

## THE MEDIEVAL ORIGINS OF PHELIP'S LODGE, ROCHESTER, AND ITS LATER DEVELOPMENT

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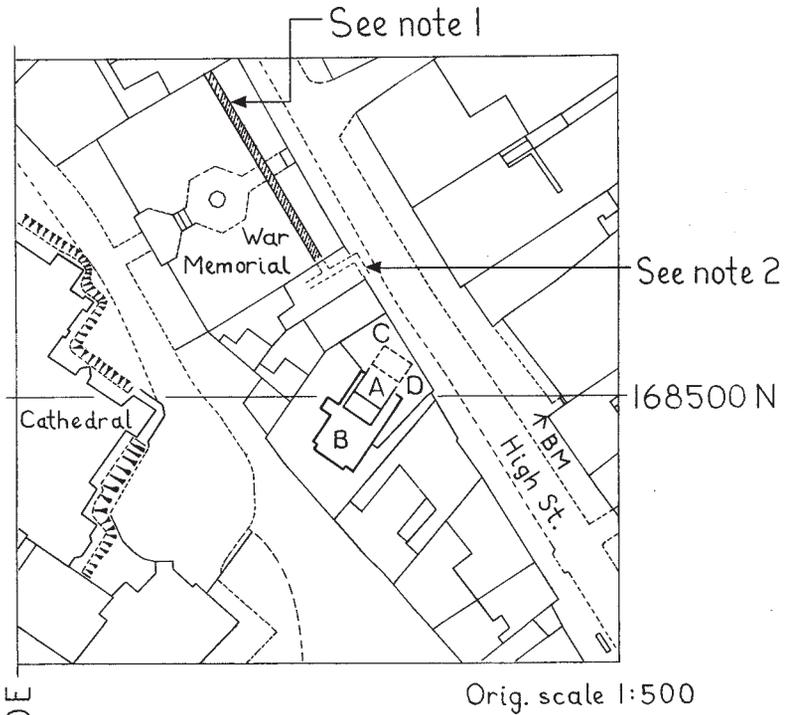
Phelip's Lodge takes its name from the last Prior of St Andrews – Walter Phelips (Phillips). After the Dissolution he was appointed first Dean of Rochester Cathedral in June 1542.<sup>1</sup> The house is situated to the rear, and adjoins, No. 82 High Street (an eighteenth-century building comprising a jeweller's shop with a three-floor flat above). At first sight, the brickwork of Phelip's Lodge, its two-storey porch and the style of the gabled roof suggests nothing older than seventeenth-century (**Plates I and II**). However, inspection of the roof structure in the northern half of the house clearly indicates that its origin is in the late medieval period.

The house (TQ 7434 6849) which has been laid-out on a north-east/south-west axis (**Fig. 1**) sits square to the cathedral and not to the High

### PLATE I



North-west elevation of Phelip's Lodge



574300E

Orig. scale 1:500

- A - Medieval building
- B - Phelip's Lodge
- C - 82 High St.
- D - 84 " "
- BM value = 8.31m

Notes

1. Foundation to Priory wall - circa 1345 A.D.
2. It seems likely, that in this vicinity, the wall deviates from its course, to skirt the medieval building.

Fig. 1 Location Plan.

PLATE II



View of the Roofs of Phelip's Lodge taken from No. 82

Street (itself on the line of Watling Street). In contrast, No. 82 is aligned to the High Street, and so the two buildings adjoin at an angle. Until recently (*c.*1978) No. 82 High Street and the house now called Phelip's Lodge were one entity – a shop with accommodation. By 1997 the pile had been divided, Phelip's Lodge to the south and No. 82 High Street to the north.

