



LEGH MANOR: FROM THE SOUTH-WEST.

LEGH MANOR, CUCKFIELD

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

ON 15 June 1929 our Society was entertained in their charming house and gardens at Legh Manor, Cuckfield, by Sir William and Lady Chance, who were already purposing to ensure the permanent protection of the property by handing it over to the Sussex Archaeological Trust. This intention has now been carried out by Lady Chance, who has conveyed the property to the Trust with a generous endowment, and has herself entered with great enthusiasm into all the detailed arrangements necessary for opening it to the public. The house and grounds were formally declared open by Sir Edwin Lutyens, R.A., on 20 June 1936. The property consists of 130 acres of fields, woodland, and lake, with farm buildings and cottages. The chief feature is the manor-house, which is described in this paper, and it is the main purpose of Lady Chance's gift that so typical a country house should be preserved with all its furnishings and fittings intact for the pleasure and instruction of posterity. The Sussex Archaeological Trust is privileged to be the means chosen by Lady Chance for this task, and Legh Manor will remain one of the most interesting possessions in its care.

The manor of Legh *alias* Paines appears to have given their names to two ancient houses in Cuckfield. It is not certain which building occupies the site of the original manor-house, and it is possible the manorial court was held at both houses at different times. The present article is concerned with the house that retains the earlier name Legh, although the fact that it was known as Little Ease, a fairly obvious corruption of Little Leghs, suggests that it had become a dower house to the more important Paines, where the lords of the manor lived in Elizabethan times.

There are many early references to members of the

family that took its name from Legh in Cuckfield. William de Legh is mentioned in 1218¹ as having died from a bow-shot, at the hands of Thomas de Dene. Walter de Legh occurs in 1235² and another Walter in 1279,² 1288,² and 1296,³ the last reference being in a Subsidy Roll in which we also find Isabel de Legh. William de Legh and John de Legh both occur in the Cuckfield subsidy of 1327.³ Walter de Leghe is in the subsidy for Clayton, Keymer, and Hurst of 1332,³ and John Leghe is found in 1393.⁴

William Smith Ellis says that Legh Manor in Cuckfield was a subinfeudation of the manor of Otehall (Oathall) in Wivelsfield,⁵ and the latter, according to a rental of Withdean Cayliffe Manor, was held under the last named.⁶ John Rowe, however, *c.* 1625, says: 'The manor of Lee alias Paynes is held (as some say) of the Barony of Lewes by knight's service, but this is not borne out by any record.'⁷

In 1400 the manor is said to have been held by John Bassett,⁸ and sometime in the fifteenth century it no doubt was in the hands of the Paine family, since Rowe states that it was 'quondam Paynes et postea Berwicks'. Of the last named we have definite evidence when, in 1509, Alfred Barwyke settled the property on himself and his wife Agnes with remainder to John Caryll and his heirs.⁹ This Agnes was sister of John Bradbridge whose wife was another Agnes (daughter and heir of John Payne of Cuckfield), and it was through their daughter Eleanor, who married Henry Hussey of Slinfold, that the property passed to the Hussey family. In 1540 Henry Hussey settled the manor on himself and his wife Eleanor with remainder to their son John, who is later known as John Hussey of Paines. Henry died in 1541, and John, who held the rectory of Cuckfield in 1559-60, and married Margaret, daughter of William Apsley of Thakeham, lived until 1571. He was succeeded

¹ *Select Pleas of the Crown* (Selden Society), i. 120.

² Lewes Chartulary, *S.R.S.* xl.

³ Subsidy Rolls, Hurst and Cuckfield, *S.R.S.* x.

⁴ B.M. Add. Ch. 28288.

⁵ *S.A.C.* xl. 51.

⁶ *S.N.Q.* II. 189.

⁷ *S.R.S.* xxxiv. 21.

⁸ Add. MS. 5683, f. 207.

