



Fourteenth century seal matrix found in Orford in 2009 and impression, showing the head of St John the Baptist and with the inscription CAPUT: JOHANNIS – see St Matthew ch 14, vv 3-12; St Mark ch 6, vv 17-29. Diameter 18mm. (Orford Museum. Photo by Richard Quarrell)

chapel was located in the field called St John's Chapel Field, between Rectory Road and Ferry Road (behind the plot of land discussed in Valerie Potter's article on p1, above). This name may however mean only that the field was once the property of the chapel. James Coe, Orford's first mayor, died in 1591 and left property to his grandson, James Beversham. This included '6 pieces of land, viz. 4 in a close called the Beacon close by the said Castle Green, and the remaining two on the N.W. side of the way from Gedgrave to the late dissolved chapel of St John Baptist in Orford, near the said Beacon Close.' This seems to imply that the chapel may have stood quite near the castle and that the 'way' in question was either the Gedgrave Road or (more probably) the footpath north of it³. After gilds, chantries and monastic houses were abolished in 1548, their role as providers of relief and shelter for the sick and the poor, and some of their property, was taken over by the civil authorities. In 1604 the Corporation of Orford owned St John's chapel. A lease was granted of 'The house called le Chapell howse of the dissolved Hospital of St John Bapt. to a ^{not} ^{Novdbr} carpenter for seven years at the annual rent of 33s. 4d.' At the expiry of that term another seven year lease, this time at a rent of 40s., was granted to Amys Cordy, a labourer. In 1618 William Blanchflower took a two-year lease at 46s. 8d.⁴ It is reasonable to suggest that the house could have served as the gildhall. The feast day of St John the Baptist is 24 June (Midsummer's Day) and a fair was held in Orford on that date from 1256 until the late 19th century.



Fourteenth century seal matrix and impression of the fraternity of Corpus Christi, Orford. Diameter 45mm. (Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service, on loan to Orford Museum. Photo by Richard Quarrell)