

Detail from a copy made by Emmeline Rope of map 28 of John Norden's survey of 1601 showing 25 and 50 (New Orford Town Trust/Orford Museum)

In a number of Suffolk villages (for example Fressingfield and Eye) the gildhall was situated next to the church gate. This leads one to wonder whether the house next to Orford's church gate (Church House) was a gildhall. The 1601 Norden map shows a building, numbered 25, on the site. The house was examined in 2002 by John Walker of the Suffolk Historic Buildings Group. Although it is considerably older than its relatively plain exterior with a later bay window on the front would indicate, on stylistic grounds it appears to be from the first half of the 17th century, after the gilds had been dissolved and after the date of Norden's map. So the very most that can be said is that perhaps there was a gildhall on that site in the 15th century. Another possible candidate is the building on the other side of the church gate, now the *Kings Head*. Both buildings overlook the churchyard and afford views of the church porch which bears an Instruments of the Passion shield and the southwest corner of the church containing the former chapel where the font, also decorated with an Instruments of the Passion shield, stands. Perhaps this was the gild chapel for the Corpus Christi gild.

Vic Harrup

Notes

- 1. David Dymond and Edward Martin (eds), *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk*, Suffolk County Council, 3rd edition, 1999, p74
- William Page (ed), The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Suffolk, Constable & Co. Ltd, 1907, Vol II, pp 139,140. Hospitals were not just for tending the sick. The destitute, the widowed and orphans could be cared for in such institutions. For an article about the Hospital of St Leonard by Jane Allen, see Orford & District Local History Bulletin Issue 6 (Summer 2006), p9.