

WALL-PAINTINGS OF THE SIXTEENTH AND EARLY
SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES RECENTLY DISCOVERED
IN BOSWORTH HOUSE, WENDOVER, BUCKS.

By FRANCIS W. READER

In comparison with the numerous mural-paintings that have been brought to light in ecclesiastical buildings, domestic work of the kind seems so scanty as to create the impression that secular buildings were rarely decorated in this manner. This, however, is far from being the case. Discoveries of domestic wall-painting doubtless far exceed those in churches, and owing to their having been, in many cases, subsequently covered with panelling, they are generally well preserved. But, in the case at least of the smaller houses, the fortuitous discovery of such paintings is not, as a rule, accompanied by a recognition of their value and importance. They are regarded merely as old-fashioned decoration, and are destroyed with the same heedlessness with which old wall-papers are stripped.

In the case of churches, the circumstances are usually very different. Any work likely to lead to such a discovery is mostly supervised by an architect who possesses some understanding and sympathy in such matters. The workmen employed are often of a more intelligent order, working under better conditions than are possible in the case of ordinary domestic houses. The operations are, also, more or less under the eye of the incumbent and members of the congregation—a fact which at least tends to force attention upon any discoveries that may be made. Further, the subjects of religious painting make a stronger appeal to the ordinary observer than the decorative ornament of the domestic house. When all these circumstances are taken into consideration, it is hardly surprising that domestic mural paintings have more rarely survived the vicissitudes of chance-discovery.

This frequent destruction which has been, and is still, taking place, was first made known to me some years ago, when accompanying my friend, the late Miller Christy, on his expeditions in search for examples of domestic mural paintings in Essex. Mr. Christy's review of all the then known early domestic wall-paintings in that county¹ is useful not only for what it records but also as showing how few and fragmentary these remains now are, in spite of several years' patient observation and enquiry. On various occasions we met builders who told of such discoveries which had passed unnoticed, and who frankly admitted that they should disregard such work if they met with it.

It is not that builders are necessarily without interest in such discoveries, or are averse from their preservation; but they are seldom capable of recognising the antiquity and interest of these paintings without encouragement from some one on whose judgment they may have confidence. Unless builders are asked to look out for and report such discoveries in old buildings which may come into their hands, they naturally hesitate, on their own initiative, to do anything that may retard their work, and shrink from the risk of being snubbed for reporting what may be regarded as mere commonplace, dilapidated ornamentation.

An instance illustrating this occurred in 1923 at Wendover, when an old timber-framed building in the High Street, which had previously been a private dwelling, was converted into a Post Office. Naturally a great deal of structural alteration was necessary, as well as some additional building, by which the character of the old house was completely spoiled, particularly at the back. The work was carried out by Mr. Fred Wood, a local builder, who is also the owner of the property. Some considerable time after the work had been completed, during a conversation about the house, Mr. Wood mentioned that all the interior walls had originally been decorated with ornament painted by hand. I enquired if any of it

¹ *Trans. Essex Arch. Soc.*, xii, 23-37.

had been saved and found that everything had been destroyed except a timber brace from a partition on the ground floor, over which the painting had been carried (1 on plan, Fig. 3). This happened to be stored in the workshop, and at my request it was readily handed to me for presentation to the Aylesbury Museum. This brace is figured on Pl. iv, B, and shows that the design consisted of a frieze of horizontal panels with the lower surface, or field, divided into vertical panels about the size and shape of the usual wainscot, the whole scheme being defined with broad bands of dark brownish crimson.

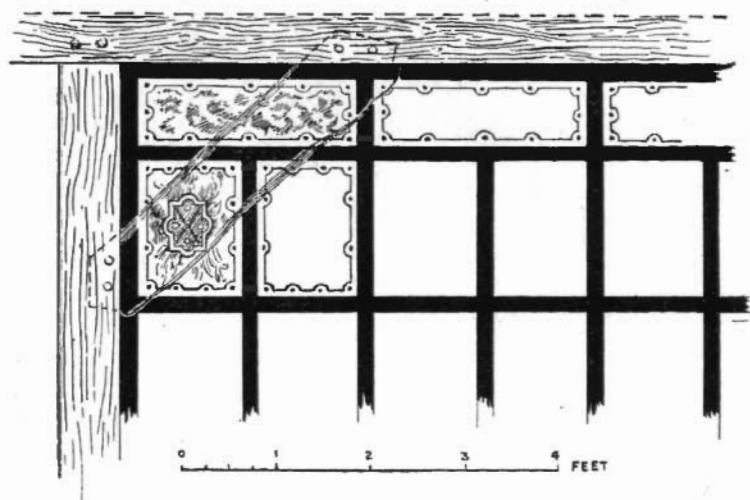


FIG. 1. SETTING-OUT OF PAINTED DECORATION ON PARTITION IN LOWER STOREY OF NO. 1 BOSWORTH HOUSE (compare Pl. iv, right)

The lower panels had in the centre a bold ornament which was formed of a rectangle, repeating the shape of the panel but having a semicircular extension on each of its sides. This had an outline of black and yellow, the filling being a low-tone green and having a small boss in the centre, where two diagonals crossed, which were carried to each corner of the rectangle. These diagonals were broken with cross-hatching, giving the appearance of feathers. The surrounding spaces and the panels of the frieze were filled with

delicate flowing foliage, resembling heraldic mantling, in soft tones of yellow, white and grey. The whole design would have been, apparently, as shown in the diagram (Fig. 1). It appeared to me to be work of the sixteenth or early seventeenth century and I expressed my deep regret at not being informed at the

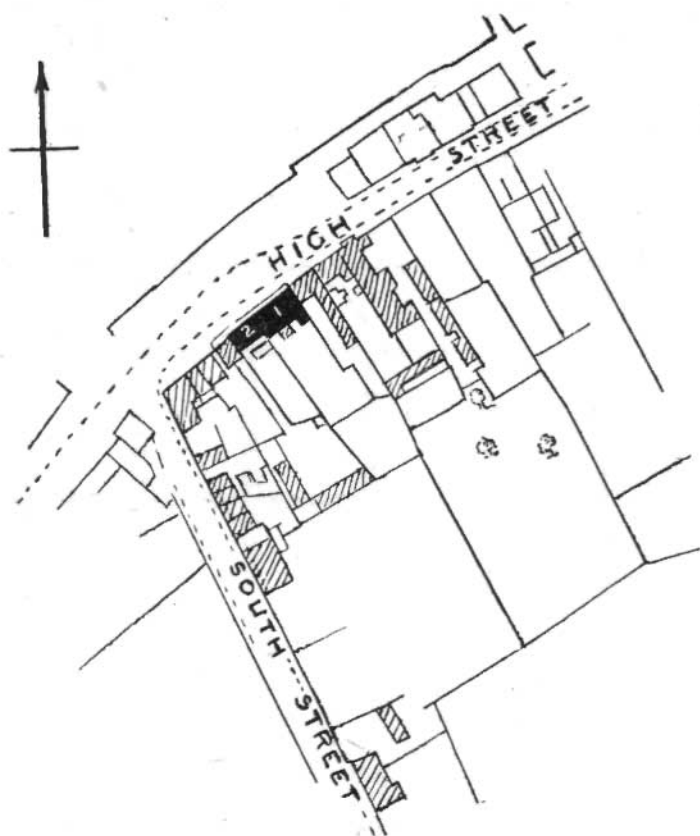


FIG. 2. PLAN SHOWING NOS. 1 AND 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE (IN BLACK)

time of the discovery. Mr. Wood said he most certainly would have done so, if he had thought it was of any interest, but as no one who saw it seemed in the least impressed, he did not suppose it to be worth bothering about.

