

◆ Late 16th-century domestic wall painting

AN EXAMPLE FROM FITTLEWORTH, WEST SUSSEX

By Danae Tankard

In 1968 a remarkable wall painting scheme thought to date from around 1580 to 1600 was uncovered during the renovation of Ivy House in Fittleworth, West Sussex. Threatened with destruction, four painted wattle-and-daub panels were removed and are now in the collection of the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in Singleton, West Sussex. This article examines the wall paintings in the context of what we know about domestic wall painting during this period. It considers the relationship between the Ivy House scheme and other forms of decorative design, in particular block-printed wall papers and black-work embroidery. It offers an overview of the structural history of the house and what is known about the social status of its early occupants. Finally, it considers how the room might have been furnished in the late 16th and early 17th centuries and the relationship between domestic interior design and contemporary clothing fashions.

INTRODUCTION

In the collection of the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum (WDOAM) in Singleton, West Sussex, are four painted wattle-and-daub panels which were removed from an upper-floor room of Ivy House in Lower Street, Fittleworth (NGR TQ 01054 18966) in 1968. The elaborate black-and-white floral, foliate and abstract designs, thought to date to around 1580 to 1600, were discovered whilst the house was undergoing renovation to remove a bulging infill between the framing timbers. This turned out to be a layer of reed plaster that had been used to cover up the wall paintings, probably in the 18th century. The new plaster was supported on battens, creating a protective air space for the original painted plaster (see Fig. 1). Surviving painting on the timber framing showed that the scheme had initially covered all four walls, although that on two of the walls had been destroyed at an earlier date when the wattle and daub panelling was replaced. The painted scheme on either side of the front-facing window included two wreathed roundels. The inner space of one was blank but the other contained a partly-completed heraldic shield. On this there were faint remnants of yellow and red colour.¹

In 1968 what subsequently became the WDOAM was still in its founding stages. Responding to the destruction of vernacular buildings in the South East Roy Armstrong (1902–93) proposed in 1965 the establishment of an open-air museum, at a weekend conference of the Wealden Buildings Study Group (WBSG), and in 1966 a Committee for the

Promotion of an Open Air Museum for the Weald and Downland was established. By 1968 it had already begun to collect buildings threatened with destruction on their existing sites (beginning with the ‘Bough Beech’ buildings from Kent, Winkhurst Farm, Little Winkhurst and Bayleaf), building parts and artefacts. The museum was incorporated as a company in 1969 and opened in 1970. From the outset its policy has been to accept buildings only when they cannot be preserved *in situ*, either because they are scheduled for demolition or because there is no future for them on their original site.²

It was Marjorie Hallam (1918–2006), a key figure in the early history of the museum and one of the founders of the WBSG, who more than anyone else was responsible for rescuing the painted panels from destruction.³ She also undertook the first research on them which is recorded in the museum’s archive and summarised in its guidebook. There is no explanation in the archive of how the wall paintings were first brought to Hallam’s attention but what is clear from her various notes and letters is that she, with other members of the WBSG and the Promotion Committee, tried hard to persuade the house’s owner to preserve them *in situ*. As Hallam noted in a letter to Armstrong dated 5 May 1969, ‘the owner was strongly urged...to preserve the plaster *in situ* but was convinced that the state of the infilling between the framing timbers necessitated complete replacement in order to achieve his purpose of thoroughly renovating the house’. Indeed, he had already begun to knock out the painted plaster and to apply a stain to the painted timbers. All Hallam



Fig. 1. The paintings discovered beneath reed plaster (WDOAM).

and her colleagues were able to do was to persuade the owner to delay renovation until a photographic and written record of the room had been made and to allow the removal of the painted panels.⁴

The panels' removal proved to be controversial because the building was listed. On 1 May 1969 the local planning authority, Petworth Rural District Council, wrote to Roy Armstrong advising him that the museum's actions were in contravention of the 1962 and 1968 Town and Country Planning Acts. It noted that it did not intend to take any action on this occasion but warned Armstrong that the museum must observe all statutory provisions in future.⁵ This was reported in the *West Sussex County Times* on 2 May 1969 in an article entitled 'Museum's curator given warning'.⁶ Marjorie Hallam was also informed that there had been adverse comment on the panels' removal at a meeting of the Sussex Archaeological Society. In his reply to the district council on 5 May 1969, repeating much of the content of Hallam's letter to him of the same date, Armstrong reiterated Hallam's points that the panels were already being

destroyed and that removal was really the only option.⁷

IVY HOUSE

An unpublished building survey undertaken by Annabelle Hughes in 1993 records that Ivy House (Fig. 2) started life as a late medieval open-hall house consisting of a two-bay hall, with a chamber at the upper (southern) end and a service room (or rooms) at the lower (northern) end.⁸ The house underwent substantial modifications in the 16th century. The open hall was floored over and a chimney stack was inserted at the lower end providing a ground floor and possibly two first-floor hearths. Ceilings were put into the first-floor rooms. The orientation of living space would have changed at this point, with the 'best' rooms in what had formerly been the lower end. As David Martin has shown, this end reversal, with service rooms becoming new parlours and ground-floor chambers or parlours becoming service rooms, was relatively common in converted



Fig. 2. Ivy House in 1968 (WDOAM).

medieval houses in Sussex.⁹ There was an access stair at the southern end of the house, which probably provided the only first-floor access, with passage from room to room.

