SUTTON RECTORY.

By W. D. PECKHAM, M.A.

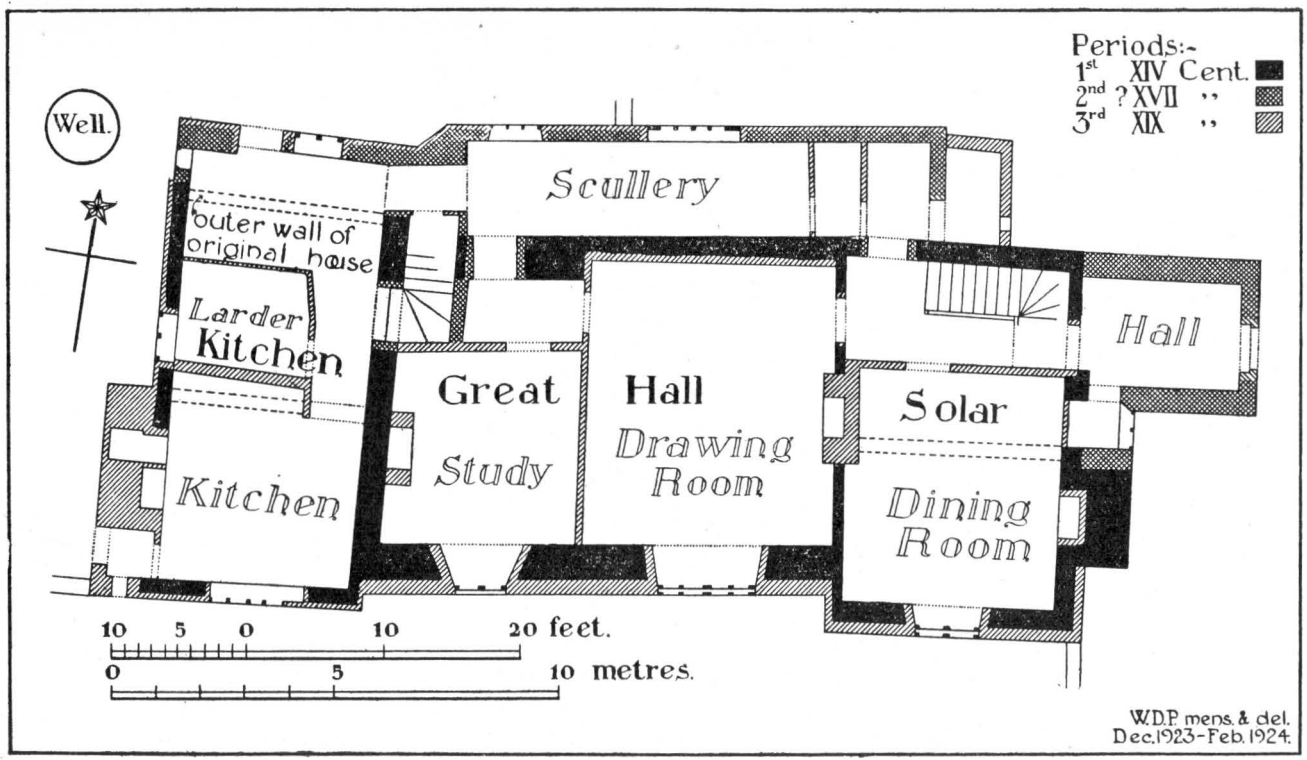
The parish history of Sutton—the parish of that name in Arundel Rape—has yet to be written, and the interest of its antiquities is generally overshadowed by those of its neighbour Bignor. But, though younger by many centuries than the Roman Pavement, Sutton Rectory can claim a decent antiquity, and presents several interesting little archæological problems.

The conditions of tenure of a glebe house make it extremely difficult to classify alterations in the building by periods, a house owned by a family is more likely to have had large and comprehensive reconstructions than one whose occupant does not expect his children to succeed him, and any remarks here offered as to periods of building must be taken with all reserve; three stages in the architectural history of the house seem fairly clear, but the later two of these may each represent a succession of small alterations by different incumbents. The work of the third period is certainly not all due to Richard Smith.

