

DERBYSHIRE ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
AND  
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

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Bradshaw Hall and the Bradshaws.

I.

THE HALL.

BY ERNEST GUNSON.

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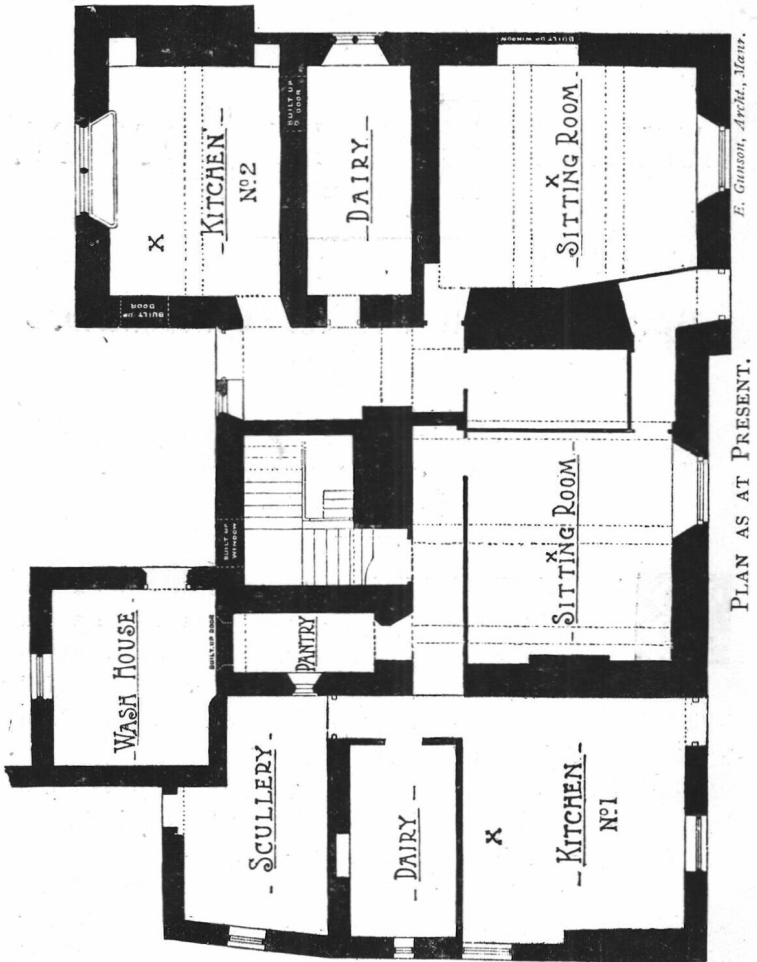
**B**RADSHAW HALL is beautifully situated on the southern slope of Eccles Pike, about a mile and a half from Chapel-en-le-Frith, and commands extensive views on three sides. Old as the present Hall is, it originally replaced a far more ancient building, as to which a few suppositions may be offered.

When Henry II., in 1156, "caused nearly all the castles which had been erected in England in the time of King Stephen to be demolished,"\* the building, without special licence from the Crown, of stone or embattled castles or mansions was prohibited, which accounts for the frequent entries in the history of many of our old families that during the following centuries a license was granted to them to erect stone walls and embattle their residences. Hence the country gentry and yeomen returned to the custom of their forefathers, and built those half-timbered

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\* Roger de Hoveden.

structures of which so many still, fortunately, remain to us. In Derbyshire, however, as in other counties where stone is the plentiful building material, and timber comparatively scarce,



they are rare, for when in Tudor times the prohibition was removed, or no longer observed, the fashion arose to rebuild with the materials nearest to hand, rather than to continue to



