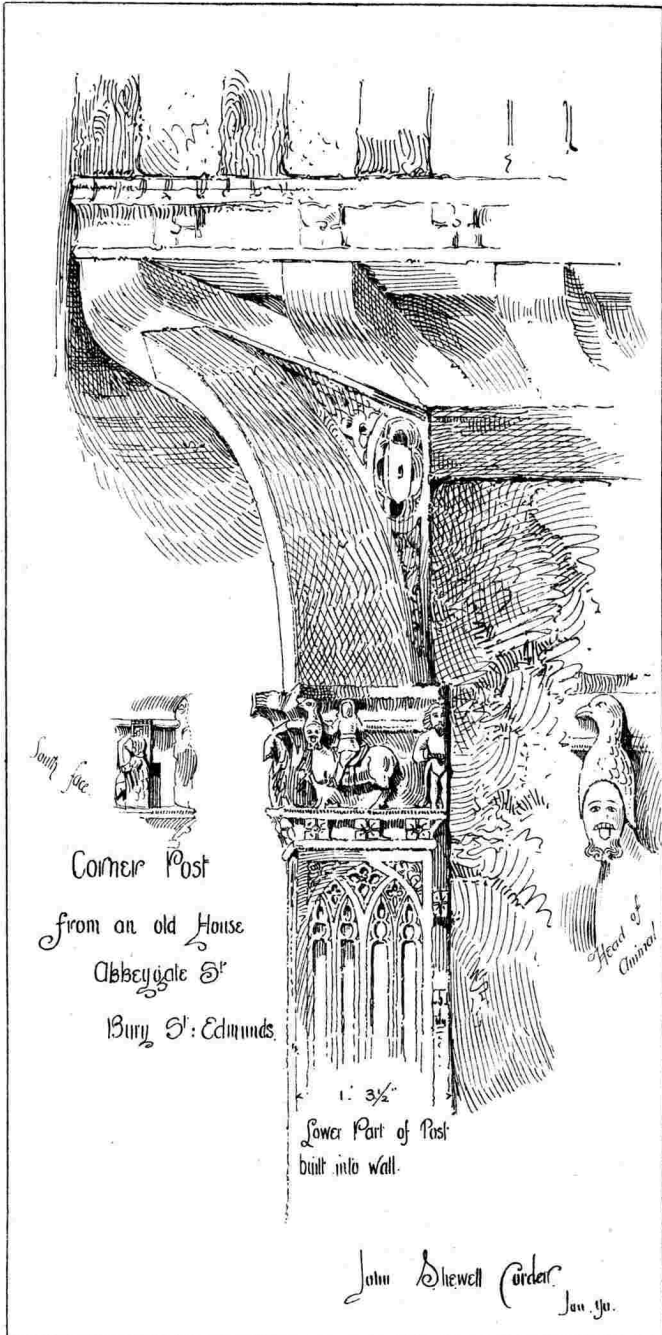


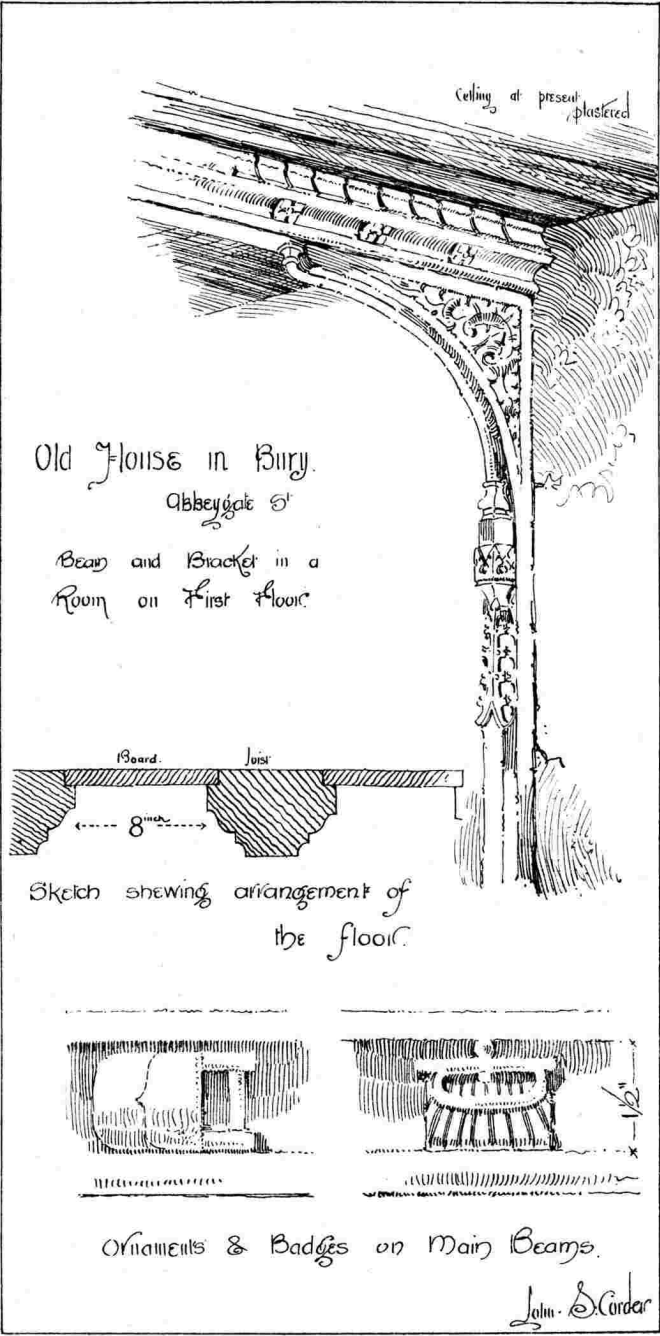
ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS FOUND
IN ABBEYGATE STREET, BURY S. EDMUND'S.

BY JOHN SHEWELL CORDER.

“As the Naturalist by the casual overturning of a stone becomes possessed of a rare specimen of the insect tribe, so the architect, when engaged in the practice of his profession often discovers, in ancient buildings he is called upon to survey, fragments of great archæological interest, which it is a pleasure to record and illustrate. A striking instance of this was brought home to me in going over the premises of 58, Abbeygate Street, Bury, a few weeks ago. The building in question occupies a site on the south side of the street, next door but one to the National Provincial Bank. The street front does not give to the passer-by the impression of any great architectural merit externally. At a glance it will be seen that it is an old timber-framed structure, plastered all over externally, two storeys high, with attics in the roof. Three gables intersecting the main roof face the street, each having a window. On the ground floor a modern shop front has been inserted, and all the other windows are of a period subsequent to the date of the original building. At the south-east corner of the premises, facing the garden, is a rectangular building, in two storeys with room in roof, covered with span roof, which intersects the main roof, and it is this structure which contains the interesting architectural details, which I will now endeavour to describe. The construction of the building is of oak, framed and pinned together with oak pins, and filled in with wattles and clay daubing, the timbers originally shewing externally,



EDWELL, IPSWICH.



DEWELL, IPSWICH.

