

Houses of the Oxford Region

3. HILL HOUSE, BURFORD (FIG. 1, PLS. XXXVIII and XXXIX A)

By DAVID STURDY

THIS house is a fine example of a mid-15th century merchant's house. It is built of coursed rubble with ashlar dressings and contained a Hall 17 by 32 by 30 ft., Solar 22 by 17 ft. with chambers above, probably with a Kitchen wing now destroyed. Behind the Solar wing is a range, perhaps built with the house as a Barn or Warehouse now converted into rooms.

The present front doorway, 1, of medieval date, is not in its original position. The original entrance was probably between Hall and Kitchen, 2, leading into a screen's passage. Fine traceried ashlar windows survive at 3. The Hall window is two-centred with flamboyant tracery. Beside it are a modern buttress and a doorway which perhaps led to a staircase to the upper floor of the destroyed kitchen wing, 4. The possible position of other similar windows in the Hall, now destroyed, is marked on the plan by dashes. The six-light square-headed window of the Solar retains its traceried heads only in the lights at each end. The centre lights were destroyed in the 18th century for a bay window, now removed. Other notable features of the Solar are the fireplace, 5, perhaps a 16th century insertion, and doorway to the former staircase, 6, on which are several examples of a mason's mark also found at All Souls College (1438-43), Magdalen College (1473-80),¹ and other local buildings. The Solar has fine moulded beams. The only ancient features of the chambers above the Solar are a plain doorway, 7, in the timber partition under the eastern roof-truss, and a plain fireplace, 8. The small room, 9, was probably a privy.

The site of the Kitchen wing is occupied by a public house built in the 17th or 18th century, when the south wall of the Hall, 10, was rebuilt. It is, however, possible that the Solar was on the first floor, marked Chambers, and the Kitchen on the ground floor under it, marked Solar, forming a house of only two blocks.

The arch-braced roof of the Hall survives above the ceilings of the bedrooms inserted into the upper part of the Hall. The roof of the Solar, of similar form, was partly reconstructed in the 18th century to replace a gable on the street with the present hip.

¹ R. H. C. Davis: 'A Catalogue of Masons' Marks as an Aid to Architectural History', *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd ser., xvii (1954), p. 72, X23 and PL. xviii.

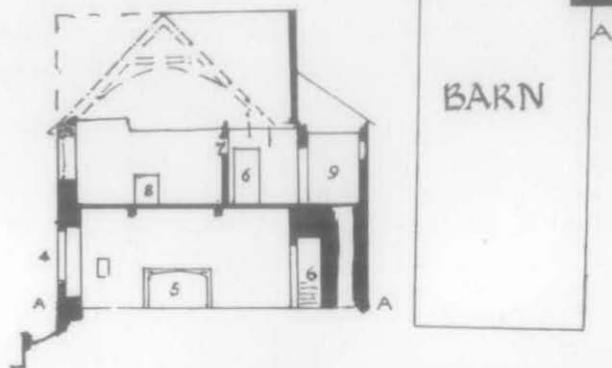
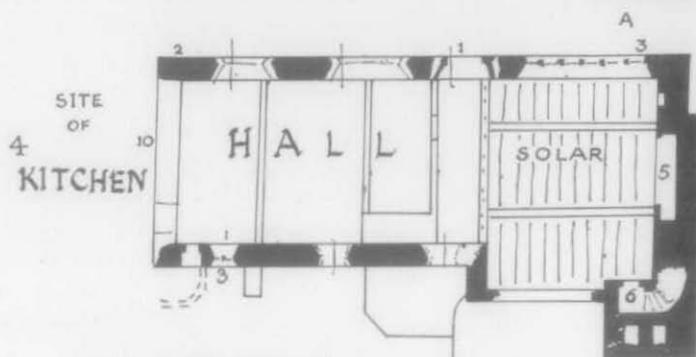
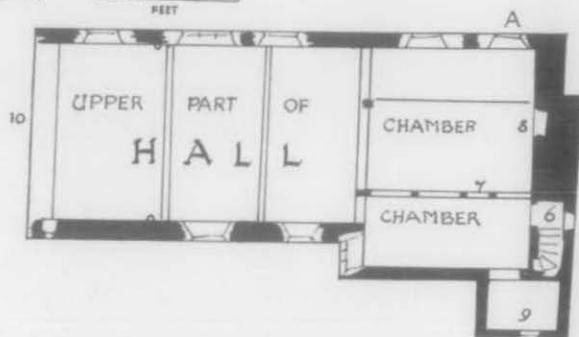
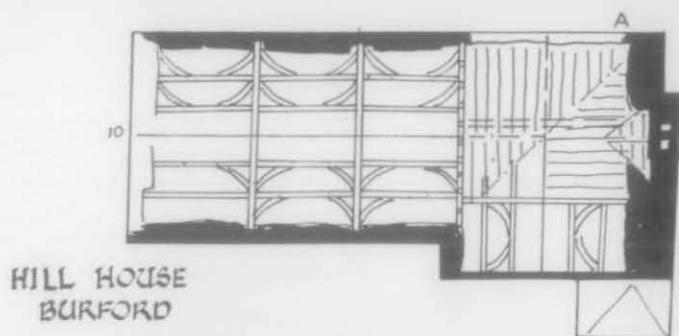


FIG. I
Hill House, Burford. Plans of (i) roof timbers; (ii) first floor; (iii) ground floor.
Section through Solar. 15th century work in solid black. Scale 1 : 240.

HOUSES OF THE OXFORD REGION

4. THE OLD MANOR HOUSE, POFFLEY END, HAILEY, OXON. (FIG. 2, PLS. XXXIX B and XL)

By DAVID STURDY

THIS house was built late in the 15th or more probably early in the 16th century of coursed rubble, with a Hall 16 by 30 by 23 ft., a Kitchen with a Solar above, both 16 ft. wide and probably about the same length. Pantry and storeroom were in a lower wing to the south with dovecotes built in the wall. The entrance was probably at 1, opposite the double timber doorway 2. Jambs of former windows exist at 3, two in the Hall under the plaster, one in the gable end of the south wing. The original roof is partly preserved. The truss, 5, contains sockets for arched braces similar to those of Hill House, Burford. From it sprang windbraces. The truss next on the west, probably of the same pattern, is missing. The truss, 6, is plain, later rebuilt or originally holding the plastered west gable of the Hall. The truss, 7, has sockets for arched braces like those over the Hall, 5, but higher (see Section A-A) to allow more headroom in the first floor Solar.

