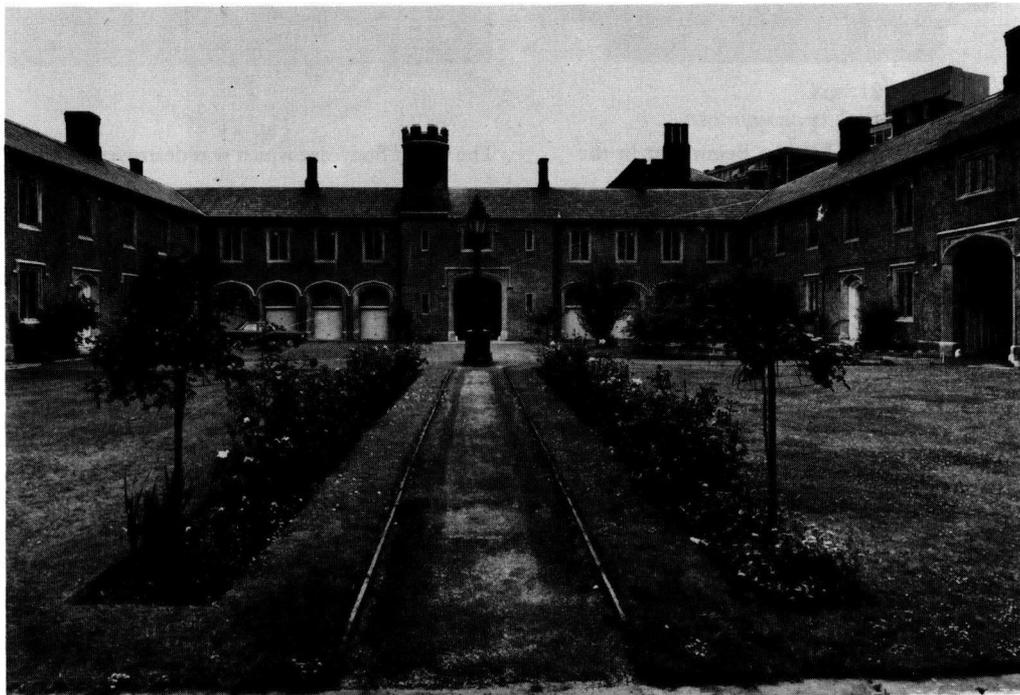


Fig. 22
Pensioners' Court

Blore was directly responsible for various other projects, such as the adding of battlements to some of the Tudor buildings. (These were removed by Lord Mottistone.) He built an annexe on to the north side of the chapel in 1824 to accommodate extra pupils. In 1842 substantial alterations were made to the interior of the chapel. It was then that the organ gallery and screen were moved to the north aisle as mentioned above (pages 20-1) and a new, smaller, screen supporting the Royal Arms put in its place; a double row of seats with stalls for the Master and Preacher were ranged along the wall of the south aisle, and a window was made at the east end of the north aisle adjacent to the Founder's tomb. A stained-glass window at the east end of the south aisle by Clutterbuck⁴¹ was presented by the masters and scholars of the school in 1844.

The great charm and attraction of Charterhouse are due not only to the rich mixture of its architectural styles, though the variety of these, the conjunction of all the different periods, is an important factor, but also to the rich and varied flow of humanity that has passed through it over the centuries. The buildings have been occupied almost continuously for more than six hundred years and although there is no direct connection between the present foundation and the Carthusian monastery there is, despite differences of religion and way of life, a continuity of sympathy and spirit. It was fortunate that the architects who restored the Charterhouse after the last war were keenly interested in its history and rebuilt with skill and sensitivity.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The Charterhouse is situated on the north side of Charterhouse Square, London, E.C.1.
2. Pevsner, N., *The Buildings of England: London* (1952), 121.
3. Oswald, A., 'The London Charterhouse restored', *Country Life*, 126 (1959), 418.
4. The principal sources used in this paper are Davies, G.S., *Charterhouse in London* (1921); Hope, W.H. St John, *The History of the London Charterhouse* (1925); Knowles, D. and Grimes, W.F., *Charterhouse* (1954); Mottistone, Lord, 'The Ancient Buildings of the London Charterhouse', *Journal of the London Society*, No. 311 (1951), 97-107 (the typescript of this paper with several additional photographs is deposited in the library of the Society of Antiquaries of London); Oswald, A., 'The London Charterhouse restored', *Country Life*, 126 (1959), 418-21; 478-81; 538-41. Smythe, R., *Historical Account of the Charter-House* (1813); Taylor, W.F., *The Charterhouse of London* (1912). The writer gratefully acknowledges the help of Mr A.O.H. Quick, whose history of Charterhouse is in preparation.
5. In the Public Record Office (Land Revenue, Miscellaneous, Book 61). Relevant passages are printed in Hope, W.H. St J., *op. cit.*
6. There is a reference to this church in an ordinance of the Mistery of Cutlers dated 1370. In that year a Fraternity was established in the following terms:
'In honour of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His Sweet Mother and of all saints certain of the good folks of the Mistery of Cutlers of London have begun a Fraternity among themselves in support of two tapers to burn (before the image of) Our Lady in the Church of the Annunciation of Our Lady called the Charterhouse, West Smithfield, in the year of grace 1370.'
Welch, C., *History of the Cutlers' Company of London* (1916), Vol. 1, 251-2.