and internally as well, a kind of construction common at that period. The timber and plastering inside being decorated with scroll work in colours. The first floor overhangs the ground floor on two sides, about 1 ft. 10 in., the overhanging at the south-east corner being carried by a very fine and exquisitely designed corner post. This corner post may be described as follows:—To a height of about 5 ft. 9 in. or thereabouts, it is enriched on the two exposed sides, with elaborately sunk and cusped tracery, with spandrels, carved with Gothic floriations, and where the post joins the building a hollow moulding runs from the base, finishing under the necking of the cap, carved with four-leaved flowers at intervals. Above the tracery is a moulded and carved necking, also enriched with similar flowers, an elaborately carved cap, and moulded abacus. On the east side of the cap is the representation in high relief of a male figure bestriding a fabulous animal, with the body of a horse and face of a human being, having a crest or helm of a bird's head. The front feet are claws, the hind ones hoofed. This animal is turning its face sideways, and protruding its tongue. The rider sits on a saddle fastened by a girth, with his feet in stirrups, and he is attired in a jerkin, belted at the waist, and is also looking in the same direction as the creature he bestrides. It seems most probable that this figure is intended as an allegorical representation of the lusts of the flesh. The mediæval carvers who delighted in symbols, and were fond of seeing hidden meanings in grotesque forms, often portrayed this subject in a similar manner. The tongue lolling out was used as an emblem of luxury and gluttony. The human head on the Beast's Body, with udders underneath, indicated the voluptuous. The front feet are clawed like a Griffin, an animal which once having seized its prey never relinquishes it. The hind feet are those of an ox, signifying tyranny. The seated figure represents Vanity. In the rear of the animal is a male figure standing facing the spectator, attired in a long flowing cloak, with a knotted girdle called a discipline

