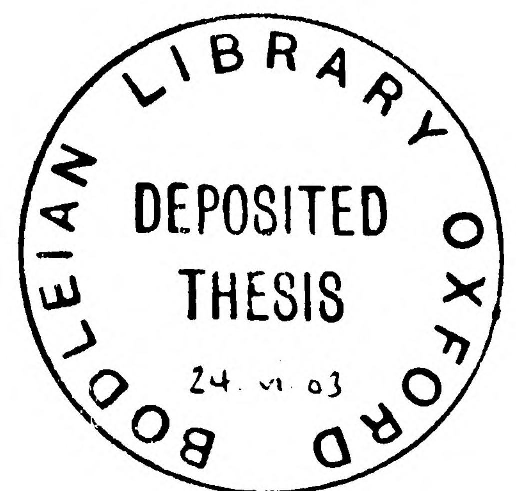
SECULAR WALL PAINTING IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

Kathryn Baird

A thesis submitted to the University of Oxford for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Kellogg College

Michaelmas Term 2002 [i.e. 2003]



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Abstract

Wall paintings survive in many houses dating from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries yet, apart from recording the phenomenon, there has been very little written about them. This research explores how common wall paintings were, what sort of houses had them, when they were painted and most importantly, what was their significance in terms of what they can reveal about the lives of the people who chose to decorate their homes in this manner. Research has concentrated on the Welsh Marches although examples from elsewhere have been referred to.

The research hypotheses are:

1. Wall paintings were much more widespread than existing records suggest and were probably universal where there was money to spend on embellishing a house.

2. Following on from this, wall paintings would have been found in houses throughout the social scale, apart from the humblest dwellings.

3. The paintings were executed by itinerant painters who used pattern books as a source of design.

4. This form of decoration was most commonly found in the period 1550-1625, with few paintings prior to this date and a rapid decline in numbers after this period.

5. In some cases there is a connection between the content of the painting and the function of the room.

The fifth hypothesis was widened during the course of the research to examine the significance of wall paintings generally. In trying to find out what wall paintings signified to the owners of houses, this research has attempted to look at all the facets of their life and environment which may have a bearing on this. This includes an understanding of the buildings themselves, exploring who the people were who might have lived in them and placing these people in their social and cultural contexts. Always the emphasis has been on the small and local rather than on the bigger picture,

as this is what touched people at the vernacular level most closely. In order to do this, the research has adopted a wide-ranging and multidisciplinary approach which cuts across traditional fields of knowledge.

Therefore, the study combines library and documentary-based evidence with extensive fieldwork, in order to investigate diverse kinds of evidence. This includes research on the wall paintings themselves, the buildings in which they were found and the social, religious and cultural circumstances in which they were created. The research synthesises a wide range of methods for gathering and interpreting data: study and analysis of contemporary literature and documents, the study of a wide range of published and unpublished research, and a substantial fieldwork survey.

First the context in which wall paintings were created is explored, in terms of physical environment, cultural and social characteristics of the period, and the church. Then the key findings arising from the fieldwork are discussed, looking at the sorts of houses that have wall paintings, the people who lived in them, and in detail at the characteristics of the paintings found. 233 wall paintings were recorded in 188 buildings. The hypotheses about universality and status are explored by investigating the vernacular qualities of wall painting in terms of materials and techniques required, who was doing the paintings, and their cost.

Through the identification of a range of iconography, and the classification of paintings, possible sources for wall painting designs are explored. Finally the key issue of the significance of painted decoration at the vernacular level is discussed drawing on the various strands of the research in order to understand why particular forms of decoration might have been chosen, and what social and cultural meanings they may have had.

The findings of the research indicate that wall paintings were very widespread. They were found throughout the area of study in houses of all but the very poor. Whilst the majority of paintings surveyed were in houses of the gentry or better-off members of society it is argued that this reflects the differential rate of survival of vernacular buildings. A technical analysis of wall paintings and an assessment of their total cost reveals the vernacular qualities of the wall paintings. This also suggests that wall paintings were only ever intended as short term decoration as some of the pigments used were very fugitive. Further evidence for this has been found in the practice of overpainting one scheme with another within a short period, which was revealed through microscopic analysis of paint samples.

The contemporary aesthetic included striking yet crude designs which were capable of being executed by local craftsmen. These findings indicate that wall paintings could have been extensive lower down the social scale.

Whilst painted decoration throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was examined, it is submitted that the majority of paintings were executed during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries – a period of considerable change during the transition from a medieval to an early modern society. The paintings dating from this period have a character quite distinct from the limited number found earlier and later than this period.

The significance of wall paintings is closely bound up with issues of status. This period of transition was characterised by outward expressions of status by means of display in a variety of forms. It is argued in this research that wall paintings were an element of such display. Iconography included decorative as well as figure subjects and it is this that holds the key to the significance of the paintings. The higher status houses had the more complex figurative and ornamental schemes whilst, for the most part, the humbler houses had simpler ornamental schemes. Also the simpler, decorative schemes seem to have been more common in halls whilst more sophisticated paintings appear to have been in the more private rooms of the house. The iconography and the context of the wall paintings can provide an important insight into some of the more intangible and elusive aspects of vernacular life.

Social and cultural values of the period are particularly difficult to access as surviving indicators of these are limited. Literary sources have limited value in a society which expressed itself in a predominantly non-literate fashion. Vernacular buildings can provide a major source of information and this research argues that wall paintings were a key element in vernacular buildings at a specific time during the transition from a medieval to an early modern society and are, therefore, a crucial record of changing social and cultural values.

