

# No. 173, HIGH STREET, LEWES.

By WALTER H. GODFREY, F.S.A.

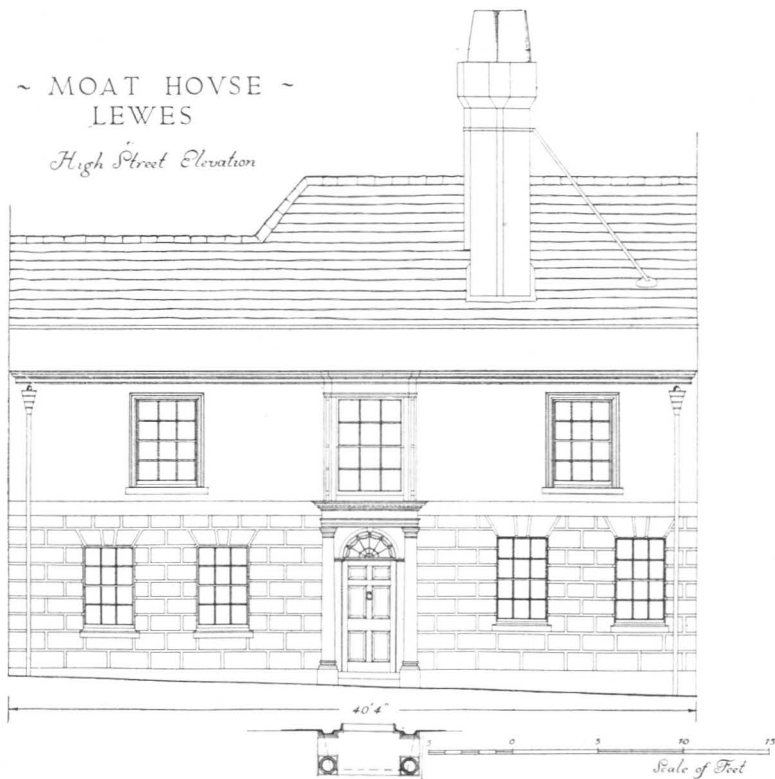
THIS house, known recently by the name of Moat House, has been demolished to make way for the new premises of the National and Provincial Bank. The bank was good enough to consider very carefully the plans submitted for the preservation of the building, but its condition was such as to make it very difficult to preserve or to adapt it to its new purpose. The early eighteenth century panelling from two rooms is to be refixed in two similar apartments in the new bank, and the Sussex Archæological Society has been presented with all the remaining features of interest. The bank has also presented the Society with a set of photographs specially taken for the purpose of recording the exterior and interior of the building.

During the process of demolition it has been possible to investigate the various alterations which have taken place in the house and these can be traced to five periods, namely (1) late mediæval, (2) Elizabethan, (3) 1674, (4) early eighteenth century, and (5) late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Each period has features of interest. Beside the structure of the house itself, the framework of No. 174, the building adjoining on the east, was exposed, and an interesting series of assembly marks was visible on the oak timbers that appear to date from the late fifteenth century.

The history of No. 173 is not known before the time of James I., although in John Rowe's survey it is stated to have belonged at one time to the family of Kyme.<sup>1</sup> John Kyme or Keyme, who died in 1586, was

<sup>1</sup> From a preliminary investigation of the poor-rate lists in the Churchwarden's Book of St. Andrew and St. Michael, it appears likely that the house had been occupied by Thomas Audley (1525-1539), Thomas Inderwick (1540), John Kyme, the younger (c. 1544), Thomas Jeffery (1546-1552).

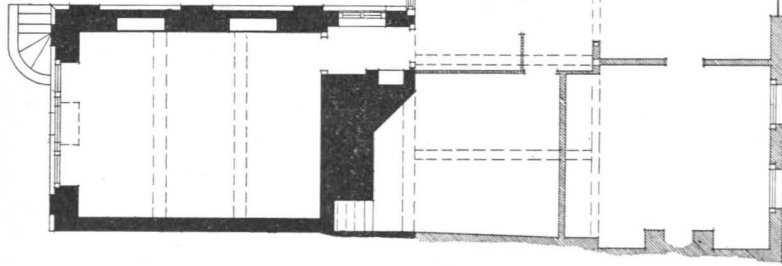
possessed of the Friars, Lewes, (the house on the site of the Greyfriars), and other property in the town. In Thomas Blunt's bequest of the adjoining house (Nos. 171 and 172, High Street) to the town of Lewes,



about 1611, No. 173 is described as the White Hart, tenanted by Edward Holmwood, whose name appears as innholder, when surety for a licence for a marriage in 1619. About 1629, John Rowe puts Edward Claggett at the White Hart, and the previous tenant as Holmwood. Claggett had formerly owned the Bull Inn (from 1612-1615) and during his and Holmwood's occupation of No. 173 it seems probable that it was also an inn. At that time the present White Hart,