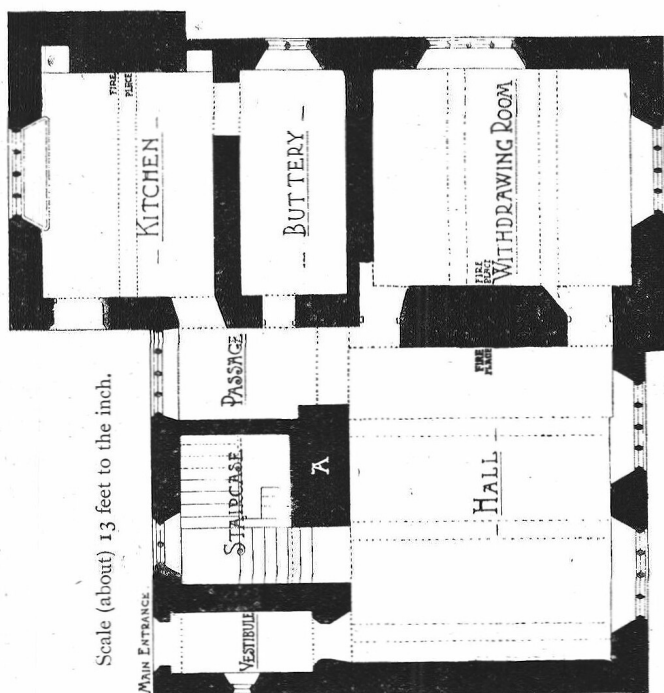
JOHN BRADSHAW,  
SERJEANT-AT-LAW.

*President at the Trial of King  
Charles I., 1649.*

*Jo: Bradshawe*

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uphold those wooden structures to which fire was, and still is, always an imminent danger. This latter reason was brought prominently to the fore at that time, for it was not until the advent of the Tudors that the chimney was introduced into usual domestic architecture in England, and it naturally necessitated great changes in internal arrangement, and added no



BRADSHAW HALL, AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED IN 1610-20.

little to that danger until its construction was perfected by experience.

The present Hall at Bradshaw is an interesting instance of such rebuilding, for its very plan tells us that it has been built upon the foundations of its half-timbered predecessor. Taking the ground plan of the hall and of the withdrawing room

together, we have a parallelogram of 42 ft. by 18 ft., which closely compares, as to length at least, with that of the old home of the Lancashire Radcliffes, which until recent years upheld its oaken structure of 43 ft. by 26 ft.

Such was the original plan of the mediæval hall of the Bradshawes in, perhaps, the thirteenth century—a plain hall, open to its high-pitched roof, with a hearthstone in the centre from which the smoke ascended to the rafters and found its way out through a hole in the tiling called the “louvre.” The entrance would be at the lower end of the hall, and is again evidenced on the original ground plan of the present building, where the position was retained. At the upper end of the hall, where the “Withdrawing Room” is marked on the plan, would be the raised dais, where the head of the house and his family dined and lived. As time progressed, the requirements of civilization prompted the addition of kitchens to the lower end of the hall, which would be added on the site of what is now “Kitchen No. 1” on the modern plan, and private rooms for the gentry would be built, or at least partitioned off, at the upper end of the hall. This was the usual plan of a mediæval hall, and a typical example may still be seen at Baguley, near Cheadle, where the kitchen and private rooms alone have been rebuilt, leaving the grand old half-timbered hall in its original condition as it was before chimneys were thought of.

The advent of the chimney caused immediate structural changes; the introduction came from the Continent towards the close of the fifteenth century, and in the days of Henry VIII., if not earlier, the custom of adding stone stacks to the existing buildings became prevalent throughout the country. These were usually built outside one of the sides of the hall, and contained a broad archway, opening into the room, in which the log fire was kindled. This seems to have been the case at Bradshaw, for on the line of what was formerly the outside wall of the hall is still standing a great stone chimney-stack, marked A on the plan. That it was the chimney to the ancient Hall, and is the oldest portion of the present building, there

can be little doubt, for it plays no part in the later design. Moreover, a portion of the top, where the plaster "parging" of its flue (there tapered to about 2 ft. in diameter) can still be seen, has been taken down to allow the main timbers of the present roof of 1610-20 to pass over its head; it has been filled in and its archway beneath built up. When the architect designed the later building, he found that this old stack fell into line with his plan and served as a support for the great staircase which he built around it. Hence, it has survived as a solitary memorial to mark the site of the structure, which has almost vanished. One other memento, however, we have. The staircase is supported on bearing timbers made of principals from the old high-pitched roof, in which the mortices and oak pins still disclose their previous use and design; these, after serving their original purpose for generations, were yet sound enough to be used to sustain the heavy staircase—a remarkable testimony to the quality of the oak selected for such purposes some six centuries ago, and still apparently as good as ever.