In reconstructions late in the 16th or in the 17th century, a chimney stack and staircase, 8, were built into the Hall, a floor inserted in the Hall, the Solar floor rebuilt, a floor added to the south wing (see Section B-B) and a chimney stack, 9, built over the double timber doorway of the old passage. The lower part of the Hall and the old Kitchen formed living rooms. Three large rooms on the first floor had their own doorways from the staircase, as bed-chambers. The store room was made into a kitchen with a chimney stack, 10, inserted with a storeroom or servant's bedroom over it cut off from the rest of the house with its own staircase perhaps also, at 10. All the present windows, except that at 11, which is modern, were inserted and the gables of the former Solar built. These alterations provided a neat and spacious plan with a fine exterior. The position of the entrance is not known.

The house can probably be identified with that mentioned in the inventory of the possessions of Robert Yate drawn up 13 March 1639 [1640].² If so it was reconstructed by Robert Yate *c.* 1609 and its connection with the ancestors of Gilbert White of Selborne may be traced in *The city of Oxford and the Restoration of 1660* by Margaret Toynbee.³

The rooms enumerated in the inventory may be tentatively identified: Hall, ground floor, former Kitchen and screens passage; Parlour, ground floor, east part of former Hall; Chamber over Buttery, may be identified with 9 on plan; Cheese Chamber, perhaps small room to east of former Hall;

² Bodleian MS. Wills Oxon., 75/3/28.

³ *Oxoniensia*, xxv (1960), 93.

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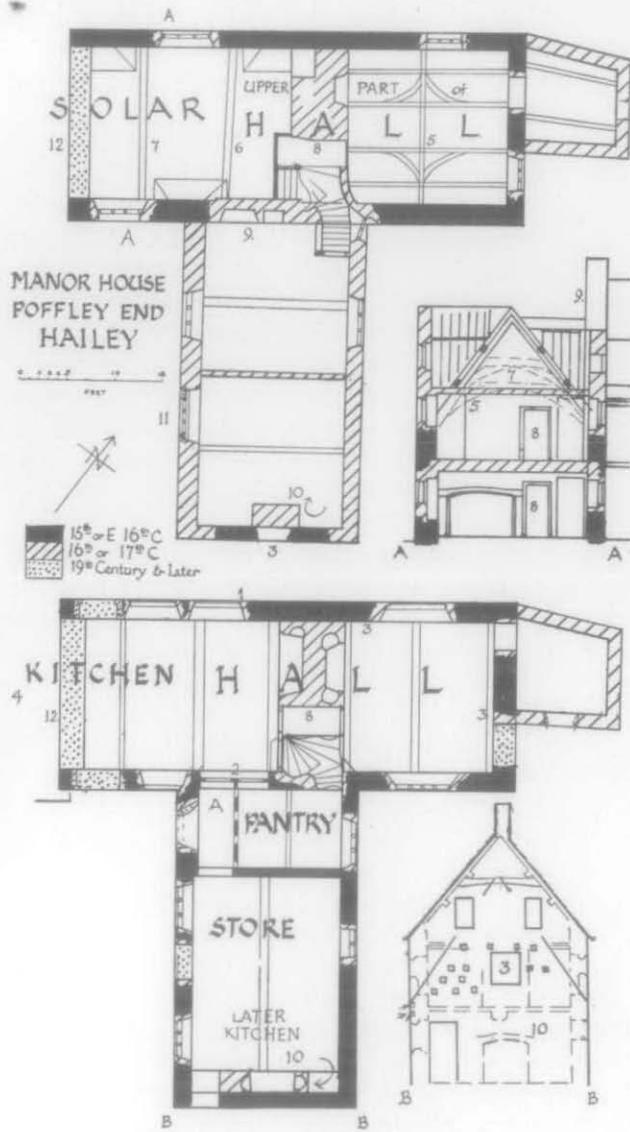


FIG. 2

The Old Manor House, Poffley End, Hailey. Plans of (i) first floor; (ii) ground floor. Section AA through Solar. Elevation BB of rear wall of south wing. Scale 1 : 240.

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His lodging Chamber, with 5; Chamber over Dairy House, Maid's Chamber and Servant's Chamber, perhaps with 6 and 7 and farther rooms to the west now rebuilt; Kitchen, ground floor, former Store; Buttery, marked Pantry; next come Corn House, Timber House, Malt Mill House and so on, probably several ranges of farm buildings, now destroyed, with among them Chamber over Kitchen, probably identifiable with 11.

It is not known how the name manor became attached to the house, for Hailey was one of the townships in the manor of Witney. On the other hand Crawley manor (another township) is mentioned in late 15th century documents. The name may have originated at the time of 'Squire' White (1636-1701). The house ceased to be connected with the Whites probably when Sampson White the younger (1670-1708) built Swanhall a few hundred yards away. Early in the 19th century it was turned into cottages and three new cottages were added at 4 and the wall at 12 rebuilt. In 1958 it was again made into one dwelling.

5. ELEVEN SMALL OXFORD HOUSES

Edited by DAVID STURDY

THE reports below illustrate the characteristics and development of small houses in Oxford from about 1570 to 1720.⁴ In this period one of the few respectable ways of investment was the leasing and sub-letting of houses at a profit. Many houses were rebuilt by the lessee. Two small houses with one room on each floor were often built on a single plot. This sub-division of property was due to the growth of the population and prosperity of the town from the middle of the 16th century, a movement common to the rest of England.