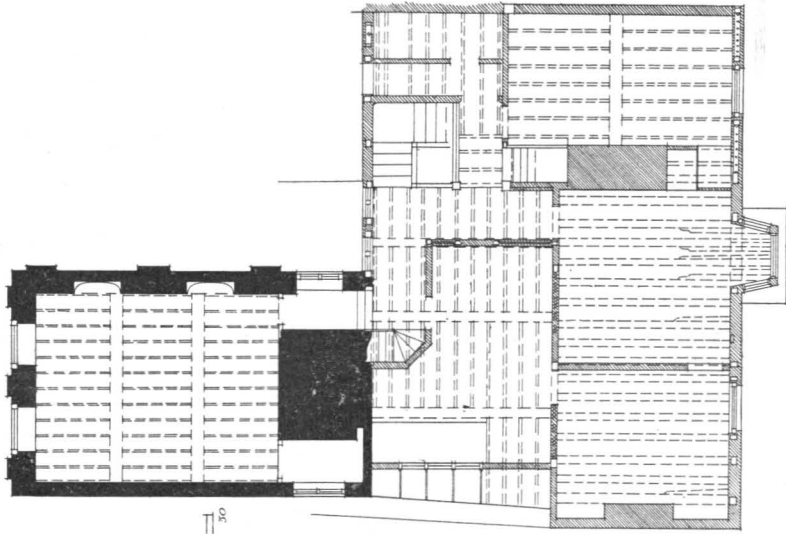
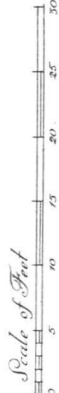
on the South side of the High street, was the town house of the Pelhams. From later documents in connection with Blunt's Charity we find that Richard Barnard, woollen draper, was here in 1679, and his son Thomas in 1720. Richard, brother of Thomas, was here from 1740 to 1764. We shall see from the evidence of the building that the first Richard Barnard was living here in 1674; his name is frequently mentioned in the accounts of the persecution of the dissenters, and the Barnard family is intimately connected with the history of Westgate Chapel. The rate-books are preserved from the year 1744, and we learn from them that Mrs. Barnard occupied the house from 1764 to 1771. In the latter year we find Richard Comber in possession. Some time between 1785 and 1790 he moved to Barbican House, but he remained the owner, while the house was occupied by Benjamin Comber. Subsequently Moat House was in the possession of Charles Kell, Messrs. Kell & Son and William Polhill Kell, who were Clerks to the magistrates. In 1882 the name of H. Jones, Clerk to the visiting justices occurs. The last tenant was the late Mr. J. Miles, Clerk to the Lewes Water Company.

The comparatively modern front which was covered with cement, concealed a considerable amount of the early sixteenth century timber framing. The western, and larger section, of this south front had originally been a gable overhanging the street. The moulded fascia beam has been preserved, and with it a heavy oak support at its west end. To the latter was attached another oak bracket westwards, showing that the building originally overhung the ground floor towards the Blunt property on the west. Very little of the framing above the fascia had survived, but the north gable of this roof remained practically intact in the centre of the building. Its northern face had evidently been open to the air. The timbers, which were not moulded, comprised a bressummer at first floor level and another beam at ceiling level, with heavy