#### Details of the Medieval Building

Two medieval bays still survive at first-floor level and within the roof structure, the most southerly of the pair being quite complete (**Fig. 2**). They reveal that the roof structure incorporated crownposts, a complete example of which survives where the two bays adjoin (**Plate III**). At this point the collar-purlin continues northwards for an additional 3.93m (12ft 11in.) to where it has been cut through. It is assumed that this happened when the current No. 82 High Street was built sometime in the eighteenth-century. The collar-purlin for this northerly section still bears seven sets of original rafters with connecting collars. The roof members here are smoke blackened, indicating an open hall on the northern side of the southern bay. To aid assembly, each rafter-set has been inscribed with a Roman numeral, beginning at viiii [*sic*] in the hall through to xviii in the southern bay. There does not appear to be any markings on the last three rafter-sets in the southern bay. The rafters have been laid flat and not edge-on.

A mortise at the northern end of the collar-purlin (24.5cm from where





Crownpost at rafter set xi, viewed from the south side

it has been cut through) suggests from its form that it was for a brace. The size of the brace, intimated by the cut and size of the mortise, matches the brace at the southern end of the hall – which is part of a crownpost structure. It is assumed that the northern brace would also have been part of a crownpost structure and defines the northern end of the bay. If this is so, then an estimate can be made for the internal length of this bay, which has been assessed at approximately 4.3m (14ft 3in.). The collar-purlin has a scarf joint close to the wall end, which is set between the brace and crownpost.

On the south side of the southern bay, the collar-purlin ends at this point – its cut section and the supporting crownpost beneath are weather worn. There is no mortise in the southern face of the crownpost for a brace to support the continuation of the collar-purlin southwards. Therefore, it is likely, that this bay marks the southern, gable-end of the medieval house.

At gable level, the framed structure on both the north and south sides of the southern bay has been in-filled with laths and daub. The laths have been tacked to the external face of the studding. Therefore, when viewing the external face of the southern gable, the daub is rendered flush with the main members (crownpost, braces, collar and the end rafter-set), but covers the studs. Internally many of the studs are exposed. The daub is of sandy clay with chopped straw or reeds.

The first-floor room of this bay was ceiled across the underside of the collars with laths and plaster, the plasterwork was continued down on either side of the sloping roof. It is quite possible, that this ceiling was put up when the building was substantially altered in the seventeenth century. Later, the ceiling has been lowered to its present position 48cm above the underside of the tie-beam (**Plate IV**). Much of the first ceiling still remains above the present one.

PLATE IV



Tie-beam between the hall and south bay, viewed from the north side

The numbering of the rafters suggests a third bay at the northern end of the building (see Fig. 2). It is assumed that rafter-sets one to eight were pulled down with the building of No. 82 High Street. Bearing in mind the assumption about the length of the existing hall-bay, one of these sets would have spanned this bay, and another would have marked the end of it. This would leave six to span an additional bay to the north. If the spacing of the rafters in this bay is of similar proportions to the bay at the south end, it will be approximately 3.2m (10ft 6in.) in length. Overall, the medieval building is therefore assessed to have been 10.1m (33ft 2in.) x 4.5m (14ft 9in.).

### Dating of the Medieval Building

The framework of what remains from the original building indicates it was constructed sometime in the fifteenth century – possibly the latter half. The braces to the crown-posts are thin and plank-like, the date range for this type of brace tending towards the second half of the fifteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

The scarf joint (side halved and bridled) that is set within the collar-purlin, was used in timber framed buildings for a longish period within Kent, from *c.*1370 to *c.*1520.<sup>3</sup> Of the twelve dated examples of the above type scarf joint cited in a RCHME report,<sup>4</sup> two were of a late fourteenth-century date; one was within the first half of the fifteenth-century; six were within the second half of the fifteenth-century and three were within the first quarter of the sixteenth-century.

It has been pointed out that the position of the scarf joint, so close to the end wall is highly unusual (S. Pearson, pers. comm.). The question is raised whether the south-end of the building was originally hipped, and at an early date rebuilt as a gable, i.e. before the mid sixteenth century. As previously mentioned, the last three rafter-sets at the south do not appear to be numbered. Were they put up sometime later, to convert from hipped to gable-end? If so, this would necessitate the extension of the collar-purlin, so that it abuts with the crownpost that is set within the gable. Hence, the scarf joint so close to the end wall. However, on drawing this end of the roof structure in section, and then projecting a line from the end wall tie-beam to the apex of rafter xviii the original collar-purlin cuts beyond the projected diagonal by at least 30cm. It would appear, therefore, that this end had a gable from the outset.

