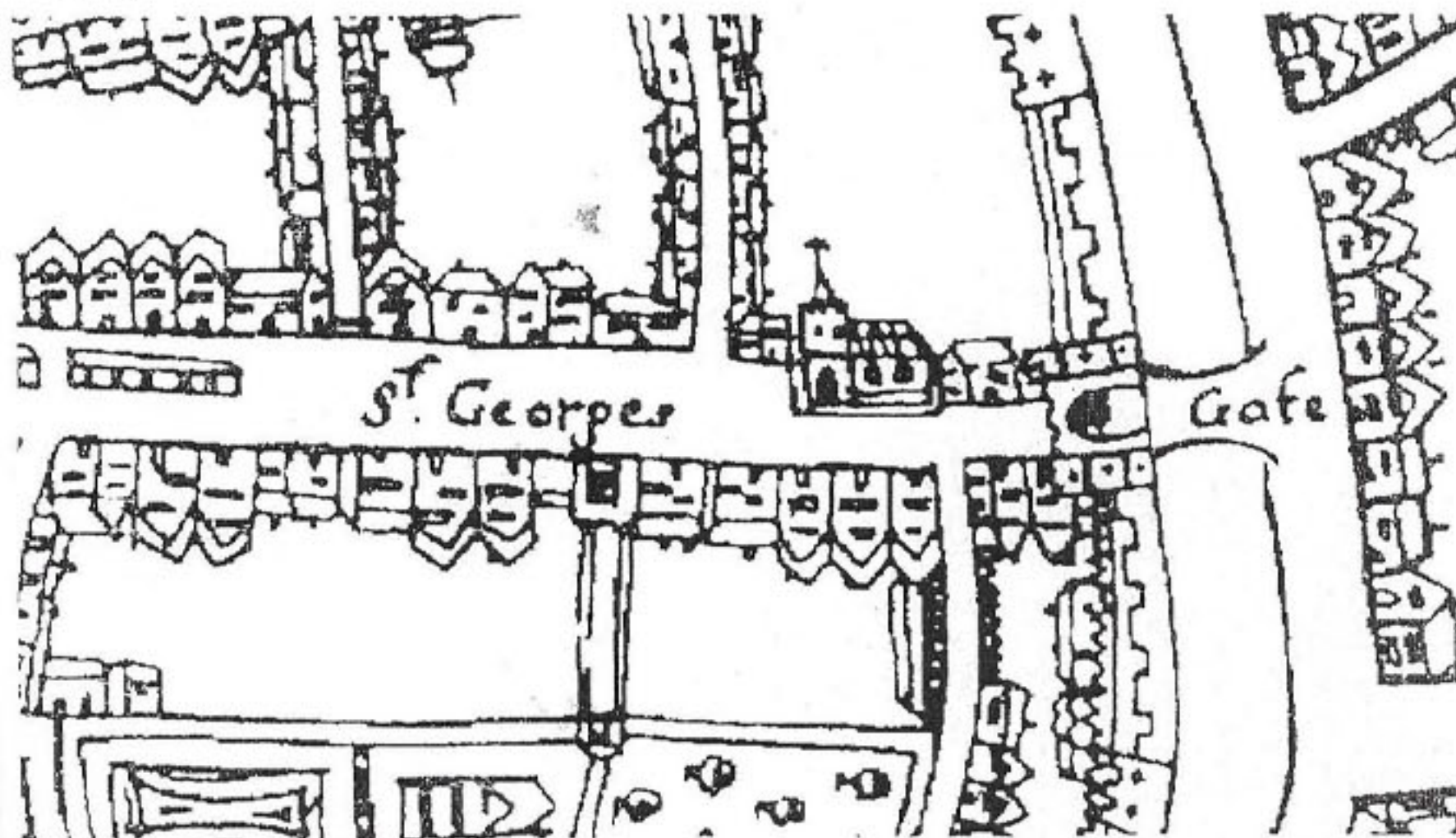


Christopher Marlowe's Canterbury



Canterbury Environment Centre City Trail No.8



Published by: The Canterbury Environment Centre, St Alphege Lane, Canterbury Kent CT1 2EB

CHAS SCANS

Between 1977 and 2002 Canterbury Urban Studies Centre and Canterbury Environment Centre published around 30 guides and city trails describing various aspects of Canterbury's past. Both organisations were based in St Alphege church.

