

A JETTIED HOUSE AT WICKHAM, HAMPSHIRE

By ELIZABETH LEWIS

The interest of this timber-framed house lies first in the details of construction which suggest that it was built with an open hall, the jetty carrying a gallery at the front; and secondly in its interior decorative scheme which includes wall paintings and an unusual painted wooden ceiling.

DESCRIPTION AND INVESTIGATION

The house stands at the north-east corner of the Square, Wickham, SU 57161150. It is of two storeys and three bays with a jettied facade along all three bays overlooking the street. A timber lean-to at the rear is not contemporary. A timber-framed barn of four bays stands to the rear of the property. An opportunity to examine and record it arose in 1974, when planning permission was granted by Winchester City Council to convert it from an antique shop (The Curio Shop) to a wine bar.

During alterations, some evidence of the framing was lost at the south end, while new evidence emerged on the framing details of the middle and north bays. From this the position of the window mullions on the ground floor could be recorded, while the mortices for the framing along the front indicated close studding on the ground floor, with square panels on the first floor. On the back wall of the house, the framing on the first floor remained in the north bay. Here there were curved braces springing from the posts to a central stud and a mid rail. All panels had been filled originally with wattle and daub, and some had later been weather-sealed with hanging tiles and subsequently by pebbledash rendering; others had brick infilling.

The roof trusses have diminished principals clasping side purlins (Fig. 1). There are two curved queen struts and a central strut between tie beam and collar, except on the

end south truss where there are straight queen struts. All are closed trusses, at least to the collar. The roof has been retiled this century and the rafters renewed.

There are two main phases of building construction. The original house was of three bays. It is possible that there was another house adjacent to the south end, or perhaps an additional wing, as the change in the roof truss design indicates. The bay arrangement is typical of many small timber-framed houses of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, with a central hall between a service room and a parlour, the slightly narrower bay to the south being probably the service bay. This bay was gutted during alterations before detailed examination could be made. The position of the entrance is uncertain, but it was not in either the middle bay or the northern bay, as the mortices for close studding close the facade completely in these bays. A part of the front wall of the south bay which was not accessible to examination remains a possible site, with the entry into the service bay from the street.

The construction of the hall bay poses a problem of interpretation. Some of its original framing had been altered during secondary building work, and unfortunately renovation prior to the works of 1976 had resulted in the removal of certain key pieces of evidence before they could be recorded. We can be certain, however, that the chimney stack in the hall bay was not an original feature. When it was inserted, part of the stud work of the wall between the middle and north bay was removed on the first floor to permit the insertion of the first floor fireplace. On the ground floor, an original connecting door between the hall and parlour with a chamfered doorhead was obscured by the same work. A new post was introduced in the back wall of the middle