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Abstract

Wall paintings, which survive in many houses dating from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, constitute an important element of display embodying complex cultural and social values of this period of transition from a medieval to an early modern society. This research explores how common wall paintings were during this period, what sort of houses had them, when they were painted and most importantly, what their significance was in terms of what they can reveal about the lives of the people who chose to decorate their homes in this manner. Research has concentrated on the Welsh Marches although examples from elsewhere have been referred to.

In trying to find out what wall paintings signified to the owners of houses, this research looks at all the facets of his life and environment which may have a bearing on this, including an understanding of the buildings themselves, exploring who the people were who might have lived in them and placing these people in their social and cultural contexts. In order to do this a wide-ranging and multidisciplinary approach has been adopted which includes the study and analysis of contemporary literature and documents, the study of a wide range of published and unpublished material, and a substantial fieldwork survey. 233 wall paintings were recorded in 188 buildings.

The findings of the research indicate that wall paintings were very widespread in the late 16th and early 17th centuries and that they could be found in houses of all but the very poor. The contemporary aesthetic included striking yet crude designs which were capable of being executed by local craftsmen. Iconography included decorative as well as figure subjects and it is this that holds the key to the significance of the paintings. Social and cultural values of the period are particularly difficult to access as surviving indicators of these are limited. Vernacular buildings are a major source of evidence for this and wall paintings constitute a significant element within them which can provide a record of changing social and cultural values during this period of transition.

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First I would like to acknowledge the invaluable help of Professor Malcolm Airs, my supervisor, for his sustained encouragement, his enthusiasm and his critical analysis.

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Abbreviations used in the text

SRRC – Shropshire Records and Research Centre
GLO – Gloucestershire Record Office
NLW –National Library of Wales
PCC – Prerogative Court of Canterbury
CRO- Cheshire Record Office
WRO – Worcestershire Record Office
SCRO – Staffordshire County Record Office
TSAS – Transactions of the Shropshire Archaeological Society
TEAS – Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society
SMR - Sites and Monuments Record
VCH – Victoria County History
RCAHMW – Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales
RCHM(E) - Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments (of England)
VA – Vernacular Architecture (Journal of the Vernacular Architecture Group)
Trans. Rad. Soc – Transactions of the Radnorshire Society

Notes on text

The Gazetteer accompanying this thesis contains photographs of the wall paintings surveyed and the buildings where they are found. Some of the data collected during the fieldwork is included to provide access to the information upon which judgements have been made. Also an explanation of each painting is included to assist legibility. The Gazetteer is arranged in alphabetic order of county. Each painting is referenced by a number in square brackets [] and these are referred to throughout the thesis.

Where details of families are given, this is assumed to have been the family living in the building when the wall paintings was carried out.

Monetary values are given in £ s d and measurements in imperial.

Section 1

Contextual Background

Chapter 1
Introduction

Impetus for research

The discovery, in the course of my professional work in building conservation, of the wall painting shown in fig 1.1 was the starting point for my initial search for information on wall paintings in vernacular houses. Shortly afterwards I came across three more, in close geographical proximity. Then, the more I looked the more I found (see figs.1.2, 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch and 1.3, Cotton's House, Market Drayton). I was quite unfamiliar with this element of vernacular buildings as I had not encountered such decoration before moving to Shropshire, having worked previously in the Pennines - a point of relevance whose significance emerged during the course of the research. Faced with having to make decisions on alterations and repairs to these buildings I needed first to understand the significance of the wall painting. I wanted to know how common wall paintings were, what sort of houses had them, when they were painted and most importantly, what was their significance[1].

I researched many sources of information on buildings and conservation but failed to find any substantial references to wall paintings in vernacular buildings. A number of articles in archaeological and antiquarian journals gave descriptive accounts of wall paintings found, usually during the course of demolition, and offered speculative dates and explanations for their existence.[2] Whilst knowledgeable and, for the most part, soundly based, the scope of discussion was limited and there was rarely any evidence submitted to support claims made. There was plenty of advice on practical conservation of wall paintings, information on painted decoration in churches and some higher status secular buildings but there was nothing to help me understand the significance of vernacular wall paintings.

Art history sources were explored and these were even less helpful. Early references to vernacular painting were dismissive, if not derogatory. That the Victorians were unimpressed by these wall paintings is not surprising,[3] but as late as 1953 Waterhouse wasted no time on the subject:

> Secular wall paintings from the sixteenth century do exist, but they are mainly decorative, and the work of local house-painters. An exception is the series from Hill Hall, Essex, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which are pedestrian imitations after tapestries from Raphael school designs. It will be sufficient to have mentioned the existence of this class of work.[4]

This attitude has possibly been responsible for the loss of many wall paintings. More recent work has recognised their value but is still based on an art historical perspective[5].

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[1] The term wall painting is used throughout to include ceiling paintings as well.
[2] See, for example, articles by Reader, Benton and Rouse
[3] See Reader, 1935 for a discussion on Cussan's views
[4] Waterhouse, 1953, p.29
[5] For example Carrick, 1989

Fig.1.1 Coptivinney, nr. Ellesmere, Shrops.

Fig.1.3 Cotton's House, Market Drayton, Shrops.

Fig.1.2 17-19 Watergate St., Whitchurch, Shrops.