My protests, fortunately, were not made in vain,

as during the spring of 1930 some further discoveries were made in the adjoining building, and of these Mr. Wood very kindly sent at once to inform me.

Before proceeding to give particulars of these, it may be as well to say something about Bosworth House, the name by which the range of buildings, including the above-mentioned Post Office, was formerly known. These buildings have attracted some notice on account of their picturesque appearance, their clusters of ornamental brick chimneys, and a fourteenth or fifteenth century stoup or font which is built into the wall of the gateway, no. 2 on plan (A, Pl. xi). The history of these buildings is obscure. Lipscomb makes no mention of them, but there is a local tradition that they formed some small monastic establishment, an unconfirmed legend which may have had its origin from the font.¹ Until recently the property belonged to the Manorial Estate and it then included three houses, one east of the gateway, now converted into a shop, and two, to the west. It is quite clear, that formerly, the two on the west side formed one house. This was evidently the case when Sheahan wrote in 1862.² Although he does not mention it by name, he says:—

‘A large house on the south side of the street near the London road—the residence of Zachariah Phillips, Esq.,—is remarkable for its handsome chimney shafts, which are circular in form and clustered.’

Now, of the three groups of chimneys only the westernmost has circular shafts. This chimney-breast forms the extreme end of the house, which stood open until the eighteenth century, when the present small cottage was built against it, without, however, ever forming part of the property. See the photographs, Pl. i, B, showing building at the present time, and Pl. i, A, an enlargement from an old, general view of the village taken about 1870 and now in the possession of Mr. F. W. Blake. This view shows, on the right,

¹ Another local tradition is that this stoup or font came from the nearby, ancient chapel of St. John, which was

demolished in the early nineteenth century.

² *History of Buckinghamshire*, p. 207.

an old wheelwright's shop, now removed and thrown back into the yard which its removal has opened up.

The conversion of the house into two dwellings must have taken place soon after Sheahan wrote, as I am told by Mr. Robert Deering, who is 93 years of age, and who well remembers when it was occupied by Zachariah Phillips, and also the division of the house into two, which he says would be about 60 years ago.

The house in its entirety was apparently called 'Bosworth,' as in the copy deeds it is described as Bosworth House no. 1 and no. 2.

Since its partition, the one adjoining the gateway (no. 1) has solely been known as Bosworth House, and the other (no. 2) has never gloried in any distinctive title locally, but has always been defined by the name of its occupant. (Many of the older inhabitants still retain for it the name of a tenant of 30 or 40 years ago.) For the present purpose it will be simpler to adopt the distinction of Bosworth House nos. 1 and 2.

The Royal Commission¹ describes the two dwellings as one monument: '(19) House, now Bosworth House, and a second dwelling, is of two storeys with a cellar and an attic, built of brick and timber probably early in the seventeenth century, but almost entirely re-fronted with modern brick. The original plan was rectangular, possibly with a small central wing at the back, which is now enclosed by modern additions. On the N. front the upper storey formerly projected but has been underbuilt, except at the E. end.

'Three chimney stacks are built of old thin bricks; the westernmost has three circular shafts with moulded bases, the top probably has been altered. The second dwelling has chamfered beams in one room, and in a modern room at the back is some seventeenth-century panelling, now painted and used as a partition. Under a covered gateway at the E. end of Bosworth House is a stone pillar piscina, probably of the fifteenth century.'

The Victoria County History gives a very similar account. Considering the unfavourable conditions

¹ Bucks.



A. BOSWORTH HOUSE ABOUT 1870



B. BOSWORTH HOUSE, PRESENT DAY



A. UPPER FLOOR IN NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE, DURING REMOVAL
OF PANELLING



B. THE SAME ROOM AFTER REMOVAL OF PANELLING

under which the Commissioners had to examine this house, its exterior covered with 'rough cast,' its interior obscured with a modern central staircase, modern partitions, fire-places, wall-papers, etc., whereby much of its timber was hidden and buried, their account may, perhaps, be considered as good as could be expected, with the exception of the 'cellar' for which there seems to be no warrant whatever.

Very much better conditions were afforded in the summer of 1930 for seeing the real nature of the structure. Mr. Fred Wood, having obtained possession of no. 2, decided to live in it himself, and proceeded to alter and adapt it to his own requirements. These operations led to the building being so cleared as to leave little more than its shell remaining, and thus enabled a good plan and a section of the original framing of the building to be obtained.¹ For this I am indebted to Mr. Ernest G. Theakston, F.R.I.B.A., who, from his long residence in Wendover, has an extensive knowledge of the buildings and takes great interest in their antiquity. I have to thank him also for many helpful suggestions during the progress of the work. Mr. Theakston was not engaged professionally, but readily volunteered his assistance, on hearing of the discoveries revealed by the dismantling of the house.

It will be seen by the plan, from which all modern partitions have been omitted from no. 2, that the whole house consisted of two timber-frame sections, the larger one, on the east (no. 1) being 34 ft. by 20 ft., and that on the west (no. 2) 25 ft. by 20 ft., the eastern portion having chimney-breasts at either end, while the smaller has one on the west side only. These measurements do not include the passage-way between the two, which is 5 ft. 6 in. wide.

It is a matter of conjecture as to whether these two sections were originally separate structures with a passage between, as Mr. Theakston suggests, and only came to be united under one roof at a later period. Although there seems some probability of

¹ The shading of the walls to indicate their date is a temerity for which I must be held responsible.

