

A Forgotten Gate to the Schools Quadrangle

By I. G. PHILIP

AT a meeting of Convocation on 2 March 1618 the Vice-Chancellor reported that William Toldervey, a young Oxford bookseller and a 'privileged person', had committed *felo da se*. His estate being therefore forfeit to the University, and University committees being at that time both willing and versatile, Convocation agreed that the disposal of Toldervey's goods should be referred to the delegates recently appointed to consider a quite unrelated matter, the lease of Holme Cultram rectory in Cumberland.¹ Five months later, in Convocation on 14 June, the delegates for Holme Cultram rectory reported that they had agreed on the disposition of Toldervey's estate and proposed that after the payment of just debts and expenses the remainder (£8 7s. 7d.) should be devoted 'erga structuram januarum iuxta Collegium Aenei Nasi in primo introitu erga scholas ut maior et melior si fieri poterit sit mundities in illis locis'.² Thus a committee appointed to deal with property in Cumberland evolved a novel and now forgotten architectural feature to enhance the approach to the new Schools Quadrangle.

At first sight it is difficult to see what purpose this gate by Brasenose could have served. We have become used to the spacious approach to the south side of the Schools Quadrangle, and Loggan's meticulous drawing of the Schools gives the misleading impression that even in the seventeenth century there was an unobstructed approach to the south gateway.³ In fact, however, until the ground was cleared for the building of the Radcliffe Camera, a huddle of buildings and garden plots lay close to the quadrangle and the approach from the south was by a narrow entry running north by Exeter garden wall and then east alongside the quadrangle wall to the south gate. It was to make this entry more imposing, and cleaner, that the delegates proposed the building of another gate 'iuxta Collegium Aenei Nasi'.

By the beginning of 1623 the delegates for building the Schools had agreed on the details of the new gate. At their meeting on 28 January 1623 they made various decisions⁴ about paving the quadrangle and also agreed that 'the passage betweene the gate next Brasenose, and the entry or passage on that side into the Schools should be pitched with good sound pibble, the work to bee wrought

¹ Univ. Arch. Reg. N., f. 53.

³ *Oxoniensia*, XIII, pl. IV.

² *ibid.*, f. 73.

⁴ Univ. Arch. Reg. N., f. 155.

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diamond like'. At the same time they 'committed the care of the building of the great gate towards Brasenose, both for the mannerforme and fashion thereof . . . to Mr. Dr. Hawley, Mr. Briggs, Mr. Simonson, Mr. Burton, who agreed with John Clarke and James Partridge for the making of the said gate in manner and forme following. Imprimis that the said John Clarke and James Partridge . . . shall make the gate in breadth eight feete, in height 20-feete or thereabout, in height to the under parte of the arch of the gate ten feete and a halfe or eleven feete, the rest of the worke from the lower side of the arch to the toppe of the same gate nyne feete; the gate to bee built with good free stonne cleanly wrought; all the ashler worke of the said gate behinde the collumnes from the james of the gate on both sides to bee mulleted. The Kings armes to bee put above, and to stand very faire bosted out (sc. boasted, carved out in the mass), put in collours and gilded, and two other armes in the two spandrells of the gate to bee set forth in collours and gilded. The uppermost parte of the said gate above the cornishe to bee wrought all on the backside as on the foresyde, but the Kings armes, which must bee according to the finisshing. . . . The said gate is to bee finished before the fyfte of July, 1623 . . . that the said John Clarke and James Partridge are to have for the buildinge of the said gate fyftie pounds . . . and . . . shall have the bords which stand at Exeter Colledge wall end.'

The gate must have been completed by 22 April 1624, on which day the final payment was made to Partridge, who seems to have been responsible for most of the work on the gate, since John Clarke is not mentioned in this connexion in the Vice-Chancellor's Schools accounts after the first instalment of £16 paid to Clarke and Partridge jointly.⁵ The gate appears, somewhat sketchily, in Loggan's plan of the city from the north, and the position of the gate and the line of the passage to the south gate of the quadrangle is shown on a plan⁶ drawn in connexion with the planning of the Clarendon Building, c.1710 (PL. XIII). Thereafter the gate disappears; presumably it was destroyed when the site was cleared for the building of the Radcliffe Camera. The wall of Exeter College garden was presumably moved eastward to its present line at the same time, and the raised walk inside the wall may indeed have been made with soil from the Camera site.

In addition to his work on this gate James Partridge occurs frequently in the Schools accounts for the period 1621-4, when he is paid for paving, for pinnacles, and for 'stone work done about the three gates of the schools and for carving the three arms', these being the arms of Pembroke over the inner face of the south gate, the arms of the University over the north gate, and the royal arms immediately over the arch in the Tower of the Five Orders. Of these the

⁵ V.C. Computus, 1556-1666, f. 9 v.

⁶ MS. Top Oxon. a. 24 (46).