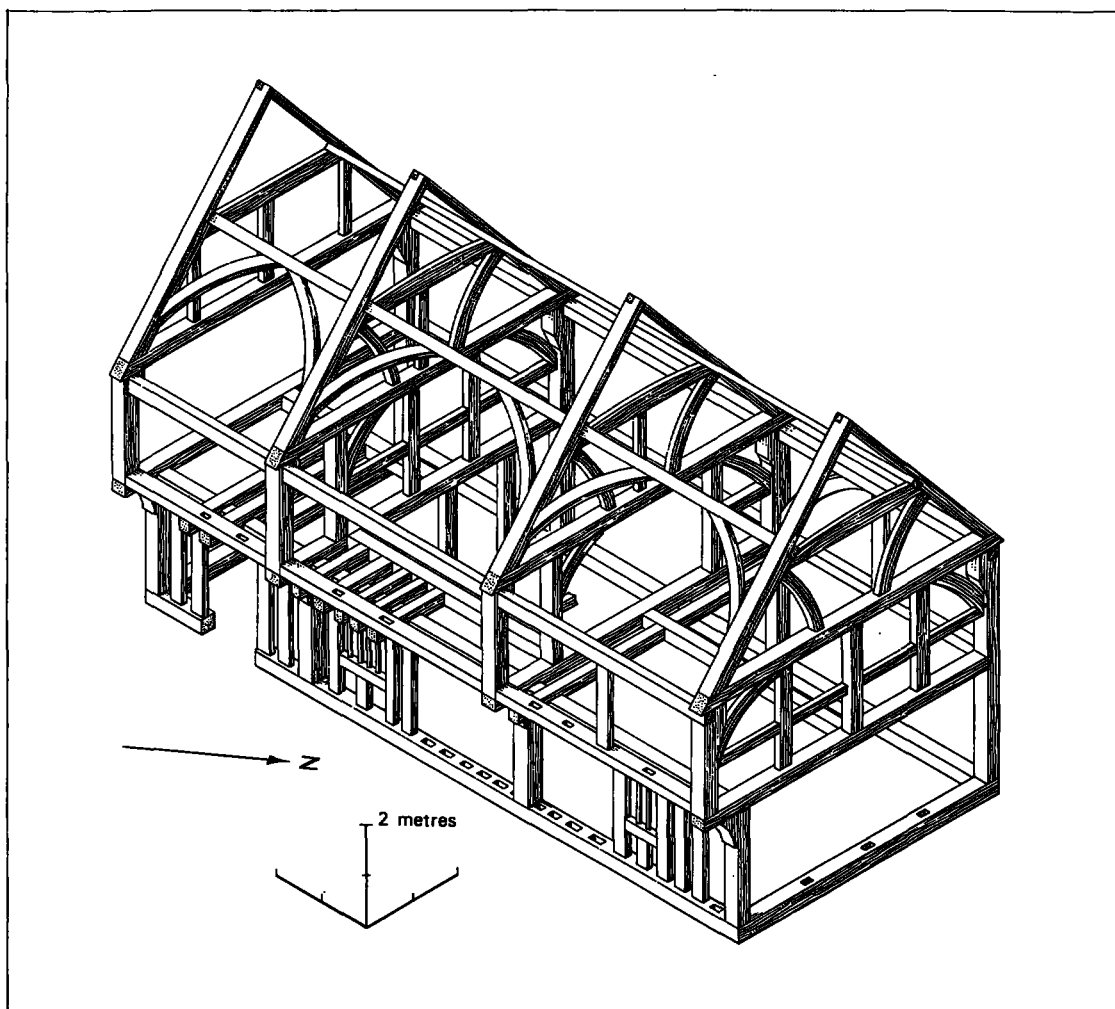


Fig. 1. Curio Shop, Wickham. Conjectural reconstruction of the first phase of construction. Drawing: Nigel Fradgley.

bay, and this supported a bressummer beam making an additional chimney bay (Fig. 2.b).

The problem is to ascertain the character of the hall prior to these inserted features. Was it floored to begin with or was it originally open with an internal gallery along the jetty? In most houses of this kind (and demonstrated here in the other two jettied bays) the joists which support the oversailing first floor are mortised into a spine beam,

making a stable structure of two floors. To insert a chimney into this arrangement would mean sawing through the existing joists and providing an anchorage for the ends of the joists left hanging in the air in the chimney bay. This would be done by inserting a narrow trimmer over the newly-created lobby entrance by the side of the stack, and fixing the ends of the joists to this (the opportunity being taken to renew one or two). Then either

