

MEDIEVAL HOUSES AT LINDFIELD

THE TIGER AND THE BOWER

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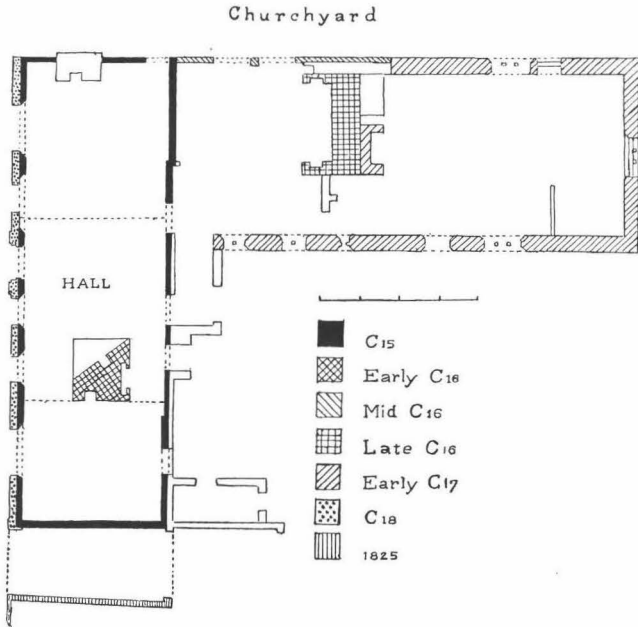
FORMING the southern boundary of the churchyard at Lindfield, in process of restoration as a parish house, is a block of old buildings that illustrate the story of domestic architecture from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth. It was formerly an inn,¹ but there is no trace of the medieval galleried courtyard that was the prototype of the modern theatre. The fabric follows the ordinary domestic tradition.

The earliest portion is a timber-framed hall (axis north and south) with chambers at both ends: it may with fair confidence be assigned to the fifteenth century, though it might be a little earlier, or just possibly later. The uprights are close together, in the usual medieval way. The hall was of two bays: the heavy cambered tie-beam has a roll moulding along its soffit, which is cut off at either end to oppose the massive brackets which press against it, each being morticed to the tie and fixed with three pegs. Above (visible over the ceiling) is a good octagonal king-post, braced to the collar-runner and the adjacent collar. The roof over the chamber to the north has long braces from the end-posts to the collar-runner. The framing is entirely normal, but the work has been much reconstructed, a rough ridge-piece being added. Smoke blacking largely remains. On the west side, facing the street, the lower portion of the roof is covered with the original Horsham slabs. Elsewhere are red tiles. There is no indication whatever as to which was screen or dais end of the hall.

The flooring over was carried out rather early, probably before the middle of the sixteenth century. The ceiling beams of the ground floor are moulded—concave

¹ Originally, it seems, the Michelborne Arms (*S.A.C.* x. 188). The Tiger was the crest of the Michelbornes.

edges, rolls along the under sides—and the work has been very good, though now badly hacked about. At the same time a large brick chimney was erected in the southern bay of the hall; the portion above the roof is oblong with projecting ends having a central triangular vertical ridge, the whole crowned by the customary



GROUND PLAN. (Scale in 5 ft. sections)

heavy cornice. The stack leans heavily westward and has largely dislocated the roof, the reason being that during the nineteenth century nearly half the base was cut away, diagonally across, to insert a modern fireplace. Though badly cracked, the fabric successfully stood on account of its admirable building, and the damage is now restored.

It was probably a little later—but there are no precise indications of date¹—that a new two-storied

¹ In contrast with masonry, whose technique was getting constantly modified, timber-framing (with mortices, tenons, and pegs) remained very much the same from the late fourteenth century till well into the eighteenth.

wing of timber was added to the east of the north end. This portion is very roughly framed of massive timbers, displaying square panels to the exterior, which, on the north, overlooking the churchyard, is still untouched. The upper long window is intact with wooden mullions, modelled on those of stone and obviously intended to be glazed, in contrast to the free diagonally set square rails with wooden shutters against them that presumably existed in the earlier section.