From my previous research into vernacular buildings and my experience of working with them for many years I knew that even the smallest detail can yield valuable information about people's lives for which no other record exists. I felt that wall painting was potentially a significant element in vernacular buildings and that not only were we missing out on the information which might be embodied in this form of decoration but also, because of the vulnerability of wall paintings, that there was a danger of losing this evidence altogether.

Having failed to find satisfactory published answers to these questions about wall paintings, I set about trying to answer them myself. The aim of this research, then, is to fill in this gap in our knowledge of vernacular buildings in the hope that we can make better sense of what wall paintings have to tell us about the lives of the people who chose to decorate their homes in this manner.

Nature of wall painting

Before discussing the research further, the nature of the wall paintings which form the subject of the research should be introduced. The Gazetteer, which is an integral part of this thesis, contains an illustration of the front elevation of all buildings where wall paintings were found and a detail of each painting. The first thing to be noted is that the paintings are frequently fragmentary and often difficult to decipher - possibly one reason why academic study of them has been neglected. A brief description accompanies the painting illustration to assist in interpretation. Particularly good examples (in that they are clear and fairly complete) are paintings of Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire [3-4], the Town Council Offices, Ledbury [42], New Hall, Ticklerton [85], Petsey, near Wem [91], Church Farm, Neenton [130], Harvington Hall, Worcestershire [160 –171] and Dowles Manor, near Kidderminster [177]. Included in order to provide a context are some examples from higher status houses, for example Combermere Abbey, Cheshire [1] and later houses such as Tredegar, Glamorgan [214] and Knightwick Manor, Worcestershire [178].

The widely varying characteristics of paintings made it difficult at first sight to see any pattern or common factors which could be used to organise the information which they may contain. Only after carrying out a pilot survey did some general characteristics emerge. Work by others on classifying wall paintings[6] helped to order the characteristics in a way that clarified their meaning. This classification is set out under *type* in the Gazetteer and assisted the reading of some of the more illegible paintings.

Often contemporary writing can help in understanding a phenomenon alien to modern experience but in the case of wall painting there are disappointingly few references. This might be because they were so commonplace that writers ignored their presence, as recorders of an age tend to note the strange and exotic more than the everyday and mundane. Leland writing in c.1540 described The Olde House, Chenies, Buckinghamshire: 'The house is within diverse places richely painted with antique workes of white and blak'[7], noting the antiquework for its novelty as it was only just becoming popular at this time.

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[6] Reader, 1941, Rouse, 1989

[7] Smith, 1964, p.105

Shakespeare makes a few references in his works, though there is no way of being certain that these refer to wall painting rather than painted cloths. In *Henry IV, Part 2*, Falstaff is trying to persuade Mistress Quickly to part with her furniture in order to raise money to make him a loan:

> ... and for thy walls, a pretty slight drollery, or the story of the Prodigal, or a German hunting in water-work, is worth a thousand of these bed-hangings and these fly-bitten tapestries.[8]

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the Host describes Falstaff's room:

> There's his chamber....'tis painted about with the Prodigal, fresh and new[9].

Harrison, a principal observer of the customs of the age, writing in 1577, frustratingly makes no mention of wall paintings, referring only to painted cloths. Intriguingly, a late sixteenth century account of the Hundred Head Inn between Ludlow and Worcester gives a description of a painted room in the following terms:

> ... in the fairest room whereof, being a low parlour, there was no garnishing with wainscot, or so much as a stained cloth, but bare loom walls whited over with a rude anticke of flowering work in blacke, painted upon it, leaving at the upper end of the wall next the ceiling a narrow white border wherein was written in a continued line round about the room these verses:
>
> 'Sith it is uncertain where death shall us meet
> And yet most certain that he follows our feet
> In all our waies let us so wise and steady
> That wherfuer he meet us, he may find us ready.[10]

Complete schemes rarely survive and those that do have suffered from years of wear and tear. In the Marches, Harvington Hall offers the best example and, somewhat further afield, the Golden Cross in Oxford gives a good impression of a complete scheme. The full impact of this form of decoration can best be seen in the reconstructions of painted cloths at Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford, (see figs 1.4-1.5) The painted cloths cover the entire wall in the manner of wall paintings and in fact the designs are largely based on existing wall paintings (only one of the designs is based on a painted cloth as hardly any survive to copy).

Previous perspectives on wall paintings

Scholarly interest in wall paintings dates back to the early nineteenth century focusing primarily on higher status houses and more accomplished paintings. As

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[8] Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part 2*, Act 2, Sc.1, 160-163.
[9] Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act 4, Sc.5, 6-9
[10] Quoted in Carrick, 1989 where she attributes it to a supplement to Harrison's *Description of England*, 1908 but I have been unable to find the original quotation. The painting was recorded as still in existence in the 1930s.

Fig.1.4 Hall, Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford, Warwickshire

Fig.1.5 First floor chamber, Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford, Warwickshire

their worth was considered to lie in their artistic merit, many wall paintings received fairly dismissive reviews. They could not be compared favourably with the élite art produced during the period. Curiosity prompted some reports, often when the building was in the process of demolition, for example those at Grove House, Woodford, published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. These were discovered in an upper room known as the Ballroom. The building, which the article suggests was a hunting seat of the Earl of Essex, had been used latterly as a school and the Ballroom was the dormitory. The article reports that the figures on the walls 'so disturbed ...the infant imaginations, that they could not settle themselves to repose', with the consequence that some of them had been whitewashed over. The paintings consisted of twelve panels, one of which was dated 1617, each containing a scene of rural life (see fig. 1.6)[11].