The houses described are all rebuildings or infilling on land already developed in the Middle Ages. During the period new rows of houses were also built in a large area of development along the City Wall and Ditch shown on the map (FIG. 3).

(i) 31-34 ST. ALDATE'S

(FIG. 4, PL. XLII B)

By G. J. DAWSON

THESE houses, on the east side of St. Aldate's, immediately north of Denchworth Bow, under which flowed Shirelake, a branch of the Thames, form two blocks, each of two houses. To the south Nos. 33 and 34 both

⁴ Cf. B. H. St. J. O'Neil, 'Some Seventeenth-century Houses in Great Yarmouth', *Archaeologia*, xciv (1953), 141-80. H. E. Salter, *Cartulary of the Hospital of St. John* iii, O.H.S., lxxix (1916), 327-337.

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contain one room on each of two floors; No. 33 has also extensions at the rear, and over the yard between it and No. 32. No. 34 was built late in the 16th century, two stories high of coarse rubble, including re-used moulded stones of medieval date. The roof, now destroyed, was probably parallel to the street and high-pitched like No. 33, but never contained an attic. The house has a fireplace on each floor, possibly in the original positions; a newel

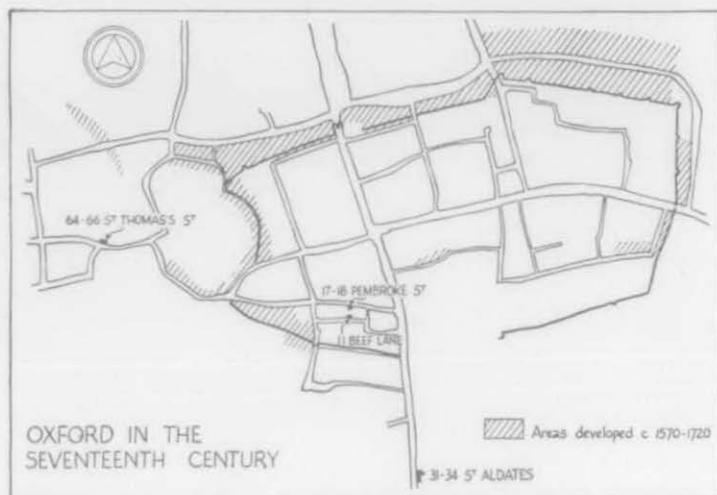


FIG. 3

staircase fits between the chimney breast and the rear wall and on the ground floor a window in the south wall has mouldings similar to those of Tom Gate, Christ Church, of 1525-30, and looked over Shirelake, but was blocked early in the 19th century when No. 35 was built over the stream.⁵ No. 33 was perhaps of the same simple plan as it was first built in the mid or late 16th century, but with a chimney stack built at the rear with a staircase perhaps beside it. When a rear wing was added in the 18th century the staircase was rebuilt behind the chimney stack. The house was also enlarged later by the insertion of an attic in the roof and by the building of rooms at first floor and attic level over the yard to the north; the rearrangements on the first floor can be traced from the changes in floor level.

Nos. 31 and 32 were built probably early in the 17th century as small houses of one room on each of two floors, perhaps with attics in the roof. The structure was timber-framed except for the stone chimneystack which survives

⁵ On the plan, No. 34 is shown at ground floor level except for the front wall.

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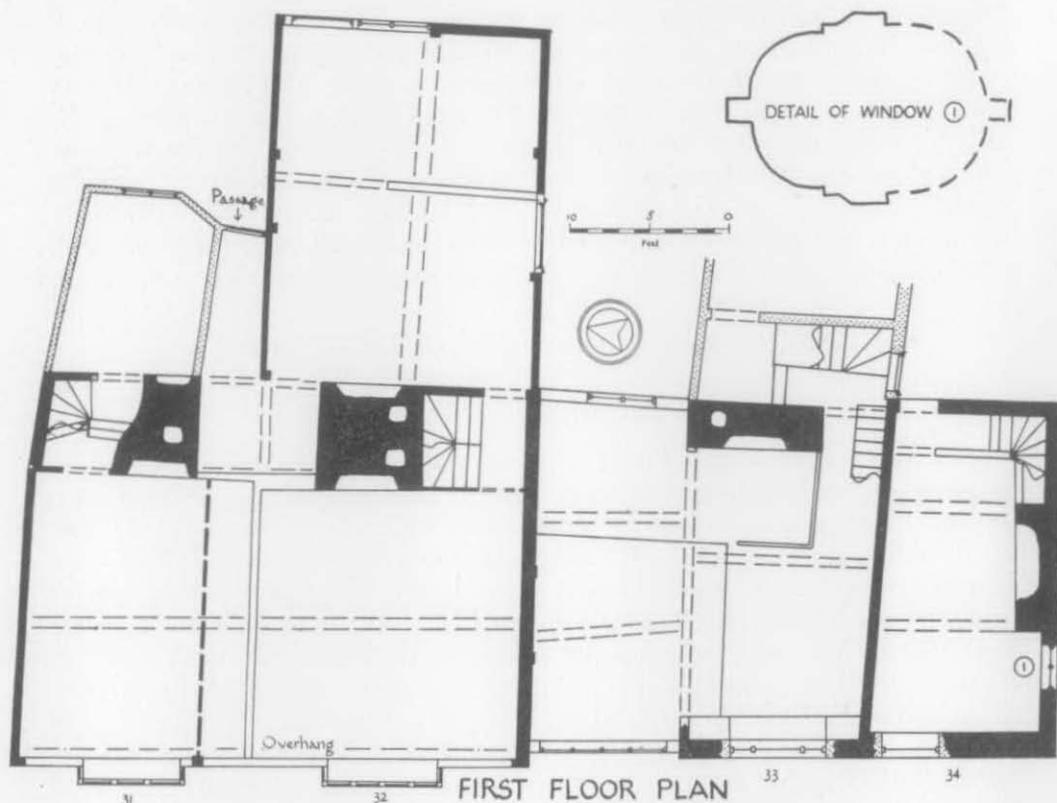


FIG. 4

31-34 St. Aldate's. Scale 1 : 144; detail of window 1 : 3

with original fireplaces at the rear of the rooms, with newel staircases beside. No. 32, the larger house from the start, was extended perhaps late in the 17th century by a large timber-framed rear wing of three bays and two stories with fireplaces inserted in the back of the chimneystack. A major alteration took place probably early in the 19th century when the division between the two houses was moved south about two foot and the present symmetrical façade constructed. But No. 32 retained a little annexe at the rear on the old line of division and both this and the extension at the rear of No. 31 also appears to be earlier than this alteration. In the 19th century a passage was cut through No. 31 and a single storey block added behind the rear wing of No. 32, and in this century the façade and much of the interior have been further modified.

