

Sevenoaks District Architectural History

regional study of early vernacular buildings

Department of the Environment
Fortress House
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URGENT

Your ref. Room 324
AA 50951/2

116.
from
ANTHONY D. STOYEL

52 Tudor Drive
Otford
SEVENOAKS Kent
TN14 5QR

telephone OTFORD (09592) 3579

26th March 1981

Dear Mr Stocker,

OTFORD PALACE

Further to my letter of 16th March, I enclose for information a copy of another letter I have sent to Sevenoaks District Council. As you will see, the first definite sign of impending disintegration of the tower has now become apparent. I have sent copies of the letter to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and to the Ancient Monuments Society.

From the District Council's recent discussions, it is now abundantly clear that the majority of their members are intent only on ridding themselves of the tower as quickly as possible in the hope of avoiding altogether the need to spend money on it. We very much fear that all they will do about the dangerous parapet may be to attempt to dismantle it as an emergency precaution against injury to third parties, and leave it at that. The enclosed letter has been written as a 'last ditch' effort to persuade them to adopt a more responsible attitude, but we are not optimistic that it will make any impression whatsoever.

The present circumstances lend still more point and urgency to the suggestions made in the final paragraph of my letter of 16th March. Since the Council refuse to execute even essential repairs now, what hope is there for the future?

The Council's officers have firmly taken the view that any question concerning Otford Palace is entirely for the councillors themselves to decide. Since the officers chose to suppress your letter of 19th February (and also letters from six other bodies), I strongly recommend that when writing to the Council in future you specifically request that your letter be brought to the notice of all councillors.

I shall be much obliged if you will keep me in the picture regarding developments.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Stoyel

Director of Studies

Mr Murphy

Re attach to earlier letter & etc

1 AM re

1 AM re, 30/3/81

Sevenoaks District Architectural History

a regional study of early vernacular buildings

The Secretary
Sevenoaks District Council
Argyle Road
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TN13 1HG

Your ref. OS.2/DCO/DC

115.
from
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telephone OTFORD (09592) 3579

23rd March 1981

Dear Mr Orgles,

OTFORD PALACE

In reply to your letter of 16th March, there are certain aspects of the District Council's resolution at their meeting on 12.3.81 on which I wish to comment and I shall be obliged if you will bring the following to the notice of all Councillors as quickly as possible.

(1) The Immediate Situation

Inspection of the Palace tower this week-end revealed that the parapet has developed an outward lean that was not apparent a month ago, clearly due to the almost complete absence of mortar in the brickwork and stone quoins, especially of the internal walling. At the moment, the lean is confined to the NW side overlooking the much-used public footpath crossing Palace Field, but the decay is practically as bad on the other sides. Partial collapse at least of the upper storey must now be regarded as imminent, and virtually certain to occur unless emergency remedial measures are taken without delay. Consequently, immediate steps are required to safeguard passers-by and the occupants of the adjoining cottage. I need hardly mention the heavy liabilities which could devolve on the Council in the event of personal injuries and damage to property as a result of the authority's negligence.

(2) The Council's Responsibility

When the former Sevenoaks Rural District Council purchased the greater part of the Palace site and remains in 1935, it was with the declared intention of securing their preservation for all time. That authority immediately carried out a major restoration of the tower, and no large-scale repairs have been required since; however, as a matter of course and without being asked, it thereafter maintained the structure regularly (at intervals of not more than about 5 years) by minor 'stitch in time' work at negligible cost. Thus from 1935 to 1974 the Palace was kept in good condition by its owners, very much on the lines I mentioned in my letter of 31.1.81 (page 2) as fundamentally essential for ancient buildings, especially where roofless.

When responsibility passed from the RDC to the new District Council in 1974, this maintenance unaccountably ceased. Instead of getting on with the job as before, the Council have simply discussed it for the past 4 years. The inevitable result is that the need for restoration has grown from a minor one in February 1977 to a major one now.

