

The Building of the Second Palace at Cuddesdon

By J. C. COLE

IN this paper I propose to discuss the surviving documents connected with two legal disputes which arose in Oxford during the second half of the seventeenth century, from which we can learn some details of the building of the second palace at Cuddesdon and the craftsmen who were employed upon that work. The first of these disputes was brought before the Court of Arches in 1669,¹ the second before the Vice-Chancellor's Court in 1681.²

Before 1634 the Bishops of Oxford had no dwelling house especially appropriated to their use, but lived either in their parsonage houses or in hired lodgings in Oxford. In that year, as Anthony Wood tells us, William Laud, then Archbishop, persuaded the Bishop of Oxford, John Bancroft, to build a house for his own use and that of his successors 'for ever'.³ The site chosen was the small village of Cuddesdon, of which Bishop Bancroft happened to hold the incumbency. The place was conveniently situated about five miles to the south-east of Oxford and not far from the old London Road. The building, which displaced an earlier parsonage house described as mean and ruinous,⁴ was said to have cost about £2,600. King Charles gave his approval to the project and contributed fifty timber trees from the royal forest of Shotover as well as remitting a sum of £343 from the first fruits of the bishopric.⁵ Several representations are to be found of the palace, which contemporaries called 'a fair house of stone'.⁶ Laud paid it a visit of inspection in 1635⁷ and stayed there again in 1636 on his way from London to Oxford to entertain the King. On this occasion he came in state in a coach and six with fifty horsemen, 'all his own servants'.⁸

Unhappily this first palace did not survive the Civil War. In 1644 Colonel Legg, then commanding the Royalist garrison in Oxford, ordered it to be scorched to prevent its occupation by Parliamentary troops, and in 1652 the Parliamentary Commissioners sold the land and the chapel, which

¹ Now in Lambeth Palace Library. I have been given leave to publish it by the kind permission of His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury.

² University Archives. Papers of the Vice-Chancellor's Courts, Michaelmas 1681.

³ Wood, *Ath. Oxon.* ed. Bliss, II, 894. The house was actually finished in that year. Gloucester College had originally been intended to serve as the Bishop's residence. Wood, *City of Oxford*, II, p. 261. (O.H.S., XVII, 1890.)

⁴ *C.S.P. Dom.*, 1636-7, p. 507.

⁵ *Ibid.* The sum was £343. 7s. 11½d.

⁶ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, V, p. 100, plate and references in notes.

⁷ Wood, *loc. cit.*

⁸ *C.S.P. Dom.*, 1636-7, p. 114.

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had survived. At the Restoration an act was passed indemnifying all such destruction of property during the wars, and the diocese was therefore left without redress for its loss.⁹

When the Civil Wars began the Bishopric of Oxford was held by Robert Skinner, who was sequestered during the Protectorate and returned at the Restoration. He was succeeded in 1662, by William Paul, a man of means, chosen in the hope that he would rebuild the palace. On Bishop Paul's death in 1665, Walter Blandford became the next bishop. In 1669 Blandford brought an action against the widow of William Paul claiming that the £1,997 needed for repairs to the Palace of Cuddesdon should be found out of the revenues of the See collected by her husband. In her defence Rachael Paul submitted that the estimate was altogether untrue and that, 'though she had not seen the said ruins, she believed the palace might be reedified and repaired for the sum of £1,500, and that in any case the destruction of the palace was an event which had occurred before her husband's tenure of the Bishopric'.¹⁰ Skinner, now Bishop of Worcester, added his testimony that for such destruction the bishops were exonerated by the Act of 1660; Mistress Paul also pointed out with spirit that after deducting the first fruits for the Crown and the expenses of the Cure of Cuddesdon, the revenues of the See had been scarcely adequate to meet the demands of hospitality and support the honour and dignity of her husband, who nevertheless had laid in timber 'to the value of £300 or £250 or at any rate £200' towards the rebuilding of the palace.¹¹

Among the papers connected with this case a detailed estimate for the repairs has survived.

'The Estimate

a View of the Delapidations of the Lord Bishop of Oxford's mansion house at Cudesdon in the County of Oxford taken the 7th Day of May 1669 by the workmen whose names are Subscribed to the Particulars which concerne their respective Trades.

The Plumer and Glasiers worke.

For 1000 foot of Glasse for glazing the windows of the Chapell and House.	£	S	P
	025	00	00
For Eighty Seven Hundredweight of Lead for the Gutters and Pipes from the Plumers.			
	030	00	00
	<hr/>		
E. Badnall	}	055	00 00
Bernard Rawlins			

⁹ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v, p. 100.

¹⁰ See Lambeth Deeds.

¹¹ Frogley in evidence says £200. The workmen who demolished the palace showed me that some of the 17th century timbers of Fell's house were of re-used wood with earlier peg holes remaining.

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The Carpenters worke		
For Timber Boards and nailes for all the floores	518	00 00
For Timber and nailes for the Roofe	190	00 00
For 32 Dores	015	00 00
For the Staircase	040	00 00
For the little Staircase	010	00 00
For Lintelles about the house and Stable worke	050	00 00
For Partitions and Dorecases	080	00 00
	903	00 00
	Richard frogley } William Smith }	
The Plaisterer and Tilers worke		
For the Tiling work, Tiles Lath and nailes and mortar at 24S the Hundred (foot). 10200 foot.	122	08 00
For 3050 yards of Raistering as 12d a yard.	152	10 00
	274	18 00
	Job Dew } John Dew }	
The Joyners worke		
The Great Parlour and Little Parlour wainscoted (170 yards at 4s the yard)	034	00 00
For the Skreene in the Hall and Benches and Back of Wainscote and Boards in the Windows	030	00 00
For an Alter Rail, Skreene, Desk Seats stall and Wainscoat on the Back in the Chapell.	060	00 00
	124	00 00
	John Wild } George Wild }	
The Masons worke		
For the Stoneworke of 120 lights in the windows at 6/8d the light the mason paying for the stone at Heddington Quarrey, ¹² preparing it there and setting it.	40	00 00
Carriage of the Stone being about 10 Loads	02	00 00
For repaying the End window in the Chapell and making new the two Side windows and taking down the Chimney.	30	00 00
For five Quoincs, the mason buying stone preparing and setting it 22 foot high a piece at 6d a foot	02	10 00
Carriage of the Stone being 5/- a Load	01	00 00
For Becketts and Jeames for 5 chimneys in the Great Stack and carriage of the stone being 2 load.	03	08 00

¹² See below. Notes 34 and 45.

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For Beckets and Jaumes for 5 Chimneys in the Great Stack and Carriage of the Stone being 2 load	03	00	00
For Beckets and Jaumes for the 4 Chimneys on the South Side and the Hall Chimney and carriage.	03	08	00
For four Quoins of the Chimneys on the South side at 6d a foot and carriage	03	12	00
For Beckets and Jaumes for 3 chimneys in the East part and carriage	02	04	00
For Beckets and Jaumes for the dores	04	00	00
For Pulling down and cleansing the whole house	26	13	04
For the rough stonework at 7/2 a Perch Rangeworke ¹³ there being 1009 Perches	361	11	02
For Paving the Chapell floor with Quarries of Brick (400 foot at 5d a foot)	08	06	08
For building a wall before the Porters Lodge wh is carried away and wh was in length 12 score foot And in height 12 foot at 4/6 P Perch ¹⁴	40	04	00
For paving the Great Kitchen with Heddington paving at 7d a foot	10	14	00
For the Tunnells of the chimneys above the roof of free-stone, the stonework and carriage	04	10	02
	<hr/>		
Thomas Robinson	}	544	06 02
Francis Robinson			

The Smith's work

For Barrs for all the windowes	38	00	00
For casements	34	00	00
For Hinges, Bolts Locks and Latches	24	00	00
	<hr/>		
	John Showell	}	96 00 00
	Richard Coorte		

	£	S	D
Plumer and Glazier	055	00	00
Carpenter	903	00	00
Plasterer and Tiler	274	18	00
Joiner	124	00	00
Mason	544	06	02
Smith	096	00	00
	<hr/>		
	1997	04	02

Note. The alterations of the figures in the Summs before expressed were made by the workmen or their direction before they agreed upon the particulars in the presence of

John Price Notary Public.

¹³ See below. Note 34.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

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It will at once be noticed that the names of the workmen who signed this document are nearly all those of leading craftsmen concerned in the building of the Sheldonian Theatre.¹⁵ Whether it represents a serious intention to rebuild the palace forthwith is doubtful. It was probably simply drawn up for the purposes of the case and Blandford would naturally turn for an estimate to the set of workmen with whom, as Vice-Chancellor, he had been intimately acquainted. The interrogations took place in the University Church in October 1669 and, in response to the question 'of what age and condition are you?', the witnesses supplied the following useful details about themselves.