I. Some time in the fourteenth century a good-sized timber-framed house, consisting of hall, solar and offices, was put up, covering nearly the area of the house as it exists to-day.

II. It is reasonable to suppose that this house was reconstructed and the great hall divided up soon after the close of the mediæval period, and to this reconstruction I assign the long building lying north of the great hall, the roof of which forms a continuation of the roof of great hall. Its walls are of considerable interest as they are made of mud bricks.

I do not know of any other case of mud *brick* construction in England, the "cob" of the West of England



Sutton Rectory. Historical Ground Plan

is, I believe, monolithic (if so inappropriate a term may be pardoned) as is also pisé. The "whichert" of the Vale of Aylesbury, which is still in use, is made with the spade in courses of about eighteen inches, much as a sculptor adds one dab of modelling clay to another; and this seems to have been the mud construction in use in Selborne in Gilbert White's time.[1] The work at Sutton is in bricks which were evidently made and dried before being put in place, more mud forming the mortar. They are 1 ft. long and 9 in. thick; as the only part now visible is in stretcher bond the width of the brick cannot be ascertained. Part of this wall was cut away when the outside was fronted with burnt bricks, and the width of the brick may not be recoverable.[2]

This building is evidently later than the great hall as its addition converted what was formerly an outside wall into a partition. To this we owe the preservation of the two mediæval windows, to be described later.

I associate the construction of this building with a division of the great hall into rooms, because it would form a passage from the kitchen to the present front door, independently of these rooms; its date would appear to be of the seventeenth century because the door opening into it from the passage outside the

[1] Letter XVI. to Barrington.

[2] As probably few of my readers will have seen the making of mud bricks, an account of this craft, as still practised in the Near East, may be of interest. The mould is not unlike a miniature bookcase, consisting of a dozen or so of short planks having their ends nailed to two long ones, so that a number of bricks are made at once. Earth—naturally a sandy soil is not suitable—water and straw-chaff are mixed into mud; the straw-chaff (Arabic *tibn*, Turkish *saman*, Hindustani *bhusa*), the inevitable result of sledge threshing, is the "straw" which Pharaoh refused the Israelite brickmakers, and is needed to prevent the mud cracking as it dries. The mould is laid on a flat piece of ground and wetted. It is then filled with mud, the superfluous mud is struck off the top with a piece of board, and the top surface of the bricks wetted. The mould is then lifted off, put down in a new place, and the whole process begun again. After two or three days the bricks are turned over to secure even drying. If my memory serves, a gang of seven or eight men can make about a thousand bricks, say 1 ft. by 8 in. by 6 in., in a day. If preserved from wet by a roof, and by a periodically renewed mud plastering on the outer side, this form of construction seems no less durable than burnt bricks. It is unnecessary to standardize the size of the bricks as they are easily cut with a spade.

study has the characteristic mid-seventeenth century bevelled panels. The lining of the doorway to it from the inner hall has the same panels, and what was clearly the original door in this place has been re-used elsewhere.

Of approximately the same date, it would seem, is the small wing projecting eastwards, which now contains the front door. Its roof timbers are modern, but it contains thin seventeenth century bricks. It is, however, possible that it is mediæval, forming a "lord's room" opening off the principal withdrawing room on the first floor.[3]

There are also traces of a re-fronting of the west side of the house with the same thin bricks, and it would seem that the ground floor of the kitchen wing was then brought out level with the face of the upper floor, which had previously overhung.[4]

The great hall could have been divided up into two floors of quite practicable height if the first floor ceilings had been at primitive eave level, but no clear signs of such division can now be traced, the great hall having suffered extensive—and destructive—alterations in the nineteenth century.

III. Dallaway[5] says of Sutton:—"The rectory house is ancient, but has been competently repaired by the present incumbent"; and in his list of rectors gives the name of Richard Smith, 1806. Between, then, that date and 1819, when the "Rape of Arundel" was published, must have taken place the very drastic reconstruction of the great hall.

[3] In my own house, Ryman's in Apuldram, the early fifteenth century Solar contains a projecting wing, subsidiary to the so-called Tower, whose first floor was, I conclude from internal evidence, William Ryman's private room. And the accounts of the Manor of Apuldram for 1321 (P.R.O. Min: Acc: 1016:6) speak of the Manor House having "Hall, Solar and Lord's Chamber."

