TUDOR MURAL PAINTINGS IN THE LESSER HOUSES IN BUCKS

By FRANCIS W. READER

Since the publication of the discovery of mural paintings at Bosworth House, Wendover[1], a considerable number of such works in mid and south Bucks has been brought to my notice by the kindly interest of local residents. By this means I have fortunately been able to obtain records of several new discoveries, and details of others that have been more or less known but have not yet been adequately described.

The little town of Amersham has been the most fruitful source. There, examples have occurred in four different houses, in each of which the walls of two or more rooms have been found to have been decorated in this manner, while I have heard of three or four other cases where paintings apparently of a similar character have been destroyed without record.

In Aylesbury, at the Crown Hotel, an exceptional find has been made of three super-imposed paintings of widely different periods. At the 'King's Head,' also, some fragmentary evidence has been brought to light, while in what was formerly the White Horse Inn a wall-painting of ornamental foliage and bearing inscriptions in black letter, which had been exposed to view for many years, has, on the conversion of the building into the British Legion Headquarters, been obliterated with distemper and, so far as I can find, quite without record.

During the investigation of the recent discoveries, what appears to have been a fine example, with a frieze of black-letter inscriptions, was disclosed in redecorating an old house at Great Missenden ; but, in spite of all the interest that had been aroused locally,

[1] *Arch. Journ.* LXXXVII, 71–97 (1930). *Records of Bucks*, XII, 225–238 (1931).

this was at once destroyed or covered up again without record, and my only information was obtained from one of the workmen employed.

No new discoveries have been reported from the north of the county, but this may be owing to a scarcity of observers in this district.

Details of an example at Granborough have been obtained, owing to the kindness of the owner, Mr. J. R. Parsons, who is a resident of Aylesbury. This has, however, been formerly known and is briefly mentioned in the Royal Commission's Report.[1]

Among the many helpers who have so kindly assisted me in making this record, I am particularly indebted to Mr. Clive Rouse for the details of several examples from the south of the county—Stoke Poges, Chalfont St. Peters and Jordans. In addition to this, I have to thank Mr. Rouse for much friendly co-operation at Amersham and Aylesbury in helping in the recovery of the paintings from the layers of lime-wash with which most of them are covered, and for the drawings and photographs acknowledged to him; also Mr. T. P. Oakley, the Senior Assistant of Dr. Challoner's Grammar School, and his son, Mr. Kenneth Oakley, for information, photographs and other material help at Amersham, and to the Curator of the County Museum at Aylesbury, Mr. Edwin Hollis, who has kept me informed of matters at Aylesbury and elsewhere.

Before describing the various examples in detail it may be useful to give a brief general review of this little understood and much neglected subject, concerning which a great deal of confusion appears to have arisen. This is hardly surprising in view of the varied and conflicting statements which have been made by many of those who have undertaken the description of isolated examples. Thus we find them referred to as exceptional and curious examples of ancient art, perhaps the work of some itinerant artist possessed of no other means of paying for his board and lodging. Frequently their artistic merit is judged from the standard of the easel picture without any regard to

[1] *Bucks*, vol. 2, p. 120.

their purpose and position, and condemned as unworthy of notice. In some cases they have been treated patronisingly and apologetically as possessing a secondary interest on account of some detail ; but very rarely have they received sympathetic recognition, or their true character been understood.

Throughout the Middle Ages, not only churches, but secular buildings were decorated with mural paintings. There was, however, no character which distinguished such work from the purely ornamental work in churches, as we can see from the rare examples that have survived and from drawings and prints. Moreover, the use of wall-painting in secular buildings was, as a rule, restricted to the less important rooms, wall hangings and panelling being customary in the principal rooms, at any rate of the wealthier houses.

Tudor mural painting is distinguished by its freedom from tradition, whether ecclesiastical or otherwise. It was a distinct craft of the people of the middle and trading classes—the farmer, the artizan and all those who shared the growth of prosperity of the period, and, fired by the New Learning, developed a desire for greater domestic comfort and luxury than had been customary in the Middle Ages. This development began in early Tudor times and only reached its full development in the time of Elizabeth.

Henry VIII encouraged the building of private houses, but these were mainly those of the wealthy. After the Dissolution the plight of the painters, deprived of their great patron—the Church—must have been deplorable. The demand for domestic mural painting could not then have been sufficient to absorb their energies, even had the painters of saints and dooms been capable of adapting their talents to purely secular purposes. They appear to have disappeared as completely as the works they had accomplished were obliterated. They trained no followers, and with them traditional art was buried.

The great demand for domestic mural painting came to a later generation. The new men arose with the new needs. Unlike their predecessors, who worked under strict rules laid down by a corporate body, the

sixteenth-century painter had as patrons a vast, diverse mass of individuals largely lacking cultivation of taste, influenced by a revulsion of feeling against convention and mysticism, but possessed of a strong desire for realism.

This interesting change of thought and conditions was not one of transition, but was a complete break with the past, followed by a gradual development on new lines, which resulted in an extraordinary variety of ornament largely distinct from anything accomplished during the Gothic periods, and displaying much inventive skill and play of fancy. In no sense is it a degradation of the work that preceded it, as is often asserted.

The sources of inspiration of the new style were numerous, and while much of it is original and native, there is also some foreign influence, which is often rather an adaptation than an adoption, perhaps the result of imperfect training and scarcity of good models. Some of the designs are excellent examples of Italian Renaissance, but frequently they are coarse and clumsy, and seem to show that this style did not readily take root in this country.

Although surviving examples in this style are too few to admit of any definite conclusion, there appears some reason to think that in the earlier period these 'arabesques' were mostly in white on a solid black background: later, that they were more usually in black outline on a white ground and sometimes relieved with colour. That work in this style should be mostly in plain black, suggests its having been derived from engravings.

Our native craftsmen achieved greater success with floral ornament treated in a more or less naturalistic manner and painted in rich and brilliant colours. Some of these are just a flowing expanse of floral growth in which a wealth of colour, rather than form, seems to have been the aim. Designs of this nature may be regarded as an original native product, and have persisted to our own time. A common variant of this is to entwine the floral ornament in a geometric arrangement of strap-like borders, which seem in some cases

to be based on oriental and other fabrics. Another scheme of rich, colourful ornament is the division of the main surface into rectangular panels, or coved niches, filled with cartouche and other ornaments in imitation of the elaborately carved wood panelling of the larger houses. Representations of tapestry and other hangings, suspended between columns of classic character, also appear to have been borrowed from the methods of decoration employed by the wealthier classes.

In figure-subjects there is a strange assortment, representing classical deities and legends, biblical and apocryphal stories, etc., which at first sight may excite wonderment at the wide reading of the people of Tudor times. This choice of subject, however, as Miss M. V. Taylor has pointed out to me, was not inspired by love of literature, but indicates the popularity of the sister-art—the drama, now also enjoying its full freedom from the domination of the Church, and also the enthusiasm for pageantry at this period. Many of these compositions are framed in an architectural setting which seems to represent the proscenium of a theatre.

Some of the biblical scenes may have reflected the patron's piety, of which the 'Adam and Eve' in the following Bucks series, with all its barbarity of drawing, may be an example (Pl. xxiii, 3).

So far as the lesser houses are concerned, there is an entire absence of anything of an historical nature. The designs are distinctly homely and a mere reflex of what appealed to the ordinary people in their every-day life—their gardens, amusements and sports.

The temperament and religious feeling of the owner may sometimes be indicated by the inscription of biblical texts or virtuous mottoes. The brevity and vanity of human life is a favourite theme, which is treated with flippant quips by the light-hearted, and by the sober-minded with solemn injunctions, while very commonly exhortations to charity and righteous living are enjoined as the duty of all.

Owing to the friable nature of this work, it is only removed with difficulty, and such fragments as find their way into a museum are mostly too incomplete

to make attractive specimens or tell the whole story. The painting is best seen in the position for which it was designed, and fortunately some examples have been preserved in this way, of which two notable instances are easily accessible :—The Painted Room, no. 3, Cornmarket, Oxford, which has been preserved owing to the public spirit of Mr. E. W. Attwood, the principal of Messrs. Hookham & Co. ; also the White Swan Hotel, at Stratford-on-Avon, where are some representations of scenes from the story of Tobit and the Angel. These, with the usual discrimination displayed by Trust Houses, Ltd., have been preserved with every care. Both of these examples have been treated under the direction of Mr. P. M. Johnston and have been recently described by him.[1]

One great character of this work is, that it is based on a definite scheme. The craftsman considered his spaces and designed his decoration to suit the circumstances and position. In most cases the wall-surface was divided into the three areas known to us as frieze, filling and dado. This last is sometimes painted, but more often it seems to have been of wainscot, and is sometimes reduced to a mere skirting.

The painted pattern is often carried over the timber uprights or ' studs,' or it may be confined to the panel of plaster, the timbers being decorated as a frame. Occasionally, even the plaster is painted to represent extra timbers. An instance of this from the Monastery House, at Ipswich, can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

A great feature is the difference of treatment of an unbroken wall from that of one which is cut up by windows. In the latter, the ornament is adapted to fit the irregular spaces, while the harmony of style is preserved. It is not clipped, as if with scissors, as is done with material at so much per yard. Even in the smaller houses, not only the walls and timbers, but the ceilings were painted, but it is more difficult to find traces of the latter, owing to constant renewal and repair. There is little doubt that this practice of interior decoration of the ordinary houses was, by the middle

[1] *Journ. B.A.A.* xxxvii, n.s., 75–100.

of the sixteenth century and for a considerable time after, as generally employed as are wall-papers in more recent times. Proof of this is afforded by the number of instances that have been discovered during the last two or three years in so small a town as Amersham. At the time when mural painting was most in vogue it is easy to see that so extensive an industry must have engaged the painters more than all the other branches of the work put together.

It is in London that we should naturally expect to find the works of the highest merit, but alas ! they were almost entirely wiped out in the Great Fire, when, also, two wall-paintings by Holbein, in the Hall of the Steelyard, perished. All that are known to have survived are two fine panels, still preserved in Carpenters' Hall, which are of mid sixteenth-century date.[1] Doubtless there were others in those parts which escaped the fire, but they were destroyed during the equally devastating changes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The records of the Painter-Stainers' Guild of the City of London throw a good deal of light on the matter and of the conduct of the craft, so far at least as London is concerned.[2] The scope of work, of this Guild was very wide, extending from house-work to portraiture, and including the painting of house-signs, painted cloths, the Lord Mayor's barge, the City Conduits, etc.

In 1523 the Guild showed signs of growing importance and for some years they appear to have enjoyed prosperity. Their bye-laws contained the usual stipulations and penalties for the conduct and control of the trade, including the exclusion from the calling of all incompetent persons. Apprentices were bound for a space of seven years or more. ' Parties of the Yeomen of the Company were abroad to make due search for all and singular, the works, the paintings, the tinctures, etc., not only of Freeman but of all others

[1] Roy. Com. Hist. Mons., *London*

[2] *Hist. of the Twelve Gt. Livery Cos. of London*, by Wm. Herbert, 1837. *The Livery Cos. of the City of London*, by W. Carew Hazlitt, 1892. *The Painter-Stainers Company, by* W. Hayward Pitman.

outside the Company, and to judge if such were well or ill done, and if the latter, to condemn, to seize and to take away, and the said offenders to punish and correct.'

The jurisdiction of the Company was limited to two miles from the City. Similar regulations were made in other cities and no doubt affected, to some extent, the more remote parts of the country.

However good these regulations may have been, they appear to have been subject to constant evasion and the troubles of the Company were numerous. Towards the end of the sixteenth century these increased and the Company petitioned the Queen 'to give aid and assistance to them,' with the result that they were first granted their charter in 1581. Their prosperity still declined, and in 1603 they had a particular grievance against the Plasterers, who, they said—'exercised the mystery of a painter whereby much bad work was wrought to the detriment of the King and his subjects.' By an act of James I, the Plasterers were restricted to the use of six colours, 'mingled with size only, and not with oil,' and were forbidden the use of varnish 'either mixed with the paint or as a glazing.' Even these arbitrary restrictions of the Plasterers appear to have failed in reviving the former good fortune of the Painter Stainers.

Stow, in his Survey of London, makes a very definite statement which shows the Painters to have fallen on very evil days, as early as 1598. Under the description of Queenhithe Ward, he says :—'In Trinity lane on the west side thereof, is Painter-Stainer's Hall, for so of old time were they called, but now that workmanship of staining is departed out of use in England.'

There is no reason to doubt that there is a truth of some sort underlying this explicit statement by Stow, and it becomes perfectly understandable if we recognise that wall-decoration by painting and the painted cloth was a general and almost universal practice which towards the end of the sixteenth century was a spent force. The tide of fashion turned in favour of severe simplicity; the glowing colour and richness of

Tudor times was succeeded by cold Puritanism, plain panelling and whitewash. Evidences of this change are abundant.

Nearly all the examples of this mural painting known to us have been found preserved behind seventeenth-century panelling. The greater number of them were buried in whitewash, but their remains have rarely been sought, yet, when looked for, are frequently found.

The new fashion had probably become established in London when Stow wrote. But for him 'England' did not extend far beyond the city walls. Fashions moved slowly in those early times, and the work of the mural painter still lingered on in country districts, although, as a special craft, it was languishing and finally ceased. The term 'Tudor,' for this work, is therefore appropriate and justified, for although the craft continued into Jacobean times, it was not as a natural product, but merely as a survival of the earlier period.

The allusions by Shakespeare to both the painted wall and the painted cloth afford evidence of how extensive these crafts were in his days.[1]

Shakespeare makes an amusing allusion to them in 'Love's Labours Lost,' Act V, Sc. 2, when Costard says to Sir Nathaniel :—

'You will be scraped out of the painted cloth for this.'

Again in 'Henry IV,' Pt. I, Act IV, Sc. 2, Falstaff says '. . . slaves as ragged as Lazarus in the painted cloth, when the glutton's dogs licked his sores'; and in the same play, Pt. II, Act II, Sc. 2, the hostess bewails :—

'I must be fain to pawn both my plate, and the tapestry of my dining-chambers.'

[1] The painted cloth or 'steyned hanging,' has not come down to us. It is frequently mentioned in inventories and wills, and was a craft of sufficient importance for Queen Elizabeth to encourage by the restriction of the importation of such things from abroad.

Falstaff makes this disparagement :—

'Glasses, glasses, is the only drinking: and for thy walls—a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or the German hunting in water-work, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings, and these fly-bitten tapestries."

This has sometimes been taken to refer to the painting on the plaster surface, but this was not usually done in 'water work' but by the medium of oil and varnish, as is shown, not only by the work itself, but by the order of James I to the Plasterers, referred to above.

The painted cloth would seem to have been a cheap substitute for tapestry, and was probably something more ambitious in character than the commoner painting which was done directly on the wall. An allusion to the latter is made by Shakespeare in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,'[1] the Host of the Inn says to Simple :—

'There's his chamber, his house, his castle, his standing-bed and truckle-bed; 'tis painted about with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new.'

The question of the quality of the work is a somewhat complicated matter, which is rendered the more difficult by the scarcity of recorded examples.

Fortunately, it is not the primary duty of an archaeologist to extol or select antiquities on artistic grounds, but to collect and record them, as accurately as possible, whether they be good or bad, together with the conditions in which they occur. A few detached fragments, viewed at close quarters in the cold surroundings of a museum, are apt to create a prejudice against such works on aesthetic grounds. Each case should, however, be considered as an entire scheme, in relation to the position for which it was designed. It was naturally not work on which high finish was either necessary or called for, and, in execution, it was dashed in boldly, with breadth and freedom if also with a certain crudeness.

The craftsmen employed may have been of local

[1] Act IV, Sc. 5.

origin and ill-trained, or they may have been highly-trained men sent by a master painter from the town. Of their artistic training we know little, but they appear to have availed themselves of any models that came to hand, including the printed book, the illustrations of which were frequently rather crude and elementary. Some of them travelled and received training on the Continent.

Perhaps the most important task for the apprentice's education in the mystery of painting, was the preparation of his materials. Even in this matter the sixteenth-century painter seems to have failed to learn fully from his predecessors. The English painters of the fifteenth century had earned a European reputation for the excellence of their colours. In the sixteenth century there is a notable deterioration in this respect, and some pigments in former use remained to be re-discovered in the seventeenth century.[1] In spite of this, many of their colours were very good and have retained their brilliance in a remarkable manner.

After the decline of Tudor mural painting, there was a long period of dreary barrenness, so far as can be judged from the number of houses that have been examined in Bucks, whether in the farm-houses or in the houses of the towns. Except for panelling, which was of a plain order, walls were treated only with successive layers of lime-wash, varied merely in tint, sometimes by means of a flat coat of oil-paint. This appears to have been the great general rule, but rare and exceptional cases of ornamental painting have occurred down to the present time.