Subsequently a face or cross wing was added at the northern end of the house with an eastern-facing jetty and an external chimney stack serving two hearths. The jettied upper-floor chamber measured approximately 15 feet by 12 feet. An east-facing staircase tower was added providing separate access at this end. The style of timber framing, in particular the distinctive ogee braces, suggests that the cross wing was built between 1580 and 1600



Fig. 3. The cross wing after renovation showing the ogee braces (WDOAM).

which is consistent with the dating of the wall paintings (see Fig. 3). The house was extended towards the south in the 18th century and to the front in the late 18th or early 19th centuries.

It was only in the upper room of the cross wing that extensive wall paintings survived, but fragments of plaster and faint impressions on timbers revealed that other rooms in the house had once had polychrome paintings, including 'leaves and grape-like bunches' possibly in the ground-floor room or parlour.¹⁰

DOMESTIC WALL PAINTINGS

The black-and-white wall paintings that make up the Ivy House scheme were created using carbon black and chalk white (see Fig. 4). The scheme was not uniform across the whole room, but used a variety of patterns which were repeated in approximately similar arrangements on each wall. The wall plate was decorated with a chevron design. Below this was a broad horizontal band or frieze of a naturalistic floral and foliate design, followed by alternating vertical bands of more abstract, curvilinear decoration. Different schemes were used for some of the intervening timbers of the wall frame.

In layout it is similar to that found in other domestic houses of this period. Kathryn Davies has shown that painted schemes typically had three elements, the frieze, the main panel and the dado. Friezes varied in depth from a few inches to about two feet and their design usually bore no relationship to that of the main panel, from which it was separated by a decorative band or border, which often took the form of a 'guilloche' (a ropework design) or 'glyphs' (a design that looked like eyelet holes). In the Ivy House scheme, separation between the frieze and the main panel and its



Fig. 4. The wall paintings in situ in the upper chamber (WDOAM).

compartments was achieved through a simple black line. The main panel was usually divided into compartments, separated from each other by decorative framing. The final element of the scheme, the dado, at the base of the wall, was generally different in design from the main panels and separated from it by a decorative border.¹¹

In many surviving wall paintings the design extends continuously over the surfaces of the walls and timbers (and in some cases the ceilings as well) without any interruption in the pattern, with the design being adapted to fit the available space. In the case of Ivy House the scheme is interrupted by the use of contrasting patterns on some of the timbers (see Fig. 5). On other timbers, for example the large arch brace on the north wall and the ogee braces on the east wall, the design is continuous.

The designs of domestic wall painting varied widely but can be divided into three categories, figurative, architectural and decorative, with some schemes incorporating elements of all three. Figurative paintings included religious, classical

and miscellaneous figures, including the occasional portrait, as well as actual and imagined land and townscapes. The most common architectural motif was fictive wood panelling but there are also examples of fictive arcading and close studding. However, decorative schemes predominated. These might be classically-inspired designs usually described as antique work or grotesque work, floral and foliate designs, organic or geometric abstract designs or a mixture of these. Some schemes incorporated moralising, religious and secular text; others included royal or personal heraldry.¹² It is clear that in some cases the wall painting was intended to look like hung or draped textiles with the design imitative of tapestry or woven or embroidered cloth.¹³

Davies has described the techniques that would have been used to set out designs like this one. Long straight lines could be achieved using snap lines, which involved 'snapping' a taut string covered in soot or other powdered pigment against the wall, or for true vertical lines like those on the main panel



Fig. 5. Detail of painted timber (WDOAM).

a plumb line might be used. Once this had been done the pattern could be sketched in outline onto the surface using charcoal or a dilute pigment or traced onto it using a blunt-pointed instrument. Other methods of transferring a design to the wall were by pouncing, which involved piercing a paper design with tiny holes so that the pattern could be produced onto the wall when it was rubbed with charcoal or powdered pigment (a method also used in embroidery), or by using stencils.¹⁴

In London the trade in decorative painting on solid surfaces and on cloth was monopolised by members of the Painter-Stainers Company.¹⁵ The overlap between their trade and that of other London-based professions is shown in the prolonged disputes they had with the Heralds at the College of Arms over the right to paint coats of arms and with other companies like the Plasterers whose members were illegally practising 'the art and mystery of painting staining'.¹⁶ Outside London the smaller number of single-craft professionals meant that they tended to group together into composite guilds. For example, in Kingston-upon-Hull the painter-stainers were part of the Goldsmiths' Company and in Shrewsbury they belonged to the Saddlers' Company, along with plumbers, glaziers and other crafts. However, as Davies has pointed out, outside urban centres wall paintings are likely to have been executed by general building craftsmen who may have been employed specifically for that task or may have done it as part of other building work.¹⁷

Despite their complexity, wall painting schemes were not that expensive to execute, with the

majority of the cost in the labour rather than the materials.¹⁸ Most paintings were done using a limited range of colours, with black and white predominating. Carbon black, an organic pigment, derived from charcoal or lampblack, and white or 'whiting', a mineral pigment, was made from lime or chalk; the costs of both were negligible. Earth pigments like red and yellow ochre cost between 1d. and 2d. per pound, with about half an ounce of pigment covering one square yard.¹⁹ Davies has suggested that wall paintings were intended to have a relatively limited lifespan of about twenty years; schemes could

be overpainted without too much disruption to counter pigment deterioration or accommodate changes in fashion.²⁰