[4] The mediæval roof timbers here extend as far north as the present house. But the beam in the back hall has on its under side, between mortises for timber uprights, holes for sticks, evidently the warp of a wattle and dab infilling. It is, of course, common for an upper story in timber construction to overhang, it is also common for the ground floor to be brought out if the building is subsequently faced with brick.

[5] *Rape of Arundel*, p. 214. It may be well to point out that this is the only scrap of external evidence of the history of the house that I have.

Smith was evidently a man of means as well as a foxhunting squarson; "He shot hisself and hunted hisself" was the local tradition of him, he kept a pack of hounds and half a dozen horses, and, unfortunately, had money to spare for what Dallaway calls "competent repairs"; in other words, the destruction of a great deal of very interesting mediæval timber work. Had Dallaway given a careful account of the state of Sutton before Smith worked his wicked will on it, I could even have foregone his nine pages, two plans and a set of elevations devoted to the Petworth Bridewell. As it is I am reduced to inference and conjecture.[6]

It was proposed, in about 1870, to make a neo-Gothic addition to the east end of the house; this was not carried out, but plans and elevations are in existence. A plan of the whole house was made, evidently by someone who thought that the mediæval carpenter was particular about right angles. I would add my usual disclaimer of any rigid accuracy of my drawings. Those who have only measured masonry have no notion of the difficulty of making an accurate plan of a house of this kind. The same reserve applies to the hatching to denote periods.

The wing to the west of the great hall is now the kitchen and offices, and presumably always has been so; habit, and the presence of a large and deep well cut through the greensand, are the evidence for this. The present kitchen chimney is modern, dating from the Smith era or even later, and one or two small indications suggest that the original kitchen chimney was against the same wall, but further north. As this wing was always two-storied[7] there must have been a chimney from the very first. I cannot say

[6] My drawings of the woodwork distinguish between parts no longer existing and parts which have survived. It is not to be understood that any one bay is as complete as my drawing represents, as various braces, etc., are missing. A comparison of the three bays, however, will show that I have actual authority for every timber shown as existing.

[7] Besides the beam, already referred to, there is a fine beam, evidently original, which supports the kitchen ceiling.

whether the southern part of the wing was partitioned off as a buttery, or whether meat, beer, bread, pewter and trenchers were kept together in one chaotic room.

The first floor is roofed[8] with a hipped ridge running north and south, having the common arrangement of a tie-beam, kingpost with curved braces in four directions and a longitudinal timber supporting a succession of collars linking every pair of common rafters. The present ceiling is at tie-beam level, but there is an older ceiling under the rafters and the collars. This room was presumably a servants' dormitory.

The general plan of the solar wing is the same, though the roof has been patched and re-patched with any old timbers that came handy.[9] I infer from the place of the tie-beam and kingpost that this wing had an overhanging upper floor like the other, but the roof timbers are such a patchwork that I cannot be sure. The ground floor limits were presumably as now (less, possibly, the small eastward wing) as there is a cellar hewn out of the solid rock, extending under the inner hall and dining room.[10]

Between the two wings lay the great hall, measuring at floor level about 32 ft. by 19 ft. 6 in.,[11] a ratio of about 100:60, and roofed in three equal bays. For my information as to the walls of this I am indebted to the great facilities given to me by the present incumbent, Rev. H. L. Newman, who has not only allowed me free access to all parts of the house, but has also stripped, at my suggestion, a section of lath and plaster under the northern end of the third truss.[12]

From this it appears that the side walls of hall for about 6 ft. of their height were of masonry, about 3ft.

[8] The whole house is now tile-heled, and the pitch of the roof suggests that it always has been so.

[9] The wall plate of the south wall of this wing is a big reused timber, but its original use is uncertain.

[10] It is, of course, possible that this is part of Smith's repairs. I have no information as to his consumption of port.

[11] Accurate measures are under the circumstances impossible. The length between gables in the roof, taken down the middle line, is 33 ft. 1½ in., there is probably an offset on the lower wall, which would account for this difference.