⁹ *S.R.S.* xix. 269.

by his son John, who married Joan, daughter of John Michell of Cuckfield and, secondly, Mary, daughter of Sir Thomas Wroth of Durants, Enfield, in Middlesex. A fine of 1587 between Thomas Wroth and John Hussey regarding the manor of Legh had probably to do with the marriage settlement. One of the younger sons of this second marriage, Nathaniel of Paines, succeeded his father to Legh Manor, and by his will of 1626 left it to his mother. During Nathaniel's life the property seems to have been divided into two parts, for John Rowe's Survey states: 'Henricus Ward generosus tenet parcellam manerii de Lee alias Paynes nuper Porters et p^rantea Husseys, necnon parcellam unius virgate terre, continentes per estimacionem 250 acras in Cuckfield et Hurst per pound et pro redditu iij s. per annum vide 32. H. 8, quondam Paynes et postea Berwicks,' and 'Nathaniel Hussey generosus tenet residuum predicti manerii de Lee alias Paynes et terrarum predictarum pro redditu, 32. H. 8 . . . vij s. iij d.' ('Totus redditus manerii de Lee est xj s. iij d.')¹

In 1627 Mary Hussey senior, widow of John Hussey, and Mary Hussey junior, widow of Nathaniel Hussey, conveyed the manor to John Stapley and Drew his wife, and in 1634 George Hussey, son of Nathaniel, released his right in it.² John Stapley died seized of Legh in 1639, leaving directions that the manor should be sold,³ and it was evidently purchased by John Burrell, who held his courts there from 1651 to 1690. He settled it on his daughter Mary, who married William Board, and in 1707 they sold it to Charles Sergison. Legh then descended with the other Sergison manors in Cuckfield until it was sold by Mrs. Prudence Sergison-Brooke in 1917 to Sir William Chance, Bt.

The house, beside its quiet beauty of form and texture, has many points of interest for the student of architecture. Its builder has left two clues to his identity, for beside the name HWSEE within a scroll above the Hussey arms, which is the sole relic of the painted glass of the

¹ *S.R.S.* xxxiv. 21.

² *S.R.S.* xix. 269.

³ *S.R.S.* xiv. I.P.M. no. 986.



LEGH MANOR: SOUTH FRONT.

windows, there are the initials I H and M H, each pair of letters linked by tasselled knots, within the spandrels of one of the fireplaces. The form of the letters is that in use in the first part of the sixteenth century, and this, confirmed by the style of the building, points to the early part of the period when the manor was in the possession of John Hussey and his wife Margaret (Apsley), probably between 1540 and 1550.

The first point to be observed in the plan (Fig. 1) is the absence of a room that we can dignify with the name of Hall, used in its old sense. There are two parallel ranges of buildings which we will call the north and south wings, the ends of which form towards the east a symmetrical pair of gables with lofty chimney-stacks. The range, however, which connects these two wings contained originally but one moderate vestibule, set centrally with the south wing, which is a longer building than the north. This gave a small eastern entrance court which had a porch covering the doorway. In a normal plan of the period the wings would have been separated by the great hall, with its upper or southern end communicating with the solar wing and its northern with the kitchen and offices. But in the smaller houses of the sixteenth century the great hall was gradually falling into disuse, and here we see its frank abandonment in favour of a practical plan which foreshadows the practice of a much later date.

On the other hand, we can still recognize a certain conservatism in the planning of the parlours of the south wing. The range is divided by its timbers into five bays, three of which are occupied by the Great Parlour to the east. The planning of this room certainly preserves an echo of the hall plan of old, since its entrance is at the lower end and has opposite to it, on the south wall, an external doorway to a porch in the centre of the south front. Moreover, the ceiling beams are so arranged that a screen is almost certainly suggested, which would provide a passage across the lower end of the room. It may be that John Hussey called this room his Hall, although its position, form, and function equate it with the Great Parlour of contemporary plans.