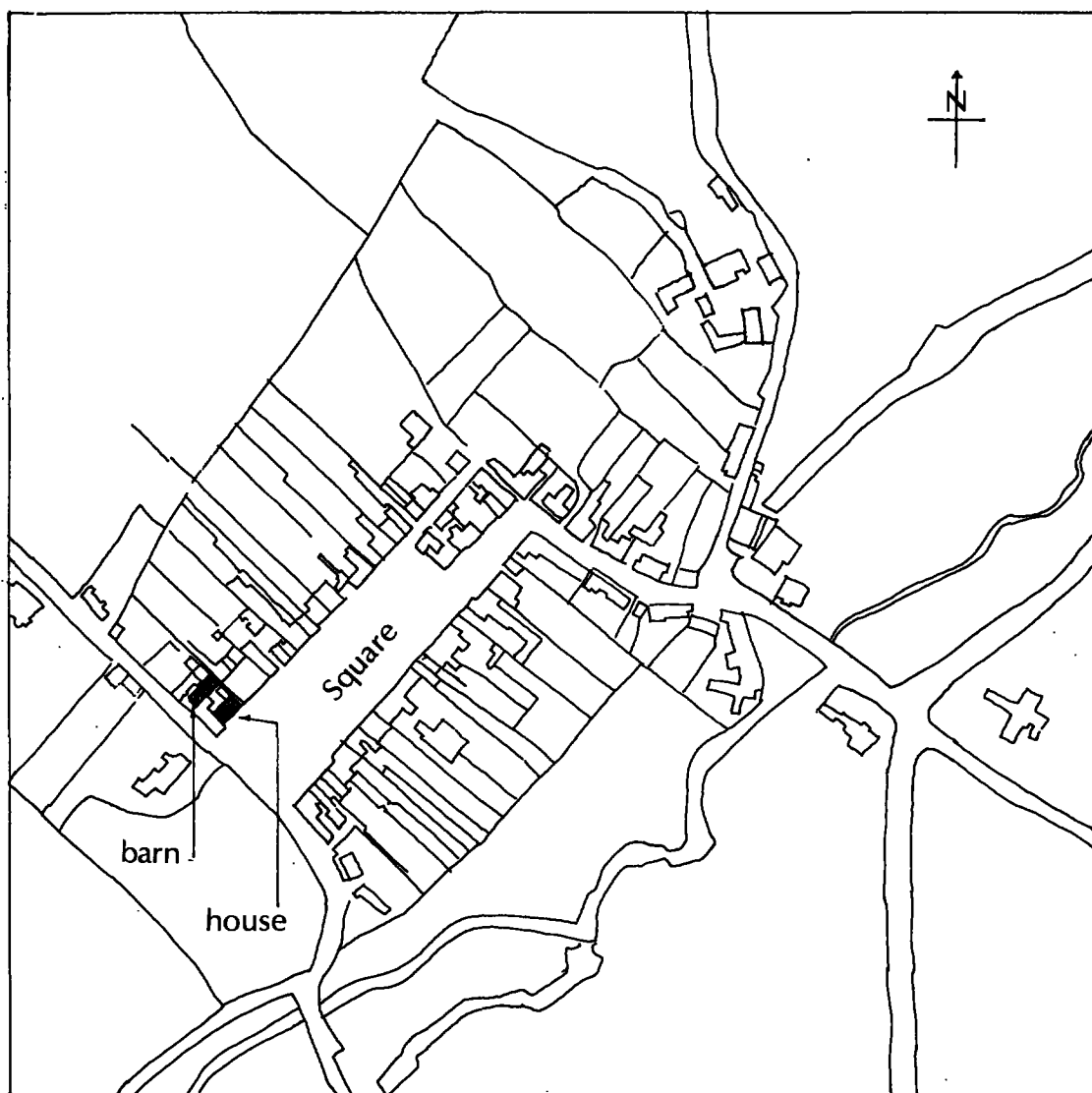
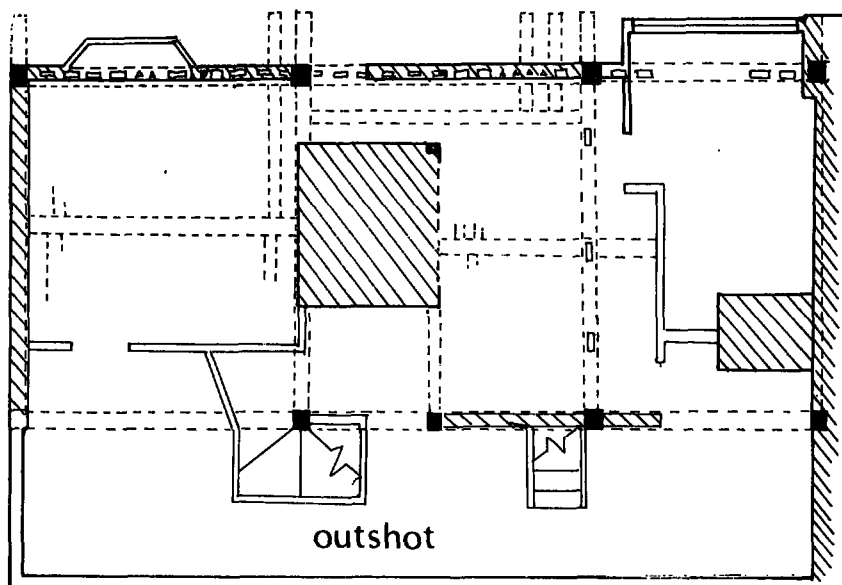


Fig. 2a. Curio Shop, Wickham. Site plan.

the existing spine beam would have to be shortened, or a new one would be needed. But the surviving evidence at the Curio Shop seems to indicate different circumstances altogether. Here the spine beam appeared to be a new one, and at its insertion the whole plan of the two south bays was reorganised so as to increase the length of the middle bay to compensate for the loss of space caused by the

