

HARWELL VICARAGE

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THE demolition of Harwell Vicarage with its adjacent barns and stables in July–August 1961 provided an opportunity to examine and record the Tudor component of this property. Of the thirty or so buildings with medieval or Tudor features that still remained in the village in 1950 it is one of several now demolished. The Vicarage stood on a sunless site (Fig. 1) on the north side of the Church at a level below the churchyard, and although over £1,000 was spent in 1951 on damp-proofing it, there was further deterioration, partly due to lack of maintenance, before the decision to demolish. There are many who still remember the well-kept house and garden in the times of Samuel Mountjoy Smith, Vicar from 1857 to 1907.

The advowson, rectorial tithes and Upper (Prince's) Manor in Harwell were formerly part of the honour of St. Valery. Those who held¹ them included Richard and Edmund, Earls of Cornwall and Piers Gaveston but it was the Black Prince who arranged for the Church to be appropriated in 1360 to the use of the College of St. Nicholas in Wallingford Castle, the Manor being granted² to the College shortly afterwards. The vicars appointed by the College until its suppression in 1548 had for those days a moderate income, the living in 1535 being valued at £12 4s. 2½d. In 1557 as part of a large transfer of Crown Property, the Manor together with the advowson was purchased³ by the London agents, Mylner and Pynde, for the then tenant, Richard Loder, the transaction being recorded in the name of his son John. But the rectory and rectorial tithes were not included in this sale to John Loder.

The first record of the house that has been traced is in the terrier⁴ of 1634 in which it is clearly identified in the opening phrase "Item, to the Vicarage belongeth a Mansion House, a barne, a hovel, an orchard, two gardens and a barne yard". A brief and separate reference is made in this terrier to the Parsonage house.

The Tudor Portion

At the time of the demolition, the oldest surviving part, A in Fig. 1, consisted of a clearly defined two-storey tiled unit of two bays, 31 feet long and 16 feet wide. In this part, for which the ground plan and a section are included in Fig. 1, most of the original oak timbers⁵ had survived; the posts, ceiling-beams and framework in the partition were visible from the inside of the house and the wattle and daub filling between the panels was revealed during the demolition. This filling was covered externally with roughcast and internally sometimes by lath and plaster, sometimes merely by hair-bound plaster.

¹*W.C.H. Berks.*, 1923, III, 491.

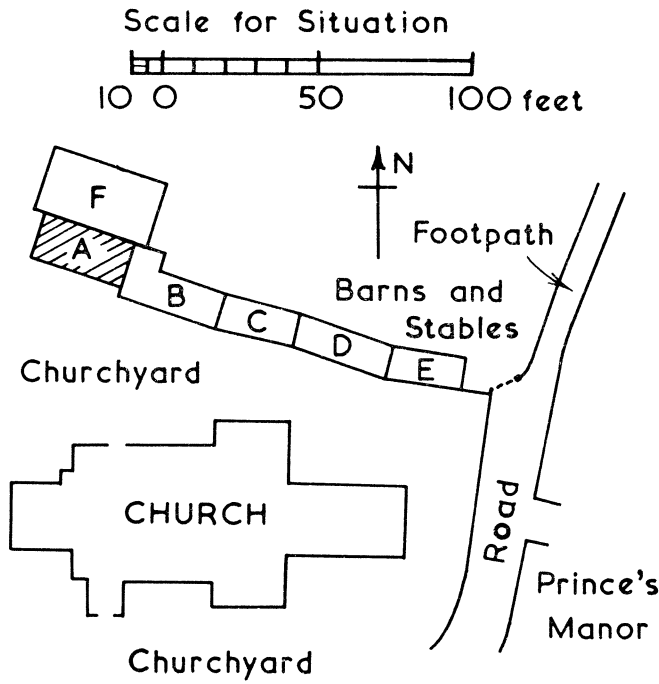
²These transfers were an outcome of the Black Death: as the college, already endowed with two Manors of Warborough and Shillingford together worth £40 annually, complained of impoverishment, Prince Edward (*Black Prince's Register*, IV, p. 64) had

ordered as early as 1352 the payment of £20 from the farming of his Harwell Manor.