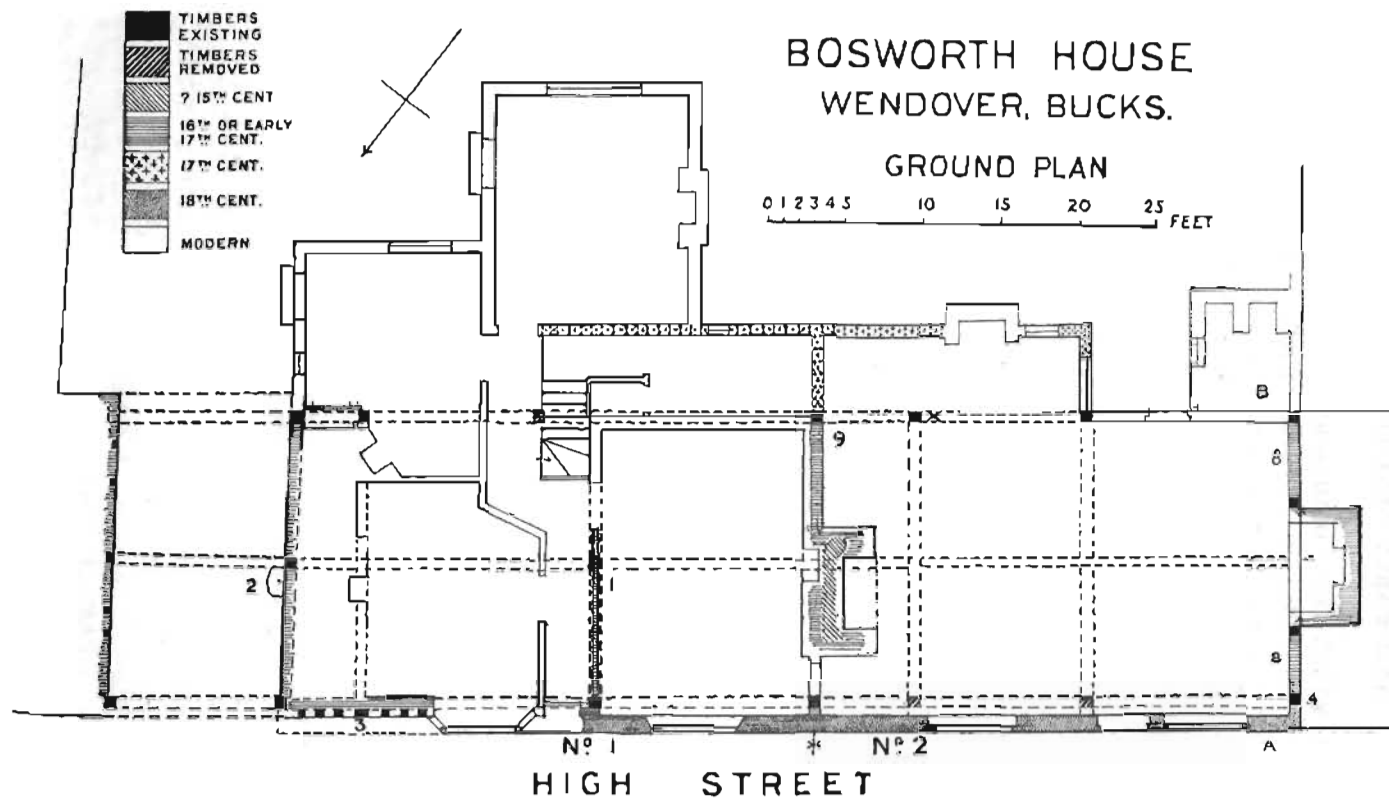


FIG. 3

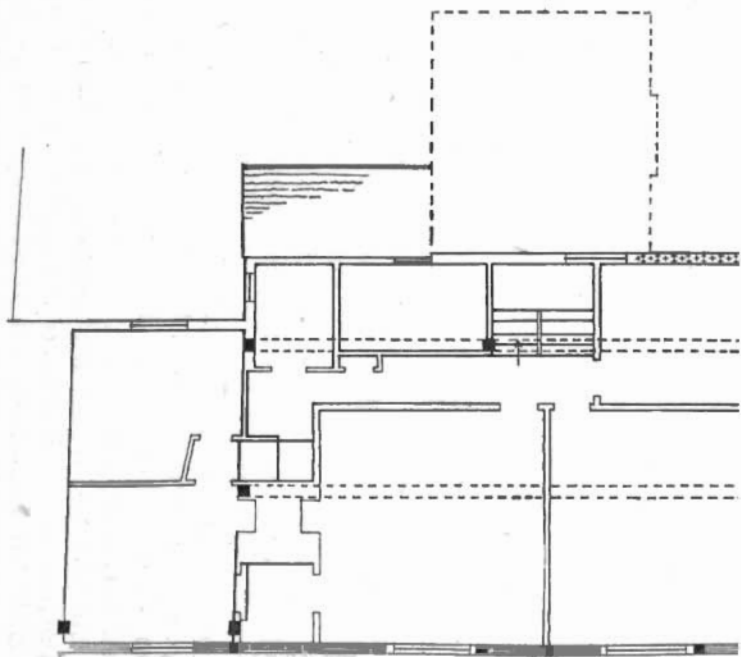
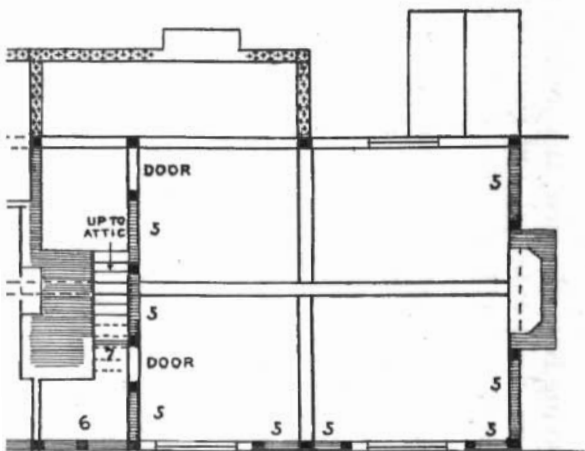


FIG. 4

UPPER FLOOR



this having been the case, the timbers show no evidence of having been external, but some of these might have been re-placed or re-dressed when the two houses were joined.

For the present purpose it will be sufficient to deal with the building as it stands. Of No. 1 it is not possible to say much, with certainty, as the evidence was mainly lost during its alteration in 1923. It seems, however, to have been the more important portion of the house, of which No. 2 formed an annex of some special character.

Modern additions and alterations to No. 2 proved less serious than we had feared, consisting of the insertion of a central staircase and the dividing up of the floors with light partitions so as to form a sufficient number of rooms, but which otherwise caused little alteration.

Among the points revealed by the clearance of these modern excrescences, the statement of the Royal Commission that the house was 'almost entirely refronted with modern brick,' proved incorrect. The lower storey front was re-built probably in the eighteenth century, so as to support the 'over-sail' of the upper storey which formerly ran the whole length of the range, but now only remains for a few feet adjoining the gateway (3 on plan, Fig. 3).

The supporting beam, marking the original face of the lower storey, was found in the west wall and is now a foot within the room (4 on plan, Fig. 3, and Fig. 5). The brick filling of the upper storey was intact except for the alteration of the windows. At the back is a small projection which probably formed the evidence on which the Commission based the 'small central wing.' On the Post Office side a corresponding structure had been enclosed by a nineteenth-century addition, but, so far as No. 2 was concerned, this appeared to have formed part of the original structure and may, at first, have been an open entrance to the back staircase. The timbers of this portion were somewhat weathered, but it was apparently bricked up and enclosed at an early period. There was no evidence of this ever having been anything

more important. The original sill, or horizontal beam at ground floor level, into which the upright posts of the structure were framed, was discovered under one of the posts. When the modern tile floor was removed for an alteration it was found that this sill had been cut off on either side of the post, leaving the remaining portion of the sill intact (x on plan, Fig. 3).

