

# OLD PLACE, PULBOROUGH

By V. W. TYLER

In volume LXX of the *Collections* (1929), Mr. W. D. Peckham wrote (pp. 119-133) an exhaustive description of the buildings at Old Place, Pulborough, which he described as "the Farmstead."

These buildings, used for farming purposes for many years until early in the 20th century, gradually became more and more dilapidated and, shortly after the close of the 1939-1945 war, the Surveyor of the Chanctonbury Rural District inspected them and expressed the opinion that, owing to the decay of much of the oak timbering, they were in a dangerous condition.

In order to find a use for the buildings and so to make the restoration of part of it an economic proposition, I decided to apply for permission to demolish the eastern portion, using the best features of that part in the retained portion, to restore the remainder and to convert it into a residence. Permission was granted in due course by the Chanctonbury Rural District Council and by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (Historic Buildings Section). The work was completed in two stages, the first affecting the western portion in 1950 and the remainder in 1953.

In the accompanying plan (Fig. 1), which is taken from that in Mr. Peckham's article (p. 122), the area, W, X, Y, Z, shaded with diagonal lines, represents the portion demolished. The windows and doorways A, B, C, D, E, in the demolished part are shown in their new positions in the new wall WZ, which was built entirely out of material from the portion removed. In this connection it should be explained that, in order to have a wide window here for the admission of light into the interior, only the stones of the sides of window E (shown in the new position as EE) were used, a horizontal stone lintel being built to join them. For a similar reason window D at the eastern end of the south wall was widened by the insertion of a stone at the apex of the arch.

During the progress of the demolition and alterations certain matters of interest came to light:

- (a) On the removal of the roofing timbers, the eastern wall collapsed, but it was clear from the soot on many of the stones that, contrary to Mr. Peckham's surmise (p. 127), the existence of a fireplace there at some time appears probable.
- (b) The walls XYZ on the plan rested on earth at ground level, but, on excavation, it was ascertained that the western wall went to a considerable depth, the lower portion consisting of

huge blocks of stone, thus confirming Mr. Peckham's feeling that the moat shown on his site plan (p. 131), based on the Tithe Map, 1841, probably continued right round the building.

- (c) When excavations were being made to the north of the existing building in connection with the Pulborough main drainage scheme, foundations similar in width to the walls now remaining were found, thus confirming the view that the northern arm of the building originally extended as far as the fishpond. This portion may have contained a porter's lodge with entry from the passage way, small parts of the wall on one side of which still exist inside the building.
- (d) On removing the brick and rough stonework with which the windows, archways and all but one of the doorways in the northern arm had been filled, the beautiful mouldings hitherto obscured were disclosed. Where the walls were rebuilt, they were set back so that the mouldings can now be seen.
- (e) When extending one of the openings in the western wall to accommodate a large modern window, an earthenware jug was found upright in the centre of the wall. The Curator of the Worthing Museum assigns this vessel to the 14th century.

It will be observed from Plate II that the west wall before restoration contained no windows at ground floor level, the only openings being the doorway mentioned by Mr. Peckham on p. 123 and two holes broken through the wall for farming purposes. To provide the necessary light to the interior, the windows shown in Plate IVa and b were inserted. These were all made locally of oak to the same design and as nearly as practicable to the measurements of two mediaeval windows incorporated in "the House." A similar procedure was adopted for the windows D and EE in the reconstructed east and south walls, mentioned previously and shown in Plate V. From these photographs it will be seen that the string course and the best-preserved of the oak-mullioned windows, drawings of which appear on page 126 of Mr. Peckham's article, were again utilised. Other than in the cases mentioned, no alterations were made in the existing windows, which were merely filled with leaded glass.

In the interior of the building, the only partition or erection of any kind in the part of the building retained was a much-decayed timber partition, originally supporting part of the roof of the main wing but at the time of the alteration failing to do so. This was reconstructed so as properly to support the roof and now forms the dividing wall between two rooms. To provide for the necessary fireplaces and for central heating, two chimney stacks containing five flues were erected, the positions of which are shown in Plate IV.

To protect the principal door, that in the west wall, from the

weather, a porch was built from old materials, the design and proportions of which were dictated by the height of the stone portion of the wall and the distance of the bottom of the door from ground level.