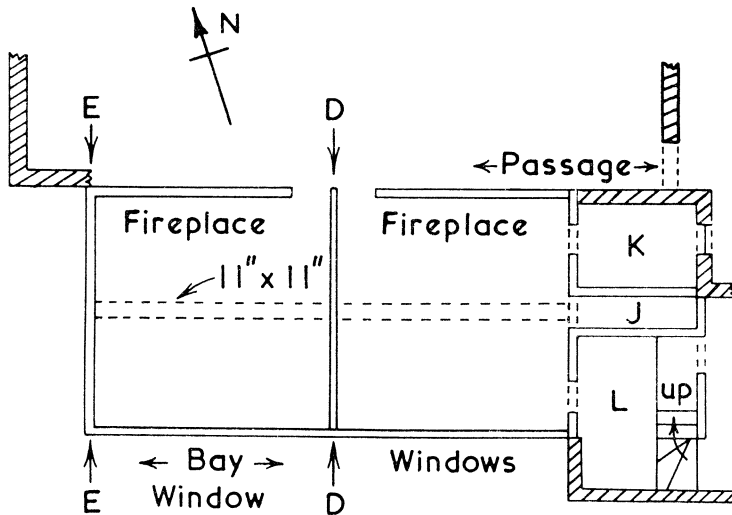
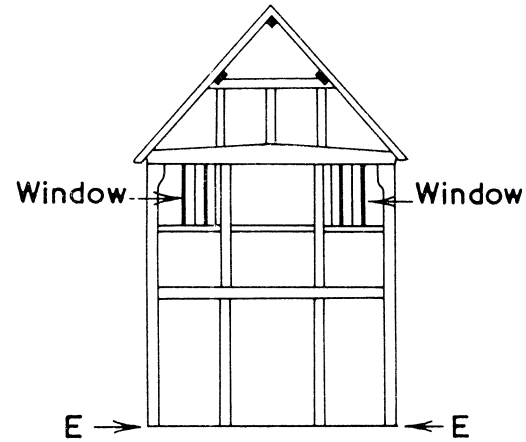
³*Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 1557, pps. 154 and 239.

⁴*MS. Arch. pps Berks.*, c. 185, f. 96-97.

⁵Eight items, including a tie-beam, corner-posts, purlin, dowls and barge-board were identified as oak.



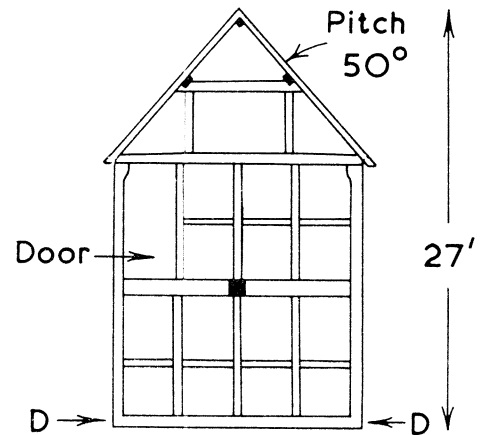
Reconstruction of Original Section at EE



J - Cupboard
K - Kitchen
L - Larder

5 0 5 10 20 feet

Scale for Plan and Sections

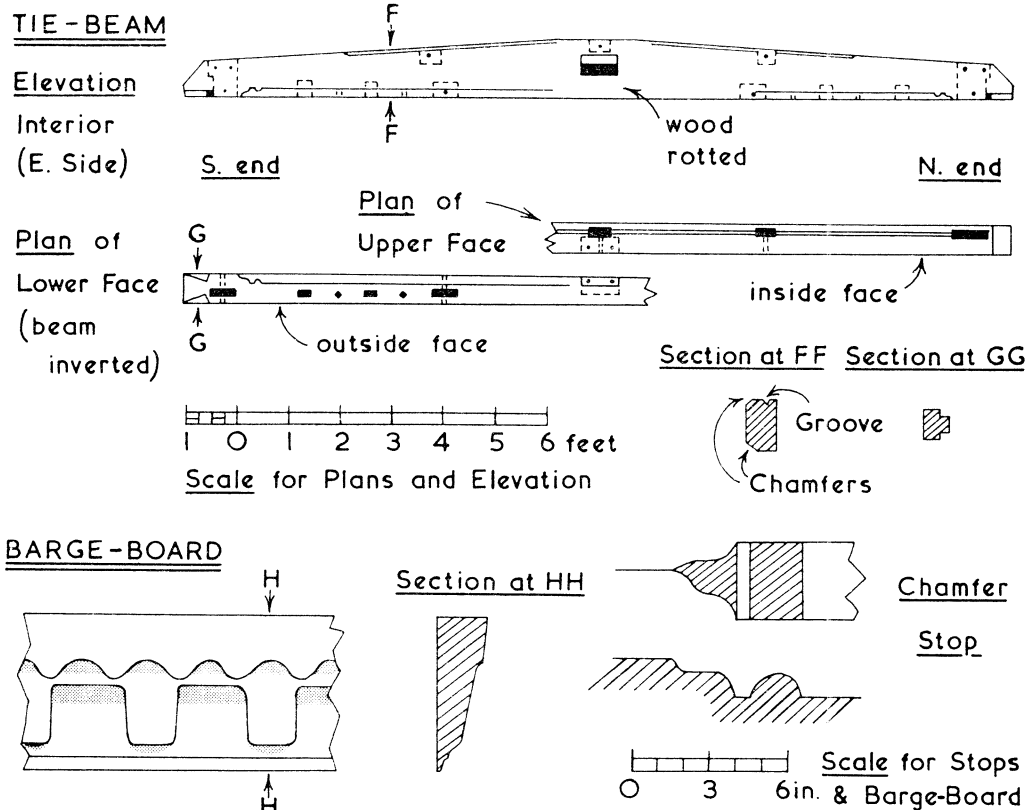


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Fig. 1. The Vicarage, Harwell. Situation; Ground Plan; Section; Reconstructed west face of Tudor portion