The roof may, perhaps, have been re-built and slightly raised, as it will be seen by the photograph, that the base of the central chimney-stack is now enclosed. This may have been done when

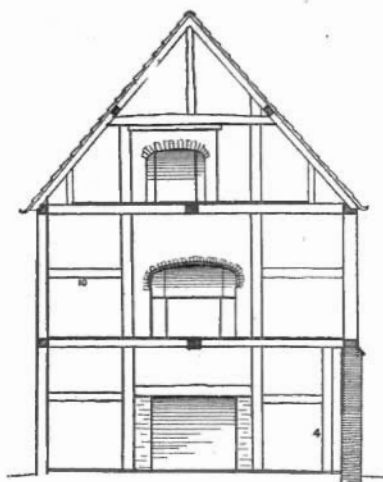


FIG. 5.

BOSWORTH HOUSE SECTION ON A—B

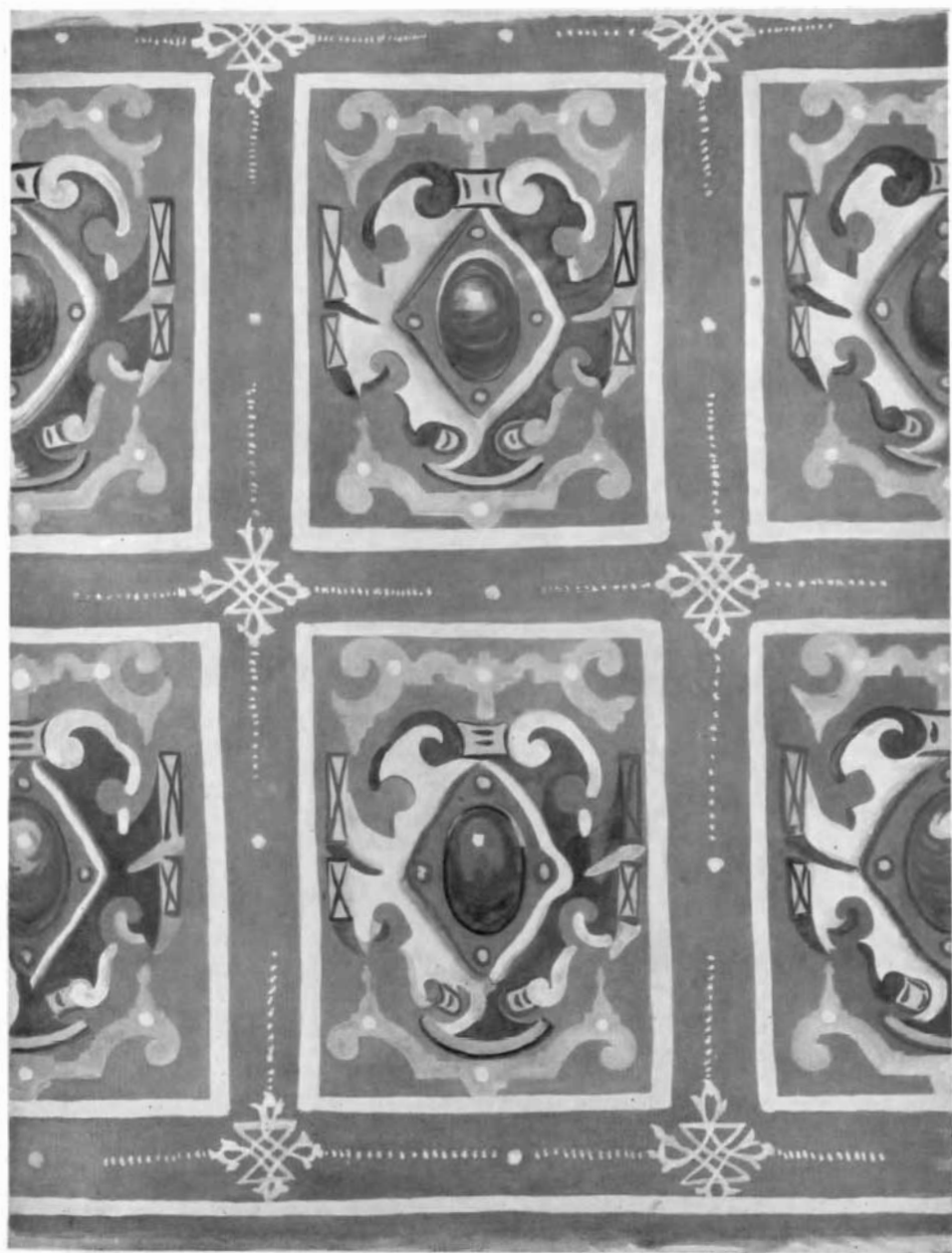
the two houses were joined and lends support to the view that they once existed as separate buildings. It was evident that no great alteration of the general structure had taken place since the whole had formed one house.

From evidence, which will follow, No. 2 seems to have consisted of one room only on the upper floor, with a passage on either floor connecting the two houses. On the upper floor a staircase, abutting on the central chimney-stack, and entered from the back, led to the attic or solar.

The east wall of the upper floor was covered with many thicknesses of wall-paper on stretched canvas. This is a condition that usually arouses suspicion of concealed panelling, and it so turned out in this case. When the wall-papers were stripped, oak panelling was found to extend the whole length of the wall, and had a nailed-up door blocking the passage which connected the two houses. The panelling, which appears to be of late seventeenth-century date, had received many coats of paint. Originally, it had been carried round the whole of the upper-floor and had remained so, until the house was divided, when the central partition was built against it. Still later, the panelling was taken down from all sides except the east, and was used to form the partition on the ground floor, as noticed by the Royal Commission. So as not to disturb the central partition, the wainscot had been sawn through on either side, leaving a narrow strip, a few inches wide, which still remains.

It was on taking down this panelling on the east wall, for re-erection on the ground floor, that the first wall-painting was discovered (Pl. ii ; 5 on plan, Fig. 4). The wall was merely a filling of wattle and daub, within the timbers of the frame. Over the surface, brought level with the face of the timbers, was a covering of fine hair plaster, and this had been elaborately painted and was in good preservation, the colours being bright and fresh. The design consisted of a series of panels of cartouche-ornaments, or strap-work shields studded with large gems brilliantly coloured blue and red (Pl. iii).

The panels were regularly disposed in two rows on a background of warm brown, with pretty vermicular rosettes and lines of dots in white. This had been surmounted with a frieze about 12 inches deep, but this was destroyed beyond recovery by a coating of lime-wash of a particularly pernicious character, which defied any attempt of scraping. The frieze was subsequently found on the other walls. After prolonged exposure to the air the details appeared through the limewash having the appearance of damask linen (Pl. v). The whole of the ornament occupied a



DETAIL OF PAINTING ON EAST WALL OF UPPER FLOOR, NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE ($\frac{1}{6}$)

depth of 4ft. 3 in., the lower portion of 3 ft. 3 in. is plain and was probably covered with a wainscot dado. The brown colour of the background had been carried right down in one portion and white 'setting-out' lines were ruled on it, which looks as if the original intention had been to carry down a further two rows of the cartouche panels.