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From the evidence of documents, the area on the southernmost edge of the town adjoining the ancient county boundary of Shirelake had buildings on it by the mid-13th century.⁶ Grandpont, now the Abingdon Road, had been built late in the 11th century by Robert d'Oilly I, thus opening up the area.⁷ Among the early tenants a weaver is mentioned. But by the late 14th century, the sites of at least Nos. 33 and 34 had reverted to garden,⁸ a common change of land-use on the margins. After the middle of the 16th century, the whole area was again developed with simple well-built houses for workmen which survive much altered. Nos. 31 and 32 are still occupied.⁹

11 BEEF LANE AND 17-18 PEMBROKE STREET

(FIGS. 5 and 6, PL. XLI A)

By DAVID STURDY

No. 11 Beef Lane was demolished in the summer of 1961 when many ancient features were exposed. It was built early in the 17th century, behind Nos. 17 and 18 Pembroke Street, of timber with stone chimneybreasts and side walls, as a pair of houses, with basement, ground floor, projecting first floor and projecting attics. The roof plan was a lateral ridge with pairs of gables at front and rear. Each house had one room on each floor linked by a newel stair on the side wall between the chimneybreast and rear wall. On the ground floor was perhaps a pair of central passages; the rear doorways survived. Large plain four-centred arched stone fireplaces suggest that the kitchens were here. The rear window frame survived in one room and the small staircase window in the other. On the first floor elaborately moulded fireplaces with recessed spandrels show that here were the main living rooms, and perhaps also bedrooms. The positions were revealed of large windows at front and small at rear. The attic rooms also had small plain fireplaces. In the 18th century the gabled dormers were replaced on the outside by a low-pitched roof and the rear attic wall rebuilt. At this time doorways were pierced between the two houses, throwing them into one; the ground floor front wall was rebuilt in brick with a single front door, and one staircase was destroyed. The house was refitted and re-windowed in Georgian character.

⁶ H. E. Salter, *Survey of Oxford*, I, O.H.S. (N.S.) XIV (1960), 241-2. Add: John Treguran held No. 34 from 1449 to after 1468. Giles Pulton held it from before 1479. H. E. Salter, *Oseney Cartulary*, II, O.H.S. XC (1929), 167; III, O.H.S. XCI (1931), 110-283 *passim*. S. R. Wigram, *Frideswide's Cartulary*, I, O.H.S., XXVIII (1894), 183-5 *Collectanea*, IV, O.H.S., XLVII (1905), 48-9.

⁷ J. Stevenson, *Abingdon Chronicle*, II, Rolls Series (1858), 15, 25, 284.

⁸ S. R. Wigram, *Frideswide's Cartulary*, I, O.H.S., XXVIII (1894), 189-90.

⁹ I would like to thank the owners and tenants of the property for allowing them to be measured, Mr. D. Sturdy for constant advice, and Mr. J. Cherry and members of the Oxford University Archaeological Society who assisted in the measuring.

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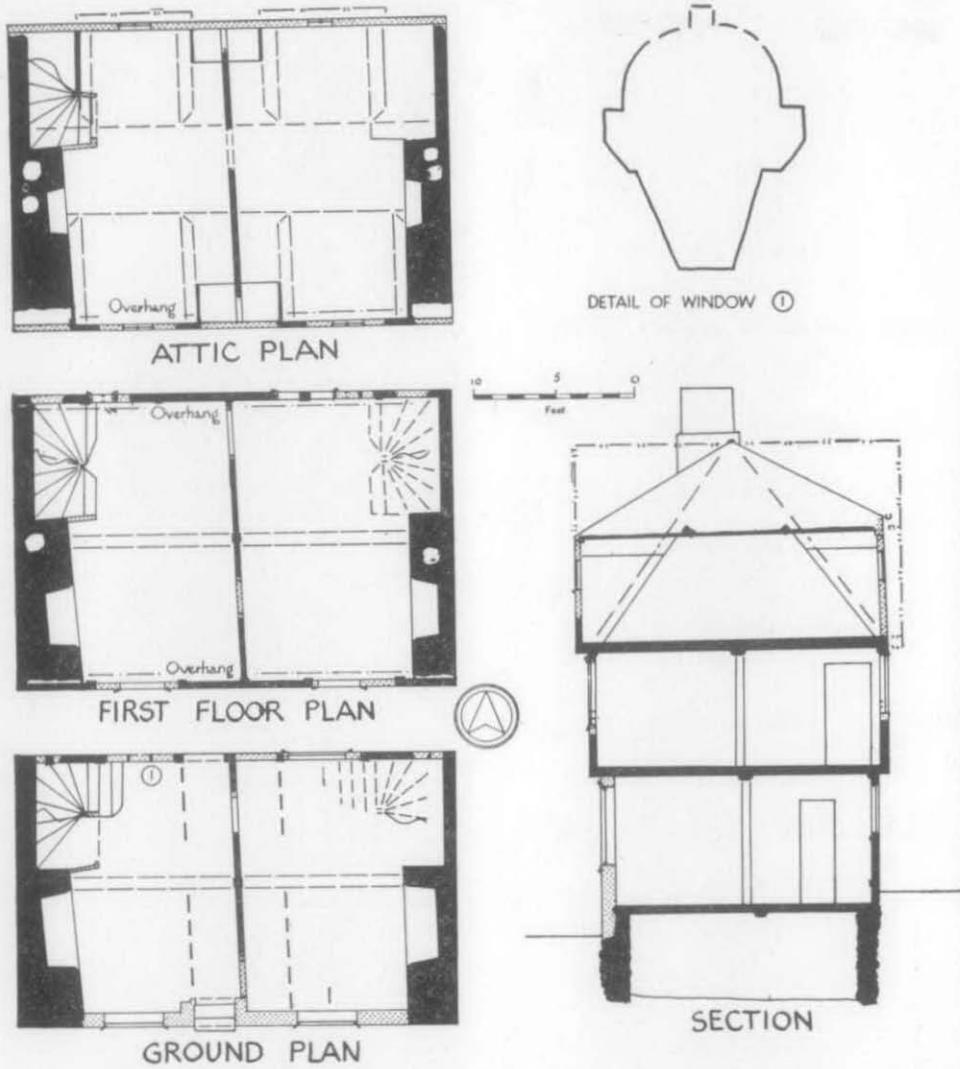