*Ground Floor*

~ MOAT HOUSE ~  
LEWES



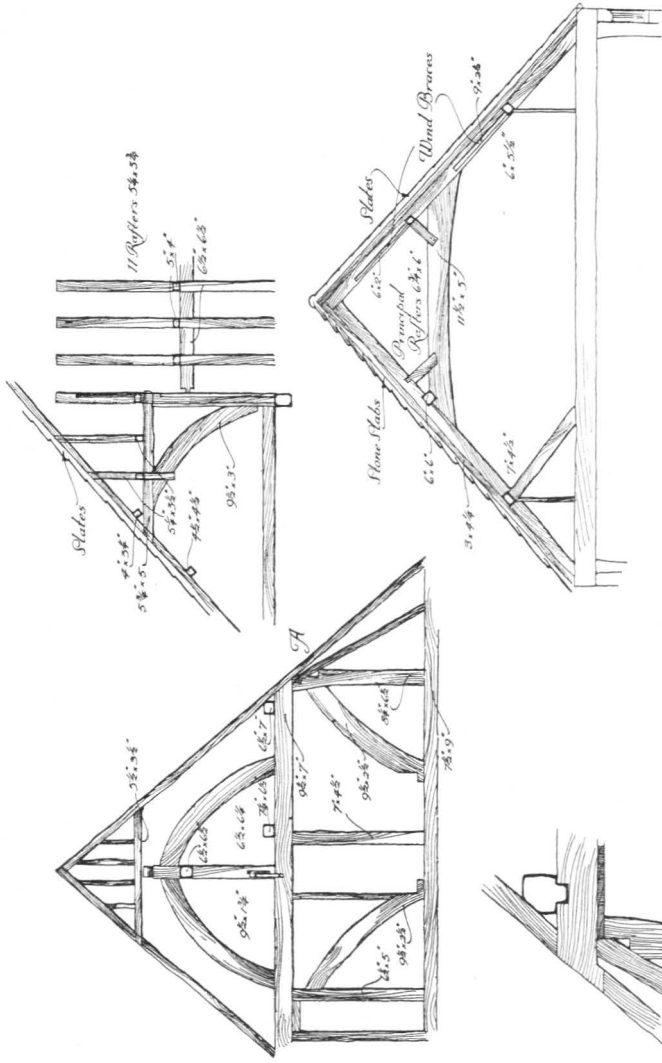
*First Floor*

(Note: the extension of 1674 is shown in black.)

curved braces, and a king post with other curved braces above. The framing was not symmetrically arranged, but the king post was in the centre of the roof, and part of the collar purlin (with its brace) which connected it to the front gable, was still in position. The three main posts had the assembly marks I. A. II., which also appeared on the tie beam at the joints, the one marked A being intermediate between the other two. The post marked A on the drawing is No. I.

The space east of this roof, (the ridge of which ran north and south), was occupied by a building of wider span, but roofed at right angles to the part described, the eaves being towards the street. The roof was of two bays, and the span was considerably wider than the length. It appeared to be later, by a few years, than the other, and it was evidently raised after the building of No. 174, since it covered a small window in the gable of the latter. The principals were furnished with heavy tie beams (to the two end trusses) at first floor ceiling level, and three trussed collars, and also curved wind braces. The old framing to the street was in a more complete condition, and a part remained on the north side. Several of the original window openings could be traced, which had been adapted in the time of Elizabeth, and the diamond mortices remained from the bars of an early unglazed type of opening. Several timbers morticed in this way for square mullions set anglewise were found used for other purposes in the building.

The chimney stack between the two sections of the front building appeared to belong to the first quarter of the sixteenth century. The fireplace openings were formed of oak beams shaped into a three-centred arch with chamfer on the soffit. A cellar under the eastern section of the house was built of rough stone and chalk. The rebated jamb of the door to the street from the cellar was found *in situ* and the step about 3 feet above floor level. Access from the street to this type of cellar was, it appears, usually



