

The Red Lion Hotel, Colchester

by D.F. Stenning

This paper presents a detailed description of the remarkable early 16th-century timber-framed building complex known as the Red Lion in Colchester.

An attempt is made to establish the sequence of building and the functional inter-relationships of the numerous rooms. Comparisons are made with other contemporary buildings and the scant documentary evidence is examined and evaluated.

Whilst the original purpose of the complex remains unclear, a convincing link with the important Howard family is established and a likely construction date is deduced.

Introduction

The Red Lion is a magnificent complex of timber-framed buildings, fronting the south side of Colchester High Street. In 1987, the property was purchased by a new owner and a major programme of repairs, alterations and improvements was set in hand, involving the complete opening-up of the fabric and providing ample opportunities for inspection and evaluation.

During the progress of the contract virtually every surviving member and much of the substructure was opened to view, enabling a detailed examination to be made.

The author, and others, were able to study the surviving features and to make drawings of the various parts. Unfortunately, as with most ancient buildings, the fabric proved to be far from complete. Over the centuries, buildings are constantly altered and adapted and each change obscures the original concept.

The Red Lion has long been regarded as something of a mystery, partly as a result of a lack of documentary records. At the beginning of the survey, it was hoped that a detailed examination of the buildings would bring to light sufficient evidence to determine its use, and to allow it to be dated with some accuracy. However, although a wealth of information was obtained, some major areas remain unknown, particularly where fabric has been removed. In addition, our knowledge of other comparable urban structures is somewhat sketchy and at present seem insufficient to allow for a full understanding.

The purpose of this study is therefore, to present, as completely as possible, the information discovered as a stepping stone on the path to knowledge. Obviously, with studies of this kind, it is tempting to speculate without a firm factual base. Conversely, it is

all too easy to provide a mass of survey material without attempting any analysis or trying to weigh its particular value. There is little doubt that all ventures of this kind deal with degrees of 'probability' rather than certainty and the student of architectural history should be wary of this fact.

General site layout (Fig. 1)

The various building blocks are disposed to form a dense urban complex. The O.S. map of 1876 shows the Red Lion as part of an area of commercial building, between the High Street to the north and Culver Lane to the south. The documentary evidence suggests that a large block of land, bounded by Culver Lane, Lion Walk and Eld Lane, once belonged to the Red Lion and may well have contained buildings. The particular alignment of Lion Walk, centred on the Red Lion courtyard, may be coincidental, but could also suggest an earlier through route.

Figure 1A shows the northernmost part of the site at its earliest recognisable stage, prior to the major redevelopment that forms the principal part of this study. Some way back from the frontage stood the 'southern halls', which still survive and which will be considered in greater detail later. The shaded areas represent missing buildings which were clearly in existence at this time, in that their presence helped to determine the later layout.

Figure 1B illustrates the major redevelopment at its first, formative, stage with the new complex filling much of the available site area.

The east wing is of three storeys in height, is jettied to the frontage and penetrates well into the site. It seems appropriate to regard this as a drastically extended version of the domestic 'service' crosswing as found in the typical medieval house. Attached to its flank, some way back from the frontage, is a block at right angles, containing two 'halls', one on top of the other. This again reflects the standard domestic plan, although the halls are in duplicate and set deep within the site. That these two ranges are contemporary, and form part of a considered 'design', is proven by the detail. The fenestration of the crosswing's west elevation is carefully placed to take account of the hall block, which obviously covered part of the facade.

As originally conceived, the rest of this west elevation was an *external* wall and was elaborately decorated for display. All horizontal members were richly

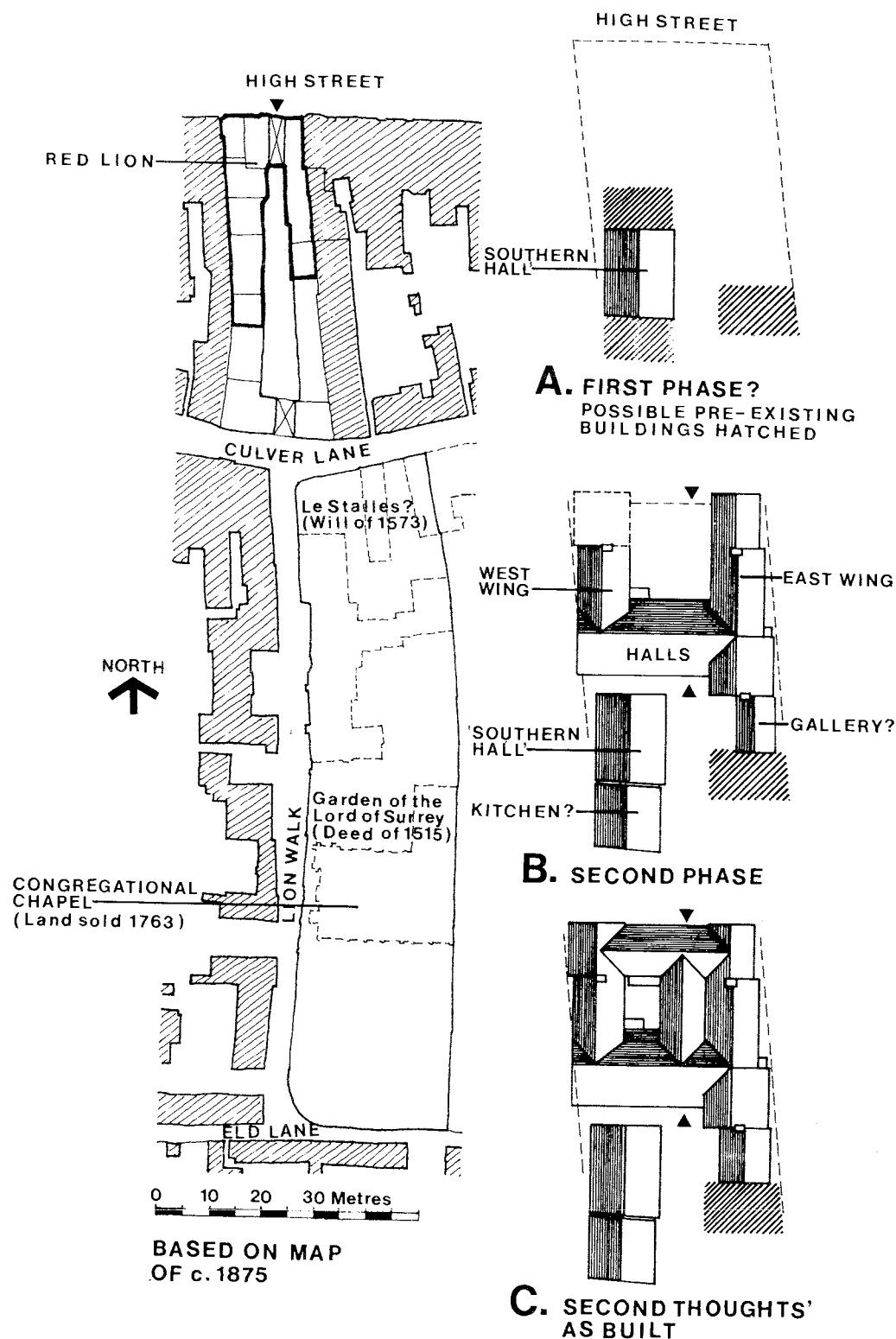


Fig. 1 The Red Lion, Colchester. Site location (left) and general phase plan (right).

moulded and the principal posts had attached vertical shafts which rose the full height of the elevation.

The three-storey west wing also seems to have formed a part of the original design concept. The

north-western corner of the hall range takes structural support from the western wing and thus the two structures seem physically inseparable. This short wing, which returns to the frontage, presents problems

of interpretation, to which we will later return.

We are therefore presented with an original concept which provided a forecourt-like arrangement to the High Street frontage. This seeming likeness to a typical Parisian 'hotel' may, of course, be misleading. It is quite conceivable that this forecourt area contained pre-existing buildings at this stage which our builder was unwilling, or unable, to demolish.

The principal entrance to the complex, which was to remain unaltered through the centuries, was via the eastern side of the court. The easternmost end of the ground-floor hall, contained an ultra-wide cross-passage, another resemblance to a conventional house plan. The intended access to the upper hall was probably via an external stair, but this is now impossible to prove.

At this stage in our deliberations we are forced to confront a problem of major importance. It would appear that whilst the building was being constructed this first concept was drastically changed. Detailed examination suggests that the carpenter had already produced most of the intended framing and that this needed to be modified to suit the changed circumstances of the plan (compare Fig. 1, B and C). That the same carpenter was responsible for both 'phases', is immediately apparent: the general structural concept, the carpentry technique and the consistency of the decoration all point to this fact.

The primary objective of this changed scheme was to provide a unified frontage to the High Street (Fig. 1C, 'Second Thoughts'). This took the form of a three-storeyed block, linking the cross wings and 'continuing' their jetties. It is also apparent that this frontispiece, including those parts fronting the wings, formed a single constructional unit. Hence it is clear that the scheme had been modified before the cross wings had been completed, and that their ends were modified to suit the new set of requirements. As a result of this change, the 'entrance approach' became a covered tunnel and an extension of the hall cross-passage.

The construction of the west wing seems not to have been much advanced at the time of the rethink. Its detailed design, part jettied to the east, seems to take account of the presence of the front range. However, its inner top plate (north end of east elevation) is clumsily lapped over the rear plate of the front range; a totally uncharacteristic feature. In addition, the lap is contrived at a pre-existing scarf joint, suggesting that the top plate had been curtailed.

In addition to the front range, the new scheme incorporated a further block to the rear. This three-storey structure infilled the space between the front range, east wing and hall block, leaving a small, internal court. Its western face was jettied on each floor, mirroring the detailed design of the west wing.

One effect of this change was to block large windows on each storey of the east wing. This curious

phenomenon of large windows on an internal wall effectively confused the Royal Commission investigator, who was forced to imagine an extra light well! (R.C.H.M.E. iii). The construction of this element further extended the covering of the entrance way, providing a continuous cross-passage from the frontage to the south door of the hall.

Geometry of the site (Fig. 1)

The east and west site boundaries are approximately parallel, and the frontage is not quite at right angles. This suggests that the two side boundaries constitute an ancient plot subdivision of a straight High Street, with the slight angling of the frontage representing later encroachment that produced a general curving of the street line.

Our carpenter clearly wished to take full advantage of his site and to build as close as possible to the existing boundaries. Usually, when faced with this problem, the medieval designer opted for a non-rectangular layout. The sides and front of the building were aligned with the boundaries and each compartment formed a parallelogram. Our designer had other ideas and disposed his rectangular rooms to form a stagger down the sides. The little triangular spaces left over at the edges had other uses, as we shall see later. However, this important design decision had other consequences and resulted in a multiplicity of complex frame junctions and an unduly difficult roofing problem. Can we deduce from this that our master builder was unused to working at such a large scale or on such a constricted site?

Today, the Red Lion site contains the hotel complex and the northernmost part of the Lion Walk shopping development (early 1970s). To the rear of the timber-framed buildings are a number of 19th and 20th-century buildings, that form, or formed, part of the hotel and presumably replaced earlier service blocks (Fig. 1, left).

As has been previously mentioned, the surviving timber-framed buildings represent two distinct developments (Fig. 1A and B). Having examined the general deposition of the 'Frontage Complex', we will now direct our attention to the other major element.

The 'Southern Hall'

This is a two-bay, two-storeyed building with its long axis orientated approximately north/south (Fig. 1A 'First Phase' and Fig. 4 South-North Section). Although much repaired, it was possible to determine virtually all of its original design, although some fundamental questions remain unanswered.

Sited near, and virtually parallel to, the western boundary, its eastern elevation is continuously jettied with brackets, attached shafts and carved capitals on each major structural post.

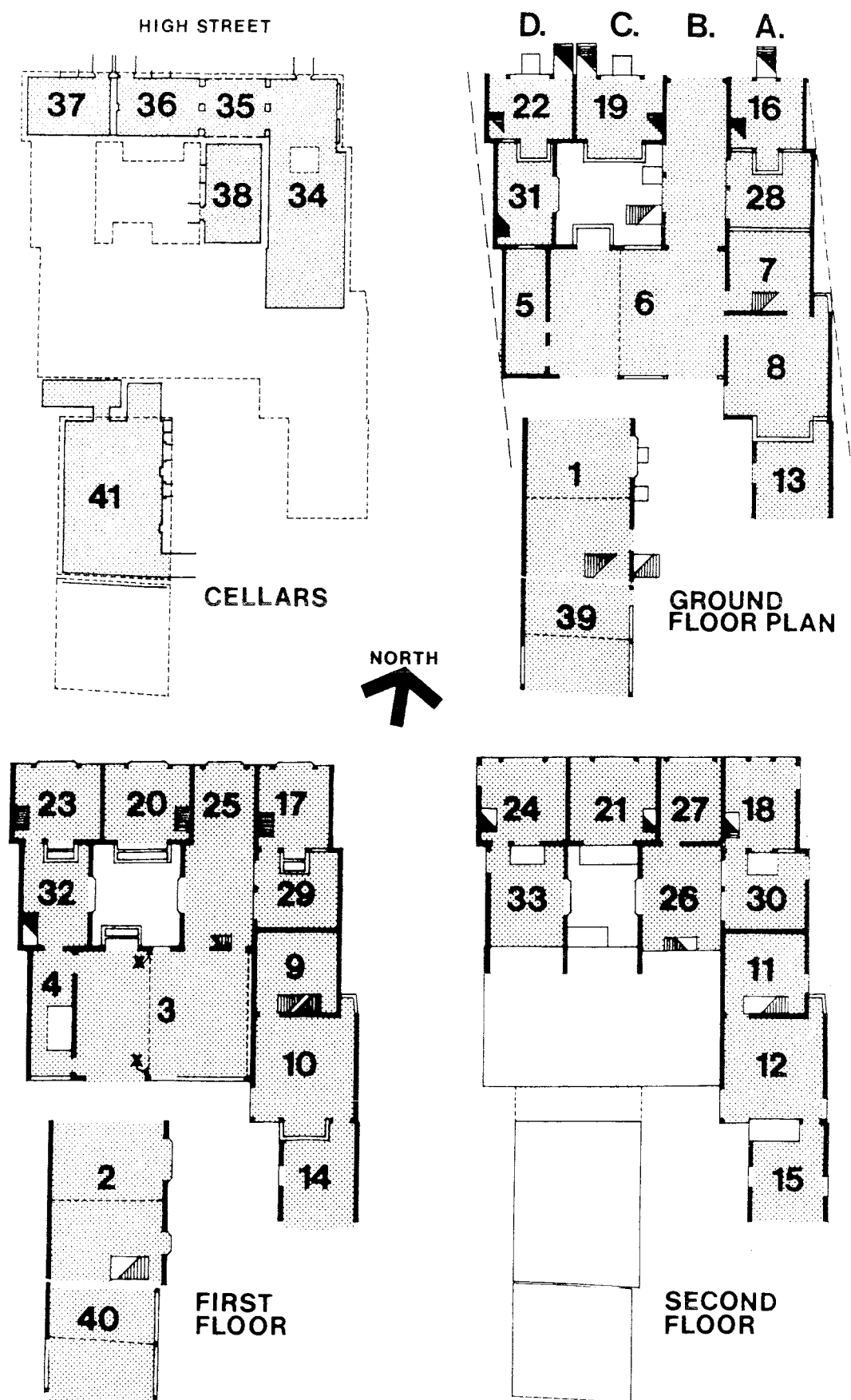


Fig. 2 The Red Lion, Colchester. Sequence of floor plans (LW = light well).