OTHER TYPES OF WALL COVERING

Enough domestic wall paintings survive across the country to indicate that they were a widely used form of interior decoration in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. However, there were other types of wall coverings in use in domestic houses during this period, perhaps the most ubiquitous being painted cloths which were popular throughout the 16th century although declining in popularity in the early 17th century. The production methods for painted cloths were similar to those for wall paintings, but designs were painted directly onto a coarse linen cloth which was then nailed onto the wall. Painted cloths had other domestic uses; for example, they were often used as canopies or testers on four-poster beds.²¹ Very few painted cloths survive; evidence for their use is found in documentary sources, most frequently in probate inventories such as that of Fittleworth yeoman, Thomas Napper, of 1585 which included a 'stained cloth' in the hall and another over the bed in a 'low inner chamber'.²² In her will of 1608 Joanne Cook of Cocking left her son, Richard, the painted cloth that had hung in the hall but by this date painted cloths were becoming unfashionable, shown by the fact that they are fewer references to them in probate material.²³ Although the design or subject matter of these cloths is largely unknown it is likely

to have been similar to that found in wall paintings. Davies has suggested that the design of the latter was possibly a 'major source' for the design of the former but it is probably better to view them as sharing a set of contemporary design motifs found in print and other types of decorative media rather than one medium transferring designs to another.²⁴

Without any surviving examples we cannot say whether the design of the Ivy House scheme is similar to contemporary painted cloths or not. It does, however, strongly resemble another form of early modern wall covering and that is block-printed wallpaper.²⁵ This survives in two forms, either preserved as a lining paper inside boxes and drawers or on the walls of domestic interiors. Much of what survives has been dated to the late 17th century, although a surviving piece in the collection of the

Victoria and Albert Museum is thought to date to the early 17th century, bringing it closer in date to the Fittleworth paintings (see Fig. 6).²⁶

Writing about wallpaper in 1699 John Houghton, a London pharmacist and writer on trade and agriculture, noted,

Of paper there are diverse sorts finer and coarser, as also brown and blue paper, with diverse that are printed for the hanging of rooms; and truly they are very pretty and make the houses of the more ordinary people look neat. At Epsom in Surrey they call it paper tapestry and if they be in all parts well pasted close to the wall or boards they are very durable; and it ought to be encouraged because 'tis introductory to other hangings.

And,



Fig. 6. Fragment of early 17th-century wall paper (Victoria & Albert Museum, London).

... a great deal of paper is nowadays so printed to be pasted on walls to serve instead of hangings and truly if all parts of the sheet be well and close pasted on it is very pretty, clean and will last with tolerable care a great while; but there are some other done by rolls in long sheets of a thick paper made of the purpose whose sheets are pasted together to be so long as the height of the room and they are managed like woollen hangings ...²⁷

Although Houghton was writing at the end of the 17th century his comments about the use of printed wallpaper are interesting because he suggests that they served as a replacement for woven, embroidered or possibly painted wall hangings: they are called 'paper tapestry' and they 'serve instead of hangings'. The implication is that they are also more affordable: they 'make the houses of ordinary people look neat'.

The stylised black-and-white block-printed wallpapers do bear a strong resemblance to the design of the Ivy House scheme and it has been suggested that the latter was intended to be imitative of the former.²⁸ Certainly the vertical banding of the Ivy House scheme approximates the 'rolls in long sheets of a thick paper' described by Houghton. However, the paucity of surviving examples of early wallpaper and the difficulty of dating it makes its role as an originator of a late 16th-century painted scheme problematic.

OTHER DECORATIVE MEDIA

In terms of design, the most obvious comparison we can make between the block-printed wallpaper and the Ivy House scheme is with a style of embroidery called 'black work' that was fashionable in England from about 1580 to about 1630. This featured dense, foliate, floral and other designs inspired by the natural world done with black silk thread, sometimes embellished with silver or gold-gilt thread, on a natural linen background. It was used to decorate men and women's clothing, especially headwear like coifs and cross cloths for women and night caps for men and also small accessories like handkerchiefs (see Fig. 7).²⁹ In 1622 Sedlescombe gentleman, John Everenden, recorded that, amongst other things, he had given his daughter, Elizabeth, 'four black-worked coifs and three cross cloths, two of them suitable' and to his daughter, Amy, 'five black-worked coifs with two cross cloths



Fig. 7. Black-work embroidered coif, 1600-25 (linen, silk and silver-gilt thread) (Victoria & Albert Museum, London).

suitable to them'.³⁰ Black-work embroidery was also used to decorate household linen, like the 'pillow bear [pillowcase]...wrought with black silk' that Arundel widow, Ann Butt, left in her will of 1602.³¹ Designs were either hand-drawn with pen and ink or block printed onto linen cloth before being embroidered. They were influenced by printed herbals such as John Gerard's *Herbal* of 1597 and other books about the natural world such as Edward Topsell's *History of four-footed beasts* of 1607.³² They could also be copied from embroidery pattern books such as Richard Shorleyker's, *A schoolhouse for the needle* of 1624, which itself drew on an earlier French work published in 1605, *La pratique de l'aiguille industrielle*.³³ Similar styles of embroidery were executed in different colours and materials, using either a single colour thread (for example, 'white work'), gold-gilt thread ('gold work') or multiple-coloured threads.

The relationship between black-work embroidery and other decorative media is a complex one and the assumption has frequently been that the former (and its sources, like pattern books) was somehow the originator of the latter.