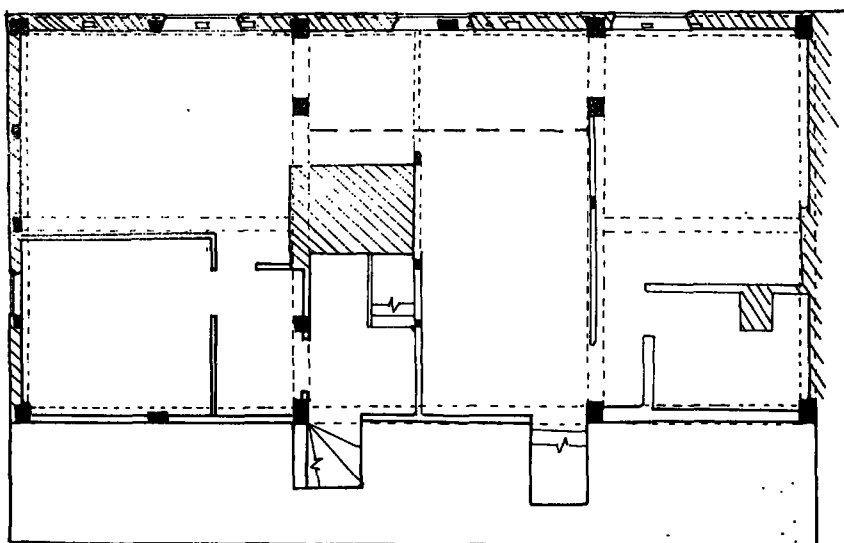
introduction of the chimney. The partition to the service bay was opened by removing the studs, and a new partition was introduced, reducing the service bay by four feet. These alterations rather suggest that the hall had previously been open, leaving plenty of scope for radical rebuilding when a new floor was inserted. The jetty, however, was an original feature, although its co-existence with an open



ground floor

0 10 20 feet

for
description



first floor

Fig. 2b. Curio Shop, Wickham. General plan of house.



Fig. 3. Curio Shop, Wickham. Exterior about 1968. Photograph: Eric Lane. PWCM 4370.

hall might be thought to be incompatible. There is surviving evidence that the joists were supported inside the hall on a bressummer running parallel to the jetty beam, making an internal gallery at the front of the hall five feet wide. The bressummer had been removed, but two empty opposing mortices remain in the cross beams, which received the tenons at each end of the bressummer. The

doorways of two upper chambers over the parlour and service room are opposite each other on the first floor, and access between the two could clearly be provided by the gallery. Another indication of an open hall is provided by the encrustation of soot that was noted on the framing of the roof trusses, and the studs and braces on the first floor, derived from an open hearth.

DISCUSSION

There are therefore two possible interpretations for the original form of the house. In the first alternative the house can be seen as a continuous jetty building of two floors but without a chimney. The form is common in the south of England, as described by R. T. Mason. Its design has been speculatively traced to 'wealden' houses where the central open hall has been floored in a second phase of construction, but by the mid-sixteenth century many houses were floored throughout at the time of construction, and incorporated a chimney to heat the hall. A local example is Great Funtley Farm, Wickham (Mercer 1977), dating to the first half of the sixteenth century, and there are early seventeenth-century examples at Mayles Farm, Cheriton and at Winchester Road, Botley (dated 1601 or 1607) where a central chimney and lobby entrance have become the established plan. However, in the case of some urban places of assembly, fireplaces do not seem to have been thought necessary, and in the four-bay upper floor hall from Crawley, now in the open-air museum at Singleton, there is no provision for a chimney at all (Zeuner 1977). The essentially domestic character of the Wickham house with its closed bays seems to argue against the possibility that it was used as a meeting room, and no documentary evidence has been traced to support this possibility.

The second alternative is that of a three-bay house with a central open hall, and a gallery connecting the two upper rooms, supported on a spine beam or bressummer along the front of the hall, the room being lit by a window on the ground floor and another in the gallery. Eric Swain (1968) has demonstrated that the principle of dividing and reducing open halls of medieval date in the sixteenth century by means of galleries with passages was well established in Kent. A normal feature of these houses is the closed-off passage beneath the gallery with stairs positioned on the hall side rising to the gallery. The resulting hall is sometimes little better than a smoke bay, and badly lit. The Kentish galleries are all secondary insertions, reducing the size

of the hall for economical as well as fashionable reasons. Divided halls are also found in Hampshire, for example at 36 Middle Brook Street, Winchester (Keene, pers. comm.) where the one-bay hall was floored in three phases; and the reduction of two-bay halls into one bay is a common device (for example in the cruck hall at Park Cottage, Titchborne). Smoke bays and timber chimneys, so common in Surrey, are being recognised in Hampshire in mid- or late sixteenth-century contexts, before the introduction of brick chimneys, for example at Nettlebed Farm, Durley (Lewis 1978).

Two other continuous jetty houses in the area are thought to have incorporated a hall with a gallery along the jetty. The earliest of these is the Blue Boar, Winchester, a three-bay house with a central hall, and a screens passage in the usual position between hall and service. At the upper end of the hall is an internal jetty, behind which is the chamber over the parlour which is jettied over the street on the end and side elevations of the house. The building was badly damaged in 1968 and rebuilt, but surviving evidence certainly points to the existence of an internal gallery to the hall along the front of the building, supported on a beam running parallel to the jetty beam. The purpose of this gallery is obscure, since it does not serve the function of linking the two upper chambers which are closed off from it. At 'Ffowlers Bucke' in South Harting (N.M.R. 1977) there are three floored bays and a narrow smoke bay incorporated into the original bay arrangement. Here the gallery along the front of the building over the jetty is screened off from the smoke bay and serves to connect the upper-floor rooms on each side of it.