[12] I number from the gable at the high table end.

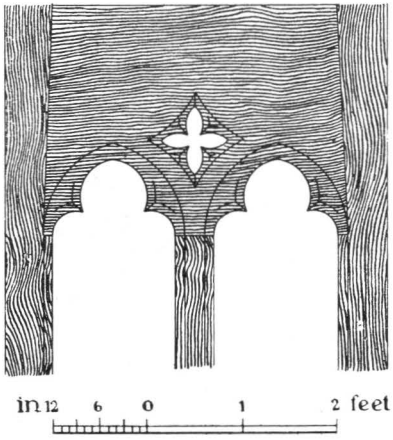
thick. On the outer side of these walls under each truss a puncheon rises to eave level carrying wall plates. This puncheon seems to go down below the top of the masonry, how far it is impossible to say. Tenoned into this is a short sturdy little timber crossing the top of the masonry and forming a base for an inner puncheon rising flush with the inner face of the wall. These two puncheons are further held together at the top by a crosswise timber which I shall for the present simply call a beam, and by a horizontal strut about half-way up; the under side of this is worked into a flattened ogee arch. The wall plate carried by the outer puncheons is plain, the inner puncheons carry two plates, one large, one small, both chamfered, which must have formed a very effective if simple cornice. Longitudinally, the inner puncheons and plates are braced by arched braces and diagonal spur braces, but had no infilling. Between the outer puncheons there rose two intermediate upright posts in each bay, forming the window jambs; they were linked with the puncheons by horizontal timbers at the level of the window sills. The side walls, therefore, above masonry level, were formed of two separate planes of timber construction, the inner giving the effect of an interior wall arcade like a clerestory passage, while the outer was, and still largely is, filled with wattle and dab between the timbers.

Doubtless there was originally a window on each side of each bay, the three bedroom windows to the south clearly take the places of mediæval windows; and, by a surprising piece of good fortune, two of the windows on the north side have been preserved.[13]

These are interesting as showing how masonry affected carpentry; the joining, for instance, of mullion to sill is as a modern mason would make it, not as a modern joiner would. The traceried heads are each cut out of one piece of wood, and the whole design is such that anyone seeing a simple line drawing of it

[13] It is just possible, but unlikely, that the north window of the first bay exists behind lath and plaster.

would easily suppose it stone work. These windows were each two-light, barred, though whether with wood or iron it is hard to say, unglazed it would seem, but fitted with shutters; the rebates of which are worked on jamb and mullion, but not on the window



Window in middle bay of Hall.

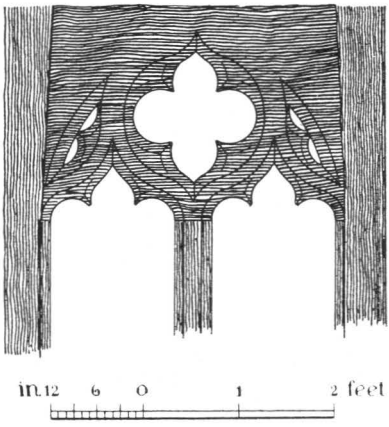
head. I have detected the holes for the shutter hinge hooks, but have found no certain traces of fastenings.

The window in the second bay is of a simple type of tracery, a quatrefoiled lozenge over two trefoil-headed lights, that in the third bay is a normal type of reticulated tracery. I can find no signs of this head being a later insertion, and conclude that the two windows are contemporary, the one made possibly by an elderly man who had no use for the finicking new-fangled style of his younger fellow-craftsman.

There is no evidence visible for the level of the window sill on the south side; it may well have been lower than on the cold north.

I suppose the hall doors to have been in their usual

places at the lower end of each side,[14] and probably the opening of the north door survives in the coal cellar under the back stairs; there was presumably the usual screen. The passage formed by this was, I suppose, ceiled over, the joists resting on the offset



Window in west bay of Hall.

of the lower wall of hall; there would thus have been a continuous[15] gallery round three sides of hall, useful, if for no other purpose, for access to the window shutters.

