

THE ROSER FAMILY AT HACHESTON

By LESLIE DOW, F.S.A.

In 1961 a small property at Hacheston, known as 'Wistaria Cottage', was acquired by Mr. G. Hardy; it is situated in the main street, opposite the former Queen's Head public house. It forms part of a larger timber-framed house of sixteenth century date which adjoins a later building to the south (Plate LVII). In the 1839 tithe map the group is named 'Malting House'; while in a deed of 1674 in the East Suffolk Record Office (50/20/38.3) it is referred to as 'Maulting House and Smith's Shopp'.

Mr. Hardy proceeded to renovate and redecorate his cottage, carrying out much of the work himself, with care and prudence. In the course of removing a modern grate, a large brick fireplace was discovered with a heavy oak beam or overmantel above the opening; on stripping the plaster and paper from the beam and from the brickwork above it, several features appeared which throw light on the former ownership of the building. These finds were reported to the Ipswich Museum and were briefly recorded in 'Archaeology in Suffolk, 1961'.¹ I am indebted to Mr. Hardy for allowing me to inspect the work as it proceeded and I now offer this fuller account of the various interesting features which were brought to light.

Let into the brickwork above the fireplace beam is a stone panel upon which is carved:

I O H A N

R O Z E R

A. D. 1541

and a rose with stalk and leaf (Plate LVII).

On the beam itself, at the left end, is a carved shield with the rose between the initials 'I.R.' (Plate LVIII), while at the opposite end is a similar shield with the initials 'A.R.'. In the centre of the beam is a larger shield with a pair of wings between the initials 'A.E.', with a pierced mullet in base (Plate LVIII). It should be added that outside, on the chimney which rises from the ridge of the roof, the same pair of wings between the initials 'I.R.' are carved in red brick.

¹ *Proc. Suff. Inst. Arch.*, xxix, p. 96.

To the right of the fireplace is a cupboard or small storeroom, over the door of which is a charmingly decorated panel or cartouche with a painted black-letter inscription:

Yf god be wyth us
Who ys a gaynst us

on either side of the inscription are two human figures, each holding a shield with the initials I and R (Plate LIX).

Finally, Mr. Hardy discovered two fragments of writing tucked in beside a door post; both are considerably torn but one is evidently a short note addressed to 'Goodman Roser' by 'Wylliam James curate of Saxtedd'; the other fragment is a bill for making a coat for 'Mr Roser' detailing some of the materials.

So much for the evidence in the house itself; but its interpretation is not quite so simple as it seems. In the Visitation of 1577 there is a short pedigree of Roser of Hacheston beginning with John Roser who married Alis daughter of John Morse of Otley; their eldest son Roger was baptised at Hacheston in December 1539. John Roser had bought the manor of Blomviles in Hacheston from Sir William Willoughby and was assessed at £20 in land in the 1568 Subsidy; he is said to have been a commander under Henry VIII at the taking of Boulogne in 1544. He was buried at Hacheston in December 1572.² It is clear, therefore, that the initials 'I.R.' and 'A.R.' represent John Roser and his wife Alis; it is also clear that they were living in the house in 1541 and possibly a few years earlier, when their son was born. It is also probable from its architecture that the house was built round about this time.

But there remains the problem of the larger shield in the centre of the fireplace beam. What is the significance of the pair of wings and the pierced mullet in base; and to whom do the initials 'A.E.' refer? The arms of Roser are given in the 1577 Visitation as '*Or, on a cross patée sable, five estoiles of the field*' and there is no mention of wings in the crest. But it is possible that these arms were granted to Roger Roser *after* the death of his father in 1572. The pair of wings are of course associated with the family of Wingfield, who owned much land in the neighbourhood, including one of the Hacheston manors.

One can only guess that John Roser, having at that time no arms of his own and being perhaps a tenant of, or in some other way connected with, the Wingfield family, used the wings on this central shield (and on the chimney outside) in honour of his patron;

² Information on the Roser family is taken from *Visitation of Suffolk 1577* (ed. Metcalfe 1882), p. 101; Copinger, *Manors of Suffolk*, iv, p. 289; *Suffolk Green Books*, xii (1909), p. 176; Hacheston Parish Registers, etc.

PLATE LVII



Wistaria Cottage, Hacheston.



Stone panel over fireplace.



Shield at left end of fireplace beam.



Shield at centre of fireplace beam.

PLATE LIX



Panel over door.

this was not an uncommon practice at that period. The possibility of a connection between the two families is strengthened by the fact that Roger's eldest daughter Margaret married at Hacheston in 1582 'Mr. Robert Winfield [*sic*]'.³ The rose sprig was presumably added as a rebus on the family name. I have not been able to solve the mystery of the initials 'A.E.'. From the carving and the lettering it would appear that this shield is contemporary with the other two, but I have been unable to find anyone to whom these initials could refer.⁴

It is possible that the central shield may have been carved in honour of Sir Anthony Wingfield who married Elizabeth Vere and who was a local magnate and landowner at that time. This would account for the wings and the mullet.

-Editor.

³ Information from Miss Joan Corder.

⁴ I am indebted to Mr. Frank Girling, F.S.A. for the photographs of the internal features of the house.