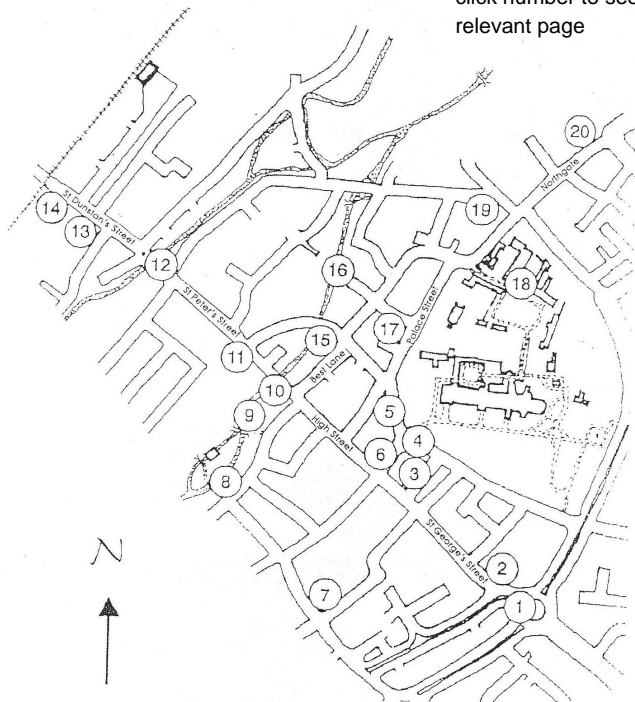
Between them they produced 14 titles in the 'Trails' series, and a further 16 titles outside the main series. All are now out of print and many are difficult (a few impossible) to find through normal second hand sources. Many contain information that is not readily available in other printed or on line sources.

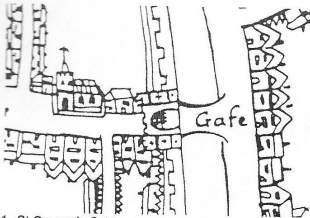
CHAS (Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society) is scanning a selection of these publications for uploading to the CHAS website as PDFs. In this way a new generation of readers and researchers can have access to this unique resource.

A full list of these publications appears on the CHAS website:

<http://www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk>

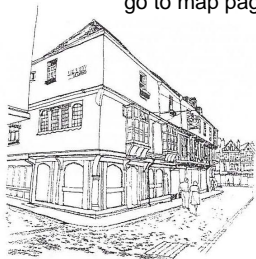
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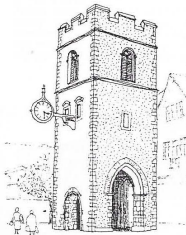
1 St George's Gate

This gate, occupying the site of a late Anglo-Saxon predecessor, was rebuilt in about 1470, the style copying the still remaining Westgate at the far end of the central spine of the city. It comprised two high drum towers (perhaps Marlowe referred to them in the Jew of Malta, "two lofty Turrets that command the Towne"). The cattle market stood close by along the outside of the city wall through all the city's history. The citizens petitioned to have this gate demolished in 1790 to allow animals and carts to proceed easily. So the massive gate was removed in 1801, and the New Dover Road became the main road to Canterbury from the South.



3 The Bull Inn, Butchery Lane

After looking at the bull's head on the wall of 9 Butchery Lane notice a low entry into a small courtyard by the side of the Shakespeare pub. This courtyard was part of that of the very large Bull Inn which included the whole area from Liberty's to Laura Ashley and all the area from the Buttermarket to the High Street. Like the Chequer opposite it in Mercery Lane, it was probably built to house the many pilgrims coming to the city in the 13th and 14th centuries. A good view of the beams of the inn can be seen in the small restaurant in Liberty's shop.