For example, it has been argued that block-printed papers, especially those used as box or draw linings, were originally intended to serve as embroidery patterns. Gill Saunders has argued convincingly that this was not the case: in addition to Houghton's description of how this paper was used she points out that 'black-work' paper designs continued to be produced long after 'black-work' embroidery had gone out of fashion.³⁴ The designs in Thomas Trevelyon's 1608 and 1616 'Miscellanies' have also been described as embroidery patterns, something which appears to be borne out by the fact that there are surviving embroideries that correspond to a number of them and that he includes a series of designs for what are clearly men's embroidered nightcaps.³⁵ There is a striking resemblance between some of Trevelyon's 'black-work' designs and the Ivy House scheme. This, together with the fact that the 1616 'Miscellany' was until 1928 in the possession of the Leconfield Estate at nearby Petworth led James Ayres to suggest that Trevelyon's designs 'may well have inspired' the Ivy House paintings, once again bringing us back to the idea that embroidery was, albeit indirectly, the source of this scheme.³⁶

However, Trevelyon's role as an originator of the images and designs in his 'Miscellanies' has always been unclear; in the 1960s J. L. Nevinson argued that Trevelyon was a copyist with access to a wide range of English and Flemish books and prints which he drew on to complete his books. More recently, Anthony Wells-Cole has identified a number of black and white prints that correspond directly or very closely to Trevelyon's hand-drawn and coloured images (but not to the so-called embroidery designs).³⁷ Wells-Cole observes that Trevelyon was 'probably an embroiderer by trade' which would make it more plausible that this section of his manuscripts was intended to serve as a pattern book but in fact we know nothing at all about how he earned his living and very little about the purpose of his 'Miscellanies'.³⁸ Given the fact that the books only exist in manuscript they would have had a limited circulation and in his prologue to the 1616 edition Trevelyon suggests that the book was intended for the private viewing of a small circle of friends.³⁹ His designs would certainly have been suitable for embroidery but they could have also have been used for other decorative work including lace work, plasterwork, metalwork, woodwork, garden design and wall painting. In this respect their purpose was probably not dissimilar

to that of Walter Gedde whose *Book of sundry drafts*, published in 1615, was primarily intended for glaziers but would also be 'not impertinent for plasterers and gardeners besides sundry other professions'.⁴⁰ The fact that the 1616 'Miscellany' was in the possession of the Leconfield Estate is of course intriguing, suggesting a potential local source for the design. However, there is no record of when it was acquired and even if it had been purchased or acquired by Henry Percy, the ninth Earl of Northumberland (1564–1632), its production post-dates the Ivy House scheme by a number of years. It is also unclear how a manuscript in a private library would have become accessible to a painter-stainer or craftsman working in the area.⁴¹ As Mary Brooks has commented, it is probably better to view the Ivy House scheme as belonging to a common visual culture which was found in print, manuscript and a range of decorative media during this period rather than trying to identify any particular source as its model.⁴²

THE OCCUPANTS OF IVY HOUSE

The property which later became known as Ivy House was a copyhold of inheritance held of the manor of Bury which was part of the estates of the Dukes of Norfolk.⁴³ The manor was divided into four tithings, Bury, West Burton, Hurst and Sand (or 'Sonde') and properties were spread out across three parishes, Bury, Wisborough Green and Fittleworth with the majority lying in Bury.⁴⁴ Ivy House and other Fittleworth properties lay within the tithing of Sand. In a manorial survey of 1686 it was described as 'a messuage, barn, garden, orchard situated...in Fittleworth on the west side of the king's highway containing three rods more or less [about one twentieth of an acre or 815 square feet] late John Stanley's gent[leman]'.⁴⁵ The earliest clear reference to it in manorial records is in a court book entry of 1673 recording that Stanley's daughter and son-in-law, Frances and John Peckham, had transferred the copyhold to John Gibson. Here the property is described as 'a messuage or tenement, barn, stables with garden and orchard...situated...in Fittleworth within the tithing of Sand ...'.⁴⁶ Stanley (d.1671) was presumably living in the property in 1660 when he made his will, stipulating that his wife, Anne, should have all 'such household stuff as she...shall have occasion for to use so long as she does abide and dwell in the house that I...do now dwell in'.⁴⁷ He

may also have been resident there when he signed the Oath of Protestation in 1641, along with his son, John Stanley junior (d.1645), both men described as gentlemen.⁴⁸ However, these two references cannot be correlated with manorial records because there are none surviving for this period.

There is no evidence for who was holding Ivy House prior to John Stanley in the early 17th century or more crucially at the time the cross wing was built and the wall paintings executed in the late 16th century. Although there are manorial records surviving for the period c. 1580 to c. 1620 the descriptions of copyhold properties in them do not match those found later on and it is possible that some of the earlier copyholds were subdivided at some point in the first half of the 17th century.⁴⁹ We know that the property was not being held by a member of the Stanley family as this surname does not appear in the earlier manorial records.⁵⁰

The lack of information about earlier occupants of Ivy House is frustrating. However, it seems reasonable to assume that they would, like Stanley, have been members of the minor or lesser gentry. So what did it mean to be a 'gentleman' in late 16th-century Fittleworth? As Philippa Maddern has noted, defining gentlemanly status can be difficult since 'unlike other late medieval status descriptors, the term "gentleman/woman" was always a portmanteau one, whose meaning stretched to encompass various levels of specificity, many criteria of social standing, and different kinds of social behaviours'.⁵¹ For William Harrison, writing in 1577, 'gentlemen' were the preeminent of his 'four sorts' of people and were themselves divided into four tiers: the peerage, knights, esquires and 'last of all, they that are simply called gentlemen'. Membership of this latter category, according to Harrison, was open to those who could 'live without manual labour' and who were able to 'bear the port, charge, and countenance of a gentleman'. This included those who were university-educated or who performed military or public services. Such men were able to purchase themselves coats of arms and so be 'reputed' gentlemen 'ever after'.⁵²

