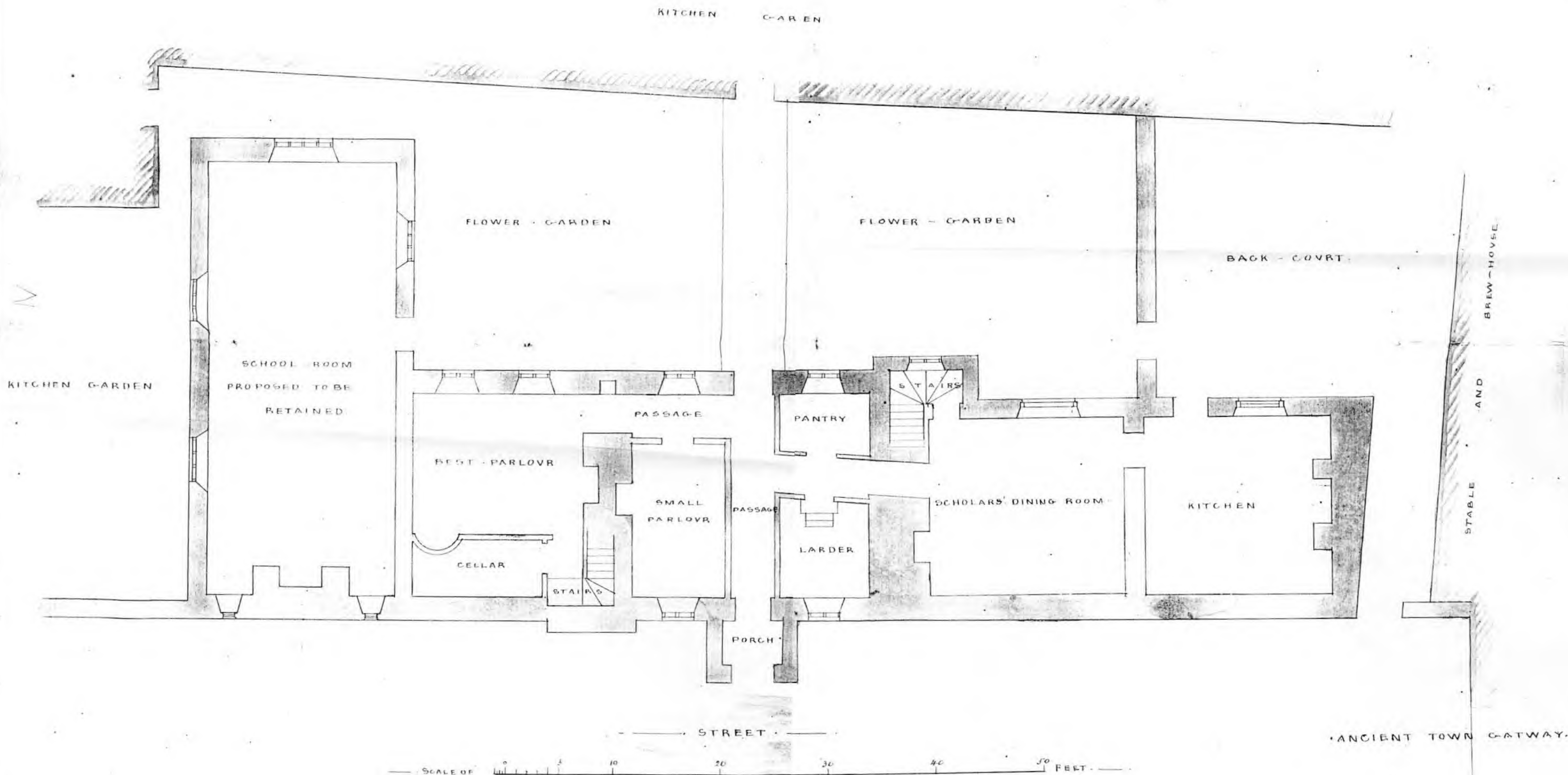


GROUND PLAN OF THE COWBRIDGE SCHOOLS

IN THEIR PRESENT STATE

1/8 SCALE



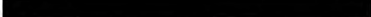
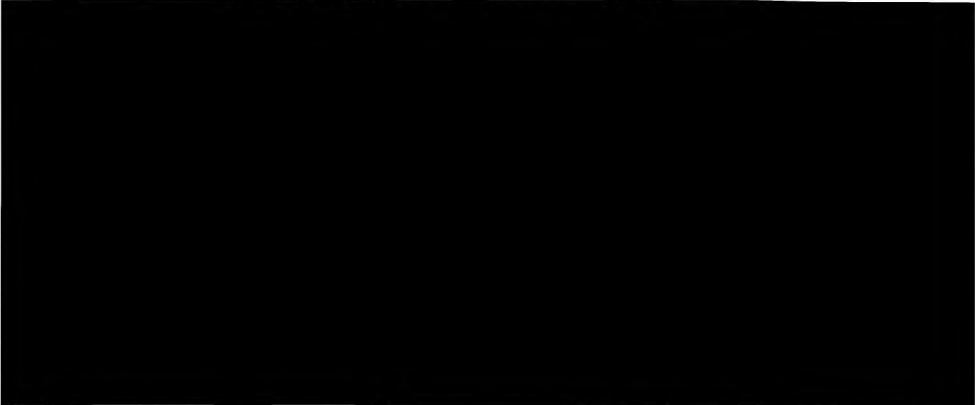
W. Richard
Diocesan Archt.