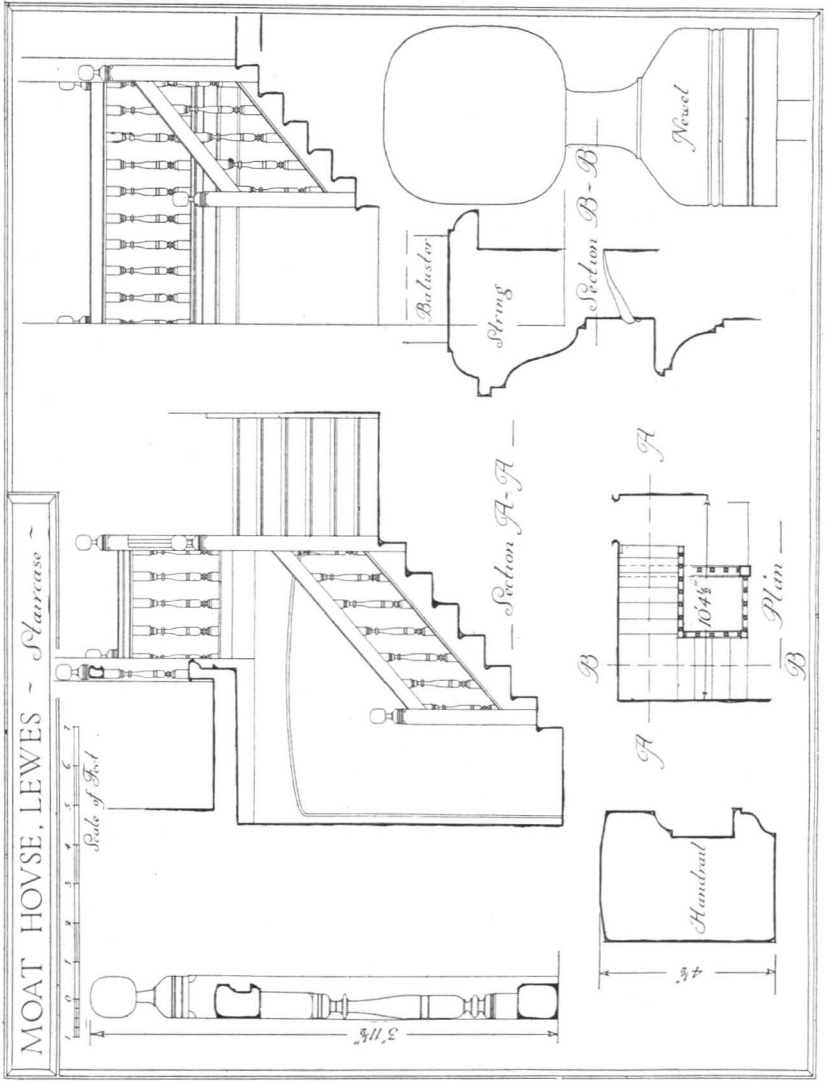
MOAT HOUSE  
Sections of Roof



Enlarged Section at A

obtained by a stair passing through the front wall by a doorway which was half above and half below the pavement. The upper steps of the stair would continue under a trap door in the footway. Compare such existing examples as the Star Inn, Lewes, houses at Winchester and Rye, and the same feature met commonly abroad.

In the second half of the sixteenth century the western portion of the house appears to have been enlarged northwards to line with the north wall of the eastern section. The house seems to have been largely reconstructed below roof level, and new timbers inserted to carry the floors. A new staircase was formed in the north eastern part with heavy oak turned balusters and ball finials to the newels. All the doorways were made in the constructional timbers with a chamfer round the opening with small stop on each side. Windows were inserted in the north wall, with the characteristic convex moulding to the mullions and worked on the framework that formed the jambs. The old openings on the south front were made to correspond by *applying* the moulding to the jambs and working it roughly on the head. It is unusual to find this moulding not worked on the solid. The moulded head of a window of five lights was found amongst re-used material. Several lengths of Elizabethan oak panelling were found and have been preserved. They had all been covered with many coats of paint, but parts of them show an original treatment of "graining" to imitate walnut, with the simulation of large oval bosses, represented by shading in colour. Instances of "graining" have been found in 17th century building accounts, and this example of an early practice is valuable, but the most interesting discovery was the evidence of painted decoration on the constructional oak timbers of the first floor (east section). On one fine post guilloche ornament of a bold pattern had been painted from top to bottom and the projecting side had also been decorated with a simple pattern. Traces occurred on