The ground floor (Fig. 2, Room 1) gives the impression of one large, lofty chamber with an impressive ceiling of moulded joists. Most of the southern bay joists are painted in red, black and ochre; possibly all are original. Unfortunately, in the northern bay, they are covered in modern, yellowish-cream paint, but are likely to have been originally the same. Access was gained through a large, arch-headed door roughly central in the east wall of the southern bay. To its immediate south, a staircase rose to the upper chamber and the usual solid-tread type seems likely. Central in the east wall of the northern bay was a wide oriel window. Already, this plan disposition suggests the usual hierarchy with a 'high end' to the north. It seems probable that this ground-floor chamber was once subdivided with some form of light partitioning. A shallow mortice, about half way up the central post, suggests this without indicating the exact layout.

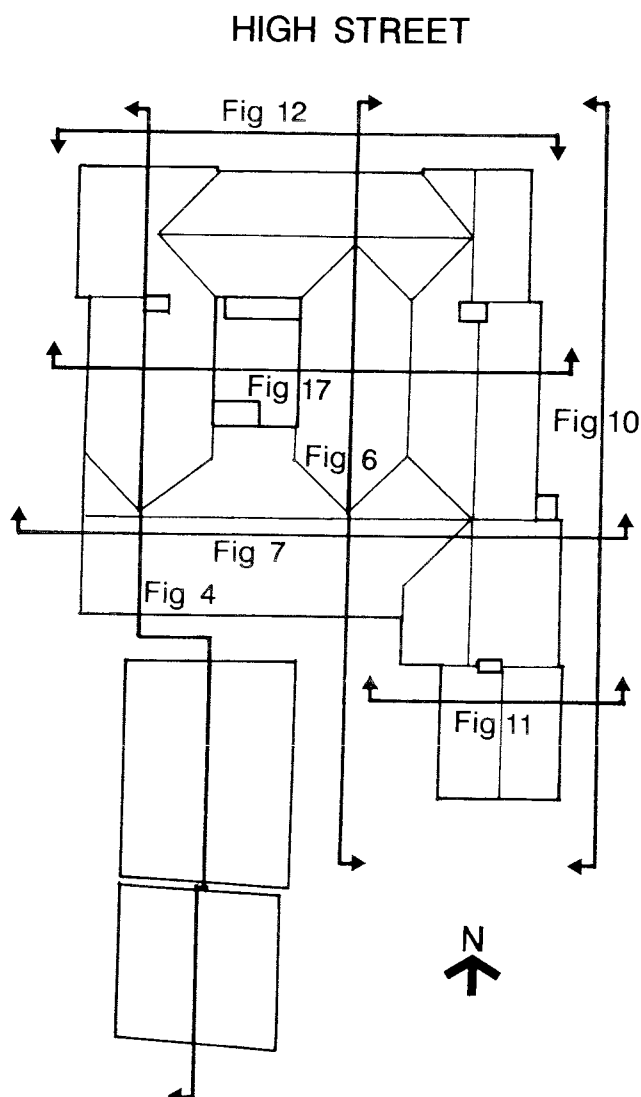


Fig. 3 The Red Lion, Colchester. Outline plan showing positions of sections and elevations.

The upper chamber (Fig. 2, Room 2) is even loftier and clearly the more important of the two. The central tie beam has simple arch braces and carries an elaborate crown post. This has arch bracing to the collar and collar purlin and is octagonal with a moulded cap and base. The crown posts over north and south tie beams are without decoration and carry longitudinal braces to the collar purlin. Central to the east wall of the southern bay was a narrow, tall oriel window immediately over the door below. The north bay had a wide oriel window, similar to that on the floor below and again emphasising 'high end' status.

The most problematic aspect of the building revolves around the design of the north and south ends. These are both 'open' frames, without any studwork, and with similar arch bracing to their tie beams. In addition, there are mouldings on the *external* face of each bridging joist, but no central mortices to indicate a continuation of the floors. At the north end the western top plate has clearly been truncated and the collar purlin projects about 12". From this evidence, it seems probable that the 'Southern Hall' was originally erected, between two pre-existing buildings, both of which have long since disappeared (shaded areas on Fig. 1A).

These former structures must have been of sufficient size to 'cover' the existing open trusses, thus avoiding the need for any form of infill. The framing at the northern end was easiest to examine and contained two minor clues. The north-eastern, ground-floor post displayed a mortice in its flank suggestive of a further prolongation. In size and position, a window cill seems likely, or the head member for an access to a cellar. However, it was clearly evident that this pre-existing block was without a frontage jetty. The inner jetty bressumer on the existing 'Southern Hall' structure stopped short of the end, against a carefully contrived upstand on the north-east corner post.

It has already been noted that the collar purlin, at this end, protrudes forward of the truss. The short stub of the collar purlin has been sawn off, through the end mortice of 'halved and bridled' scarf joint clearly indicating its former extension. However, the crown post itself lacks a brace mortice on its external face, as is also the case with its southernmost counterpart. Taking all this into account we are still lacking sufficient evidence to provide a convincing reconstruction of this missing building.

The most likely thesis involves a short unjetted bay, open from ground to roof (moulding on external face of bridging joint), like the hall of a tiny Wealden house.

Cellar of 'Southern Hall'

Below the southern hall, a deep cellar echoes the plan form above (Fig. 2, Room 41). Access was via external steps at the southern end of the eastern elevation and much has survived unaltered. That this was an original

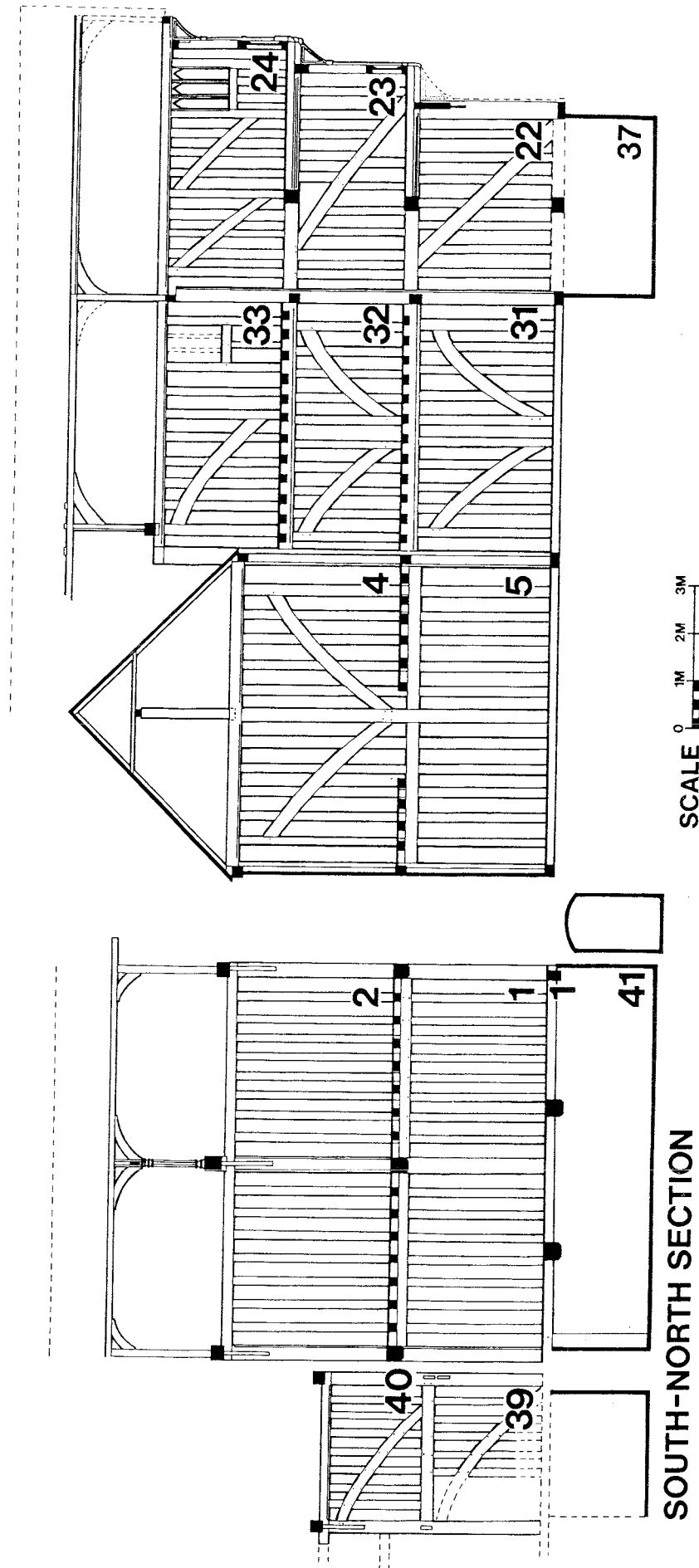


Fig. 4 The Red Lion, Colchester. Section through the west wing and southern hall, from south (left) to north (right). For position of this section refer to Fig. 3.

feature is conclusively proved by the surviving door head, framed into the structure above. Mortices in the adjacent posts point to some form of pentice over, to protect the head of the cellar opening. Two 'window' openings, with splayed reveals, pierced the eastern wall and gave light to the cellar. It is the author's opinion that the eastern and western retaining walls are contemporary with the timber structure above. These are well built and substantially of brick, but with limited areas of repair. At the northern end, most of the wall has been removed as part of a later remodelling.

It seems significant that the southern wall is slightly skewed in relation to the other walls and that this peculiar factor is repeated in the framing above. This cellar wall is relatively thick and contains stone, brick and tile, suggestive of an earlier phase. It is my opinion that this particular wall formed part of an earlier medieval building, against which the "Southern Hall" was erected.

Immediately to the north of this large cellar is an

enigmatic pair of underground chambers (Figs 2 and 5). These lie between the southern hall and the frontage complex and it is not at all clear as to which they relate. A narrow opening (now blocked) gave access to a small, brick built 'cistern' to the west, with a slightly pointed, brick barrel vault. At its western end, the summit of this vault displays a blocked opening, suggestive of the base of a chute. It has been plausibly suggested that this was a garderobe pit, related to the northern halls. To the east, the smaller chamber has rubble walls and shows signs of numerous alterations. A fragment of stone, in the ceiling above, may be part of a hearth slab of a long demolished stack. Remnants of an arched recess and traces of a segmental vault are other intriguing features that defy explanation.

An earlier description (R.C.H.M.E. iii) indicates that a dog-leg stair once rose above this space. This early 18th-century feature served the upper floors, to north and south, and was presumably unrelated to the original design.

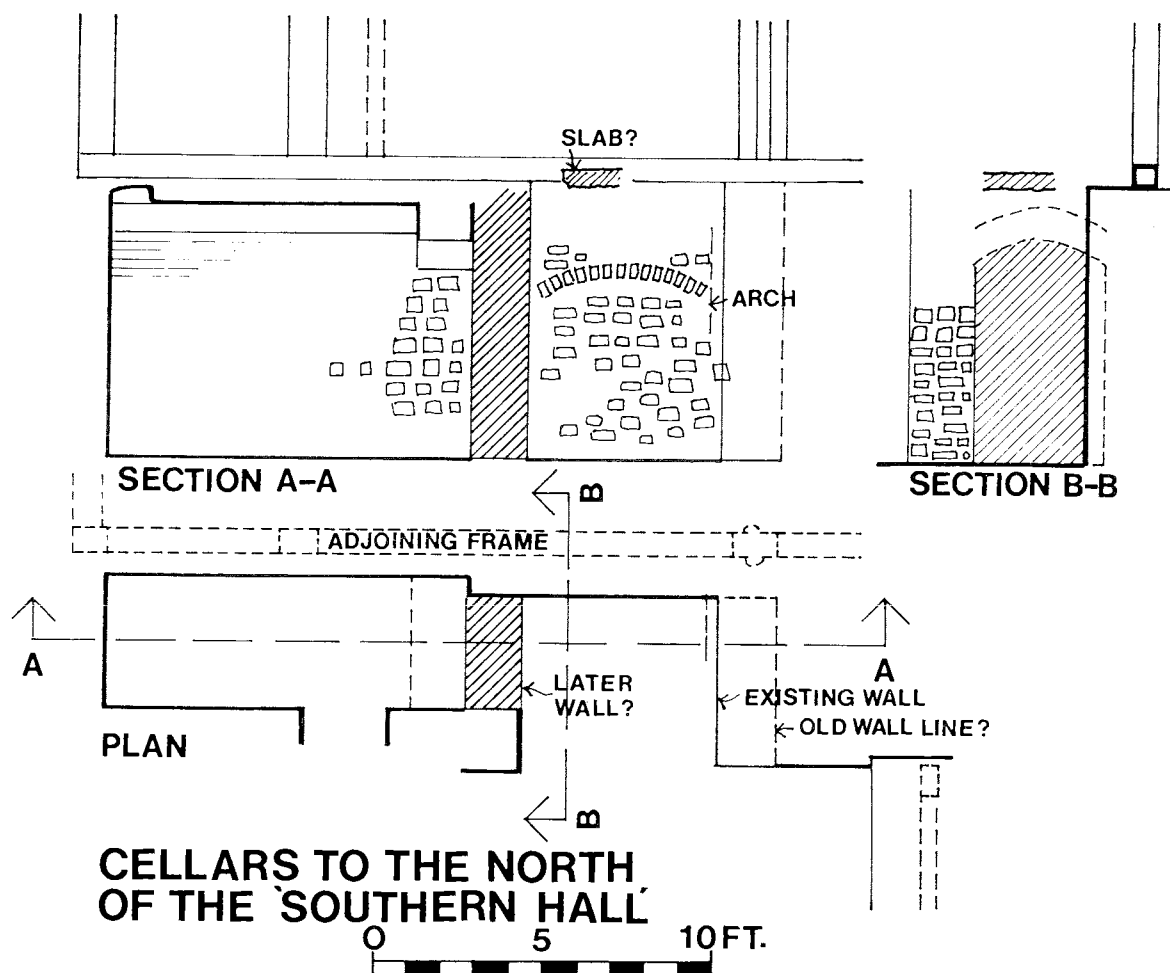


Fig. 5 The Red Lion, Colchester. Cellars to the north of the 'Southern Hall'.

