

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S GRAMMAR SCHOOL,  
FAVERSHAM.

BY GEORGE CULMER.

THIS interesting building is situated midway between the remains of a Norman Abbey founded by King Stephen in 1147 and an earlier Norman Church, both of which had an influence upon it, for under the auspices of the former the original school was founded, while from the latter came some of its masters who were vicars of the parish. It is also within a few paces of the scene of the murder in 1550-1 which forms the subject of the well-known Elizabethan tragedy of "Arden of Feversham". The field immediately in front is known as the Shooting meadow from the fact that here were placed the butts for archery practice. That a somewhat similar building once existed is shown by the plate of the Guildhall in Jacob's *History*, with the difference that the latter had a projecting window at the south end and was built in 1574, whereas the school was built in 1587.

The original foundation of the school is contained in an indenture made on December 10th, 18 Hen. VIII, 1527, between the Abbot of Faversham and Master John Cole, clerk, and the Warden and Fellows of All Souls, Oxford, "wherein the said Master John Cole intending the weal and profit of the said Monastery, the brethren and novices, and all other children that be disposed to learn the science of grammar, covenanteth to found and ordain a certain Free Grammar School within the said monastery." Then follows the grant of lands and pastures in Sheppy, Hernhill and Faversham to be held by the Abbot and Convent, and acknowledged to be of the yearly value of £14 10s. above all charges. From these revenues they were to pay a schoolmaster £10 per annum, and 20 shillings for a gown of cloth, and maintain the necessary repairs to the school house and schoolmaster's chamber in the monastery. Then follow the