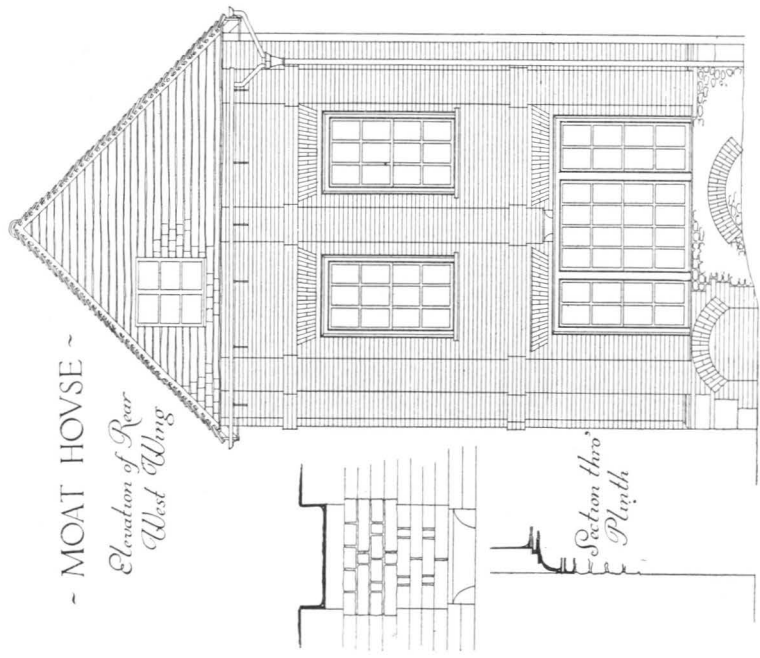
another post, the main face of which had been hacked away. It is probable that the wall had been covered with panels, with painted decoration, between the big timbers,—perhaps the panelling just described. The plaster was all on wattle and showed no traces of colour. The ornamented posts were on the east wall. The five posts bore assembly marks of Roman numerals I. to V.

The third period of work in the house is happily dated by an oak door-head with the initial R.B. in small sunk panels each side of the date 1674. This door-frame was the southern one of two doorways to a lobby giving entrance to a large northern extension of the building on the west side, an extension evidently made by Richard Barnard, in the year given. It is worth noting that both frames were cut out of earlier moulded oak, the material and the mouldings being at least a century earlier than Barnard's work. The mouldings run the length of a larger frame than the door itself, and those of the head and jamb are not mitred, but the one scribed over the other. This extension of 1674 consisted of a substantial building of thin red bricks, comprising a cellar, two stories and an attic. The walls were furnished with wide pilasters of brick, set on a plinth with moulded stone coping, and the windows were of heavy oak, two lights wide, with transom set above the centre line. This building had been altered somewhat later, but it was a valuable and picturesque example of a period of which very little remains in Lewes.

The fourth phase of the house occurred in the eighteenth century when the entrance hall was formed and the eastern rooms on the ground and first floors were panelled throughout, the lower one in oak and the upper in pine. To this period probably belonged the charming porch carried on solid columns, which supported the unusual feature of a projection in the story above equal in size to the porch below. This had been fitted with a later window, but the attractiveness of the composition was retained, and it formed a