LEGH MANOR
CUCKFIELD —

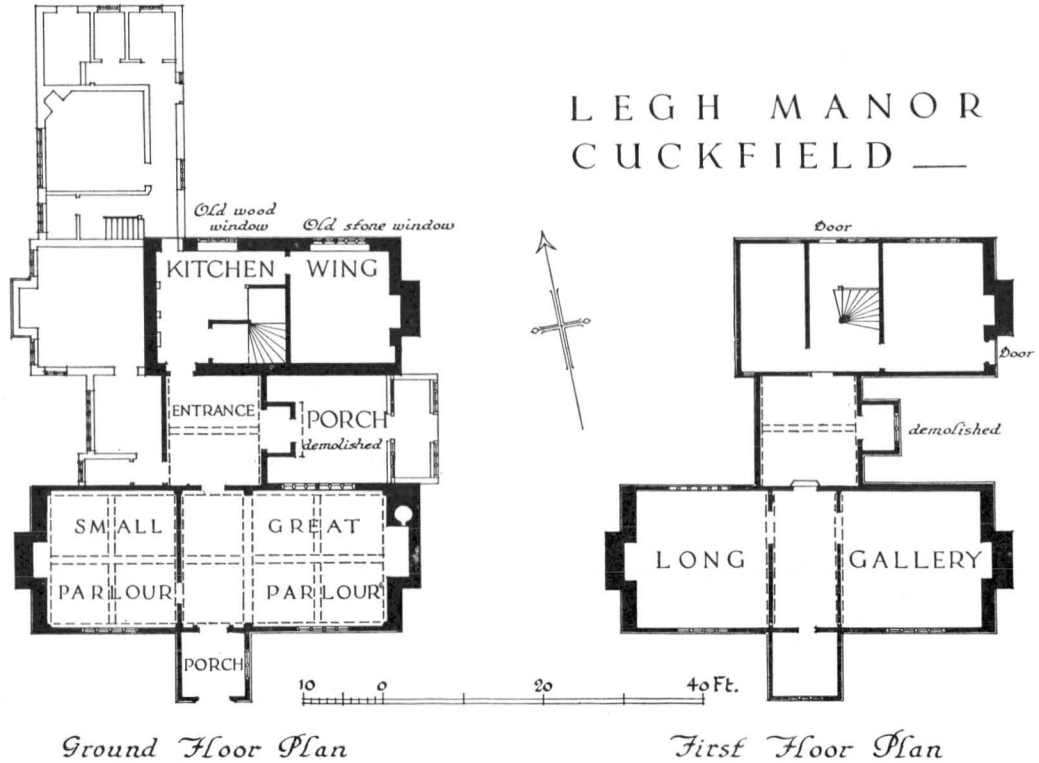


FIG. 1.

To the west is a smaller parlour, while the staircase, of a type which had not yet emerged from the old vice-like form with the treads radiating from a central newel, is in the kitchen wing just north of the central vestibule. This northern wing has thick walls of brickwork up to the first floor level, whereas the rest of the building (except the brickwork of the gables and stacks) is timber-framed above the floor of the ground story.

The interest of the first floor lies chiefly in the south range, which seems to have been designed as a long gallery with a coved ceiling, and was divided into rooms in the seventeenth century.

We may now proceed to describe the architectural features in detail. Externally the east front (Fig. 2) is dominated by the large brick chimney-stacks which terminate the two wings. The brickwork, which is of 2-inch bricks, is plentifully diapered with blue-grey headers on the south stack.¹ Each chimney is furnished with two tall flues set diagonally and tied only at the heads. The gables finish with plain verges. The space between the gables is filled with modern work faced by the porch designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

The south front (Fig. 3) is of regular design, the roof of Horsham stone terminating to the west in an old chimney-stack similar to that at the east. The walls of the basement below ground level are of sandstone with original stone windows. The rest of the structure is timber-framed, hung with tiles, including the two-story porch in the centre which is gabled. The windows have been renewed. The hanging tiles are varied by panels of lozenge-shaped and bands of scalloped tiles.