From these examples it is clear that the early part of the sixteenth century was a time of general experiment in updating the medieval organisation of houses, and building contemporary ones in the new mode. The general design of the Curio Shop can be compared to other houses in the area which do have small open halls, although none of these are jettied. Examples are Garden Cottage, West Meon,

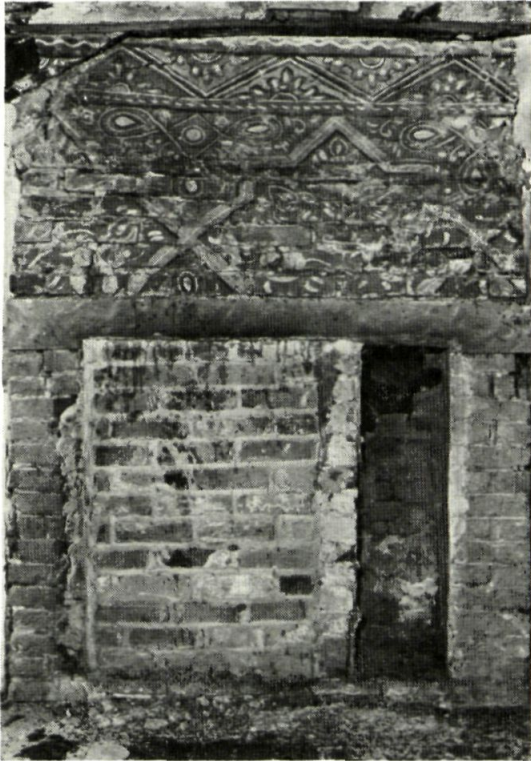


Fig. 4. Curio Shop, Wickham. Fireplace on first floor, with painted decoration.

Photograph: John Bosworth. PWCM 13803.

and Stoneacre, Denmead, both of which have one-bay open halls and trussed rafter roofs on the same pattern as the Curio Shop. This type of roof, distinguished by its curved queen struts, is common among hall houses in south Hampshire, and at Alexandra House, Wickham, it is associated with a very small 'wealden' house plan. No firm dating can be offered for these houses, but from the last quarter of the fifteenth century until perhaps as late as the first half of the sixteenth century seems to be their date span. The building of the Curio Shop probably falls into the latest period of this span, as the adoption of the continuous jetty, a novel feature, suggests.

THE PAINTED DECORATION

The painted decoration covers the walls of the first floor of the north bay, and the ceiling of the room below, though there is no reason to assume that the two schemes are exactly contemporary. The scheme on the first floor can be dated to after the insertion of the brick chimney. Here the painting covers the whole of the wall surface from floor to plate, on both the timber framing and on the wattle and daub infill panels. Its condition was fragmentary in some parts of the room, and a wooden partition had been inserted at a later date, dividing the room into two. No painting survives on the front wall where all the infill panels had been replaced. At a later date attempts had been made to cover the paintings with black paint and plaster. During alterations in early 1977, the fireplace was uncovered, and the design could be traced over the bricks of the fireplace, over the wooden fireplace lintel, and over a plaster filling linking the beam to the chimney breast. Here the paintwork was particularly fresh (Fig. 4) and a reconstruction could be made of the scheme, including the frieze which ran round the top of the walls (Fig. 5).

The ground of the painting is a deep red, and over this the design is painted in white and blue-grey pigment. The design is of interlacing geometrical figures, a pointed cross and an eight-sided pointed star. Within the cross is a four-looped knot with embellishments, and within the star is a spray of leaves and daisies, in grey, white and orange repeated in each star. A slight suggestion of relief is provided in the dark shading. The frieze above has a zigzag pattern with half daisies or marguerites in each triangle, alternately in orange and blue-grey and heightened with a dark brown wash. This motif is of Renaissance ancestry, and was noted by Francis Reader (1936) to occur in two dated contexts, at Fittleworth Manor in Hampshire and at Vernon House, Farnham. The painting at Fittleworth Manor bears the date 1580, while the Vernon House painting includes the arms of Robert Horne, Bishop of Winchester (1561–80). In both cases, as at Wickham, the



0.1 0 1.0 Metres



Dark red



Grey



Light red



White



Turquoise



Black

Fig. 5. Curio Shop, Wickham. Decorative scheme of wall paintings. Drawing: Nigel Fradgley.