The dimensions of the beams and the queen-post form of construction are typical of Tudor work in this area, there being certain features such as the relatively wide spacing of the studs and the absence of wind-braces which suggest the middle or late, rather than the early Tudor period.

Although the west gable had a roughcast finish, it is possible to make a reconstruction (Fig. 1) which gives an original appearance to accord with the evidence provided by the tie-beam which was salvaged intact and examined in detail. The elevation and plan of the tie-beam, part of which has now been incorporated in the newly-built Vicarage, are shown in Fig. 2. The drawing of its elevation shows that its base



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Fig. 2. Tudor portion of the Vicarage, Harwell. Elevation, plans, sections and stops of Tie-Beam. Design and section of Barge-board on E. gable

was flat and its upper face well-cambered, a design which occurs in the fifteenth century tie-beams in the N. transept of Harwell Church and locally in domestic dwellings of Tudor date. The tie-beams also showed clearly (i) the V shaped groove in the upper face to receive the wedge-shaped bases of wattle uprights, and (ii) the dovetailed joints for preventing movement of the corner posts on which its ends rested.

Other items recovered included the bargeboards: those on the west gable were 7" wide and plain except for a slight longitudinal groove, but those on the east gable have a regular design (Fig. 2) dated by P. S. Spokes as *c.* 1600. The two types may not be contemporary and their presence lends some support to the view that there was a reconstruction about 1600 at the east end of A.

Modifications and additions

The barn referred to in 1634 doubtless occupied the same position as the thatched barns and stables (D and E in Fig. 1) of queen-post construction which survived until 1961. Between this area and the Tudor unit A there was a range of two-storey buildings (B and C in Fig. 1) previously used mainly as offices, store-rooms etc., but, since 1946, partly converted to provide a separate unit of accommodation. It will be noticed that these extensions came even closer to the churchyard than the Tudor portion and, as there is an upward slope of the churchyard to the east, they were as much as 4 ft. below the level of the cemetery. Being also in the shadow of the Church, they were particularly sunless.

The latest and most substantial part of the Vicarage was the Georgian addition¹ in brick which is shown as F in Fig. 1: its outline appears in the Enclosure Award Map of 1805. To the date of this addition are attributed certain modifications to the Tudor unit such as the joists and flooring between the ground and first floor, the brick cellar² under the west room, and the fireplaces, with their chimney breasts, for the two ground-floor rooms.

Date of Tudor portion

The size, 1½ acres, and central position of the croft of the Vicarage must have made it the site of some messuage well before the Tudor period. It would be in keeping with local custom for Tudor bays to have been added at right angles to a medieval structure, in this case situated to the east in the position occupied by LJK on Fig. 1.

Although the College of St. Nicholas in Wallingford Castle might have added the Tudor portion prior to 1548, it is more likely to have been created by Richard Loder³ and his son John, the new owner of Prince's Manor, who belonged to the class made prosperous as a result of the Reformation. When they acquired direct responsibility in 1557 for the living, they may have been faced with the existence, parallel in some ways to the situation in 1950-60, of a dilapidated Vicarage unsuitable for the new standard of living and inadequate for a priest⁴ who was now permitted to be a married man. John Watts, the only Vicar of Harwell in the sixteenth century for whom a will⁵, proved in 1581, exists, may have been the first occupant of the new portion. The evidence suggests that eventually the medieval structure at the east end of the new portion was demolished about 1600 and the building extended by building the

¹Mr. A. L. Palmer of Newbury, who carried out the demolition, noticed that the nails in it were of blacksmith, not factory, manufacture.

²Such cellars are a common nineteenth century feature in the village.

³His will, *MS. Berks. Wills* 91, proved in 1563, refers to him as "husbandsman": his son John,

however, is described as "yeoman" in Ref. 3.

⁴The domestic arrangements of medieval priests are discussed by W. A. Pantin in *Medieval Archeology*, 1957, I, 118.

⁵The will, *MS. Berks. Wills* 133, makes no mention of a house and gives no inventory of his goods.

block B: the east gable of A exposed by this operation was then tile-hung and given contemporary bargeboards.

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