FIG. 5
11 Beef Lane. Scale 1 : 144; detail of window 1 : 3.

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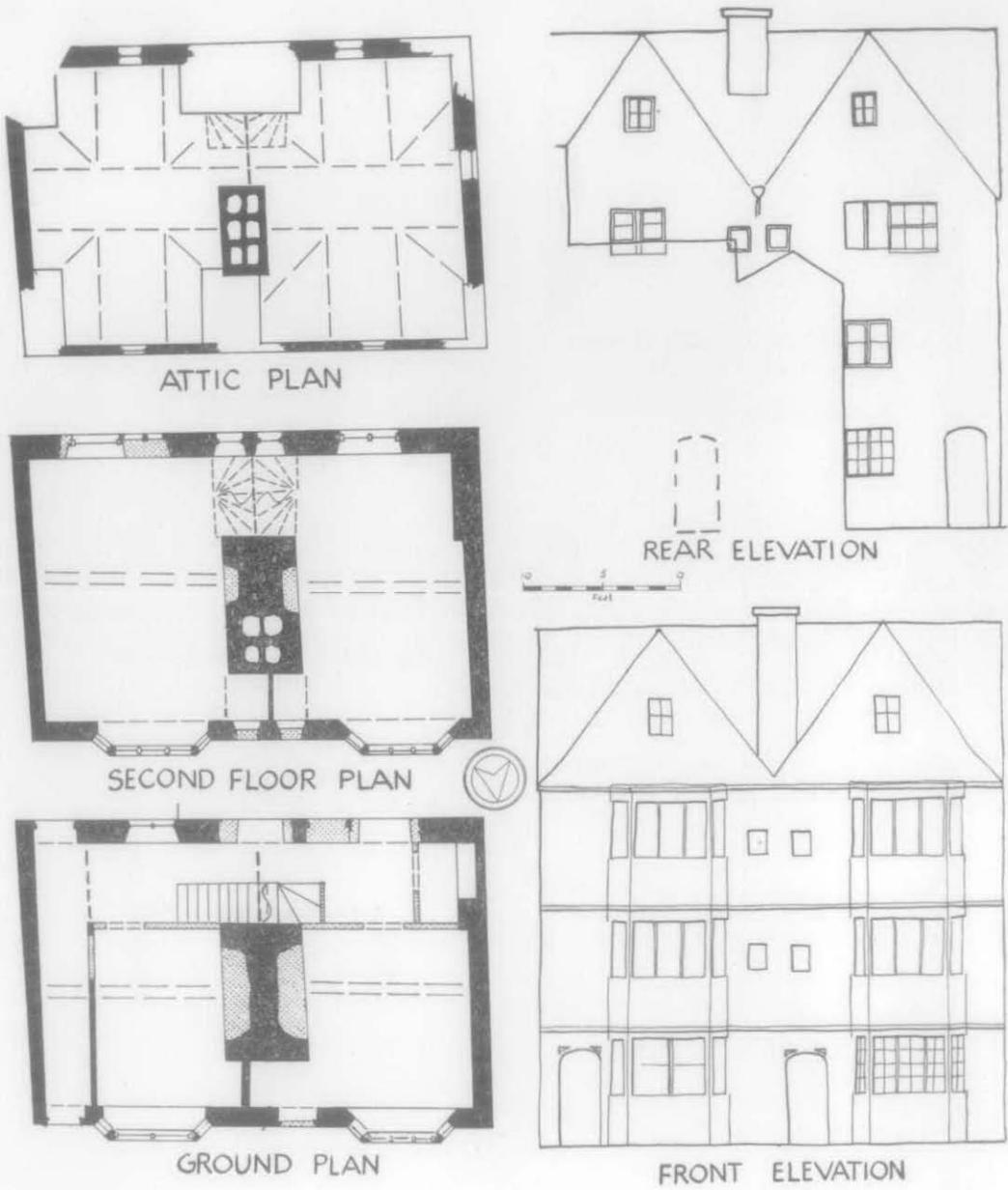


FIG. 6
17-18 Pembroke Street. Scale 1 : 144.

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Nos. 17 and 18 Pembroke Street were built of stone early in the 17th century¹⁰ as a pair of houses of three floors with cellars, attics and a single room on each floor. There was a central chimney stack with stone moulded fireplaces, now blocked. The newel staircases were behind the stack and small closets lay in front, both lit by small windows. On the street the fine bay-windows, three storeys high, form a notable feature of the front; it retains the original corner mullions of stone. The front doorways of stone chamfered with incised spanrels and three-centred arches lay on the east of each bay, and are now blocked. In No. 17 a passage probably led to the back doorway with its plain chamfered three-centred arch. The back door of No. 18 opened from the foot of the stairs. On the rear wall each room had stone mullioned windows of two lights. Late in the 18th century the two houses were made into one and a single staircase replaced the newel staircases. During 1961 these houses were restored as part of the new quadrangle of Pembroke College.¹¹

NOS. 64, 65, 66 ST. THOMAS' STREET (FIGS. 7 and 8, PLS. XLI B and XLII A)

By JAMES DORAN

THESE houses are situated on the north side of St. Thomas' Street, directly opposite the Hamel.