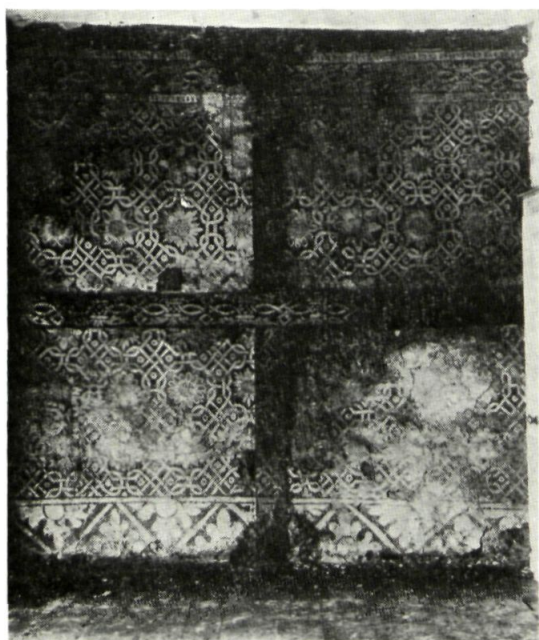


Fig. 6. Angel Inn, Basingstoke. Wall paintings. Photograph: Hampshire County Museum Service. PWCM 12983.

motif is used in an architectural context, as a framing or skirting element, or as part of the entablature. The strapwork panels enclosing flowers are a common device in Elizabethan and Jacobean wall painting, and the strong resemblance to woven damask is probably deliberate. In Hampshire few wall paintings have been recorded, but there was a similar scheme at the Angel Inn in Basingstoke, now demolished (Fig. 6). Here the walls were banded by a painted frieze at the top, mid rail and bases of the walls, and the frieze at the base used the repeated zigzag and daisy motif found at Wickham and Fittleworth and at Hambledon, where fragments of this same motif have been found recently in studwork at Hole Farm. The intermediate spaces are covered in a densely-patterned strapwork design of which the elements are octagons surrounding daisies of several different designs, and an interlacing four-looped knot such as we see at Wickham.

An even closer parallel was recorded in a watercolour by Martin Hardie, dated 1928, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum (E. 2422-1928). This was copied from a quite extensive mural scheme, removed from a farmhouse in Soberton, Hampshire. The present location of the original paintings, and the exact building from which they came are not known, but to judge from the drawing there is every possibility that they were by the same painter who was responsible for the Wickham paintings. The design incorporates the same interlacing star pattern, but in this case the pattern is in red on a grey ground. The pattern encloses individual flowers which seem to be tulips. A circle in red and orange representing a daisy is very similar to the motif at Wickham. The frieze at Soberton incorporates the words

‘To defende and kepe me in all mie wayes
Sponge out all vyces from thy mind
And unto thy neyghbour be never unkind’

The letters are in black-letter script. Martin Hardie noted the similarity between these paintings and some from Paramount Grange, West Marsh, Kent, which are dated 1603.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the Wickham house is the painted ceiling in the parlour (Figs. 7, 8). This was almost perfectly preserved except for two missing planks. The painting is on the joists, wall plate, part of the spine beam (much is obscured by later paint) and the underside of the floor boards. Where the joists are seated on the jetty beam, the spaces between are filled with patches of plaster decorated with arabesques, and in two places holes in the joists have been plugged with linen cloth and painted over.

The painting is in black on a white ground. A continuous chevron pattern with a double outline covers the joists and the side of the spine beam. Traces survive on the underside of the spine beam, which has been scraped. The spaces between the joists on the underside of the boards are filled with a running leaf scroll design, apparently willow, which encloses fruits and flowers. These include various