around his waist.* On the south face of the cap, which is much mutilated, are the remains of what appears to be an organ with pipes, and an effigy, much decayed, seated in front of it. This effigy appears to have feathers on the body. From the abacus springs a boldly-curved bracket, cut from the solid, with traceried and carved spandrels, having a shield at the intersection of the cusping. Inside this wing of the building, all vestiges of its ancient character are swept away on the ground floor, except a massive fireplace on the west side, which has been built up, and the remains of a four-light window, with moulded oak mullions, on the east side. Besides which the floor joists above are richly carved and moulded, and a beam has small pateræ upon it, one bearing an inscription I.H.C., and three others, the initials in capital letters, T.I.B., in Old English Ecclesiastical characters. On the first floor, however, there is a beautiful room, the details of which are so elaborate that it must have been an apartment of no ordinary character. The dimensions of this room cannot be accurately determined, as it has been so cut about and altered; but, roughly, it would be about 15 ft. 6 in. in width, and 7 ft. 10 in. in height, length undeterminable. A main beam traverses the ceiling from east to west, and this is intersected by another similar beam running north and south. This latter one carries the joists, which run in a contrary direction. These beams are moulded and carved with battlemented moulding along the top, both sides, whilst in a hollow moulding under the battlements are carved shields, four-leaved flowers, and mercantile and other emblems and badges intermixed. The beams are supported at the ends on curved brackets, richly carved, springing from buttressed pilasters, with crocketed finials carved on both faces. The joists are moulded, and only 8 inches apart, and the backs of the joists are rebated, the floor boards being laid in these rebates, running the same way as

* It is a singular fact that there is another Corner Post in Bury bearing the same allegorical figure. It is now in private hands, but it formerly stood in Cook's Row, at the corner of Still Lane.

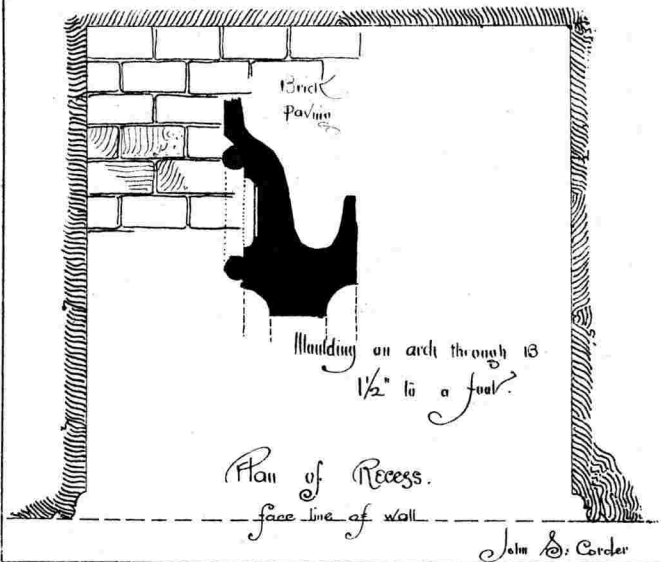
the joists, the top of the joists being level with the floor boards, and thus forming part of the floor above. The fireplace was a large open one, but it is now built up. It was placed between the main beam and the wall on the north side, and filled the whole of the intervening space. All that is left of the mantel-piece is a beam running over the opening close to the ceiling, with shields and flowers alternately carved upon it. One of the old doors remains, and it is a ledged and boarded door of primitive construction, with moulded upright boarding nailed to the ledges, and would be hung originally on massive band hinges. The place for the latch is distinctly visible, but the latch itself is gone. The present window is a modern one, and no remains of the old one exists. The room above is quite in the roof space, the timbers of which all show, and they are very massive and strongly framed together. The date of the building is clearly fixed by the details as belonging to the late Perpendicular period, circa from 1450—1500, and is thus about 430 years old.