2 St George's Church

The tower with the projecting clock was part of St George's Church which was firebombed on June 1st 1942 and subsequently demolished in 1954. This church saw Katherine Arthur and John Marlowe the shoemaker married in 1561, their second child Christopher baptised on Saturday February 25th 1564, and his father buried in 1605. The Marlowes reputedly lived opposite St George's Church in St George's Street on the corner of St George's Lane. The family moved often, and in about 1578 they were in St Andrew's parish, further down the High Street.



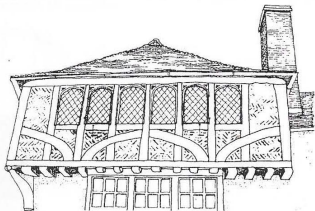
4 The Buttermarket and The Sun Inn

The Buttermarket (where the War Memorial now stands) was used for centuries as a market. It was the poultry and dairy market and also called the Bullstake where bulls were bated. The Pizzaland restaurant, beside the Cathedral Gate, was once the Sun Inn built in 1437-8 by Christchurch Priory to house pilgrims visiting the shrine of Thomas Becket.

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5 No 8 Sun Street

Detour down Sun Street and turn left to look up at the first storey of Cousins' jewellers, where plaster has been removed to show the original timber bracing and infill of the late medieval building, and to expose the original window with runners for sliding wooden shutters.



6 Chequers of the Hope Inn and Mercery Lane

Go back to the Buttermarket and down Mercery Lane and on the right, along half of the street, stood the very large Chequers of the Hope Inn, begun in 1392 during Chaucer's lifetime and costing £867 to erect. The stone arches are original and the inn had a courtyard and three storeys. Probably here and in the Bull Inn's yard theatrical performances by travelling players took place, which the young Marlowe would have seen. In or close to this building he had a fight on 15 September 1592 with William Corkine, tailor and musician. Both inns stand over large and earlier cellars which still exist. Opposite the Chequers, the Albion Bookshop, No 13 Mercery Lane, was probably the home of George Auncell, a grocer related by marriage to the Marlowe family.



7 No 16 Watling Street

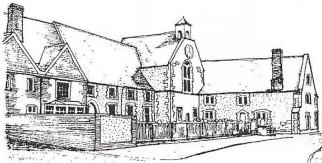
Cross the High Street and go down St Margaret's Street to the far end and turn left up Watling St. No 16 is a fine example of a prestigious brick town house of the early 17th century which shows the great difference in style from the timber buildings already seen. There is a projecting garderobe (lavatory) on the far end at first floor level.



8 Water Lane, Stour St. and the Poor Priests' Hospital

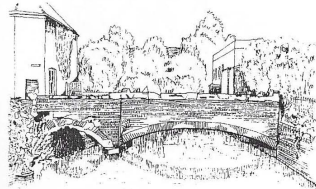
Retrace your steps down Watling Street and on down Beer Cart Lane to Stour Street, where Water Lane is opposite you. The property which stood on the left of the Lane (until it was destroyed in World War 2) was the house once owned by the widow Katherine Benchklin, whose will was witnessed and read aloud 'plainly and distinctly' by Christopher Marlowe in a downstairs room in November 1585.

The Poor Priests' Hospital, opposite, was 'a very poor house' for priests until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540 and was acquired by the City in 1575. In Marlowe's time it became a 'workhouse' and was occupied by poor and orphan children. It was also used as a lodging for paupers. It is now a perfectly restored and elegant museum dedicated to the history of Canterbury.



9 The Greyfriars (Franciscans)

Walk on down Stour Street and through the wooden gates (usually open) of No 6 into what is now a nursery garden and was once the monastery of the Franciscans who came to Canterbury in 1224. If you look down river from the modern bridge you will see the medieval bridge granted a licence in 1309. The small stone arch remains from the original bridge while the larger one was demolished and rebuilt in 1589. The only other remaining building of the Greyfriars is the small dormitory block over the river.