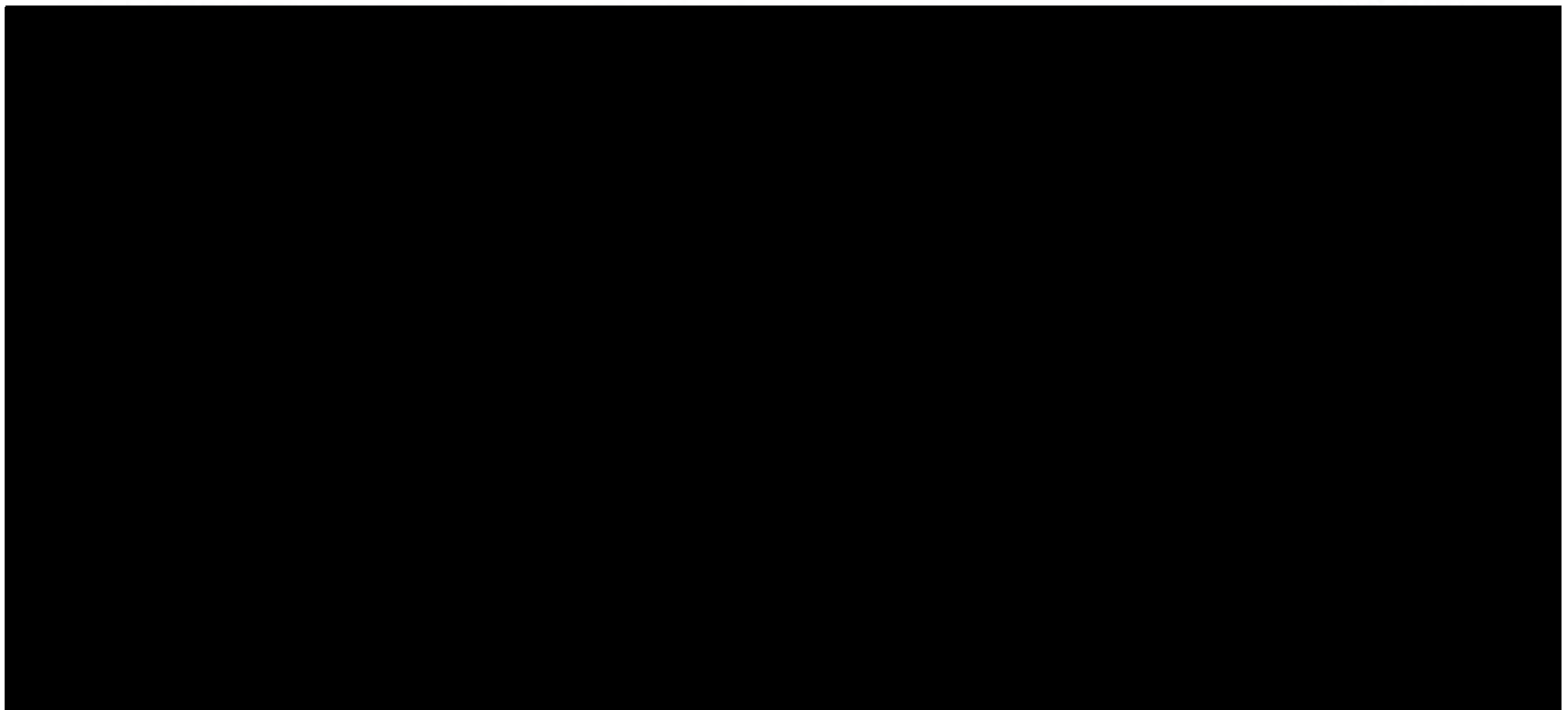

Fig.1.6 Grove House, Woodford, Essex

Other paintings noted in the late Victorian period are reported in antiquarian and archaeological journals but still they were assessed on their artistic qualities. Cussans' comments on a painting featuring figures in Elizabethan costume found at Huckster's End, Hertfordshire in 1880, are typical, 'Although of no historical interest and of little artistic merit, it is interesting as an example of costume.'[12] These paintings were in fact of considerable interest and accomplishment, as Reader subsequently pointed out.[13] A number of early twentieth century articles took wall paintings more seriously[14] and in the 1930s and 1940s Reader published a series of articles attempting a national overview of the subject[15]. Dismissing the Victorian prejudices he argued that wall paintings are worthy of attention in their own right. He was the first writer to recognise the subject as one of national interest, rather than one of local curiosity.

His conclusions, which are largely unsubstantiated, were based on the limited number of wall paintings identified at that time, most of which were in the south-

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[11] *The Gentleman's Magazine*, November, 1833, pp.393-395
[12] Cussans, 1880, p.55
[13] Reader, 1935, p.268-269
[14] For example, Christy and Maynard, Johnston and Benton
[15] Reader, 1935, 1936 and 1941

east. He attributes the work to painter stainers but suggested that some of the poorer paintings may be the work of local craftsmen. The date range he suggested is from the early sixteenth century until the early seventeenth century and dates were somewhat arbitrarily assigned to paintings within this period. In his earlier articles, Renaissance paintings attracted a disproportionate amount of attention which led him to conclude that after around 1550 all wall paintings were Renaissance in character, though this was later modified to suggest that they were, rather, no longer in the Gothic tradition. The question of how the demand for such extensive Renaissance decoration arose was not resolved 'Enthusiasm for classic learning was restricted to a small community of scholars and could hardly have affected a very wide public.[16]' Imitation panelling (such as that at Astley Town House, Worcs.[182]) was regarded as predominantly an early seventeenth century form of decoration. Accurate dating was generally acknowledged as a problem although this did not inhibit speculation as to fairly precise dates.