It is very possible that at the date when the chimney-stack was added, the old wooden kitchens were replaced by a small single-storied or low stone building on the site of the present kitchen, marked "Kitchen No. 1" on the modern plan, for tradition says that a wing of Bradshaw was pulled down, perhaps a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago, and its materials used to build an inn at Chapel-en-le-Frith.\* This is the only position from which any portion of Bradshaw could then have been removed, and that it was but a very small building is evidenced by the fact that there are original windows in the present Hall confining its breadth and height to the confines of the present kitchen, and its length could not have been greater because of the falling away in the level of the natural ground. There is a little confirmatory evidence, too, that these Tudor kitchens were preserved in use, at least after the main hall was rebuilt, in that the 1610-20 design was not completed quite contemporaneously.

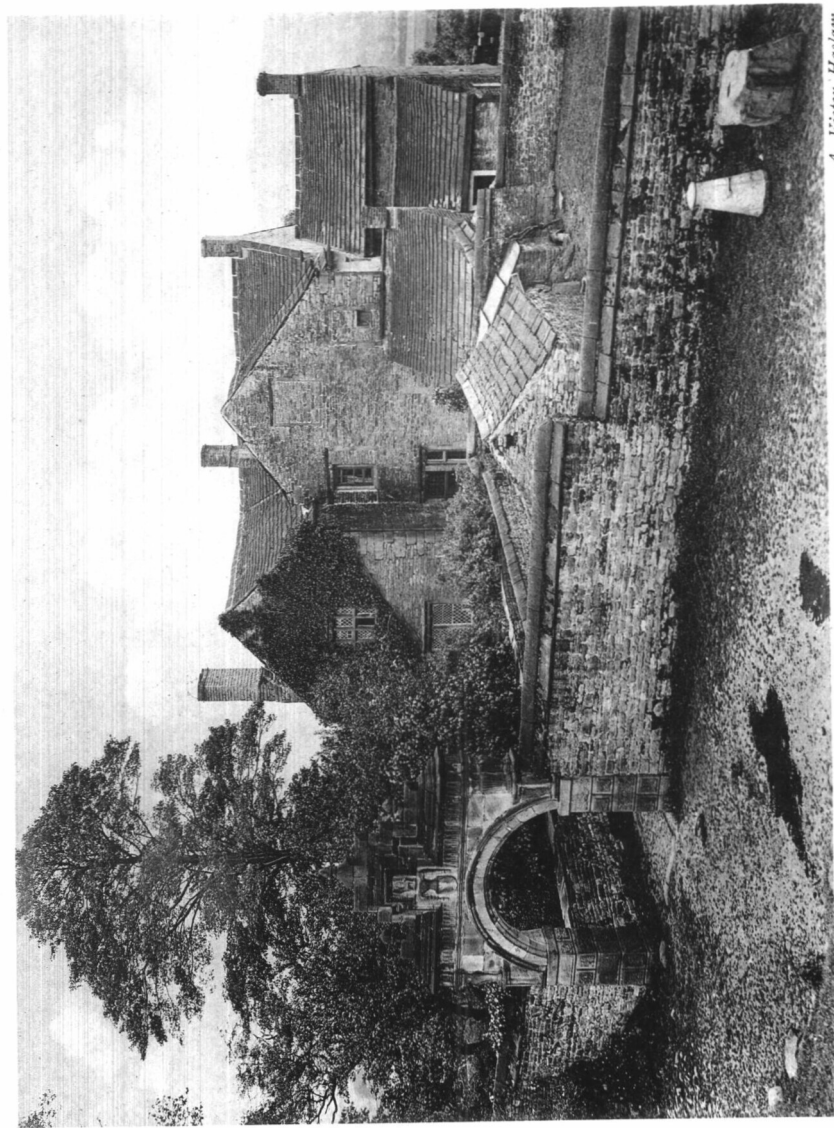
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\* The "Royal Oak" Inn has been mentioned, but little reliance can be placed on this.

The hall was evidently completed before the new kitchens, and perhaps the present Withdrawing Room, were added, for there is a curious miscalculation in the breadth of the kitchen wing, which has consequently slightly overlapped the jamb of the passage window, and which would not have occurred if the angle had been built in one piece. Therefore, it is probable that the old kitchens and living rooms were retained and used until the new dining hall was erected, and that subsequently the old kitchens (only) were retained for general purposes, for at that date they would be less than a century old. These would naturally be the first to decay, and probably their removal became necessary in the eighteenth century.