Bernard Rawlins¹⁶ of the City of Oxford, plumber and glazier, said that he had lived in Oxford for 30 years; that he was born at Tredington in Co. Worcestershire and that he was 50 years old.

John Badnall,¹⁷ of the City of Oxford, plumber and glazier, had lived there for about 34 years. He was born at Fyfield in Co. Berks and was 50 years old.

John and George Wild,¹⁸ joiners, lived in Oxford where they were born; they were 37 and 36 years old respectively.

Richard Frogley,¹⁹ of the City of Oxford, carpenter, had lived there for 21 years. He was born at Elsfield in Co. Oxon. He was 36 years of age.

William Smith,²⁰ of Headington in Co. Oxon, carpenter, was born there, and was aged 49.

Job Dew, of the City of Oxford, plasterer, had lived there for 40 years. He was born at Yarnton and was aged 57.

¹⁵ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, p. 50.

¹⁶ Bernard Rawlins. Apprenticed to John Fletcher, glazier; admitted free 1646. Hobson and Salter, *Oxford Council Acts 1626-65*, (*O.H.S.*, xcv, 1933, p. 141). Glazier to the Sheldonian Theatre (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, p. 51.) Worked on the building of the Old Ashmolean, etc. He was an ardent Royalist and associate of Anthony Wood. A Bernard Rawlins, possibly a relation, was overseer at the building of the west range of University College Quadrangle in 1634. Tredington is now in Warwickshire.

¹⁷ John Badnall, plumber, apprenticed to William Hobbs, admitted free 1657. (*O.C.A. 1626-65*, p. 219.) He petitioned that he had served ten years apprenticeship, but owing to the fact that it had not been recorded in the Enrolment Book, he had been denied his freedom. He died in 1704.

¹⁸ John Wild, apprentice to David Woodfield, joiner, who worked on the Canterbury Quadrangle, admitted free 1632 (*O.C.A. 1626-65*, p. 41). Worked with Thomas Wood at the Old Ashmolean, etc. (Wood, *Life and Times*, IV, pp. 63, 66); master joiner at Christ Church, 1669 (W. G. Hiscock, *Christ Church Miscellany*, O.U.P. 1946, pp. 14 note and 201). Worked with Peisley at St. John's in 1676-7 (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, p. 262, note 85). I can find no reference to George Wild, except his will. He died in 1712 and left his house in Pennyfarthing Street to his daughter-in-law, together with his tools and timber.

¹⁹ Richard Frogley, contractor for the second palace at Cuddesdon. See below.

²⁰ William Smith, joiner admitted, free, 1635 (*O.C.A.*, 1626-65, p. 61), apprenticed to Thomas Richardson, one of Stone's workmen, who carved in Christ Church Cathedral, the Bodleian and University College Chapel. Smith worked with Arthur Frogley and Maine at Corpus, when the President called Maine 'a skinny rascal who defrauded Trinity in his work there'. He married Mary, Arthur Frogley's sister, who died at Marston in 1696. John Dewer, overseer, witnessed her will.

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John Dew,²¹ plasterer and tiler, was born in Oxford where he lived. His age was 40.

Thomas Robinson, of the City of Oxford, mason, had lived in Oxford 36 years. He was born at Wootton Underwood, Co. Berks; aged 68.

Francis Robinson,²² of the City of Oxford, mason, was born there. His age was 24.

John Showell,²³ of the City of Oxford, blacksmith, had lived in Oxford 20 years. He was born at Whitfield in Co. Worcestershire. His age was 37.

Richard Coorte,²⁴ of the City of Oxford, blacksmith, was born at Shipston super Stour in Co. Worcestershire. He was 43 years old and had lived 20 in Oxford.

We do not know what judgement was given by the Court of Arches, but it seems that Blandford lost his case for it was not until ten years later that anything more was done about Cuddesdon. 'The house', says Anthony Wood, 'being ruined, lay so, till Dr. John Fell became Bishop of Oxford, and then with moneys out of his own purse he did rebuild it upon the old foundation with a chapel in it as before.'²⁵

John Fell²⁶ had actually been Bishop for four years when, in 1679, he set about rebuilding Cuddesdon Palace. At Christ Church and as Vice-Chancellor he had already gathered around him a group of craftsmen in whom he reposed much confidence; and it was to one of these, Richard

²¹ John and Job Dew. The Dews, Dewes or Dewers were an important group of craftsmen working in Oxford during the 17th century. George Dew was the All Souls College mason and is called 'old Dewe' in the Bursars' Account Rolls of 1667. (He worked on the Schools Quadrangle, and at Brasenose College Chapel.) He lived in Marston and died in 1670 (see will). Part of the family belonged to St. Peter's-in-the-East (see Registers). There were two John Dews: (1) John Dew, of Marston, the mason, George's son, who worked on the Sheldonian, and was the master mason (with Frogley) in charge of building a top storey to New College Quadrangle (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, p. 151); and (2) John Dew the plasterer, who worked in the Sheldonian and on Brasenose Chapel, etc. (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, pp. 48, 51). Job Dew was apprenticed to Edward Barnes. (*O.C.A.*, 1626-65, p. 72). He was admitted free in 1637. In 1648 he lived in the North-West Ward, with a wife and three children (*Surveys and Tokens*, O.H.S., LXXV, 1920, p. 278). He worked on Brasenose Chapel, at the Old Ashmolean, in St. Mary's, etc. A George Dew, perhaps the next generation, worked with Peisley and Maine at All Souls in 1689 (Bursar's Rolls).

²² Thomas and Francis Robinson. The Robinsons were another large mason family. Several of them belonged to St. Mary Magdalen Parish. In the Canterbury Quadrangle accounts at St. John's College, there is a note of a reward given to Thomas Robinson in consideration of his diligence in continuing in the work from the beginning to the end. Perhaps this Thomas Robinson was the father of John, Francis and Thomas (died 1712), who all worked on the Sheldonian and at the building of Tom Tower. Old Thomas worked on innumerable University buildings of importance in his period (see Hiscock, loc. cit. passim). There were Robinsons who were masons and quarry owners in the 18th century. One supplied stone for the building of Magdalen Bridge.

²³ John Showell was an apprentice of Thomas Rankin, admitted free in 1667. He worked on the Sheldonian (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, loc. cit. and *O.C.A.*, 1626-65, p. 223).

²⁴ Richard Coorte worked for the City (*O.C.A.*, 1666-1701, p. 315 and passim).

²⁵ Wood, *Athen. Oxon.*, ed. Bliss, II, p. 894, 5. Wood adds that he used Dr. Paul's timber.

²⁶ Dr. John Fell, 1626-86, Dean of Christ Church, Vice-Chancellor, 1666-9.

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Frogley,²⁷ the College master carpenter and a well-trying workman constantly employed by the University, that he chose to entrust his new enterprise.

Fell's contract with Frogley, which unhappily does not survive, was 'by the Great'.²⁸ That is Fell paid Frogley according to his estimate for the various parts of the building and Frogley then employed the other craftsmen necessary to help him carry out the work. Fell was probably anxious to practise as strict an economy as would accord with the dignity of the Bishopric, and Cuddesdon was in no way an ambitious house.²⁹ Sir Roger Pratt would without doubt have dismissed it as being by a home-bred architect.³⁰

Having signed the contract with the Bishop in March or April 1679, Frogley's first step was to clear the ruins of the former house and to construct, or more properly reconstruct, the cellars and foundations.³¹ We do not know whom he employed upon this work, but we do know that his overseer was one Anthony Hale, a retired cordwainer, who kept a victualling house³² in Cuddesdon. To Hale we are indebted for our first information about the mason Frogley employed. He says that when the cellars were built and all the foundations finished, Thomas Wood,³³ being at Cuddesdon, told him that

²⁷ Richard Frogley, 1636-82. (Will proved 26 May, Vice-Chancellor's Court.) He lived first in St. Aldate's and afterwards in Holywell, having moved from Elsfield to Oxford. He was chosen by the benefactress to receive part of a loan given by Mrs. Mary Brett of Elsfield to Freeman in 1656 (*O.C.A.*, 1626-65, p. 214). He worked at the Sheldonian, as master carpenter at Christ Church and at the Old Ashmolean, and was contractor for building work at New College, etc. Plot called him 'an able carpenter'. The family belonged to St. Peter's-in-the-East. Arthur Frogley, perhaps his father, died in 1674 and James Frogley was touched for the King's Evil in 1685 (Church Registers). Arthur Frogley, no doubt his brother, worked at the Sheldonian, University College Chapel and Trinity Chapel.