Indeed during the eighteenth-century wave of classic enthusiasm, when so many foreign artists were imported to decorate the mansions of the wealthy, the fashion spread even to the smaller houses, with almost sufficient energy to be regarded as a partial revival of the art. It was, however, shortlived and artificial, the painters being merely easel-picture artists applying their ability to the wall or ceiling, as opportunity offered. An interesting example, which

[1] A. P. Laurie in *The Analyst*, March, 1930.

well shows how far this revival reached, is to be seen in the Mill House, near Chalfont St. Giles, where there is a ceiling with an allegorical subject, but so blackened with smoke as hardly to be discernible.

Another of quite different character occurred on a wall at Aylesbury, which will be described later.

Such instances are exceptional, and the general rule was a flat-wash until the advent of the wall-paper, concerning which some interesting and rather surprising evidence has recently been revealed.

In many cases where wall-papers have been pasted, one over another, until attaining the thickness of board, not one of even respectable antiquity has been found. Not until the middle of the nineteenth century, or later, did the refinement of the wall-paper come into general use.

The proof of this is not only the character of the paper itself, but in no less than seven instances, old newspapers were found first pasted up to obtain a more level surface. The earliest of these is 1839, several of the '40s and one as late as 1890, with only one wall-paper beneath it, and this is dated by Mr. C. O. Masters as being no earlier than 1880.

It will therefore be seen that an interval of about two centuries divides wall-papers in general use, from Tudor paintings—a fact which makes the claim that the wall-painting is the primitive ancestor of the printed paper look rather shadowy.

Quite apart from the artistic standpoint, the Tudor mural paintings serve to throw so much light on the life, thoughts and condition of the people of this remarkable period, that they well deserve much closer study and attention than has hitherto been bestowed on them.

HOUSE ADJOINING THE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AMERSHAM

The first of the mural paintings at Amersham to be described are in a small building, now a shop, adjoining the Old Grammar School. This house forms the west wing of a block of buildings which occupies

the site of the Church House, and which bounds the church-yard on its south side.

The Church House was a timber structure of six bays, about 70 feet long, by 24 feet wide, and was built late in the fifteenth or early in the sixteenth century. It was probably, as Mr. Geoffrey Lucas suggests, open from the ground to the roof. Most of the main timbers of the original structure remain, although built in and obscured by brick facings and additions of various later times.

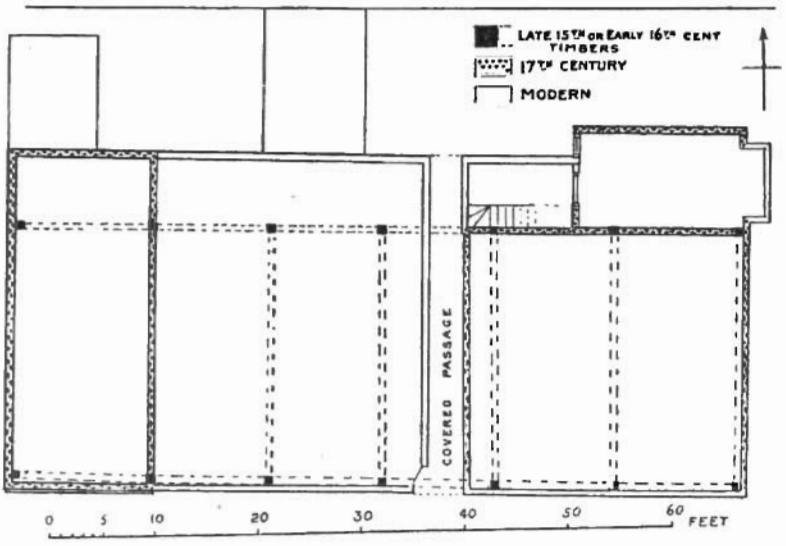


FIG. 1. GROUND PLAN OF OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AMERSHAM, SHOWING TIMBERS OF ORIGINAL CHURCH HOUSE

In 1625 the Rev. Dr. Challoner left by his will a fund to provide for the establishment of a Grammar School, on condition that the town found the accommodation. The Church House was given over for this purpose, and to adapt it to its new use various alterations seem to have taken place. A floor was inserted and the extreme east and west bays partitioned off and converted into separate buildings. At the same time these portions appear to have been extended to the north, forming two small wings, giving the whole a half-H shape on plan. The west wing was fronted with

Photos by T. C. Proffitt

OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AMERSHAM
Front and back view

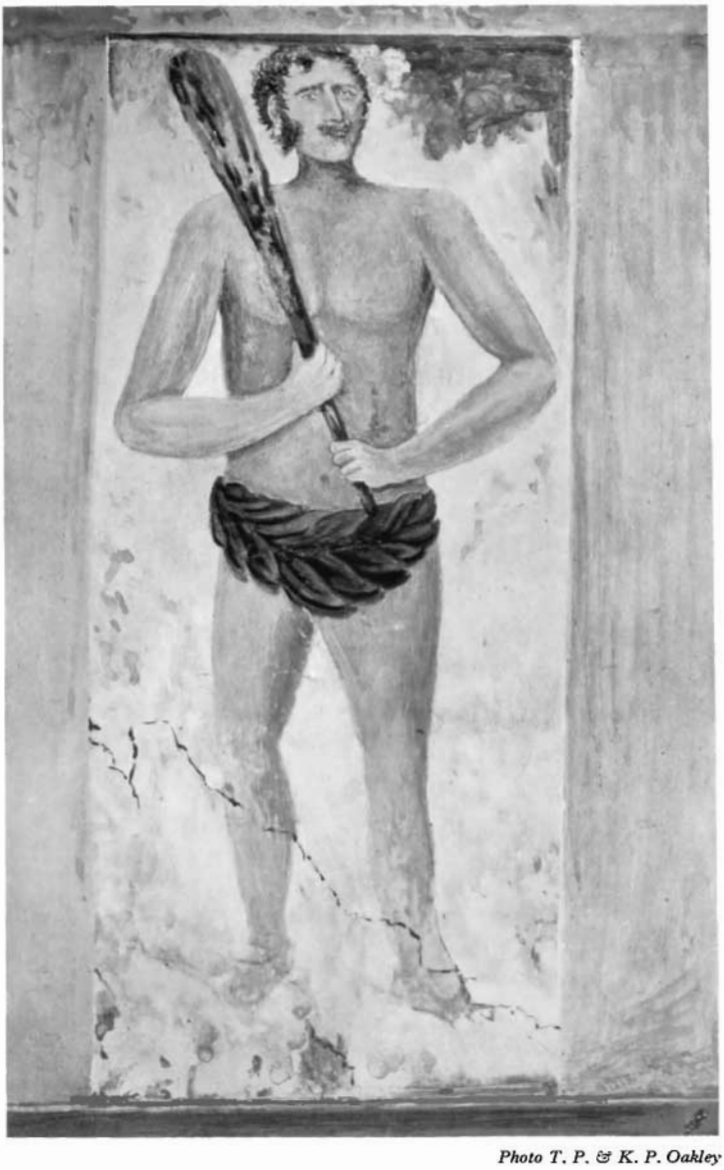


Photo T. P. & K. P. Oakley

WALL-PAINTING OF HERCULES IN BUILDING ADJOINING OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AMERSHAM ($\frac{1}{12}$)

brick, which was carried by a gable and divided off from the main building except in the roof. It is probable that the eastern bay was similarly gabled, but has since been altered. It is not clear for what purpose these two portions were divided off from the rest of the building, but probably the Church still needed part of the premises, and part of it, under the same charity, for a long time housed 'four godly widows.' However this may be, it appears that these two wings have never formed any part of the school, which occupied all the intervening portion.

It is said, also, that until the refronting of the school with brick in the nineteenth century, the ground floor remained open, with the lower portions of the timber posts exposed, and that this space served as the children's playground. It was finally enclosed and converted into apartments, but a passage-way was carried under the school-room from front to back, and still remains. The school was also extended on the north, bringing it on a level with the north face of the west wing.

It will be seen by the photograph (Pl. i, A) that the brick front of the western gable-end is of a different character from that of the more modern frontage of the school, which is built against it, and it is on this earlier wall, on the first floor, that during re-decoration in 1931 a painting was discovered, representing a man, naked save for a girdle of laurel leaves, and with a club over his right shoulder grasped in both hands (Pl. ii). This painting, 5 feet 8 inches high, occupies the space west of the window. It is fairly certain that it represents Hercules, and may have formed one of a series of figures, possibly a late group of the Nine Worthies (see below, p. 143), disposed round the room. The floor is, at present, divided up into several small rooms, but it may originally have been one large room for public purposes.

The other parts of the walls had already been re-papered, but this corner, after having been stripped and washed down, was left for a time, and the owner, Mrs. Pusey, noticed the figure showing through the partly removed white-wash. Mrs. Pusey gave it

a further washing and revealed the painting, which she fortunately decided to preserve. Previous to its having been white-washed, it had received some scratches, those in the eyes evidently being malicious, but otherwise it is in very good condition. It is proposed to move it, together with the brick-wall on which it rests, to some museum.

The drawing of the figure is certainly better than the average work in such paintings, while the type of head is more characteristic of a later period and has given rise to the idea that it had been repainted during the eighteenth century. I am unable to detect the slightest evidence of re-painting ; it all appears to be of the same period, probably of the first half of the seventeenth century.

Above, in the gable, is an attic, the sloping ceiling of which is painted with a number of devices, including the figure of a man in seventeenth-century costume ; a bird with a spray of foliage on which is a Tudor rose (Pl. iii) ; a woman's head with curls, painted with a square-ended brush with great boldness and facility (Pl. iv, B) ; a curious somewhat heraldic-looking animal-form, etc. (Pl. iv. A). These are mere scattered fragments that have survived time, weather and numerous repairs. It is uncertain whether they formed part of a concerted design, or were painted at random and at different times. The careful, almost niggled work of the male figure is in such strong contrast to the free rendering of the female head, as to make it practically certain that they are by different hands. The attics are now in almost total darkness, but, so far as I have been able to see by artificial light, there is nowhere any overlapping of these devices, as might be expected if they were painted at various intervals.

This western portion of the old Church House seems long ago to have ceased to be church property, and to have passed into the possession of the Lords of the Manor, the Tyrwhitt-Drakes of Shardaloes. On the north wall of this wing is a small tablet inscribed T.D. 1810, which may indicate the date of purchase, or have been placed there when the extension was

PAINTINGS ON SLOPE-CEILING OF ATTIC, BUILDING ADJOINING THE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AMERSHAM ($\frac{1}{10}$)

A

B

PAINTINGS ON SLOPE-CEILING OF ATTIC IN BUILDING ADJOINING THE OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AMERSHAM ($\frac{1}{2}$)

rendered in the rough cast in which the stone is embedded. As the Tyrwhitt crest is a ' savage-man,' it was, at first, generally concluded that the painting of the Hercules was the crest of the Lord of the Manor. This, however, seems to be only a curious coincidence, as the Drakes did not assume the arms of the Tyrwhitts until 1776. It was then that Thomas Drake took the name of Tyrwhitt by desire of Sir John de la Fontaine Tyrwhitt, Bart., but on the death of his elder brother he resumed the name of Drake by Royal permission in 1795. By this time the painting had probably been obscured with white-wash and lost to memory. In any case, it is highly improbable that such a painting would have been employed in wall decoration, even in so out-lying a place as Amersham, at such a late date. It is more reasonable to regard it as the work of the same period as the ceiling-ornamentation, which seems to be not later than the middle of the seventeenth century.

WALL PAINTINGS AT THE CROWN HOTEL, AMERSHAM

During the investigation of the discoveries at the Old Grammar School, I was informed that some wall-painting had recently been brought to light at the Crown Hotel, on the south side of the High Street. This well-known old coaching inn, which is distinguished by its portico, stands facing the quaint and imposing Market Hall, the lower portion of which is open and arcaded. The inn has undergone many changes. Its front to the street was so modernised in the last century as to disarm any suspicion of its being a house of any antiquity. The superficial nature of the brick front, however, is readily seen on passing under the archway to the yard, where much of the original character of the building remains (Pl. vi, A). The interior, in spite of various adaptations, still retains much of the original timber structure. It is now the property of Trust Houses, Ltd., and, in the alterations that have been made, characteristic care has been taken to preserve the antiquities, which include two wall-paintings.

On the ground floor, in what is now the Coffee Room, is a Tudor coat of arms, drawn in black outline on what was the white surface of a plaster panel over the fire-place (Fig. 2). During its long service in this position it has become toned down with smoke to a dull brown colour, but the quarterings of England and France, and the Lion and Dragon supporters, are still clearly visible. At the top are the words : ' God save the Quene,' which makes it fairly certain that the arms

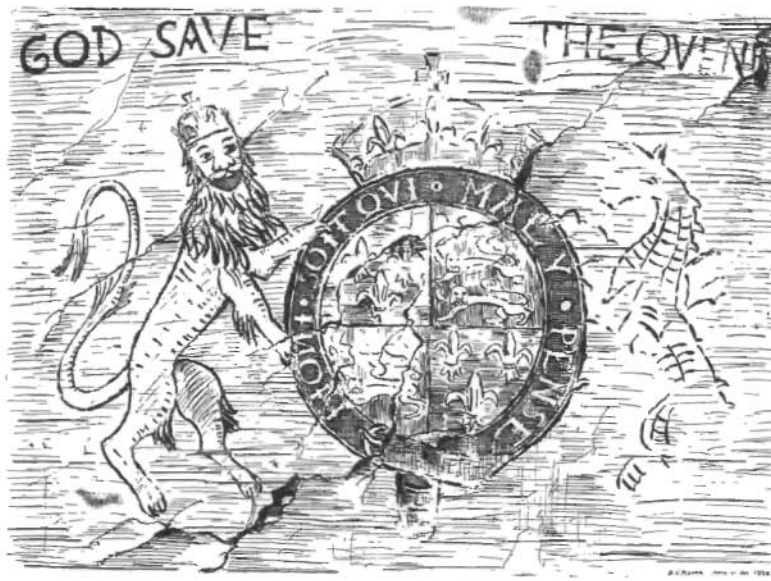
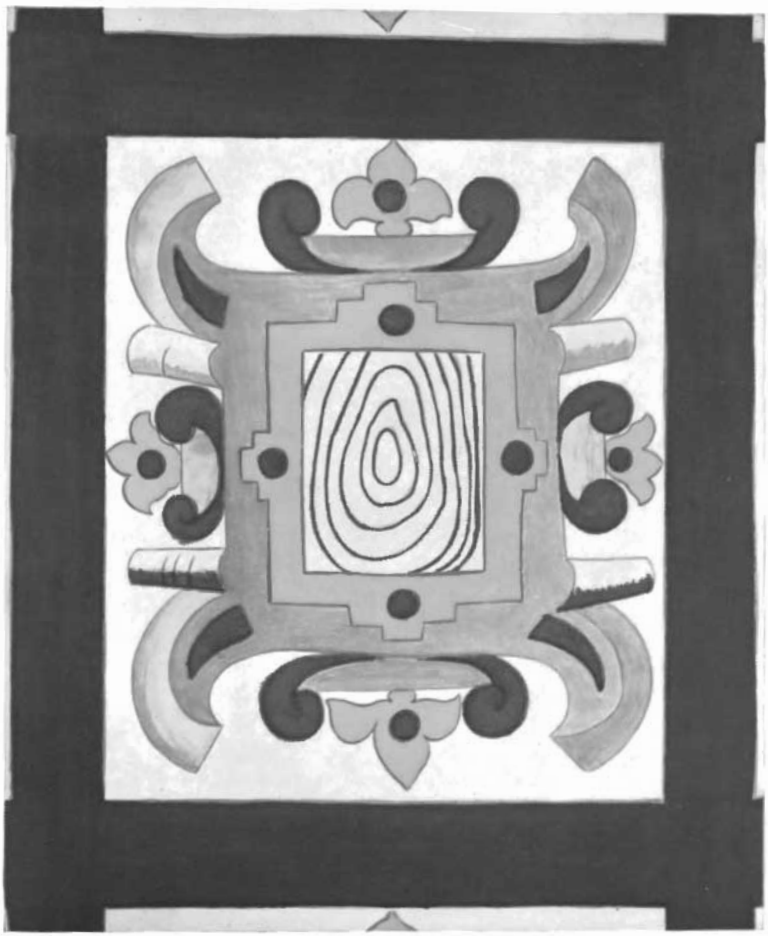


FIG. 2. WALL-PAINTING ($4\frac{1}{2}$ FEET WIDE) OF TUDOR ARMS IN THE CROWN HOTEL, AMERSHAM. Drawn by E. Clive Rouse

are those of Queen Elizabeth ; the local tradition is that they were painted in commemoration of her visit to Shardeloes.