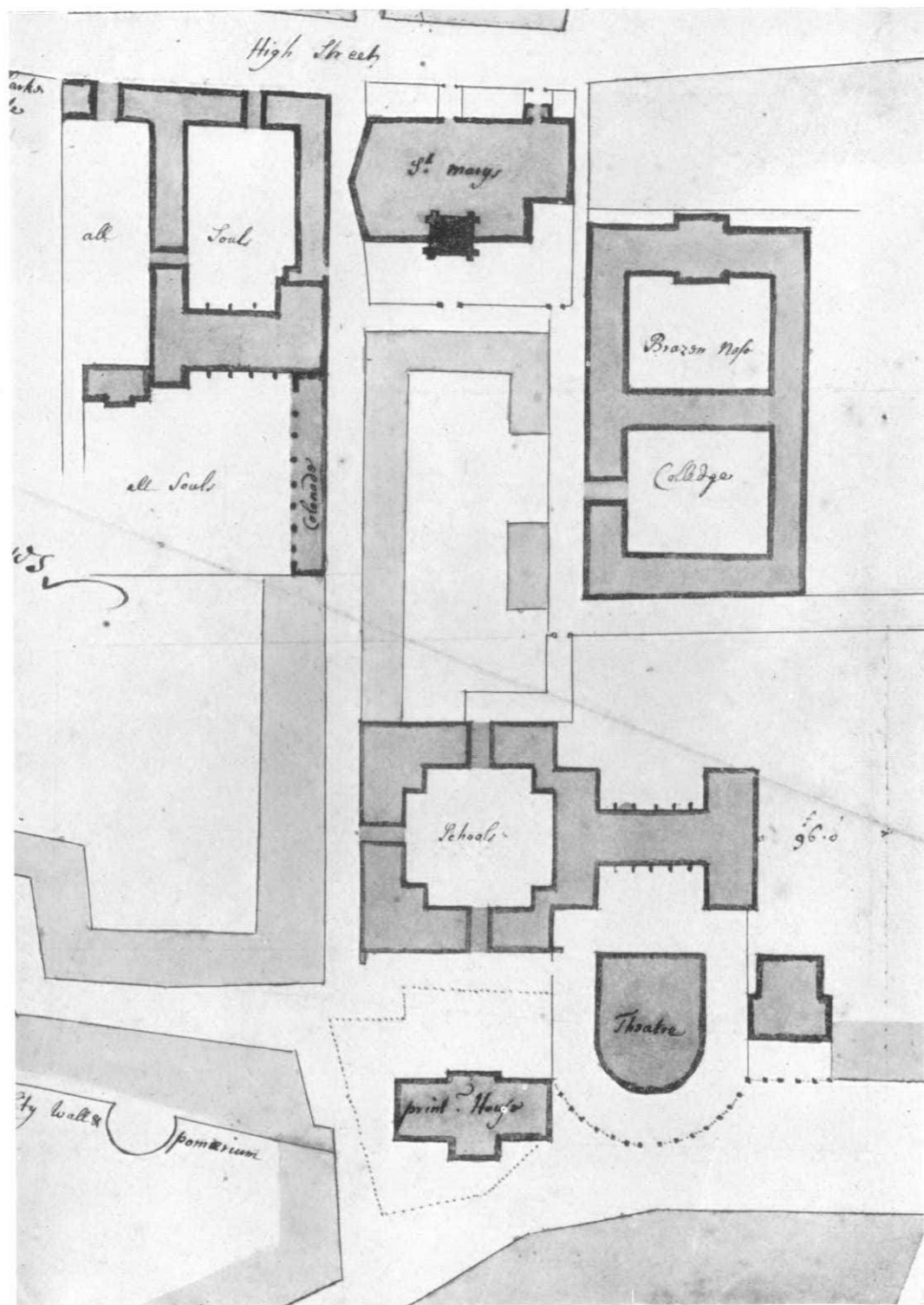
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first is almost obliterated and the last was renewed when the Tower was restored in 1878-84. In the accounts for 1634-5, among entries for the building of the Convocation House and Selden End, Partridge occurs as receiving £3 'for cutting and setting up Sir Thomas Bodley's armes over the dore at the west end of the walke'.⁷ This must mean the arms over the Apodyterium, probably the only example of Partridge's workmanship still standing unchanged. Of John Clarke's work the best-known example is the Carfax conduit.⁸ but as John Clarke 'of London' he also appears in the agreement made between Lord Danvers and various masons in 1621 for building the Physic Garden wall. Clarke was to be responsible for half that wall, which was to be 'well faire and sufficient as well as Alsoules Colledge walls, Magdalen Colledge Tower or any the fairest buildings of that kinde in Oxford both for strength and beauty.'⁹

⁷ V. C. Computus, 1556-1666, f. 23r.

⁸ Salter, *Oxford Council Acts, 1583-1626* (O.H.S. LXXXVII (1927)), p. 263.

⁹ Univ. Arch. S.E.P., F. 5.



PLAN OF THE SCHOOLS QUADRANGLE AND NEIGHBOURING BUILDINGS, c. 1710, LOOKING S.
Showing the passage-way and gate between the Schools and Brasenose College

Bodl. Lib. MS. Top. Oxon. a. 24 (46)