10 The Eastbridge Hospital

Return to Stour Street, turn left and then left again at the High Street. On your left stands the Hospital of St Thomas the Martyr upon Eastbridge, with its late 12th century undercroft, halls and chapel. By the late 16th century it was a lodging house for wayfarers. In Marlowe's time there was also a school (where 59 and 60 St Peter's Street now stand) established by Archbishop Matthew Parker in 1569 for twenty poor boys.

School masters also taught in St George's parish in 1558 and 1586. We have no clear evidence of where Marlowe went to school before going to King's but one of these three schools may have been his first source of tuition. The Eastbridge Hospital still houses men and women pensioners.



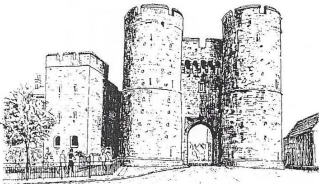
11 Cogan House

Further down on the left of St Peter's Street is Cogan House at No 53, now a bookshop in the front and a restaurant behind and above. The 19th century facade hides a long history. This was a small stone house by 1200 but on entering the restaurant by the passage on the right you will see the fine oak friezes and panelling of the 16th century; look above and you will see timbering of an aisled Hall that formed part of the original establishment. The beautiful garden and medieval chambers above are well worth visiting, and we are fortunate that one of the earliest surviving domestic properties in England can still be seen by the public when patronising the restaurant.



12 The Westgate

Westgate is the sole remaining city gate. Marlowe would have known six such gates in the great city walls. Formerly a Roman gate, Westgate was rebuilt solidly to a revolutionary design by Henry Yevele, incorporating 16 pairs of gunloops against danger of invasion from France in 1381. It had a drawbridge across the river and soon after became a prison and sometimes a place of execution. It would have had stout wooden doors, until all were destroyed during the Civil War. It is now a museum, with memories of those incarcerated there. One such prisoner was Christopher Marlowe's brother-in-law, Thomas Graddell, who spent six weeks in the Westgate prison for debt. An excellent view of the city may be had by climbing to the roof.



13 St Dunstan's Street - The Star Inn

Outside the Westgate was the old London road, full of inns - travellers arriving at the city after the gates were closed would have to stay outside the walls. It still has many timber-framed buildings dating from the time when Marlowe may have worked as a pot-boy at one of these inns - perhaps The Star (now the Hospice Shop).



14 No 81 St Dunstan's Street

Templars estate agents now own this fine early 16th century building. About half of the original timber-framed hall-house survives; the rest of the building, probably the open hall, must have occupied the site of No 81a St Dunstan's where there is now a separate Victorian building. The surviving elements were a service room on the ground floor (probably buttery and pantry) and a single large bedchamber (the solar) above.



If you go on beyond the level crossing, on your right is a Tudor brick gateway - all that remains of the house of the Roper family. It was the home of Sir Thomas More's daughter, Margaret Roper, whose husband William lived until 1578 when Marlowe was 14. The gate, recently restored by Canterbury City Council, was probably constructed by the mid 15th century.

Return to the Westgate and go back up St Peter's Street, noting the many timber-framed buildings and St Peter's Church dating from the early Norman period - one of the many buildings already old in Marlowe's time.

15 Best Lane

Turn left after crossing the river, down Best Lane. The little garden on the left is the churchyard of All Saints Church (twice rebuilt after Marlowe's time and finally demolished in the 1930s) where Christopher Marlowe's mother Katherine was buried in March 1605 - sadly not in accordance with her wish to be buried beside her husband in St George's. John had died in January, probably in their house in Best Lane for which we have the inventory of that year detailing the furniture and household items, many of which must have surrounded Christopher in his childhood.

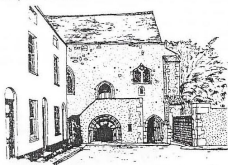
A larger house than the Marlowe's, No 4-5 Best Lane is a well restored example of a town house of that time. It has two bays in the front (now a Georgian facade) and runs back three bays. It was occupied by a prosperous Walloon family over a long period. These 'strangers' from the Netherlands comprised over a third of Canterbury's population and were generally in the weaving trade, speaking French and living in all parts of the city.