Carpentry of the 'Southern Hall'

The general style of carpentry is quite unlike that of the 'frontage complex' to the north. The crown-post roof is a late, but decorative, example and very typical of the Essex/Suffolk border. The crown-post braces are noticeably thin, flat in profile, and particularly short where they feature at the gable ends. The main posts are without jowls, as was common practice in Colchester, but unusual elsewhere. No evidence was found for any wall bracing, in striking contrast to the other, later, buildings on the site. The overall effect of very long wall studs, a wide fragile-looking roof and inadequate cross bracing, tends to suggest a lack of experience of building on this scale. In contrast, the floor-joist mouldings and floor-joist joints (central tenons with soffit shoulders) and design of the oriels exactly match the frontage complex.

The well-decorated east elevation incorporates an intriguing technique not previously encountered. The blank areas of walling between the openings seem to have been infilled with masonry for the lower two-thirds of their height. Small notches, cut in the flanks of the posts, carried some kind of cill, as a base for the studs and as a head for the walling. A short length of chamfering on the corners of the posts adds credence to this reconstruction.

Dating

The R.C.H.M. investigator considered that the 'Southern Hall' post-dated the complex to the north (R.C.H.M.E. iii). Clearly it is difficult to differentiate between buildings of a similar date, especially when their carpentry is of a quite different character. Often, their disposition can provide useful clues but these seem lacking, or contradictory, in this case.

It is now suggested that the 'Southern Hall' is a structure of the late 15th century and immediately preceded the buildings to the north. It must be emphasised that this hypothesis is unproven but seems more likely on the balance of the evidence.

The frontage complex: a detailed description*The transverse halls (Figs 1, 2, 6 and 7)*

It seems sensible to begin this detailed description by examining the hall block, which was intended to straddle the site, back from the frontage. The twin halls were obviously the visual and functional focus of the complex and the task of reconstructing the circulation system must inevitably start from here.

This hall block was of two lofty storeys with one end abutting the east wing. At its west end, it appears to have terminated just short of the boundary, leaving a small triangle of redundant land. The first-floor level exactly coincides with the first floors of all other buildings on the site. This, together with many other factors, suggests that the first floor is a kind of 'piano nobile' containing the principal chambers throughout

the complex. This primacy of the upper floor probably reflects common medieval practice such as the typical guild hall or domestic first-floor hall. Although originating in a need for security, the practice came to represent a status feature and part of the sophisticated 'hierarchy of spaces' present in a medieval building. In addition, on urban sites, the ground floor was substantially given to commercial use, thus providing a further practical justification.

Today, the character of this block is difficult to grasp as a result of earlier demolition. At some unknown time in the past, a substantial part of the eastern end of Rooms 3 and 6 was completely removed, to provide an open passageway through to the south. The alteration was probably motivated by the need to provide a coach access from the High Street to stabling at the rear. Fortunately, a substantial part of the northern top plate and intermediate girt survived *in situ*, leaving at least some indication of its former design.

The structure of the hall block was so disposed as to provide for three extremely unequal bays, identical on each floor. At its east end, the two top plates and two side girts were tenoned into studs or wall posts on the flank of the eastern wing.

The block appears to have been roofed in the obvious lengthwise manner, gabled to the west, and conjoined with the wing to the east. The design of each storey differs in detail and is described separately below.

The upper hall

Like the floor below, this consisted of a large, two-bay space and a narrow compartment partitioned-off at the western end (Fig. 2, Room 3). The two interconnecting bays were unequal in size, as are the equivalent two bays of a typical 'hall house' of the region. The eastern bay, adjoining the east wing, was the larger of the two, as would customarily constitute the 'high end' of such a dwelling. In this instance this simple interpretation is possibly misleading as there are no additional factors to confirm it. The junction between the bays is defined by a pair of posts, to carry a moulded tie beam. These posts are without jowls (as in the case throughout the complex), and are moulded on their inner arrises. Heavy, knee-like braces stiffen the post/tie beam assembly and are carried on intricately carved capitals over bold attached shafts (Fig. 8).

The braces themselves have carved foliate spandrels and curious rectangular cut outs at the innermost upper corners. Their soffits carry mouldings which are continued on the underside of the tie beam, as is the normal practice in high quality work. Above this two-bay space, the tie beams support lengthwise-moulded spine beams, which in turn carry moulded ceiling joists, thus concealing the roof space. This form of cambered timbered ceiling is a luxury technique and is relatively rare in East Anglia (Alston Court, Nayland, Suffolk and The Ancient House, Thetford, Norfolk are

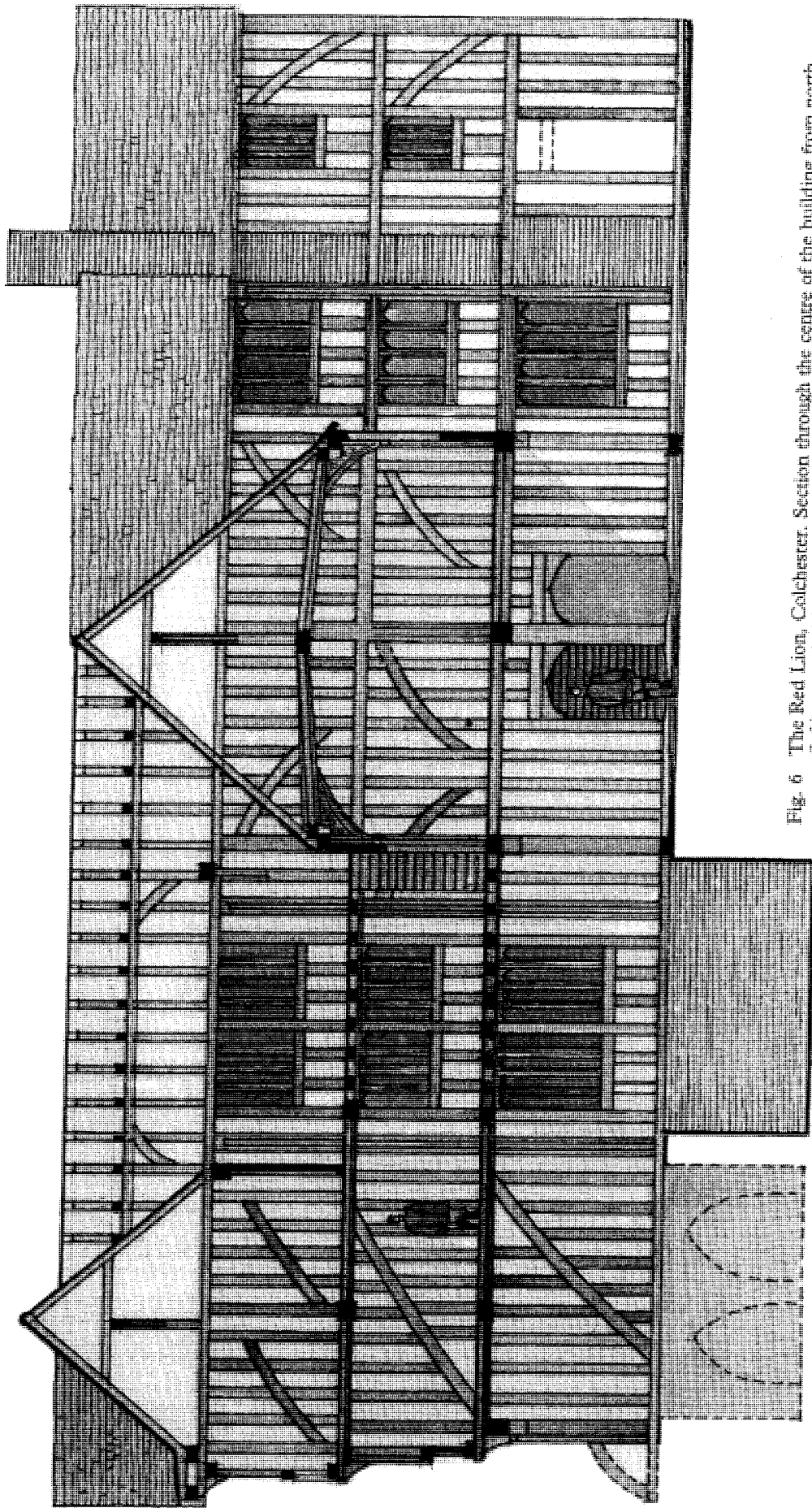


Fig. 6 The Red Lion, Colchester. Section through the centre of the building from north (left) to south (right), with elevation of east wing at extreme right. For position of this section refer to Fig. 3.

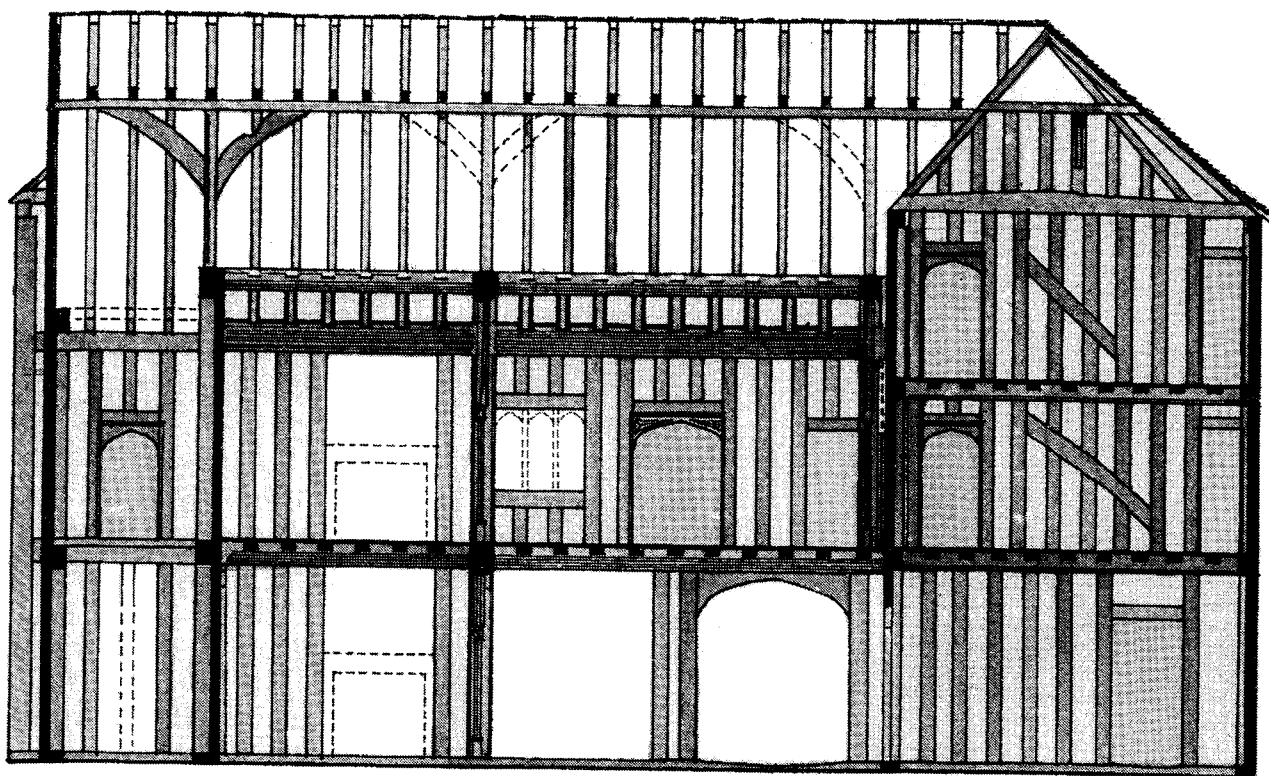


Fig. 7 The Red Lion, Colchester. Section through halls and the east wing, from west (left) to east (right). For position of this section refer to Fig. 3.

other, more or less contemporary, examples).

At the east end, a similar tie beam virtually abutted the wall of the east wing and was related to broad studs which stood on the first-floor girts. Although this tie beam has now gone and only a single mutilated wall post still survives, the former presence of attached wall shafts and arched braces could be determined.

The overall structural skeleton of this first-floor hall can therefore be determined with some accuracy. Having been subject to demolitions, alterations and numerous restorations, the secondary detail is, however, far from complete.

The north wall (Fig. 7)

The western bay of the north wall now includes a large window, gaining light from the internal light well, to the north. Although earlier writers (R.C.H.M.E. iii) accepted this window as an original feature, it is clearly relatively modern and incorporates reused timbers. Careful inspection revealed that the top plate and cornice above this window had been replaced, and the ceiling joists had received new ends. Obviously, this suggests the pre-existence of some other feature that caused this localised damage. A fireplace/chimney stack seems the probable solution and further evidence will be offered later.

The north wall of the eastern bay contained three

features of note. Immediately east of the principal post there was an original window opening of uncertain width. Beyond this was a wide door opening with moulded jambs and an arched head. Although only one jamb survived intact, a probable reconstruction can be attempted (Fig. 7).

It seems possible that this door was originally intended to lead to an external staircase before this was covered up by the gallery of the 'second thoughts' scheme. A further door opening was clearly indicated, adjoining the eastern wall post, where an appropriate rebate still displayed the original pintles. This took the form of a narrow, utilitarian opening with a simple, flat head.