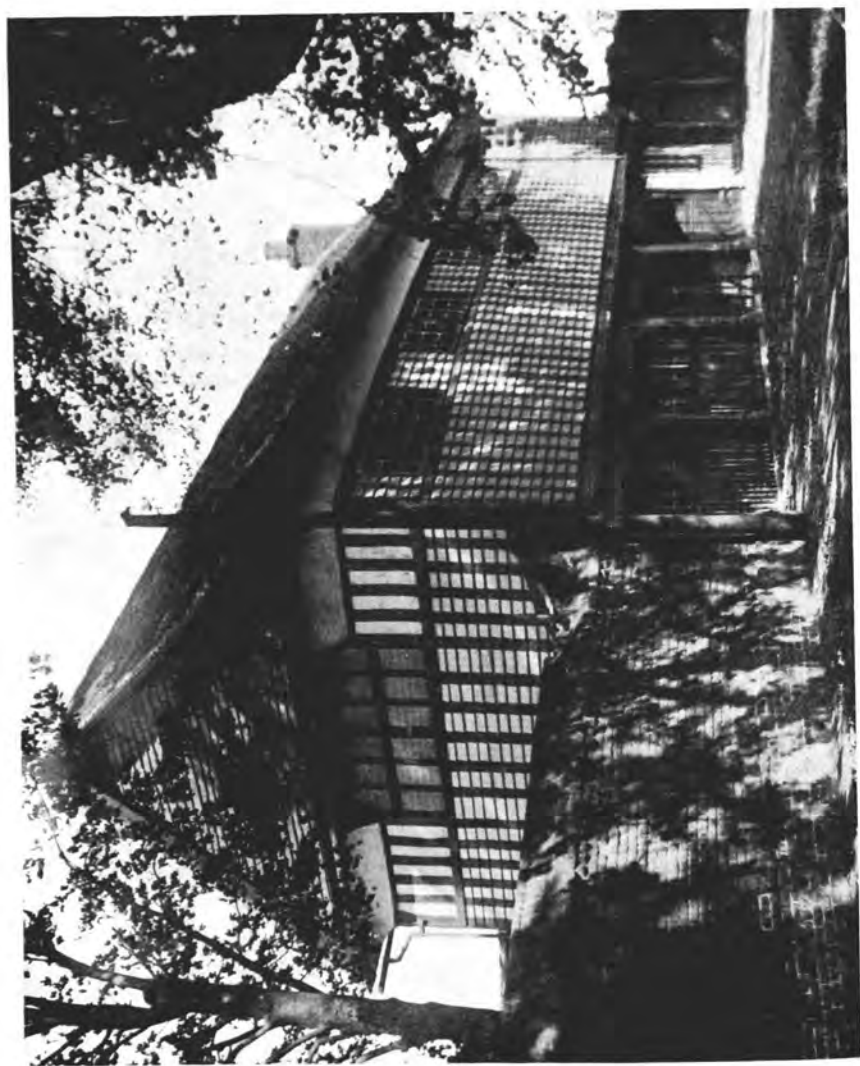


PLATE I. THE ANCIENT GRAMMAR SCHOOL, FAVERSHAM.

admission ceremony and the duties of the master, and provision for his discharge if found necessary. He was to be provided with meat and drink in the monastery at the cost of the Abbot, who also was to cause to be delivered to the master's lodging three cart loads of wood yearly, and in default of carrying out these duties to forfeit to the Warden and Fellows of All Souls, Oxford, 100 shillings as often as default is made without reasonable excuse.

The project however was short lived because on the Dissolution of the Abbey in 1538 the school lands with other possessions were surrendered to the King. Soon afterwards the inhabitants petitioned the King (Hen. VIII.) to erect and endow a Grammar School, but without success. They were fortunate later, on the occasion of that monarch's visit to the town in 1545, to obtain the privileges formerly belonging to the Abbey, which the Crown retained, by the grant of a charter to the Corporation, which the Mayor received on taking the oath at Westminster in 1546. A visit by Queen Elizabeth twenty-seven years later, which was attended, like "all visits by this popular dame, with effusions of joy and considerable expense to the inhabitants, was more fruitful, and a new charter was granted to erect and establish a Free Grammar School in the town.

The Charter was granted on July 14th, 1576, and it is noticeable that whereas the former endowment consisted of about 317 acres of land, at the time this grant was made it had diminished to about 100 acres only. The Mayor, Jurats, and Commonalty were incorporated Governors to give effect to the intention, and to control the goods, rents and revenues. The Charter also made provision for the appointment of a schoolmaster, and the use of a common seal, while, further, the Warden and Fellows of All Souls, with the Corporation, were empowered to make fit rules for the government of the school. It was a bad day for the legal profession because the last clause of the charter states "that the Governors shall have these Letters Patent under the Great Seal of England made and sealed in due manner without fine or fee by any means to be tendered, paid or done."

The site of the building was presented by grant of William Saker, jurat, and was a portion of an orchard and garden belonging to him in the Upper Amery Croft. This land extended into North Street or Abbey Street, where on the frontage of that street, Henry Saker, his son, built the house (now No. 83) which has a finely carved portico to the entrance door. On the pediment of this is the monogram H.S.1592. William Saker was Mayor in 1590, and died in 1595 during his son's mayoralty. A portion of his brass still remains in the Parish Church.

The building of the school was commenced in December, 1587, and the cost raised by a cess for £30 levied under the direction of the Corporation on the inhabitants. The Corporation bought 60 tons of oak timber for the building, and it was erected by Nicholas Clerke and Lewis Browne, carpenters, inhabitants within the liberty, under the supervision of Robert Fagg, jurat, and Edward Rainolds. It must be remembered that the inhabitants still relied on the Cinque Port charters for their privileges and protection against outside competition although that power was waning, and it is of interest to note on the formation of the "Mercers Company" to give this protection, that the Charter of James I, 1616, names no less than fifty-eight different trades. The name of Edward Rainolds appears as one of the wardens in this charter.

An entry in the Wardmote Book, 27th February, 30 Eliz., mentions the appointment by the Corporation of additional overseers, six in number, who were to make provision of lime, tile, brick, stone, and such like accessories; and for felling timber on the school lands. One of them, Abraham Snoode, was to pay the workmen out of the money he held as receiver of the profits of the school lands. It is recorded further that Mark Elfrythe, vicar and minister of the Town, and Robert Stone, schoolmaster, were to crave the goodwill of those nearby inhabitants towards the cost of erection, on the ground that the surrounding districts would benefit from the instruction the children would receive. The Guildhall or Market House was erected under similar conditions

only thirteen years before, and the accounts show the wages of the carpenters at one shilling per day. This was a relic of the old guild system in which the materials were provided by the patrons (in this case the Corporation) and contracts made with craftsmen for the labour of erection. In both cases much of the carting of materials was done by different freemen as their contribution towards the building cost.