The foregoing description, imperfect, perhaps, in some of its deductions, will serve to convey a general idea of the ancient Hall as it existed in the closing years of the reign of Elizabeth. Then the main dining hall itself had probably stood for more than three hundred years, and the time had arrived when fashion or decay, though probably the former, demanded its reconstruction.

Between the years 1600 and 1620, but more probably within the latter of the two decades, Bradshaw Hall was entirely rebuilt, with the sole exceptions of the great chimney and, probably, the kitchens, as previously explained. The result of that rebuilding is well illustrated in the photographs before us, and, so far as the outside is concerned, as its architect left it nearly three hundred years ago, so it stands to-day, save that economies in avoidance of the old window tax have, unfortunately, induced the filling in of many of the windows, and on the south side a vandalism which can be felt, and is, therefore, not illustrated, has substituted four nineteenth century sash windows. The architecture, although of this date, is still in the Elizabethan style, but, as is usually the case where hard gritstone is used, owing to the difficulty of its working, the details are as simple as possible. The windows are beautifully proportioned examples of the plain mullioned and transomed type, so frequently seen in buildings of that period, especially in this county. Most of



*A. Victor Haslam.*

BRADSHAW HALL, FROM THE NORTH.



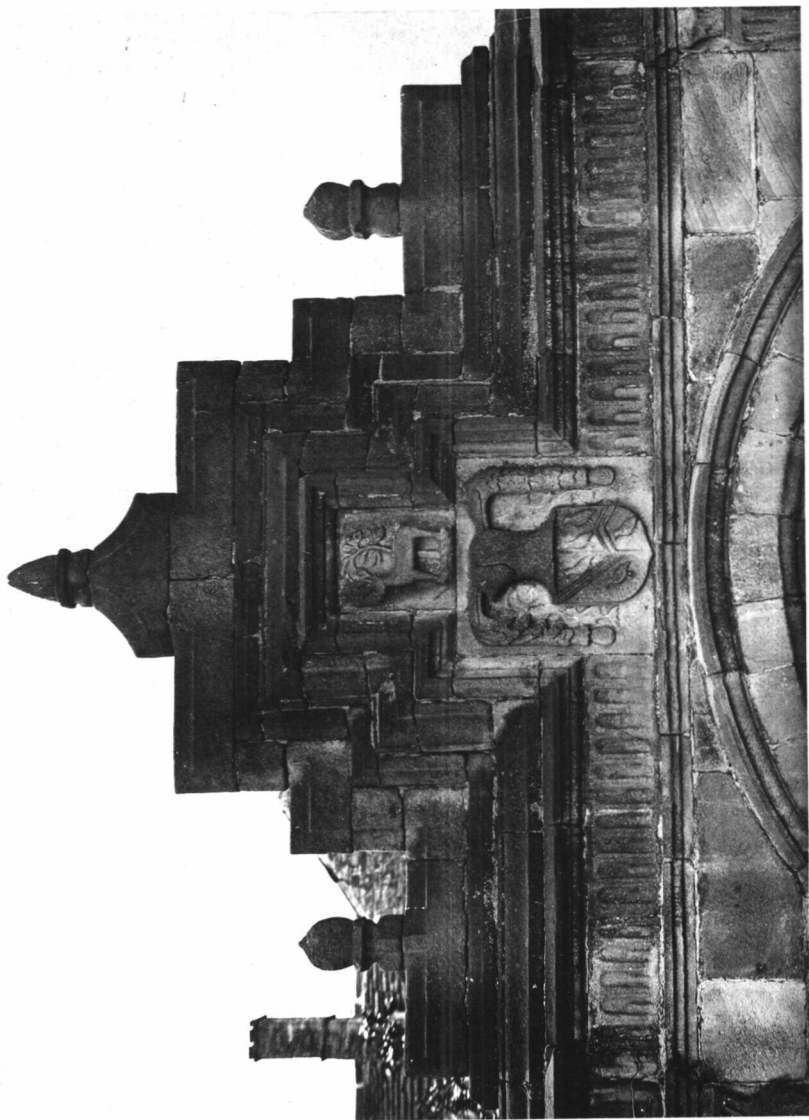
them are composed of four lights with a transom, and contain, or have contained, tinted glass within diamond-shaped leaden panes. The proportions of the mullions and transoms convey the idea of strength and lightness combined, and the straight label mould, over the window head, is as effective as it is simple. Those windows which have been filled in, still, in most cases, retain their jambs, heads, and sills, and, therefore, but await the light of restoration.