In the portion near the front of the house the plaster surface was left untouched with the background colour just broken into it. This is shown in the photograph (Pl. ii) and a hole broken through the wall shows its wattle construction.

After the papers had been stripped from the other walls, painting of the same design could be traced right along the front and the west walls (5, 5 on plan, Fig. 4); but after the removal of the panelling it had been coated with lime-wash of the same evil description as that covering the frieze on the east wall. Evidently lime-wash was considered a sufficiently good covering of the walls for a considerable period, for the first wall-paper was comparatively modern and quite uninteresting, being a pulp of sage green, printed with a pattern in red and white. Between this and the second paper, some sheets of the *Christian Commonwealth*, of November, 1892, had been pasted in order to produce a more level surface, and this affords clear evidence that the wall-papers, in spite of their numbers, were quite a modern refinement.

The treatment of the painted ornament on the front wall differed from that on the sides, and produced valuable evidence as to the window arrangement. Instead of the panels being carried in two rows over the timbers, the artist adapted the design to the condition of his surface, and all the 'studs' were painted with a special vertical design of strap-work and jewels, with the exception of the lower portion which would have formed part of the wainscot dado.

Not only were these paintings on the face of the 'studs' flush with the wall-surface, but in the case of both those flanking the present window-opening, it was repeated on the opposing return-faces, showing that originally a bay-window must have filled the whole

space above the lower three feet, which is now partly bricked up to carry the smaller, more modern window. As this brick-work had got into bad condition it had to be taken out and thus gave a good opportunity of seeing the painting on the interior faces of the 'studs,' and also the mortice-holes of the supports of the original windows. The chamfers, also, of the jambs were stopped just above the position of the sill (Pl. iv, A).

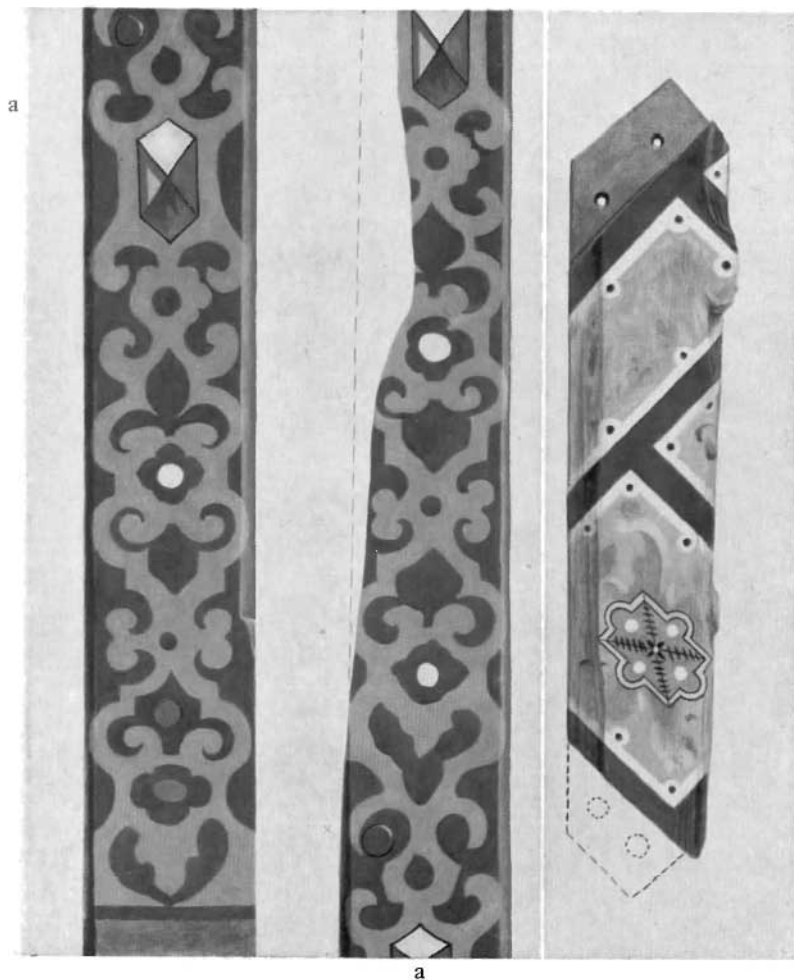
A further series of small lights occupied the top of the intervening spaces, between the other 'studs,' making a continuous window along the front of the house, just under the eaves. This is a not uncommon feature of half-timbered houses of the sixteenth century, a ready example being the Holborn front of Staple Inn. These smaller lights had been taken out and the spaces bricked up, probably when the bay-windows were altered. They were covered with plaster, on the inside, but it was clearly of a different period and none of them were painted. The method adopted by the wall-painter formed further proof that these small openings had been windows, for here the frieze had been brought down below the transom, leaving room only for one row of panels, while the transoms were ornamented with rosettes (Fig. 7).

The painting on the 'studs' had not suffered so badly from the lime-wash, which came away fairly easily and left the design to be made out both in form and colour (Pl. iv, A). It is very characteristic of the sixteenth century, being an ingenious arrangement of strap-work so as to form Tudor roses and fleur-de-lys with an occasional large jewel, faceted and brilliantly coloured.¹ The fleur-de-lys are placed alternately, one the natural way up, the other reversed, and it is interesting to see the difficulty the artist found in preserving the form of the inverted one, which gets so weirdly distorted that by itself it would be unrecognisable.

In the centre of the west wall was a fire-place of

¹ A painted door in similar style of strap-work and jewels is in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South

Kensington, simply labelled as English, sixteenth century.



Left : PAINTED UPRIGHT FROM NORTH WALL OF UPPER STOREY OF
NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE ($\frac{1}{8}$)

Right : PAINTED BRACE FROM GROUND FLOOR OF NO. 1 BOSWORTH
HOUSE ($\frac{1}{12}$)

mid nineteenth-century date, and it appeared as if in the insertion of this, the original face of the chimney-breast must have been re-built, since it bore no traces of the painting as did the wall on either side of it. However, on the removal of the fire-place in order to replace it with one of more modern type, a perfect Tudor moulded brick fire-place was discovered. It had the usual four-centred arch, which had sagged slightly at the crown but was otherwise intact (Pl. viii, A). The moulding of the bricks was a simple roll which was stopped almost at the top of the jamb. A more careful examination of the wall above showed that it had originally been coated with a plain, bright red wash, but not otherwise decorated. At some later time it had received a coat of lime-wash or white paint, and on this had been painted an inscription in black Gothic



FIG. 6. PAINTED INSCRIPTION ON FIREPLACE IN UPPER STOREY OF NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE

characters, which were not decipherable. At the side of this was the name 'Thomas,' written in black paint and in a seventeenth-century style. There was no indication of any further name. A tracing of this inscription is given on Fig. 6.