The building consisted of a large schoolroom, with a smaller room for the masters' use, carried upon well proportioned and moulded hexagonal oak pillars (of which those on the east side remain) leaving the ground floor free and forming a covered playground for the scholars. There was a small room on the ground floor at the north end for use as a school library, and a staircase led out of this room to the schoolroom above. It is uncertain when the pillars on the west side were removed and the wall erected, but the original beams which carry the floor above still remain. Some of the timbers are elaborately moulded and carved. The spaces between the external timber framing were filled in with brick or wattle and daub, and plastered. The shallow windows with their leaded lights have moulded frames and mullions, and are fixed well above the floor. The roof was covered with tiles as at present; and the wide over-hanging eaves with a plastered cove allowed the roof water to fall clear of the building. The whole of the timber framework was fitted together on the ground and marked before erection.

The walk in front of the school was given by John Smith, who owned the Old Abbey Gate Farm. The Indenture is dated Nov. 10th, 1591, and recites that "the Governors have erected a school house on the land given by William Saker lying next a parcel of ground now John Smith's known as the Amery Croft." "Whereas there is no convenient or sufficient way for the schoolmaster, usher and scholars to go to and from the said schoolhouse," the said John Smith gave "one sufficient way to lead out of the churchyard along and before the east side to the corner of the stone wall near the gate leading to his garden." This is the identical gateway through

which the body of Arden was carried after the murder. The dimensions are set out in length and breadth, and the Governors were "to erect a post, rail and pale fence to enclose the said way from the meadow, and to plant trees of elm or ash to defend the school from the weather, and to have the timber and wood of such trees for their profit."

The maintenance of the school was provided for by the income from letting the school lands, but this income was periodically augmented by the sale of trees from the said lands which brought in a good sum.

The income from letting has varied considerably—in 1589 a lease was granted for twenty-one years at £40 a year, in 1625 a lease was granted at the old rent on condition that the tenant paid a fine of 100 marks, in 1654 John Upton had a lease for twenty-one years, paying £40 a year and in addition the sum of £210, and building a barn on some convenient part of the premises, in 1794 it was let at £60 14s. and in 1850 £210 per year.