On the first floor, in a bedroom at the extreme east side of the building, a portion of the original wall-surface has been uncovered, on which a painted decoration was found. A strip 6 feet 6 inches high and 3 feet wide has been preserved, showing that the whole surface was divided into rectangular panels,



Drawing by F. W. R.

DETAILED PANEL FROM THE WALL DECORATION IN THE CROWN HOTEL, AMERSHAM $(\frac{1}{2})$

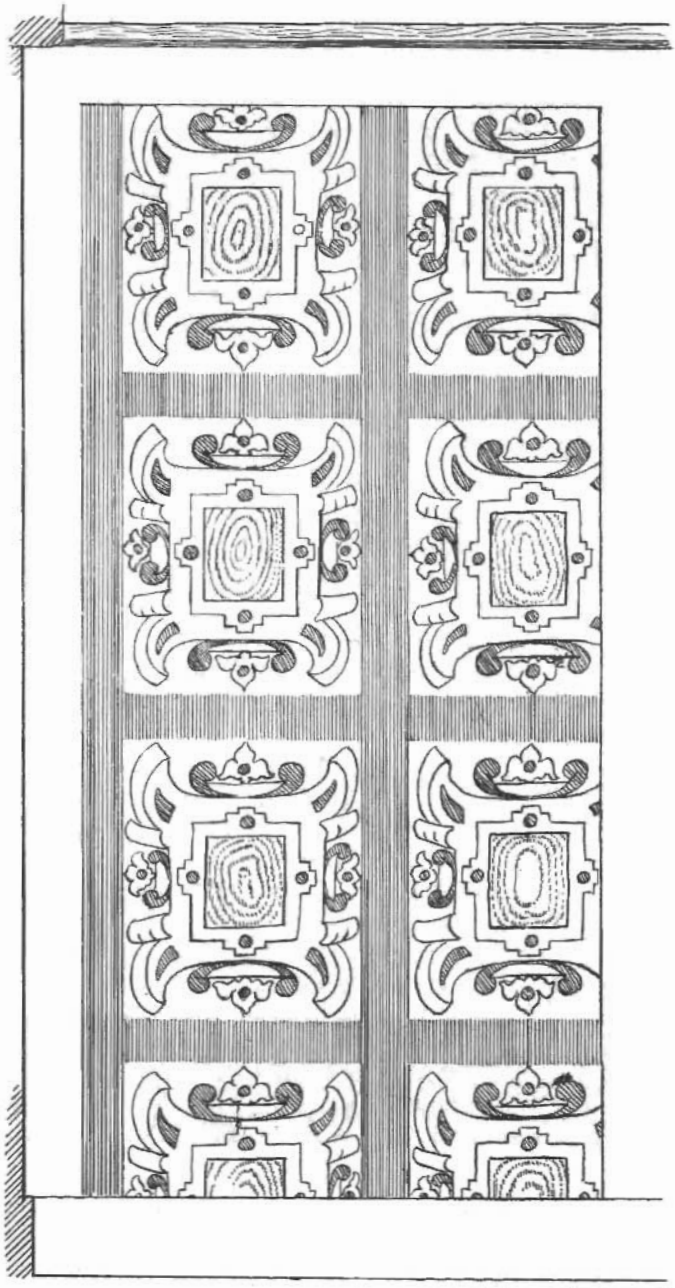


FIG. 3. WALL-PAINTING IN THE CROWN HOTEL, AMERSHAM ($\frac{1}{12}$)

about 18 inches high by 14 inches wide, by bands of dark claret colour 3 inches wide (Fig. 3). These panels were filled with cartouche-shields, drawn freely in a strong black outline, and coloured blue-grey, green and yellow. The centre of the cartouche is painted to represent a slab of veined marble, the veining being of a light red colour, in concentric rings of roughly oval shape (Pl. v). This is a novel variant of the usual boss, and appears to be an idea borrowed from the monumental work of the period, in which various marbles were so frequently introduced.

The original scheme would appear to have been the simple one of four rows of panels, all of the same size and pattern, framed in the bold red border. It will be seen by the diagram (Fig. 3) that at the present time the lowest row, even without the modern skirting-board, is cut 6 inches short by the flooring. It is improbable that the sixteenth-century craftsmen would have set out his work in this imperfect way, and much more likely that the floor has been raised during one of the various alterations that the building has undergone, although it is not easy to detect proof of this in its present condition.

NO. 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

The most interesting series of paintings at Amersham were those which came to light in the autumn of 1931 at 61, High Street. No. 61 is at the western end of the town, on the south side of the street, and forms the eastern end of an old building which has for some time been divided into three tenements; previously it had served as an inn. Originally it had been a private house of some importance, perhaps the residence of some prosperous tradesman. The property was recently purchased by Mr. G. Darlington, a builder, whose office is in the adjoining premises, on the east side of the covered entrance to the yard. This yard-entrance was probably opened up when the house was converted into an inn, before which a room apparently occupied the space, as there are at present four chimneys in the old brick stack at this end and only three fire-places (Pl. vi B).

A. THE CROWN HOTEL, AMERSHAM. FROM THE YARD
Drawing by Walter M. Keesey, A.R.I.B.A.

B. 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM *Photo by T. C. Proffitt.*

A. BACK VIEW OF NO. 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM, SHOWING STAIRCASE TURRET

Photos by K. P. Oakley

B. TUDOR FIREPLACE ON 1ST FLOOR, 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

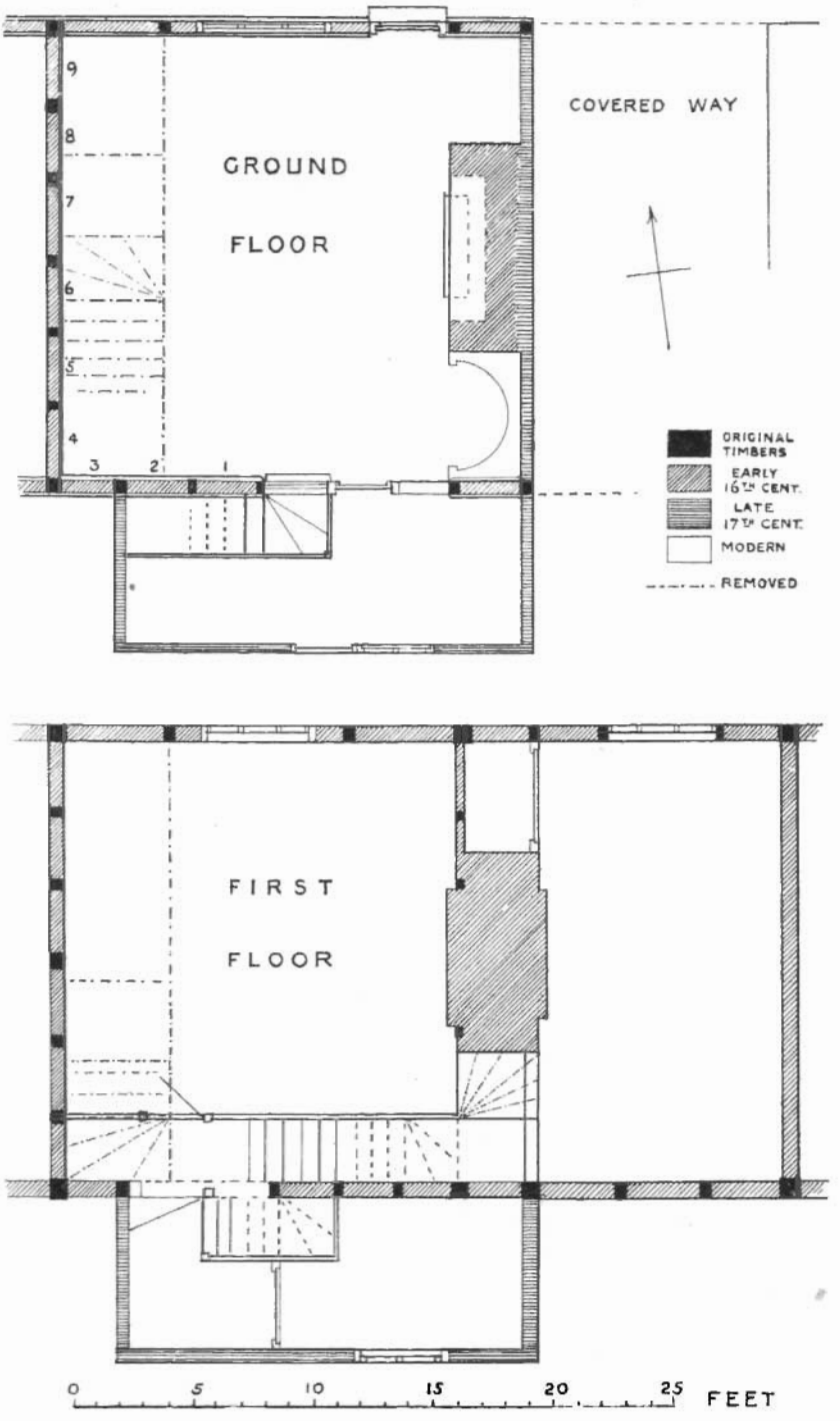


FIG. 4. PLANS OF 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

The original building would have consisted of one long range of two storeys with attics, similar to Bosworth House, Wendover.[1] In this eastern portion, the ground floor was formerly of one apartment about 18 feet square, of which both the north and south walls were external and had probably an external staircase at the back, leading to the upper floor; this staircase may be indicated by the little gabled turret seen in the photograph of the back (Pl. vii, A). The attics were reached by a difficult little winding staircase (removed in the recent alterations), which was fitted in the side of the chimney-stack on the first

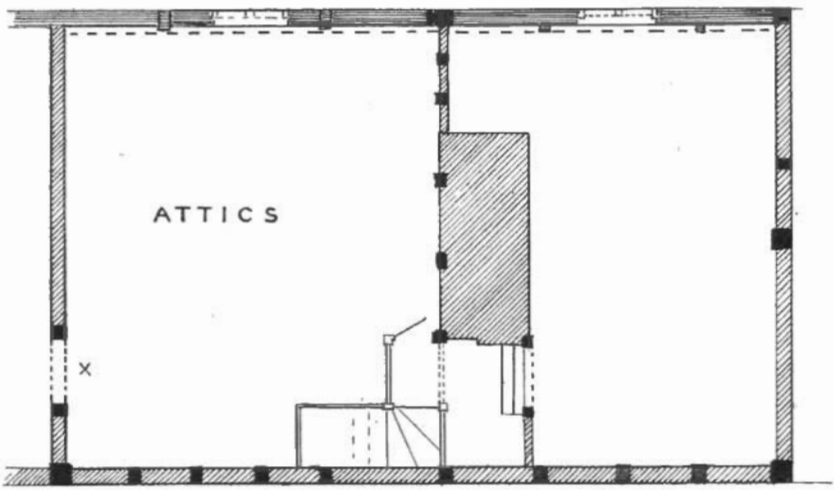


FIG. 5. PLAN OF ATTICS, 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM
× = Blocked passage way

floor, where also was a passage-way to the room over the entrance to the yard. The passage-way is now blocked and the room transferred to the adjoining house. The attics formerly communicated with the other portion of the house to the west, as the blocked entrance plainly shows (Fig. 5), but the main rooms on the ground and first floors were quite detached.

Some alterations were subsequently made, but without any great interference of the main structure.

[1] *Arch. Journ.* LXXXVII, 71.

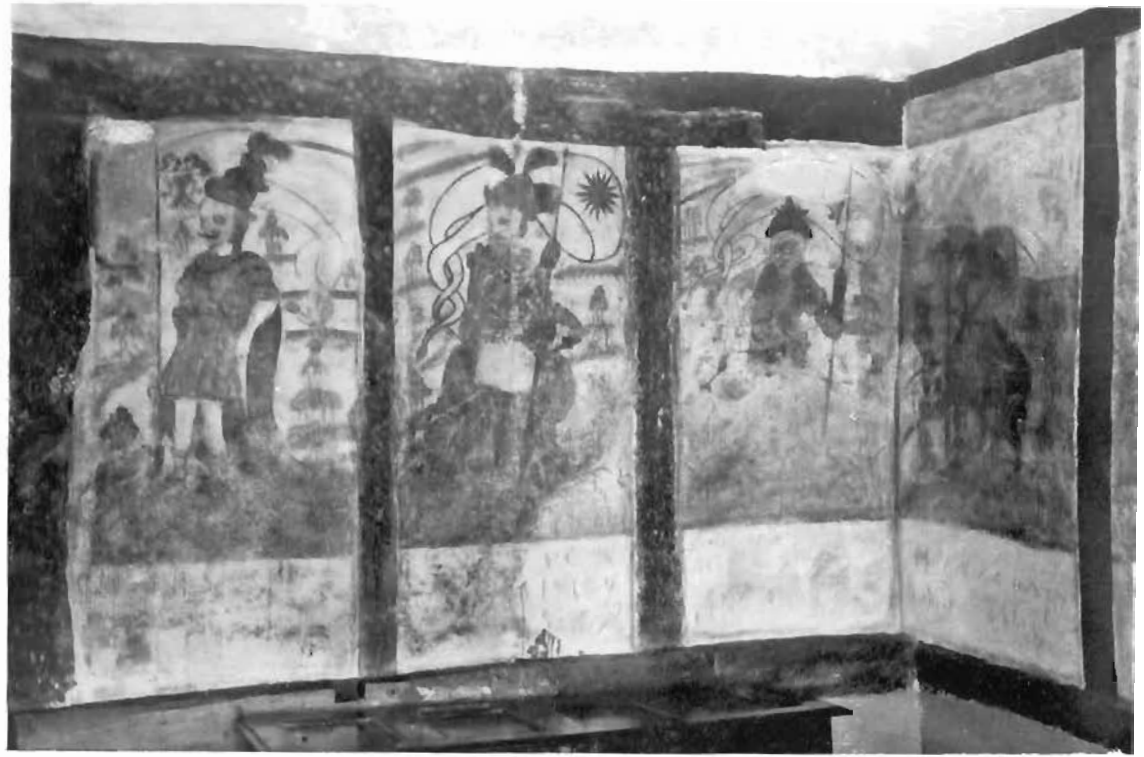


Photo by T. C. Proffitt

PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING PANELS 1, 2, 3 AND 4, 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

An additional room was built on the south, in place of the external staircase, and an internal staircase inserted in the south-west corner of the apartment on the ground floor. The date of the original building is given by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments as early sixteenth century, and the alterations as late seventeenth century.

It will be seen by the plan (Fig. 4) and the sectional diagram (Fig. 6) that the north and south walls of the ground floor are of greater thickness than the others, and have, at a height of 2 feet 6 inches from the ground, an interior set-off of 4 inches. Amersham, lying low in a

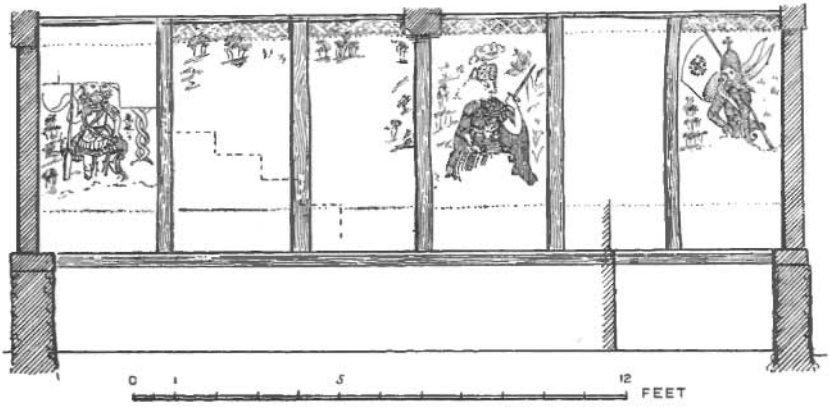


FIG. 6. ELEVATION OF WEST WALL OF GROUND FLOOR, 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM. PANELS 4-9

chalk valley along the course of the little stream, the Misbourne, the ground is liable to be waterlogged in wet seasons. As a precaution against damp, the early builders, having no better idea of a damp-course, commonly built a low foundation-wall of flint, a foot or more thick, which was carried about a foot into the ground. On the top of this the plate of the timber frame was laid, instead of on the ground-level. So long as the timbers remained sound, this method seems to have been so far successful as to restrict the damp to the lower wall beneath the plate. The inner walls were built in a similar manner, but were thinner by several inches, thus obviating the

set-off necessitated by the greater thickness of the exterior walls.