Hitherto there has never been any question of the Council's responsibility being shared by Otford. Few local people were even aware of the desperate need for repairs, partly because access to the tower has been denied: the Council changed the lock some time ago without providing the Parish Council with new keys until last month. Public consciousness of the seriousness of the position did not, therefore, even begin to become widespread until the recent Press publicity; as this started barely 3 weeks before your 12.3.81 meeting, remarks quoted from the discussion suggesting that there was no strong local support were unfairly premature. Moreover such comments, made just after receipt of my 'open letter' written on behalf of 6 local and neighbourhood organizations and mentioning Otford's forthcoming public appeal, were patently unjustified and paid no regard to the Parish Council's prompt initiative in proposing to help the District Council to fulfil its responsibility in the present difficult circumstances.

(3) District Council's Resolution on 12.3.81

We would certainly favour the Department of the Environment taking over the tower, or better still the whole range of Palace buildings if not the entire site in SDC ownership, if they can be persuaded to do so. In the case of 'any other appropriate body', however, we feel that very considerable circumspection would need to be exercised in order to safeguard, in a responsible manner, the long-term future of the Palace as a single entity. The Tudor structure consists of:-

- (a) The NW corner-tower, 3 storeys high.
- (b) The ground-storey walls of Castle Cottages, originally a long gallery of 2 storeys.
- (c) The gatehouse, a single storey of one of its former twin 3-storey towers.

All these constitute a continuous range of buildings and, for obvious reasons, it would not be in the best interests of the Palace if they were to be split between different owners, other than the Council and the DoE.

We find it hard to believe that Councillors can honestly expect the DoE or any other 'appropriate body' even to consider accepting the NW corner-tower in its present condition. Consequently we see this resolution as yet another deferment of first-aid work, with no guarantee that it will be done after the prescribed 6 months have expired - any more than it was following the Council's previous resolutions to put the repairs out to tender.

As events have now demonstrated, 6 months is in any case much too long to delay this work. If disintegration is allowed to begin, far more drastic reconstruction as well as repairs will be necessary at vastly increased cost. We suggest that a more realistic approach would have been to agree to carry out essential work forthwith and then to try to find a body willing to undertake guardianship. We ask the Council to reconsider their resolution with a view to adopting this course with the urgency that circumstances now demand.

Bearing in mind the District Council's responsibility for the present situation, we further suggest that it is grossly unfair to make the resolution conditional on Otford Parish Council bearing one-fifth of the total expense. Until District Councillors have before them an up-to-date estimate of the cost of immediately-essential repairs, how can they judge whether what they are asking is reasonable or not? Believe me, the Palace is sufficiently dear to Otford for the parish to be relied upon to do its utmost to raise the maximum possible contribution without being tied to some arbitrary percentage.

Attention has been focussed on first-aid repairs to the tower because of its now-dangerous condition, but it should not be overlooked that the specification prepared by the DoE in 1977 details other works, including gatehouse repairs, which have likewise become long overdue. It is assumed that the estimate before the Council was for the whole of this specification and we suggest that an up-to-date figure covering only essential repairs to the tower should be obtained as a matter of urgency.

(4) Historical Considerations

Having recently completed an extensive programme of research, I have just been commissioned by Kent University to write an architectural history of Otford Palace to be published in a book later this year. I hope to follow it up with a modest booklet designed for ordinary visitors to the site. In more than one letter to your Council, I have mentioned my intention to publish and that I would hope to be able to give a favourable account of the Council's stewardship of this Palace; as matters stand, however, I must tell you that with deep regret I shall have no alternative but to comment adversely.

My work on this research has shown, for the first time ever, that Otford Palace was England's largest house when rebuilt in 1515, and exceeded in size the slightly-later Hampton Court. I shall also be explaining that even the surviving remains incorporate some of the earliest-known features of their type and high quality anywhere in England.

These are facts which, having not so far been published, are not yet generally known. I have now informed the DoE of them, but this does not necessarily mean that it will be possible for them to allocate sufficient funds to take over any part of the Palace - however much they would like to. One of your Councillors whose remarks ~~XXXX~~ at the recent meeting were widely quoted in the Press is under a complete misapprehension in thinking that, if the DoE are not prepared to take over, the building was (and is) of no national significance. He also appears to believe that the tower under discussion is, in fact, the gatehouse at the other end of the range. Fortunately the tower cannot be pulled down, as he advocated, because as a scheduled Ancient Monument it is stringently protected by statute against demolition or any alteration without specific consent of the DoE.