Internally, the Great Parlour (26 ft. × 17 ft.) is divided into three bays by two heavy moulded beams which meet similar wall-beams surrounding the room. The western third of the ceiling is separated from the remainder by a large moulded cross-beam which differs from the others in that it has a flat unchannelled soffit.

¹ Mr. J. W. Bloe has suggested to me that the difference in the texture of these stacks may indicate a difference in date, and that not only the north stack but the whole north wing may be later than the south.

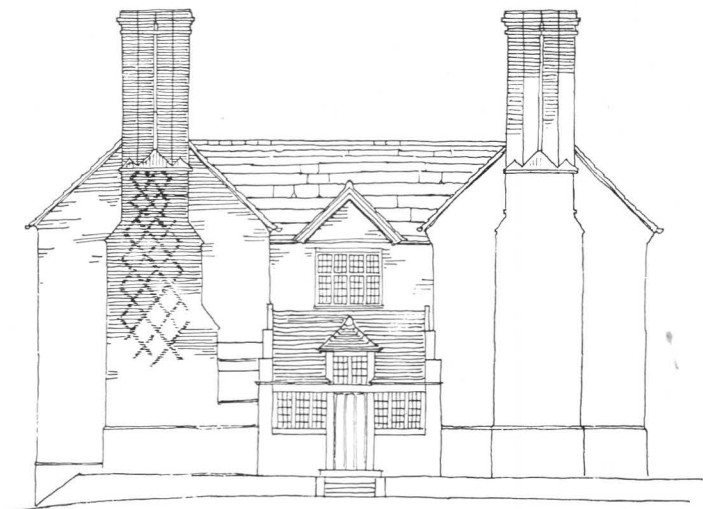


FIG. 2. E. ELEVATION.



FIG. 3. S. ELEVATION.

It alone is framed into massive story-posts with similar mouldings mitred at the angles. To its centre are tenoned longitudinal beams, one dividing the western section of the ceiling into two compartments and the other traversing the remaining two-thirds to the east as far as the chimney-breast. The other cross-beam, in two parts, divides this part of the ceiling into four. All the beams, with the exception of the main transverse one, are channelled underneath as well as moulded, and the mouldings, which are two bold quarter-rounds separated by fillets, are carefully mitred at their intersections. The whole of the framing is an exceptionally fine piece of carpentry. There are angle-posts in the eastern corners of the room, and corresponding posts to the framework of the western partition, and the wall framing is carried on a massive cill and has a heavy horizontal beam at a little over two-thirds of the height of the wall. Between the latter and the ceiling beam, in the north wall, is an original oak window of six lights, three each side of a master-mullion, the whole window being central in the eastern two-thirds of the room. The south window is modern, and the fireplace with its flanking niches is the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens.

The doors to this Great Parlour are of much interest. That from the porch (Fig. 4) is of large proportions, framed in twenty panels with moulded stiles and rails. Inside it is diagonal-boarded with wide oak planks, and its front is studded with square-headed nails. The square oak frame is moulded and channelled like the beams, and has carved stops, but both door and frame are much worn by the action of the weather, which suggests that the porch was a later addition. The door is hung on two fine wrought-iron strap hinges and possesses a charming iron knocker with shaped back plate (Fig. 5).