²⁸ Among the papers in the case there is a note in Fell's own hand which reads: 'These are to certify whom it may concern that being to build my house at Cuddesdon, I set the whole work to Richard Frogley by the Great, according to an estimate of it brought in to me, and have accordingly paid to him the several sums due upon the said agreement, for which I have his receipt . . . The stone work that was rough was to be done at a Penny the foot.' For contracts 'by the Great', see W. D. Caröe: *Wren and Tom Tower*, p. 43, and Wren's letter to Fell on the subject, *ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁹ It is interesting to compare Cuddesdon Palace with the mansion house built by Sir William Glynne at Ambrosden during the 1670's (*V.C.H. Oxon.*, v, p. 16 and plate). I think Fell may have had this house in mind when discussing his plans with Frogley, though Cuddesdon is a much smaller building.

³⁰ The *Architecture* of Sir Roger Pratt, ed. Gunther, 1928, p. 60. He says about designing a house: 'If you cannot contrive it yourself, get some ingenious gentleman, somewhat versed in the best authors, to do it for you, which will generally fall out better than one which shall be given you by a home-bred architect, for want of his better experience, as is daily seen. Architecture has here not yet received those advantages which it has in other parts, continuing almost still as rude as it was at the very first'.

³¹ Frogley repaired rather than rebuilt the house below ground level and the second palace was built partly on the foundations of the first. The 1634 cellars could be seen clearly during the demolition. The workmen said a passage led from them in the direction of the church and another to the north. They lay under the Bishop's parlour and extended to the stairs.

³² Perhaps the public house standing just west of the palace and later incorporated in its grounds, which distressed Bishop Wilberforce so much (see *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v, p. 101).

³³ Thomas Wood, mason and stone carver, 1645-95, was as a young man a journeyman of William Byrd's. He was the master mason who built the Old Ashmolean (see H. M. Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, 1660-1840*, and my article on Byrd, *Oxoniensia*, xiv, 1949). It looks as if he had been employed chiefly on marble work and paving in Oxford before this date.

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he would lose £20 at least on his bargain on the rough stone work for the palace, but if he lost no more he would be content, because it was the first bargain of that kind of work he had taken in that country and he hoped it would bring him in further employment. Hale added that after Wood had undertaken the rough stonework of the palace he employed him to overlook his workmen. Wood's men started work in April 1679.

It is to be feared that Hale was not a good overseer. It may have been that he was too lenient and that Wood, who was much occupied at that time with the building of the Old Ashmolean, visited Cuddesdon infrequently, for Frogley's witnesses complain that Wood ought to have made a good wage out of the palace, had the work been well-managed and the workmen well overlooked, and again that he did not sufficiently punish the negligence of his workmen.

Wood's notes of the work which he undertook on the exterior of the palace survive. They are as follows:

		£	s	d
1. Inprimis:	For the working erecting and building of ye rough stonework of the Sd Palace (Frogley supplying the stone from the Wheatley quarries), and also for placing and erecting ye freestone work from ye top of ye ground upwards to be bottom of ye chimney tunnells of ye sd house amounting in ye whole to ye number of 1315 perches at 3/6 p.pch ³⁴	230	02	06
2. Item:	For Burford stone, the carriage and working thereof after ye best manner for ye dore in ye front of ye said Palace	16	01	10
3. Item:	For working 6 other doorcases ³⁵ of freestone being 100 feet at 7 ^d P foot, ye said Rich. ffrogley finding stone	02	18	04
4. Item:	For stone carriage and working of 900 feet of Cornish yt goes round ye top of ye wall of ye said Palace at 1/6 p foot	30	00	00

³⁴ The workmen who demolished the house spoke with great respect of the strength of Wood's masonry and said it was stronger than the 19th century work. The girth of the house was said to be 399 ft. and the walls 27½ ft. high to the caves. The rough stone work consisted of one row of freestone and two of hardstone. Frogley calls it 'Wheatley stone' and it probably came from Lye Hill quarries because the Victorian builders used these to match it. (Plot, *Nat. Hist. Ox.*, p. 77, W. J. Arkell's *Oxford Stone*, p. 40, and *Wheatley Records*, p. 24, Oxfordshire Record Soc., Vol. 37, 1956.)

³⁵ Frogley said one was only a little door, perhaps that on the east side of the house. He added that Wood left an oven and 18 hearths and other details unfinished to the value of £9 18s. The roof of the house was of stone slates.

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5. Item:	For working of ye Cornish over ye windows of ye sd Palace, being 70 feet at 7d p. foot and for ye ashlar running between ye said Cornish being 100 feet at 6 ^d p cent. (sic) ffrogley finding stone and carriage. ³⁶	02 06 10
6. Item:	For stone and working thereof for 233 quoins at 8d p. quoin. ffrogley finding carriage.	06 18 08
7. Item:	For ye stone and workmanship of 43 windows at 25/- p. window, ye sd ffrogley finding carriage. ³⁶	53 15 00
8. Item:	For 410 feet of freestone and ye carriage thereof for the tunnells of the chimneys of ye sd Palace at 5 ^d a foot.	08 10 10
9. Item:	For working and erecting ye said tunnells and for pointing and finishing ye house all round on ye outside, not comprehended in ye 1st particular of the schedule. ³⁷	28 15 00
Sum Tot.		379 09 10

Whether his workmen dallied or not, we know from the witnesses that the work on the outside of the building was finished by October 1679 and that it was then lime-washed³⁸, for, when Wood's surveyors came to take their measurements, they said that the new angle stones could not be distinguished from the old 'because they all looked alike, being all of a white colour not long since washed over with lime'. Anthony Wood also tells us that the outside of the palace was finished in the year 1679 and that the inside followed soon after.³⁹ Why he makes this distinction in his description of the work is clear. A dispute between Wood and Frogley held up for a time the plans for the completion of the palace and the contract for the new chapel was not drawn up till late in 1680 (13 January), when Frogley and Wood had quarrelled.

³⁶ See the drawing of sections of cornice and windows. Wilberforce's front door was already destroyed before I could visit Cuddesdon and none of Wood's plain doorcases survived for me to take a section. I have to thank Mr. J. N. Stevens for drawing the sections.

³⁷ Item nine was objected to by Frogley as not customary.

³⁸ The surveyors went to Cuddesdon in November 1680 and gave witness the following April. Lime washing was thought to preserve the masonry. See W. J. Arkell, *Oxford Stone*, p. 166, where he discusses this.

³⁹ Wood, *Ath. Oxon.*, ed Bliss, II, p. 895. Wood does not make it perfectly clear whether he is referring to the whole house or only to the chapel. One wonders if at first Fell planned to keep the old chapel and restore it.

Frogley therefore gave this contract to another mason, a local man named Thomas Chapman. Chapman's articles with Frogley survive and are interesting because they give us the position of the chapel and state that it was on the same site as Bishop Bancroft's, which was still standing.⁴⁰

It is obvious that Frogley framed this agreement with an eye to the points of difference between himself and Wood. Wood, to whom Chapman was decidedly *persona non grata*, suggested that Chapman had never worked as a master-mason before and that there was some secret bargain between the contracting parties; and we are at once put in mind of the situation when Strong's carvers came to work on the Canterbury Quadrangle at St. John's.⁴¹ Wood also suggested that Frogley, who was then working at Trinity,⁴² bribed Chapman, an outsider, by promising him work at the College. This charge Chapman was at pains to refute, saying that at present he worked at Trinity College 'but by whose order he knows not, only the Bursar of the said College sent for him and his company of workmen into the country, to come and work here in Oxon'.

Since the dispute between Wood and Frogley was confined to the exterior stone work, the case in the Vice-Chancellor's Court unfortunately gives us no information about the inside of the palace, but we know that Wood worked on this part of the building also, for one of the witnesses,⁴³ speaking of Chapman,

⁴⁰ See below for details of Chapman. His articles with Frogley are as follows: It was agreed that 'Thomas Chapman should make, build and erect such stone walls as shall be convenient to the Parlour of the Reverend Father in God John Lord Bishop of Oxford, situate and being at Cuddesdon in the County of Oxford in the place or on the ground where now the old Chapel standeth and that he should make the said wall in height, breadth and thickness uniform to the East wing of the said Palace lately erected, and should set up such freestone windows in the same as the said Richard Frogley should direct and appoint with one door in the same likewise answerable to the other wing'. It was also agreed 'that the said Thomas Chapman should built or set up one good and substantial chimney, double measure, over the said chapel in such manner and place as should be thought meet and convenient by the said Richard Frogley or his assignees'. Richard Frogley on his part undertook to carry, at his own proper cost, all manner of stone, lime, sand and other materials whatsoever for the building up of the said walls and the making of scaffolding for the raising of the said wall ready for the use of the said Thomas, or his assignees, except the workmanship only. Frogley was also to make, work, and carry thither at his own proper cost such freestone windows as were to be set or put up in the walls of the said chapel to be erected or built as aforesaid.