For the purpose of record and in order to avoid confusion in the future, it should be recorded that, from the date of the alteration and subsequent separation of the two properties, the building described in Mr. Peckham's first article as "The Farmstead" is now known as "Old Place" and that described in his second article (*S.A.C.*, vol. 71, pp. 205-215) as "The House" is now known as "Old Place Manor."

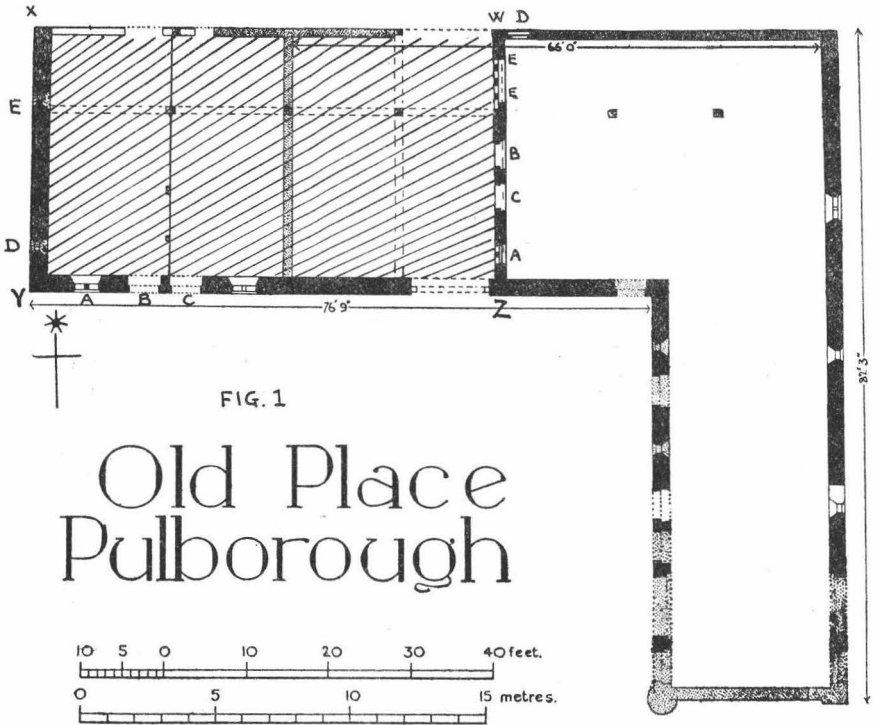


FIG. I.—Plan showing alterations. This should be compared with the plan in *S.A.C.*, vol. 70, p.122.

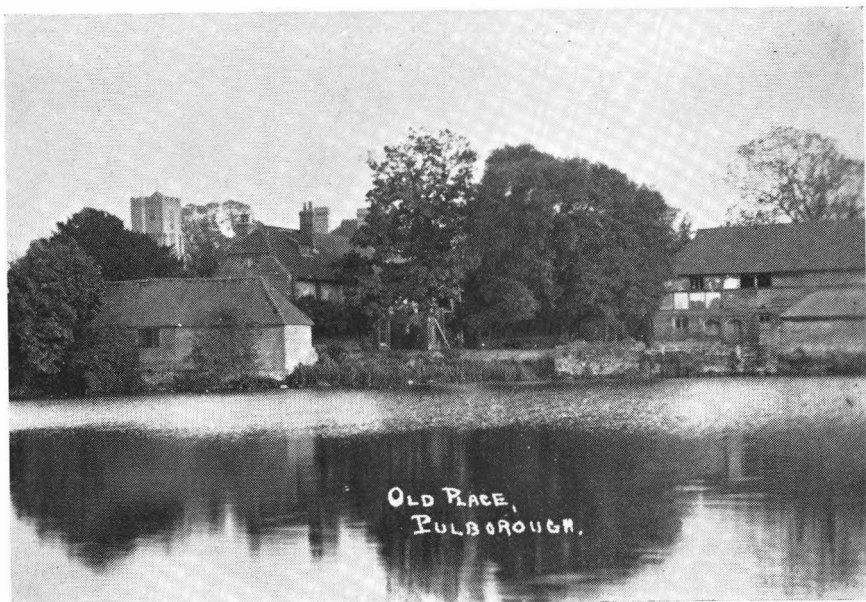


PLATE IA. OLD PLACE. View of both buildings from north before demolition and alteration.