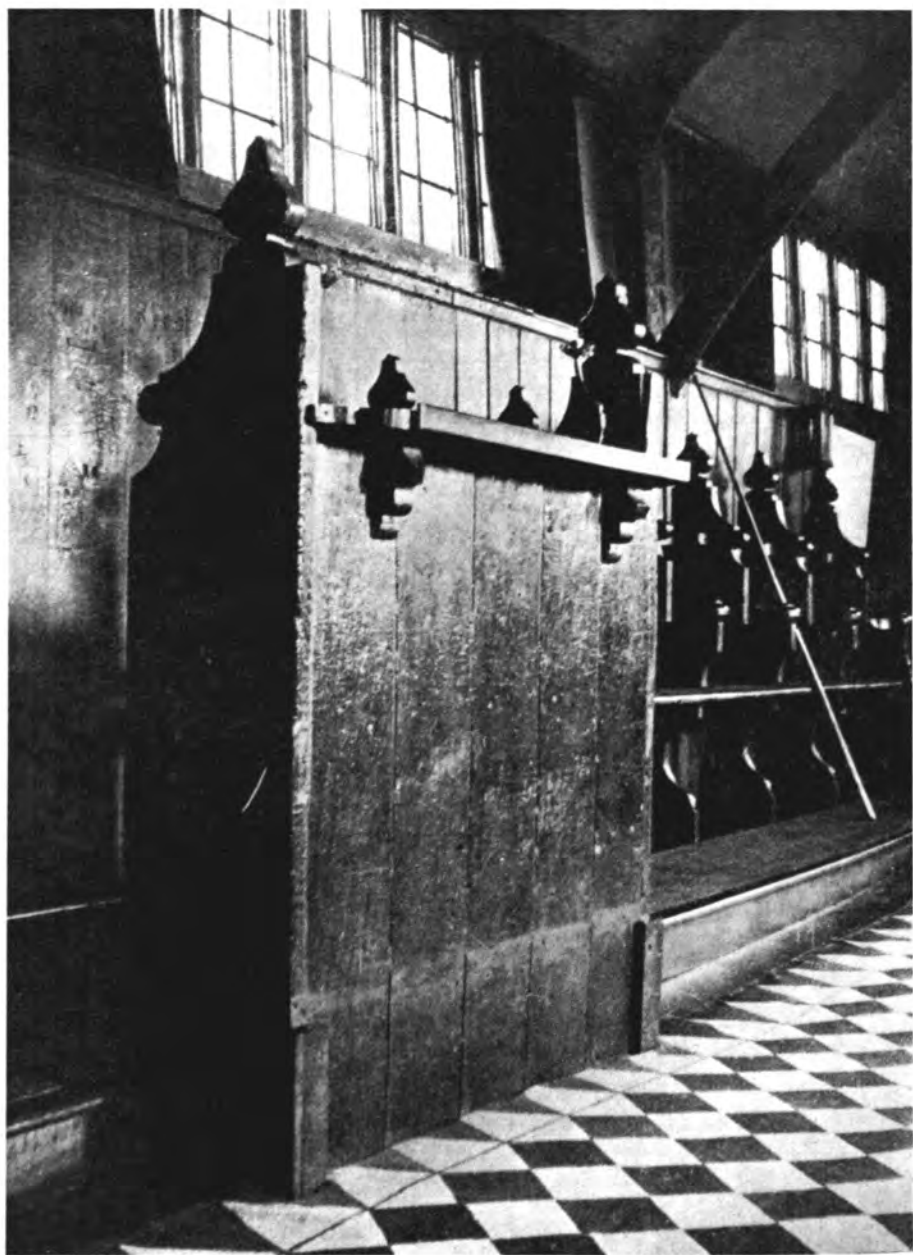
The Corporation as Governors held control over the school and building with the revenues of the lands until 1835, and were responsible for their administration, but under the Municipal Reform Act it passed to the Trustees of Public Charities, and later to governors elected by various bodies. The rules drawn up for the guidance of the School in 1604 differed little from those made for Dr. Cole's school in the Abbey in 1527. From them we read "that the master in the presence of the Mayor, shall examine every child applying for admittance, whether he can say or read the book of Psalms, or can write a legible hand, if deficient in these requisitions he was not to be admitted until able to do so." "That every scholar born in the town, or his parents being inhabitants, shall pay one shilling on entering, if a foreigner or stranger two shillings." "The usher to receive sixpence a quarter from native children and one shilling from foreigners." "School to commence at six o'clock in the morning and continue until eight when they shall proceed to hear the church service during half an hour and return to the school and there stay until eleven, at which hour they left

for their dinner and came again at one, and stayed until five, or until their lessons were perfect." Between eleven and twelve those who desired it were taught arithmetic by a skilled person by the permission of the master. Parents were to find candles "for the use of the scholar and his fellows in the form so that their time be not wasted". Scholars were not to be absent "for more than six days in the year, except at Christmas, or when the town of Faversham was visited with plague or sweating sickness". In the absence of the Mayor his deputy could act for him. At the time of Elizabeth's Charter the Master received a salary of £20, which gradually increased until in 1832 it had reached £190.

The schoolhouse remained practically as it was built until 1847, when it received considerable repair and the loss of some of its original features. The old timber framing was covered with weather-boarding and painted to represent the old work. A new staircase was built—the old one was entered from the present caretaker's room. The door frame of this has Tudor roses carved just above the plinth. The old library was enlarged and made into a room for the porter, and the staircase extended to a bedroom in the attic (formerly a storeroom), the old handrail and newels being re-used in the work. An iron railing was also added between the pillars in front.