Constructionally, the present second and third trusses of the hall roof consist each of a pair of principal rafters and three collars. The lowermost collar is clearly a modern addition, put in when Richard Smith wished to raise the level of his bedroom ceilings, which come immediately under it. The uppermost is carried by a kingpost, braced all four ways, and supporting a longitudinal timber supporting similar collars between the common rafters, as in the two end wings.

[14] The farm yard would seem to have been south of the house, the tithe barn is known to have stood there.

[15] But the middle bay on the north side shows remains of a window splay at ground level. I cannot tell its date, but it must be earlier than that of the mud brick annexe.

The kingpost rests on the middle collar, a large solid timber, from the ends of which hang, as the roof now stands,[16] two vertical timbers, puncheon-headed. On this level are also purlins; and the "puncheon-headed timbers," as I shall at present call them, are braced lengthwise to the purlins and crosswise to the collars by arched braces with diagonal spur braces, the lengthwise braces being plain, the crosswise cusped. The ends of these cusps have been sawn off, but three of the finials of them are now fixed on carved posts and form the finials to the three (modern) gables over the south bedroom windows.

Halfway along each bay is an irregular multifoil arch cut in wood, serving to a certain extent to brace the collar and rafters together, but obviously put in as much for ornament as for strength. There are slight traces of a louvre in the middle bay, but not enough for me to determine its construction.[17]

The first and fourth trusses, which are the framing of the end gables, are much the same in construction, but the arched braces are not cusped, and there are no spur braces to them. Much of the mediæval plaster infilling survives.

So far, this account of the roof has been a simple, if tedious, statement of facts; before proceeding to inferences as to the work Smith destroyed it will be well to review the actual traces of his destruction.

On each of the inner puncheons was a small octagonal shaft, its base was worked on the cross timber which supported it, and the top of its capital was about twelve feet above ground level. The capital on the north side of the third truss is mutilated, that on the north of the second is intact, but the inner puncheon on that side has been sawn off below it, to

[16] Smith's collar is broad and thin, and, in contrast to the mediæval timber which is black with smoke, light in colour. When I first examined the roof I did not at once discern its importance, and for a few moments supposed that the roof was staying up from sheer force of habit.

[17] The hearth, of course, was not necessarily straight under the louvre; probably it was nearer the high table end. At Stokesay it is about one-third of the way down the hall.

allow the drawing room to extend a foot or so further north. Both puncheons of this truss on the south side have evidently been cut away for the opening of the drawing room window. Above the capital is a mortise, obviously for a curved brace; as this runs right up to the swell of the puncheon head the curve must have been that of the half of a lancet rather than of an equilateral or drop arch. Above the puncheon is the sawn-off end[18] of a horizontal beam, on the outer end of which rests the principal. Immediately under the principal is a short inner principal rising no higher than the purlin, to this is fastened by iron pins the collar of Smith's reconstruction. Level with the under side of this last, short diagonal braces, the puncheon-headed timbers and their braces are sawn off, and the multifoiled arches are sawn off at about the same level.[19]

These remains are consistent with any one of three forms of roof design:

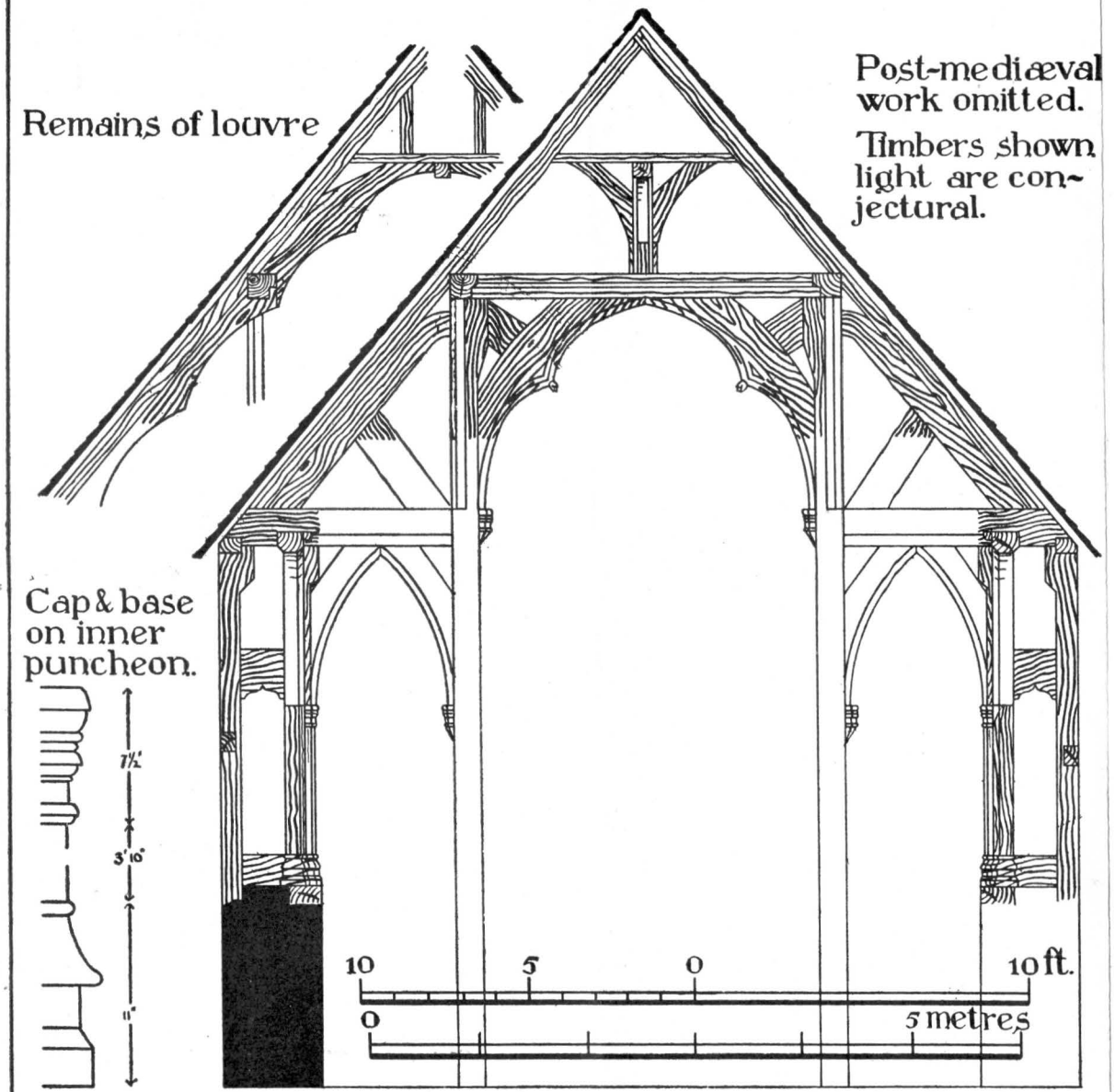
I. It would be possible to make a drawing showing the roof as a hammer-beam. But it was made some two generations before Master Hugh Herland made his masterpiece in Westminster Hall, the earliest dated example; and what was probably the mother of invention at Westminster, the necessity of roofing a wide span, was not present at Sutton. The hammer-beam theory may therefore be discarded at once.