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16 The Blackfriars (Dominicans)

Cross the small crossroads and go down King Street, turning left down Blackfriars Street. Before you stands the 13th century Dominican friars' refectory. Behind it across the river stands their dormitory, or guest house of the same date. The original precincts spread all around you, right along King Street, and on the other side down the street now called The Friars to a gate in St Peter's Street. Henry III gave £500 to build this priory in 1240; after 1538 all was sold off to private citizens. Many Walloons lived here, and in the parish of St Alphege. The guest house was used in Marlowe's lifetime as a hall to view and sell their woollen and silk cloths to the woollendrapers freemen of Canterbury.



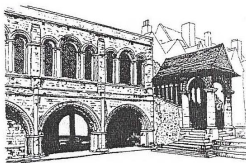
17 St Alphege Church - The Canterbury Centre

Return along Blackfriars Street and cross towards the Cathedral and the small flint church building of St Alphege. Originally built in the 11th century this building was already much altered by Marlowe's time. The present door and the huge east window had been added early that century, and the roof screen had been torn down in the 1540s. In 1575 the Walloons were offered shared use of the church before being given the use of the cathedral crypt soon after. Many Huguenot and Walloon families lived in the Blackfriars area and were buried in the church and graveyard. The church is now the home of the Canterbury Urban Studies Centre and is now an educational and community centre with exhibitions, resources on local and environmental matters and a cafe. It is open Wednesdays to Saturdays throughout the year.



18 King's School

Turn left down Palace Street, past many more timber buildings, some with their facades covered in mathematical tiles to look like brick. Cross the road and enter the Mint Yard Gate of the Cathedral Precincts to the area of the King's School. The buildings on the left of the Mint Yard are new, and part of the present school. Here stood the Almonry which was eventually used as the King's School from 1573 until it was demolished in 1859. Young Christopher Marlowe became a scholar of the school in December 1578 when he was nearly fifteen, and had left with a scholarship for Corpus Christi College, Cambridge by the autumn of 1580. He received £1 a quarter for food, and was one of about 80 scholars, both boarding and day boys. Their long day lasted from six in the morning until after evening prayers at five in the evening. As part of their education the boys performed plays and some pupils also took part in plays of visiting companies. The cathedral and the many surrounding buildings of the closed monastery would have played a major role in Marlowe's life and visual experience.



19 St Radigund's

Go round the Borough and head out of the medieval city. Down Church Lane, a little passageway to the left, is St Radigund's Hall, a largely unspoilt example of a timber building of c.1490 which is in fact two 'wealden' type hall houses forming a large L shape. The sunken garden incorporates the city wall, as does the side wall of St Mary Northgate Church, and there was a small graveyard in front of the hall tight against the back of the city wall. In the late 16th century this space would have felt very different from today.



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20 St John's Hospital, Northgate

This almshouse is probably the oldest in England, founded by the Norman Archbishop Lanfranc in 1083/5. The old great hall, now roofless, still stands, and beside it the ancient lavatory block (necessarium), now 900 years old, with its drainage to the river beyond. The latrine was still in use in 1948 - perhaps the longest continual use in the world! The chapel, though now much reduced, is of the 12th century. The refectory with its turret is of later date. The men and women presently living here occupy Victorian houses round the pretty garden viewed and entered from the timbered Elizabethan entrance gate built in or soon after Marlowe's lifetime.



Christopher Marlowe, brilliant dramatist, poet and government agent, murdered in Deptford at the age of 29, was born and brought up in Canterbury.

This publication was first published as a contribution to the 'Marlowe 400' celebrations of his life and work.

The buildings on this trail are either directly connected with Christopher Marlowe, or are some of those known to have existed in his lifetime (1564-1593) and illustrate to the observer how the city must have appeared at the time.

Christopher Marlowe