It was further agreed 'that Richard Frogley . . . should pay or cause to be paid unto the said Thomas Chapman . . . so much money as the workmanship of the said wall, doors and windows being equally measured on the outside should amount to after the rate of 1d. the foot square, of which said moneys . . . Thomas Chapman should receive the sum of £5 for the better enabling him . . . to carry out and perform the said work' and also that the said Richard Frogley should pay Thomas Chapman 'all other moneys as shall become due for the work to be performed and done as aforesaid at the same price or after the same rate as was before specified, as the occasions of him the said Thomas . . . shall require from time to time until the same be fully completed'.

Lastly it was agreed that the said Thomas Chapman should 'substantially . . . build compleat and finish the said walls, doors and windows and other the promises before mentioned and artificially or workmanlike point the same before the feast of St. John the Baptist'.

⁴¹ Canterbury Quadrangle building accounts, St. John's College Archives. 'These men would not come but at extraordinary rates, which Mr. Jackson gave them concealed from the other workmen.'

⁴² *V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, p. 242.

⁴³ George Callis.

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says that he had a hard bargain because he had no inside work to help him out, which the said Thomas Wood had in his bargain.

What was the second palace of Cuddesdon like and what other work beside that enumerated in his estimate did Wood do there?

Among the few pictures of the palace to survive is an early nineteenth-century drawing of the north front by J. C. Buckler (PL. VII). This gives us some idea of the original appearance of the palace on that side and shows us Wood's fine stone doorcase still in position. We have no pictures from any other angle, but fortunately from the diocesan records deposited in the Bodleian Library we can gather some additional information about its original form.

In 1845 Bishop Wilberforce undertook extensive alterations at Cuddesdon, which he described, somewhat disparagingly, as an 'old H-shaped, rambling sort of country gentleman's house'.⁴⁴ Among the diocesan papers, Wilberforce's architect Benjamin Ferry has left us, together with his specification, a plan of the palace before alteration and before Wilberforce's aggrandizing zeal had blurred so many of its details.⁴⁵ From this plan we can see that up to 1846 the house had indeed retained a good deal of its H-shaped character, though the projecting wings to the south had been filled in, at ground floor level only, by the addition of a drawing- and dining-room. The chapel also had been moved from its position in the N.E. wing to the S.W. corner of the house.⁴⁶ Thanks to a small collection of papers, also in the diocesan archives, we are able to disentangle still further the architectural history of the palace.⁴⁷ This little collection consists of plans, notes and letters, concerning alterations and improvements carried out by Bishop Secker (1737-58) and probably by his immediate successors. One or two of the papers are actually endorsed in the Bishop's own hand. From these I think we may conclude that soon after his elevation to the See, Secker set about rendering his living quarters in the S.E. wing more commodious and laying out a pleasure garden before his parlour windows. For these first alterations only a plan of the garden⁴⁸ remains and one (not carried out) for certain modifications to the main staircase, then situated in the E. wing. But it was no doubt at this time that the chapel was transferred to

⁴⁴ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v, p. 100, for illustration of the palace and references. *Ibid.*, see p. 101, for Wilberforce's description. With the extension of the Diocese, the Bishop needed more room to entertain at Cuddesdon.

⁴⁵ Among the Diocesan archives (MS. Diocesan Papers, C2114, No. 1). The architect was Benjamin Ferry, the contractor George Wyatt of St. Giles, builder. The alterations cost £1,500. The specification states that the additions to the palace were to be in Lye Hill stone.

⁴⁶ Chapman uses the plain points of the compass and I have followed him, but the wings of the house actually faced SE and NW.

⁴⁷ Unreferenced papers from Cuddesdon Palace. Wilberforce's specification mentions the copper covering over the drawing-room and dining-room. The upper stories here were added by the Victorians. When these rooms were pulled down Wood's rangework showed again clearly on the old outer wall.

⁴⁸ It is endorsed by Secker, 'Plan of Garden, Feb. 21, 1739-40.'

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the S.W. corner of the house.⁴⁹ Some notes on the improvements which the Bishop intended to make in his hall and parlour have been preserved, and with them the information that 'these schemes were proposed by the committee which sat all yesterday (Dec. 29), consisting of Lady Mary, My Lord of Gloucester, Dr. Gregory and Mr. Forster—My Lord of Gloucester in the chair, Mr. Forster secretary'. 'My Lord of Gloucester' must, I think have been Bishop Butler, who was translated in 1750 to the See of Durham.⁵⁰ Dr. Gregory was at this time Dean of Christ Church, where he was active in carrying out work on the hall and the Upper Library. Lady Mary Grey was his wife, a daughter of the Duke of Kent, and Mr. Forster was probably the future headmaster of Eton. Dr. Gregory's connection with Cuddesdon is interesting because it suggests that the fine stucco fireplace in the Bishop's parlour (PL. IV B), which survived, though robbed of its overmantel, till destroyed in the fire of 1958, may have been by the hand of the well-known Oxford plasterer, Thomas Roberts, who was responsible for the plaster work in the Upper Library at Christ Church.⁵¹

We do not know if Secker confined his activities to the east wing,⁵² but either he or his successors carried out further alterations to the palace and, in so doing, left us two undated plans of great interest. One of these concerns the addition of the drawing-room and dining-room (PL. VI B),⁵³ the other the construction of a courtyard on the west side of the house (PL. VI A). These plans I think give us at last the true outline of the house almost as Wood built it⁵⁴ and supply some additional information about its measurements and setting.

Fell's palace, then, was a plain H-shaped building with the main entrance on the north side, the great hall in the centre, and the library or Bishop's parlour and chapel in the north part of the east wing, corresponding with the kitchens in the west. A 'little parlour', (later the chaplain's room) was

⁴⁹ The fragments of painted glass which survived the fire, though of 16th-18th century dates, were probably inserted as a collection in the 19th century.

⁵⁰ While in Bristol he rebuilt the palace there.

⁵¹ There were also two stucco fireplace surrounds in the bedchambers in the E. wing and the workmen uncovered a third, but destroyed it. The Venetian window in the room above the library may have been put in rather later. The wall here was very flimsy.

⁵² The Bishop was still contemplating improvements in 1743, when he received a letter from John Burton, Fellow of Eton and Corpus Christi College recommending an underground tank, to be filled with the rain water from the roof, 'which should make his water supply good for all needs and immortal as the Heidelberg Tun'.

⁵³ There is a bill for the repair of the coping above these rooms in 1800, so they must have been built at some time before that date.

⁵⁴ Chapman's articles mention a door in the chapel 'answerable to the other wing', but these doors are not shown on the 18th century plans. It will also be noticed that the measurements of the NE wing do not correspond exactly with the rest of the house, either because Chapman built it a little out of the true or because the foundations of the old house threw it slightly out. Another plan gives us the names of some of the rooms.

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situated in the S.E. corner of the house and a larger parlour in the south west. A passage under the stairs led down to the old cellars and here were the sleeping quarters of the menservants.