It was this characteristic, the set-off on the south wall, that fortunately led to the preservation of the paintings in the upper panels, for at some later time, probably when the staircase was inserted, it was thought desirable to have a wall-surface flush with the face of the lower wall. To effect this a frame of timber was fastened to the recessed upper wall, and on this lath and plaster was laid, giving an unbroken surface without materially damaging the original wall.

When Mr. Darlington took in hand the renovation of the premises, the staircase was found to be in such bad condition that it had to be removed, and this led also to the removal of the lathe and plaster covering of the original south wall surface, revealing three painted panels, two of which were almost intact.

The space under the staircase had in accordance with the usual custom been utilized as a cupboard. So long as this had been put to ordinary purposes, it no doubt served to preserve the paintings, but after the division of the house into tenements, this cupboard was thought to be a convenient place in which to keep the coals, the continuous shovelling of which brought about the destruction of the lower portion of panels 2, 3 and 4.

On the west wall, at its junction with the south, forming the corner where the staircase had been inserted, the centre portion of a painted panel (4) was found, the surface of which was little damaged. The succeeding panels on this wall had been treated less kindly, having been cut into for fixing partitions, whitewashed, in places plastered and finally wall-papered.

On being denuded of these accretions, panels 5 and 6 were found to retain little of their original surface, and this merely at the sides where some of the backgrounds remained. Although considerably damaged, most of the upper part of panel 7 had survived; panel 8 had been entirely destroyed, and panel 9 retained the upper portion, which was recovered with some difficulty.

Drawing by F. W. R.

PANEL I. JULIUS CAESAR (:)

It is probable that the panels flanking the window of the north or street-front wall had been painted, but no trace of this could be discovered. Owing to this being an exterior wall it is possible it had suffered decay and the plaster renewed. The east wall is largely occupied with the fireplace, and the walls on either side appear to have been rebuilt at the time the covered entrance to the yard was constructed, and bore no traces of having been painted.

The south wall, at its junction with the east, is original only in the lower flint pediment, the panel above having been rebuilt probably during the alterations in the late seventeenth century. Beyond this first bay there appears to have been an opening or doorway, occupying a space equivalent to the width of three bays, the flint pediment being rounded at either end. It has now been filled by extending the wall from the east, a doorway leading to the back apartment and a doorway to the new staircase which Mr. Darlington has contrived so as to occupy its original position and leave the front room clear of this later obstruction.

It will be seen by the plan (Fig. 4) that there are three panels on the south wall and six on the west, each about 5 feet 6 inches high and from 2 feet 6 inches to 2 feet 9 inches wide. On the south wall the ceiling-beam curtails the panels at the top by about 8 inches, but this has been decorated with a pattern of crossed lines forming diamond-shaped spaces, in which, and at the intersection of the lines, are dots. The pattern of crossed lines is carried along the top of the six panels on the west wall, being first painted brown to simulate the beam, the whole forming a kind of frieze. The ' studs ' also are similarly decorated (Pl. viii).

The main portion of each panel contained a full-length figure, occupying a space of about 4 feet. Beneath each figure had been an inscription of several lines in black letter, filling the lower part of the panel, about 1 foot in depth. Remains of these inscriptions survived, imperfectly only, in panels 1 and 2.

Six of the panels retained the figures, two of which were fairly complete, the other four damaged and fragmentary. Sufficient remained to show clearly that

they were representations of warriors dressed in pseudo-classic or medieval garb and holding a tilting lance, on which was a pennon bearing a badge. At first only one could be identified with certainty, by the name ' Julius Cæsar ' which appeared plainly in the inscription. Our Editor, however, subsequently suggested that the figures represented the ' Nine Worthies.'

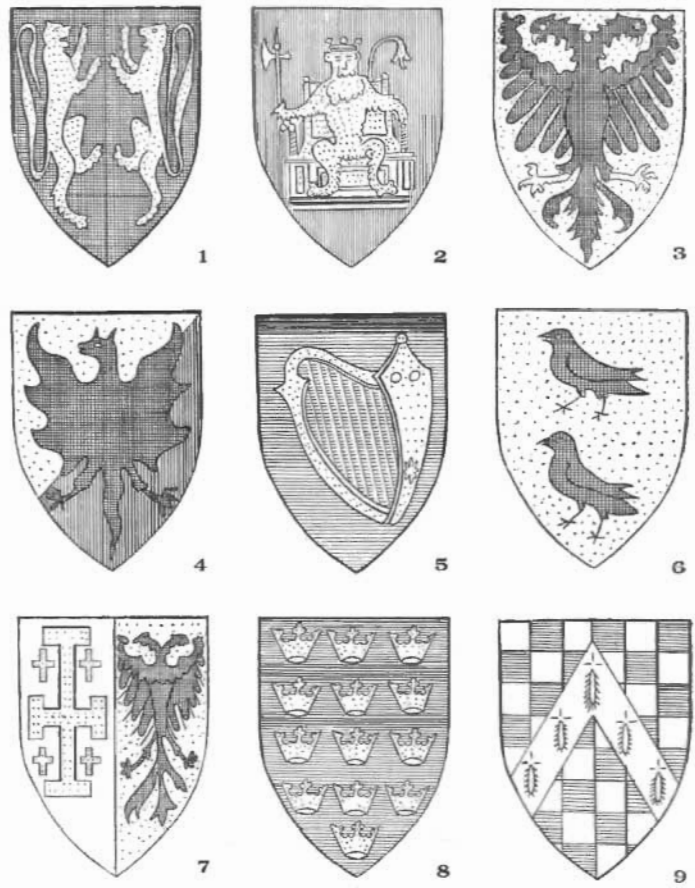


FIG. 7. FABULOUS ARMS OF THE NINE WORTHIES. FROM THE HARLEIAN MSS.

1. Hector of Troy. 2. Alexander the Great. 3. Julius Caesar.
4. Joshua. 5. King David. 6. Judas Maccabeus.
7. Charlemagne. 8. King Arthur. 9. Guy of Warwick.

This clue appeared to fit well with the figures which bore any definite symbols, and it was made the more certain by the kindness of Mr. Mill Stephenson, who pointed out to me the fabulous arms of the Nine Worthies in the Russell Collection at the library of the Society of Antiquaries (Figs. 7 and 8).

The Nine Worthies would appear to be an assemblage of heroes, originally selected in France, sometime in the Middle Ages. Their popularity spread

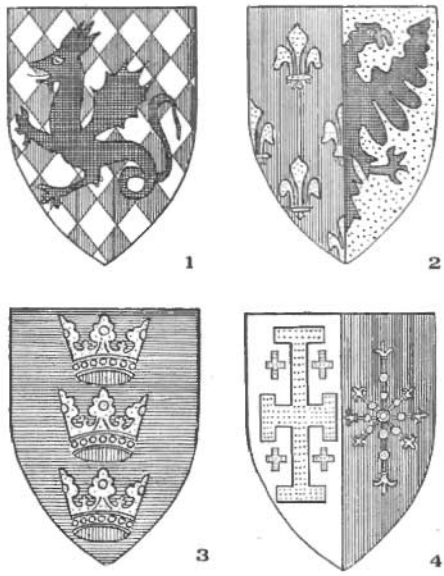


FIG. 8. FABULOUS ARMS OF THE NINE WORTHIES. FROM THE LINDSEY MSS.

1. Joshua. 2. Charlemagne.
3. King Arthur. 4. Godfrey de Bouillon.

over Europe, in various forms. In this country they were detailed as follows by Caxton in the Prologue to his ' Morte d'Arthur ' :—

> ' For it is notoyrly knowen thorugh the unyversal world that there been IX. worthy and the best that ever were, that is to wete, thre paynyms, thre Jewes, and thre crysten men. As for the paynyms, they were tofore the incarnacyon of Cryst, whiche were named, the fyrst Hector of Troye, of whome thystorye is comen bothe in balade and in prose ; the second Alysaunder

> the grete: and the thyrd Julyus Cezar, emperour of Rome, of whome thystoryes ben wel kno and had. And as for the thre Jewes, whyche also were tofore thyncarnacyon of our Lord, of whome the fyst was duc Josue, whyche brought the chyldren of Israhel into the londs of byheste; the second Davyd kyng of Jherusalem; and the thyrd Judas Machabeus: of these thre the Byble reherceth al theyr noble hystoryes and actes. And sythe the sayd incarnacyon have ben thre noble crysten men stalled and admytted thorugh the unyversal world into the nombre of the IX. beste and worthy, of whome was fyrst the noble Arthur, whos noble actes I purpose to wryte in thys present book here folowyng: the second was Charlemayn, or Charles the grete, of whome thystorye is had in many places bothe in Frensshe and Englysshe; and the thyrd and last was Godefray of Boloyn, of whos actes and lyf I made a book unto thexcellent prynce and kyng of noble memorye kyng Edward the fourth.'

In this, Caxton gives the original and orthodox arrangement (with the exception of giving priority to Arthur over Charlemagne) which, in later times, became much varied and altered. This tendency to change is striking, and general, varying in different localities, and may be accounted for by the fact that the Nine Worthies were not to any great extent established by literary and pictorial means, but became a popular subject of pagentry, in which the performers filed in before the audience, dressed and accoutered to suit their respective roles; each in turn, declaiming lines appropriate to the part.[1] At first conducted with decorum and dignity, as honouring the champions of civilization against the forces of barbarism, it degenerated into a mere spectacle, devoid of meaning and mixed with horse-play and buffoonery.

[1] In a MS. poem in the British Museum a version of such lines are given, each stanza having on its left the Latin, and the right the English. The following are specimens of the latter:—

"Ector, that was off alle Knyghtes flowre.
Whych euer gate hym with hys bond honour,
Unware of Achylles full of envye,
Was slayn; allas, that euer should he deye!

"Lo, alexander, that wan ner' all erthe,
Yett haue wyne and women hym conqueryd;
Enpoysond was thys prince of conquerors
When he was in ye freshest of hys floure.

"With bodkynes was Cesar Juliust
Mordryd at Rome of brutus crassus,
When he had many a loud browgh, full lowe,
Lo, he may trust fortune any throwe!"

See *Notes and Queries*. 7th series, vol 8, p. 22.

Drawing by F. W. R.

PANEL 2. DUKE JOSHUA (¼)

Although the introduction of the Nine Worthies in Shakespeare's 'Love's Labours Lost,' should not, perhaps, be taken too seriously, it conveys a good idea of what it became in its last stages. Under the showmanship of the 'Holofernes' of the various districts, the characters underwent much alteration; local heroes, or any one who might be thought would make better appeal to an uninformed public, were substituted for those of the original company who were least known.

Thus we find Godfrey de Bouillon was generally deposed and frequently, as is seen in the series of fabulous arms, his place is taken by Guy of Warwick; London raised Gog and Magog to worthy rank, while commonly as in 'Love's Labours Lost,' we have Pompey and Hercules thus honoured (cf. above, p. 129).

In the paintings in no. 61 it is evident that the original classification is represented, although not in the order as given by Caxton. Commencing with the panel on the south wall, marked 1 on the plan, we have Julius Caesar (Pl. ix) in fairly good classic costume with a brilliant scarlet paludamentum, holding a banner on which is the badge of the double-headed eagle; his helmet is more ambitious than successful, and the drawing of the figure is feeble, lifeless and ill-proportioned.

In panel 2 is 'Duke Joshua' (Pl. x), represented in armour of the sixteenth century. On his banner is a flaming sun painted in black with the edges of the rays outlined in red, and a face faintly painted in the centre. This, it will be seen, does not agree with the arms allotted to Joshua, in either the Harleian or the Lindsey MSS. It may be an earlier variant, or merely the fancy of the artist in allusion to the Biblical account of his having induced the sun to stand still in order to give time for the defeat of the Amorites.

Panel 3, in spite of its damaged condition, has a figure which is certainly that of King David, as he bears the harp as his badge. He is dressed in a somewhat bizarre costume of blue-green, over which is a white robe, probably signifying his character as a

bard, while his peculiar head-dress may be intended to denote him as a Jew (Pl. xi, A).

In panel 4 the figure has suffered mutilation from the fixing of the stairs, by which the top of his head has been cut off, together with the main part of the banner, while in the lower part not only has the painting vanished, owing to coaling-activities, but even the daub and wattle wall has been shovelled away, so that boarding had to be fixed on the other side to prevent the coals from falling into the next house. What is left of the figure, shows a thick-set, stumpy man with a large shaggy head, clad in semi-classical armour (Pl. xi, B). There seems to be no certain clue to his identity and he may be intended for Alexander the Great, or more probably Hector of Troy. Both of these characters seem to have been retained throughout the transformations of this pageant, being, perhaps, more widely known than some of the others, their biographies having been popular books from the Middle Ages onwards.

The figures from panels 5 and 6 had vanished in favour of the seventeenth-century staircase, nothing of the painting remaining except some of the backgrounds.

In panel 7 were remains of a figure which differs from the others, in being seated and not bearing a pennon. He wears scale armour with a corselet, on which is a repousse head. In a diminutive right hand he holds a mace, in his left hand a sword, while another sword is sheathed at his side. From his shoulders hangs an Imperial mantle of scarlet, which falls in heavy folds to the ground. His face has had for the most part to give place to a support for a partition, but sufficient remains to show him to have been bearded and venerable (Pl. xii, A).

There seems little doubt that this figure is a representation of Charlemagne, whose title among the Worthies was, ' The Arch Treasurer of the Holy Roman Empire,' for at his right side hangs a distended purse ; while his head-dress bears some resemblance to the conventional crown of heraldry, which has been borne by five kings of England under the same title. The august figure had here submitted to being white-

A. PANEL 3. KING DAVID ($\frac{1}{10}$)

Drawings by F. W. R.

B. PANEL 4. HECTOR OF TROY. ($\frac{3}{10}$)

Drawings by E. W. R.

A. PANEL 7. CHARLEMAGNE (¼)

B. PANEL 9. GODFREY DE BOUILLON (¼)

To face page 145.

washed and had been made to serve as the back of a cupboard for the storage of blackened pots and pans, which had worn away his lower limbs together with the inscription.

The 8th panel had been entirely destroyed and renewed, but in the 9th is a much-damaged upper part of a figure in blue plate and chain armour, a bandoleer, and a helmet surmounted with a cross, and with head adorned with long, flowing hair, whiskers and a pointed beard. He carries a banner on which is the cross potent gules, between four plain crosslets or, forming the arms of Jerusalem, and making it clear that he represents Godfrey de Bouillon (Pl. xii, B). This is most fortunate and important, as it shows that this series is that of the earlier original order, the three missing Worthies being Alexander, Judas Maccabaeus and King Arthur.

This is consistent with an ascription of the paintings to a period little later than the middle of the sixteenth century. In some of the faces there is perhaps a suggestion of portraiture, and it may be that the paintings commemorate some local pageant in which the townsmen filled the various roles in question—perhaps during the residence of Princess Elizabeth at Ashridge from 1551 until her arrest there in 1554, under suspicion of complicity in Wyatt's insurrection.

Although the paintings display only a very modest ability on the part of the actual craftsman the general design and decorative treatment indicates a good pictorial tradition. The colours are still brilliant, and it is evident that the pigment must have been skilfully prepared. Crude though it be, the painting is executed with a certain precision and facility. Particularly pleasing is the varied and graceful treatment of the bannerets. The backgrounds are landscapes of the conventional nature of the period, with trees, hills and streams, one above the other, without any attempt at perspective, but they form a simple and reposeful setting for the figures. The general effect of the whole decoration, with the painted timber and ceiling must have been very rich and colourful.

In striking contrast was the scheme of decoration

in the room on the first floor. Here each panel contained at the head, a single semi-circular arch painted in a broad, flat band of black, it rested on caps and had suspended from the centre an oval pendant.

