

GREAT PATTENDEN, MARDEN

By S. E. RIGOLD, M.A., F.S.A.

THOUGH this house 'vanished' some fifteen years ago and my notes and photographs, which seem to be the only record of it, are all too few, it deserved an essay at reconstitution—made not without a touch of sentiment, for I used to admire it from the train-window as a schoolboy in the 1930s and reluctantly concluded that what was obviously a medieval hall, but totally transformed in the later Stuart period, with its warm buff rendering rising above a well-tended garden, might be more beautiful than a hall relatively unaltered. Such a house in so accessible a position might have seemed secure, but the troops treated it unkindly during the war and the death-watch beetle was 'digging for victory' at the same time. When I visited it in 1951 and 1953, it was deserted, and the owners were understood to be only interested in disposing of its timbers. The joints looked sound enough but some timbers were heavily infested. By 1954, it had gone and the area was turned over first to fruit-packing and then to light industry. It was, in fact, an early (probably late fourteenth-century) hall of exceptional size and quality of workmanship, preserving features of unusual interest from *two* reconstructions, one in the earlier sixteenth century as well as the final one which masked most of the primary detail. Had the demolition been watched, the record might have been much fuller.

The site, at N.G.R. TQ 739448, beside a feeder of the Teise and quite a complex of moats or rectilinear ponds, is just north-west of the village. In view of the 'denn' name it might still produce evidence, if excavated, of unbroken habitation since Saxon times. The attached tenement was evidently quite large and split, as so often, into a Great and a Little Pattenden, besides giving its name to a mill, a good half mile north of the former. Thus the 'denn' of Pattenden presumably extended northwards from the eponymous 'denn' of Marden. There is, however, another Pattenden (with almost the classic instance of the maturest sort of 'Wealden' hall) in the adjoining parish of Goudhurst.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to say whether they originated as separate 'denns'

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, xxix (1911), 174–82. (H. S. Cowper's old description, recording a number of details, in his pioneer article, 'Some Timber-framed Houses in the Kentish Weald': even if the glass with Catherine of Aragon's pomegranate badge goes with the flooring over the hall, the associated detail is, as Cowper admits, not far removed from that in the main construction, which seems to me to be essentially early Tudor.)

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or as detached parts of the same 'denn', in which case Pattenden in Marden, as the less remote, was probably the nucleus, or whether one was a relatively late settlement, taking its name from the medieval family of Pattenden that held the other. Since Pattenden in Goudhurst was in that part of the parish *not* in Marden Hundred, any interests of the family within the Hundred must be presumed to refer to Pattenden in Marden.<sup>2</sup>

Though latterly miscalled 'Great Pattenden Manor', the house was never the capital messuage of a manor even in the feeble Wealden sense, with insignificant incidents and overlapping rights. It was included, with most of Marden, and most of Goudhurst, too, in a dependency of the great manor of Milton Regis. Marden also contained the sizeable but divided manor of Cheveney and several little marginal tenures. There were enclaves of Gillingham and East Farleigh in both parishes; Pattenden in Goudhurst belonged to East Farleigh, but not, it appears, Pattenden in Marden.<sup>3</sup> The stewardship of Milton Regis was exercised from the miniature court-house on Marden square, though Great Pattenden was the nearest thing to a 'big house' close to the village. There is no recognizable corner of the church or churchyard for its tenants<sup>4</sup> and I would leave their identification to more persistent local historians, but at the same time I would suggest that the final and most pretentious alteration of the house may be the work of the family of Symons whom Hasted notices as landholders in the parish since Edward Symons acquired the lands of Sir John Packington in 1662.<sup>5</sup> The same Edward appears in an assessment of 1676 as the richest inhabitant after the Maplesdens of Cheveney.<sup>6</sup>

### DESCRIPTION

The house fronted south, with two wings, of which only the jettied upper storeys projected from the façade, but which were marked by separate hipped roof-spans, covered, in true Kentish fashion, by the overall hipped roof of the hall. In the later seventeenth century the door had been moved, a little awkwardly, to the centre, all the windows renewed with flush-framed casements, with rectangular leaded quarries and mostly with transoms, and all trace of the framing, except the jetties, had been masked in a soft rendering. It will be seen that the raising of the roof of the east wing was part of the same scheme, which

<sup>2</sup> H. S. Cowper, *ibid.*, 181. There were Pattendens in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Milton, the superior manor, and Sittingbourne (*Arch. Cant.*, xliiii (1931), 50; xliv (1932), 91).

<sup>3</sup> Hasted, quarto edition, vii, 53 ff., 68, 77.

<sup>4</sup> There are several wall-monuments to the Maplesdens and Coles of Cheveney, one to Amhurst of Loddington and one to Symons.

<sup>5</sup> Hasted, quarto edition, vii, 61.

<sup>6</sup> *Home Counties Magazine*, vii, 307; no addresses given.