In his last article he proposed a classification based on iconography. Whilst useful as a starting point for considering any volume of information, the lack of any deeper investigation suggested this was seen more as an end in itself - the recording of the phenomenon - rather than an investigation into the significance of it.

Rouse's excellent work on recording wall paintings continued along similar lines. He published articles on Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire and for the latter recorded 107 examples[17]. Although he attempted briefly to set wall paintings in a wider context he was still principally concerned with description and classification. Whilst Reader was relatively circumspect, Rouse was more authoritative in some of his assertions but he failed to present the necessary evidence to substantiate them. He submitted that journeyman painters were responsible for the work possibly using pattern books and the similarity between some schemes was explained by the use of such patterns or by the same painter repeating a scheme as he travelled around. Instances of overpainting one scheme with another (for example at Pittleworth Manor) were noted by both Reader and Rouse but passed over without further comment and, whilst Reader thought decorative schemes in more than one room of the house were common, Rouse found this to be rare. Dealing with the significance of wall paintings very briefly and simply, he considered their purpose was to imitate more expensive materials.[18] Most writers have accepted that display was the motive although the reasons for such expression and its significance were not explored.

Developing Reader's classification (which understandably has a strong south-eastern bias), Rouse suggested a model which is more universally applicable. This has been used by Carrick[19] and forms the basis of the one used in this research. Carrick's work on Essex looks comprehensively at one county and gives an idea of the range of wall painting found in one area and presumably in houses of all status, although this is not made explicit. The emphasis of the work is strongly art historical and provides much useful information on the range of sources for the designs found.

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[16] Reader, 1936, p.227
[17] Rouse, 1989
[18] ibid., p.428
[19] Carrick, 1989

The growth in interest in secular wall paintings is reflected in the increase in the numbers recorded. In 1883 Keyser published a list of all known wall paintings which consisted almost entirely of church painting. Only around twenty secular paintings were included[20]. By the 1930s Reader had compiled an inventory of over two hundred examples in less than twenty counties. By the 1980s Rouse recorded just over a hundred in Hertfordshire[21], and Carrick[22] noted around two hundred in Essex. In addition many others have been recorded in Buckinghamshire, Suffolk, Oxfordshire and examples have been found elsewhere in the country.

This brief summary represents the nature of research to date on wall painting. Apart from a few reports on individual buildings this work does not seriously discuss the buildings where wall paintings are found nor the people who commissioned them nor, more importantly, do they consider the significance of the paintings. The research set out in this study aims to address the issue of wall painting comprehensively. It seeks to answer the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter - that is, how common were wall paintings, what sort of houses had them, when were they painted and what was their significance?

Scope of research

In order to do this, the research demands a wide-ranging and multidisciplinary approach which cuts across traditional fields of knowledge. In trying to find out what wall paintings signified to the owner of a house, I have attempted to look at all the facets of his life and environment which may have a bearing on this. Starting with an understanding of the buildings themselves, I have sought to learn as much as possible about the people who might have lived in them and tried to place these people in their social and cultural context. Always the emphasis has been on the small and local rather than on the bigger picture, as this is what touched people at the vernacular level most closely. In many aspects of vernacular building a detailed analysis of technical issues can yield unexpected information and it seemed reasonable to suppose that wall painting would be no exception to this concept. For this reason the study also focuses closely on the practical aspects of painting, working through exactly what processes were involved at each stage, who did what, and where materials were obtained.

The research therefore addresses a complex network of interwoven threads which reflects the reality of people's lives. This approach has been adopted in some recent studies in vernacular architecture[23] recognising the need to flesh out the bones of the building by looking at the people living in them and has been forcefully advocated by Mercer[24]. By linking different disciplines and adopting a wider approach, a deeper understanding of the subject can be gained.

Whilst the study essentially concerns vernacular buildings, some houses of the élite are included. These help to place the vernacular buildings in their context. Moreover,

[20] Keyser, 1883
[21] Rouse, 1989
[22] Carrick, 1989
[23] Johnson, 1993, Pearson, 1994, Alcock, 1993
[24] Mercer, 1997, pp.9-12

their dominant presence in the community must have had some impact on the lives of ordinary people. If nothing else, the decoration in these houses may have constituted an aspiration for those lower down the social scale. Similarly the date range set out in the title has not been strictly adhered to. Early writers have often referred to wall painting as a Tudor phenomenon but without much hard evidence to back this up. I have looked at wall painting throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in some cases even the early eighteenth century, in order to understand the chronology of this topic better.

At one point in their existence, many buildings in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were highly decorated. Other aspects of vernacular building may have had functional and rational explanations but this cannot be the case for wall paintings. There is clearly an element, best described as fashion, at work which can provide rich insights into a wide range of social and cultural values. If only wall paintings could be understood, I felt that here was a valuable source of information on issues which otherwise are difficult to access. Much has been lost and many of those which survive are a struggle to 'read', making it difficult to access the information they contain. Nevertheless, there is a story here and from the time of my early discoveries of wall paintings I have felt that it was worth unpicking the evidence to see what they are telling us. This is what the following chapters attempt to do.