The east wall (Fig. 6)

The internal elevation of this was formed by the revealed part of the east-wing flank. Because of the relative height of the hall and wing, part of two storeys of the latter could be seen from within the hall space. A major east-wing storey post falls on the hall centre line and formerly displayed an attached shaft. Whether this carried a longitudinal arch brace proved impossible to determine. The external wall bracing of the east-wing flank forms a feature of this internal wall. On the upper range the bracing appeared symmetrical, but below, the effect is somewhat chaotic. Although it is

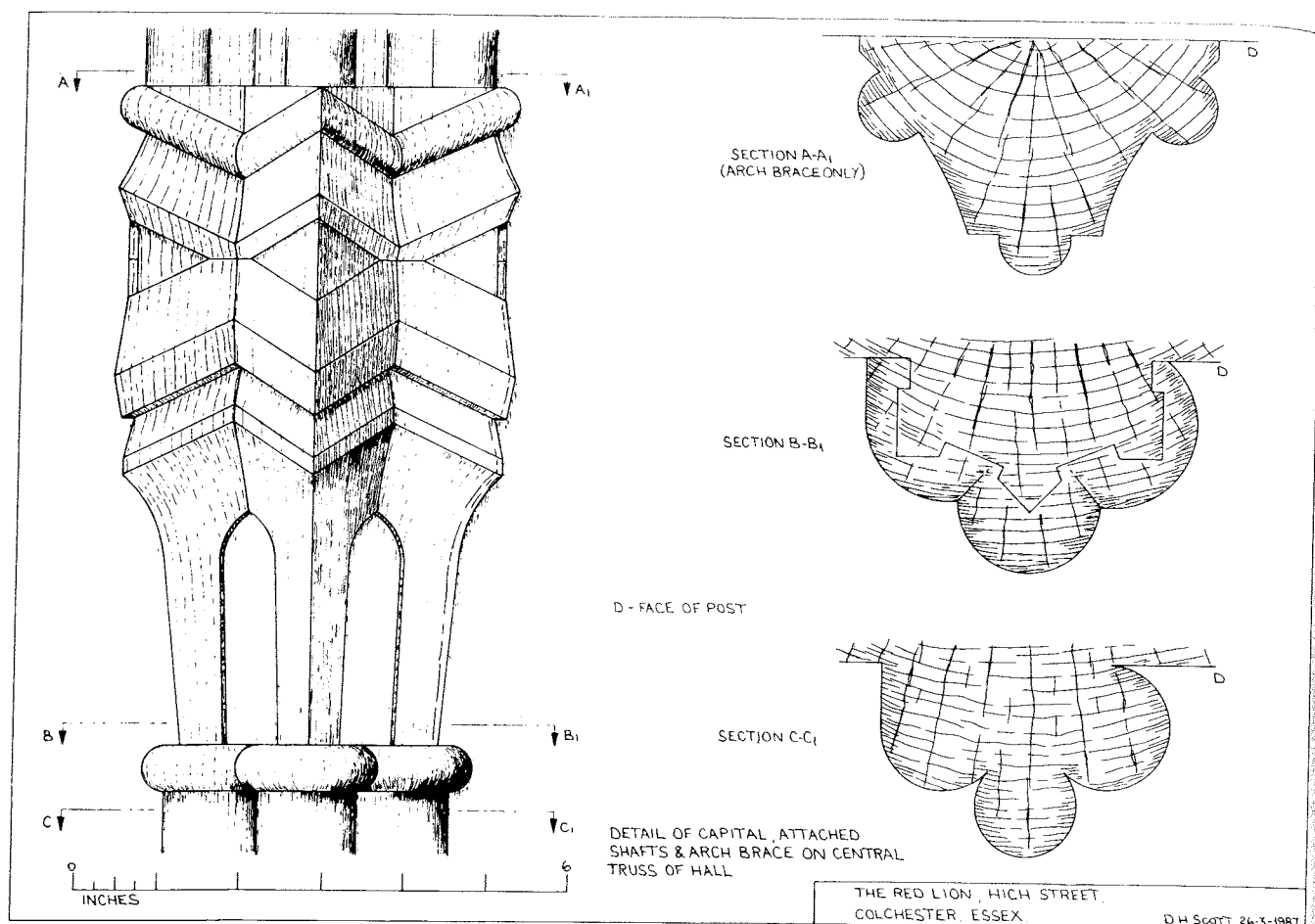


Fig. 8 The Red Lion, Colchester. Detail of capital, attached shafts and arch brace on central truss of hall.

tempting to suggest a 'high end' bench against this wall, the detail does not seem to bear this out. Large peg holes at a suitable height are certainly present, but only over a limited area. These seem more likely to have supported a bench within the east wing rather than within the hall. In any case, the central attached wall shaft would have presented an obstacle and the asymmetrical wall bracing would have spoilt the effect.

The south wall

The western bay, together with its equivalent on the floor below, provides one of the minor, unexplained, riddles of the complex. It is almost completely without infill, save for one stud at its western side. At first sight it seems a suitable situation for an external stack, but the other stack opposite (if this was an original feature) throws doubt on this idea. Other factors will be considered later, in relation to the unexplained zone of space to the south.

Most of the east bay was demolished at some earlier date. However, the off-centre main post shows evidence of a window, similar to that on the opposite wall. Its width cannot now be gauged, but one would expect extensive fenestration in the one unobstructed part of the elevation.

The west wall

This took the form of a close-studded partition with door openings at its outer limits. Nothing survives of the timber of the partition and thus the degree of elaboration, or the possible provision of wall bracing, cannot now be determined. The left hand (southern) door was relatively narrow, and that to the right (northern) of considerable width. The central part of this partition seems a more likely location for a 'high end' bench.

The narrow western bay

Passing through either of the door openings in the partition, one entered a narrow enclosed bay (Fig. 2, Room 4; Fig. 7). Here, there was no moulded ceiling and the roof was exposed from below. A crown post on the partition-wall tie beam is chamfered on its visible face and carries an elegant, longitudinal brace. The other (eastern) face of the crown post is without a chamfer and the brace is strangely mis-shapen. In this bay, the top plates are unmoulded and the 'cornice' member omitted.

The south wall

This appeared to contain a narrow central door opening with moulded jambs and a four-centred head. The

recent works revealed that this, unquestionably contemporary, fabric had been refixed to a replacement top plate and girt.

Thus it is now impossible to determine whether it formed an original feature of the design. However, probability suggests that it has always been here, rather than it having been moved from another location. It seems reasonable to suggest a circulation route involving the narrow partition door and this particular feature.

The west wall

This is a simple, external stud wall, without windows and with symmetrically disposed, internal bracing. The gable above, which was open to view, had straightforward infill studwork.

The north wall

A medium-width door, with moulded jambs and four-centred head, formed the central feature of this wall. One jamb survived intact and the other had been reused above the door head.

The floor between Rooms 4 and 5

Although this had been removed, mortices in the bridging joist indicated its former presence.

The joist-end joints were simple soffit tenons, a sign of utility and the only such joints in the complex. A lack of joints evident in part of the bridging joist can be interpreted in more than one way. Clearly it suggests a substantial, off-centre void, connecting with the bay below and possibly intended as a stair well. However, a shallow flat rebate, similarly aligned, on the gable-wall tie beam, may suggest another purpose. Could this have formed the shaft of an internal timber smoke flue, connecting with the small room below? The provision of two doorways in the hall's west partition seems to indicate some form of central obstruction, giving further credence to this possibility. The off-centre location would make some sense in ensuring that their hypothetical flue avoided the collar purlin above.

However, this proposition may be considered more imaginative than credible and the simple staircase, with its implications for routing, may nevertheless be preferred.

Ground-floor narrow west bay

Unfortunately, the north, south and west walls have all been removed, together with their respective girts above (Fig. 2, Room 5). As on the first floor, the hall/west bay partition has been largely removed, but the central post and stud mortices survive. These indicate a different arrangement from that above with a pair of door openings on the eastern side. The southernmost opening was a wide door, wider than its fellow on the upper floor, with a narrow opening by its side. The latter either gave access to the staircase and

room above, or to the previously suggested fireplace. The sparsity of information regarding the other walls makes interpreting this area difficult.

The ground-floor hall

Unfortunately, the ground-floor hall had suffered more change than that above, but important features survive (Fig. 2, Room 6).

The north wall

The wall to the west bay had been largely removed, but during the renovation works, part of the concrete ground-floor slab was broken up in that area of the light well that adjoins this wall (Fig. 7). Short projecting brick footings were revealed, and a black, soot-like substance spilled out from the sides commensurate with the base of a stack. The eastern bay is similarly damaged, but the girt survives towards the eastern end, and displays important evidence. A pair of long mortices with post mortices either side indicate the former entrance. This extremely wide doorway exactly matches the carriage arch on the front and had mouldings on both its faces.

The south wall

The east bay, as its equivalent above, contained no timber infill. The off-centre post between the two bays of the hall still remains and shows clear evidence of an internal shaft which gave the appearance of carrying the bridging joist brace. Braces to both posts remain and have foliate spandrels, similar to, but smaller than, the ones above. To the west of the post, the evidence suggests a further window, but the remainder of the wall has gone. It seems reasonable to presume the former existence of another wide door to the eastern end to complete a typical "cross-passage" arrangement.

The east wall

This is, of course, formed by the flank of the east wing and contained a pair of doors, one each side of the central post (Fig. 6). These had arched heads and were of unknown width, but have the locational attributes of "service doors".

All this is suggestive of the 'low end' and cross-passage arrangement of a typical hall house, with its associated 'high end' in the western bay. If one can imagine some form of spered partition to screen off the wide cross-passage, then the unequal bay sizes can be explained.

The west wall

The disposition of the door openings in this wall has already been described, but an additional feature deserves attention. The central post has survived *in situ* and had an attached shaft with a bifurcated top (Fig. 9B). This peculiar detail, with two incomplete arches, presents difficulties of interpretation. A similar detail has been observed in a contemporary 'low-end'

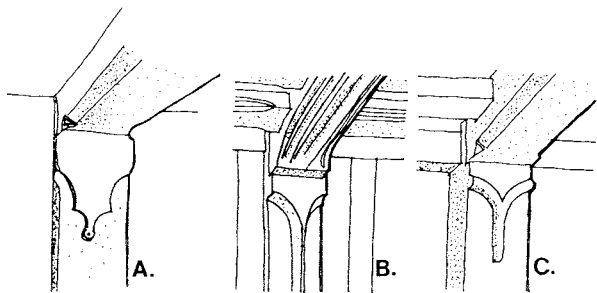


Fig. 9 Examples of bifurcated arcades.
A. Reused post, farmhouse, Little Waltham
B. The Red Lion
C. High Street, Brightlingsea.

partition in Brightlingsea, and on a reused post elsewhere (Fig. 9A and C). Whether this once formed part of a 'high-end' bench assembly, is open to debate. It seems appropriate to add that the spine beam over the east bay abutted directly into the flank of the east wing, and that all the ceiling members are as richly moulded as those to the chamber above.

The exterior

The steeply pitched roof, like the others in the complex is clad in peg tiles, likely to have been the original treatment. The off-centre, major bay dividing posts, each displayed an attached, external shaft, rising through the two tall storeys. Clearly, both were fully visible when the structure was first erected. Leaving the ground-floor hall via one or other of the east wall 'service doors' brings us to the south-east 'lodging'.

South-east lodging

The southern end of the east wing appears to consist of a self-contained suite of six rooms, related directly to the ground-floor hall (Fig. 2, Rooms 7-12). There are slight doubts about its ground-floor north wall as this has been removed, but the impression is still of a physical separation between this group of rooms and the remainder of the complex.

The three superimposed chambers (7, 9 and 11) that form the northern rooms contained wide, steep staircases and only the uppermost room had a window. The floor joists were without mouldings and the general character is that of a stairtower. Access to this tower from the ground-floor hall was from the north-eastmost of the previously mentioned service doors.

The three adjoining rooms (8, 10 and 12) are accessible at each level from the stair-tower and are richly moulded and decorated. The chambers on the first and second floors are amongst the most attractive in the complex and thus perhaps can be labelled as a 'parlour' and 'solar'. Each of these is well lit by windows on the south-west corner and had its own fireplace on

the southern wall. In the north-east corner, each is provided with a little narrow door presumably to give access to a garderobe tower, contrived within the triangle of unused site. Although the actual fabric of this had disappeared, the unweathered condition of the adjoining studs indicated its former presence. An unusual feature of the second-floor room (solar?) is its asymmetrical crown-post roof, a necessary device resulting from the staggered plan form. It will be noticed that the wall bracing throughout the east wing is disposed in an unusual manner. On the east elevation it is so arranged to appear within the rooms (Fig. 10), but on the west it is on the outside and appears within the adjoining rooms.

The ground-floor room of this triad (Room 8) had a similar arrangement of corner windows and probably a large fireplace on its southern wall. It seems to me to be sensible to label this 'kitchen' in view of its relationship with the rest of the complex (Fig. 11).

The three rooms (13, 14 and 15) that adjoin to the south provide further difficulties of interpretation. The timber-framed structure of this group, although similar to the adjoining rooms, is different enough to raise doubts. The junction where it adjoins the wall to the north is crudely contrived and overlaps areas of the original mouldings. However, access to the upper chambers is gained via unarguably original doors (with moulded jambs), so something must have stood here from the beginning.

This less ambitious structure has a simple, collared rafter roof (the only example on the site) and is 'open framed' on its southern end. The latter detail suggests the presence of an earlier building here, that has since been replaced by a 19th-century block. The northern end of the west elevation was specially designed to take account of the chimney stack by omitting studs and utilising the flank of the stack as a form of brick infill (Fig. 6). The stack itself, as elsewhere in the complex, has been rebuilt but incorporates some early brick. It would seem logical to suggest that the stack was rebuilt contemporaneously with this structure as that would explain the treatment of the flank. However the off-centre windows, with their miniature arched heads, were seemingly identical to those in the adjoining block. An unusual feature that does not appear elsewhere is the single wide stud beneath the cill, included to equalize the panels of infill. The floor joists throughout are without chamfers or mouldings which, with the simple design of the roof, suggests rooms of secondary status.

An interesting feature can be observed on the external face of the 'solar' tie beam. Here, above the communicating door, is a shallow horizontal rebate suggestive of fixing for a boarded ceiling.