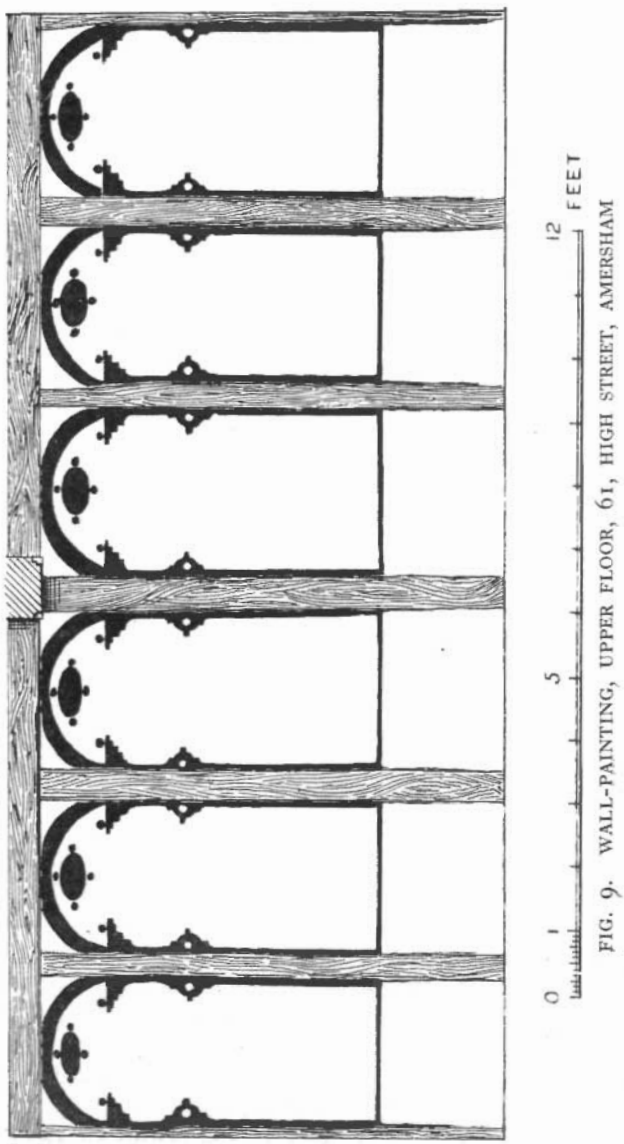


FIG. 9. WALL-PAINTING, UPPER FLOOR, 61, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

A. VIEW SHOWING JUNCTION OF ROOFS IN EAST WING

B. FIREPLACE (J ON PLAN FIG. 10)

Photo by J. W. Bloe

C. 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM, BEFORE RENOVATION

Photos by Maud Johnson.

47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM. FRONT AND BACK ELEVATIONS

Below the caps a plain band of paint was carried on the edge, broken only with a boss just below the cap, and ending 2 feet 10 inches from the ground by being carried across the panel. A wood skirting, no doubt, was the finish of the design to the floor. This seems to have been a necessary protection for the base of a daub and wattle wall (Fig. 9).

The simple scheme of this room forms good evidence that the sixteenth-century wall-painter was capable of restraint, even though he usually aimed at elaboration and richness.

NO. 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

During the investigation of the discoveries already described No. 47, High Street, came into the hands of the builders for restoration. This is a modest half-timbered building of three gables fronting the street ; it is of greater extent at the back than might be suspected, and can claim considerable antiquity. It is fully described in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments*, where it is observed that ' This house is especially interesting on account of the medieval work it contains ' (Pls. xiii-xvi).

Since it was visited by the Commissioners in 1913 it has been much neglected, and but for the measures taken in its recent renovation, much of it would certainly soon have fallen into ruin.

The original building was a hall of the fifteenth century, open to the roof, with, at least, a west wing forming the solar. In the sixteenth century a portion of the hall on the west was altered, the present main chimney stack was built, J on plan (Fig. 10), and a floor inserted in the portion of the hall which survives. On the first floor, at the centre of the main range, is a portion of the original oak moulded cornice, two feet above the floor, on both its north and south sides, while on the other side of the south wall, on the staircase-landing, the rafters of the earlier roof can be seen behind a shutter inserted for the purpose. In the sixteenth century, also, the west wing was lengthened to the south by two bays, making it the largest apartment in the altered house (Pl. xv, B).

The east wing may still be as originally built, although the fact that the one main bay of the hall roof, with its moulded wall-plates (Figs. 11 and 12) and windbraces, does not coincide with the east wall, but stops about one foot short of it, seems to suggest that the hall was either longer to the east, or it may have been the first intention to make it a bay or a half-bay longer in that direction. Now that the east wing has

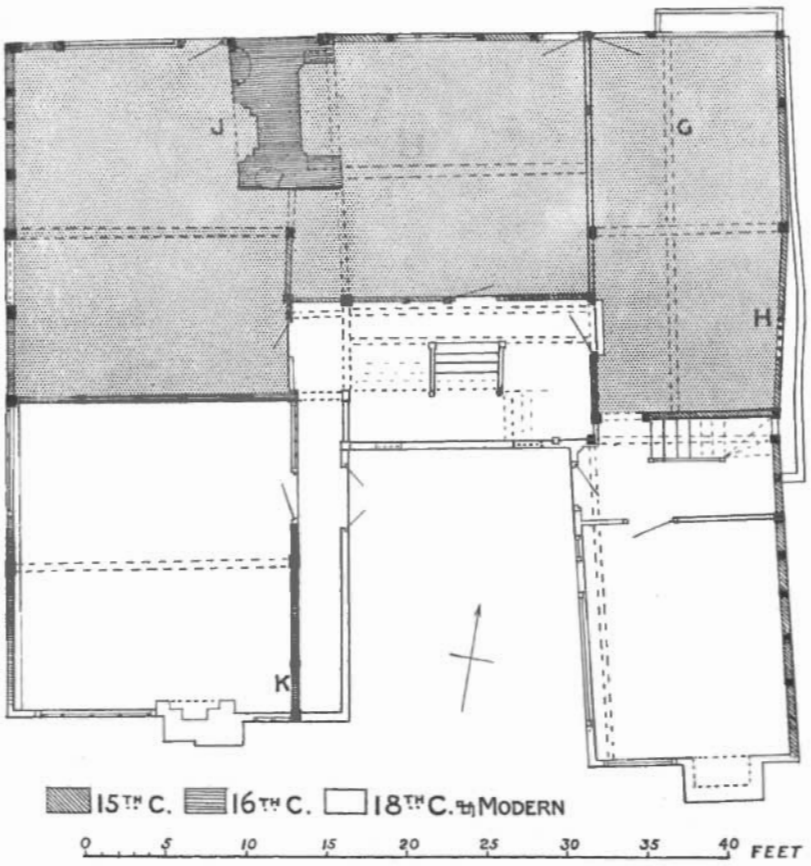


FIG. 10. GROUND PLAN, NO. 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

G. Beam formerly carrying partition.
H. Light opening.
J. Sixteenth-century chimney stack.
K. Sixteenth-century doorway. Chamfered head remaining.

been stripped, the exposed timbers show construction which appears to be as old as that of the hall, especially that of the wide, flat ceiling joists. One of these (G on plan, Fig. 10) has the mortices, etc., showing that it formerly carried a partition. The position of this suggests that the hall was not reduced in length, but that the screen passage was put in the wing instead of the usual position at the end of the hall. This

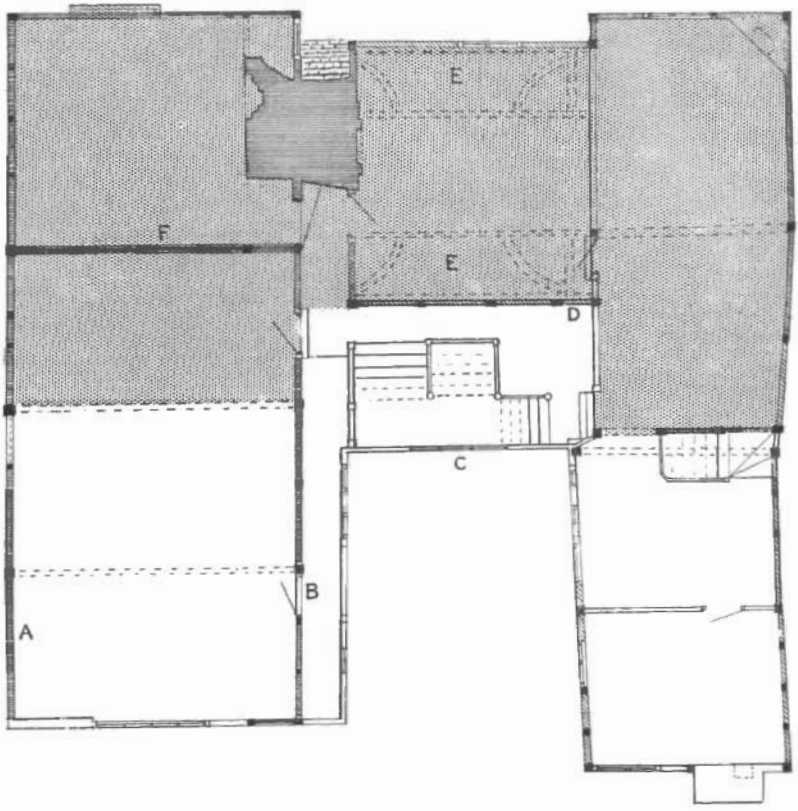


FIG. 11. PLAN OF UPPER FLOOR, 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

A. } Position of portions of fifteenth-century screen.
B. } A and C destroyed summer 1913.
C. } B preserved in Aylesbury Museum.
D. Exterior of original roof exposed.
E–E. Purlins and wind-braces over moulded cornice.
F. Remains of painted wall surface.

arrangement would have reduced the buttery to quite small chambers and left the hall of the comparatively small size of only just over a bay and a half.

In the eighteenth century the middle portion was extended to the south and the well-staircase inserted,

FIG. 12. SECTION OF FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ROOF-PLATE 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

while the building now forming the south end of the east wing was incorporated. Previously this was a detached building standing only about a foot distant from the original end of the wing. The extension of the middle portion just joins the end of this building and the alteration of the roof to connect it can plainly

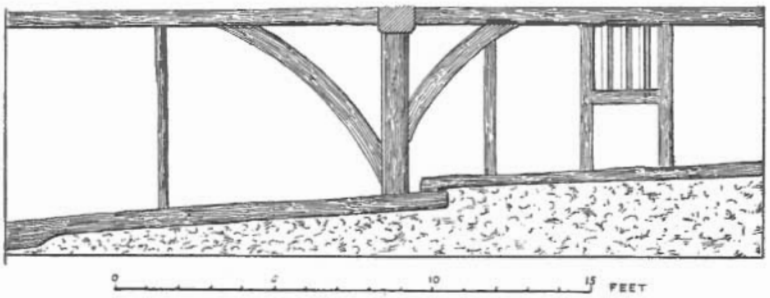


FIG. 13. ELEVATION OF EAST WALL OF EAST WING, 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

be seen from the exterior (Pl. xiii, A). A small staircase was then inserted at the point of juncture.

An interesting feature of the extreme east wall is the method of building the plate on a flint foundation. The plate almost touches the ground at the street front, but rises to a height of about three feet at the back (Fig. 13). At first sight, in such an irregular building, this might appear to be a mere accident, but in the building now forming the south extension of this east wing its east wall is built in a precisely similar manner, and it looks as though this were a designed provision to drain off the condensation of moisture on the bottom of the plate, the slope in both cases being that of the natural lay of the land towards the stream.

A primitive light was also uncovered high up on this wall (H on plan, Fig. 10). On the outside it has been obscured by a wall built against it, which forms

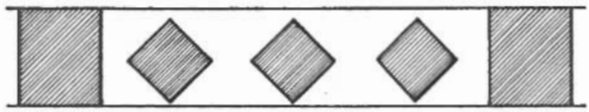


FIG. 14. PLAN OF LIGHT IN WALL OF EAST WING

the side of the yard entrance to the adjoining ' King's Arm's ' inn. This light, two feet square is unglazed and is merely an opening in the upper portion between two timber uprights, divided by three wood bars, three inches square but placed diagonally as shown on the plan, Fig. 14.

Many details mentioned by the Royal Commission have disappeared during the time that has elapsed since the Report was issued. The buildings have long been let off in portions for various purposes. The Bucks Art Society occupied the ground floor of the east wing. The south portion of the west wing was let as a warehouse, while other parts were divided off as tenements.

Fortunately the property came into the possession of Mr. C. M. Cheese, a solicitor in Amersham, who has made considerable alterations so as to restore it again as one house, and has been to some care and expense

in exposing the timbers and fireplaces, and preserving the character of the building while making it conform to modern ideas of comfort.

Although some details of the restoration may be unfortunate, the essential features of the building are more clearly to be seen than formerly and Mr. Cheese deserves our gratitude for having saved this interesting house from complete destruction.

The three portions of the carved fifteenth-century screen, mentioned by the Royal Commission (A, B, C on plan, Fig. 11) have disappeared. They had been inserted as window openings, but left unglazed. That in the west of the west wing and that in the south front of the middle of the main range had suffered from exposure to the weather, and were taken out by former tenants and chopped up for firewood. Fortunately the third portion, which was in the east side of the west wing, had been protected by the covering of the exterior staircase and was in better preservation. This has found its way into the Bucks Archaeological Society's museum at Aylesbury (Pl. xvi, A).

I have been fortunate in obtaining the co-operation of Mr. J. W. Bloe, F.S.A., of the Royal Commission's staff, who surveyed the building in 1913. He visited the site and inspected its present conditions and has rendered me much valuable assistance in making the plan and reading the structure.

Nothing of interest relating to the house or its earlier occupants appears to be known, but a house of this character was naturally regarded as one in which mural paintings might occur. As the restoration progressed the walls were carefully examined, and although many of them were found to have been painted, the evidence was fragmentary, owing very largely to repeated repairs. Particularly was this the case with the ground floor, where nothing definite was discovered, but the upper rooms were a little more satisfactory.

The sloping ceiling under the roof of the old hall (E south on plan, Fig. 11) had suffered much from the effects of weather, but some portions of the original plaster were found to be surviving amidst much evident

patching. These, when released from the covering of white-wash, showed traces of a decoration with a bold, flowing pattern of conventional flowers and foliage in the style of the textiles and embossed leather of the sixteenth century. The ornament was in purple on a black ground, which must have produced a very rich, though somewhat sombre effect. Only on one portion was any part of the pattern able to be recovered, but this is sufficient to give an idea of its general character (Fig. 15).

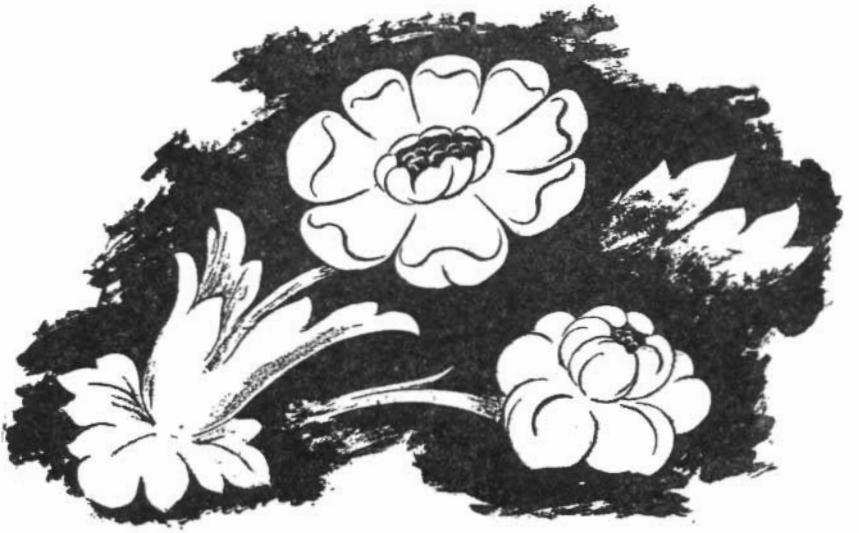


FIG. 15. PAINTED ORNAMENT ON SLOPE-CEILING OF OLD HALL, 47, HIGH STREET. (⅓)

On the partition wall which divides the west wing on the upper floor (Pl. XV, B), one of the simplest schemes of decoration was found on the south face, consisting of two bands of colour black and red, bordering the plaster panels. Each of the bands being about one inch wide (Fig. 16). This was probably carried round the other sides of this large apartment, but no trace of it could be found owing to the entire renovation of these walls in later times. On the north side of this partition (F, Fig. 11) the fine plaster surface, which had apparently projected beyond the