In fact not all 'gentlemen' had coats of arms.⁵³ Nor were they always especially wealthy: their income might in fact be similar or indeed lower than that of some yeomen.⁵⁴ Whilst Harrison observed that gentlemen lived 'without manual labour' this did not mean that they did not earn their living. By the late 15th century tenure of public office, service

in aristocratic households and the practice of certain professions, especially law, were viewed not only as ways of acquiring gentlemanly status but also as acceptable occupations for those who already had it.⁵⁵ For younger sons some kind of 'gentle' employment might be a financial necessity as land usually passed to the eldest male heir.⁵⁶

THE HERALDIC SHIELD

As has already been noted, on either side of the front-facing window in the upper chamber at Ivy House were two painted wreathed roundels. The inner space of one was blank but the other contained a partly-completed heraldic shield with the remnants of yellow and red paint (see Fig. 8). The pigments used to achieve these colours are likely to have been red and yellow ochre. Since we do not know who was living in Ivy House at the time the scheme was painted, we cannot say whether they were entitled to a coat of arms. However, the likelihood is that they were not and that the shield was fictional and intended to be decorative. The householder may have thought that it would enhance his status; in that sense, it could be described as aspirational. Possibly he had an interest in heraldry. There were a number of books on heraldry in circulation in the late 16th century, including Gerard Legh's popular *The accedens of armoury*, first printed in 1562 and reprinted five times between 1568 and 1612, or John Bossewell's less popular *Works of armoury*, first printed in 1572 and reprinted only once in 1597.⁵⁷ At least one late 16th century Fittleworth gentleman owned a book of heraldry or 'armoury': in his will of 1604 Richard Hardam senior bequeathed to his son Richard Hardam junior 'my lute, my luting books, my book of armoury and all...other my books'.⁵⁸

The Hardams are a good example of the type of minor gentlemen resident in Fittleworth in the late-16th and early-17th centuries. Hardam senior was a copyhold tenant of the manor of Bury, holding a tenement and barn and a small piece of land in Fittleworth together with seven acres of wasteland in The Mens, a large area of common woodland to the north of Fittleworth.⁵⁹ Whilst there is no indication about Richard Hardam senior's profession (if he had one), we do know that his son, Hardam junior, was an attorney in the Court of Common Pleas.⁶⁰ The Court of Common Pleas was a common law court dealing with civil cases, mainly debt and property, which sat in Westminster



Fig. 8. The heraldic shield (WDOAM).

Hall. In his role as attorney Hardam junior is likely to have divided his time between Westminster and Fittleworth.⁶¹

Much of *The accedens of armoury* is about the symbolism of heraldry. Legh begins his book by outlining the nine 'fields' which could be used to make up a coat of arms or escutcheon, two metals (gold and silver) and seven colours. Each of these fields had a particular symbolism, drawn in part from its association with a specific planet and a precious or semi-precious stone. Gold, for example, symbolised prowess and virtue; its associated planet was the sun, the worthiest of all planets, and its precious stone was the topaz. The symbolism of

these metals and colours changed when they were combined with others.⁶² For Legh, the coat of arms was thus the outward symbol of the inner virtue of the true gentleman. J. F. R. Day has observed that Legh's book seems to have been 'particularly well adapted to the class-conscious claims of the gentry, whose obsession with pedigrees and coats of arms were almost as much a reaction to social mobility as an anachronistic longing for chivalry' but also that it would have appealed to readers who 'found armoury a useful adjunct to their claims to gentle status'.⁶³ This latter suggestion is perhaps apt for Hardam senior and also for the unknown late 16th-century occupant of Ivy House.

A ROOM TO BE SEEN

The Ivy House wall paintings are in an upper chamber and their opulence suggests that the room was not merely intended to be a bedroom but also functioned as a second, more private, parlour where the householder and his wife would have taken their more favoured guests. It is worth considering the type of furnishings that might have been in the room and how these impacted visually against the black-and-white scheme. There are very few late 16th- and early 17th-century probate inventories surviving for Fittleworth and these give little indication of what household furnishings actually looked like. For example, if we look at the 1620 probate inventory of Fittleworth gentleman, Thomas Roberts, we see that in his bedchamber he had a joined bedstead, a feather bed (the mattress), a bolster, a flock (sheep's wool) bolster, two pillows, an orris coverlet, two blankets, a livery table, two joined stools, one chair, two andirons, a bed pan and three cushions.⁶⁴ We can see that Roberts's bedchamber was quite well furnished in the sense of having a range of furniture and bedding. The reference to andirons indicates that it was heated. However, the lack of detail means that we cannot gauge the range of textures, patterns and colours that someone would have encountered on going into the room. The only clear indication that there was some is the fact that his coverlet was made of orris, a term usually used to describe a textile embroidered with an elaborate gold and silver pattern.⁶⁵