Chapter 2
Methodology

The previous chapter explored the origins of this research, and identified the principal questions for consideration. The present chapter presents the subsequent decisions about research design that were made in order to investigate those areas of concern in a systematic and rigorous way. This involves, first of all, the presentation of the key hypotheses of the research. The chapter will then discuss in detail how the research process seeks to substantiate or disprove those hypotheses through the investigation and analysis of evidence and theories from a wide range of sources, and from extensive fieldwork.

Research Hypotheses

1. Wall paintings were much more widespread than existing records suggest and were probably universal where there was money to spend on embellishing a house.

2. Following on from this, wall paintings would have been found in houses throughout the social scale, apart from the humblest dwellings.

3. The paintings were executed by itinerant painters who used pattern books as a source of design.

4. This form of decoration was most commonly found in the period 1550-1625, with few paintings prior to this date and a rapid decline in numbers after this period.

5. In some cases there is a connection between the content of the painting and the function of the room.

The first two hypotheses are distinct from one another in that the first concerns the question of whether or not wall paintings were geographically universal across the broad area of the Marches being found in buildings of all types (in terms of materials of construction), whilst the second concerns the question of whether or not wall paintings could be found in houses at all levels of society.

The third hypothesis addresses the argument presented quite widely in the extant literature that wall paintings were generally painted by itinerant painters. This theory is based on the knowledge that other kinds of master craftsmen did indeed travel round the country to work on major building sites. Given the universality hypothesis, this is an issue which must be resolved by the research.

In the fourth hypothesis, the research attempts to illuminate and possibly question established opinion in the literature about the period when wall paintings were most common. The final hypothesis raises the issue of whether there is a connection between the iconography in the painting, and the function of the room in which it was painted.

Underlying all the research is the desire to understand what these paintings mean in the context of vernacular buildings. If the extent and nature of wall painting implied by these hypotheses can be substantiated, then these paintings must clearly be recognised as a significant expression of the social and cultural life of the period.

Research Design

In order to test the hypotheses outlined above, it was necessary to conduct a study which combined library and documentary-based evidence with extensive fieldwork, in order to investigate diverse kinds of evidence. This included research on the wall paintings themselves, the buildings in which they were found and the social, religious and cultural circumstances in which they were created. Therefore, the research design attempts to synthesise a wide range of methods for gathering and interpreting data: study and analysis of contemporary literature and documents, the study of a wide range of published and unpublished research, and a substantial fieldwork survey. In reality, these different methods were carried out concurrently so that, for instance, ongoing study of relevant and recent research literature was able to inform fieldwork, and discoveries in the fieldwork were able, in turn, to inform the reading of research literature.

The present thesis is written in a way that reflects this process to some extent, with empirical findings being discussed in the light of relevant reading, and also on occasions with findings being used to exemplify theoretical perspectives from the literature, although the different chapters of the thesis do emphasise clear and distinctive stages of the research. In the interests of clarity, the following sections describe the different methods used more sequentially.

Literature and Documentary Research

Wall painting literature review

The starting point for the research involved wide-ranging reading of all published material and unpublished research relating to secular wall paintings. The published material consisted mostly of journal articles many dating from the first half of the twentieth century which tended to arise out of antiquarian interests rather than being the products of rigorous academic research. This stage of literature review led to the adoption for the research, in a modified form, of a classification system for the planned fieldwork survey based on an established system that had been used by other researchers. This had proved to be a workable system for organising material and it also meant that the results could be considered in relation to existing research. Details of the classification are contained in Appendix 1.

This stage of review also involved the study of contemporary references, such as those found in Shakespeare's works, William Bullein[1], Leland and later references in architectural and antiquarian books.

[1] Bullein, 1573, pp.80-94

Context Literature Review

This aspect of literature review consisted of two distinct areas of focus: physical and economic, and cultural contexts.

i. physical and economic

The first step in the review of literature relating to context was to define the geographical area for the fieldwork survey. Having decided on the Marches as the broad area of focus for the research, it was necessary to identify an area which had some social, cultural and economic cohesion in the chosen period of study. This involved the study of contemporary and modern accounts of the historical development of the Marches, the physical geography of the area, the factors contributing to the economic base during the sixteenth century, and the distinguishing characteristics which gave the area cohesion. County boundaries were used for ease of documentary research and were as defined in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

A major element in the physical environment, for the purposes of this study, is the vernacular building in the Marches. As there is no single published work covering the Marches, there was a considerable amount of work to be done in terms of summarising the characteristics of the built environment. There was considerably more information available for some areas than for others. Apart from the RCHM's volumes for Herefordshire, the work of the RCAHMW and Fox and Raglan provided the only significant published sources which obviously only covered the Welsh counties so it was necessary to draw on unpublished research (principally with regards to Shropshire), journal articles and personal knowledge.

ii. cultural

In order to be confident that the examination of painted decoration was properly grounded in its cultural context, a wide range of contemporary and modern literature was reviewed covering those aspects which it was felt might have a bearing on the subject of the research. A particular concern was to understand how changes in buildings were related to cultural changes during the period in question. Other factors felt to be of relevance were issues of status and how status was expressed, principally through buildings but also through costume. The growth in print as a medium of communication during this period of history was another major cultural factor. Closely allied to this were questions of education and literacy.