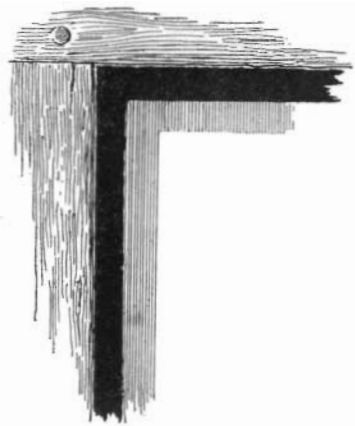


FIG. 16. WALL DECORATION IN BLACK AND RED, WEST WING OF 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

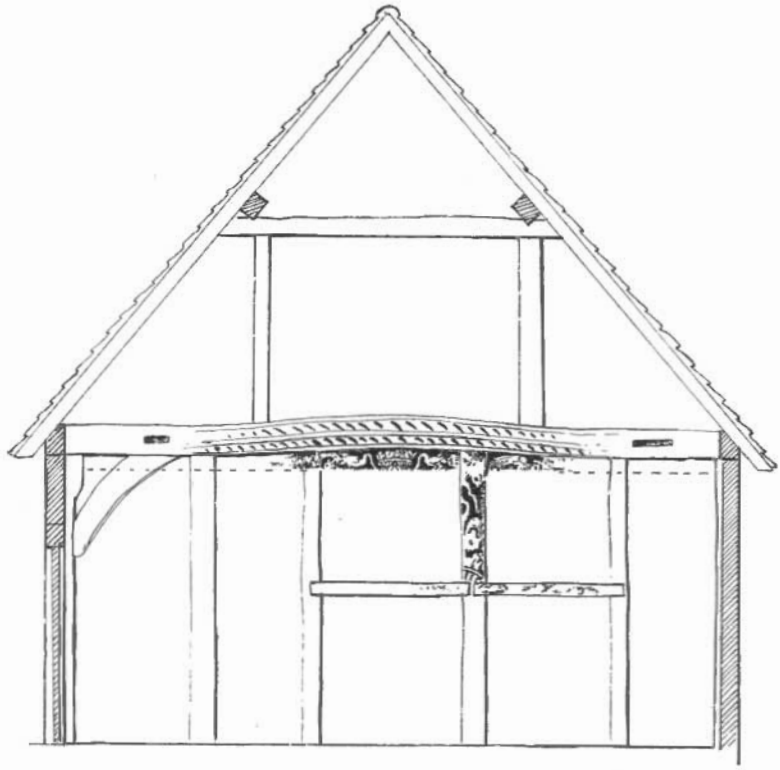
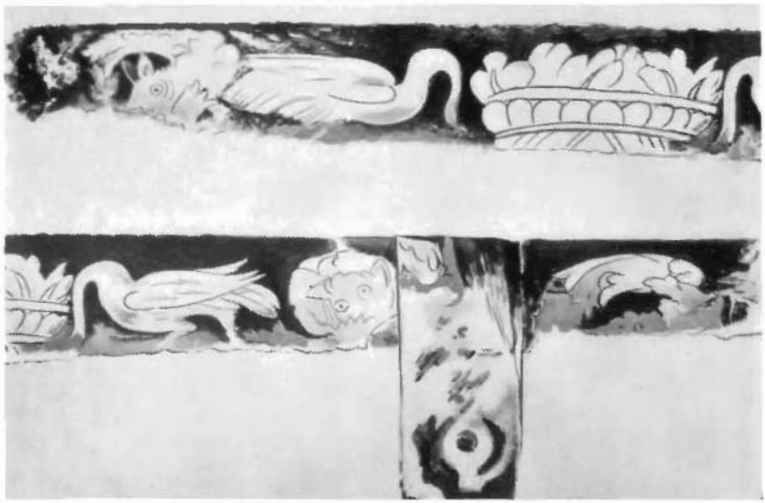


FIG. 17. ELEVATION OF UPPER FLOOR, WEST WING, SHOWING REMAINS OF WALL PAINTING, F ON PLAN. 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM



A. REMAINS OF WALL-PAINTING ON PARTITION-WALL OF WEST WING. 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

B. UPPER FLOOR OF WEST WING LOOKING N. 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM

A. PORTION OF FIFTEENTH-CENTURY SCREEN FROM 47, HIGH STREET, AMERSHAM
(Preserved in Aylesbury Museum)

B. THE CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY

timbers, had all been hacked away to form a more level surface in the wall-paper period; but on the removal of a late ceiling, in order to expose the timbers, a portion of a painted frieze, about 6 to 8 inches in depth, was found almost uninjured (Pl. XV, A). This frieze would appear to have been very little deeper than the portion remaining, and was Italian arabesque in style, with white ornament on a solid black ground, having in the centre a basket of foliage, on either side of which was a swan and, beyond, a dolphin, etc. It was clear that this frieze had surmounted a rich decoration which consisted of strap-work ornament rather mooresque in character, traces of which were found under white-wash remaining on the timbers.

The tie-beam just above was painted white, and divided horizontally into five bands by black lines. The central and two edging bands were narrow, and between these were two broader bands hatched boldly with a kind of cable-ornament (Fig. 17).

Unfortunately this interesting piece of work was destroyed by the carelessness of the workmen, in spite of the owner having given instructions for its preservation.

This completes the report of the discoveries at Amersham, and we will now pass on to those at Aylesbury.

THE CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY

The 'Crown' at Aylesbury has long been regarded as a building in which almost all traces of its antiquity had vanished through modern alterations. There was some warrant for this idea, as in 1826 the main portion of the original building was demolished in order to form the High Street on its present line. Previously to this the 'Crown' faced the Market Square and extended across the present roadway. It is described by Gibbs[1] as having been 'much of the character of the "King's Head," and was probably a building of about the same date, but of greater extent in its

[1] Robt. Gibbs, *History of Aylesbury*, 1885.

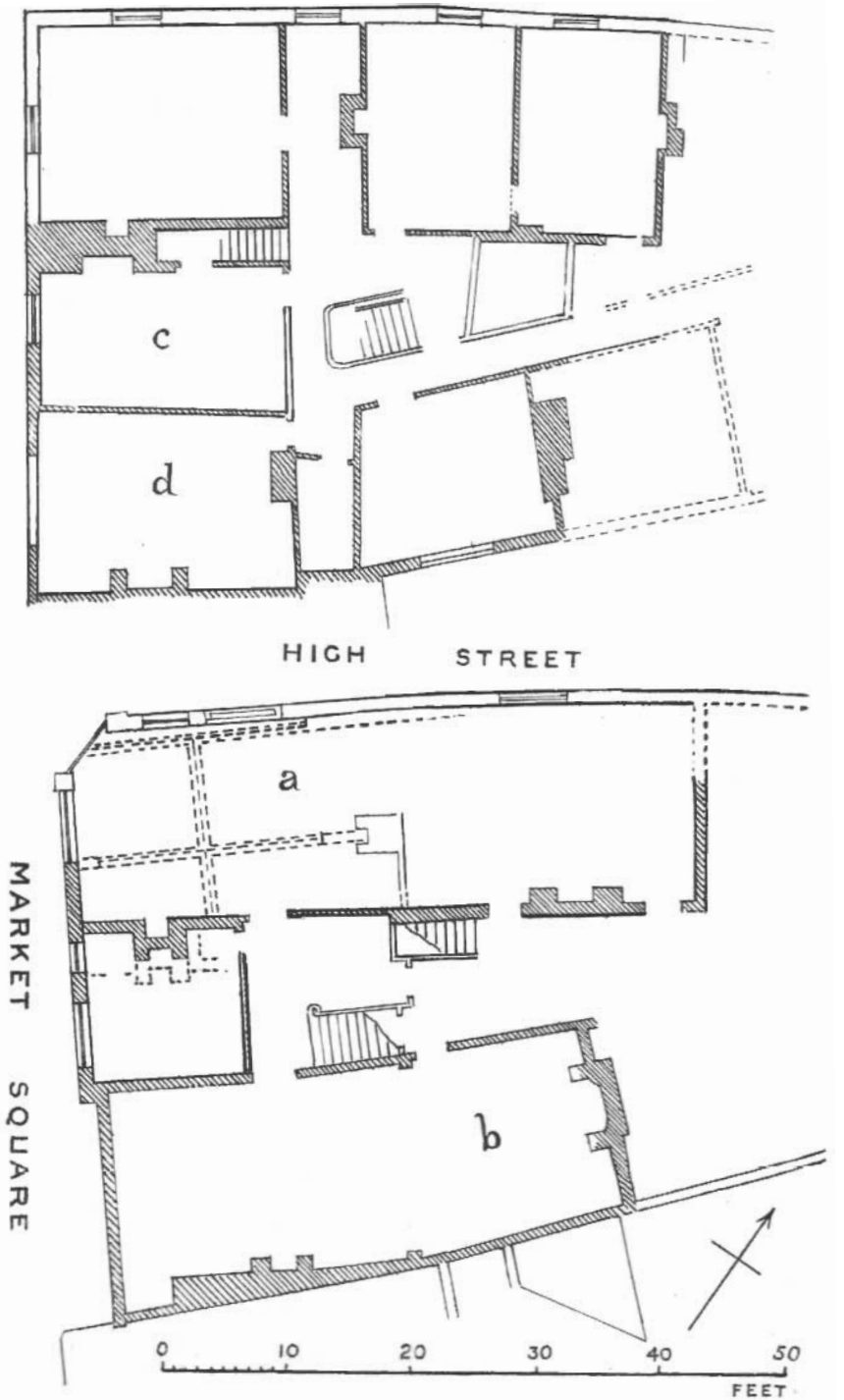


FIG. 19. CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY; PLANS OF GROUND AND FIRST FLOORS, BASED ON PLANS BY MESSRS. TAYLOR & WHITE, ARCHITECTS, AYLESBURY

appurtenances; it had gardens, a bowling green, extensive stables and out-premises covering a large area.'

As it now stands, its main front extends along the line of the High Street, and, judged from its exterior, it might well be considered to have been rebuilt in the early nineteenth century.

Only at the extreme south-west end does a small portion of the original half-timbered structure show

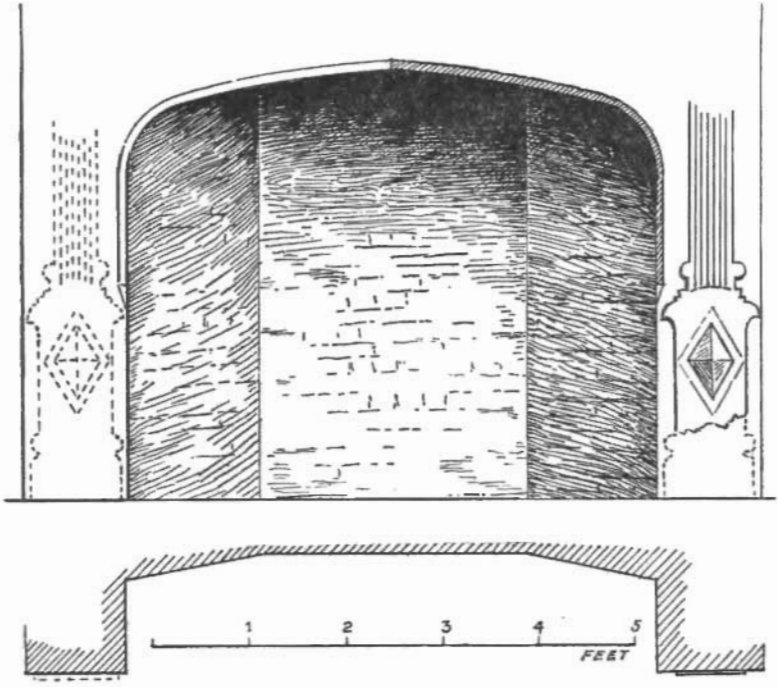


FIG. 20. TUDOR FIREPLACE ON GROUND FLOOR OF CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY. (*b* ON PLAN, FIG. 19)

externally. Recent discoveries have revealed that the alterations in the nineteenth century were more in the nature of a superficial covering than a re-building, and that internally little had been done beyond obscuring the old timbers with ceilings and plaster, inserting modern fireplaces, or disguising the earlier ones, and generally to effect ' modern improvements.'

The present proprietor, Mr. S. Kesley, has done much to reveal the old timbers by the removal of ceilings, which, together with other evidence produced in alterations in 1932, show that the greater part of the structure remains as originally built. Moulded beams occur on the ground floor, in the north-west corner, while in the south-east, 40 feet into the building either way, a moulded brick Tudor fireplace, with Jacobean plaster ornamentation, was found buried behind a most unlikely-looking monstrosity of the nineteenth century (Fig. 20).

The original building was a private dwelling built by Sir John Baldwin, who owned the Manor of Aylesbury in the time of Henry VIII. At the Dissolution Sir John purchased the site of the Greyfriars Monastery,

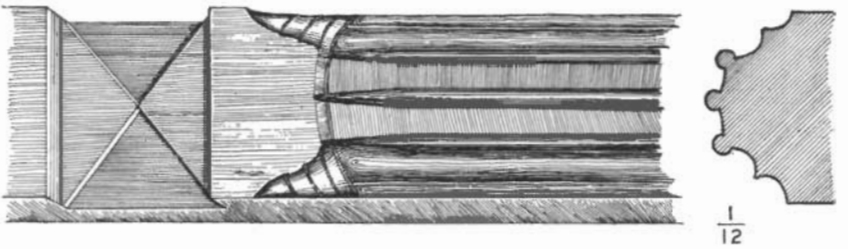


FIG. 21. MOULDED BEAM ON GROUND FLOOR, N.W. CORNER (A ON PLAN), THE CROWN, AYLESBURY

where he built the Manor House. At his death in 1545 the property passed to the Pakingtons, in which family it remained until 1802. Although the Manor House was the principal residence of the Pakingtons, some of the family appear to have occupied the building part of which now constitutes the 'Crown.'

Sir John Pakington, who was Privy Councillor to Queen Elizabeth, built a mansion at Westwood, in Worcestershire, but resided sometimes at Aylesbury, as did also his son, Sir John, who was created a baronet in 1620, when 20 years of age. The father entertained James I and his Queen at Aylesbury in 1603, and lived until 1625, aged 74 years, surviving the first baronet by a few months. He was succeeded by his grandson, also Sir John, the second baronet,

who was distinguished as one of the few prominent men of Buckinghamshire who remained loyal to Charles I. For this he had to pay dearly; his property, including the 'Crown,' was sequestered by Parliament and he was committed to the Tower. At the Restoration he recovered his property, but during the commotion of the Civil War, the Manor House was destroyed and was not again re-built.

The Pakingtons retired to Worcestershire and it was probably at this time that the 'Crown' became a hotel and was so designated to commemorate the loyalty of the owner.

In the principal room of the old 'Crown' 'was a fine panelled ceiling divided into four compartments, which were embellished with the quarterings of the families of Peckham, Cheney, Pakington, Royston, etc.'[1]

This would have been in the main portion of the building destroyed in 1826, and it seems to favour the probability that the 'Crown' may have been Sir John Baldwin's residence before he built his Manor House on the site of the Greyfriars.

The portion of the old house which remains is probably that of lesser importance, but some interesting discoveries were made this year (1932) in two of the rooms on the first floor. These are rooms c and d on plan (Fig. 19), and form the upper part of the half-timbered portion of the house shown in the photograph (Pl. xvi, B). Both these rooms have Tudor fireplaces, Pl. xx, B of carved stone and Pl. xx, A of brick with moulded plaster. Although these have always been open to view, they were thickly coated with dark paint and seem to have escaped notice.

Through the accident of a chimney taking fire, the flue had to be opened at the side of the fireplace in room c. On opening the chimney-breast it was found to have a later brick-facing, one brick thick, which had been built, apparently, to cover up a settlement-crack. Behind this facing, the original wall was found to have

[1] Gibbs, op. cit., p. 413. A description of the escutcheons is given in Richard Lee's *Gatherings of Oxfordshire*, 1574. (Woods MSS., Bodleian Library.)

its surface covered with a series of painted panels representing wall-niches, each of which contained a naturalistic floral design. Among these, honey-suckle, apple blossom, grape vine and a pod plant of some kind could be distinguished (Pl. xviii). Above a strip of five of these panels which had formerly covered the main wall surface of the room is a frieze of horizontal panels containing black letter (Fig. 22). Although these are imperfectly legible, sufficient remains to afford valuable information as to the date of the work.

In the first inscription it is clear that the 'King' referred to is James I, and the second panel is a com-

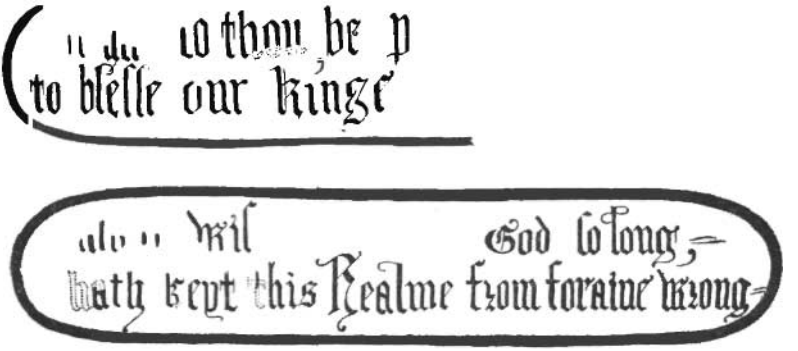


FIG. 22

ment on the course of events during the reign of Elizabeth.