I am sending copies of this letter to the bodies named at the end of my letter dated 31.1.81.

Yours sincerely,



Director of Studies

21st October 1978

26
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Your ref. AA 50951/2 pt. 4

8HACK
30/10
Dear Mrs Hewer,

OTFORD PALACE

Thank you for your letter of 21st September notifying us of the additional area accorded 'Ancient Monument' scheduling on 21st February 1978, which we are very pleased to note.

With your letter of 22nd November 1976, you enclosed a plan showing (a) the area already scheduled and (b) the additional area you at that time had in mind scheduling. Included in (b) was the early-C16 gallery linking the NW corner-tower with the principal gatehouse, which was converted c.1900 into 3 terraced dwellings by the addition of a roofed upper storey and thereafter became known as Castle Cottages. When at your invitation we later made our detailed recommendations, we were consequently under the impression that the case we had already made for the scheduling of the ground storey of this gallery - despite being occupied - had been accepted by your Department. In this connection I would refer you to the section nod. (4) in my letter of 8th October 1976, and to the plan enclosed with my letter of 11th December 1976 (subsequently amended by those accompanying my letters dated 17.2.77 and 26.3.77).

In view of this, we are surprised to observe that the plan enclosed with your letter under reply shows the gallery as an excluded building and I shall be glad to receive your assurance that this was in error.

dealt with on approp. file. [With regard to the enquiry concerning Becket's Well in my letter of 8th August last, I assume from the absence of comment that there are not yet any further developments to report.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Stoyel

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THE ARCHIEPISCOPAL PALACE AT OTFORD, KENT

N.G.R. TQ 528592

STRUCTURAL HISTORY

The medieval Archbishops of Canterbury, as manorial lords, had a manor-house at Otford from before the Norman Conquest until 1537. Of the many recorded alterations, by far the most extensive were made by Archbishop Warham c.1515 when the complex was enlarged and almost entirely rebuilt on palatial lines; the only parts of the earlier structure incorporated were the walls of the chapel and those of the great hall. New buildings were erected not only within the encircling moat of the old manor-house on the southern part of the site but also over a large tract of land to the N, with the result that the area of the whole site became vast, roughly tripled.

In 1537 Archbishop Cranmer was forced to surrender the manor to Henry VIII and it remained Crown property until 1601, when it passed into private hands. Although Henry continued to maintain the palace buildings until his death, they were thereafter neglected and had become ruinous well before the end of the C16. Successively robbed for building-materials from the C17 onwards, not much more remained by Victorian times than is visible today. Walls of the N range and of a lodge survived only because they were adapted as farm buildings, apparently during the C17. In 1935 the former Sevenoaks Rural District Council purchased the N range and 4 acres of adjoining land forming part of the site, in order that the preservation of the remains within the area might be secured.

PRESENT REMAINS

Parts of the N and S fronts of the palace have survived, and archaeological excavation of the SE corner in 1974 demonstrated the wealth of further remains undoubtedly existing below ground-level in between. The pattern of otherwise-invisible walling is often discernible in times of drought. The N arm of the moat is still to be seen (as a small overgrown stream, now lacking the sluices which gave it greater depth and width) with further walls of unusual interest in its banks. The latter, and a long ragstone wall which formed the base of the S front of the palace, are in gardens of private houses in Bubblestone Road.

The most prominent survival, however, is the single range of early-C16 buildings representing the western half of the N front. At one end is the shell of the three-storeyed NW corner-tower, which has newel-stair and garderobe turrets adjoining and contains original fireplaces for its three heptagonal rooms. At the other end of the range is the ground storey (later roofed and at present in use as a Girl Guide HQ) of one of the twin towers of the principal gatehouse of the palace; projecting from its S side is the newel-stair turret of this tower, and against its E side is a finely-moulded stone base of the great inner arch of the gateway itself. Linking these two end-towers are the virtually-complete ground-storey walls of the western half of the N gallery, now incorporated in Castle Cottages; since they form an important part of the subject of this report, they are described below under a separate heading.