We know from probate inventories and wills from other parishes in Sussex and Surrey that beds were frequently hung and covered with elaborate, colourful and multi-patterned textiles. For example, in 1600 Farnham widow, Alice Allen, left to her three daughters two red and yellow dornick coverlets and another coverlet of blue and red together with a bedstead with a painted tester; in 1602 Harting widow, Eme Smith, left her son, Edmund a dornick coverlet, a black-and-white coverlet and three pairs of sheets, one 'fringed with blue'; and in 1604 Woking yeoman, Nicholas Port, left to his wife, Joan, two red and yellow coverlets and two joined bedsteads, one with a painted tester, and to his son, John, 'one standing bedstead with a painted ceiling and a painted cloth at the head'.⁶⁶ We have already seen that Arundel widow, Ann Butt, had a black-work pillow case.⁶⁷ More detailed descriptions of bed textiles can be found in the wills of two Surrey

widows. In her 1608 will Guildford widow, Ann Pickaies, bequeathed 'an old coverlet of black and yellow' and a complete bedstead with its curtains and valance of green and yellow say; in her 1620 will Bermondsey widow, Judith Rither, bequeathed a 'tapestry coverlet', 'a pair of needlework valances with bells' and 'another pair of needlework valances with red fringe'.⁶⁸ Other coloured and patterned textiles could be found upholstering chairs or stools, used as cupboard cloths, wall cloths, cushion covers and curtains: Rither left a 'pair of embroidered cushions for stools', 'two needlework-bordered green cupboard cloths' and 'five pairs of curtains of red and green mockado'; Pickaies left 'the painted cloths that hang about my chamber'.⁶⁹

But decoration was not restricted to textiles. Much of the furniture is likely to have been elaborately carved and it may also have been painted—something that we tend to overlook because so little original paintwork survives. Paints and stains could be applied across the wood or could be used to accent areas of carved work with the rest of the piece uncoloured. They were also used to achieve imitative finishes like wood graining or marquetry.⁷⁰ We also find references to smaller decorative objects which would have enhanced the visual impact of a room. Rither had a 'needlework fine pin cushion' (to keep the pins used to fasten her clothes), 'a pair of bellows wrought with alabaster and gilt', 'a great looking glass gilt' and 'mine own picture in a table with children standing by' (that is, a panel painting of herself and her children).⁷¹ Pickaies had a 'fair plate of iron to stand in a chimney' and a brass candlestick 'that will hold nine candles'.⁷² Whilst we have no way of knowing how the upper chamber in Ivy House would have been furnished it is reasonable to assume that many of the items would have been decorative, with contrasting colours and patterns.

Finally, it is worth considering very briefly the relationship between domestic interior design and contemporary clothing fashions. We have already seen that there was a marked visual similarity between black-work embroidery, the Ivy House wall paintings and the design of early block-printed wall papers. Clothing, for those who could afford it, could be highly coloured, textured and patterned in exactly the same way as domestic textiles. The use of silver and gold-gilt thread and 'spangles' or sequins meant that clothing, like some textiles, caught and reflected light, which must have been

a particularly desirable quality given the low light levels in domestic interiors (see Fig. 9). In addition to their black-work coifs and cross cloths, John Everenden's daughters each had two gold-work coifs with Amy also having two gold cross cloths.⁷³ In her will of 1618 Chichester widow, Mary Beard, left an embroidered handkerchief edged with gold spangles, another embroidered handkerchief, two embroidered smocks and a range of other clothing including a riding cloak, safeguard and hood of purple cloth edged with velvet.⁷⁴ Judith Rither had two 'white-work wrought coifs', two black stomachers and another 'wrought with gold' and two holland handkerchiefs 'wrought with red silk'.⁷⁵ This clothing had different uses and some garments or accessories were more visible than others: some were intended to be worn outdoors; some were for best; some (for example, the smocks and handkerchiefs) would have been partially covered by the gown or hidden away in a pocket. However, when imagining the overall visual impact of the upper chamber of Ivy House the appearance of its clothed occupants sitting in, or moving around, their domestic space should not be forgotten.



Fig. 9. Embroidered woman's waistcoat, 1600-25 (linen embroidered with silk, metal thread and spangles) (Victoria & Albert Museum, London).

CONCLUSION

The Ivy House scheme offers us a tantalising glimpse into the visual and material culture of the lesser gentry in a late 16th-century rural community. Its existence points to a world of pattern and colour that is almost invisible in surviving probate inventories of this period with their prosaic lists of furniture, household linen and domestic utensils. We know that this was not the only painted room in Ivy House and that the schemes in other rooms were multi-coloured rather than black-and-white. Putting together evidence from other sources about furnishings and decorative objects we begin to get an idea that at this social level interior design could be complex, with multiple—and perhaps to modern eyes, clashing—colours, textures and patterns. We have seen that there are strong correlations between the design of the Ivy House scheme and other media such as block-printed wall paper and black-work embroidery but rather than trying to identify a single source as originator it has been suggested that it is preferable to see them all as intersecting or overlapping products of a common visual culture.