Probably during the reign of Elizabeth a huge brick chimney was rather clumsily constructed within the eastern part of this addition, providing for the lower apartment a large, if very ordinary, ingle, having a salt-recess at either end. This work seems to contain vast spaces of internal rubble; part of the east side appears originally to have been of rough stone. Many of the bricks are vitrified. The portion above the roof is modern.

Early in the seventeenth century this wing was extended by a fine addition of ashlar stone, rather suggesting Brambletye in its technique. The stones are large, but the courses are not entirely regular. Owing to the slope of the ground this portion is on a lower level. It has two stories and had above them a very large loft whose floor rested on ledges formed by the setting back of the inside walls about 3 ft. from the top. It was lit from a square-headed three-light stone mullioned window in the east gable. All the windows of this part are of the usual plain Jacobean type of two and three lights except three which are obviously altered and another small rectangular (south wall) which apparently was not glazed. A loose shutter was inserted into a groove in the lintel, pressed against the frame, and secured by a massive wooden bar which fitted into large holes in the jambs of very medieval type. The actual jambs are greatly worn down by knife-sharpening. On the same (south) wall is a plain doorway under a flat arch. The lower story formed domestic offices.

Above them is a fine chamber, originally ceiled, but now open to the ridge of the (modern) roof by the

throwing in of the loft. The opportunity has been taken to provide a most attractive west gallery against the battering chimney. The (original) fire-place has a very flat arch formed of two stones, over which for relief was inserted a hidden oak beam. Each jamb has a very simple form of the ancient 'marigold' pattern,¹ in this case mere four-petal cruciform blossoms, each formed by four semicircles, very crudely made. The two eastern windows (beneath that in the gable that originally lighted the loft) have been enlarged, with wooden frames under flat brick arches, during the nineteenth century. The apartment is locally known as the tithe-room, which probably explains the large store space.

During the eighteenth century the street front (west) was faced with brick, 9 in. walling, entirely outside the old timber frame. The house adjoining on the south, with gateway through, is dated 1825.

The reconstruction of the fabric is being carried out by Harold Turner of Haywards Heath, to whom I am much indebted for help in its study. The outlines of the plan were made in his office, but I am myself responsible for its dating.

Across High Street, 36 ft. away, which gives the width of the medieval highway through the village, is another, smaller old house whose history seems largely similar. It is now known as the Bower. Its centre is a late-medieval hall of two unequal bays, whose roof is perfectly preserved as an attic, the original plaster and beams heavily coated with untouched soot. A massive cambered tie-beam, originally braced, supports a plain square king-post with braces to the collar-runner and the adjacent rafters, which are not heavier than the rest. In the wider bay only, the collar-runner is also braced to the wall centre-post. There were rooms (two stories and attic) both north and south of the hall.

The flooring over, in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, is interesting from the fact that curving wall-braces and other parts are clearly cut from the ribs of

¹ It is more than likely that the resemblance to this ancient Romano-Celtic device is purely accidental.

old vessels, and nothing of the kind is more persistent than the traditions among the older countrymen throughout the Weald about the extensive use of ship-timber in the building of cottages and barns. Any sawn beams were far too valuable not to be re-used, if possible. One of the purlins has a ring that could be of no possible service in its present position. Another is formed from timber that displays the arras groove, with holes through it for the pegs by which the curtain was suspended. A similar beam at Philpots (West Hoathly), in its original position, opened from the hall to the rooms beyond the dais.¹

It was presumably at the same time that the hall was floored over that a large brick chimney was built outside it on the west. Probably timber wings projecting westward from the north and south ends are also contemporary.

During the eighteenth century the interior chambers were plastered up in the fashion of the time, and the outside walls were mostly refaced in brick below and hung with weather tiles above. The date of this is given on a stone tablet

V
A M
1725

Recently the timbering has been re-exposed throughout the interior, but also, rather confusingly, in parts reconstructed.

¹ I have seen reason to alter the view (expressed in *S.A.C.* LXXIII. 166) that this lintel is re-used.