~ MOAT HOUSE ~

Elevation of Rear  
West Wing

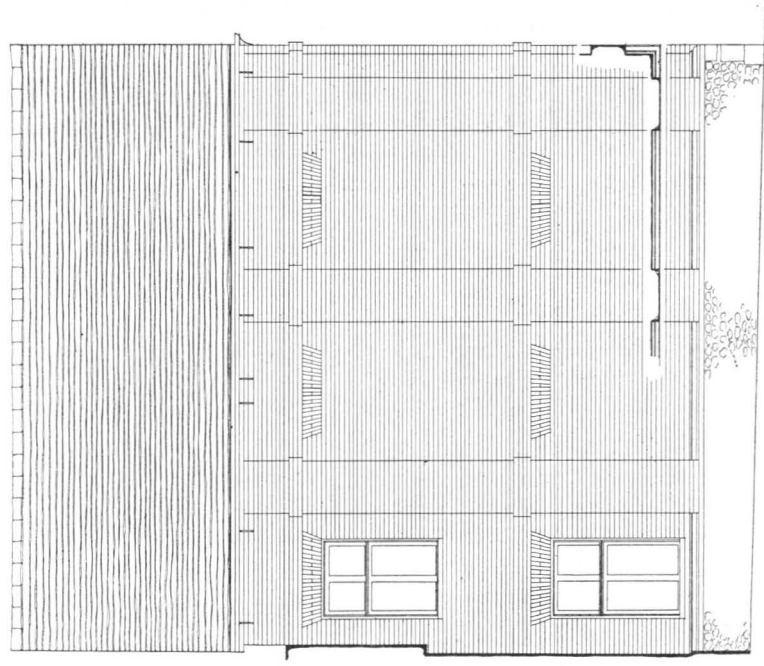


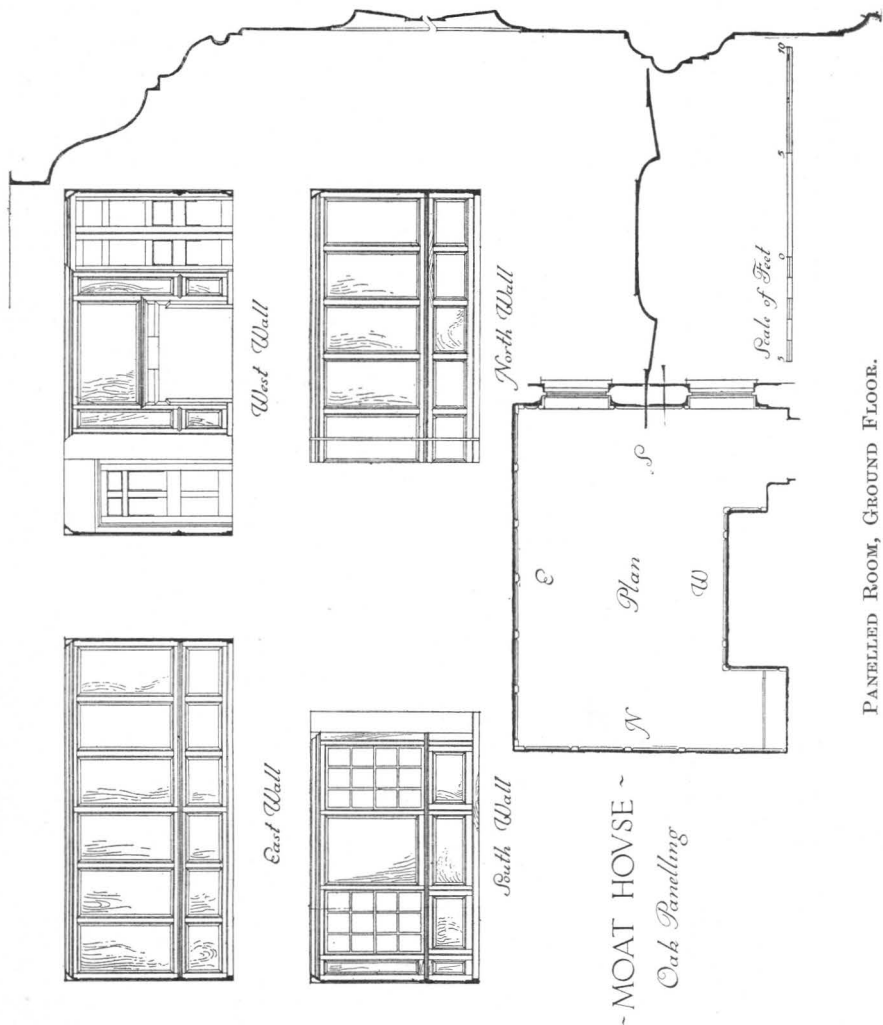
Section thro  
Plinth

North Elevation



East Elevation





familiar and pleasant architectural *jeu d'esprit* in the old High Street, intruding in nonchalant fashion right into the footway. The front door was fitted with a good fanlight and there were one or two excellent little late eighteenth century chimneypieces which have been preserved.

To the early part of the nineteenth century, I think, we must put the white stucco front with its bold channelling of the joints to imitate stone. The windows on the street were renewed at the same time and various matters were modernized in the interior. The central pilaster of the northern building was rather recklessly cut away to make room for a larger window on the ground floor, and shallow recesses were formed in the east wall of the upper room, which was fitted with a new fireplace, and enriched cornice and dado. At much the same time an extension was built northwards on the east side.

The front of the new bank, now being erected, is being built with the bricks from the 1674 building, and the roof will be covered with the original Horsham slabs. The consulting room and an office on the first floor are being built to receive the panelling of the two old rooms, with the minimum of alteration. Among the gifts to the Sussex Archæological Society are:—

*Early sixteenth century*—(a) moulded fascia beam, (b) braces of gable and roof trusses, (c) two chimney beams.

*Late sixteenth century*—(a) Stair newels and balustrade, (b) window frames (c) Elizabethan panelling, (d) posts with guilloche ornament and other oak timbers.

*Work of 1674*—(a) Door-frame with initials R.B. and date, (b) similar door-frame uninscribed, (c) window-frames.

*Eighteenth century*—(a) Several chimney pieces, (b) columns of porch, (d) fanlight.

The drawings accompanying this paper have been made by Mr. E. F. Harvey under my direction.