No. 64 was built as a symmetrical pair of houses near the end of the 17th century. The three storeyed structure is of timber with lath and plaster, but the facing is Victorian brickwork. The upper storeys overhang the ground floor by about a foot. The top floor is an attic with dormer windows, the roof plan being a lateral ridge with two gables at the front and three at the rear. On all floors there is a central partition. The chimney stack is central, at the rear, with a staircase to one side, and indications of another having been symmetrically placed. The fittings are 18th and 19th century.

To the primary structure have been added two brick-built extensions on the ground and first floor. An extension had been made by 1750¹² but the surviving main extension is later, of the late 18th or early 19th century, and probably indicates the merging of the two houses.

No. 65 was built, probably as one of a symmetrical pair, in the late 17th or early 18th century. The structure is again three storeyed with overhang

¹⁰ Probably between 1621 and 1635. C. L. Shadwell and H. E. Salter, *Oriel College Records*, O.H.S., LXXXV (1926), 263.

¹¹ I am grateful to the Bursar of Pembroke College who gave permission for the survey of these houses.

¹² Isaac Taylor, *Plan of Oxford* (1750).

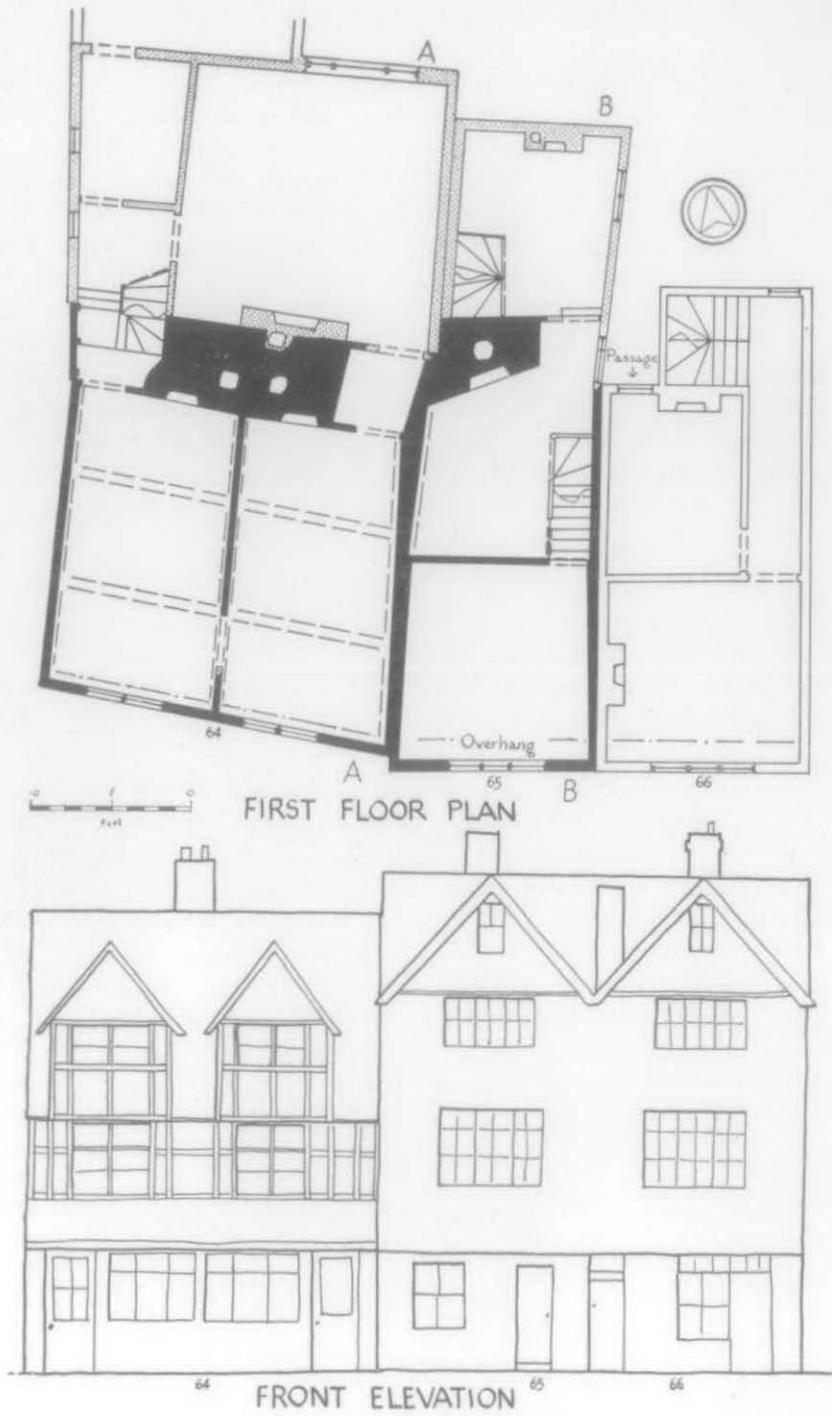


FIG. 7
64 to 66 St. Thomas' Street. Scale 1 : 144.