One more detail about the palace we may perhaps justifiably conjecture from the plan of the courtyard. The two fine gate posts with their flanking volutes shown on the plan at the entrance to this yard, and later incorporated with one of Wood's plain door cases in Wilberforce's somewhat composite front door, must originally have stood at the entrance to a fore-court on the north side of the house.⁵⁵ These surely were Wood's work.⁵⁶

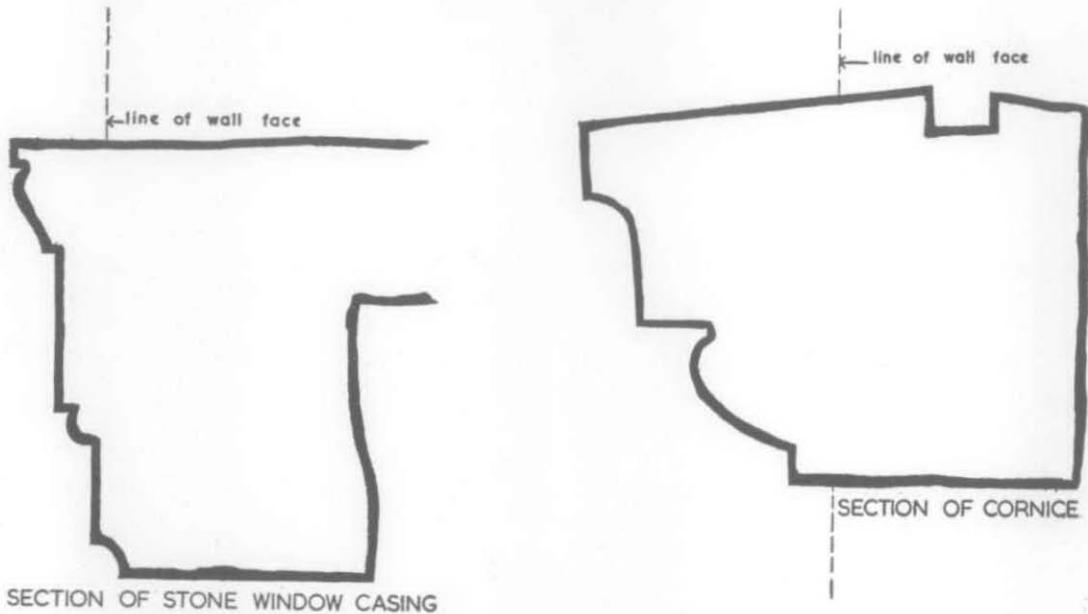


FIG. 18
Sections of Wood's Stonework.

Bishop Secker's papers give us no information about the appearance of the inside of the palace and it is to the specification of Wilberforce's architect that we must turn again for such meagre details as survive. It would be

⁵⁵ cf. the Manor House at Ambrosden.

⁵⁶ It is possible that Wood also carved the sundial shown in Secker's garden plan, since a note (not in the Bishop's hand) records that it is 3 or 4 minutes too slow and it may therefore have been carelessly re-erected.

natural to suppose that Fell would have commissioned Wood to execute one or more carved stone chimneypieces for the hall and perhaps the Bishop's parlour, since these were a special 'line' with both Byrd and Wood;⁵⁷ but of such chimneypieces there is no mention. Frogley, of course, complained that Wood had left 18 hearths unfinished in the palace and it may be that he also refused to erect his chimneypieces there; but Secker may equally have banished them at the time of his alterations.⁵⁸ We are on surer ground with regard to the pavements, for the specification tells us that the chapel of the 18th century house was paved with black and white lozenge marble and the hall with a chequered pavement. This last we may reasonably suppose was part of Wood's contract. The chapel paving is more difficult. It was a fashion which persisted for a long time and may have been added during the eighteenth century. On the other hand, it was a type of pavement which we know Wood laid⁵⁹ and it may be that the marble had been cut and laid in the old chapel before Wood and Frogley quarrelled, since there is no mention of such work in Chapman's estimate.

So Cuddesdon was built, and the story of its building might have ended here. But, as in the case of so many other Oxford buildings,⁶⁰ the work was not finished without a bitter quarrel. This time the trouble was not between the patron and his contractor, but between the craftsmen themselves. On November 19 1680, Thomas Wood of Oxford, stonemason, began a suit against Richard Frogley of Holywell Parish, carpenter.⁶¹ Wood submitted that Frogley had contracted with the Bishop of Oxford to erect a palace at Cuddesdon and had agreed with Wood that he should do the external stonework. He had also commissioned Wood to erect a stone chimneypiece at Esquire Lenthall's house at Haseley,⁶² and to work 230 feet of 'cornish' at Newington in Oxfordshire.⁶³ Wood claimed that Frogley owed him £394 and that 'many times or once at least' he had asked for payment and that Frogley had utterly refused, or 'at least delayed more than is just'. Frogley replied that he had agreed to pay 1d. a foot for the stonework, i.e. £81 9s. od. and not £230.

⁵⁷ Wood made a chimney piece of stained marble for the Old Ashmolean.

⁵⁸ In an inventory of 1812 two marble chimneypieces and some moulding are mentioned among lumber in a storeroom. The same inventory lists a German stove in the hall. Unhappily the chimneypiece from the first palace mentioned in *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v, p. 100, does not survive.

⁵⁹ cf. The pavements which Wood had lately laid in St. Mary's. The chancel is paved with a chequered pavement (Wood, *Life and Times*, II, p. 358, and IV, p. 75-6). Wood also laid pavements in St. John's chapel, Balliol and elsewhere.

⁶⁰ e.g. The Canterbury Quadrangle and the garden quadrangle at New College.

⁶¹ In the following pages I have quoted freely from an unprinted abstract of the case made by the late Dr. Salter, now in the Bodleian Library.

⁶² This chimneypiece no longer exists.

⁶³ Probably Newington near Britwell, perhaps for the Dunch family, for whom Byrd worked.

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On April 29 1681, Frogley began a suit against Thomas Wood, saying that Wood had employed him to build a stable by the Lady Chapel or round house by Smith Gate,⁶⁴ and also to work in the said Thomas Wood's racket courts,⁶⁵ and had commissioned him to buy cedar⁶⁶ wood, and that Wood refused to pay him. Wood replied that Frogley had charged excessively for his work, that he had commissioned Frogley to buy 60 feet of cedar for the chapel of Corpus Christi College to match a pattern, that only 9 feet matched the pattern in colour and that the rest was useless.⁶⁷

The case was protracted through many months and each side produced witnesses to support their claims. In addition to some minor points, Thomas Wood's witnesses were called to prove (1) that their measurements were accurate, untampered with and according to the rules of architecture; and (2) that Wood's charges were not excessive. His first group of witnesses were the masons who had surveyed the rough work of the palace on his behalf.⁶⁸ His second estimated the other items on his account.⁶⁹

Robert Springhall⁷⁰ of Bletchington, stonemason, said that he was an apprentice of Thomas Barton, an expert in the trade, about 40 years ago. He was born in Kidlington Parish and was 56 years old; that he had worked on stone houses in Oxon and several other places; that he had worked as a master mason in Windsor Castle, where for 20 weeks he had the command over 20 workmen; that he had worked for the late Duke of Richmond⁷¹ and was working now for the Lord Privy Seal at Bletchington and likewise for Esquire Coghill there; that he had worked for Chancellor Hide at Cornbury,⁷²

⁶⁴ Where Wood lived. See *Oxford City Properties*, (O.H.S. LXXXIII, 1926) p. 322.

⁶⁵ Behind the house.

⁶⁶ Really Juniper.

⁶⁷ See *V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, p. 226.

⁶⁸ Namely Springhall, Varney, Clements, and Hanks (Sanders was called away).

⁶⁹ Hanks again, Dew and Byrd.

⁷⁰ Robert Springhall. It seems significant that Springhall emphasizes that he worked on stone houses, as though this was not his main occupation. I think he may have been one of Wood's marble workers and paviors (Bletchington is in the Forest marble district) and this becomes more probable when we consider his list of patrons. A lot of paving was being laid in the State Apartments at Windsor circa 1677-8 (*Windsor Castle*, W. H. St. John Hope). Plot tells us that Lord Anglesea, the Lord Privy Seal, had chimneypieces and pavements of Forest marble in Bletchington Park (Plot, *loc. cit.*, p. 79). None of the other country houses mentioned, so far as I know, were undergoing any special rebuilding at this period, but all were likely to be laying marble pavements, etc., and this was what was being done at Cornbury in 1677, for Plot wrote: 'At Langhome in the confines of Wychwood there was a quarry of very hard stone . . . with which His Lordship intends to pave the new chapel now building at Cornbury' (*Cornbury and the Forest of Wychwood*, V. J. Watney, p. 134 note). If Wood were the contractor for some of these pieces of work, it would lend point to his statement that he had not had much work of the type of Cuddesdon in that country before.

⁷¹ The Duke of Richmond obtained the Bletchington property through his marriage with the widow of William Lewis of Glamorganshire and Bletchington, which her previous husband had bought from Sir Thomas Coghill. Lord Anglesea was Lord Privy Seal in 1673.

⁷² See *Cornbury and the Forest of Wychwood*, V. J. Watney, p. 134.

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for Sir Thomas Chamberlaine at Northbrook,⁷³ Esquire Dormer at Rousham and for Mr. Carter at Brill,⁷⁴ and for most of the gentry from that side of the county. He said he measured the stonework at Cuddesdon and found it to be 1,315 perches, reckoning 16½ feet to the perch 'as is the custom of that side of the Country'. He denied that Wood showed them any book or charts or figures.