From the above indications, a possible alteration can perhaps be deduced. As first constructed, the solar/parlour block was linked to a pre-existing building, by a narrow three-storey gallery. Not many years

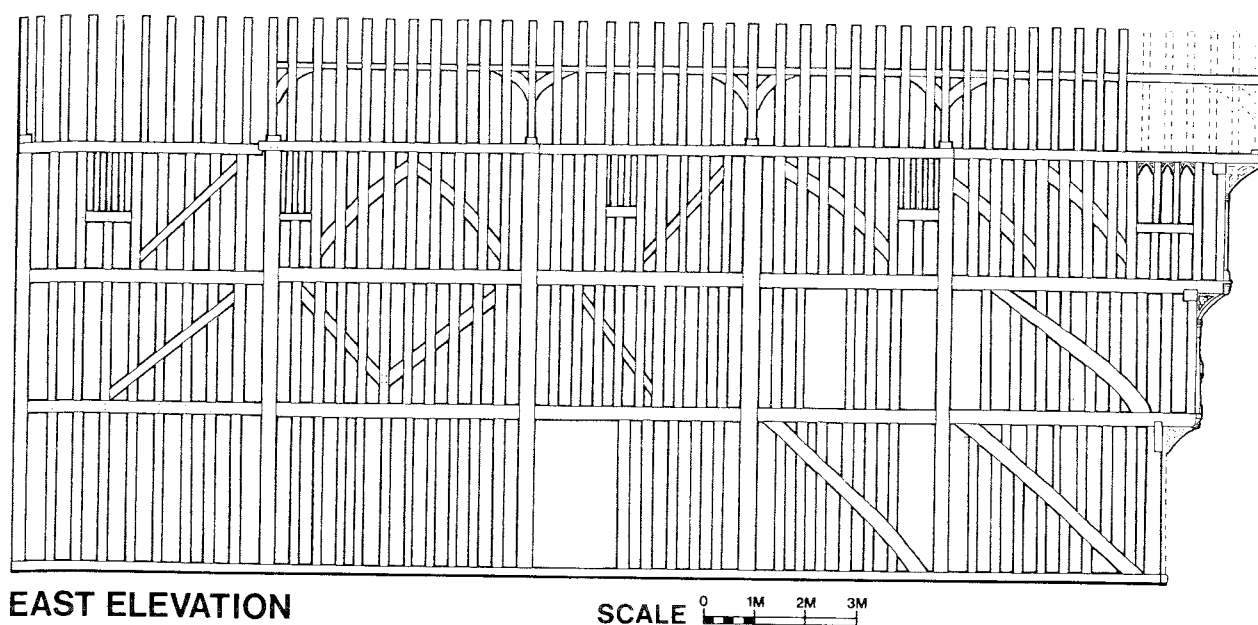


Fig. 10 The Red Lion, Colchester. East elevation of the timber frame.

later, the 'gallery' was rebuilt as three useable rooms and the stack was also rebuilt to fit. We will now examine the frontage range to the High Street, which again lends itself to separate consideration.

The frontage range

This consists of three jettied storeys and is four bays wide, probably with gables over the outer two (Fig. 2, Rooms 16-24; Fig. 12). These bays are labelled A-D in Figure 2. Bays C and D are the widest and of equal width, with Bay B (the carriage arch), the narrowest. Bays A, C and D are similar in appearance and in the accommodation they provided, and so are considered together.

Each consisted of a cellar and three superimposed storeys, with the oriel-bayed first floor as the most important. The ground-floor elevations were divided into three parts, and this sub-division was continued into the secondary structural members of the upper floors (Bay A is slightly varied).

In the case of Bays C and D, the sub-division of the ground floor consisted of a wide central opening with narrow, door-like openings either side. In the narrower Bay A, the ground-floor elevation was of three equal subdivisions and this pattern was repeated on the 2nd floor. In all cases, the posts that provided this sub-division have unfortunately been removed, leaving only their mortices in the heavily moulded inner bressumer above. Bay D is the least altered at this level, and the two major storey posts retained slots for arched door heads in their appropriate flanks. Thus it

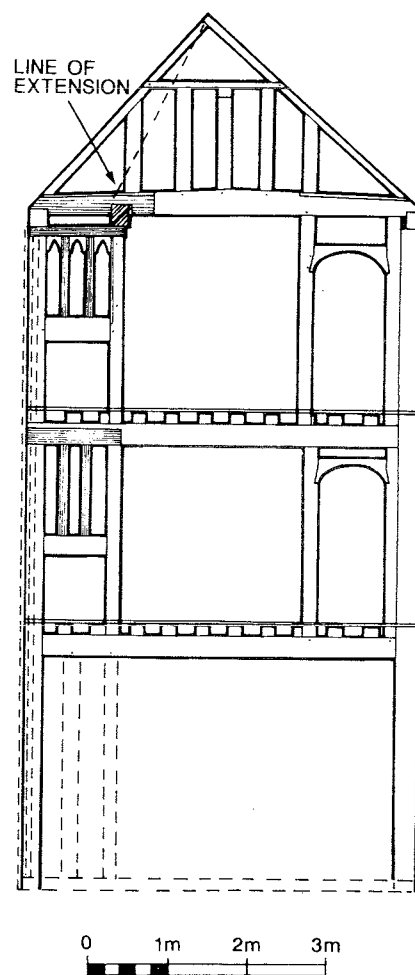


Fig. 11 The Red Lion, Colchester. South elevation of the east wing (without the extension).

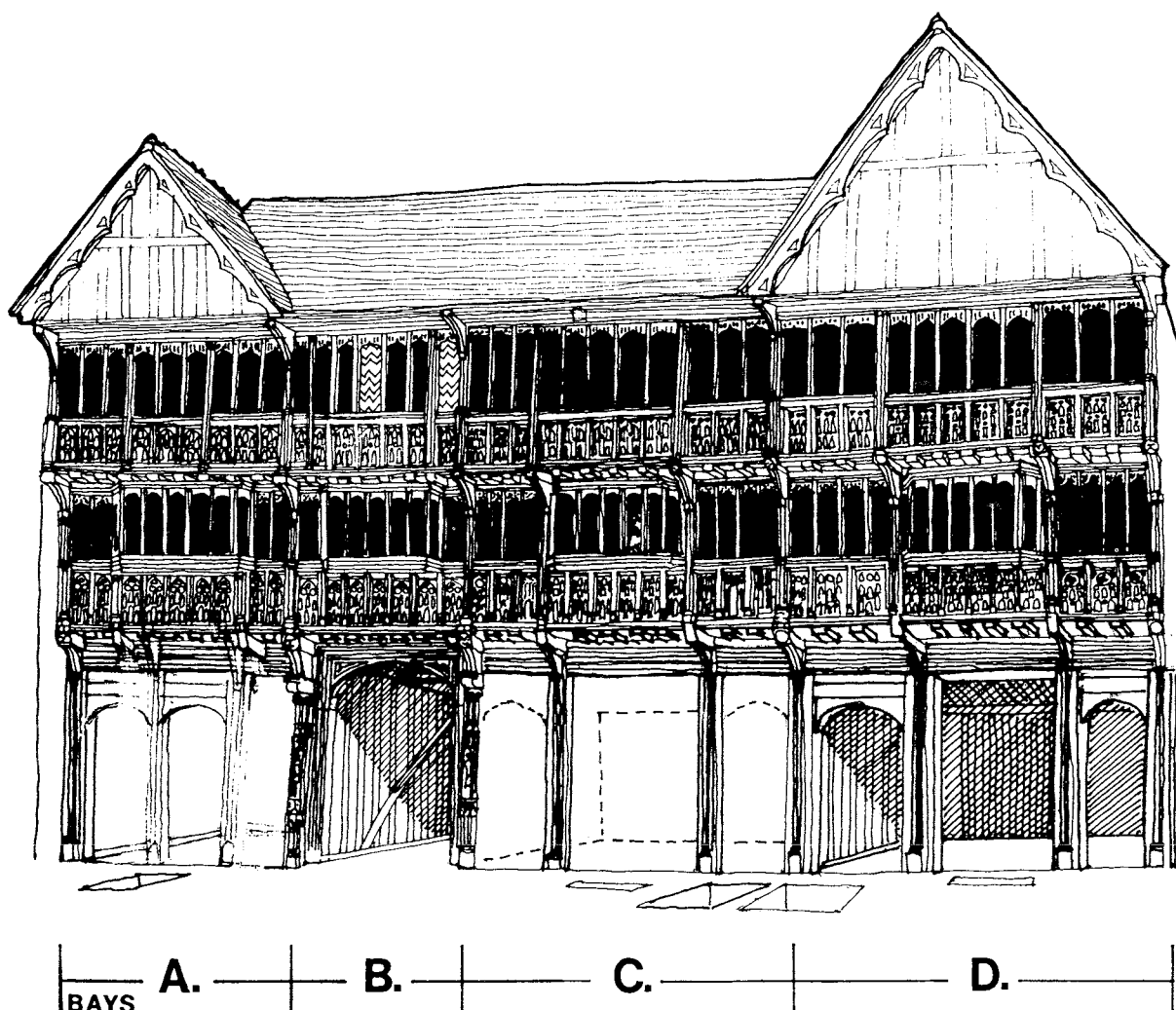


Fig. 12 The Red Lion, Colchester. Reconstruction of street frontage elevation.

can be deduced that the narrow openings in each case took the form of doors, but the wider central opening is more of a problem. Careful examination of the soffit of the inner bressumer showed no evidence for any form of infill. However, a small rebate on the innermost edge ran the full width of the bay, suggestive of a fixing for shutters. It is therefore contended that the most likely function for the wide central openings is as some form of shop window.

The external steps which gave entry to the cellars were, in each case, located in front of one of the narrow 'door' openings. The 'windows' in the cellar walls below are situated below the wide central opening, except in Bay A where there was no room for such a window. Thus a sensible reconstruction can be attempted, which portrays a functional connection between the cellar and ground floor (or that part of it served by the cellar-related door). In each case, the other side door clearly gave access to a narrow stair and by other stairs to all three floors. Therefore it can

be seen that Bays A, C and D were each conceived as relatively independent units, with individual accesses and no direct, horizontal connections between each other. It seems probable, although there is a complete lack of supporting evidence, that each of these ground-floor rooms were partitioned into more than one area. Some form of screening between the 'shop unit' and the staircase, would seem to have been desirable but may have been so flimsy as to have left no trace. There are, however, other aspects of the design of this frontage range that throw doubts on this concept of a 'commercial' ground floor. First, all three storeys have richly moulded timbers, similar in all respects to the rest of the complex. In addition, each separate bay had its own rear-wall chimney stack (see below) with fireplaces to all the ground-floor rooms. The idea of a shop unit with a fireplace and a moulded ceiling seems somewhat unlikely!

In each case, the first-floor chamber (Rooms 17, 25, 20 and 23) had a central front oriel and continuous

unglazed fenestration either side.

The 'windows' here and on the second floor were provided with storey-height shutters, some of which survived into this century. Each first-floor chamber had its own fireplace opening into the rear wall stack, but the openings (together with most of the stack) have since been removed. The second-floor chambers were basically similar, but without the central oriel and with a crown-post roof in place of a ceiling. It is now impossible to determine whether the second-floor rooms were provided with fireplaces.

It would appear that Bay C was, from the beginning, intended as a completely independent unit without any undercover connections to any other part of the complex.

In contrast (discussion below), the rooms on the first and second floors of Bays A and D had doors in their rear walls, providing access to rooms beyond. Whether similar doors existed on the ground floor cannot unfortunately now be determined. The second-floor rooms of Bays A and D had three-light windows in their external flanks above the roofs of adjoining buildings (Figs 4 and 10). The three rooms that constitute Bay A are slightly deeper than their equivalent in the other bays. This would seem to have been an accidental effect resulting from the constructional 'second thoughts'.

Rear chimney stacks

The rear wall of each bay was so constructed as to provide a wide gap in the studwork to accommodate a stack. At first sight, it appeared that the original stack had survived to the rear of Bay C. Further examination provoked considerable doubts and Listed Building consent was eventually granted for its demolition, subject to a careful recording. More extensive examination during the process of removal failed to clarify the position and the evidence remained ambiguous. Quite unexpectedly, one first-floor flank of an apparently contemporary brick stack was found to survive, behind Bay D (Fig. 13). This was divided into a pair of flues and the rearmost, serving the ground floor, was heavily sooted. Its rear wall was clearly not bonded in, and may represent a later alteration. Beneath this, works to the footings revealed its original base, together with a small fragment of a stone hearth slab (Fig. 13). Curiously, a small fragment of a similar slab was later discovered behind the rear wall of Bay A. This seems to have survived, despite the removal of the stack, and was concealed beneath a later staircase. Why it was thought necessary to rebuild or remove all these stacks remains open to question. One minor point that may well throw light on the sequence of construction seems worthy of mention. The provision of a stack to the rear of Bay D was probably not part of the 'original'

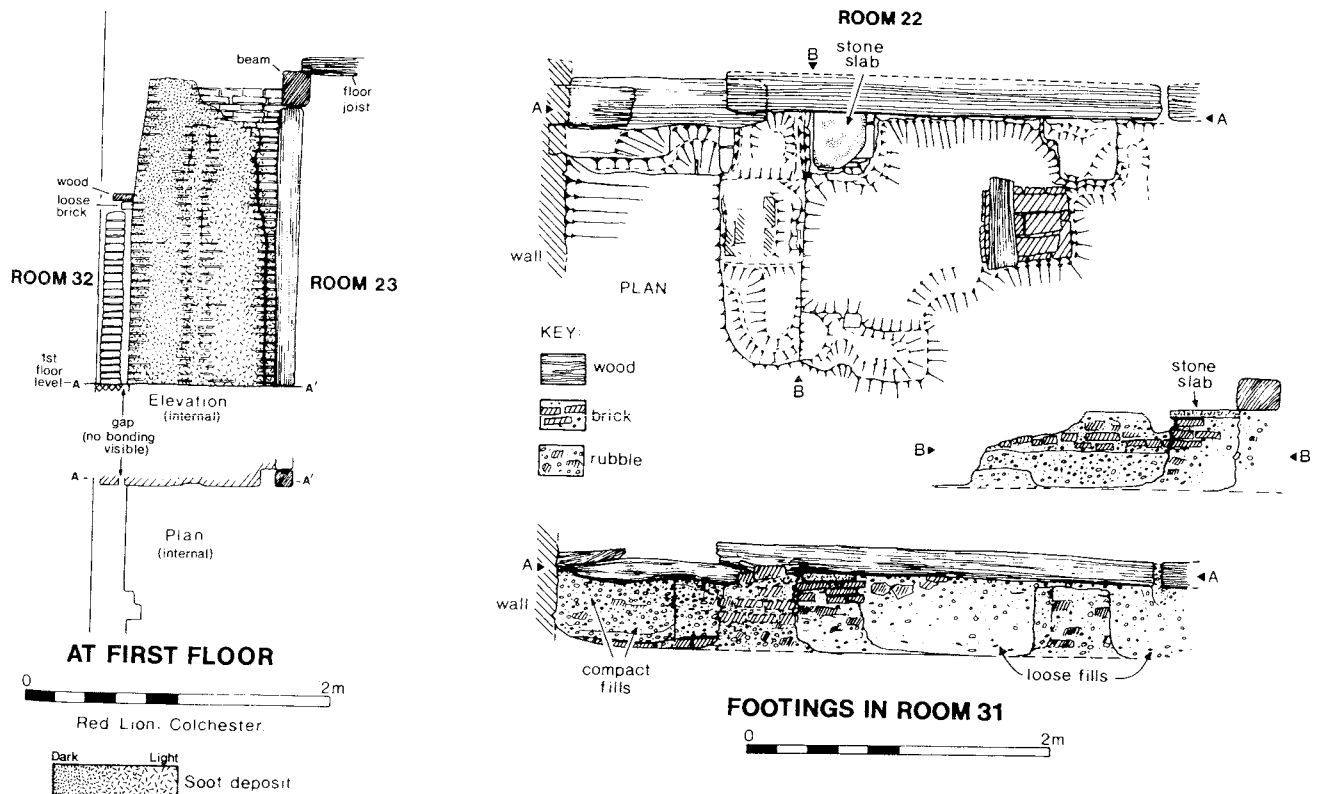


Fig. 13 The Red Lion, Colchester. Remnants of the stack to the rear of Bay D.

intentions. The collar purlin of the crown-post roof (over Room 33) had clearly been truncated to allow for its insertion as part of the sequence (described previously) as a 'second thought'.