The door in the north wall of the room is of three planks of oak heavily studded with nails (Fig. 6). The frame here is smaller than the porch door, and is moulded with one quarter round, two fillets, and a surrounding sunk channel, which does not meet at the angles. The stops to the mouldings are elaborate, and it will be seen



LEGH MANOR: GREAT PARLOUR

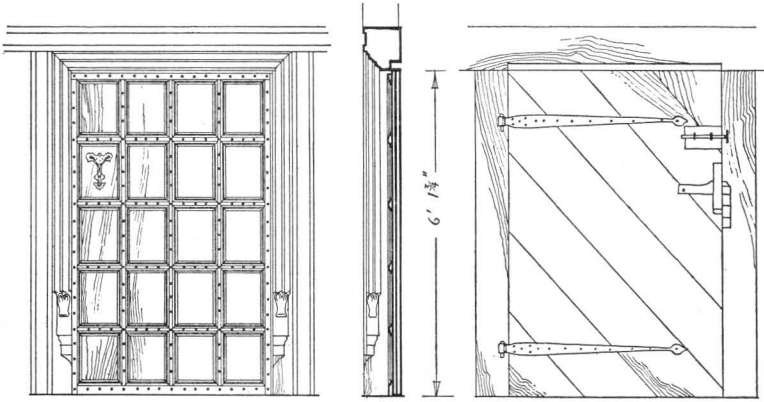


FIG. 4. OAK DOOR FROM PORCH TO GREAT PARLOUR

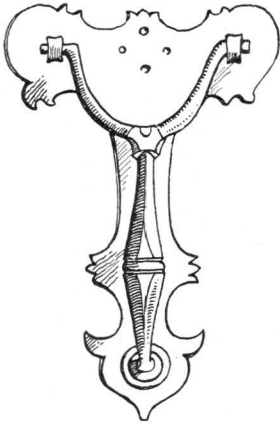


FIG. 5. WROUGHT-IRON
KNOCKER.

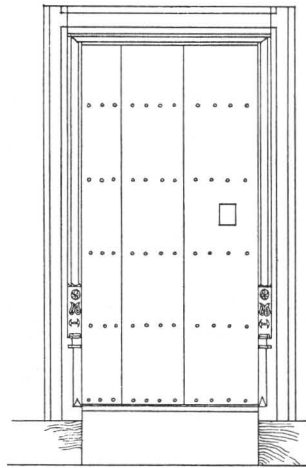


FIG. 6. N. DOOR TO GREAT
PARLOUR.

from the drawing that they are distinctly reminiscent of Gothic detail (Fig. 7, A).

The chief feature of the small western parlour is the stone fireplace (Fig. 8). The head is a four-centred arch, within a framework enclosing spandrels, and both it and

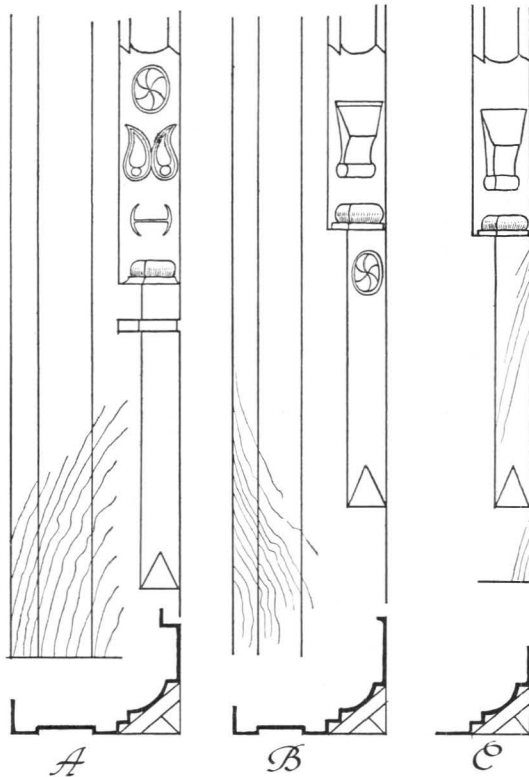


FIG. 7. CARVED STOPS TO DOOR-FRAMES.

the jambs are elaborately moulded, the latter having moulded stops. The spandrels (Fig. 9) are filled with the stiff Tudor-leaf foliage which reverses ribbon-fashion, and in the angles are the two shields already mentioned with the initials I H to the left and M H to the right, each pair being linked by a tasselled knot. Over the moulded framework is a frieze carved with a characteristic fluting which seems to have been evolved from the classical