The covering of the framing may have been necessary for weather proofing but we must remember that it was the age of sham, when brickwork was covered with cement and blocked out to imitate stone, and many of our old timber buildings covered with mathematical tiles to imitate the newest fashion of brickwork. The school continued there until the erection of new school buildings in St. Ann's Road in 1879.

The Governors at a meeting in July, 1879, resolved that arrangements be made to sell the old school and the walk in front, and that the Mayor be requested to call the attention of the town to it with a view of securing it for the use of the inhabitants. After refusing a private offer the building



THE USHER'S DESK, GRAMMAR SCHOOL, FAVERSHAM.

PLATE II, p. 195.



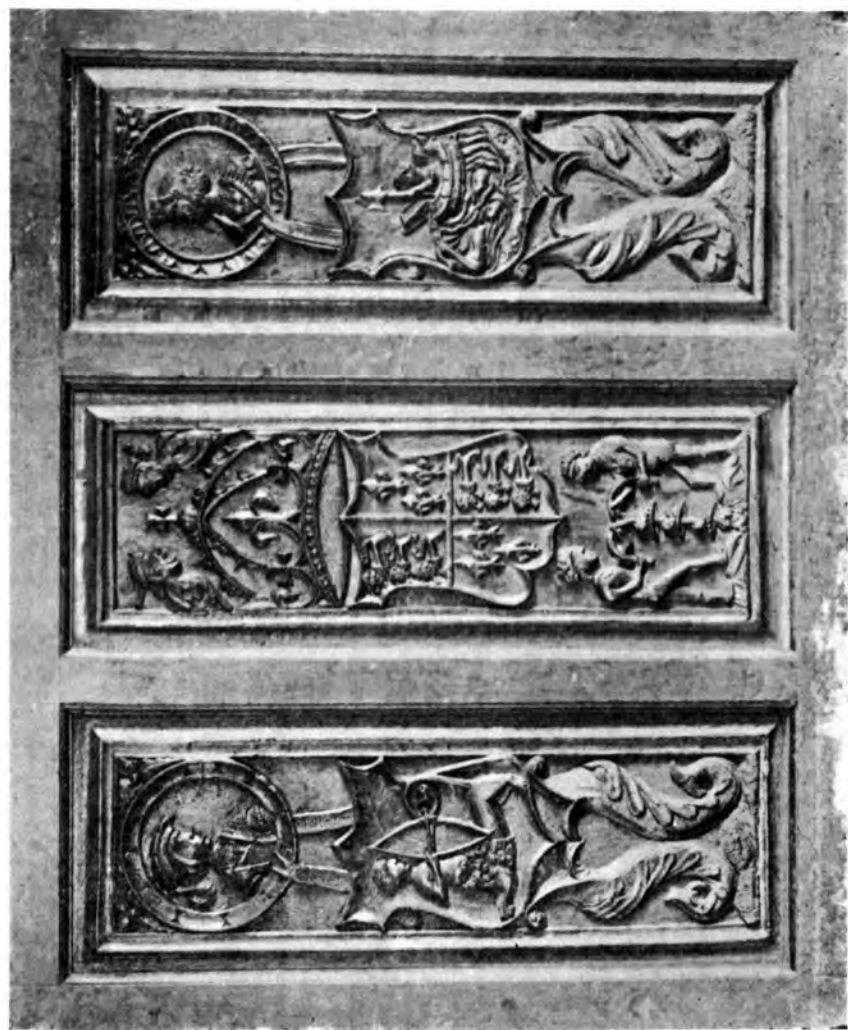
was eventually sold by auction for £230, and the walk to the old Pavement Commissioners for £40. The new owner used the lower portion as a store for a time, and let the schoolroom in tenements at one shilling a week each, in fact he intended converting it into cottages. From this fate it was fortunately preserved on account of certain difficulties which prevented the carrying out of the plan. Finally it was purchased in 1887 by the Freemasons' Lodge of Harmony, No. 133, who, with great care made good the dilapidations that had occurred in the previous seven years, and converted the open space beneath it into a refectory, preserving the oak pillars in front.