Richard Varney of Islip, stonemason, said that he was 32 years old; that 'he was never an apprentice, yet he served his father (though he was his eldest son) more than a double apprenticeship'; he had been a master workman 7 years and had erected the chancel at Islip,⁷⁵ repaired and finished Mr. Norse's house at Woodeaton⁷⁶ and had worked for Mr. Gilder of Noke⁷⁷ and others.

Stephen Clement⁷⁸ of Oxford, stonemason, said he was 31 years old. He was an apprentice for 7 years to his father, Tristram Clement; he had been a master workman for 10 years; 'he had completed several houses and lately the new building at All Souls College⁷⁹ where the common fire room is, and the house which was burned near Carfax lately he rebuilt, and since that Mr. Crosby's house in Cat Street'.⁸⁰

William Hanks⁸¹ of Oxford, stonemason, said he was 45 years old; that he served an apprenticeship to his father, William Hanks of Oxford, stonemason, lately dead, and had been a master workman for more than 20 years and had built houses in Oxford, 'too many to be here inserted'. He said that he

⁷³ The mansion house at Northbrook was built between 1579 and 1641. After the mansion house at Kirtlington was built, it disappeared and left no trace except some walled gardens, fish ponds and a dovecote. In 1681 Robert Dashwood became engaged to Penelope Chamberlayne and by this marriage Northbrook passed to the Dashwoods. I can find no mention of special building at Rousham at this time.

⁷⁴ Alice, widow of George Carter senior of Brill, yeoman, c. 1586-90, is mentioned in *Hist. and Antiq. of Co. Bucks*, by George Lipscomb, 1847, vol. I, p. 114.

⁷⁵ Dr. South, rector of Islip, rebuilt the chancel of Islip church. He also built a school in 1710, perhaps using Varney again, though Varney died that year.

⁷⁶ The manor house of the Norse family, repaired and enlarged in 1676, was taken down about 1775.

⁷⁷ Mr. Gilder of Noke was no doubt John Gilder of Noke who died 1697, aged 74. MS. Top. Oxon., d. 202, p. 495.

⁷⁸ Stephen Clements married a Kidlington woman (see parish registers). His father died in 1670. He was a city mason who stood well with the Guild, where Richard, Thomas Wood's brother, was a rising man at this time. Stephen died in 1683. The family lived in St. Giles parish.

⁷⁹ *V.C.H. Oxon.*, III, p. 190. After the Restoration the College felt in need of common rooms. In 1669 sums of money were set apart for this purpose.

⁸⁰ Neither of these houses survives.

⁸¹ A William Hanks worked on the Canterbury Quadrangle, probably the father of this mason. He died in 1680. William Hanks junior was admitted free, 1655 (*O.C.A.*, p. 209). Two sons of old Hanks, Thomas and John, were also his apprentices. A William Hanks worked under Jackson at the building of Brasenose chapel. There were some other Hanks who were masons at the time. Nathaniel d. 1711. Edmond Hanks of Hensington near Bladon, repaired Woodstock church, died 1675. A Nathaniel Hanks, mason, of Oxford, died 1711. Some of the family belonged to St. Mary Magdalen parish.

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understood measuring 'as he was taught by his father according to the arts of measuring' and 'as he had seen master workmen use' and 'according to the usual way of measuring'. 'He measured in perches and fractions, but how many feet the said fractions contained they none of them took any notice.' Wood showed him no books of architecture.

John Sanders⁸² of Denton, in the Parish of Cuddesdon, said he was born there and was 38 years old. He served his father a double apprenticeship, 'his father being an able rough mason who worked yet well at his trade though he was about 4 score years old'; he had been a master workman for more than 20 years and had erected and completed very many buildings and lately particularly at Sir John Doyley's⁸³ and at Esquire Hadlestone's⁸⁴ at Haseley and at Denton at Farmer Munts⁸⁵ and Mr. Smith's house at Baldwin.⁸⁶ He was called away in the middle of the measuring, but knew how to measure rough stonework.

John Dewer⁸⁷ of Marston, said he was 35 years old, that he served an apprenticeship 9 years to his father and during that time worked at Brasenose College chapel and likewise at the vestry and vault of St. John's College: and also at the theatre in Oxford. He worked 'under Mr. Byrd at the making of the doorcase of the Divinity School in Oxford', and since he became a master workman he undertook and finished the new stonework in New College Quadrangle and 'now was and had been employed in the building of the Elaboratory within the University of Oxford'. He knew how to measure 'according to the practice and rules as other masons have and usually do in this country and he believed it to be according to the rules of architecture'.

William Byrd,⁸⁸ stonemason, said that he was 57 years old, that he was born in St. Nicholas parish in Gloucester, and had served eight years apprenticeship under Walter Nichols, a mason there. He had lived in Oxford for 34 years and lately in Oxon he built the Arch at New College and Edmond Hall chapel; before that he had worked at several noble buildings in different counties.

These witnesses all endorsed Wood's charges. Frogley's witnesses, in so

⁸² There was a John Sanders, mason, of Garsington, whose will was proved in 1731. Perhaps a son.

⁸³ For Sir John Doyley, of Chiselhampton, see Skelton's *Antiquities of Oxfordshire*, 1823, Dorchester Hundred, p. 1, Wood, *Life and Times*, II, p. 442.

⁸⁴ For the Hadlestone or Hudlestone family, see *Oxfordshire and Post-Reformation Catholic Missions*, Mrs. Bryan Stapleton, pp. 257-8. They lived at Little Haseley.

⁸⁵ For the Munts of Denton, see *V.C.H. Oxon.*, v, pp. 107, 109.

⁸⁶ Perhaps the family listed in the Poll Tax returns of 1754.

⁸⁷ For John Dewer, see above, Note 21.

⁸⁸ William Byrd worked on the Sheldonian and many other buildings in Oxford. He was a stone carver with a large trade in monuments, stained marble chimneypieces, etc. He built the garden quadrangle at New College and worked on Winchester Palace under Wren. See H. M. Colvin, *Dictionary of English Architects*, and my article, *loc. cit.*

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far as they were concerned with Cuddesdon,⁸⁹ were at pains to prove that 1d. a foot was the common rate for rough stonework and that the perch customarily contained 18 feet in and around Oxford. They were examined between October and November 1681, and consisted of (1) his surveyors, namely Sibley, a gardener, Hale; Chapman and Callis, employed on the chapel, John and Thomas White, both carpenters, and the well-known mason Bartholomew Peisley; and (2) three other masons, Christopher Kempster, Thomas Robinson and Thomas Williams. These last were called separately and merely gave evidence corroborating the use of 18 feet to the perch as customary round Oxford, though not according to the statute. They gave no particulars of themselves.

Henry Sibley of Britwell, yeoman, aged 49, said that he was gardener to Mr. John Stone⁹⁰ of Britwell and was skilful in measuring and surveying. He was employed by Frogley to measure the stonework at Cuddesdon and also at Great Haseley.⁹¹

Thomas Chapman,⁹² a native of Little Milton where he lived, said that he was 35 years old and had been a mason 23 years. He then gave the details about his contract for the palace and added that a perch contains 16½ feet; that at present he did not know how many perches 19,957 feet amounted to, but had he convenient time allowed him he could easily count up and turn the feet into perches.

George Callis⁹³ of Little Milton, stonemason, aged 28, said that he had helped to erect the stonework of Esquire Lenthall's house at Haseley and that he worked at the chapel adjoining the palace at Cuddesdon 'from the beginning to the finishing'. He further said that any able-bodied workman would take and finish the rough work at 1d. a foot and William Willis,⁹⁴ late of Britwell, mason, 'did in his lifetime agree with Frogley to erect and build the rough stonework of Esquire Lenthall's house at Haseley at 1d. a foot, nor did Frogley pay him any more as this witness heard or knew'. He worked under Willis at the building of the said house and on Cuddesdon chapel from the beginning to the finishing and knew Chapman agreed to build it at 1d. a foot which he believed to be a hard bargain (etc., as quoted). Callis signed his mark.

⁸⁹ Frogley called as witnesses over the stable his servant, Godfrey, and Thomas Band of Pusey, Berks, carpenter, aged 37. They do not concern us here.

⁹⁰ The Stones lived at Brightwell Manor. Their huge monument in Brightwell Baldwin church has been attributed by Mr. Esdale to William Byrd.

⁹¹ An Esquire Lenthall's house, at Latchford, now destroyed.

⁹² Chapman does not appear to have established himself as an Oxford mason. I know nothing more of him. A Thomas Chapman was living in Milton in 1754, perhaps a son.

⁹³ George Callis belonged to a family of masons. One, Anthony Callis, died in 1689 and George in 1708. Both belonged to Great Milton.