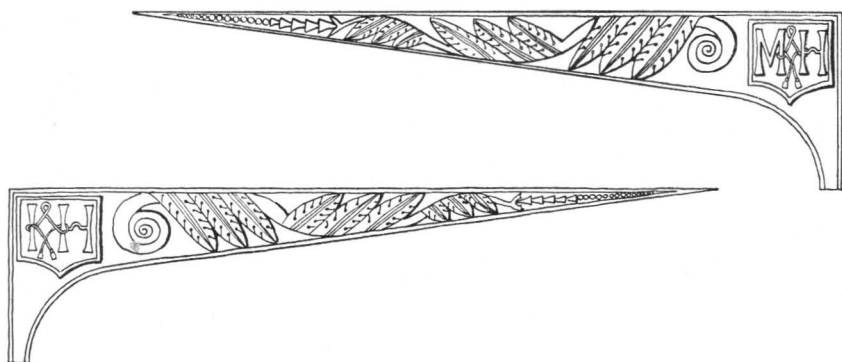


FIG. 9. CARVED SPANDRELS OF SMALL PARLOUR FIREPLACE.

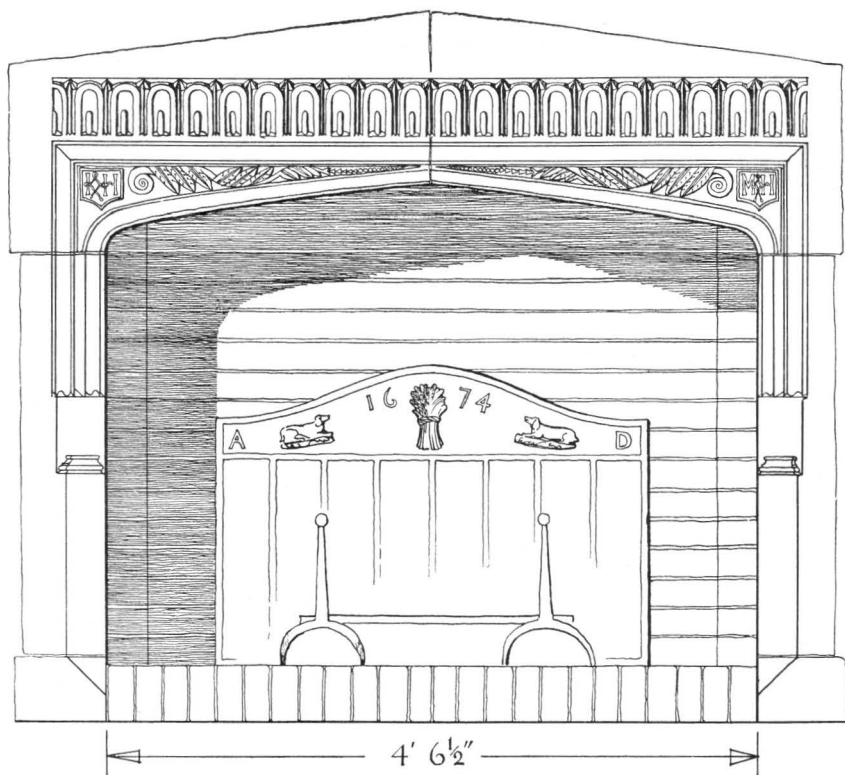


FIG. 8. FIREPLACE, SMALL PARLOUR.

ornament of egg and dart. Behind the fire is a fireback dated 1674. This room used to communicate with the Great Parlour by a door in the partition between them, but it is now approached from the vestibule to the north.