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gave the façade an almost complete symmetry and a Groombridge-like elegance, with pronounced, but not coved, cornices and eaves. Nothing of this exterior, except perhaps the porch, need be later than the third quarter of the century—in fact the time of Edward Symons. Certain internal features, a quite splendid panelled archway into the projecting stair-compartment (though hardly the fine, Caroline-looking oak staircase), and the panelling in the front service-room (Fig. 1 B, F), with bolection-moulded fire-surround, surmounted by a weird and stormy, stylized landscape,<sup>7</sup> suggested improvements in the next generation. Fig. 1 A, based largely on a photograph, shows the façade as at the time of demolition.

The medieval house thus discreetly covered, showed two phases of construction. The hall was unusually wide and in its final form comprised *three* bays: the low bay and screens-passage (Fig. 1 B, L) were always at the east and the short west bay (Fig. 1 B, S) was a 'smoke-bay' and never a passage. Though open smoke-bays in this position are not unknown at earlier dates,<sup>8</sup> this one may well have been built to contain the great brick chimney and possibly belongs with the complete flooring-over of the hall. In any case, it was probably not much older, and it will be argued that the most likely, though not proven, date for the bay was about the second quarter of the sixteenth century and that the geographically closest parallel for this rare feature seems to be of this date. The flooring of halls in two stages, thus temporarily reducing them to single smoke-bays, has been observed so often as to allow the presumption that it was usual; but, in this case, there is some evidence that the low bay was always partly floored, and even the flooring of the high bay might have required a purpose-built smoke-bay. But in default of an opportunity to examine much of the frame, the critical evidence came from the roofs: the roof of the east wing had been raised in the seventeenth century, but its two crown-posts had been left standing functionless in mid-air and were of similar, early detail to that in the hall, whereas the free-standing crown-post in the west wing was of common sixteenth-century type, with an advanced bell-base on a high plinth and that in the partition-frame had four-centred down-braces and a four-centred doorway below it, towards the west. The roof of the west wing was intact, with plates at higher level than those in the east. The partition-frame between the high bay of the hall and the smoke-bay was clearly of primary date, the embedded crown-post well fitted to the main collar-purlin and

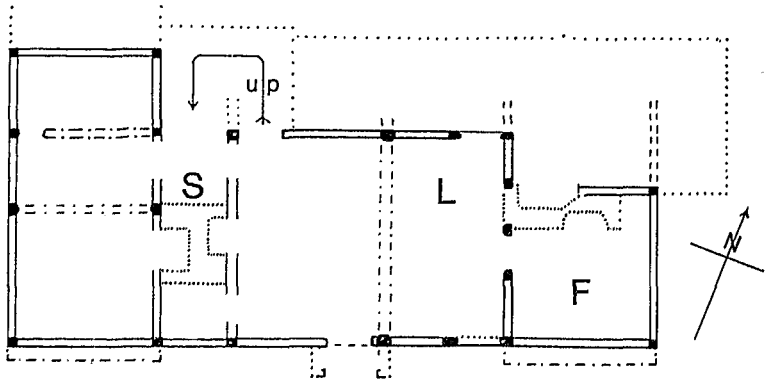
<sup>7</sup> These overmantel landscapes deserve more study; they begin quite early—there is a splendid set from the 1680s or '90s at Urchfont Manor, Wilts. I have noticed several in Kent, e.g. at Rat's Castle, Plaxtol. The front 'service' room, which so often is, or becomes, a small parlour, office or study, is a usual place for one.

<sup>8</sup> Also terminal fireplaces, as at Whichford, Warwickts.

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A



B

----- 1st-floor Features



C

FIG. 1. (Scale: approx. 1 : 240.)

supported by wide-striding, two-centred down-braces. This implies that the roof continued further west. The partition-frame could, indeed, have already separated a smoke-bay. But since a house of this size and quality may be presumed to have had some sort of parlour and upper chamber at this date, what reason would there have been for demolishing this and building a new high-end wing, not notably longer or wider than its presumed predecessor, except the insertion of the smoke-bay and the consequent moving of the parlour further west? The most probable solution is that the primary house, like others of its date, had a transverse roof over the low-end only and that the parlour and high-end solar were roofed in series with the hall, without an intervening smoke-bay, and hipped longitudinally in normal fashion. Enough of the main tie-beam projected to show that the front had been recessed and the high-end solar jettied forward.

Fig. 1 C shows a tentative reconstruction of the primary building, incorporating all the aforementioned features. If correct, it shows a transitional form of early hall-house, but since the reconstruction incorporates analogies on these lines, it cannot be taken as positive evidence for them; it is merely not inconsistent with them. The low-end wing, with gable and barge-boards, may be compared with the fourteenth-century examples described in *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxii:<sup>9</sup> at Hamden, in the middle of the century, there was clearly a gabled low-end wing and a high-end, roofed in series; at Rooting, somewhat later, and probably of similar date to Pattenden, the positive evidence for the high end is missing. The window in the gable-end may be shown too low—it is so shown on the analogy of the smaller window in the hall, but it is possible that the corresponding window at Rooting was, like its successor, also low-set. Of the external details the door-derns and the small hall-window are shown on the front as they were preserved at the rear.