The only above-ground portions of the palace and its appurtenances currently accorded 'Ancient Monument' scheduling are the NW corner-tower, the remains of the principal gatehouse tower, a single wall surviving from the eastern half of the N gallery, and St. Thomas à Becket's Well (a medieval reservoir and conduit-house from which the palace offices and moat were supplied). The scheduling includes a so far unexcavated area of open land to the S and E of the N range, bounded by 'The Castle House' drive from Sevenoaks Road (S) and by the Bubblestone Road - Churchyard footpath (E). Castle Cottages at present rank only as a Listed Building, grade II*. The Department of the Environment now intend to extend the 'Ancient Monument' scheduling to embrace the remainder of the palace site and all located appurtenances, but their negotiations have

not yet been completed. The scheduled area will then include:-

- (a) Castle Cottages (thus completing the scheduling of the N range).
 - (b) That part of the site occupied by the moated pre-Tudor manor-house, with visible remains already mentioned, to the S of the present scheduled area.
 - (c) The outer court, to the N of the present scheduled area.
 - (d) The pleasure garden, which still has its recorded brook, to the W of the present scheduled area.
 - (e) The kitchen garden and butts, to the E of the present scheduled area.
 - (f) A lodge, walls of which survive in the front garden of Moat Cottage, Station Road.
 - (g) The pond yards, in which 7 of the 9 recorded fishponds still remain.
- (f) & (g) are to the NE & E of the present scheduled area, which will thus be linked with the already-scheduled Becket's Well.

Sevenoaks District Council own the N range of buildings (viz. the NW corner-tower, Castle Cottages, and the remains of the principal gatehouse tower) with a strip of land to the N and 4 acres of open ground to the S. The remainder of the site of the palace buildings and appurtenances (including some of the visible remains) is almost entirely in private ownership.

CASTLE COTTAGES

The ground-storey walls are of early-C16 brick with ragstone plinths and originally carried a timber upper storey. In the Tudor structure, the two storeys were passage-galleries 'to walke in above and beneath' (Survey of 1540/41). The ground storey was treated as a cloister, having along its S side a series of 11 closely-set unglazed lights immediately above plinth-level opening into the palace's immense inner court (about 80 yards square). These lights are entirely executed in finely-moulded brickwork, hollow-chamfered and with four-centred heads enclosed in square labels.

The timber upper storey was removed altogether following the abandonment and decay of the palace. The ground storey was provided with a thatched roof, probably during the C17, and used as a farm building (within the curtilage of Castle Farm, the principal dwelling of which survives as 'The Castle House') until the beginning of the present century. The central part incorporated the farm smithy and for this purpose a square-headed doorway was inserted in one of the S-facing cloister lights, 4 of which had by this time been blocked with brickwork; also to serve the smithy, two adjacent cloister-lights were demolished for the construction of a projecting ragstone chimney-breast. The doorway was blocked with brickwork in the first half of the C19.

During the early years of the C20, the building was converted into the present three terraced dwellings called Castle Cottages. The work involved:-

- (1) Superimposing a new brick upper storey with tiled roof on the early-C16 ground-storey walls, which were left unaltered except as mentioned below.
- (2) Blocking the 5 S-facing cloister-lights not already filled in, and inserting modern windows in the blocking-material of 5 such lights.
- (3) Blocking a Tudor doorway immediately E of the series of cloister-lights.
- (4) Capping the C17 smithy chimney-breast with a tiled lean-to roof.
- (5) Blocking with ragstone a large square-headed Tudor opening in the W end-wall.
- (6) Inserting 2 modern doorways and some windows in the Tudor N wall and erecting against it a small projecting outbuilding with a tiled lean-to roof. This wall otherwise remains substantially undisturbed, still displaying an original doorway at the centre and characteristic blue-header diapering in the brickwork throughout its length.

Of the early-Cl6 features preserved in the cottages, those of the S elevation are undoubtedly the most valuable. The surviving 9 cloister-lights, terminating with a coeval blocked doorway at the E end, constitute the finest architectural detail remaining on the whole site. The continuity of this series still impresses, despite its interruption by the later smithy chimney-breast and blocked doorway which are themselves of historic interest in their own right.