25.11.05

Dear Jeff,

Thanks for the Newsletter.



Perhaps the most important document is the plan of the old school. I wonder if it was the foundations of the walls dividing the garden and back court that were seen in the headmaster's lawn in dry seasons (Hopkin James, p.230). John Prichard was right to describe the old buildings as "ill arranged". The schoolroom, for instance, could only be entered from the flower garden which seems to mean that pupils would have to go through the middle of the headmaster's house to get to it!

I am returning the papers by post because we are unlikely to meet up in the near future. Thanks again.

Yours sincerely,

Rwan



THE REBUILDING OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A visit to Jesus College archives in the summer proved very valuable in discovering a variety of documents relating to the history of Cowbridge Grammar School. These included a list of names of five pensioners of the school in 1685, the earliest known school roll - that of 1847 when there were only 31 pupils (including Sylvester who was later to be one of the first recipients of the VC), a plan of the pre-1847 school building, details of the acquisition of the cottages which were sited next to 6 and 7 Church Street, and considerable information about the rebuilding of the school. Extracts from some of the letters concerning the rebuilding are included below:

Three letters from the Diocesan architect of Llandaff, John Prichard, to the Bursar of Jesus College, Oxford:

4/3/1847: Prichard stated that he had done a requested survey of the Grammar School buildings which were “so bad they cannot be improved and must be rebuilt”; “in a ruinous state and so ill arranged as to require extensive alterations”. He also considered that should any portion of the present building be left, it would “have a tendency to prevent a more desirable arrangement”.

“All the apartments on every floor are of insufficient height varying from only 8 to 6 ft. To raise the rooms on the ground floor to the moderate height of 10 ft, the first floor to 9 ft and the attic to 8 ft will require an additional height of walling of about 10 feet, the present height of the eave course being only 14 ft.”

He wrote that it would be unwise to put such additional height on old walls, though they may be strong enough, especially “when it must be borne in mind that under several apartments commodious (?) it will be necessary to remove the position of most of the present ill-shaped doors and windows, the apertures thus left, however well they may be rebuilt, must naturally have a tendency to destroy that bond of union which is so essential to the strength and durability of a building”. Prichard had calculated that retaining any portion of the old walls would not amount to a saving of £50; he had prepared preliminary sketches to send forward for inspection.

4/6/1847: A letter detailing plans for the new building, which had taken longer than anticipated. It “provided comfortable accommodation for the Master and for the Boarders, the number of forty, with such ...appendages as ...considered essential to an establishment of this description.”

Prichard felt that the sum Jesus College wished to spend was inadequate to provide the required accommodation, so he was obliged to adapt the plan “having regard to strict economy”.

In determining the style of architecture he stated: “the schoolroom is the only important part of the present building I propose to retain in precisely of the same character. (In fact, he did not retain the old schoolroom, which was built at right angles to Church Street). The houses in the immediate neighbourhood possess much of the same style. It cannot fail to harmonise with the church which is hard by on one side, and the ancient town gateway which abuts against the building on the other. The great irregularity it admits of, frequently increases the picturesque effect externally while it often affords a most convenient internal arrangement. It is economical and substantial, which I imagine must be a good inducement to you . . . to meet the wants of the present day and also to provide also for the exigencies of generations yet to come.”

“The picturesque effect I expect will be produced by the varied disposition of the several gables, chimney stacks, etc, but by a careful comparison of the play with the elevations you will be able to form a tolerable idea of the light and shade which will be produced by those parts of the building which project and the others which recede.”

Regarding the manner “in which I have disposed of the dormitories, I thought that to arrange the beds as they are generally done in a hospital or an infirmary would not be very agreeable to the feelings of young gentlemen, for it is not pleasant for the occupant of one bed to be staring at that of another. It is proposed to divide the room by means of boarded partitions which are not to be carried up to the ceiling but only so high as to give an air of privacy to each division, thereby preserving the advantages of one large room for the purpose of due ventilation.

“The apartments of the boarders are quite distinct from that of the master, yet ready access is provided both above and below. The amount of accommodation in these premises is so great that to execute them satisfactorily will require the sum of £2500.”

18/12/1849: “On the annexed leaf you will find my account what you were kind enough to say you would send me . . .

To providing plans, specification and estimate and to supervise the erection of the Cowbridge schoolroom, at 5% commission	£93. 0. 0
travelling expenses	£13. 0. 0

(Prichard was to receive this £106, and a further £112 for the remainder of the building)

JA

STOP PRESS

The next study meeting will deal with the ‘repopulation’ of Church Street, and will be held in the Duke (upstairs) on Monday 16 January from 10.00 to 11.45 am. All welcome!

WRITTEN BY JEFF ALDEN
FOR THE HISTORY SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER Dec. 2005 (chs00008)