PLATE IB. OLD PLACE. View of part of building from north before demolition.

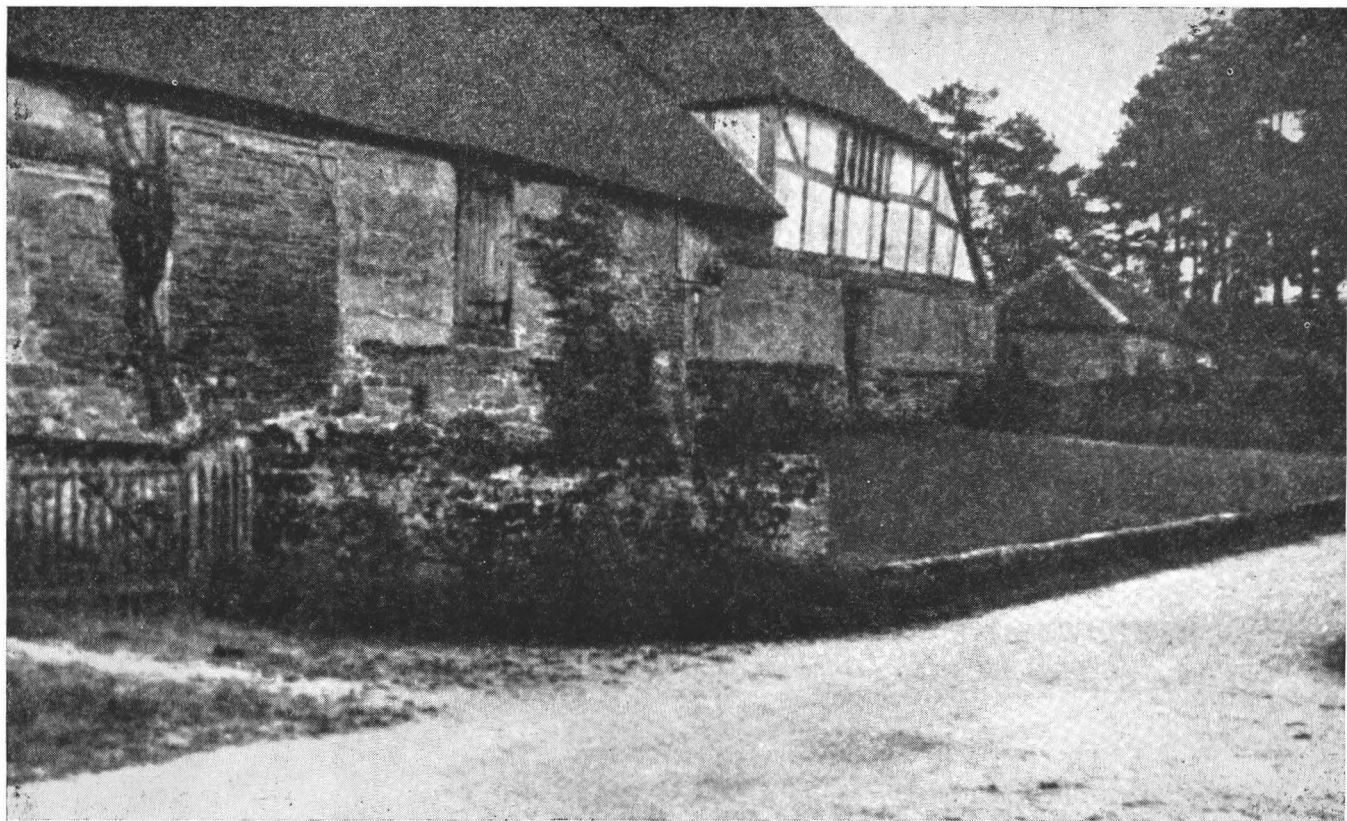


PLATE II. OLD PLACE. View from north-west before alteration



PLATE IIIA. OLD PLACE. View from east before alteration



PLATE IIIB. OLD PLACE. View from south before alteration





PLATE IVA. OLD PLACE. View from south-west after alteration



PLATE IVB. OLD PLACE. View from north-west after alteration



PLATE VA. OLD PLACE  
View from north-east after  
demolition and alteration



PLATE VB. OLD PLACE  
View from east after  
demolition and alteration



PLATE VC. OLD PLACE  
View from south-east after  
demolition and alteration