The finding of this fire-place is important as providing evidence for the date of the building, and it also confirms the opinion that the attic fire-place, above (Pl. xi, B), was of similar character and period. Although, in this case, only three bricks on the one side, and one on the other, of the original arch remained, the crown having fallen and been re-built with modern brick, I had previously expressed my belief that this was a Tudor fire-place.

Doubts were felt that the evidence was too slender, and apparently the Royal Commission were also of that opinion, as it omitted any mention of this one

fragment of definite antiquity which was open to view when their examination of the building was made.

The back wall of the upper floor had undergone so many changes that none of it appears to be in its original condition and no traces of the decoration were found here.

The ceiling of this floor covered all the timbers, and there is reason to consider that this was part of the original scheme.

It had been coated with paper but, on this being scaled off, it was found also to have been painted. So much had it undergone repair in the course of time, that it was not possible to recover the general design. This appeared to have been an arrangement of panels in imitation of the moulded ceiling of the period, as the outlines of the panels were formed of different shades as if to represent relief. Some of the panels were as large as four feet in diameter, but others were only half that size. They also varied in form, some being 10-sided, the smaller only 6—but in all cases the sides seemed to be scalloped.

Although so badly damaged, portions remained, here and there, sufficient to show that the ornamental fillings consisted of floral designs and diaper work, in a variety of rich colours, and executed with greater skill and refinement than that displayed on the wall.

The whole effect of the decoration of this large room must have been very rich and colourful, though, perhaps, rather bizarre, and suggests that it served some public use, such as a council chamber of some kind. I have endeavoured to give a restoration of the room in diagrammatic form, Fig. 7, which shows also the little lobby or passage connecting it with No. 1. This passage was evidently regarded as part of No. 1, being definitely screened off by the eastern wall of the upper floor of No. 2. On the other hand it will be seen by the plan that the stairs to the attic pass over the lobby and that the lobby is lit by one of the wing lights of a bay-window of No. 2. This little passage formed, in fact, a kind of 'no man's land,' and like the bordering provinces of great neighbouring countries, it has passed through many vicissitudes

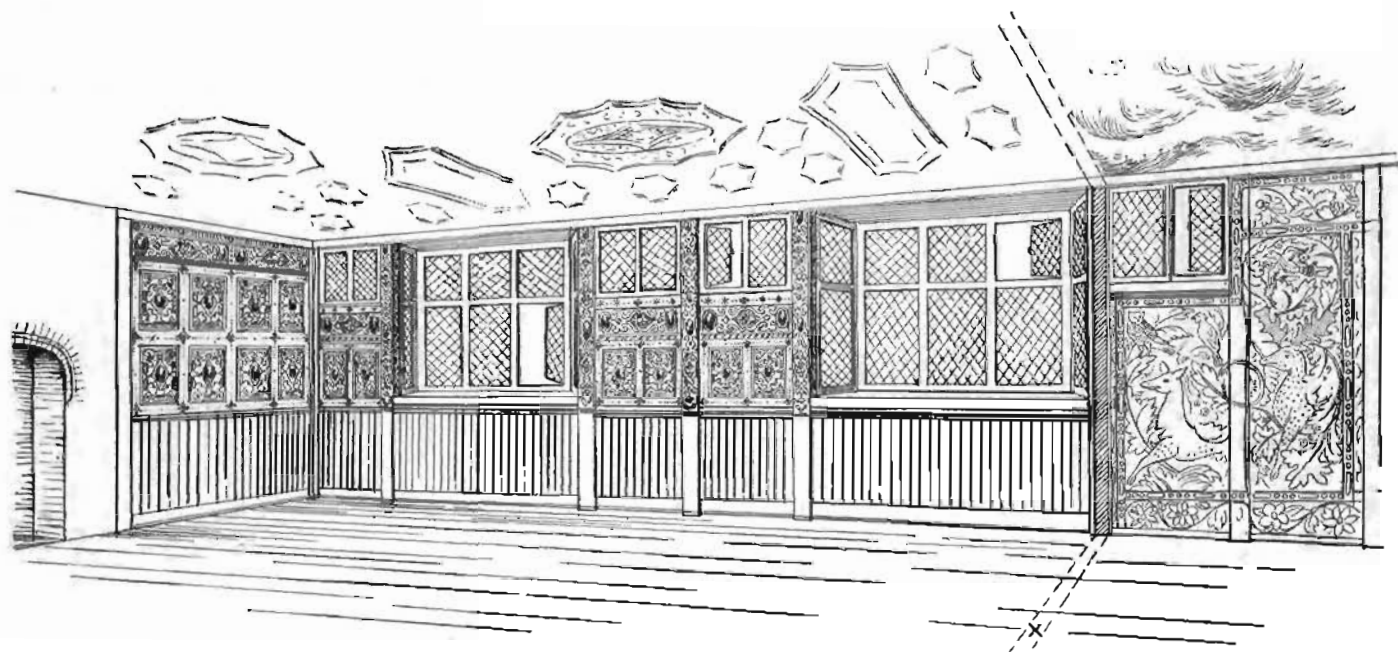


FIG. 7
RECONSTRUCTION OF UPPER FLOOR OF BOSWORTH HOUSE (X = site of partition removed for purposes of diagram)

and changed hands many times. For the last few years it has been nailed up on the one side and bricked up on the other for the greater security of the Post Office.

The little chamber thus formed (6 on plan, Fig. 4), 5 ft. 6 ins. by about 4 ft., was left shut off from the inmates of both houses, forgotten, perhaps, by all save the owner, who, having obtained the vacant possession of No. 2, thought the additional space would be useful to throw into the room. The nailed up door which gave entrance to the lobby was evidently no part of the original partition, but had been added when the wainscot was put up. It was not even made to fit its position but had to be cut and made up at the bottom. The cross timber was probably cut into at this time to give greater height. On this door being unfastened, another door was found nailed up at the back. This was of about the same period but its top panel was carved with two ornamented lunettes. It had formerly been fitted with 'cock's head' hinges; these had disappeared, but their marks were shown by the coating of white paint with which the whole had subsequently been covered. This door is shown in the photograph (Pl. ii, A), leaning against the panelling.

On being opened up, the chamber bore evidence of its having been used as a cupboard by No. 1, as it was fitted with clothes pegs, and its lime-washed sides had been pasted over with sheets of *The Bucks County Chronicle* of 1848-9, evidently to prevent the clothes from being soiled by the powdering of the lime-wash.

It seems a reasonable supposition that the date of the newspapers would indicate nearly the time that the passage was stopped by the nailing up of the doors, and if so, it would seem that the communication between the houses had been cut off, on the upper floor at least, some time before the western house was fitted up as a separate dwelling. In the process of stripping the newspapers much of the lime-wash came away in places, showing further painting on the plaster coating of the panels on the side formed by the front of the house. Fortunately a less intractable wash had been used on this portion of the walls, and it was possible



PAINTED FRIEZE OF DESIGN ILLUSTRATED IN PLATE III (A)



PAINTED PANELS IN UPPER STOREY, IN PASSAGE CONNECTING
NOS. 1 AND 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE

to remove it by scraping, although this was a lengthy and laborious task. Most of the colour had been burnt out by the lime, only earth-colours like burnt sienna and light-red remained except for occasional small patches. Little, therefore, was recovered save the 'setting out' or outline, which was boldly and freely drawn in black.