Whilst there exists a great deal of literature discussing these issues at certain levels of society during this period, the particular concern of the present research is to explore such concerns at the vernacular level, where limited published information exists. The aim was to build up a holistic view of the lives and cultural world of the people whose buildings and painted decoration were the focus of the research.

Some attention was paid also to the impact of the Reformation at the vernacular level, in terms of how this was expressed in the decoration of the local church, but without attempting to over-extend the scope of the study to include larger political and religious issues.

Documentary Analysis

All available published indexes of wills covering a large part of the country were studied, in order to gain some indication of how many specialised painters there were nationally during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In addition, unpublished wills and inventories covering the Marches were comprehensively reviewed for evidence of painters in the region of study.

Unpublished transcribed inventories (numbering just under a thousand) covering three North Shropshire towns were examined in order to extract information on evidence of painted cloths, ownership of books as an indication of literacy and how buildings were used in terms of how people made use of different parts of the building. A further source of unpublished inventories (arising from the University of Wolverhampton's *Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities* project) was used to identify local sources within the Marches for pigments and other materials required for wall painting.

Churchwardens' accounts were examined for evidence of painted decoration, to see who was carrying out painting work in local churches, and for wage rates for different craftsmen. Building accounts held in the local record office were also studied for evidence of painters and wage rates. Royal proclamations provided further evidence on wage rates and also information on pigments and the decoration in churches.

In addition, a great number of other individual sources were drawn on, all of which are recorded in footnotes in subsequent chapters.

Technical Literature Review

The review of technical literature was undertaken because it was felt important to establish exactly how vernacular painting was carried out. The principal aim of this was to investigate materials and techniques used in wall painting, for which painters' handbooks, contemporary and modern, were used. The preparation of pigments was studied also using contemporary and modern sources. An important additional source was literature based on the notebook by the plasterer John Abbott[2], which was used in relation to pigments and techniques, and for sources of design.

Published literature on wage rates was consulted in the course of this aspect of the literature review, which supplemented the documentary work referred to above in assessing the cost of painted decoration.

One significant outcome of the process of consulting the technical literature was the decision part-way through the survey to undertake pigment analysis, which had not initially been included in the research design.

Review of Material relating to the Visual Environment

This review had to be carried out after the fieldwork had been completed and when the iconography of the paintings had been analysed. It consisted of two linked elements: first, looking at the total visual environment as a context for painted

[2] See Chenevix-Trench, 1986, Bath, 1998, Beacham, 1990 and Wells-Cole, 1997

decoration; secondly, looking at sources for design in order to see if these were drawn from that environment. This involved an investigation of churches which were known to have contemporary decoration, and elements of decoration surviving the Reformation. The county volumes of Pevsner's *Buildings of England and Wales* series was the main source for this supplemented by personal knowledge of the area. Materials and costume which were encountered at the vernacular level were explored using contemporary references, surviving examples and information from the Victoria and Albert Museum. Printed material studied included published figurative and ornament prints, as well as the collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum, ballad sheets in the Bodleian Library, emblem books, title-pages and borders, and illustrations from contemporary books. These were accessed by looking at the original source material, reproductions in title-page publications, and the Early English Books Online resource, which enabled a wide range of contemporary illustrations to be consulted.

Existing buildings, artefacts and household goods were investigated for the extent of contemporary decoration, and to identify any possible connections with wall painting designs. Building elements such as plasterwork, panelling, carving, glazing patterns and indeed painted decoration in other buildings were examined. Contemporary literature and documents were studied for further evidence of decoration in the visual environment.

Fieldwork Survey

It is important to stress at the outset that the survey of buildings was not designed on a sampling basis. The aim was to survey all known examples in a given area. This involved using records extracted from the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest, the RCHME and RCAHMW, Pevsner's county surveys and county sites and monuments records. In addition further paintings were tracked down using a variety of contacts, such as building conservation professionals, local historians, local architects and building craftsmen and other local knowledge. As the survey developed, the number of examples discovered far exceeded expectations and it was not possible to devote the time necessary to seeking out all hitherto unknown examples in some of the counties surveyed. As a result, the counties of Shropshire and Herefordshire were surveyed exhaustively and all known Welsh examples were surveyed based principally on the records of the RCAHMW. In Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Staffordshire and Cheshire generally only recorded paintings were surveyed and very few additional leads were sought to discover further painting.

Whilst this research is concerned with vernacular buildings, a small number of higher status buildings have been included to provide a context for the vernacular buildings. Paintings found in these provide a useful basis for comparison. Similarly, although the period of greatest interest is the second half of the sixteenth century and the early seventeenth century, paintings from any period within the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are considered (and in a few cases examples from outside this period are used) as they provide a useful reference points against which changes can be assessed. Whilst this research is essentially concerned with houses, some inns and other public buildings have been included, primarily because their function at the time the wall paintings were done is not known but also because they too provide a context for domestic paintings.

Designing the Survey

There were two main areas of concern in the survey: i) establishing details about buildings containing paintings; ii) establishing details about the paintings themselves. The survey was developed and refined over time. A first version of the survey was trialled with a number of houses, leading to the decision to expand the fields relating to some architectural features and painting details. The first of these was because it became evident that the architectural detail would be a key determinant of status. With the second, it had become apparent (as a result of reviewing the technical literature) that colour alone was too crude an element to yield significant information and that an assessment of the pigments used would be more informative. (The pigment analysis is discussed further below.)