⁹⁴ William Willis seems to have been another of the workmen employed by Frogley. I know nothing more of him.

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John White,⁹⁵ carpenter, of the City of Oxford, where he was born, aged 40, said that Wood deserved no more than 1d. a foot (the common price about Cuddesdon as he has heard), because he had also the windows and doors, and a 1d. a foot was the common and usual price about Cuddesdon, and the other masons he was measuring with would have taken it on at that. He added that according to the reckoning of masons 'in and about Oxford' the perch contained 18 feet but 'whether that be according to the statute he knew not'.

Thomas White, carpenter, of the City of Oxford, where he was born, aged 45, said that to pay for the stack of chimneys at 1d. a foot was a reasonable rate, and added (as quoted) that Wood might have made a reasonable wage out of the work.

Bartholomew Peisley⁹⁶ of the City of Oxford, where he was born, said that he was 61 years of age, that he erected a stone house in St. Giles' parish 'where in Esquire Bateman lately lived'⁹⁷ at 1d. a foot and that he had heard that some of the masons now working at Christ Church⁹⁸ would have undertaken the stonework at Cuddesdon Palace at that rate and that in Oxford the custom was to reckon 18 feet to the perch. He added that he had come at the request of Richard Frogley, 'but favoured one not more than the other'.

The records of the Chancellor's Court tell us that judgement was given in favour of Wood and that Frogley appealed. Whether he won his appeal or not is unknown, and for us, with our limited knowledge of the circumstances, it is hard to assess the rights of the case. A little light, however, is thrown on its background by some of the letters which passed between Fell and Sir Christopher Wren in the spring and early summer of 1681, when Tom Tower was in process of construction. Wren, so often exasperated by the stupidity and provincialism of the Oxford masons, yet understood them very well. Fell, who knew a great deal about building, had nevertheless, in Wren's eyes, as mistakenly high an opinion of his craftsmen as they had of themselves. 'It makes me jealous', writes the irate Wren on the subject of the foundations of Tom Tower, 'that your workmen, beginning so giddily, will proceed accordingly and that you will find it too late, that every workman is not fit for a great undertaking only because he is honest.'⁹⁹ On June 25 1681, he wrote again on the very question of surveying with which we are concerned. 'I

⁹⁵ John White was the son of Alderman John White, carpenter. He served on the council with Anthony Piddington and others. John White senior and his two sons, John and Thomas, all worked on the building of University College Hall, where John White, senior, was master carpenter, 1656-7. A John White worked at Oriel, 1678, 1680 and 1682, and John White, junior, worked at All Souls with the Dewes.

⁹⁶ Bartholomew Peisley belonged to a family which for three generations produced leading Oxford masons. See H. M. Colvin, *loc. cit.*

⁹⁷ No. 62, St. Giles, now demolished.

⁹⁸ On Tom Tower.

⁹⁹ W. D. Caröe, *Wren and Tom Tower*, p. 26.

fear', he says severely, 'that your workmen if they cannot give me a ground plot, will hardly follow one that's given. You must have an understanding trusty measurer. There are few that are skilled in measuring stonework. I have bred up two or three.'¹⁰⁰

When we consider the welter of confusion which, quite as much as knavery, probably led up to the Cuddesdon case, we can sympathize with the Surveyor General's exasperation. The truth was, no doubt, that a statutory measure of $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet to a perch had long been established, but that this, though convenient for reckoning and reducing larger measurements, was clumsy to handle at the lower end of the scale, and reckoning was, as we have seen, a serious problem for the ordinary craftsmen. Masons, therefore, in and about Oxford preferred to keep their customary measure of 18 feet, which was far easier to handle. This practice was probably well recognized and caused little practical inconvenience in a society where many measures still fluctuated. Even to-day tilers of the Cotswolds keep an arbitrary measure for their roof tiles and until recently custom¹⁰¹ governing the measurements of walling varied from district to district in that locality.¹⁰² Moreover, Frogley's contention that masons in and about Oxford measured 18 feet to the perch is borne out not only by the testimony of such reputable and experienced witnesses as Peisley, Kempster and Robinson, but by actual practice, as we learn not only from Robinson's own estimate of 1669 but also from the building accounts for the chapel at University College,¹⁰³ built between 1640 and 1665, where we find the information that a wall 180 feet long and 36 feet high contains 366 perches and costs £252 os. od. at 14s. the perch.¹⁰⁴ That this measure persisted at least into the mid-eighteenth century in parts of the Cotswolds we learn from a book called *The Young Astronomer's Assistant and the Countryman's Daily Companion*, written by William Hitchman, shoemaker, of Poulton, near Cirencester, printed by A. Wright at Holywood Ampney in 1755. On page 174 Hitchman writes: 'Masons' work is mostly taken by the perch of $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet, sometimes by 18 feet, the customary way in many places.'

The other main point at issue over the palace concerned the rates at

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁰¹ Information kindly given me by Mr. George Swinford of Filkins, a Cotswold stonemason.

¹⁰² No doubt this is what one of the witnesses meant when he said that Wood had the windows and doors to help him in his bargain, for in some localities in the Cotswolds walls were measured straight through without regard to door and window space; in others these were excepted. See also Chapman's articles.

¹⁰³ Archives of University College.

¹⁰⁴ I am indebted to Miss Coral Wicks for the following interesting references in the Declared Accounts of the Office of Works, 1615-25:

1618-19 St. James, Carpenter working on a roof, 10 square feet = 1 rood.

1619-20 Newmarket, Carpenter of floors, 10 square feet = 1 rood.

This shows that it was not only the mason's measures which fluctuated, and indeed perhaps gives point to Wood's jibe that Frogley, being a carpenter, had no skill in measuring stonework.

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which the various pieces of work were reckoned. Here again there may have been some distinction between the prices ruling among country masons and in the building of the humbler houses in Oxford, and for the work of high class craftsmen employed upon the great University buildings, though cut-throat competition was always so keen that undercutting no doubt often reduced the University contracts. That Frogley was justified in claiming his rate of 1d. a foot for rough work, *The Young Astronomer's Assistant* assures us, quoting 1d. a foot for rough mortared walls and 3d. a foot for paving and fine stone.

The battle between Frogley and Wood is only a minor chapter in the chequered history of Cuddesdon Palace. The house early lost some of its distinctive seventeenth century charm and grew to be both unwieldy and unattractive. But it was nevertheless a building with which the names of great men were intertwined and it will be sad if we cannot at least save Wood's fine stone doorcase and use it again in an Oxford setting that links it with its past.

A



B



C



D



PLATE III

CUDDESDON PALACE.

A. West Front. B. South Front. C. Modern entrance doorway. D. Upper part of Wood's front door-case.

PLATE IV



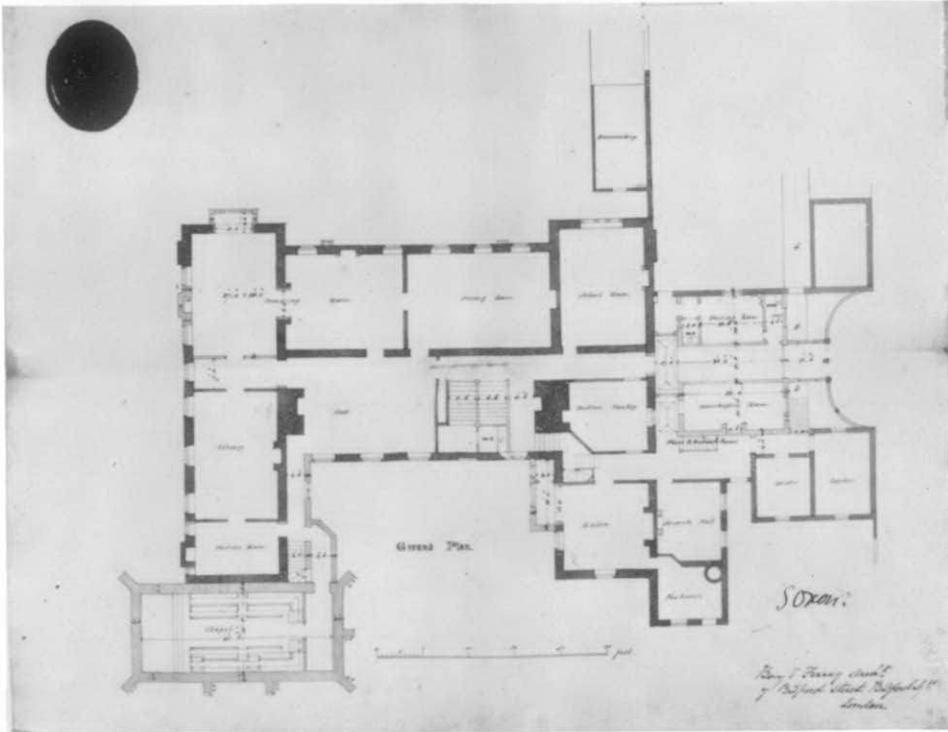
A. 17th century range work and window casings. North front.