The work revealed in this connecting passage was of a quite different character from that just noticed, both in style and treatment. At the top was a frieze of 1 foot in depth, having a bold scroll of flowers and leaves. At the base was a similar pattern, forming a mere skirting of about the same size as the frieze. The whole of the intervening surface was filled with a conventionalised woodland scene, occupying two panels, and carried over the timber upright between them (Pl. vi).

The right-hand panel was the full height of the wall, 7 ft. 6 ins. and 2 ft. wide, having both frieze and skirting. The panel on the left was curtailed in height, by having at the top, the little window already mentioned. It was 2 ft. 6 ins. wide and 5 ft. high, including the skirting, but the frieze was omitted. In the right-hand panel was an antlered male of the fallow deer and, above him, a bird in flight, probably a pheasant. In the middle of the panel on the left was the doe, and in the corners above was an owl on the left, and a crested bird on the right. Entwined between and around these animal forms were very graceful, conventional foliage and flowers. This composition was framed by a narrow jewelled band or fillet which, together with a simple band of dark red from the top of the frieze, was brought down the edge of the 'stud' and carried along the transom so as to form the frame of the left-hand portion of the painting. This provides a further proof that the little top panel was formerly a window, the transom having been the sill. The condition also of the painting under this window was not so sharp and distinct as the adjoining panel, which looks as if it had suffered from the effects of weather.

Sufficient traces were found to show that the

whole design had been coloured, though possibly in sober low tones. The body of the doe was red-brown, but only the antlers of the buck bore much distinct trace of colour.

The feathers of the owl had been elaborately pricked out in red-brown. This colour, which is probably burnt sienna, is of a transparent nature and seems to have sunk into the plaster and been little affected by the lime-wash. It occurs also on the foliage, to give modelling and veining. The foliage was also painted in body colour of shades of green, but the colour was mostly killed by the lime and came away in the scraping. Some of the flowers that had been thickly painted still showed some crimson and purple. Several of the jewels in the border had remains which showed that they had been brilliant red and blue.

Opposite this remarkable piece of work was a plaster panel, formed on a background of laths and fitted in the space under the stairs (7 on Plan, Fig. 4).

It had received some damage and was covered with the inevitable coating of lime-wash. The lower portion had been broken away, as was a portion of the left side. This was done, no doubt, when the chimney-breast, against which it rested, was thickened during the alterations incidental to the separating of the two houses. At this time the panel appears to have been taken out and cut down to fit its more restricted quarters. Enough remains, however, to show that the design was of the same description as that on the wall fronting it, only it consisted entirely of foliated ornament. Apparently this obscure corner was not considered worthy of much elaboration, as, although the drawing was boldly executed, the setting out was faulty and the plaster-surface had not been carefully prepared (A, Pl. vii).

The ceiling of this little chamber was also painted, with a representation of the sky, having somewhat threatening clouds of dark grey, which were in places tinged with pink and rather suggested a gathering storm (B, Pl. vii).



A. PAINTED PANEL IN UPPER STOREY UNDER STAIRCASE
IN PASSAGE BETWEEN NOS. 1 AND 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE



B. PAINTED CEILING OF SAME PASSAGE



A. FIREPLACE IN WEST WALL OF UPPER STOREY, NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE



B. FIREPLACE AND PAINTED WEST WALL IN LOWER STOREY,
NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE

It now remains to describe the ground floor. Here, the walls had also been decorated, but, owing to the various alterations, little of the original surface remained. The front had been rebuilt, while the east side consisted mainly of the passage and the central chimney-breast. Until the conversion of No. 2 into a separate dwelling the ground floor had only the fireplace in the west wall. The division of this floor necessitated the opening of the back of the central stack, which hitherto had been open only to No. 1. In the recent operations this was again opened up and the flues exposed, showing plainly the alteration of the original arrangement. The additional flue had necessitated the thickening and rebuilding which has been noted on the floor above. It was also disclosed that even at the time of the erection of the house as it now stands, presumably about the middle of the 16th century, this central chimney-breast was only a re-building and enclosed in the lower portion, an earlier one of chalk blocks and thin tiles. The result of these changes was that no trace of the original wall-surface was left on the east, and the back, also, had been altered, as on the floor above. It was, therefore, only on the west side that any of the original wall surface was found. (8-8, on plan, Fig. 3). On both sides of the large open fireplace and over the top of it, painted plaster was disclosed under wall-papers and many coatings of lime-wash. During the long service of this room as a farm-house kitchen, the walls had been much damaged by nails for utensils, while steam and general rough usage had done much deadly work. It seemed a hopeless task to recover any semblance of its original character, and my efforts were several times abandoned; but finally one portion on the left of the fireplace yielded sufficient detail to obtain the general scheme and a fair amount of colour (B, Pl. viii).

At the top was a frieze, 1 ft. 3 ins. in depth, which was filled with bold rounded forms, which suggest fruit and vegetables, but so indefinite was the actual detail that I could do no more than copy it as exactly as possible and leave its interpretation to others.

The rest of the space was occupied by three rows of architectural wall-niches, varying slightly in size, but generally about 1 ft. 6 ins. high and a little over a foot in width. These were set about 3 inches apart in a wall-surface represented with various architectural embellishments, which were in a quasi-classic style. The coving of the niches was shown by shading in red-brown and each niche had in it a conventional floral arrangement. Only one of these was sufficiently well preserved to give the idea of the design. This was of three groups of three four-petaled flowers, coloured red at the tips, and with white centres. The stems and leaves, which only faintly remained, were disposed in a very graceful and pleasing manner. The design in each niche was different and, so far as could be judged, showed much inventive skill. The wall-space on the other side of



FIG. 8

PAINTING ON CEILING ON LOWER FLOOR OF
NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE

the fire-place being a little narrower, the artist had contented himself with two niches in the row, but made them a little wider. The panel over the fire-place was too damaged to indicate the design, but the surviving fragments showed it to have been in rich and varied colouring. In the drawing (Pl. x) I have endeavoured to show the general scheme, and the detail in colour on Plate ix.

This room did not appear originally to have been ceiled. A modern ceiling had been fastened to



DETAIL OF PAINTED WEST WALL IN LOWER STOREY OF NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE ($\frac{1}{6}$)

the rafters, leaving the beams exposed, but this has now been removed.

The little apartment at the back, which may originally have been the entrance to the stairs, marked 9 on plan (Fig. 3), had a ceiling which had been decorated in the corners with a trident (Fig. 8) in flat brown, and although having the appearance of a stencilled pattern, it seems to be hand-painted, as the brush has slipped beyond the boundary in forming the cross-bar.

Below the present brick paving of the fireplace large rough stones were found, evidently the original hearth.

Judging by the inner core of the western fireplace of No. 1, there is reason to think that the present building is more in the nature of a re-building of an earlier house.