THE FUTURE OF THE SITE

In December 1974, Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) approved a scheme prepared by their Planning Dept. for the 'modernization' of Castle Cottages. The plans included provision for substantial internal changes which, if the range is to continue as dwellings, are highly desirable for the improvement of tenants' amenities. Also involved, however, were external alterations which would have severely damaged the Tudor features of the S elevation. My first knowledge of the plans was in January 1977, when they had still not been implemented and SDC invited Otford Parish Council (OPC) to submit observations. I forthwith notified the Department of the Environment (DoE) and this was the first they had heard of the proposals. Listed Building Consent was thereupon refused. Following a site meeting at which DoE was represented, SDC prepared revised plans and DoE granted Listed Building Consent for these in May 1977. The external work in the revised scheme was limited to provision of rear access to cottage no.2 by opening up the blocked smithy doorway and to cottage no.3 by opening up the blocked Tudor doorway, both in the S elevation.

When the revised plans were made known to OPC in July 1977, strong objections to these external alterations were put forward to SDC by me and by OPC, the Otford & District Historical Society (ODHS), the Otford Village Society (OVS) and, following reports in the local press, by a number of individuals. Letters of protest were also sent by ODHS and myself to the DoE, who replied 'we are completely happy with negotiations to date which will cause no major change to the facades'.

As a result of the letters to SDC, their Planning Officer held a meeting in his office in September 1977 attended by representatives of OPC, ODHS, & OVS, the local District Councillor, and officers of SDC and Kent County Council. The Planning Officer was aware that I would be unable to be present owing to absence from the district. The meeting went unminuted and I was afterwards given conflicting reports of the discussion by people who had attended. What was abundantly clear, however, was that all objections had been swept aside by the SDC officers.

The Joint Historic Buildings Committee of the Kent Archaeological Society and the Committee for the Preservation of Rural Kent discussed the plans at length in August 1977. They decided to raise no objection because they felt that, if the two rear doorways were necessary from the point of view of ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ tenants' amenities, the SDC scheme was probably the best that could be devised in the circumstances. Upon hearing of this, I immediately notified them that I had already interviewed the tenants of all three cottages, taking great care not to influence them in any way, and that they themselves were unanimous in not wishing to have rear doorways. As a result, the Committee arranged for the Secretary of Kent Archaeological Society to send a corrective letter in January 1978 informing SDC that they now felt that the existing brickwork would be better left alone until such time as a comprehensive restoration of the Cl6 work could be undertaken.

Since the meeting in September 1977 mentioned above, renewed efforts have been made to persuade SDC that it would be wrong to proceed with the proposed rear doorways. Letters have been sent by me and by the local bodies already

mentioned giving further explanations of our reasons for maintaining this view.

The most far-reaching of these reasons is that we consider SDC ought to be working towards eventual fulfilment of a coherent long-term policy for the future preservation, investigation and most-effective public display of the archiepiscopal palace as a whole. When the economic climate and the pressures of housing council tenants have improved sufficiently, we very much hope that the site will be excavated under proper archaeological supervision, the remains being suitably preserved and left exposed for public inspection, and that the present superstructure of Castle Cottages will then be demolished so as to leave the early-Cl6 ground-storey walls as nearly as practicable in their original form. The site, if well laid out in this manner, would undoubtedly be of exceptional interest, far more in keeping with its significance in national history, and would provide the Darent Valley with another important tourist attraction, along with Eynsford Castle and Lullingstone Roman Villa. Meanwhile, our contention is that there should be no unnecessary tampering with the surviving fabric, as this would be prejudicial to the realization of the ultimate objective.

The SDC Planning Officer was sufficiently impressed by the suggested long-term policy to recommend that the Council's officers be authorized to carry out discussions with the DoE with the object of securing guardianship of the site and buildings by the Ancient Monuments Division of the DoE. I have just been informed that this recommendation has been adopted by a full meeting of SDC.