### Site of Medieval Building in Relation to the Priory Wall

In this section of the High Street a wall was built along the southern side of the High Street in 1345 dividing St Andrew's Priory from the town.<sup>5</sup> It is quite possible that the original medieval structure was built behind this

wall and thus within the confines of the Priory. At the war memorial site (Fig. 1) evidence of the wall was revealed in 1887.<sup>6</sup> The foundation to this wall lies 15ft from the outer side of a retaining wall against the High Street. To the east, an excavation carried out in 1969 located the junction of the priory wall and the east wall of the city.<sup>7</sup> The junction occurred at a point 17m (56ft) from the edge of the pavement of that time.

If a line is projected between these two points the wall would have passed through the centre of the medieval hall. Clearly this could not have been so. Therefore as the priory wall is quite near to the High Street on the western side of the medieval building, in this vicinity, the wall must have deviated from its course quite abruptly – either turning to the north, towards the High Street, or south towards the priory. Whichever side of the wall the medieval building was sited will, of course, greatly influence our interpretation of its original use. Assuming the building was within the confines of the priory, albeit somewhat set apart from the main cloistered area, maybe it was a lodging house for lay members or visitors. If on the other hand the building was a High Street property, it is likely that the resident family would also use it for trade, as a shop or possibly a workshop.

If the building was within the priory complex, did the layout follow the ‘normal’ tripartite division? From our recording work we know that there was a partition between the southern bay and the central hall bay. Did the hall extend into the northerly bay? If it did not, and there was a partition between these two bays, then the hall was quite short in length.

Two issues from the medieval period require summing up – the relationship of the medieval building to Rochester Priory and the alignment of the priory wall in the vicinity of what is now called Phelip’s Lodge. As already discussed the medieval building is aligned to the Cathedral and therefore its orientation will accord with the layout of the priory buildings that encompass the Cathedral. Also, medieval shops and workshops that line the trading Street are normally placed square to that street. Our medieval building is set at quite an angle to the High Street, thus taking up a greater frontage. From this it seems reasonable to assume that the medieval building was indeed part of the priory complex.

If this conclusion is correct then the priory wall must have passed the medieval building on its northern side, running along the southern edge of the High Street. It is also very likely that on the western side of the building the priory wall deviated from its course in the near vicinity; the deviation would have been less abrupt if the wall took the northern course. Some support to this arrangement is provided by ‘The Map of the River Medway at Rochester & Chatham’, dated 1633.<sup>8</sup> It reveals that the section of wall that once by-passed the medieval building had already been pulled down, though a little further to the east it is shown

to be still standing. It is shown continuing along the southern edge of the High Street, where it goes on to adjoin the southern tower of East gate. However, the findings of the 1969 excavation (see above) do not entirely accord with the map illustration.

#### Later Development of Phelip's Lodge – the Seventeenth-Century Addition to the South

At the front of the house (**Fig. 3**), the ground floor wall is built of seventeenth-century red brick, with patched repairs. Above, the wall is a framed rendered structure. Central to this elevation is the two-storey porch with a gabled roof of peg tiles. Within the north-east wall of the porch, there is an oval opening, which when first built gave a view down to the High Street. To either side of the porch there is a large gable, they give symmetry to the front elevation and appear to frame the windows beneath.

To the north of the porch, at first-floor level, there are two iron casement windows with leaded lights. The casements to the most northerly of the pair, are set between wooden ovolo mullions. This window still retains its original catch. At ground floor level, the window to what is now the jeweller's workshop, is an horizontal sliding sash.