Construction details of the front range

In general, this is typical local work, with jowl-less posts and 'Colchester' style bracing (tension bracing pegged to studs rather than principal structural posts). The floor joists, as elsewhere, have central tenons and soffit shoulders, and the scarf joints are edge-halved and bridled. The one unusual and remarkable feature is the presence of heavy wall braces in the flanks of each bay. These are the full width of each wall and have the wall studs tenoned and pegged into their upper and lower faces. The detailed design at eaves level over Bays B and C remains unclear as a result of later changes.

The frontage block, Bay B

The ground floor of this narrow bay forms the carriage-entrance and probably functioned as a wide cross-passage. The entrance-door framing is a portal-like structure with a contemporary four-centred arched head. The carved spandrels depict St George (on the left) and the dragon (on the right), together with stylised foliage. The elaborate carved figurines, to the left and right of the doorway, probably date from a restoration of the 1890s, but may conceivably reflect surviving fragments. Jamb figures of this type are a common feature of high-quality buildings of c.1500, for example, Mummings either side of large doors at Paycockes House, Coggeshall.

The first-floor chamber is two bays in depth (Room 25) and may well have functioned as a kind of gallery. The front to the High Street contained a band of windows and a central oriel as on Bays A, C and D. Access was via the first-floor 'hall' to the south.

The second-floor room (Room 27) had a continuous band of frontage windows and is generally similar to those on either side. However it had no staircase and no fireplace and access was gained from the room to the rear (26). This is the only room where the crown-post roof can still be viewed, the later, inserted ceiling having been removed.

Rooms to the rear of Bay A (28, 29, 30)

This superimposed group of three rooms formed part of the original east wing and communicates, on each level, with the rooms of Bay A. (The evidence for or against a communicating door on the ground floor has unfortunately been destroyed.) Each room incorporates a substantial window on its western flank (Fig. 14), all of which were later obscured by the 'gallery' block (25, 26). On the ground and first floors, these had moulded mullions and arched lights as elsewhere on the complex. That to the second floor has only diamond mullions, but the smaller window in the

east wall was of the elaborate kind. The floors of this bay are without mouldings, indicative of a secondary function.

High Street facade

The High Street facade is richly decorated, with all the members elaborately moulded, and forms the visual climax of the entire complex (Fig. 12). The ornamental vocabulary is typical of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries and of the Suffolk/Essex border country, with its contemporary clothier wealth. Such details as the undercut cusping of the top of the capitals can be seen in profusion in Lavenham and Sudbury, and as far south as Bocking. Despite a later covering in plaster, individual members survived complete, enabling a convincing and complete reconstruction (Fig. 12). The grotesque carved heads are particularly effective, like timber equivalents of the stone church gargoyle (Fig. 15).

The traceried panels which constitute such an attractive feature of the first and second floors are worthy of special attention (Fig. 15). The upper band are all identical, but they differ noticeably on the first floor. It seems probable that the original intention was to use a separate design in each bay. The surviving examples suggest this approach, but if so, a minority are out of place. Either the carpenter interpreted this loosely, or some of the panels have been subsequently moved. Tracery panels are relatively rare and are an obvious prestige feature and could be a late survivor of the plank-boarded facades of the late thirteenth century (Tiptofts Manor, Wimbish, Essex). Comparable examples have been noted in Sudbury (with plain panels at 'Priors Gate', Friars Street), Bury St Edmunds and Stratford St Mary. During the pre-war restoration, three painted shutters were discovered *in situ*. These with their painted chevron patterning were all located on the second floor of Bay C. Conceivably, they still exist, hidden behind the plaster and await another restoration.

It seems possible that each bay of the frontage had painted shutters of a different pattern, emphasising each individual unit. However, it is also conceivable that the tracery panels beneath the windows of Bays B and D could have been the same (assuming some have been moved), thus emphasising that these two bays were part of the same unit, linked by their rear doors to the accommodation behind.

The 'Gallery' block

This three-storey structure, which incorporates part of the "cross-passage", acts as a link between the first-floor hall and the frontage block (Fig. 2, Rooms 25 and 26; Fig. 15). It is jettied at each level over the light well and has its own crown-post roof. The upper two floors each have a central oriel with traceried panels beneath the cill, similar to those on the frontage.

On the ground floor (part of the cross-passage), the western elevation has a pair of flush windows with

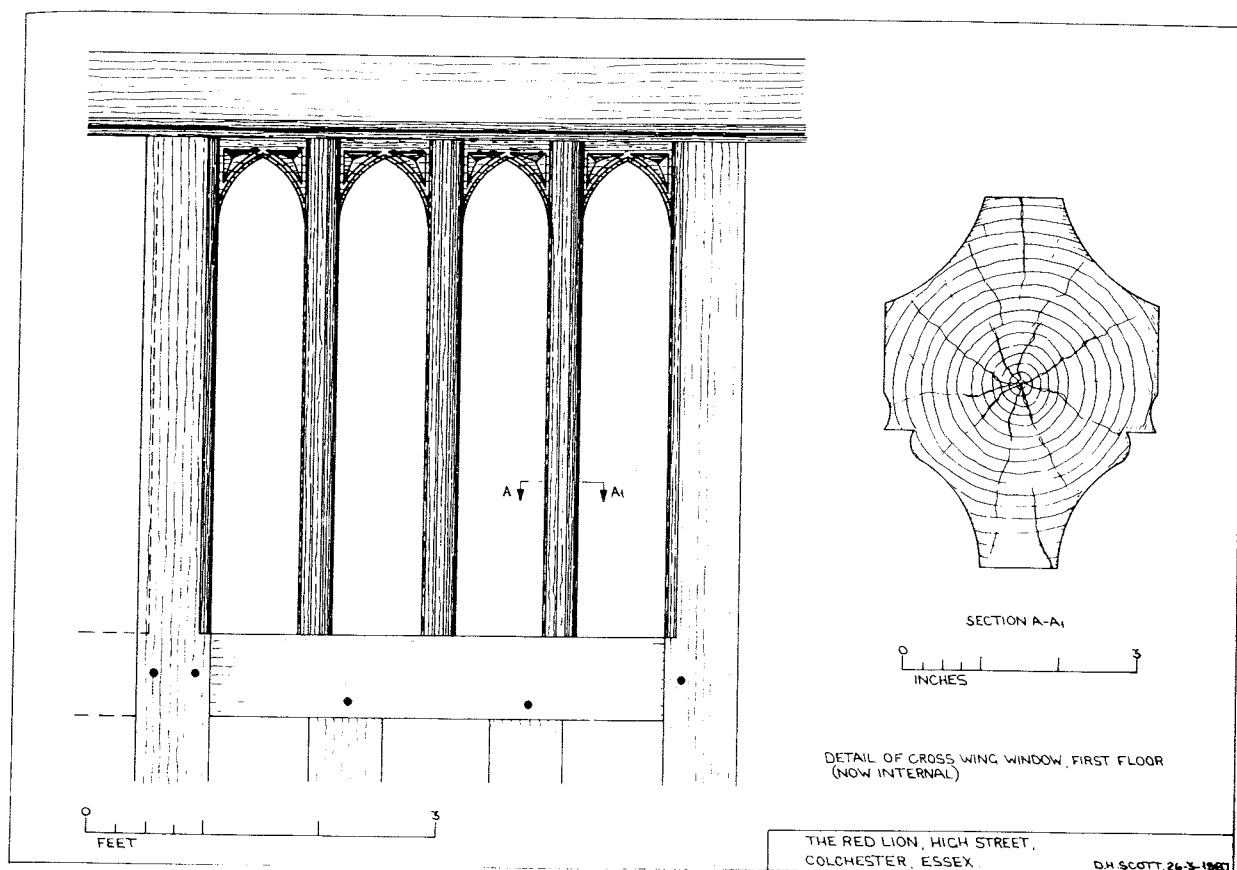


Fig. 14 The Red Lion, Colchester. Detail of cross-wing window (now internal), first floor.

moulded mullions and arched lights.

Access to the gallery (25) was via a door from the first-floor hall (3), thus linking it in with this important element of the complex. Access to the second-floor chamber (26) is more problematic and still awaits proof. There is evidence for a staircase against the south wall of Room 25. It is tempting to consider this as an original feature but it has the character of a hasty improvisation. If original, it probably functioned via the narrow hall door, which seems to have the attributes for this particular function. Clearly, at a later date this staircase was enclosed in a light partition which partially blocked the main hall door (there is evidence for the partition, consisting of a series of small mortices, penetrating the original floorboards and the top surface of the joists). An alternative means of access for Room 26 could have been via a door into Room 30. A poorly constructed arch-headed doorway certainly exists, inserted into the intervening window. However, this is more likely to be a secondary feature, probably of the later 16th century.

The west wing (Rooms 31, 32 and 33)

This three-storied structure is like a mirrored version of the 'gallery' wing (Fig. 17). Its jettied floors overhang the west side of the internal light-well and it links

the hall to the frontage block. Each room has a central oriel and traceried panels peeping between the light-well stacks. Room 32 has connecting doors to the first-floor hall (4) and the frontage block (23) and the ceiling joists are without mouldings. A staircase between 31 and 32 seems poorly constructed and is probably secondary. Room 33 on the second floor connects with the frontage (24) and has an asymmetrical crown-post roof. An additional window on the west elevation matches that to Room 30. On inspection, it was found that part of the west wall, where it overlaps the hall, was infilled with brick. This may have constituted a fire precaution bearing in mind the adjoining stack.

Cellars under frontage complex (Rooms 34-38)

This series of cellars are clearly medieval in character and seem to be accurately related to the timber structure above. Although their walling is visible, it is generally obscured by thick layers of whitewash and consequently the construction is difficult to determine. In all cases there is a substantial amount of brick, but areas of stone rubble and broken tile can be detected. Cellar 38 was completely lined in brick and the dividing wall between 36 and 37 seems to lack other materials. A notable feature near the base of this wall is alternating courses of yellow and red brick.

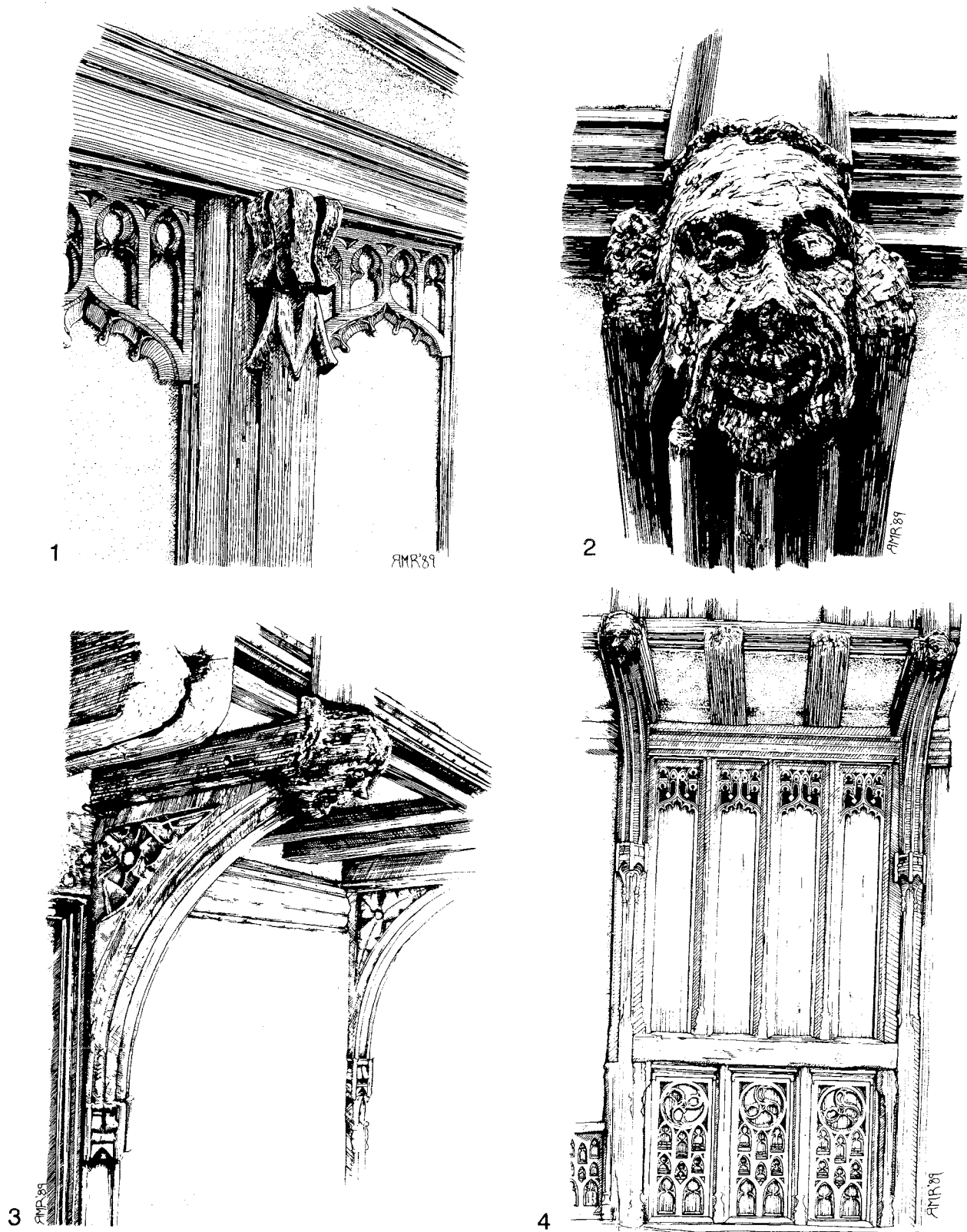


Fig. 15 The Red Lion, Colchester. Details of High Street elevation:
 1. Second floor, attached shaft and window tracery
 2. Grotesque head, end of bridging joist
 3. First-floor jetty detail with carved blocked spandrels
 4. One bay of first-floor elevation with blind tracery panels.