HOUSES OF THE OXFORD REGION

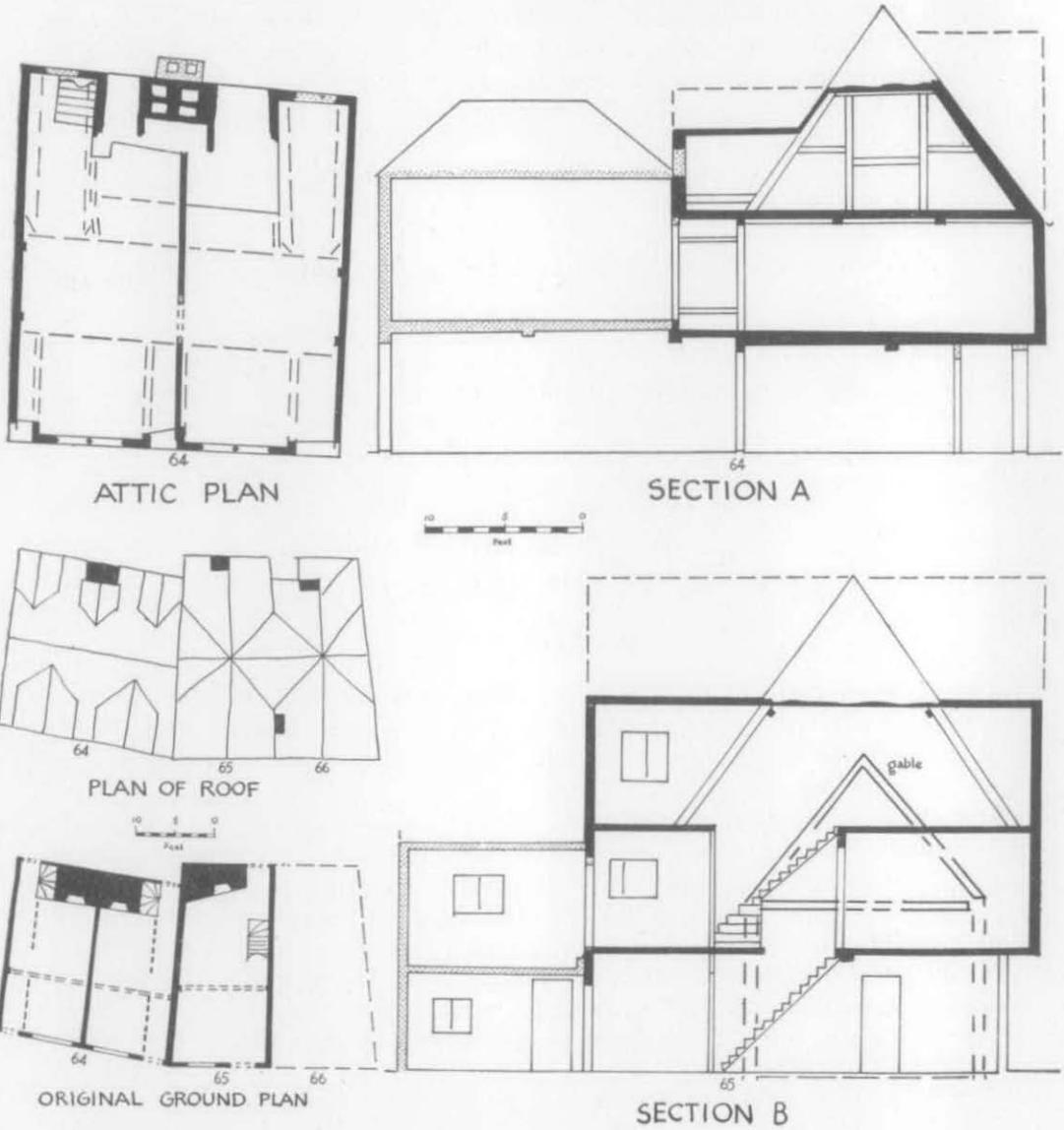


FIG. 8
64 to 66 St. Thomas' Street.

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and in timber with lath and plaster. The roof plan has a longitudinal ridge and a cross ridge. The roof space is inaccessible and unused although a small front window has been introduced, probably in the 19th century. There is a rear corner chimney stack and a central stairway. The fittings are generally early 19th century.

At the rear of No. 65 is an 18th century timber-built extension at ground and first floor level, which originally rose to the second floor as is evidenced by a blocked stairway.

No. 66 was entirely rebuilt at the end of the last century and its similarity to No. 65 is only superficial.

Of considerable interest is the presence in the common wall of Nos. 65 and 66 of plaster from the pre-Victorian structure of No. 66 and also of a roof truss apparently a survival from a 16th or 17th century building. This roof truss seems to be matched by some early timbers preserved, beneath cement rendering, on the outside of the east wall of No. 66.¹³

6. BEGBROKE HILL FARM

(FIGS. 9 TO 11, PL. XLIII)

By DAVID STURDY

THE Jacobean farmhouse,¹⁴ built by Humphrey Fitzherbert (d. 1616) or his son Robert (d. 1632),¹⁵ retains part of the undercroft of a medieval house with doorway and one transverse arch, roofed at ground level early in the 19th century.

The main body of the house, 60 by 24 ft. is of five bays with two floors and attics, built of local limestone for both dressings and rubble walling, once rendered over. The five bays are divided internally by large chamfered beams with simple stops; on the first floor these are also the tie beams of the roof, holding massive main rafters which have two sets of purlins. The stone-mullioned windows of up to four lights make a fine articulated front with flanking gables in the end bays and another projecting above the porch. The end walls, 5 ft. thick, themselves form the chimney stacks with small

¹³ For assistance in the preparation of this report thanks are due to the owners of the houses, Messrs. Archer, Cowley & Co. Ltd., to members of the O.U. Archaeological Society and particularly to Mr. D. Sturdy of the Ashmolean Museum.

¹⁴ The house is occupied by the Weed Research Organization of the Agricultural Research Council; I am indebted to Dr. E. K. Woodford for news of the discoveries of painted plaster during recent alterations, and to the architects, Messrs. Bryan & Norman Westwood & Partners, for the survey from which the plans are taken.

¹⁵ Mrs. B. Stapleton, *Three Oxfordshire Parishes*, O.H.S., xxiv (1893), 90, 340-1, 349-350.