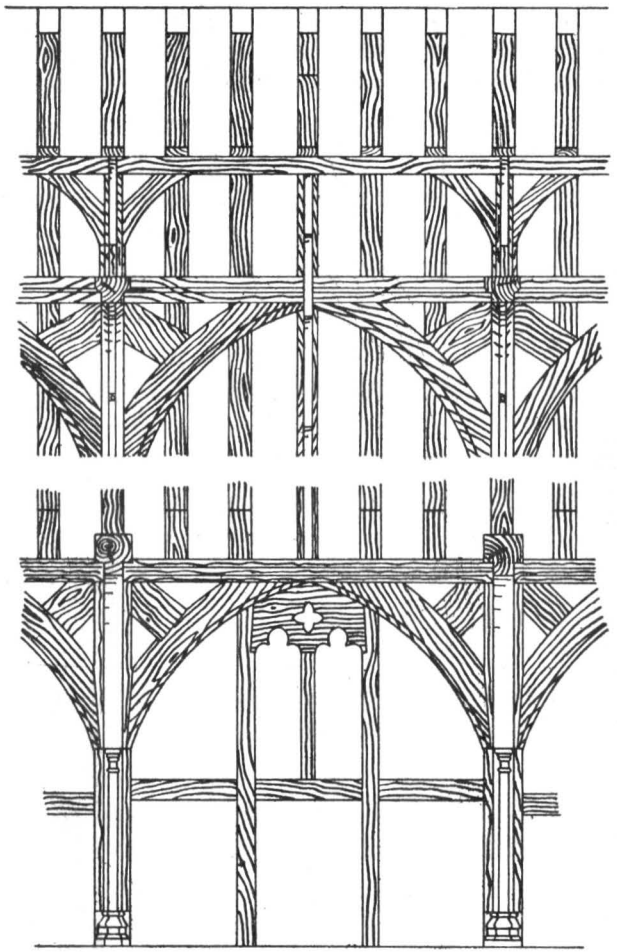
II. It would be equally possible, and more consistent with the evidence of style, to reconstruct as a tie-beam and queenpost roof, the "puncheon-headed timbers" being the queenposts. This, however, is open to objections. The brace rising from the capital would either have been needlessly steep[20] or needlessly

[18] Close examination of the end in No. 3 truss makes it quite clear that this was sawn off as a work of destruction, not construction.

[19] I have searched the present outbuildings for signs of a re-use of the ancient timbers cut away and found nothing but a beam or two which may have come out of the outer walls. Probably some of the big roof timbers were re-used for lintels for the drawing room window, possibly others are elsewhere in the village.

[20] The average inclination of such a timber to the horizontal is naturally about 45°.





Sutton Rectory

Sections through Great Hall.

W.D.P. mens. & del.
Dec. 1923-Feb. 1924.

thick, even according to the ideas of a mediæval master carpenter. Further, there are no mortises for diagonal spur braces, and, considering the passion the Sutton carpenter had for them, it is unlikely that he would have foregone them here, had they been practicable. More cogent still, this design would give a foliated arch rising over a horizontal beam at its springing level, a form which I do not believe a mediæval builder would have gone out of his way to produce.

III. The third alternative, which I have adopted in my drawing, is that of a roof in nave and aisles.[21] According to this theory the "puncheon-headed posts" came down to ground level, the beams sawn off at eave level merely crossed the aisles, and the great middle collar was, in effect, a high tie-beam to the nave roof. Not only does this theory avoid the objections advanced against the last, but there are also other arguments which may be produced in its favour.

It explains the existence of the inner principal over the aisles. In nave and aisle timber construction I have no doubt that the nave timbers were reared first and the framing of the walls set up later; this inner principal would help brace the nave and aisles together independently of the great principals.[22] It is a member of the roof in which the carpenter seems to have taken some interest, in No. 4 truss (which, according to the carpenter's marks hereafter to be discussed, was the first made) it is parallel to, but about a foot from, the long principal, and is without the diagonal braces. As the carpenter changed his design it may have been because he attached some importance to this member.

The other argument is from the design of the arched brace over the aisles. The capital of the inner wall puncheon gives the level of the spring of this, the tie

[21] Cf. Oakham, and Winchester Castle. The latter has undergone two architectural revisions since Sutton was built, but retains its pillars.

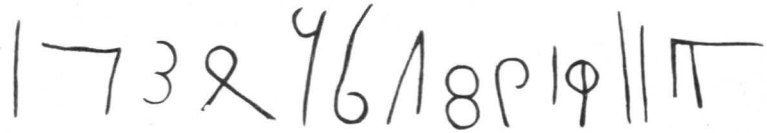
[22] Similar timbers occur in the roof of St. Mary's Hospital, Chichester, which presents a similar design, with rather different proportions, to what I believe Sutton to have been.

beam of the aisle gives its crown, the breadth of the aisle gives its span; is it a coincidence that an arch described under these conditions not only is perfectly consistent with the existing mortise, but has a radius identical with that of the trefoiled arch spanning the nave?

Mr. P. M. Johnston has been good enough to give me his opinion of the date of this building, which he would assign to *c.* 1330. Professor E. S. Prior (who, however, saw my drawings long before they were complete, and before the moulded cap and base had been uncovered) dated it about ten years earlier.