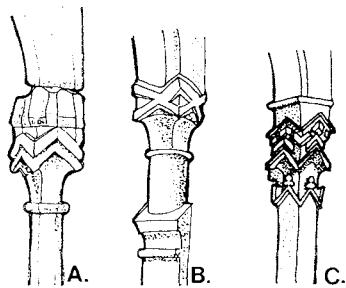


Fig. 16 Examples of 'chevron capitals':
A. The Butts, Nayland, Suffolk
B. Lavenham Guildhall, Suffolk
C. Paycockes House, Coggeshall, Essex
(compare with Fig. 8).

The doors and 'window' openings (Rooms 34, 36, 37 and 38) all have jambs of worked limestone, the doors having splayed external jambs.

Cellar 34 This is the largest single area in this group, and was entered from the frontage. Cellar 34 was without a 'window' but has two low arch-headed recesses in its east wall, above a bench like-base. The walling of the southern half has been substantially repaired and the west wall is noticeably irregular in alignment. A pair of steep but unconvincing looking brick arches leads to cellar 35.

Cellar 35 This space now contains two segmental brick barrel vaults, running parallel with the frontage. The impression was gained, however, that these, probably early 19th-century works, had been inserted within an earlier cellar. More investigation would need to be carried out to establish this with certainty.

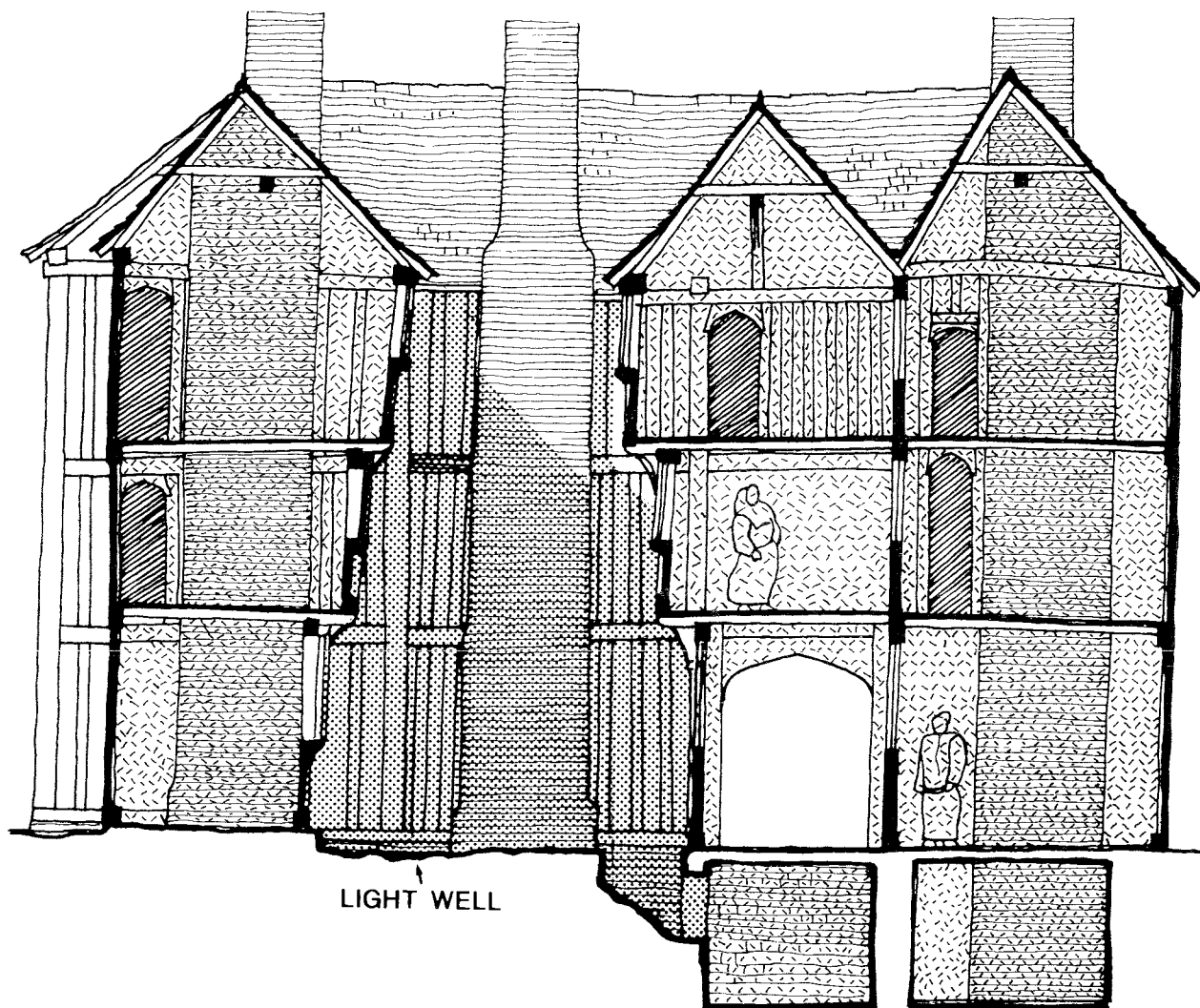


Fig. 17 The Red Lion, Colchester. Section through the centre of the building from west (left) to east (right). Refer to Fig. 3 for position of this section.

Cellars 36/37 These are similar in size and detail and fit neatly under Bays C and D above. The separating wall now has a door and is conceivably later than the bounding wall. A central stone pilaster on the eastern face of 36 once carried a timber spine beam.

Cellar 38 This was only rediscovered during the recent renovation works and again had been modified, to carry a segmented brick barrel vault. The door and 'window' openings proved to be well preserved and were disposed towards the central light well.

It is suggested that the cellars are substantially contemporary, with the frontage range, but may well incorporate some earlier work.

Buildings to the south of the 'Southern Hall'

During the recent renovation, fragments of a further structure were revealed (Rooms 39, 40; Fig. 4). This had two storeys and was of at least two bays and was open-framed towards the "Southern Hall". The carpentry is akin to that of the frontage complex and it was probably a part of this development. However, its utilitarian nature is clearly manifest and it probably served some ancillary function. A simply treated entrance door was easily detected, and part of a window could be deduced on the back.

Remains of 'Gallery'

Two reused posts on the first floor of the "Southern Hall" provide evidence for another former building. Obviously, they are two halves of an inner jetty bressumer and are identical in detail to similar features elsewhere in the complex. The elevation consisted of a row of moulded mullioned windows with mortices for stud tenons at each end. On the top are shallow indentations for former jettied floor joists with the 'standard' spacing. The structure was of two or more storeys and about 14'0" wide, but it is now impossible to determine where it stood.

The Howard connection

Various authors have suggested a connection with the immensely wealthy and influential Howard family. (R.C.H.M.E. iii).

The documentary evidence, such as it is, gives credence to this view and the building itself contains further pointers. The most fundamental factor emerging from the written matter is the name of the building itself. As early as 1515, the building (or part of the complex) was described as "Le Whyght Lyon", the commonplace badge of the Howards. It seems probable that the lion changed colour in the reign of James I.

The spandrel carving of the entrance-passage arch also seems extremely relevant. This depicts a somewhat emaciated St George about to fight a very Gothic

dragon, an apparently curious choice. However, George and the Dragon are important symbols of the Order of the Garter and their prominence here must be significant. The various members of the Howard Family, Sir John (1443-85; Duke of Norfolk from 1483), Thomas, Earl of Surrey (1443-1524; Duke of Norfolk 1514-1524), and Thomas, Earl of Surrey (1473-1554), the Third Duke of Norfolk, were all members of the Order of the Garter, an extremely select body.

Bearing in mind the documentary material, it is Thomas, the 2nd Duke of Norfolk, who is the crucial figure, and he was a Companion of the Order between 1483-1485 and from 1489 to his death. (He was attainted following the Battle of Bosworth.)

The quality and complexity of the decorative carving has already been noted and this probably contains a further clue. The wall-shaft capitals in the upper hall (front range; 'X' on Fig. 2, first-floor plan) are of a particularly unusual design (Fig. 8). The use of two bands of chevron-like cresting is the feature of note and this can also be seen on the front. This device seems to derive from the conventional Gothic tabernacle, as a series of 'gables' linked and compressed. Various stages in this transformation can be detected in the church furnishings of the area. Other noteworthy examples are :-

(1) 'The Butts', Church Lane, Nayland, Suffolk (Fig. 16A)

The timber-framed part of this house consists of a jettied cross wing opposite the flank of the parish church of St James. Shafted corner posts mount capitals virtually identical to the Red Lion examples. The spandrels of one jetty bracket contains a blank raised shield intended to be painted. Close examination of the building revealed poor quality framing indicative of a late date. It seems likely that the corner post and jetty assembly are second hand, and a likely source is near to hand. The mansion of the Howards, Tendring Hall, once lay some 2½-3 miles to the north-east and was, apparently, rebuilt on numerous occasions. It seems probable that 'The Butts' incorporates fragments of the Howard mansion, which contained work by the Red Lion carpenters.

It is likely that the Howard family employed the same carpenter for both its major local buildings.

(2) Lavenham Guild Hall, Suffolk.

Here only one of the numerous external capitals takes this unusual form (Fig. 16B).

(3) Paycockes House, Coggeshall (1514)

The capitals on the exterior of the building are all 20th-century replacements, but are of a markedly similar form. It would seem unlikely that they are the invention of the restorer and were probably copied from a surviving fragment (Fig. 16C).

(4) Parclose of chapel. Thomas Spryng, Parish Church of Ss. Peter and Paul, Lavenham, Suffolk
Here the motif appears around the base of the finials as an extremely exaggerated variant (after 1523).

The documentary evidence

The Red Lion was a complex of considerable importance and one of the most substantial secular properties in Colchester. It thus seems surprising that very little documentary evidence has survived (or has been recognised) to throw more light on its construction and purpose. Useful information has been found in the Hundred Court Rolls as transcribed by Benham (E.R.O.). Unfortunately there are no transcriptions for the late 15th century, or opening decade of the 16th, as the Court Rolls are apparently missing.

1515. British Library
Compotus of John Cokkeshall, rent collector (of Duke of Norfolk) in Colchester.

Arrears £9.17s.5d.¹

Farm of lands and tennements £8 from farm of an inn then called le New Inn with the sign of the lion, which used to be let for £6 a year and from the farm of a tennement which used to render 23s.4d. a year and of the farm of another tennement annexed to said inn, which used to render 26s.2d. and now they are let together to the computant by indenture for 5 years for £8 a year.

Rents paid.

To the bailiffs at the moot hall 16d.

To the same bailiffs for a post in the street these to support the sign of the lion 1d.

After the account.

Wm. Wode farmer of a tennement on south? side now called le New Inn paid 30s. of his arrears.

The Duke of Norfolk in question recipient of these rents was the second Duke, who had regained his title the preceding year.

*Deed enrolled at a Hundred Court, 29 January, 1515*²
This property transaction involved the hostelry called 'le Crown' and a capital messuage called 'le Hell'.

The Crown is described as situate and lying in the market place, between the hostelry known as 'le Bell', on the east side of the hostelry called 'le New Inne', otherwise known as '*le Whyght Lyon*' on the west side, one end abutting on 'le Fische markt' there, on the north and the other end on the lane called Culverlane.

The tenement called 'le Hell' abutted, on the north side of Culver Lane and the other end northwards on the Land of Thomas Clare, and eastwards on the tenement of Thomas Cristemass and the remainder on the tenement of Joan Ynkley, and westwards on the garden of the Lord of Surrey, belonging to the hostelry of the sign of '*Albi Leonis*' called '*le Whyght Lyon*'.

*Deed enrolled at the Hundred Court, 1 May 1554*²

This again, is concerned with 'le Crown' and 'le Hell' and although the names of the parties have changed, the sites are described in identical terms. Clearly, le Whyght Lion is in business as an Inn and the former Earl of Surrey (correctly described as The Duke of Norfolk) still enjoys his garden.

*Survey of the Estate of Thomas (4th) Duke of Norfolk 1554*³

'County Essex: The Inne called the Lyon in Colchester near the Shoppeshalles and pastures thereunto belonging are holden in free burgage and be worth by yere over and above all £10.'

*Will Enrolled at the Hundred Court 1573*²

This Will involved a capital messuage called 'le Lyon' in Colchester and of two shops, all and singular solars, cellars, houses, barns and buildings adjoining and belonging to the same; also of two pieces of vacant land lying before the gate (*ante postam*) of the said messuage formerly called 'le Stalles' and a small croft of land on the south side (the garden?).

The next part of this Will seem somewhat ambiguous but it appears that the clerk was supplying some useful background information:-

'Thomas Late Duke of Norfolk, as more fully appears, by indenture in triplicate dated October 1st 1557 made between the said Late Duke (died 1554), Henry Earl of Arundel (died 1557) and Thomas, Bishop of Ely, (Thomas Thirby 1554-1559) of the first part and the aforesead Robert Lambert of the second part'

The property in question, which presumably included the Red Lion, is summarised as 3 messuages, three gardens and 30 acres of land with appurtenances in Colchester. This indenture was taken before the Court of Philip and Mary, at Westminster on June 5th 1558.