The purposes of its erection are somewhat conjectural, but from its nature and construction it possibly formed part of a trade or guild hall, and my opinion in this is strengthened by the fact that the beams are carved with merchants' signs and badges, two of which I sketched, one being a scrip or purse. It is a noteworthy fact that the ancients never carved an ornament without a meaning to it, and from the character of the decorations it seems most natural it should have been either a trade hall or possibly the residence of a wealthy manufacturer. Another curious fragment of antiquity is to be found in the house between the last named and the Bank. This is also a timber-framed building, but it has been refaced in white brick. Though at present connected with the first-named house, it does not appear to have originally formed part of it, the floors being on different levels, and the roofs not being continuous, though it is possible the building may have extended further westerly over part of the site occupied by the Bank, but this is not certain. The chief point of interest

in the house is the cellar, which extends under the front portion next the street, and is approached by a staircase under the principal stairs. It is a spacious apartment, 26 ft. 6 in. by 16 ft., and 9 ft. 2 in. high. The walls are very massive, and are built of flint and freestone intermixed. Around in the thickness of walls are four curious arched recesses, three being 5 ft. 6 in. wide, 5 ft. 6 in. deep, and 5 ft. 3 in. high, and one smaller one. These recesses have moulded jambs in freestone, and cusped arches, with traceried spandrels over them. In two of them the arches are perfect, but the two next the street have been altered and roughly arched in brick. Above the last two built into the walls are sunk traceried quatrefoils, possibly part of the destroyed arches. Across the ceiling is a large oak beam, carrying the joists of the floor above, resting at one end on a large carved stone corbel. The cellar is now paved with brick, but the original paving has vanished. It is lighted by two small windows to Abbeygate Street. A passage pierced through the wall into an adjoining cellar shew the former to be 6 ft. 8 in. thick, the solid chalk of the foundations being left as a core, and faced on both sides with flintwork, and the mortar is very hard and durable. The date of this cellar is probably sometime during the early part of the 15th century, as evidenced by the mouldings and carving.

Detail of Stone Arch over Recess A
 in cellar of an old House

Abbeygate St. Bury S. Edmunds.

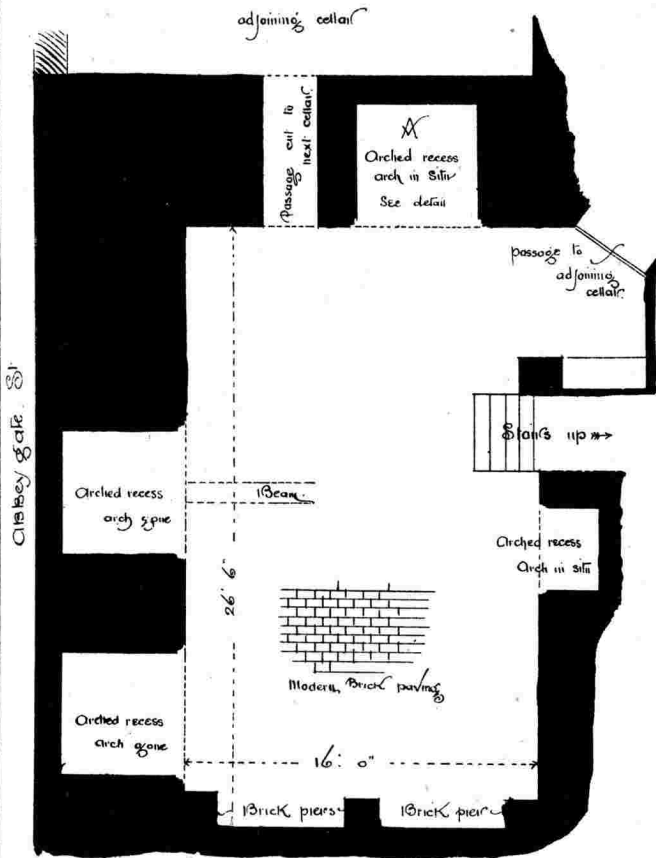
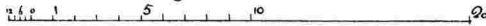


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Plan of cellar

under an old House Abbeygate St
Bury S Edmunds.

Scale of feet



height of cellar 9' 2"

John Stewell Corder
Jan. 00.

COWELL, IPSWICH.