It is much to be regretted that the building cannot be dated by external evidence; for close examination revealed the fact that the carpenter used the Arabic numerals. It is of course usual in woodwork to fit joints like tenons and mortises individually and to mark them for subsequent identification when assembling; the usual ancient method, when blacklead pencils were not, was to cut with the chisel marks, generally rectilinear and usually based on the Roman numerals. At Sutton the four trusses of the Great Hall roof were numbered in Arabic from 1 to 4;[23] the twelve braces, with their spur braces, under the purlins are numbered from 1 to 12;[24] and Nos. 2–5 in the north wall inner framing, the only part of the wall framing now accessible, bear the same numbers.

The actual forms are as follows:—



Of these, the 2 like a modern 7, the 4 and 5, and the 7 as an inverted V[25] appear to be normal fourteenth

[23] But the only number I have found on what should be No. 1 (No. 4 by my uniform reckoning from the high table end) is most like the carpenter's form of 12.

[24] 1–6 from west to east on the north side, 7–12 from west to east on the south.

[25] There are no data in the building to show which part the carpenter considered the top of the figure, they were cut any way up as suited the workman's convenience or the grain of the wood.

century forms; a bar across the 0 is also usual, but it is generally horizontal or oblique, not vertical;[26] the 9 is intelligible when taken in its place in the series. The 12 is rather interesting, the 2 is reversed, like the 9, and the two figures blended into one form; this suggests that the carpenter had not grasped the essence of the Arabic notation—the use of only ten signs to express numbers of any magnitude.[27]

The circular parts of the figures were obviously scratched with a staple, and the holes of the centres are sometimes visible.

To me it is very remarkable to find this illiterate master carpenter adopting the Arabic numerals when the scribes were still showing considerable prejudice against them.[28]

For a mediaeval Clergy House, Sutton is remarkably large, its Great Hall actually covers more ground than the then existing Great Hall of the Bishop at Amberley; and, judging by eye and without measurements to guide me, I should say that the house was much larger than the Clergy Houses at Alfriston or West Hoathly. It is possible that it was only acquired as a glebe house long after it was built; there is no documentary evidence either way. Its position close to the Church suggested the possibility of its being the old Manor House, but this theory is untenable; on the other side of the Church and near that ancient communal institution the pound stands the Manor House, now converted into cottages; and a cursory examination, all that I could make, satisfied me that this contains the remains of a timber-built Great Hall. The Rectory,

[26] The straight strokes of the 1 and the bar on the post run across the grain.

[27] On the subject of early forms of Arabic numerals in Europe see *Archæologia*, LXII., part 1, p. 137, which gives comparative tables of forms. English examples giving the forms of all the ten digits elsewhere than on parchment seem to be rare in early times, this article gives only one set (from Wells) of an earlier date than that of Sutton.

[28] As an instance of this within my own experience, the folios of Liber P. of the Chichester MSS., compiled half a century after the date of Sutton, were originally numbered in Arabic; a later scribe has taken the trouble to re-number in Roman, presumably because the Arabic numbers were objectionable or unintelligible.

of course, may have been a freeholder's house, or it may have originally been built as a Rectory.

T. R. Turner[29] seems to think that it was built to accommodate three or four monks, but that generation often suffered from monks on the brain; it is true that the advowson belonged to Lewes Priory as early as 1121,[30] but that is no proof that monks ever resided there.[31] The connection with Lewes cannot have been very close, as the great tithe was never impropriated, the Prior and Convent contenting themselves with charging the Rectory with a fee-farm rent, which was only re-acquired from their successors in title a few years ago.

On the other hand the church may have been well staffed with clergy (there are triple sedilia in the Chancel). Or it may be that we are dealing with an early case of what was not uncommon in the nineteenth century, a well-to-do rector saddling his benefice with a large house, the upkeep of which proves a heavy burden on less wealthy successors.

[29] *S.A.C.*, XV., 243.

[30] *Ibid.*, XXXV., 193.

[31] To take a modern parallel, if an advowson belonged to an Oxford college, which also owned property in the parish, no one would suppose that a large vicarage was built for the accommodation of three or four Fellows.