Other references are as follows:-

George Gray purchased the Red Lion Hotel in 1722. He sold the hotel in 1741, but retained the 'garden ground' in Lion Walk (Fig. 1). In 1763 his executor sold this land to the trustees of the Congregational Church (Sier 1948).

A Roman tessellated pavement was found on the south side of the Red Lion, when part of it was converted into an iron-warehouse. A great quantity of the pieces were preserved and set in an arbour in one of the gardens belonging to that Inn (Morant 1763).

Conclusions

When examining ancient buildings, there are three important questions that demand answers: who built it, when was it built and for what purpose?

Who built it?

From the evidence previously cited, it seems virtually certain that the Red Lion complex was built by one of the important members of the Howard family. The secondary nature of the documentary material leaves room for minor doubts and it is possible that only part of the site is being identified. The apparent involvement of other parties, the Bishop of Ely and the Earl of Arundel, may be misleading, as they may not have been involved with this particular property. The Earl of Arundel was a relative-by-marriage and all three were leading Catholics, who were disposing of properties during the reign of a Catholic monarch (Mary I). Perhaps this is significant, but if so, its particular relevance is not yet apparent. The question of which member of the family was responsible for the construction is similarly fraught with difficulties.

It is known that, following the Battle of Bosworth, Thomas, 2nd Duke of Norfolk, found refuge in Colchester. It seems conceivable that after he regained some of his properties (1509), he built himself a house in the town and perhaps it may be this that partially survives in the form of the 'Southern Hall'.

Obviously the age of the buildings should provide the strongest clue and this leads on to the second question:-

When was it built?

The various structures in the Red Lion complex can be compared with other important timber-framed buildings in the locality. As has already been noted, the buildings are clearly the product of the local Essex/Suffolk style that was generated by the wealth of the wool industry. The use of 'Colchester braces' (wall bracing terminating at studs rather than at principal posts or beams) and jowless posts are features of Colchester and its *immediate* environs, and points to an indigenous carpenter.

Knowledge of other buildings would suggest a possible date range from 1480 to 1550 to encompass all the features so far described. The crown-post roof is still prevalent in this period but is heading into final decline.

The thin collar purlin braces of the Southern Hall roof are typical of this phase and the frontage block braces are not much more substantial. The floor-joist joints, with their central tenons and soffit shoulders, are a quality feature of this period. It is suggested that one would expect to find floor joists with 'diminished haunches' in any quality building post-dating 1530. Conversely, the use of full-width braces with discontinuous studs seem unlikely before 1550. In fact, this kind of bracing is extremely rare before 1600, and may be a one-off solution to a major structural challenge. Bridled scarf joints are again ubiquitous before 1550 and thus are of no assistance in establishing a precise date.

Taking all factors into account, the author would

prefer a date c.1520 for all of the components of the frontage complex. However, there seems to be conflict with the documentary evidence which suggests an operational 'Inn' by 1515. This leads naturally to the question of use and to the possibilities of more than one function.

Purpose of buildings

Without the benefit of any contemporary description, the intended use can only be gauged from the physical evidence that survives. Clearly, we are dealing with buildings of a markedly 'domestic' character with a hint of 'commercial' on the ground-floor frontage. In pondering this question, the particular nature of each room is important, as is its apparent status as exemplified by its decoration. Of crucial significance are the communication links which bind together spaces of associated function. It seems reasonable to suggest that certain arrangements of rooms form relatively self-contained residential 'units' on the following pattern (Fig. 2).

Unit 1 (Rooms 5-15 and 38)

This 'unit' consists of the ground-floor hall, entrance passage, cellar under the passage and south-east 'Lodging'. The light-well yard is also related.

Unit 2 (Rooms 3 and 4, 23-27, 32 and 33)

Consists of the first-floor hall, the first and second floors of frontage Bays B and D, and part of the west wing.

*Unit 3 (Rooms 20 and 21)**Unit 4 (Rooms 17 and 18, 29 and 30)*

The upper floors of frontage Bay A.

The so-called shops, with their associated cellars, can either be considered as separate units, or apportioned to the 'residential' units above.

The opening in the floor between the two halls (Rooms 4 and 5) introduces a complication, if this was indeed a connecting staircase. In effect, this would imply a joint use of units 1 and 2, so forming one extensive habitation.

Some additional support for this interpretation can be found at Giffords Hall, Wickhambrook, Suffolk (Fig. 18). The original core of this delightful moated dwelling displays remarkable similarities with many aspects of the Red Lion. In particular, it is a compact block, with two superimposed 'halls', the uppermost of which has an elaborate, framed 'ceiling'. Other points in common are: (1) massive storey posts, (2) identical floor joints, (3) similar mouldings in the ground-floor 'hall', (4) the design of the garderobe door, and (5) 'Colchester bracing' is present in a partition and produces a striking similarity of effect.

We are firmly of the opinion that the resemblance

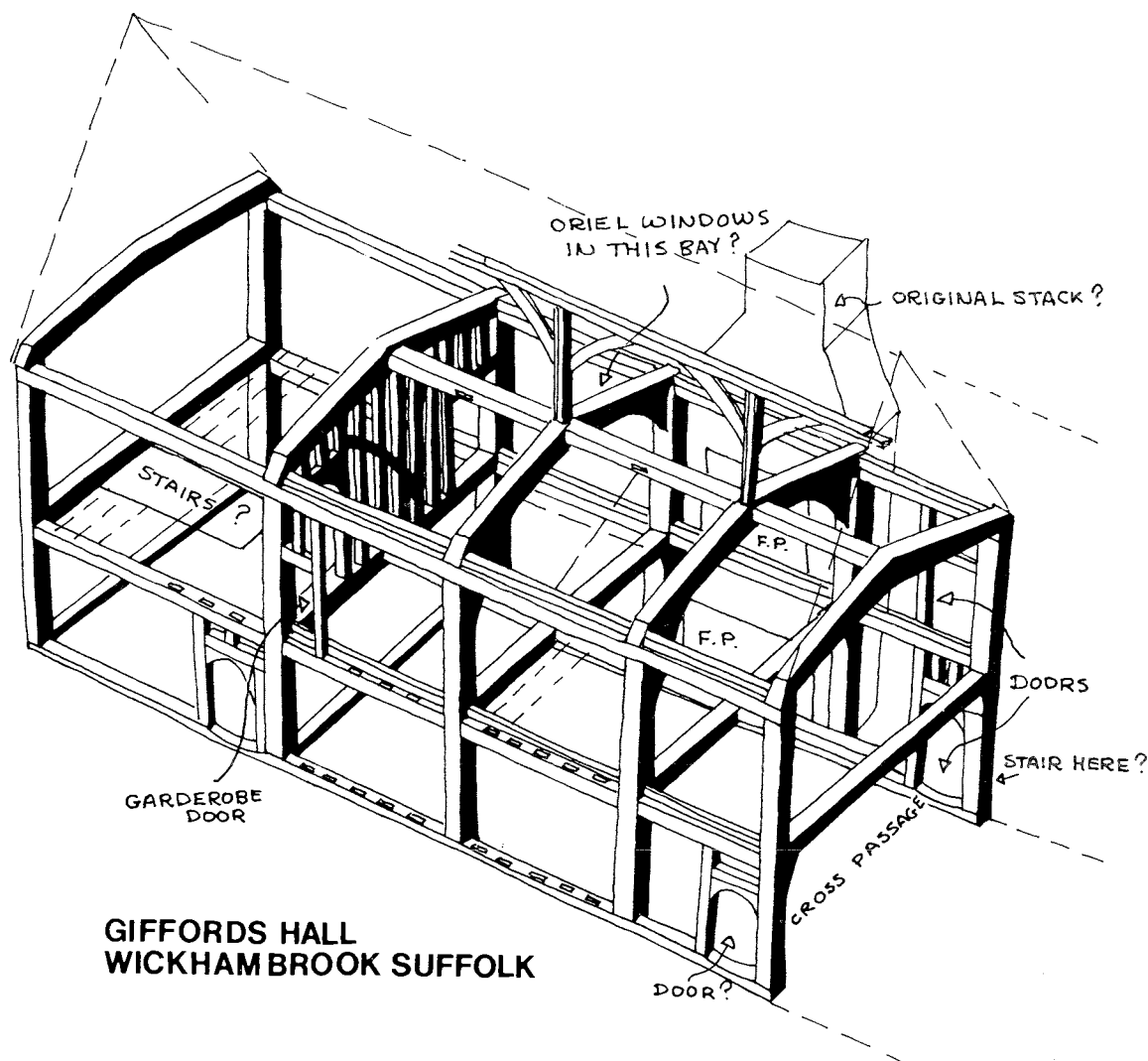


Fig. 18 Reconstruction of the 16th-century Giffords Hall, Wickhambrook, Suffolk.

cannot be coincidental and that the same carpenter was responsible for both buildings. Giffords Hall is clearly a single, rather grand, dwelling in an isolated, rural location where two 'halls' would seem to be unnecessary. This thesis would thus suggest that in both cases the 'upper hall' should be called a 'great chamber' and was functionally distinct from the hall proper below. Such great chambers are a common occurrence in the so-called 'long-wall jetty' houses of the period and an essential component of the contemporary noble mansion.

The possibility of doors in the rear walls of the shops (Bays A and D) would link these with the accommodation to the rear.

The "southern hall" is also clearly domestic, but it enjoys an ambiguous relationship with the rest of the complex. With no clear links to the frontage group, it was evidently associated with earlier, long destroyed structures and is of different date.

In considering an incomplete series of structures, of unknown provenance, we can only think in terms of degrees of probability. It seems that we know very little about the major urban structures of the late medieval era, despite a reasonable level of survival. However, a sensible line of approach seems to be to measure the Red Lion against a series of possibilities:-

Thesis One; the single dwelling

The uniformity of build and quality of execution could point to the single town-house of a noble lord. The accommodation could thus be interpreted as two principal suites with ancillary 'lodgings' in the frontage range.

It can be argued that the particular plan arrangement would have been well suited to this use, and that a series of separate accesses might well have had its advantages. However, it seems unlikely that such a dwelling would have been converted to an inn so soon

after its initial construction (at least by 1515 citing the documentary evidence). The lack of a firm construction date is again an imponderable.

Thesis Two; the speculative complex

The idea that the Red Lion complex was a speculative urban development by the Howard family has its attractions. It is clear that in the Middle Ages, great families, religious institutions and other bodies, were frequently involved in such enterprises. Again, the plan arrangement could have involved a series of 'dwellings' of varied size, with two or three shops on the frontage. Examples of such schemes still exist and their pertinent points can be compared. As a general rule they tend to display 'showy' decorative exteriors, but are plain and utilitarian inside. With the Red Lion, the high quality of the interior finishes and of the overall carpentry would seem to demolish this thesis.

Thesis Three; the Inn

The suggestion that the Red Lion was built as an Inn has obvious merits, bearing in mind the documentary information and the building's later history. The late W.A. Pantin, probably the greatest authority on medieval urban plan forms, examined and described a number of ancient Inns. In an article about the 'Golden Cross' in Oxford (Pantin 1955), similarities with a conventional house plan are noted and this point has been elaborated by others (Wood 1965).

However, other early inns are dissimilar in form, particularly in the means of access. The White Hart at Brentwood, in Essex, remains a long, two-storey range of chambers with a continuous first-floor gallery. This Inn predates the Red Lion by at least a century and capitalises on an advanced circulation technique of probable monastic origin. The advantages of the gallery system are such that one would have expected them to have been utilised in all purpose-built Inns. The complexities of circulation in the Red Lion seem to indicate a different use.

A possible solution

Bearing in mind the previous arguments, the following possibilities come to mind. The 'southern hall' is, in itself, too isolated to provide any real idea of its use. Either it could be the surviving remnant of a mansion, or part of an Inn called the White Lion. In the author's opinion, the frontage complex has an ambiguous character that appears to defy all usual labels. A convenient explanation would combine the strong points of each thesis into a 'multi-functional' explanation. The Red Lion would thus start life as a town house of the

Howard family somewhere around the year 1500. From the beginning, lodgings were provided for retainers or associates with commercial activity on the ground floor. At the same time the buildings may have functioned as a kind of Inn with strangers welcomed when the noble owners were elsewhere. Perhaps with the passage of time the 'town house' element became less important and the Inn function completely took over. Only further research and investigation of other comparable buildings will confirm or deny these tentative conclusions.

Acknowledgements

I am especially grateful to the joint owners, Restoration Inns Ltd and Cordwell Properties Ltd, for allowing me to examine the building and for making a donation towards the costs of recording the chimney stacks. Special thanks are due to Dunthorne Parker, Architects and Designers; the main contractors, H. Firmin and Sons Ltd, to Messrs Sinclair Johnston, the site Engineers and to Ms Helen Axworthy, the job architect. I would like to thank my fellow enthusiast, Mr Richard Shackle, for his assistance and for the use of his measured drawings on which Figures 4 and 1D are based. Members of the Carrick Club visited the building and I am indebted to them for their advice and comment. Thanks are also due to the late Mr Douglas Scott, for permission to reproduce his excellent drawings (Figs 8 and 13) and to Mr Paul Gilman of the Archaeological Section, County Planning Department, for his work in recording the stacks (Fig. 13). Mr Roger Massey-Ryan produced the fine drawings of carved work (Fig. 15).

I would also like to offer my warm thanks to the staff of the Victoria County History and to Mrs Sarah Rodgers, Assistant Librarian to Arundel Castle Trustees Ltd, for their help with the documentary evidence.

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Footnotes

1. British Library (pers. comm. J. Cooper, *VCH Essex*).
2. Partial transcription of Colchester Borough Court Rolls, N.E. Essex Branch.
3. Arundel Castle Library Mss. MD490.

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Postscript

Evidence provided by The Priory, Little Horkesley, suggests that the rebates in the tie beams (see main text, p.145) were to house a vertical cladding of boards over the studwork, forming the line of a flue. This suggests that the hole in the floor between rooms 4 and 5 was for a timber stack.

The Society is extremely grateful to the Hervey Benham Charitable Trust and to Essex County Council for generous grants towards the cost of publishing this article.