The removal of the painted wall panels from Ivy House nearly 50 years ago was contentious and of course their loss of context is regrettable: even with the photographic record it is now difficult to understand the complete scheme. But Armstrong was no doubt right in his insistence that the prompt action of the museum and the WBSG prevented their complete destruction. As he said in his letter of 5 May 1969 to the district council, 'I think it is fair to say that but for our action there would today be no more trace of this historical and artistic find... of the painted patterns which a year ago were still visible after four hundred years'.⁷⁶

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NOTES

- ¹ *Guidebook of the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum* (WDOAM) (1969), 24–6. A short version of this article was published in the museum magazine, *Weald & Downland Open Air Museum Magazine* (autumn 2015), 18–20.
- ² For an overview of the early history of the museum see D. Tankard, ‘The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum 1970 to 2010’, *The Local Historian* **40** (4) (2010), 281–291.
- ³ The Wealden Buildings Study Group was founded in 1964 by Roy Armstrong, R. T. Mason and Marjorie Hallam. For Hallam’s obituary see *Weald & Downland Open Air Museum Magazine* (autumn 2006), 9.
- ⁴ WDOAM Archive, no. 2161.
- ⁵ WDOAM Archive, no. 2161.
- ⁶ *West Sussex County Times*, 2 May 1969.
- ⁷ WDOAM Archive, no. 2161.
- ⁸ I am grateful to Annabelle Hughes for sharing her survey with me.
- ⁹ D. Martin, ‘End reversal during the conversion of medieval houses in Sussex’, *Vernacular Architecture* **31** (2000), 26–31.
- ¹⁰ WDOAM Archive, no. 2161. Hallam provides no further information about these wall paintings or their location but Hughes’s report notes that ‘coloured paintings of leaves and grape-like bunches’ had been seen by Sylvia Bright in the 1960s, apparently in one of the lower rooms of the cross wing.
- ¹¹ K. Davies, *Artisan art: vernacular wall paintings in the Welsh Marches, 1550–1650* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 2008), 5–6.
- ¹² Davies, *Artisan art*, 8–18.
- ¹³ Davies, *Artisan art*, 92–6.
- ¹⁴ Davies, *Artisan art*, 70–1.
- ¹⁵ For a history of the Painter-Stainers Company see W. A. D. Englefield, *The history of the Painter-Stainers Company of London* (London: Hazell, Watson & Viney Ltd, 1950).
- ¹⁶ See Englefield, *The history of the Painter-Stainers Company*, 69–106 (quote from p. 104).
- ¹⁷ Davies, *Artisan art*, 67–70.
- ¹⁸ In the late 16th century craftsmen earned about 10d. a day (Davies, *Artisan art*, 75).
- ¹⁹ Davies, *Artisan art*, 61–6; 73–6. Davies provides some estimated costs for surviving in-situ schemes, based on room size, pigment choice and design complexity (see pp. 207–12).
- ²⁰ Davies, *Artisan art*, 64–5.
- ²¹ See for example will of Alice Allen of Farnham (Surrey), 1600, which includes a bedstead with a painted tester (London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA) DW/PA/7/7, 280r–281v).
- ²² West Sussex Record Office (hereafter WSRO) Ep I/29/86/2.
- ²³ WSRO STC I/15/290b.
- ²⁴ Davies, *Artisan art*, 94–6.
- ²⁵ G. Saunders, “Paper tapestry” and “wooden pictures”: printed decoration in the domestic interior before 1700’ in M. Hunter (ed.), *Printed images in early modern Britain: essays in interpretation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 335.
- ²⁶ Object number E.1974-1927.
- ²⁷ J. Houghton, *A collection for the improvement of husbandry and trade*, letters numbers 356 (19 May 1699) and 362 (30 Jun. 1699), quoted in Saunders, “Paper tapestry” and “wooden pictures”, 318. Houghton’s *Collection* was a series of letters published weekly as single folio sheets from Mar. 1692 to Sep. 1703, featuring brief articles written by Houghton backed up by commercial information (Anita McConnell, ‘Houghton, John (1645–1705)’, *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13868, accessed 22 Dec. 2015].
- ²⁸ Julian Munby pers. comm. (26 Oct. 2015).
- ²⁹ A coif is a close-fitting hood. A forehead or cross cloth is a triangular strip worn around the head with the point facing backwards. The coif was attached to the cross cloth by pins. Coifs were essential wear for women, worn indoors without a hat or outdoors beneath a hat.
- ³⁰ East Sussex Record Office (hereafter ESRO) FRE 520, 25r, 26r. These items were contained in chests along with other items of clothing and household linen, possibly intended to be kept until they married.
- ³¹ WSRO STC I/15/79b.
- ³² J. Gerard, *The herbal or general history of plants* (London, 1597); E. Topsell, *History of four-footed beasts* (London, 1607).
- ³³ R. Shorleyker, *A schoolhouse for the needle* (London, 1624); M. Mignerak, *La pratique de l’aiguille industrielle* (Paris, 1605). See J. L. Nevinson, ‘The embroidery patterns of Thomas Trevelyan’, *Walpole Society* **41** (1966–8), 8.
- ³⁴ Saunders, “Paper tapestry” and “wooden pictures”, 317–35.
- ³⁵ The 1608 edition is in the Folger Shakespeare Library (MS V.b.232). A digital edition of this volume can be viewed at http://www.wdl.org/en/item/11292/ (the ‘black-work’ designs begin on f. 218v). The 1616 edition is in the Wormsley Library (Buckinghamshire). There is a facsimile edition: N. Barker (ed.), *The Great Book of Thomas Trevelyan*, 2 vols (Roxburghe Club, 2000). There is also a third ‘Miscellany’ dated c.1603 in the collection of University College London (MS Ogden 24). For a discussion of the relationship between Trevelyan’s designs and contemporary embroideries see Nevinson, ‘The embroidery patterns of Thomas Trevelyan’, 1–36.
- ³⁶ J. Ayres, *Domestic interiors: the British tradition 1500–1850* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 145.
- ³⁷ A. Wells-Cole, *Art and decoration in Elizabethan and Jacobean England: the influence of continental prints, 1558–1625* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 235–44.
- ³⁸ Wells-Cole, *Art and decoration*, 235.
- ³⁹ ‘All I hope that see it are my friends and accept it friendly, others if they behold it, I imagine they behold it not, or at the least they should not behold it’ (quoted in Nevinson, ‘The embroidery patterns of Thomas Trevelyan’, 6).
- ⁴⁰ W. Gedde, *Book of sundry drafts* (London, 1615), title page.
- ⁴¹ Alison McCann, pers. comm. (26 Nov. 2015); Percy was a prisoner in the Tower of London from 1605 to 1621 so was