To the south of the porch there is a square bay window, offset from the gable above, built sometime after the seventeenth-century addition had been completed. This can be seen from within the roof structure, where the lath and plaster of the gable has been broken through to construct the bay window. The top window of the bay tends towards the Venetian style, which we are told, first appeared in England in the reigns of James I and Charles I. This style returned with the Palladian Revival in the eighteenth-century. The central light of this window is flanked on either side by two identical caryatids in the form of buxom females (**Fig. 4**). At ground floor level the bay has a sash-cord window of a later period.

The south-west wall was rebuilt sometime in the eighteenth century. This is indicated by a vertical joint in the brickwork at the west corner of the building. Also a brick within the wall is inscribed with the year 17\*0 beneath the initials 'RS x IB' (**Fig. 5**). The third number of the year is badly eroded. The wall was probably built no earlier than 1730 and might be as late as 1790.

With regard to the layout of the house, there were two external chimney-stacks along the south-east wall (**Fig. 6**). The seventeenth-century stack for the room to the south can still be viewed from the outside whereas the stack for the room to the north is enclosed by No. 84 High Street (a weather-boarded shop with accommodation over). However, the original seventeenth-century fireplace for this room can be seen within the jeweller's shop of No 82. The fireplace, which has a simple stone surround, is now bricked-up.



Fig. 3 Phelip's Lodge, North-West Elevation.



Fig. 4 Phelip's Lodge, the caryatid(s).

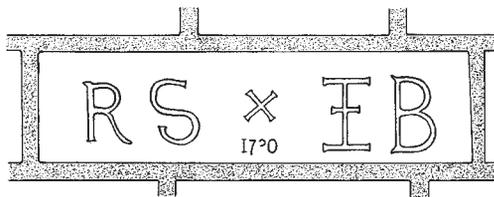
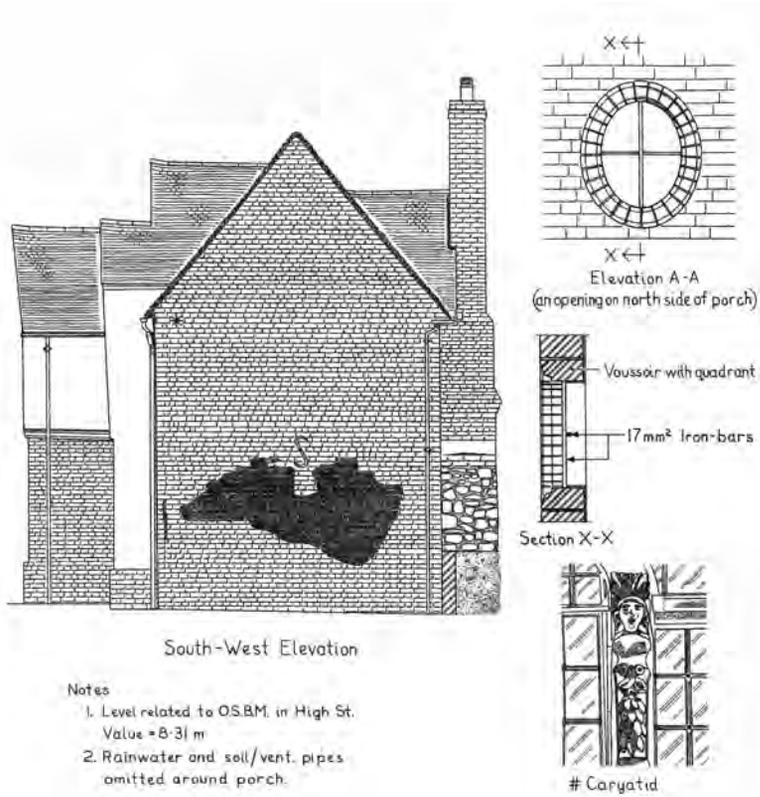