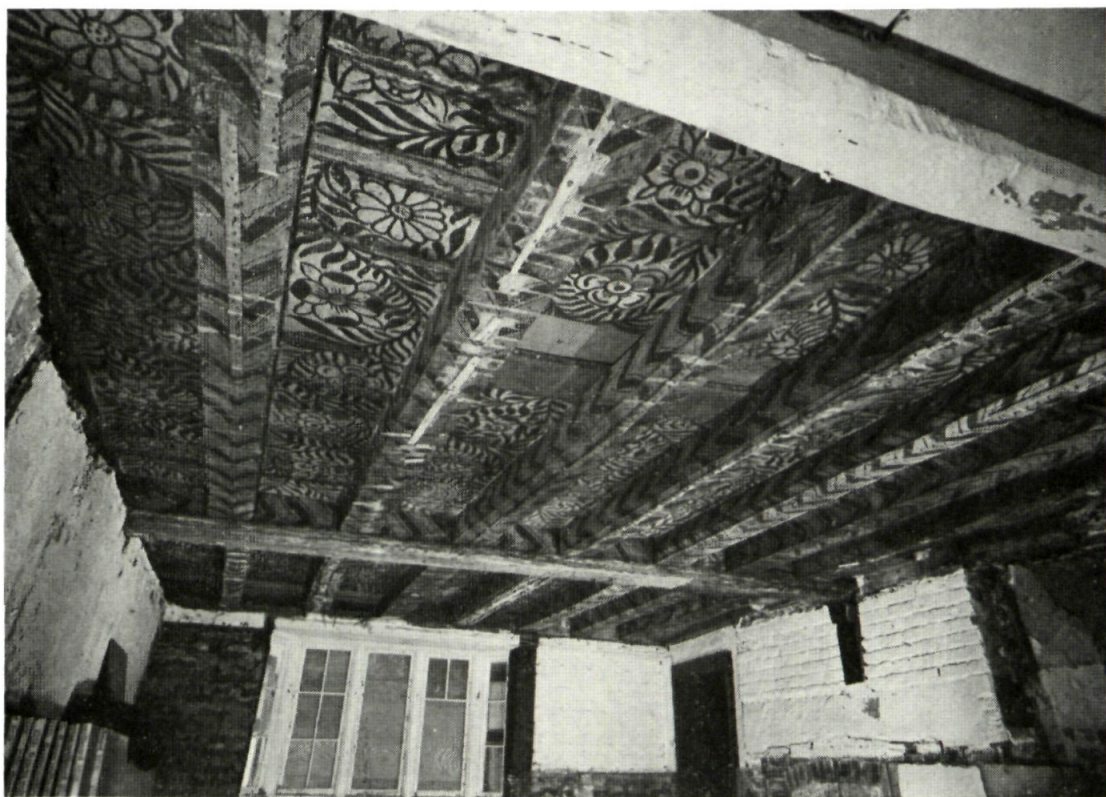


Fig. 7. Curio Shop, Wickham. The painted ceiling. Photograph: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. PWCN 10780.

stylised daisies or pimpernel, Tudor roses, carnations and clusters of fruit which could be pomegranates or pears. The style of painting varies. A dense space-filling technique is employed at the south end of the room but at the north end the design is much looser and less well executed, clearly the work of two different painters. As none of the original framing to the walls survives in this room, it is not possible to say whether the walls too were decorated.

This ceiling is not the isolated example that it at first seemed. Several examples of painted joists, sometimes re-used, are known in the south of England, and we can now infer that many complete painted ceilings of this kind have been lost by the replacement of floor boards, or concealed by later plaster work. A

list of known examples is given below, but it is worth mentioning specifically two Sussex examples, one at Elsted and the other close by at West Harting (Fig. 9). They are both in ground-floor rooms, on ceilings that have carpentry details compatible with a late sixteenth-century date. In the Elsted house the joists are chamfered and this is emphasised by the painting of a black line along the chamfer. Both ceilings use arabesques to finish off awkward spaces. The West Harting paintings are remarkable in the use of different designs on each joist. The marguerite/zigzag pattern we have seen in several wall paintings. There are also running scroll patterns, a leaf or cloud-burst device, and circles or daisies. The most complete example of a painting like the Wickham one is that at the Bursary at Trinity



Fig. 8. Curio Shop, Wickham. Photo collage of the painted ceiling. Photograph: Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. PWCM 10781.

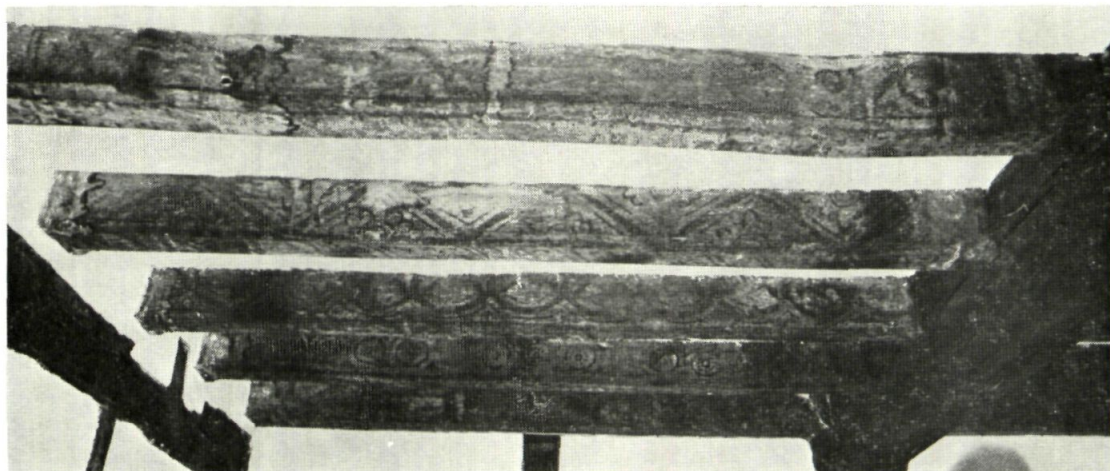


Fig. 9. Old Farm, East Harting. Painted joists. Photograph: M. Rutter. PWCM 13761.