The gable coping is of neat design, and, without being obtrusive, assists to give that air of solidity to the building which is one of the characteristics of the Elizabethan style. The door heads are simply plain lintels, segmental in shape, with a deep splay, which is continued down the jambs, terminating in neat stops. As neither of them (for there are two) bears any inscription, the main entrance was probably protected by a porch, and this is the more likely because, if its doorway were turned towards the kitchen entrance, the arrangement would bring the main gateway and approach into a straight line with the centre of the small courtyard so formed, instead of, as at present, in line with neither doorway. Whilst upon the subject of this porch, it should be mentioned that, built into one of the farm buildings adjoining, is a stone which may well have been preserved from its gable, for it is inscribed with the initials of Francis Bradshawe, the then owner of the Hall, and of his wife, Barbara Bradshawe, *née* Davenport, namely "F B B B 1619," above a design somewhat resembling the linen-fold pattern, so often seen on oak furniture of that and of an earlier period. If this were the true position of the stone, it suggests that the Hall was completed in 1619, which would agree with the date, one year later, upon the main gateway, for that would probably not be erected until the extra, and bulky, traffic necessary during the building operations, no longer prohibited a restricted approach.

The gateway, which stands some 80 ft. away, on the old bridle road leading to the ancient highway on Eccles Pike, is, as will be seen from its illustrations, of an exceptionally neat and

picturesque character. Above the arch, on the north side, it is embellished with armorial bearings, and on the south side is ornamented with a shield within floriated scroll work below the inscription, "1620, FRANCIS BRADSHAWE." There are indications that originally the archway was enclosed with double gates, and rebates for which still remain in the upper section, but the lower has evidently been slightly restored, perhaps some half-century ago. A feature of the walling round Bradshaw is its heavy double coping. The eastern boundary wall has been removed, but its line is traceable between the Hall and the present road, and was continued to the terraces on the south side. In the field, in front of these, can still be seen the outlines of the old gardens or orchards.

Entering the Hall by the principal entrance—that is, speaking figuratively from the original plan, for the doorway is now built up—we notice a quaint little window on the right, about 1 ft. 8 ins. by 1 ft. 2 ins., which gave light to the vestibule, but which now merely opens into a modern addition to one of the two farmhouses, into which Bradshaw has been divided, perhaps, fifty years ago. Hence we pass through a splayed doorway into the dining hall. This was (for it is now divided by partitions) a spacious room, 22 ft. by 18 ft., lighted by a pair of four-light windows, now, alas, as previously mentioned, replaced by modern work. Above, to support the floor of the upper storey, and the rooms at Bradshaw are unusually lofty, are massive oak beams about 16 ins. deep by 14 ins. wide, moulded and stopped on the lower edges. On the left is a very fine segmental arch over the entrance to the staircase; it has a span of 4 ft., and its depth from front to back is 4 ft. 1 in., being deeply splayed on the outer side; altogether, the design is striking, and if the old window, lighting the staircase behind it, were but opened out, the effect would be distinctly quaint and picturesque. This archway springs from the ancient chimney, through which it may have been cut, which here, for the greater part of its length, forms the side of the hall, and no doubt, to the mind of its seventeenth century



*A. Victor Haslam*

BRADSHAW HALL. DETAIL OF GATEWAY, NORTH SIDE.

architect, added much to the stability of the building; but, speaking as one of his modern successors, this, his work, was too sound to require. Further, on the same side, is another archway leading to the kitchen, and at the top of the hall was the original great fireplace and a door leading into the withdrawing room. There seem to be some indications of a door in a similar position at the opposite end of the same wall, but whether it was a second door into the withdrawing room,\* designed, perhaps, for the purpose of an even effect in the interior detail of the hall, or whether it was merely a cupboard in the thickness of the wall, is not now apparent.† Above it, certainly, although now plastered over, is a large cupboard, which opened into the withdrawing room. Of this we are told, in *Secret Chambers and Hiding Places*, that there is, or was, a secret chamber, high up in the wall, large enough to hold three persons. Probably the cupboard would hold three persons, but, alas for the romance, much of the space which it now occupies was formed by the modern alterations to divide the Hall into two farmhouses, and comprises the space over the low internal porch or passage to the door, then opened for access to the garden. A "*priest hole*" in the Puritanic house of Bradshaw would indeed have been an anomaly. The withdrawing room is lighted by similar windows, but that to the east has been built up. Identical beams cross its ceiling, but in a different direction to those of the hall, showing that it never formed part of the same room, as was once thought; moreover, its chimney-stack separates the two.