Fig. 5 Phelip's Lodge, the inscribed brick

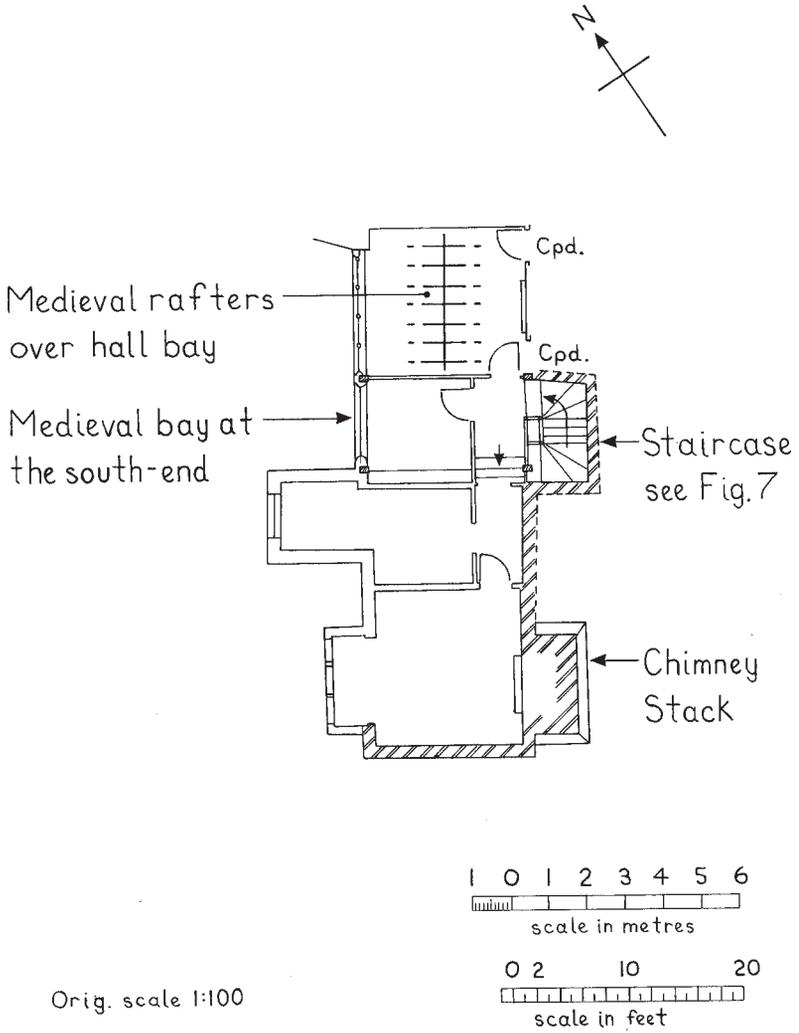


Fig. 6 First-floor Plan of Seventeenth-Century House.

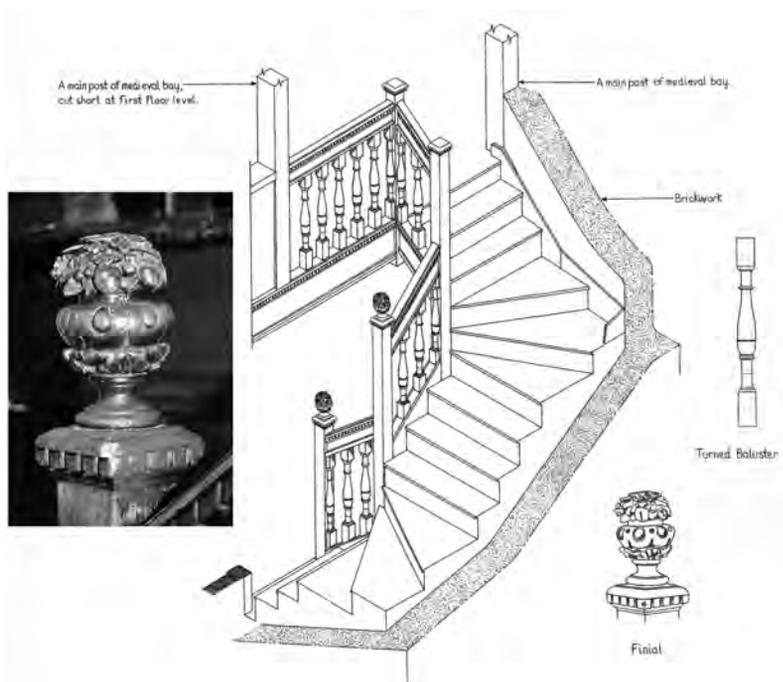


Fig. 7 Open-Well Staircase, with a detailed photograph of a finial from the staircase