The only visible primary details were generally analogous to those at Rooting. The splendid tall crown-post of the hall (Fig. 2 B) had mouldings of the highest precision and from the same general repertoire. The capital, though rather more everted than that at Rooting, was again surmounted by an ogee-mould, and the same cyma-motif appears below the necking and above the relatively squat bulbous base, here spreading in two stages. It stood on a square plinth with a hollow chamfer. The head of the post clasped the collar-purlin (at Rooting only the embedded crown-post did so), with a neatly shouldered double jowl, reminiscent of the treatment at the mid-fourteenth-century Southchurch Hall, Essex. In general, the clasping crown-post is a relatively early feature; in the late fourteenth century it occurs, for instance, at Bredgar chantry. The pegs to the upward bracing

<sup>9</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, lxxxii (1967), 246 ff.

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from the crown-post were set four-square, not staggered. Again as at Rooting, the moulding on the relatively shallow tie-beam was returned round the side-walls, in this case on to structural wall-plates bearing ashlars, not on to an attached cornice. The moulding, Fig. 2 A, consists of opposed ogees flanking a deep cavetto. In Kent any elaborate moulding of the upper plates is a rare and early feature.

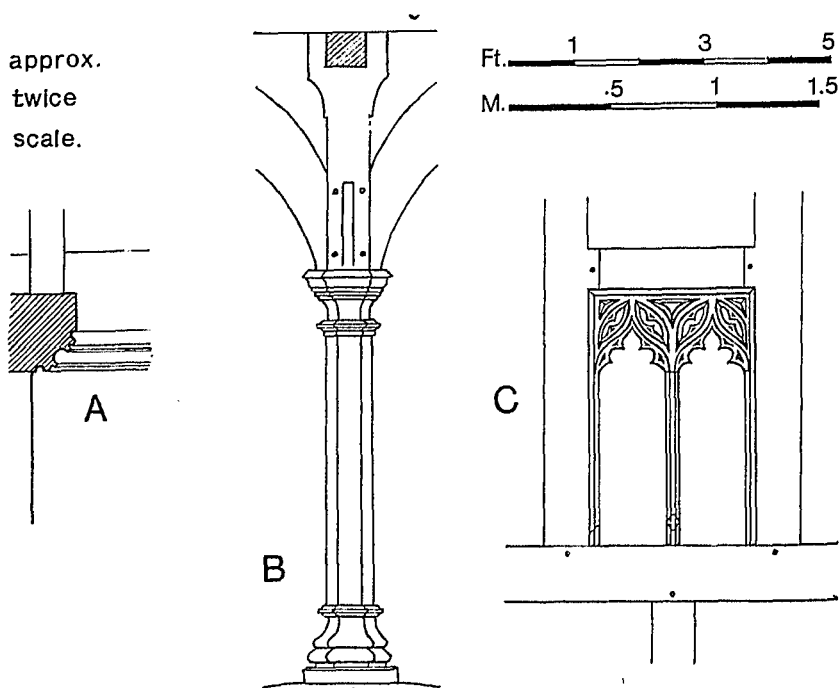


FIG. 2.

The door-derns at the rear of the passage formed a depressed two-centred arch, with a gentle point and a relatively sharp intersection with the jambs. Above the door and towards the central truss, at the rear and doubtless also at the front, was a small too-light window, such as is occasionally found in this position, but seldom of such an elaborate form. It was unquestionably a primary feature, and although such windows might be explained as purely for ventilation, it is hard to avoid the suggestion that, even at this early date, there was a stage, gallery or jettied chamber above the dwarf-speres. The tracery is completely curvilinear in concept, even if this need not imply quite such an early date as it would in stone tracery, consisting (Fig. 2 C)

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of ogees flanked by mouchettes, all cusped and hollow-chamfered. Nothing else can be said about the wall-frame, except that the rear of the hall showed, as at Rooting, arch-bracing only. The frame, including the door-derns, was not conspicuously heavy for the size of the hall.

There was no indication whether any secondary walls were close-studded. They need not have been so, even at their apparent date, and were certainly not so in the partition-frame in the high-end wing, which had, on the upper floor, a half-height rail and arch-braces. But there is a significant parallel to the smoke-bay ascribed to the secondary phase, recorded from the same parish of Marden, in a rather inaccessible book, *Old Houses in England*, by Rowland C. Hunter.<sup>10</sup> The exact position is not given and, as far as I can discover, the house no longer exists. It was a typical, very late, close-studded 'Wealden' recessed hall, truncated at one end and much underbuilt. But from indications of the great window it appears to me that it was the low end that had gone and that the bay containing a sizeable chimney breast was not an adapted passage-bay but a purpose-built smoke-bay, perhaps of a piece with the chimney, between the recessed hall and the high end. This pattern is certainly repeated in the floored halls of the succeeding generation;<sup>11</sup> both the Marden instances are therefore probably also transitional.

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<sup>10</sup> R. C. Hunter, *Old Houses in England*, New York, 1930, pls. 40-1.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Loddenden, Staplehurst, and The Cott, Biddenden: H. S. Cowper, as in n. 1, *Arch. Cant.*, xxix (1911), 187 ff., 195 ff., with plans.