Beneath this painting, in places, could be traced an earlier one, and in the other parts of the room, after many layers of wall paper had been stripped, remains of both these paintings were found. Only in one panel, on the opposite wall, which is formed of wattle and daub, could any considerable portion of the earlier painting be recovered. It is sufficient to indicate the character of the pattern, which is particularly interesting as being more in the nature of traditional art, and quite exceptional among domestic mural paintings of the sixteenth century (Pl. xix).

The design is of rich conventional foliage on strong, upward-flowing stalks, drawn in a crimson line and pricked out with a background of purple.

The style being very similar to the Venetian and Florentine damask fabrics of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. It is certainly early and may be contemporary with the building of the house in the time of Henry VIII.

Imperfect and fragmentary as is this painting, it is remarkable that so much has survived all the patchings and the re-decoration of the wall in its earlier days, while in later times, the friable material of its composition had been subjected to much shattering by nails that had been driven into it, and other rough usage, so that much of the fine plaster surface was so crumbled as to be held in position only by the

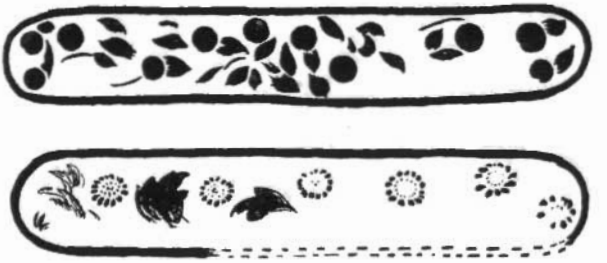


FIG. 23

stout layer of wall-papers which formed its final covering. In its entirety this earlier scheme must have been a strikingly rich and beautiful decoration, in perfect harmony with its surroundings. It appeared to have been restricted to the surface of the plaster panels, the timbers forming a bold and simple framing of the pattern.

The second painting was continuous, regardless of irregularities of the surface, and was carried over the studs, on which remains of it can still be seen, while the long panels of the frieze, which bear the inscriptions over the fireplace, were carried round the room, but filled with floral ornament. The depth of these panels seems to have been regulated by that of the wall-plate in the front of the house, on which they remain as represented on Figs. 23 and 24.

A further find of a painted surface was found, which, although of much later date, is interesting as

bearing on the subject, and serves to make this a unique example in the discovery of domestic mural paintings. After a considerable period of white-washing had effectually obscured the earlier decorations, probably in the early nineteenth century, the walls of this room were again ornamented with a painted pattern. Directly over the white-wash, a ground of deep buff was laid, with a dado of slate grey, about three feet in height. The surface of the buff

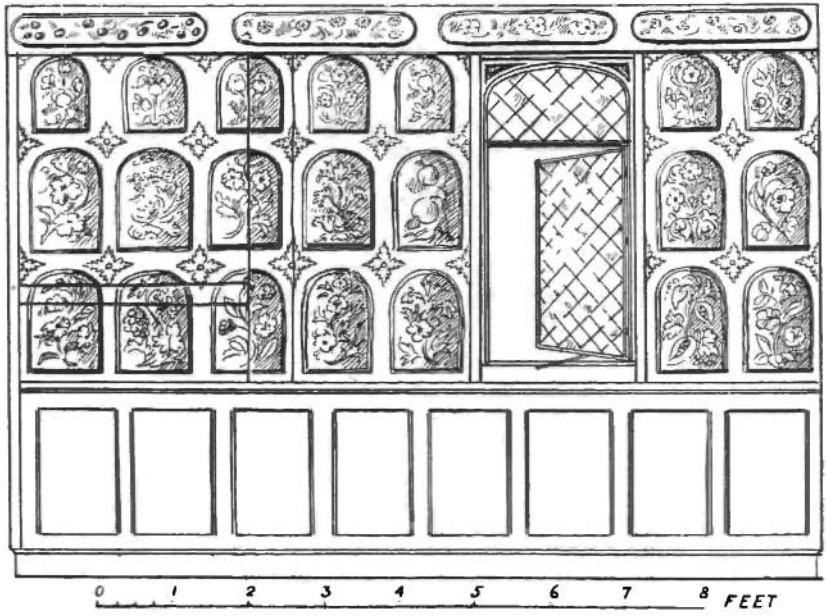
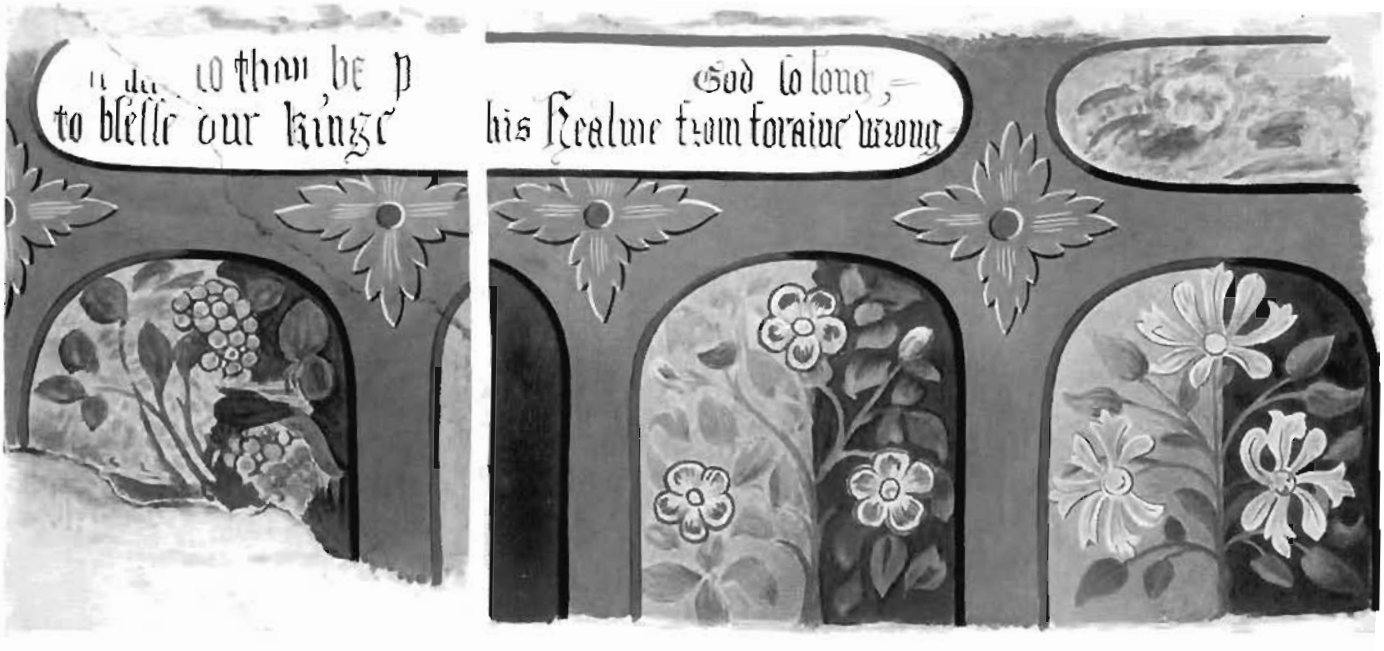


FIG. 24. RESTORATION OF WEST WALL OF ROOM C
Based on remains found

ground was then stencilled over with graceful nosegays of flowers in black, and sprays of foliage in white and brown, with a black ornamental band bordering the top of the dado. The flower patterns appeared to be in endless variety and in no case could I detect any repetition of the same stencil. None of it was in good condition, having had the first wall-paper pasted directly over it, and my drawing on Pl. xvii is somewhat in the nature of a restoration, having been

Drawing by F. W. R.

LATE EIGHTEENTH- OR EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY STENCIL-PAINTING ON WALLS OF ROOM C. THE CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY ($\frac{1}{5}$)



Drawing by F. W. R.

PORTIONS OF WALL-PAINTING, 1603, OVER FIREPLACE, ROOM C. $(\frac{1}{8})$
THE CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY

To face Plate XIX.

REMAINS OF EARLY SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PAINTING FOUND UNDER THOSE OF PLATES XVII AND XVIII, IN ROOM C, THE CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY ($\frac{1}{8}$)

recovered partly from what remained on the wall and partly from the soaked-off wall-paper, to the back of which much of the painting adhered in spite of the greatest care. The simple nature of the work admitted of such a reproduction being made with fair accuracy. The general effect of this decoration is quite pleasing and is a most successful example of the use of the stencil. It is, in fact, the only instance of a stencilled pattern that I have met with in domestic wall-painting.

Although no similar example seems to have been noticed, there is little doubt, from the great variety of the stencil patterns, that this method of wall-decoration must have been fairly extensively practised during the early part of the nineteenth century, before wall-papers appear to have become sufficiently economical to obtain general usage. Between this painting and the first wall-paper was a newspaper of 1843.[1]

[1] Another instance of the late use of wall-painting and the appearance of wall-papers in the mid-nineteenth century, has just occurred at the White Swan Inn, Aylesbury, where a fixture of shelves put up about 1870, was removed and the wall behind was covered with seven or eight wall-papers. These covered a large painted landscape composition which extended over the whole wall space, about 14 feet in width, and consisted of a barrack-like mansion of early nineteenth-century style, a ruined church, a background of mountains and a fox-hunt in the foreground. Unfortunately the wall-papers had been so roughly torn and scraped off as to completely ruin the painting. On the surface of the painting were pasted a number of strips of newspapers of 1847. The practice of pasting newspapers on the walls would seem to have been not uncommon in the early nineteenth century. The *Times* of 18th January, 1933, records that in an old house at Fetcham Grove, Leatherhead, the walls of a room had been covered with copies of *The Times*, the earliest date of which was 1821. These were overlaid by about fourteen wall-papers, which covered not only the walls but several blocked-up windows.

The use of the printed page for papering walls goes back much earlier than the era of newspapers, but appears to have been a secondary use of spoiled sheets, the backs of which were printed with ornamental patterns.

As early as 1568, Herman Schinkel, citizen and printer of Delft, in answer to a charge of having printed certain ballads, set up the defence :

" that they were printed in his
" absence by his servant, and on his
" return he refused to deliver them
" and threw them into a corner
" intending to print roses and stripes
" on the other side, to paper attics
" with."*

From this it would appear that such early wall-papers were used only for inferior rooms. It seems, also, that this method of wall decoration was in early times, very limited, but was possibly more extensive than the scarcity of their remains would suggest. The recognition of such works from the later wall-papers with which they would mostly be covered, would be beyond the capabilities of the ordinary workman and consequently they would meet with destruction more easily than the painted surface.

There is, however, little connection between these early wall-papers and the later newspapers and wall-papers which are the result of the production of paper in continuous rolls combined with cylinder printing.

* *Notes and Queries*, New Series, II, July, 1856.

There is little doubt that the walls of the adjoining room d have also been painted, but the opportunity for their examination has not yet occurred. The proprietor, however, did act on my suggestion to remove the wall-paper over the fireplace, which was supported on canvas and yielded to pressure, showing that it covered an uneven surface, indicating an overmantel of some kind. An interesting find was revealed in fresh and almost perfect condition. The surface of what had originally been a Tudor brick fireplace, with two panels of moulded brick above, had been covered and ornamented with plaster, in an architectural arrangement of classic columns and dentelles in low relief of the same character as that of the fireplace (Pl. XX, A). It is an excellent piece of work of the Jacobean period, but was evidently considered 'demodé' in the early nineteenth century, when canvas was stretched across it and fastened with tin-tacks, to carry wall-papers, and so preserve it for an age when its qualities will be better appreciated.

A narrow wooden sill was also inserted, which was not of sufficient width to form a shelf, but as a finish to the fire-place. This has not been removed, but generations of paint were 'pickled' off from the fireplace, which is now restored to its original white condition, as the work above was found to be, when uncovered.

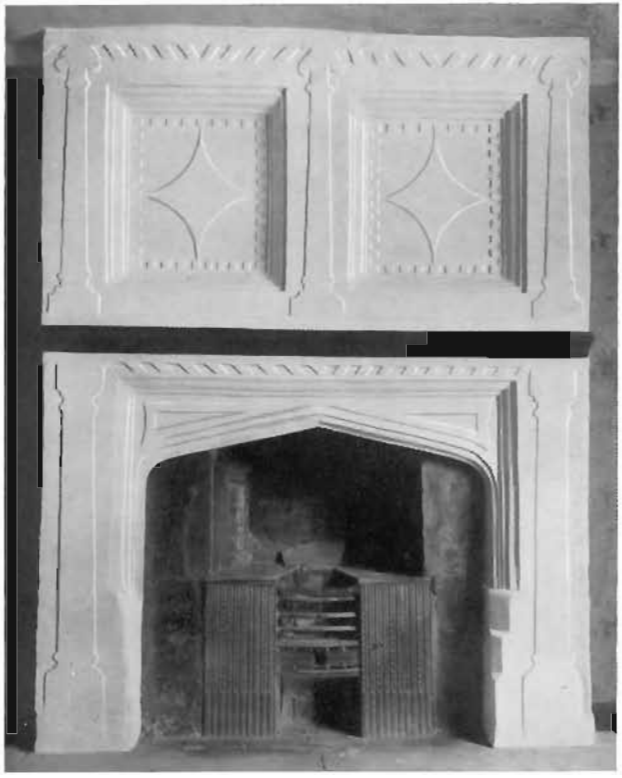
It has been slightly impressed with lines to represent joints, so as to give it the appearance of having been built of blocks of stone.

It seems possible that this plaster decoration, the second wall-painting in room c, and the plaster-ornamented fire-place on the ground floor (Fig. 20) were all part of a scheme of furbishing the house in 1603, on the occasion of the royal visit to Aylesbury.

The king, no doubt, would have stayed at the Manor House, but as we are told 'that the King and Queen, and their train, were entertained with unusual magnificence by Sir John Pakington'[1] some of the guests may have been accommodated at this house.

[1] Nicholls, *The Progresses, etc., of King James Ist*, I, 192.

To face page 164.



A. TUDOR BRICK FIREPLACE WITH JACOBEAN PLASTER COVERING. ROOM D ON PLAN, FIG. 20

B. STONE TUDOR FIREPLACE WITH REMAINS OF WALL-PAINTING OVER. ROOM C ON PLAN, FIG. 20

THE CROWN HOTEL, AYLESBURY

THE KING'S HEAD HOTEL, AYLESBURY

The fireplace and painting (Fig. 25) were found in the room over the passage-way

THE KING'S HEAD, AYLESBURY

A restoration of the room over the archway of this well-known house (Pl. xxi) during the summer of 1932 led to the discovery of the remains of a stone Tudor fireplace, and exposed the original surface of the walls and the roof-timbers. Although only very fragmentary traces of painting were found in this room, they are of

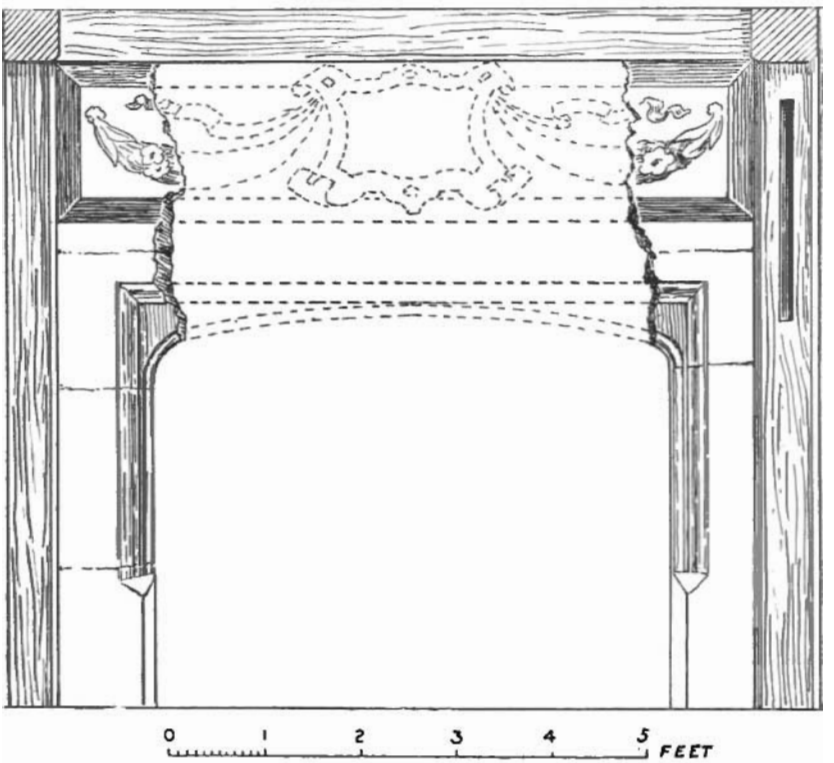


FIG. 25. REMAINS OF WALL PAINTING IN THE KING'S HEAD HOTEL, AYLESBURY

some importance as showing that probably much has already been overlooked and destroyed in other parts of the house, and as indicating that more may yet be discovered buried under wall-coverings, if they are properly observed.