Set between the two chimney-stacks is an open-well staircase,<sup>9</sup> which is also external to the south-east wall (**Fig. 7**). The staircase has been constructed between the main posts of the south medieval bay (the most southerly of the pair has been cut short at first-floor level). When the staircase was first built, each newel post was capped with a finial; only one of the original set of four now survives. A copy of this original has recently been made. The design of the finial is of an urn topped with floral decoration. The various features of the staircase indicate a date of construction to around 1640-75. This is deduced from the closed string balusters, which are of a stocky form and have an inscribed line round the widest part of the bulb;<sup>10</sup> the floriate decoration on the top of the newels adds weight to this suggested date range. This staircase has no quarter landings, at each angle the stairs rising in a spiral.<sup>11</sup>

At this time it seems likely that the medieval hall was floored over. The beam (or binder) for supporting the joists of this floor can be seen within the current jeweller's workshop (see **Fig. 8**). It has ovolo mouldings and

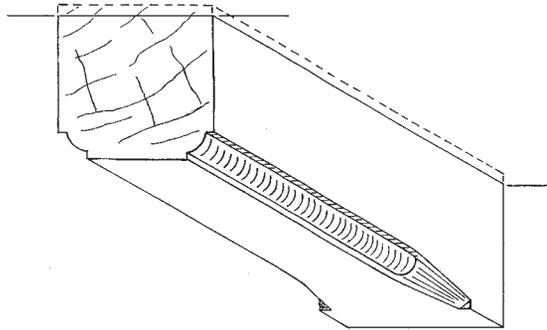


Fig. 8 Beam binder.

traverses the width of the building. The roof of the seventeenth-century addition is of a collar rafter construction, and as for the medieval roof, the rafters have been laid flat – there being 15 sets in all (Fig. 9). Again the carpenter has inscribed some of the members with Roman numerals to aid assembly. The ridge of the roof for this section is approximately 40cm higher than for the medieval section. The covering of the whole roof is of peg-tiles (Plate II).

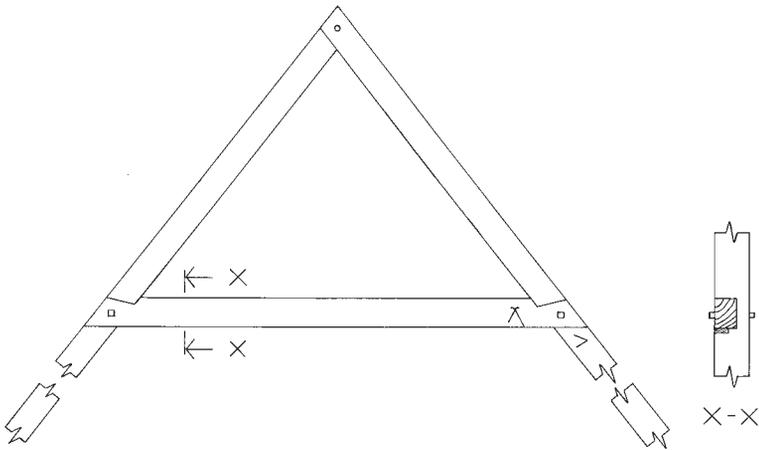


Fig. 9 Rafter Set in Seventeenth-Century House.

From initial observation, it was assumed that all of the seventeenth-century alterations were carried out in one phase, sometime in the last half of the century. However, after seeking out information on the various features of the building – plus ideas and information from others – it is now thought that this building work was begun before 1650. Possibly the work was done in stages for a period covering much of the century, or even going into the early eighteenth.