Ph. : H. M. Colvin

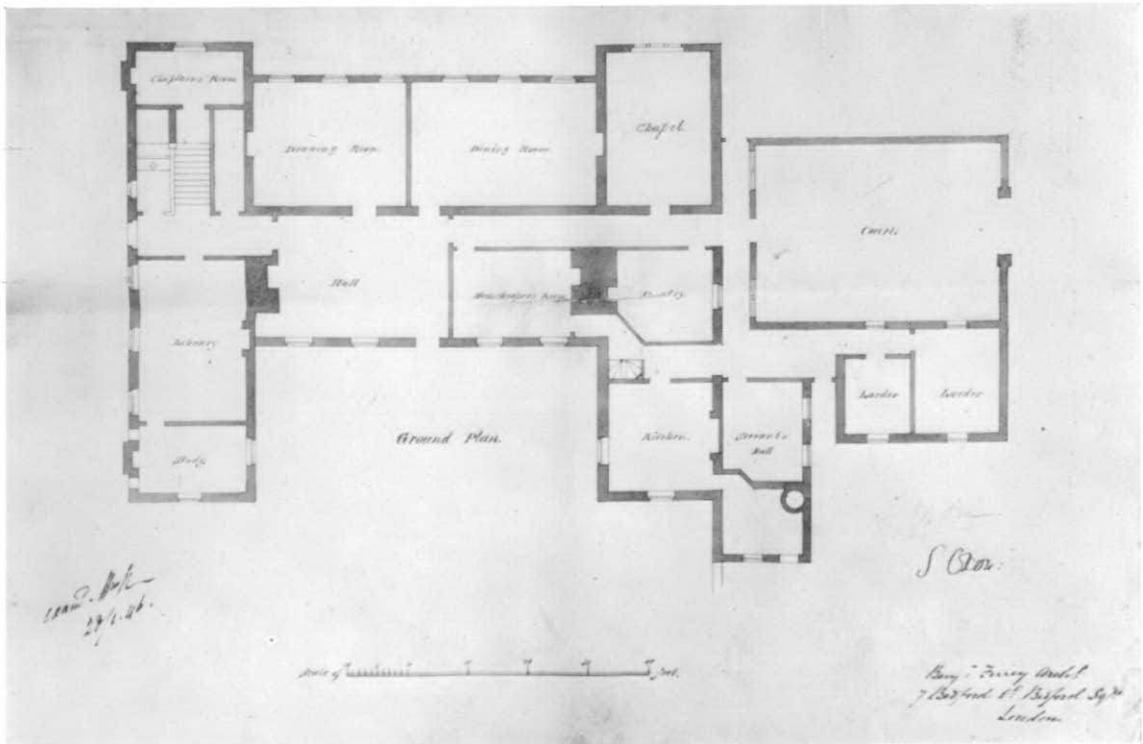


B. BISHOP'S PARLOUR.

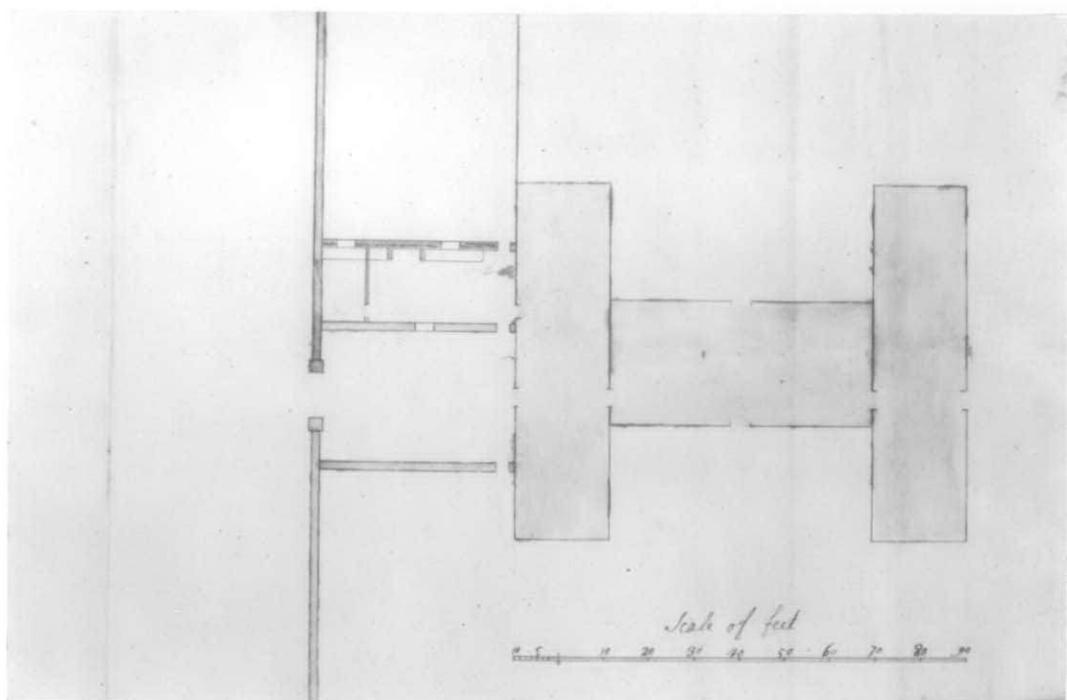
Ph. : P. S. Spokes



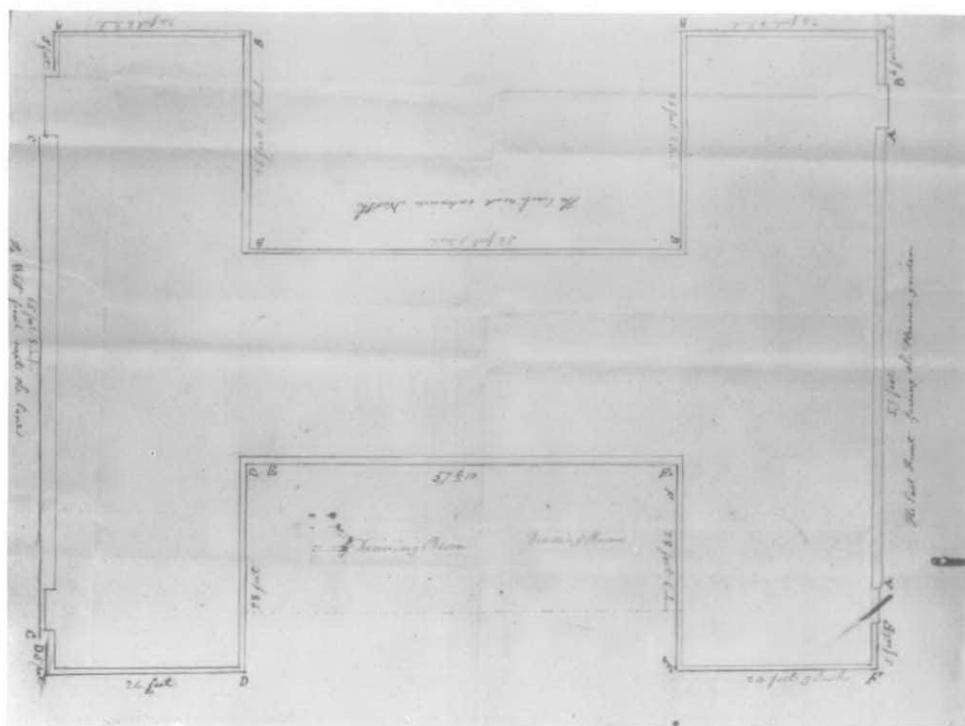
A
 CUDDESDON PALACE AFTER 1846.
 (Bodleian MS.)



B
 CUDDESDON PALACE BEFORE 1846.
 (Bodleian MS.)



A
 CUDDESDON PALACE IN 18TH CENTURY.
 With Courtyard (Bodleian MS.)



B
 CUDDESDON PALACE IN EARLY 18TH CENTURY.
 (Bodleian MS.)



CUDDESDON PALACE IN 1820. BY J. C. BUCKLER.

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COLE, BUILDING OF SECOND PALACE AT CUDDESDON