Turning to the left into the passage, ornamented with a moulded cornice, which leads to the kitchens, we notice the fine four-light window at the end, cruelly mutilated to form the modern main entrance. On the right are the doorways to the kitchen and larder, to the former of which there is no door nor any trace of there ever having been anything of the kind.

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\* The splay of the jamb supports this alternative. See next paragraph.

† It must be remembered that all these observations were made within plastered and papered walls which, therefore, cannot be disturbed for theoretical enquiry.

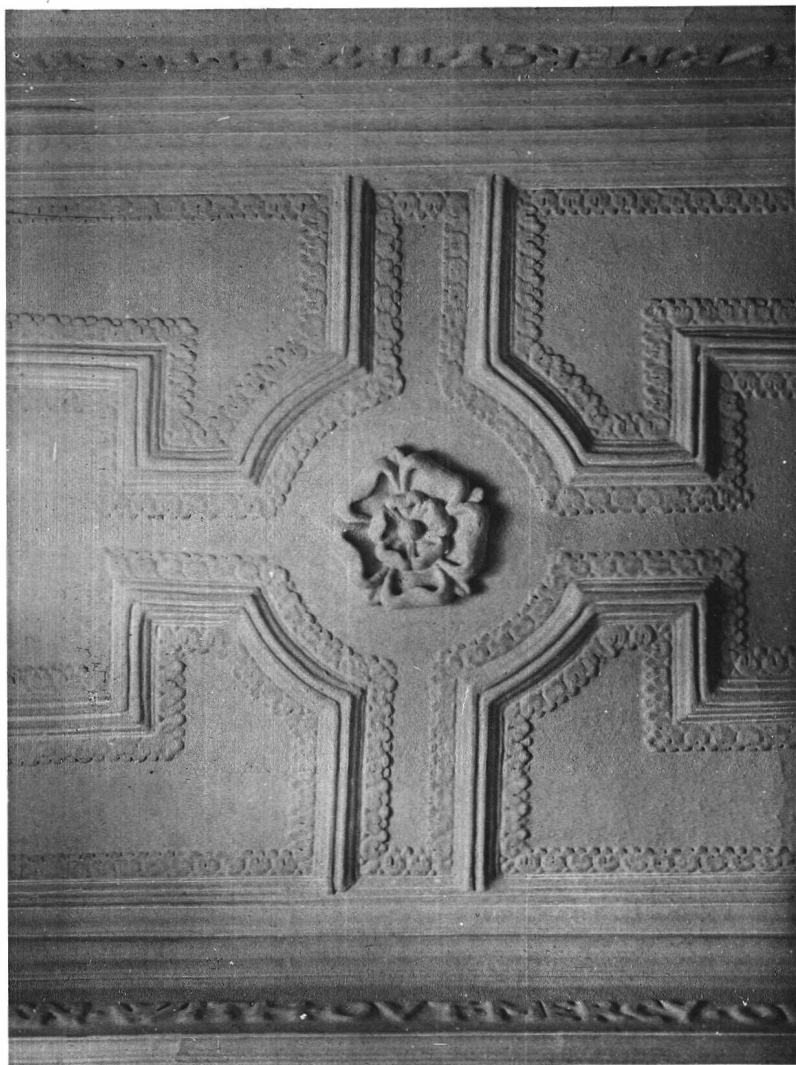
A feature of Bradshaw is that all the door jambs have been splayed off, both in the same direction, and those of the kitchens are severely treated in this manner. The direction always follows the line of general traffic, and the idea evidently was to cut off the corners and, especially in the case of the kitchens, no doubt to facilitate the carriage of the heavily-laden trenchers to the dining hall. The kitchens are similarly lighted, and the fireplace is contained in a large outside chimney-stack, as shown on the photograph taken from the north-east.