- not resident at Petworth during this period. See G. Batho, 'The Percies at Petworth', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **95** (1957), 3.
- ⁴² Mary Brooks, pers. com (1 Dec. 2015).
- ⁴³ Land in Fittleworth was spread across three manors, Bury, Bedham and Amberley. There was also a fourth manor of Lee, which was supposedly incorporated into the manor of Amberley in the 17th century (M. C. W. Maxse, *The story of Fittleworth* (London: The National Review, 1935), 19–30. I would like to thank Margaret Welfare for giving me a copy of research on the history of Ivy House undertaken some years ago by Brenda Salmon. I would also like to thank Anthony Poole for letting me see his own research notes on Ivy House and the Stanley family and for providing me with copies of his transcripts of Fittleworth wills and probate inventories.
- ⁴⁴ Arundel Castle Archive (hereafter ACA) MD 535, 39v–44v; WSRO Add MS 25791.
- ⁴⁵ WSRO Add MS 25791. The annual rent was 5s. 4d.
- ⁴⁶ ACA M 301, 37r.
- ⁴⁷ WSRO STC I/26/166/1660. He bequeathed the residue of his estate to his daughter and son-in-law, Frances and John Peckham. The copyhold would automatically have descended to his daughter and son-in-law as his next heirs.
- ⁴⁸ R. Garraway Rice (ed.), *West Sussex Protestation Returns*, Sussex Record Society **5** (1906), 84.
- ⁴⁹ This hypothesis is based on a comparison of the 1570 and 1686 manorial surveys (ACA MD 535; WSRO Add MS 25791). There are fewer and larger properties listed in the former. Neither the property descriptions nor the annual rents are comparable.
- ⁵⁰ ACA M532 (draft court book, 1583–1600); M533 (draft court book, 1596–1607); M299 (court book, 1615–1619).
- ⁵¹ P. Maddern, 'Gentility' in R. Radulescu and A. Truelove (eds), *Gentry culture in late medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 21.
- ⁵² W. Harrison, *The description of England*, ed. G Edelen (New York: Folger Shakespeare Library and Dover Publications, 1994), 94, 114–15.
- ⁵³ M. Keen, *Origins of the English gentleman* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002), 102.
- ⁵⁴ J. C. K. Cornwall, *Wealth and society in early sixteenth century England* (London: Routledge, 1988), 14–25. See also Maddern, 'Gentility', 20.
- ⁵⁵ Keen, *Origins of the English gentleman*, 111–16; 121–42.
- ⁵⁶ Keen, *Origins of the English gentleman*, 109–10.
- ⁵⁷ G. Legh [Leigh], *The accedens of armoury* (London, 1562); J. Bossewell, *Works of armoury* (London, 1572).
- ⁵⁸ TNA PROB 11/104/518.
- ⁵⁹ ACA M532, 8r–v; M533, 72v–73r.
- ⁶⁰ <http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Attorneys/attpages/FullAttorneyList1607.html> (accessed 20 December 2015).
- ⁶¹ C. W. Brooks, *Pettyfoggers and vipers of the commonwealth: the 'lower branch' of the legal profession in early modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 118–19.
- ⁶² Legh, *The accedens of armoury*, 1r–12v.
- ⁶³ J. F. R. Day, 'Legh, Gerard (d. 1563)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16362>, accessed 7 April 2015]).
- ⁶⁴ WSRO Ep 1/29/86/8.
- ⁶⁵ The *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of orris is 'an ornamental braid or lacing of various patterns in gold or silver, used to trim coats, uniforms, etc; embroidery made of gold or silver thread'. It was sometimes used as wall hangings ("orris, n.2". OED Online. December 2015. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132769?rskey=OBYVww&result=2> (accessed December 23, 2015)).
- ⁶⁶ LMA DW/PA/7/7, 280–281v; WSRO STC I/15/150; LMA DW/PA/7/7, 476v–478v. Dornick is a silk, worsted, woollen or partly woollen fabric.
- ⁶⁷ WSRO STC I/15/79b.
- ⁶⁸ TNA PROB 11/113/34; LMA DW/PA/7/11, 28r–30r.
- ⁶⁹ Mockado is a velvet-like fabric. LMA DW/PA/7/11, 28r–30r; TNA PROB 11/113/34.
- ⁷⁰ V. Chinnery, *Oak furniture: the British tradition* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1979), 198–216.
- ⁷¹ LMA DW/PA/7/11, 28r–30r.
- ⁷² TNA PROB 11/113/34.
- ⁷³ ESRO FRE 520, 25r, 26r.
- ⁷⁴ TNA PROB 11/131/472. A safeguard was an outer petticoat or skirt worn when travelling to protect the under petticoat from dirt.
- ⁷⁵ LMA DW/PA/7/11, 28r–30r. Holland is a type of fine linen.
- ⁷⁶ WDOAM Archive, no. 2161.