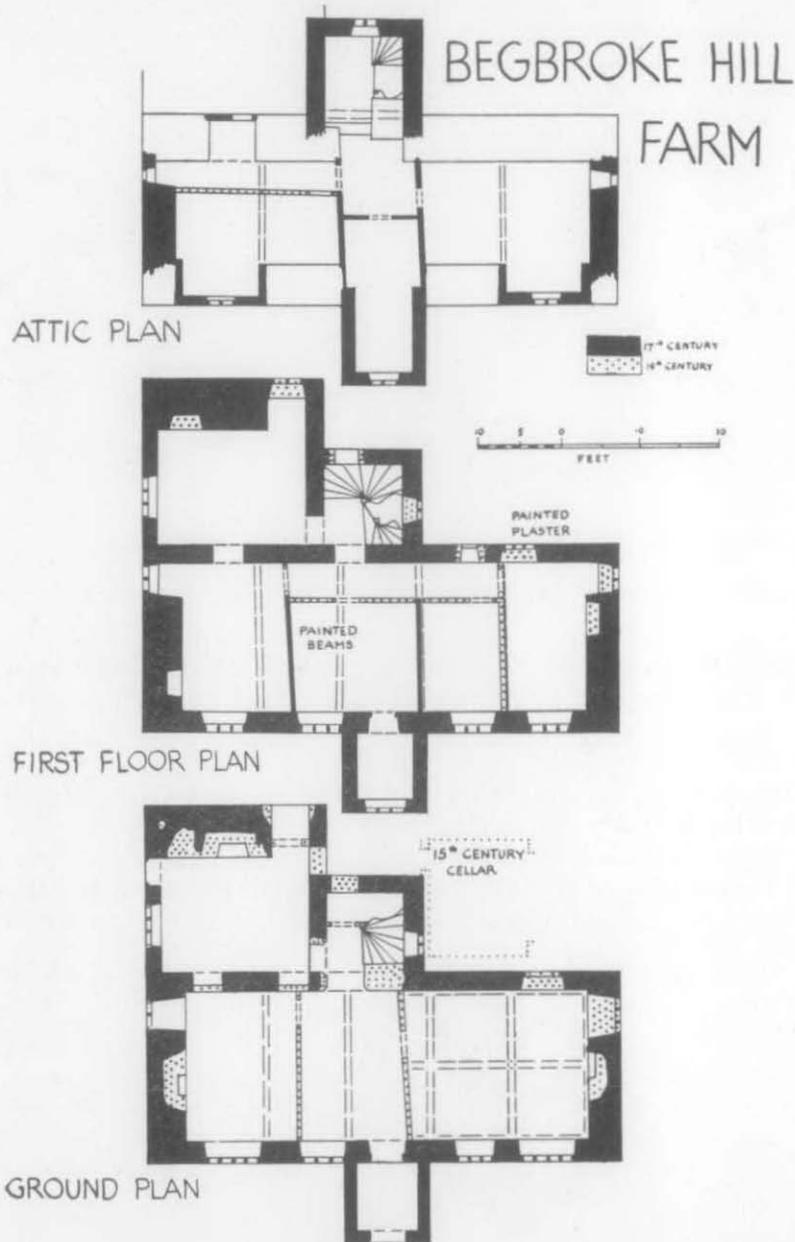


FIG. 9
 Scale 1 : 288.
 Begbroke Hill Farm.

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FIG. 10

Begbroke Hill Farm. Painted plaster from soffit of rear window on first floor. Scale 1 : 7.

stone fireplaces, all but one mutilated or hidden. Behind the two western bays is a rear wing 22 ft. square of two bays, exactly the same as the main body. The projecting porch is balanced behind by a tower 12 ft. square containing a newel staircase which was perhaps rebuilt in the 19th century. The lower room of the rear wing was probably always the kitchen. The rooms in the main body of the house have been altered. A large room in the eastern half of the ground floor, probably the Parlour, has a plastered ceiling of early 17th century date with elaborate mouldings on the beams with a simple vine scroll pattern under the beams and repeated as a frieze. In the

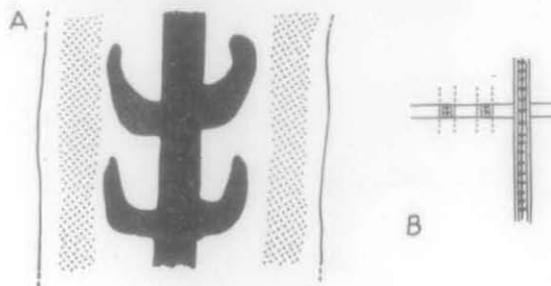


FIG. 11

Begbroke Hill Farm. Painted beams from room on first floor. Scale A 1 : 4; B 1 : 80.

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room above, perhaps the principal chamber, now divided, was a painted decoration, also of early 17th century date, surviving on the soffit of the back window (FIG. 10) with traces elsewhere in the room. On a background of pale ochre was painted in black with white highlights an overall trellis pattern of intersecting quatrefoils linking black lobed shapes. In the centres of the trellis were alternate black shapes and red criss-crossed lines. No great care or imagination was shown in this old-fashioned example of a decoration more common in Elizabethan times.

In the adjacent room another 17th century painted decoration (FIG. 11) was found remaining on the beams of 'beanstalks' in red flanked by blue lines, the whole forming groups of vertical pattern.



A

A. Hill House, Burford. Rear of Hall from East.



B

B. Hill House, Burford. Doorway, 6, in Solar.



A



B

A. Hill House, Burford. Roof-timbers of Hall.
B. Manor House, Poffley End, Hailey. Street-front from West.



A
A. Manor House, Poffley End, Hailey. Rear wall of south wing.



B
B. Manor House, Poffley End, Hailey. Rear wall of Kitchen and Solar.



A

A. 11 Beef Lane. Street-front from south-west.



B

B. 64 St. Thomas' Street. North-west dormer of attic.

PLATE XLII



A



B

A. 64-66 St. Thomas' Street. Rear of houses from north-west.
B. 31-34 St. Aldate's. Street-front from south-west.

PLATE XLIII



Begbroke Hill Farm. South front.

OXONIENSIA, VOLS. XXVI/XXVII (1962)

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