Returning through the hall to ascend the main staircase, we pass, on the right, under the stairs, a store room or very small cellar, but it is now little lower than the level of the rest of the flooring; it may, however, have been the entrance to the old cellars, of which more anon. The massive staircase is about 4 ft. in width, and consists of solid oak steps; it is supported by the ancient chimney-stack, and opens into a small landing on the first floor, from which access is given to various bedrooms, and through them to others. This landing, which originally was lighted by the usual four-light window, now partially built up, has a remarkable ceiling, cornice, and frieze in plaster work (see illustration). Around the latter, in raised letters, is the following verse or verses:—“: LOVE · GOD · BVT · NOT · GOLD\* · A · MAN · WITH · OVT · MERCY · OF · MER · \* · CY · S†HALL · MISS · BVT · HE SH\*ALL · HAVE · MERCY · THAT · MERCYFVL · IS.\*”

It will be noticed that the words are separated by single pellets and the sentences by colons—a custom which, I am told, was observed on the coinage of the period. The proverbs have a biblical ring, but the Concordance does not assist one's memory to find them in the Bible, nor are they known to Dr. Cox in his extended ecclesiastical researches. The first, however, suggests a Puritanic variant for “Love God and honour the King,” and the second would seem to be the favourite motto of the Bradshawes, for it is carved on the bedstead of President

\* At these points occur the angles of the walls.

† This letter is almost obliterated.



*A. Victor Haslam.*

BRADSHAW HALL, CEILING OVER THE STAIRCASE.

Bradshawe at Marple Hall; and Mr. Isherwood, of that Hall, writes that it is also to be seen on a window at Bradshaw Hall, Lancashire. That it should ever have been the motto of the famous President at the trial of Charles I. is a curious corollary in the study of human nature.

On this floor, over the kitchen, still remains a fine example of a panelled room. The design of the panelling, which is of oak, and extends from floor to ceiling, is similar to that at Bolsover, illustrated on page 158 in last year's volume of this *Journal*, and the effect, aided by the quaint and perfect four-lighted window, with its tinted leaden lights, is everything that an archæologist could wish.\* Probably other rooms were similarly treated when the Hall was in the heyday of its prosperity.

The staircase is continued to the attics, still with the solid oak steps, which, coupled with the windows (now blocked) in the gables, suggests that here the men servants slept, although the pitch of the roof allows little head room, as we are accustomed to require it. In the bulkhead covering the stairs, the laths are also of oak; a typical instance of the attention which our forefathers devoted to every detail, so that their building might be a credit to them long after they themselves had ceased to take any interest in the matter—a sad contrast to the methods of too many of their modern successors.

One only of the out-buildings need be mentioned, namely, the old cow byre. This is of the same date as the Hall, and its windows are of the same design; if the rest of the old farm buildings were of the same excellent quality, one can gather that the farm would constitute a model of what was considered best in those days.

On the modern plan will be noticed the letter "X" in a position very nearly in the centre of each of the original rooms

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\* Unfortunately, owing to the presence of large cheese-drying frames, which, having been constructed in the room, were too large to be removed through the doorway, it was impossible for Mr. Haslam to obtain a photograph of this room.—ED.

on the ground floor. This letter marks the spot where we have excavated, or, in the case of the withdrawing room, where the floor is boarded, bored, to a depth of five or six feet in search of the old cellars of Bradshaw, which, as will be proved from the inventory of their contents, given by Mr. Bowles on p. 68, certainly existed in the seventeenth century, but we failed to discover them. Under the floor of the dining hall, however, which has evidently been flagged at a later date than the rest of the building, the ground is composed of loose material, and this suggests that the cellars may have been here, but since filled in and flagged over. Elsewhere we found pieces of a deeply-moulded cornice, which perhaps came from the dining hall.

Had the Bradshawe family but continued to reside at the old Hall it would have been preserved to us as the fine building which, for its size, it undoubtedly was, and might have been to-day one of the choicest examples of Elizabethan architecture\* in the county, and, to those who know Derbyshire thoroughly, this is praise indeed.

One fact about Bradshaw is almost unique. From the days of Henry III., when the lands were reclaimed from the forest, until to-day, Bradshaw has never been sold out of the family or forfeited, but has passed down by descent alone to its present owner, Mr. C. E. Bradshaw Bowles, as heir to the founder of its ancient Hall.

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\* I have explained that this type of architecture was continued in Derbyshire after the death of Queen Elizabeth.





BRADSHAW HALL, FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

*A. Victor Haslam.*