7. Davies, G.S., *op. cit.*, 15-7.
8. Harvey, J., *Henry Yevele* (1944), 13.
9. Chauncy, Dom Maurice, edited by Curtis, G.W.S., *The Passion and Martyrdom of the Holy English Carthusian Fathers* (1935); the Latin text with translations by Radcliffe, A.F. This is the so-called fourth narrative, dated 1570.
10. P.R.O. Rentals and Surveys, SC 12/36/26. Printed in Knowles, D. and Grimes, W.F., *op. cit.*, 84-6.
11. He was the father of Anne Clifford, the redoubtable Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery (1590-1676) who may have lived in Howard House as a child. Her answer to Sir Joseph Williamson, Secretary of State to Charles II may be apocryphal but demonstrates her spirit; 'I have been bullied by an usurper, I have been neglected by a Court, but I will not be dictated to by a subject; your man shan't stand'.
12. Trevor Roper, H.R. (Lord Dacre), 'Thomas Sutton', *The Carthusian* (October 1948), 2-8. King James I remarked that Audley End was too big for a king but would do for a Lord Treasurer.
13. Trevor Roper, H.R., 'The bishoprick of Durham and the Capitalist Reformation', *Durham Research Review* (1947), 110-4.
14. Fuller, T., *Worthies of England, Lincolnshire* (1662), 168-9.
15. Smythe, R., *op. cit.*, 252.
16. Smythe, R., *op. cit.*, 251.
17. Fuller, T., *op. cit.*, 168-9.
18. This ceased to be the case in 1962.
19. Arrowsmith, R.L., *Charterhouse Register 1769-1872* (1974), v.
20. Printed in Hope, W.H.St J., *op. cit.*, 178-84.
21. *ibid*, 184-92.
22. Hope, W.H.St J., *op. cit.*, 107-44; Hope, W.H.St J., *Archaeologia*, 58 (1902), 293-312.
23. Hope, W.H.St J., *The History of the London Charterhouse* (1925), at the end of volume.
24. Mottistone, *op. cit.*, 102. It is interesting to note that G.S. Davies, supposing the present chapel to have been the choir of the monastic church, suggested (*op. cit.*, 311) that there would have been a squint in the east wall of the Treasury to provide a view of the high altar, thus making a suggestion similar to that of Lord Mottistone.
25. Knowles, D. and Grimes, W.F., *op. cit.*, 48-9, 87-92.
26. *ibid*, 51-63.
27. *ibid*, 38n., 39.
28. Barratt, M., *Archaeological Investigations on the Site of St Bartholomew's Medical College, E.C.1, July-September 1989*, London: Museum of London (1989), 7-8, Figs 7 and 8.
29. Knowles, D. and Grimes, W.F., *op. cit.*, Plate IIb; Evans, H.F.O., 'Charterhouse, London', *Transactions of the Monumental Brass Society*, 9, pt 9 (1962), 464-74.
30. Davies, G.S., *op. cit.*, 75-6.
31. For discussion of this point see Knowles, D. and Grimes, W.F., *op. cit.*, 39n.
32. Oswald, A., *op. cit.*, 480.
33. Davies, G.S., *op. cit.*, 147-50.
34. *The Carthusian, a Miscellany in Prose and Verse* (1839), 509.
35. *A Relation of the Proceedings at Charter-House upon Occasion of King James the II. His presenting a Papist to be admitted into that Hospital In Vertue of his Letters Dispensatory*, London (1689); Davies, G.S., *op. cit.*, 238-41.
36. The archives are kept in the Greater London Record Office, 40 Northampton Road, London, E.C.1.
37. Radclyffe, C.W., *Memorials of Charterhouse* (1844). It is difficult to see how this screen was fitted into the west end of the south aisle unless it was considerably smaller or located east of the arch that separates the antechapel from the chapel, thus protruding into the nave.
38. Spiers, W.L., 'The Notebook and Account Book of Nicholas Stone', *Walpole Society*, 7 (1918-9), 40-2.
39. Pevsner, N., *op. cit.*, 124.
40. Colvin, H.M., *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600-1840* (1978), 637.
41. There are windows by Charles Clutterbuck at St Anne's, Limehouse, and St Botolph's, Aldgate, the former being a Crucifixion.