The SDC Planning Officer's recommendation was made in a long report dated 9.6.78, in which

- (i) he expressed some apprehension about the suggested eventual abandonment of the residential use of Castle Cottages; and
- (ii) he maintained that the provision of rear-access doorways to the cottages will in no way prejudice the long-term policy and that meanwhile they are necessary amenities for the tenants. Indeed, encouraged by the granting of Listed Building Consent for doorways to cottages nos. 2 & 3, he recommended that similar Consent be sought for the construction of a third doorway to serve cottage no. 1. This would be in the ragstone infilling of a former large square-headed Tudor opening in the W end-wall.

His report was framed in such a manner that the conclusions reached (except regarding DoE guardianship) were generally based upon a series of misconceptions. The deficiencies are so serious that I have now written to him, on behalf of ODHS and with the backing of the other local bodies concerned, giving a detailed explanation of the thinking behind our proposals and objections, and asking him to arrange for my letter to be placed before the SDC committees to which his report has been submitted in order that any decisions already reached may be reconsidered in the light of these further observations.

There, for the moment, the matter rests.

In this latest letter to the SDC Planning Officer, I commented on the suggested eventual abandonment of the residential use of Castle Cottages on the following lines:-

- (a) The very fact that their ground storey is a once-cloistered passage-gallery, only some 12 ft. wide, surviving from the Tudor palace imposes limitations which render the accommodation unsatisfactory now and (even after the proposed internal modernization) likely to become more so as the years go by. The limitations referred to are not merely the cramped size of the individual cottages. What we have particularly in mind is the importance of the whole ground storey as a historic building, which will always inhibit external alterations and prevent what would in other dwellings be perfectly normal and acceptable improvements.

- (b) Abandonment is in itself unlikely to have the effect of increasing vandalism. The existing residential presence has shown no sign of deterring hooligans from causing occasional minor damage to the NW corner-tower. The same would doubtless be true of other remains if excavated and left exposed as suggested; these, however, should be much less vulnerable once consolidated for preservation. We believe the constantly-used public footpath across the site to be a far more effective deterrent in practice, since considerable parts of the remains are not visible from the cottages themselves.
- (c) The early-C20 upper storey is an unworthy intrusion on the Tudor ground storey, and is particularly ugly when viewed from the S side, i.e., where the greatest interest lies. It is not (and can scarcely have been intended to be) in any sense compatible with the timber original, being more reminiscent of the poorest late-Victorian working-class housing. Reduction to a single storey would expose an authentic little-altered Tudor gallery, and the two end-towers would be given the appearance of greater height, thus producing a more interesting contrast of outline as 'backcloth' to the picturesque village green Conservation Area.

With regard to the proposed three rear-access doorways for Castle Cottages, the explanation of our objections given in my recent letter to the SDC Planning Officer is on the following lines:-

- (1) The blocked doorway in the S wall of cottage no.3 has lost its stone jambs, and brickwork has been substituted. But its early-C16 four-centred arch survives intact and, although there is surface decay, the stonework is quite sufficiently sound to remain unrestored provided the infilling is left undisturbed. If the latter were removed, a completely new stone doorway would have to be substituted. Little enough exists in the way of standing remains displaying original features without destroying this - one of the few medieval doorways. Even if the upper storey is eventually demolished as suggested, this doorway would doubtless remain blocked in order to preserve its Tudor arch. In the palace, it provided access between the inner court and the western half of the N range ground-floor cloistered passage-gallery.
- (2) The blocked square-headed doorway in the S wall of cottage no.2 was inserted to give access to Castle Farm smithy, probably in the C17. It appears to have been blocked during the first half of the C19, when the agricultural depression evidently made the maintenance of the smithy uneconomic. Indeed, the rough brickwork of the infilling may be symptomatic of the great poverty then prevalent. The doorway and adjacent chimney-breast constitute the only survivals of this private farm smithy, once a common feature among the larger establishments. Such relics, especially of this early date, are believed to be now rare and the infilling of the doorway provides valuable evidence of the period of use. Doorway and infilling are consequently worth preserving intact, not only on this account but also as representing interesting stages in the post-Reformation history of the palace remains.

The present tenant and his family, who have spent much of their lives here, particularly stress that, if this doorway is re-opened, their furniture will make it impossible to use and it will only create difficulties for them.