The present Entrance Hall between the two wings is more than double the size of the original vestibule, which formerly functioned as the 'screens passage' between Parlour and Kitchen. Its extension eastwards now covers the north window of the Parlour, and various other alterations have taken place. The external door, with its original frame (similar to those already described; see Fig. 7, B) has been fixed in the north wall to give access to the stair, and the door (Fig. 7, c) that opened into the kitchen wing has since been moved eastward to lead to the north-east room, now the dining-room. This room, perhaps the original kitchen, was formerly approached by a door north of the staircase. It has a stone window of five lights, with transom, in its north wall, and in it is the Hussey shield (*ermine three bars gules*) with a scroll above it, in painted glass (Fig. 10).

The stair is entirely of winding steps, tenoned into a circular newel-post, and contained within a square frame. The lowest steps have been removed and replaced by a small flight leading through the new opening into the entrance hall. At first-floor level there is a larger landing than usual and the continuity is broken by a large oak door that shuts off the upper flight that provides access to the roof. In the north-east room on the first floor is an oak window of five lights in the north wall, and there was originally a small window in the south wall. A simple stone fireplace with a four-centred arch is preserved in this room.

The south wing, on the first floor, has the appearance of being planned, as already noticed, in one room. It was ceiled with a cove, which can still be seen in the central passage, and carved wall-brackets to the two tie-beams, which are partly buried in the present partitions, were evidently designed to be in full view. A five-light oak window in the north wall of the western section is

now blocked. At each end are good stone fireplaces similar to the one in the small parlour below, but with uninscribed shields.

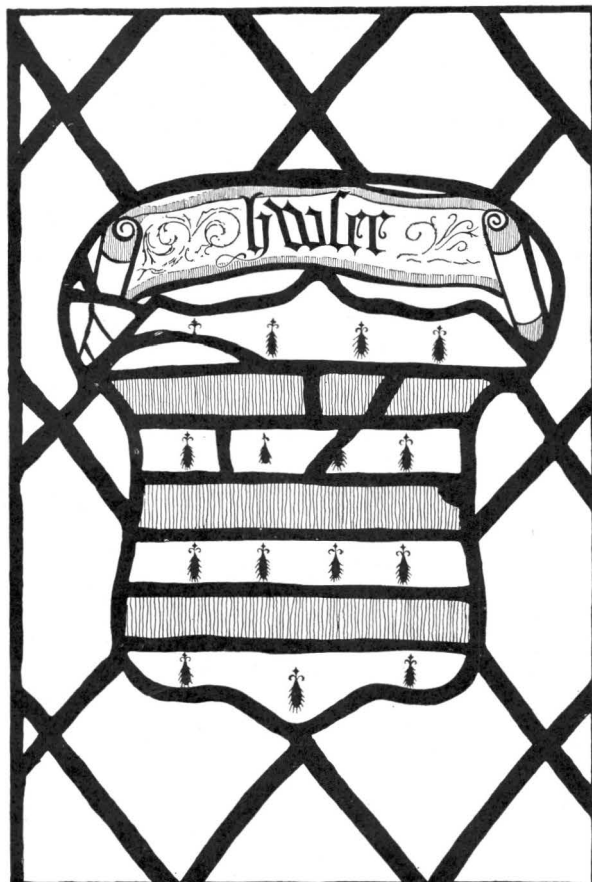


FIG. 10. HUSSEY ARMS IN WINDOW OF N.-E. ROOM.

The room over the porch is separated from the passage by a partition, in the upper part of which is a balustrade of turned oak balusters. It is said that similar balusters existed in the partitions of the passage between the door heads and the tie-beams. It is probable that the division of the gallery into rooms and the insertion of

this balustrade were carried out at the same time as the building of the porch in the seventeenth century.

Nothing has been said here of the interesting contents of the house nor of the beautiful gardens which Lady Chance has laid out with such skill. Particulars of the furniture, pictures, &c. will be found in the guide on sale at the house. Enough has, however, been said to show the value of the building as evidence of a peculiarly interesting moment of transition in English house-building, and as an example of that charm which is inseparable from the craftsmanship of the Tudor period.