

BRIDGE CHAPEL & CHAMBER REFURBISHMENT

HISTORY

The Bridge Chapel, a medieval chantry built by Sir John de Cobham, dates from the end of the 14th Century. Described as ‘newly constructed’ in January 1393, the Chapel stood at the east end of the medieval stone bridge, providing a place for travellers and pilgrims to pray for a safe journey. Three priests said masses for the souls of the Cobham family until the Chapel was suppressed during the Reformation in 1548.

Over the next three centuries the Chapel was used first as a storeroom for the bridge workmen and then was converted into a house, serving variously as a private dwelling, a public house, and in Victorian times as a fruit and sweet shop.



When surrounding buildings were removed in 1879 during the construction of the Bridge Chamber, little more than a ruined shell of the medieval Chapel remained. In 1937 the Chapel was restored to designs by Sir Herbert Baker, and it is now used primarily for dinners and meetings. Once a year, on 2 November, All Souls Day, a service is held to commemorate the founders and benefactors of Rochester Bridge.

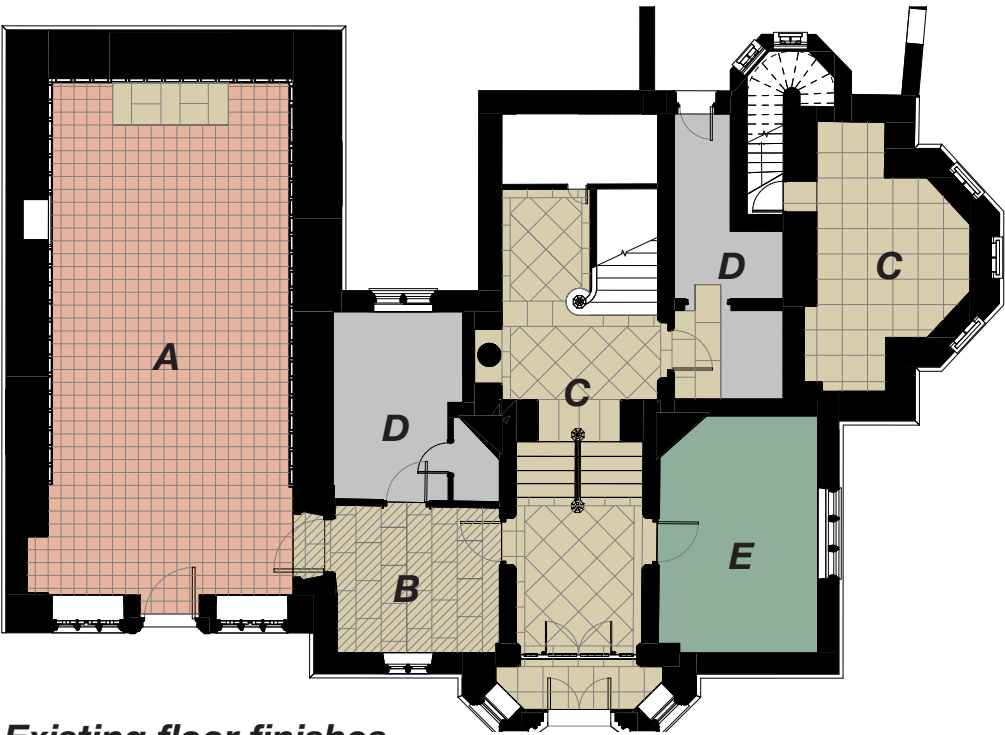
The Bridge Chamber is first mentioned in the records in the wardens’ accounts for 1398, but little is known about the medieval Chamber. A new Chamber was constructed in 1585 during the reformation of the bridge administration.



In 1627, a new Bridge Chamber was built above the western entrance to The Crown Inn yard.

The current Bridge Chamber was built in 1879 to the plans of the local architect Martin Bulmer. The previous chamber was demolished and the adjacent plot of land bought from the Earl of Jersey. At the eastern boundary of the plot a new road, now Castle Hill, was built.

Despite the robust construction of both buildings, internal fabric and infrastructure are now in need of refurbishment to preserve the buildings and make the space suitable for staff and members of the public attending functions.



- Existing floor finishes**
- A** Terracotta tiles in Chapel laid in 1937
 - B** Delaminating stone tiles in lobby from 1879
 - C** Stone tiles from 1879
 - D** Concrete floor - alterations since 1970
 - E** Carpet on concrete - alterations since 1970



Images **1** Archive photograph of the Chapel in ruin. The photograph is dated from 1928 and demonstrate the significant extent of the reconstruction which took place a few years later in 1937 **2** Photo showing the porch to the Chapel (1877) following the demolition of the Waterman’s Arms to the right hand side of the Bridge Chamber **3-4** Views of the Chamber first floor main landing showing water damage to the interior walls and the delaminating stone floor in the small ground floor lobby