- (3) The proposed doorway in the W end-wall of cottage no.1 is archaeologically the least objectionable, but we are seriously concerned about the detrimental effect it would have on the appearance of the great Tudor NW corner-tower, which it would adjoin. In the palace, the opening in which this doorway would be inserted served as the internal link between the N & W ground-floor passage-galleries.

- (4) SDC allege that the three proposed doorways are 'necessary' for the sole reason of giving tenants easy access - for cultivation, window-cleaning, etc. - to the narrow strip of land along the S side of the cottages at present enclosed by low chestnut paling. The tenants of two cottages have told me that they will not use this land unless complete privacy from one another is provided by close-boarded fencing (unfortunately, relations between the occupants of the three dwellings ~~XX~~ are far from harmonious). We would be strongly opposed to the erection of such fencing or anything else which would spoil the appearance of the S elevation and inhibit facilities for viewing it.

We do not believe that the problem of window-cleaning (possibly from within) cannot be quite simply overcome by other means if a genuine effort is made to do so.

If easy access to the strip of land were essential (which we do not accept), it would be a relatively simple matter to provide it externally from the field lying immediately S. It is apparent from the report that, having decided on doorways, no serious consideration has been given to possible alternatives in spite of all the objections which have been raised from many different quarters.

In our opinion it is unreasonable to claim that the doorways are 'necessary' for the purposes stated. Of course degrees of necessity vary enormously, but in this case the need seems very slight. The cottages have existed without rear access for their whole life of nearly 80 years and, now that their future may be comparatively short, it would be highly undesirable to interfere with the incorporated remains without far-more-compelling reasons.

- (5) We are opposed to the provision of doorways not only because of actual and visual damage they themselves would inflict on the remains, consequently prejudicing the long-term policy, but also because of the adverse effect they would be bound to have on the general appearance of the S elevation while the cottages remain occupied. The possibility of fencing has been already mentioned. What is more certain is that tenants' property of various kinds can be expected to be placed on the enclosed strip of land. Such things as lines of washing, runner bean poles, and other temporary or semi-permanent objects, although quite innocent in themselves, would unfortunately produce a cluttered effect seriously impairing the present uninterrupted views of the remains obtainable from the field to the S. Efforts should be directed towards enhancing rather than spoiling these views. Otford Palace attracts many visitors - parties from learned societies, etc., as well as individuals - and the S elevation is one of the chief showpieces, largely due to its series of cloister-lights, the special merits of which have been described on pp.2 & 3. We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of leaving this stretch of the remains alone (except for essential repairs) and fully exposed for public inspection. In saying this, we would stress that we have no objection whatever to the proposed internal improvements; the delay in proceeding with this undisputed work, coupled with press publicity about the long-term future of the cottages, is causing the tenants a great deal of worry and distress - chiefly because of their inability to understand what is going on.

CONCLUSIONS

Naturally it is very much hoped that, following the latest representations made, SDC will now agree to delete from their scheme the proposed rear-access doorways for Castle Cottages. Whatever the outcome, however, it is urged that in view of all the aforementioned circumstances:-

- (a) DoE will if possible withdraw the Listed Building Consent already granted for two doorways in the light of information in this report, some of which was doubtless unknown to them at that time;
- (b) DoE will, if approached, refuse Listed Building Consent for the proposed third doorway; and
- (c) DoE will agree to SDC's proposal that guardianship of the site and buildings be vested in the Ancient Monuments Division of the DoE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- (1) Archaeologia Cantiana 31 (1915), pp.1-24, for general historical description and some primary source-material (mostly sound, but with a worthless plan).
- (2) Archaeologia Cantiana 70 (1956), pp.172-7, for report on excavation of Becket's Well.
- (3) Archaeologia Cantiana 89 (1974), pp.199-203, for report on excavation of SE corner of palace site.
- (4) Dennis Clarke & Anthony Stoyel, Otford in Kent - A History (1975), for numerous references to structural and other history, surviving remains, and source-material. See especially the plan on p.102.
- (5) John Newman, The Buildings of England: West Kent and the Weald, ed. Pevsner & Nairn (2nd edn. 1976), pp.446-7, for brief account of present remains.

7th September 1978

ANTHONY D. STOYEL