Fig. 10. Park Cottage, Swanmore. Eighteenth-century wallpaper between joists.
Photograph: John Bosworth. PWCM 12482.

College, Oxford, but there the painting is in red and green rather than black, and the floor boards with the running scroll pattern survive (Rouse 1972).

It seems likely that the group of ceilings in West Sussex is broadly contemporary with the Wickham example. The Sussex examples must certainly be after about 1560 and although the Trinity College ceiling and the Wickham ceiling are painted on to framing that is earlier in date, the similarity of the motifs and their common treatment in relation to their position on the ceiling suggest that these too were done at the end of the sixteenth century or during the early years of the seventeenth. In Scotland, the fashion for painted ceilings of this kind seems to have reached its peak in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and extremely ambitious schemes in many colours were undertaken, especially in castles and large mansions. Huntingtower, Perthshire, has one of the simpler decorative schemes with looped and knotted interlace covering the planking, and at Northfield, Prestonpans, East Lothian and at Gladstone's Land in Edinburgh (dated 1620) there are sumptuous garlands of fruit and flowers. The joists are generally painted with cloudburst and fan patterns rather than the chevrons seen in the south (Apted 1966).

There is one curious late variation on the painted ceiling at Park Cottage, Swanmore, about five miles from Wickham. Here the hall

of a house rebuilt in the seventeenth century has been decorated with pasted-on strips of hand-blocked wallpaper which were found applied to both the joists and the underside of the boards. There are three layers, the earliest dating from about 1690 and the latest, datable by the customs stamp, after 1712. The design is of a running scroll pattern of leaves and flowers with birds and foxes (Fig. 10). It seems that locally, at least, the fashion for cheap decorative ceilings lasted for some time.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many people in the course of researching for this report; in particular to the owners of the houses mentioned, who have been unfailingly helpful and hospitable; to Mr. Derek Gale for all his assistance during the renovations to the Curio Shop (now Knockers Bar) Wickham; to Clive Rouse for his advice on the wall paintings at Wickham; to Anton Stanczyk and Miss Debbie Langslow for their careful conservation work on the paintings; to the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments for the photographs of the ceiling reproduced in Figs. 7 and 8; to the Hampshire County Museum Service for permission to reproduce Fig. 6; and to the Hampshire Record Office for permission to use the 1870 Ordnance Survey map of Wickham, on which Fig. 2a is based.

All credit for the original discovery must go to Mrs. Jo Chaplin who lifted a plank of her grandmother's floorboards in 1969.

Notes and photographs of the buildings discussed are deposited in Winchester City Museum. Negative numbers are given after captions.

Some examples of Painted Ceilings

LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	DATE	SOURCE
Bursary, East Range, Durham Quadrangle, Trinity College, Oxford	Joists painted in white/red with scrolls, foliage and fruit and green gourd-type fruits; scroll pattern also on underside of boards.	1570 or 1602 (Sir Thomas Pope's refurbishing)	E. Clive Rouse (1972)
Exeter, Devon, 1-2 Catherine Street, First floor	Joists painted with yellow ochre ground, plain black chevrons. Running tendril on spine beam between joists.	Late 16th C.	D. Portman (1966)
East Harting, Sussex, The Old Farm	Joists painted black on white, different designs including zigzag/marguerite, leaf and tendril patterns. Spine beam decorated.	Late 16th C.- early 17th C.	J. Budden Mr. and Mrs. Wise
Elsted, Sussex, Blackmore	Joists painted black on white, multiple chevron pattern.	Late 16th C.- early 17th C.	Mrs. Wyke-Smith
South Harting, Sussex, Ffowlers Bucke	Joists, re-used in attic, are painted with black chevrons on white ground.		Mrs. Bacon R.C.H.M.
Hambledon, Pleasant House	Cross beam has black-letter inscription (remains of wall painting), spine beam in next bay has tendril pattern.	Late 16th C.	Lt. Col. Roberts
Horsham, Sussex	Joists from demolished house stored at Singleton, chevron on white.		C. Zeuner
Haddon Hall, Derbyshire	Painting on plaster and joists.	Early 16th C.	Croft Murray (1962)
<i>Scottish examples include:</i>			
Huntingtower, Perthshire	Knotwork pattern between joists.	c. 1600?	M. R. Apted (1966)
Gladstone's Land, Lawnmarket, Edinburgh	Running tendril pattern with flowers and leaves between joists patterned in sunburst device.	Dated 1620	M. R. Apted (1966)

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