Whether No. 2 was already existing and merely connected with No. 1 at this time, or whether No. 2 is to be regarded as an entirely new extension, is a question difficult to decide. The Tudor fireplace on the upper floor of No 2 may perhaps be taken as the best evidence of the period of that building, but it cannot be closely dated. Whether the brick fillings of the front are also of the same age as the fireplace is uncertain. They may have replaced an earlier wattle-and-daub filling, but there was no evidence of this on the timbers, and as the bricks of the fillings were of similar description to those of the fireplace, there seems little reason to doubt that both were of the same period. This would appear to indicate the time the buildings were connected.¹

The date at which the paintings were executed is hardly possible to determine within narrow limits, but it seems probable that all of them fall into the period of the latter part of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth centuries. They are not necessarily of the age of the building, and there is indeed some reason to regard them as of slightly different dates.

¹ The manorial map of 1620, on which all the houses of the village are shown in elevation, Bosworth House appears as a group of build-

ings, which do not well agree with the present plan. Doubtless the representation on the map, however, is in any case merely symbolical.

In the case of the upper floor, there was an indication of there having been an earlier scheme of such decoration. This was on the west wall, on the left side of the fireplace, where the painted plaster had been carried over the transom, completely hiding it from view (10, Fig. 5). When the plaster was removed, in order to expose the timber, it was found that this had previously been painted a dark bronze-blue and had two bands of orange colour running horizontally along its length.

It is, of course, possible that this was a re-used timber and was already painted when fixed in its present position. No other evidence of former painting was detected in any other part.

The internal evidence of the ornament itself does not help to define the chronology further. The decoration of the upper floor has the general characteristics of the time of Queen Elizabeth, to which the fleur-de-llys and the Tudor roses on the studs may give support. The main motif is the cartouche, which had, however, a long range, exceeding the Elizabethan period in both directions. True, I know of no similar arrangement of cartouche-panels in any wall-painting, but there are some examples in carving, such as on the front of Paul Pindar's House (1610) which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. What would appear to be a similar instance is that referred to by the Rev. Canon Wheatley, in his paper on 'Boley Hill, Rochester, after the Roman Period.'¹ In an old house now called 'Trevine' a large portion of decorated panelling was discovered. One of the panels is figured and it is said to be 'one of a number,' but no indication is given of their arrangement.

The ground-floor decoration was evidently painted by a different hand and may possibly be a little later in date than those of the upper floor. Although the architectural frame-work in which the niches are set was rather carelessly drawn, the floral fillings showed considerable skill, variety and sense of beauty in design. A painting on almost identical lines to this is in South Kensington Museum. It is a door from

¹ *Arch. Cant.* xli, 127-141.



RESTORATION OF PAINTED WEST WALL IN LOWER STOREY OF NO. 2 BOSWORTH HOUSE



A. STOUP OR FONT UNDER GATEWAY AT EAST END OF
NO. 1 BOSWORTH HOUSE



B. SIXTEENTH-CENTURY FIREPLACE (ARCH LARGELY REBUILT)
IN ATTIC

Coopersale House, Epping, a building mainly of late seventeenth-century date but including both earlier and later features.¹ The floral designs in this are, however, much more naturalistic and less delicate and graceful than those of Bosworth House. The date attributed to the Epping example is the seventeenth century, which is merely conjectural and does not, therefore, help our problem.

The painting of the connecting passage on the upper floor of No. 2 is of a very different description to the others, and possesses much greater artistic merit. No similar work, so far as I can find, has been discovered in domestic wall-painting. While being of well developed Renaissance character it cannot be said to be either Italian or Holbeinesque. It seems probable that it is the work of a local artist, who had learnt his craft in a good school and had developed his native talent on original lines. The foliage is powerfully drawn, with much freedom and variety of line and detail, while his animal forms, although far from faultless, show a great advance on most of the works of this description.

Although somewhat conventionalised, the deer are drawn with sufficient accuracy and observation of detail to show the species intended, and similarly the birds can mostly be identified. There is nothing of the grotesqueness which one sees in that elaborate and ambitious painting at the Old Flushing Inn, at Rye, which has been fully recorded by Mr. P. M. Johnson,² while the painting at Shelly Hall, Ongar, recorded by Miller Christy,³ is by comparison simply barbarous, both as regards the representation of a bird, or the floral ornamentation. This being of the same modest class of work as the Bosworth House painting, forms a better comparison.

Although little more than the original setting-out lines have been recovered, it is sufficient to show that the design was of great richness and beauty, while possessing breadth and restraint. It is interesting to

¹ Roy. Commission on Hist. Monuments, Essex Central and S.W., p. 61.

² *Sussex Arch. Coll.* 1 (1907), 117-124.

³ *Essex Arch. Soc. Trans.* xii (1911), Figs. 1 and 2.

observe how the main curves were carried right through and afterwards clothed and broken with overlapping leaves, which were evidently painted with body-colour so as to disguise the main line in these parts. In some cases, also, it could be seen that the leaves had been lightly sketched as entire before being divided up as partite leaves. In this way the flow of natural growth has been admirably and pleasingly expressed. The treatment is quite conventional, various kinds of leaves growing from the same stem, but they grow naturally and vigorously. It may not be possible to recognise them as of definitely known plants, but it may at least be said that they are all such as nature might have grown and such as nature would certainly not scorn to have produced. Among the interesting little conceits in which the artist has indulged, is the attempt to conventionalise blossoms gone to seed, balls of pappus, rendered in a novel and effective manner, which reveals his knowledge and observation of nature (Pl. vii, A). The idea underlying this decoration seems to be an impression of the teeming life and varied growth of the woodland.

In point of time, this painting seems to be somewhat later than those of the two floors of No. 2. It has many points of resemblance to the tapestries and embroideries of the early seventeenth century, in the treatment both of the animals and of the ornament. The frieze and skirting of equal size and character also correspond to the border usually carried round the tapestries, although the vertical borders in the painting are treated differently.¹ The use also of lath and plaster suggests a later date than the wattle and daub of the east wall of the upper floor of No. 2.

There were indications that this work was continued beyond the passage so that this painting appears to be a portion only, and a quite subordinate part, of the decoration of the upper floor of No. 1. The main portion may therefore still be concealed beneath wall-paper and whitewash, and be discovered at some future time. It is much to be hoped when oppor-

¹ Mr. Martin Hardie suggests that there is oriental influence shown in this work.

tunity occurs, that every effort will be made to recover further work of this artist, who well deserves recognition as 'The little Master of Wendover,' and be given a place beside the two other ancient worthies, Roger and Richard of Wendover.

Mr. Wood deserves thanks for the public spirit he has shown, not only in allowing every facility for the record of the work, but also for freely presenting portions of the cartouch panels to the following museums :—

The Victoria and Albert, South Kensington.

The Bucks Arch. Soc. Museum, Aylesbury.

The timber brace (Pl. iv, right), the panel (Pl. vii, A), the piece of ceiling Fig. 8), have also been presented to Aylesbury.