As previously mentioned, the square bay window appears to be of a seventeenth-century date. Also, as mentioned, it was added sometime after the addition to the south had been completed. However, all the windows for the house are within the north-west elevation, so that the rooms were not well lighted. Therefore, to bring in more light (and possibly to be more fashionable), the bay may have been built soon after the addition had been completed – say within 20-40 years. Indicating, that this part of the building (along with its porch), was built within the first half of the century, or even possibly, the closing years of the sixteenth century.

#### Eighteenth-century addition (the present No. 82 High St)

Sometime in the eighteenth-century, a second major phase of building work was undertaken at the northern end of the house. This addition to the property is three storeys high and is surmounted with a tiled mansard roof that incorporates two bedrooms with dormer windows (**Plate V**). There is also a cellar within this addition. (When the cellar was dug out, did the excavators remove the last remnants of the Priory Wall? A narrow cutting across the cellar floor, now covered with flagstones and patches of concrete, might decide the matter.) The first floor of this building is at a higher level than that of Phelip's Lodge. Prior to the division of the pile, a shallow flight of stairs led down to the first floor of what is now Phelip's Lodge. This is now blocked.

The north-east wall, which fronts the High Street, is of red Flemish bond brickwork. As well as fronting No. 82, the wall continues along to front Nos 80 and 78 High Street. This frontage seems to be as one, there being no vertical joints in the brickwork to mark out the three properties. The wall is topped with a parapet that is underlined with a shallow cornice.

Centrally placed in the High Street wall of No. 82 is a fire insurance wall mark. The building pictured on this mark, indicates it was issued by the Royal Exchange Assurance Company (**Fig. 10**).<sup>12</sup>

The ground floor contains a shop with a workshop to the rear – the workshop being within the seventeenth-century structure. As previously stated, the predominately seventeenth-century house and the plot it is built on, meet the High Street at an angle. Therefore the rooms in the eighteenth-century addition are of a trapezoid shape.



Nos 82 and 84 (weatherboarded) High Street, Rochester



Fig. 10 Fire insurance plaque.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> W. Wildash, *History and Antiquities of Rochester*, 2nd ed., 1817, 192; 'Walter Phillips, the last prior. On the surrendry of the monastery into the Kings hands was by the foundation charter ... dated June 18 1542, appointed the first dean thereof. He died in 1570'. However, checks in Medway archives and the electoral register show that the name Phelip's Lodge has only been given to the building quite recently, since the early 1990s.

<sup>2</sup> S. Pearson, 1994, *Medieval Houses of Kent; an Historical Analysis*, RCHME, pp. 76-89 (85).

<sup>3</sup> N.W. Alcock, M.W. Barley, P.W. Dixon and R.A. Meeson, *Recording timbered-framed Buildings: an Illustrated Glossary*, Practical Handbook in Archaeology 5, CBA (Scarf Joints F29).

<sup>4</sup> S. Pearson, *op. cit.*, (see note 2), p. 155. Scarf joints, from tree-ring dating.

<sup>5</sup> Thorpe's *Registrum Roffense*, pp. 552-3: *Archaeologia Cantiana*, XXIV (1900), 23-7. In letter patent of Edward III granted in 1345 for the building of a stone wall from east gate of the city to St William's gate.

<sup>6</sup> *Archaeologia Cantiana*, xviii (1889), 201.

<sup>7</sup> *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LXXXVII (1972), 122.

<sup>8</sup> There is a copy of this map on display at Rochester Museum; the original is held by the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Hall, 2005, *Period House Fixtures and Fittings 1300-1900*, pp. 101, 104-5.

<sup>10</sup> N.W. Alcock and L. Hall, 1994, *Fixtures and Fittings in dated houses 1567-1763*, Practical Handbook in Archaeology, CBA, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> For this type of staircase some of the illustrated examples consulted are shown with quarter landings. If our staircase had quarter landings, each flight would be of a slightly steeper pitch than for the spiral arrangement.

<sup>12</sup> R.G.M. Baker, 1970, *Fire Insurance Wall Plaques*, Walton and Weybridge Local History Society, no. 7.

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