

21. Feb. 1948.

MAISON DIEU HOUSE, DOVER.

The very serious condition of Maison Dieu House, Dover, a red brick Jacobean house, situated on the Dover-London Trunk Road A.2., adjoining the Maison Dieu, formed the subject of a report to the Town Council recently submitted by Mr. Philip V. Marchant, A.M.I.C.E., M.I.Mun.E., the Borough Engineer and Surveyor, after consultation with the Ministry of Works Architect in Charge of Ancient Monuments.

HISTORY OF BUILDING.

A few historic particulars regarding the fine old house, which is scheduled as an Ancient Monument, may be of interest in view of the fact that its future existence is endangered owing to the high estimated cost of restoration, although ways and means are being explored with a view to preserving the building.

Maison Dieu House was originally built as the residence of the Agent Victualler, Royal Navy, and was used by this official until after the Battle of Waterloo 1815, and subsequently by the Chief of the Ordnance Department until 1834. Later the building was disposed of as a private residence and eventually, in 1904, became the property of the Corporation, since when it has been used as Municipal Offices, and is now used as the offices of the Borough Engineer and Surveyor's Department.

The Agent or Chief of the Victualling Office, was a much coveted office, the appointment being in the hands of the Lord Chancellor. The Maison Dieu, or Town Hall as it is to-day, was used as a Victualling Office for the Navy from the time of Queen Mary until 1834, after which it was bought by the Corporation.

Maison Dieu House is reputed to have been haunted like many other old houses, this belief being strengthened by the author of "Inglesby Legends", making the house the scene of his "Lay of the Old Woman clothed in Grey".

In this narrative poem, it is related how an old woman in grey sits astride a barrel of wine, with a bag of gold held in her right hand, which she offers politely to all who happen to see her.

No-one amongst the Council's staff has yet been known to accept this generous offer.

Maison Dieu House dates from 1665, and externally, despite the absence of the original entrance doorway, the front elevation is robust and interesting of a rather rare type (photograph No. 1), whilst internally there is a very beautiful Jacobean staircase (photograph No. 2).

Acknowledgements are due to Mr. B. A. Correll,

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Acknowledgements are due to Mr. B. A. Correll, A.L.A., Borough Librarian, for supplying the information from which the historical notes relating to the building have been compiled.