The old school benches with their quaint poppy-head ends that had escaped destruction were made into seats, and the usher's desk retained. Fortunately the original doorway leading into the schoolroom survived, with the letters N.V. carved on the left and M on the right posts, representing Nicholas Upton, Mayor, who held office during the erection of the building. The remains of the old panelling are of more than passing interest, for thereon it are rudely carved or burnt with a poker the names, initials and dates in profusion of bygone Faversham boys who were scholars, and afterwards took their share in the town's trade and government. One of the most noted of these was "Herbert Marsh 1767." He was the son of the then vicar, Richard Marsh, and after leaving the school became a scholar at King's School, Canterbury, thence going to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took his degree in 1779, and was Senior Wrangler for that year. He then became a member of the University of Leipsig for twelve years, and returning to Cambridge with the reputation of being one of the foremost theologians of his day was elected in 1807 Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity. He was the first holder of that office to deliver his lectures in English. He was consecrated Bishop of Llandaff in 1816, and in 1819 translated to Peterborough, which diocese he ruled until his death in 1839. One of the masters of the school—Dr. Joshua Childrey—afterwards became Dean of Salisbury.

Among the objects of interest hung on the walls of the old schoolroom are three carved panels framed together. An old engraving of these panels published in Jacob's *History of Faversham*, 1774, was reproduced in *Arch. Cant.*, XXXIV, p. 136. On page 134 they are described as "from an ancient carving in wainscot in the house on the east side of the Abbey Gate". The third quarter of the shield on the centre panel is incorrectly drawn showing the three fleur-de-lys as one and two, instead of two and one as they exist.

The left panel represents in the medallion, King Stephen, and on the shield his badge, the Sagittarius, or Archer, while in the base, and also on that of the third panel are dolphins affronted. The centre panel depicts at the top two choir boys singing, under which is a shield surmounted by a crown. On the shield are displayed the arms of England first and fourth, and France second and third, an unusual arrangement. The base of the panel shows two bell-ringers. The right panel represents in the medallion Queen Matilda, and on the shield her badge, the Knight of the Swan, this being the legend associated with her as a queen of the house of Boulogne.

Mr. Aymer Vallance, F.S.A., in the description quoted above, considers the design of the carvings belongs to the Dissolution period, i.e. about 1525-40. It is thought they were originally in the room over the Town Gate where the Abbot held his courts. On the demolition of the gateway, or that portion which then spanned the road, in 1772, the panels came into the possession of Edward Jacob, M.D., F.S.A., the historian. From him they passed to his son Edward, also a surgeon, who practised in partnership with John Thomas Giraud in Faversham. On the death of Edward Jacob, Junr., in 1839, the panels went to his executor, Frederick Francis Giraud, son of his partner, and father of Francis Frederick Giraud, Esq., a distinguished contributor to *Archæologia Cantiana* during his long membership of the K.A.S. The latter presented them to the Freemasons' Lodge of Harmony soon after they purchased the building in 1887.



CARVED OAK PANELS, FAVERSHAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

The building bears witness to the days of the Window Tax. The writer has seen an old photograph (*circa* 1860) showing some of the front windows closed up. In 1907, while repairing the weather boarding the fine moulded framing of the large south window was discovered. This window was opened up, repaired, and filled with stained glass by the Freemasons to mark the jubilee of one of their members, the previously named Francis Frederick Giraud, Esq., who was for many years Clerk to the Governors of the School, and also Town Clerk from 1870-1902. In 1932 another window was opened out on the staircase from behind the plaster covering, and two of the original four lights were filled with quarry lead glazing. A few fragments of the original lead and the tinted glass were found.

The building is fortunately in safe custody for its future preservation. As we look on its age-worn timbers it is possible to see in imagination that army of boys, sons of the town's freemen, who gathered for study through nearly three centuries within its walls, and later of men who have contributed their various talents to the enlightenment of their fellow men.

I have to acknowledge the kind assistance of Dr. R. E. Flower, Deputy Keeper of the MSS., British Museum, in the identification of the carvings, and also Mr. W. H. Evernden, Faversham, for the photographs illustrating the paper.