The two jambs of the fireplace, with the springing of the four-centred arch, were found, the centre having

been broken away in order to insert a coved cupboard of the eighteenth century, in the grate. The main portion of the chimney-breast above the arch had also been removed. On the portions that remained, on either side, I uncovered from the whitewash sufficient to show that a large rectangular panel had been painted above the fireplace, having a bold border representing a chamfered frame (Fig. 25). In the centre had probably been a cartouche-shield with a coat of arms, with a dependent 'swag' on either side. Only the ends of these remained, with a small rosette fastening painted in black and shades of grey. The work was apparently of early seventeenth-century date. It was unfortunately not considered worth preserving.

On the opposite wall, which had suffered much repair, I found evidences of painted ornament, but nothing sufficiently definite to record.

THE WHITE HORSE INN, AYLESBURY

This inn, now the headquarters of the British Legion, in Market Square, had a sixteenth-century black-letter inscription, as is mentioned in the Royal Commission's Report.[1]

I am told that the inscription was framed with vine leaves, but it has been washed out with distemper and I cannot find that any further record exists.

EXAMPLES IN THE OUTLYING DISTRICTS OF BUCKS

In the remoter districts of the county, discoveries of domestic mural paintings that have been noticed are few, and their records scanty. This is not surprising, as the likelihood of their importance being recognised is naturally less than in the towns, and, being less accessible, they would not receive the same attention.

At Loughton Manor House, near Wolverton, was a good example of Italian arabesque in black outline. This is noticed and figured in the Royal Commission's Report,[2] and has since been covered with canvas

[1] *Bucks*, i, 39.

[2] *Bucks*, ii, 183.

and wall-paper. Its description by the Commissioners is therefore of value :—

'On the first floor . . . the room at the E. end has a sixteenth-century stone fireplace with a flat four-centred arch in a square head ; the adjoining room has remains of late sixteenth-century paintings on the walls, until recently covered with whitewash : that on the E. wall has been almost entirely exposed and is in fairly good condition : the design is in black line on white plaster and is divided into three bays by vertical lines and zig-zag ornament ; in each bay is a roundel enclosing a head wearing a quilted hat and a ruff : the roundels have angels as supporters, above

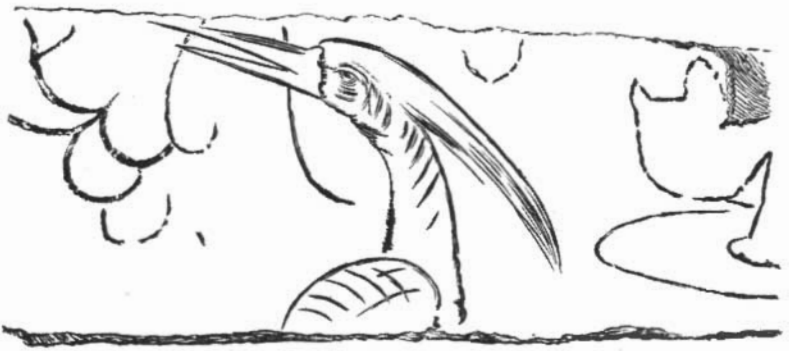


FIG. 26. FRAGMENT OF PAINTED PLASTER FROM FENNY STRATFORD, NOW IN THE BUCKS COUNTY MUSEUM, AYLESBURY

which are cupids on horseback, and foliage ornament ; the frieze has figures of half-seraphs, half foliage and other ornament, and rectangular panels with inscriptions : only one inscription "Feare God," is completely exposed.'

So far as can be judged from the photograph, this painting appears to be the best specimen of its class in the county, and it is to be hoped that it has not been injured and that it may again be brought to light.

At Fenny Stratford there was formerly a painting of considerable interest, having a representation of 'a cat with a fiddle,' with birds and foliage.

It is briefly mentioned in the Royal Commission's

Report[1] and also by Mr. Wm. Bradbrooke in a paper on Fenny Stratford, in the *Bucks Records*,[2] where a portion of it is shown in a photograph which is here reproduced by kind permission (Pl. xxii).

The building which contained this painting was of timber and brick of the fifteenth century with additions and alterations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. At one time it served as an inn and brewery. After falling into disuse, it was, a few years ago, turned into a factory, when the painted plaster was taken down. The portion with the cat and fiddle is in the possession of Mr. Frank Parrott, and a portion bearing the upper part of a heron is in the County Museum at Aylesbury (Fig. 26). These appear to have been portions of a frieze partly painted on the coved plaster of the junction of the wall with the ceiling, the lower part being carried down on to the wall-plate. Only the upper portion seems to have survived, but the decoration was probably continued on the ceiling and wall-surface.

The frieze consisted of a scroll of conventional foliage with animals in the coils. In style this work belongs to a distinct class which may be called Tudor Arabesque. It is frequently called Jacobean, but although it may have survived into the early seventeenth century, its origin and development belong to the sixteenth century. It is drawn in a strong, vigorous outline on the white plaster ground, the ornament being relieved here and there with colours, these being principally a somewhat vivid green, red and yellow. In feeling it is Renaissance, but differs entirely from wall-paintings of the definitely Italian and French Renaissance; these are usually in black only, and a good example of which is that at Loughton Manor House, referred to above. In the former class the animal forms are much more naturalistic and free from fanciful distortions, while the foliage and flowers, although conventional, are of a novel and more varied character, and relatively free from the classical acanthus. In its earlier stages this class of work was based more

[1] *Bucks*, ii, 11A. [2] Vol. 12, 6–23.

WALL-PAINTING AT FENNY STRATFORD, CAT AND FIDDLE, BIRDS, ETC.
By kind permission of the Bucks. Archaeological Society

A. ADAM AND EVE, FROM FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ITALIAN WOODCUT

B. ADAM AND EVE, FROM "BIBLIA PAUPERUM"

C. WALL-PAINTING OF ADAM AND EVE. THE SPRING, MEADLE, NEAR MONKS RISBOROUGH

on classical lines, and shows coarse attempts to imitate caryatides, decapitated human heads and other such motifs. But in time these gave way to purely naturalistic animal-forms, such as those in the cat and fiddle painting and that of the stag panel at Bosworth House, Wendover.[1]

Examples of the earlier style can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum: 58884, from Lincoln's

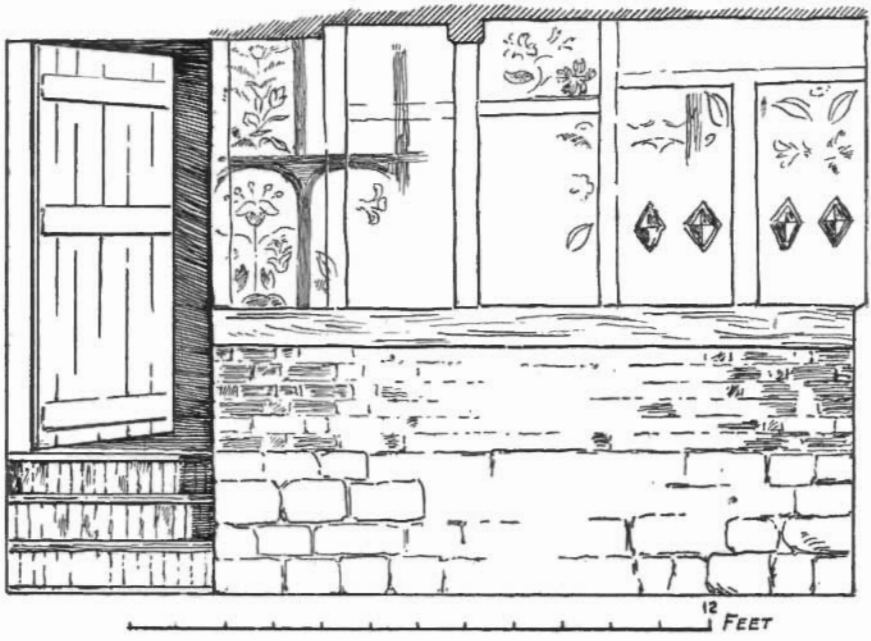


FIG. 27. ROOKERY FARM, GRANBOROUGH

Inn, said to be first half of the sixteenth century; 48805, English, attributed to the second half of the sixteenth century.

At Rookery Farm, a quarter of a mile N.W. of Granborough Church, is a painted wall in a cellar, or sub-cellar, adjoining the house on its W. side.

[1] *Arch. Journ.* LXXXVII, 59, Pl. vi.

It is about 12 feet in height, about 5 feet of which is below ground level. The lowest part of the wall is built of stone blocks, 3 feet, followed by just over 2 feet of brick. Above this the wall is constructed of timber with wattle and daub filling, the plate resting at ground level. This upper part is plastered and painted, the surface being divided into arched panels filled with simple floral ornament of the style of work just discussed. At one end, two of the panels formed by the timbers each contain two diamond forms, but these appear to be a later painting over the floral pattern. My visit was very brief and I had time only to make the sketch (Fig. 27) without being able to examine or record the work in detail.

Its great interest is in showing how general this work must have been for such a room to have been decorated in this way. It is known as the ' Brewhouse,' and has formerly been used for this purpose. It is mentioned by the Royal Commission.[1]

An extraordinary figure-subject of Adam and Eve is preserved in a farmhouse, the Spring, at Meadle, near Monks Risborough, which for crudity of drawing is possibly unsurpassed in the country (Pl. xxiii, C).

It is difficult to suppose that this is the work of a ' Painter-Stainer,' and is more probably the production of some local tyro.

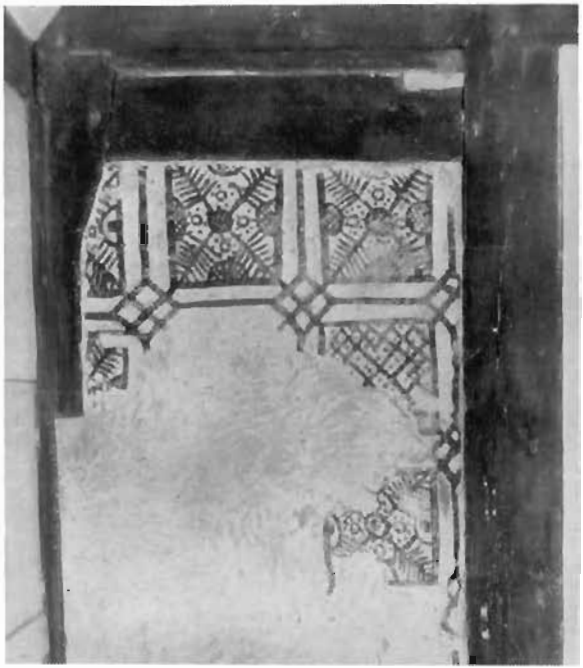
Evidently an effort has been made to represent the subject in the time-honoured, conventional manner, as in the Italian fifteenth-century woodcut (Pl. xxiii, A). This reached our country by such prints as in the *Biblia Pauperum* (Pl. xxiii, B), where all the fruit has disappeared from the tree.

After a course of copying we may suppose it to have become transformed as we find it at Meadle. In this the tree is not only denuded of its fruit, but most of its leaves, while the serpent has descended to embrace his unfortunate victims, his coiled body being utilized by the painter as a medium on which to indulge his passion for writing texts.

[1] *Bucks*, ii, 120.

WALL-PAINTING, CHALFONT ST. PETER
By kind permission of the Bucks Archaeological Society

A. HOUSE IN THE HIGH STREET, CHALFONT ST. PETER, IN WHICH IS THE WALL-PAINTING SHOWN ON PLATE XXIV



B. WALL-PAINTING, DEAN FARM, JORDANS

Photos by E. Clive Rouse

To face page 171.

A placard has been placed against the tree on which is written in black letter :—

'As by the disobedience of one manne many weare made sinners so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

If the date 1627, carved on the beam over a fireplace, may be relied on to date the house, we then have some indication of the period to which this curious production belongs.

The building is fully described in the Royal Commission Report[1] and the painting is mentioned.

In 1918 a painting was discovered in a small house on the east side of the London Road, Chalfont St. Peter (Pl. xxiv), when the walls of a room on the first floor were being washed down for re-decoration.

This example is specially interesting on account of the very modest cottage in which it occurs, and which forms striking evidence of how widely the practice of wall painting was carried during the sixteenth century (Pl. xxv, A).

This painting consists of a panel framed in strapwork, which contains the following inscription in black letter :—

'When any thinge thou takest in hand to do or Enterpryse fyrst markewell The fynall end there of that Maye Aryse. Feare God.'

A detailed description of this painting appears in the *Bucks Records*, and is illustrated with the photograph here reproduced also by kind permission of the Bucks Archaeological Society.

A recent discovery has been made at Dean Farm, Jordans (in the parish of Chalfont St. Giles), by Mr. P. B. Hart, who has converted the property into a dwelling-house. Extensive repairs were necessary owing to neglect, and in these operations Tudor fireplaces and much fine timber have been opened up. Fortunately Mr. Hart is very interested in such matters and he has restored the building with sympathetic care. He tells me that all ancient features were so

[1] *Bucks*, i, 261.

hidden up as to be quite unrecognisable until they were revealed by the work necessary for the repairs. This explains its omission from the schedule of the Royal Commission.

The main part of the building appears to have been built in the sixteenth century, with later alterations and additions.

In one room on the first floor, a painted pattern has been found beneath white-wash, on a panel 3 feet in width (Pl. XXV B). The design consists of a simple arrangement of squares filled with various patterns and having borders of straight lines and connected at the corners by smaller squares placed diagonally. The pattern is painted in black on the white plaster and is of an elementary character.

A room on the ground floor has the studs ornamented with a scroll of simple brush strokes in white. This simple, uncultured style of work seems to occur in outlying and remote places and has similarity to that at Shelley Hall, Ongar.[1]

The Old Rectory at Beaconsfield, built in the first half of the sixteenth century, has remains of painting on the fireplace and two posts in the N. wall of a room at the E. end of the N. wing.[2] One post has a female head and shoulders in Elizabethan costume and there are traces of other figures and ornament.

At Hulcott Manor House, now a farm, said to be of seventeenth-century date, are some paintings on the plaster fillings between the timbers in the upper part of the staircase. These are representations of Hercules and the Lion, Leda and the Swan, etc., but have been much restored. An illustration of them is given in the Victoria County History, *Bucks*, ii, 342.

An example at Stoke Poges Manor House closes the list of Bucks wall-paintings. It does not properly belong to the present story, as Stoke Poges Manor was in its time one of the most important mansions in the country. The existing building is but a remnant of the large house built in 1553 by the Earl of Huntingdon, the greater part of which was pulled down in

[1] *Trans. Essex Arch. Soc.* (N.S.) xii, 23, Figs. 1 and 2.

[2] V.C.H. *Bucks*, i, 42.

Drawing by E. Clive Rouse

WALL-PAINTING IN STOKE POGES MANOR HOUSE

1775. The portion that remains was for many years neglected and put to base uses, such as a game-keeper's lodge and storehouse. Sir Edwin Landseer for a time used part of it as a studio and it has since passed into private ownership and suffered further vandalism. The present owner has done much to preserve the ancient features that remain and it is to be hoped that the building may now be safe from further destruction.

Formerly there were many interesting wall-paintings in the house, and the Royal Commission includes the following :—

> 'On the first floor, one room contains a carved oak fireplace, with caryatid pilasters, and a carved frieze and shelf, of mid-sixteenth century date : above it is a panel with painted precepts such as "Feare the Lord, Obey the prince," "Love thi neighbour," etc. : on the walls are painted armorial bearings, with the initials E.B., B.B., H.H., a coronet, etc. ; and on the north side of the fireplace, a bird with a long beak, resembling an ostrich.'[1]

I am indebted to Mr. J. W. Bloe for the following, in addition to the above mottoes :—

'Beware of Pride,' 'Speak the Truth,' and 'Bear no malice.'

Only one of these paintings now remains, a curious armorial device, in black and red, of the ragged staff, with two bears within a garter on which is the Royal motto, and surmounted with a coronet ; beneath are the initials E.B. (Pl. xxvi). It has not as yet been identified. The sole relic of this interesting work has been drawn by Mr. Rouse, and its reproduction may not be altogether out of place in this record.

[1] *Bucks*, i, 289.