The purpose of the survey of buildings was not to carry out a full archaeological record (although where full archaeological recordings had been carried out by others, these were used), but rather to collect certain information about the buildings and paintings which would inform the hypotheses. The aim was to establish the type of buildings which had wall paintings and their status, the date of the building and any alterations and/or additions, the location and extent of the wall painting and details on technique, pigments used and iconography. Appendix 2 has a sample of the survey sheet indicating the full range of information collected.

Not all of the information was collected on site. In the case of building details, some was gathered subsequently following research into building records and some was assessed later in the light of an analysis of the fieldwork. Similarly for painting details the cost of decoration and an assessment of its date could only be assessed later following further research.

Carrying out the Fieldwork

Access to buildings was arranged in advance so that adequate time could be programmed to collect all the information required, including analysing the historical development of the building, measuring, photographing and studying the paintings in detail. In some cases it was not possible to have unlimited access to the building so as much information as possible was collected.

A photographic record was made of the building and each painting. For the building this included key elevations and internal and external architectural features. For each painting a record was made of the scheme as a whole and details of interest were photographed separately.

Whilst considerable effort was invested in designing the survey, it was acknowledged at the outset, from professional experience of working with historic buildings, that there would inevitably be elements which were unexpected but which may be of relevance to understanding the building or its painting. For this reason as full an exploration of the building as the owners would permit was undertaken and any other features of note were recorded.

Fields requiring assessment

A number of the fields did not simply require the collection of data but involved an assessment based on the evidence available and professional experience. The methods of assessments are as follows:

i. status

The issue of defining status is one that has been the subject of much discussion at the vernacular level, and there is no clear definition of, for example, a gentry house or a yeoman's house. This possibly reflects the contemporary uncertainty regarding the boundaries between different social groups. There is general agreement, however, that status is a function of size, plan form, building materials and construction techniques, external and internal details. The survey was designed to collect information regarding all these points, with a view to assessing the status of the buildings. Details of the assessment of status are given in Appendix 3.

ii. date

In some cases an accurate date is known from dendrochronology and in others there has either been a full archaeological survey which has yielded fairly accurate dates or there is documentary evidence for the building date. Otherwise dates have been assessed on plan form and building details. The most difficult period to assess was the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, which seems to have been the period of greatest building activity. It is not always possible to distinguish different phases within this period but where both the main building and its additions or alterations appear to date from this period, then the main building has been assumed to date from the late sixteenth century and the alterations from the seventeenth century, simply on the grounds that it is reasonable to allow a period of time in between building phases.

iii. pigment analysis

Initially only the colours of the wall painting were recorded. As a result of investigating the materials and techniques used, it became apparent that an analysis of the actual pigments used could yield useful information which could help in assessing the vernacular qualities of the painting. Microscopic analysis is a specialised (and expensive) undertaking and experts were used to carry out this work. Because of the time and expense involved only a limited number of painting schemes were subject to full microscopic analysis. In a few cases this information was already available from wall painting conservators who had worked on the painting. For the remainder, a visual assessment was carried out based on the known characteristics of pigments.

iv. status and costs of wall painting

Using the paintings of higher status houses as a reference point, the quality of the execution of the paintings was assessed. Material to this assessment was the range of pigments used, the complexity of the design, the extent of modelling and the overall accomplishment of the painting. Details of how the costs of the painting were assessed are contained in Chapter 9.

v. date of wall painting

It was not possible to record this in the field except in the few cases where wall paintings were dated. The factors involved in assessing the date are discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Recording and Organising Data

Data collected during the course of the fieldwork was entered immediately into an Access database which enabled ongoing querying of relationships between different aspects of the buildings and the paintings. The feedback from this process enabled refinement of data collection, which in turn entailed some revisiting of the buildings surveyed early on in the fieldwork.

Given the large amount of information collected, and the importance of this information in developing explanations of key aspects of the research, it was decided to present this information as comprehensively and transparently as possible in the form of a Gazetteer, designed to accompany this thesis. Thus the information upon which judgements about issues such as the date of buildings, their status and the costs of decoration could be made fully accessible. Not all the data collected is included here but a synthesis of the fields which provide key information on the buildings and painting details is given. The introduction to the Gazetteer includes a more detailed explanation of the data used.

Research on Families

Arising out of the fieldwork but undertaken as a separate exercise was research on the families who lived in the houses at the time the wall painting was likely to have been carried out. The aim was to find out what sort of people were commissioning wall paintings and this also contributed to the assessment of the status of the houses. A wide range of sources was used for this including material in local record offices, published works such as Victoria County Histories, Heralds' Visitations and other historical accounts, information from house owners, local historians and a variety of other sources which are detailed in footnotes. The person commissioning the wall painting is deliberately referred to as male throughout and is intended to reflect gender realities of the time.

Conclusions

The various aspects of the research design outlined above are dealt with in the following chapters, in order to establish a rich and comprehensive evidence base. This is subsequently interpreted and analysed in the final chapters in order to test and discuss the hypotheses presented at the start of the present chapter.

Thus, the next three chapters explore the context in which wall paintings were created, in terms of physical environment, cultural and social characteristics of the period, and the church. Chapter 6 then presents in detail the key findings arising from the fieldwork, looking at the sorts of houses that have wall paintings, the people who lived in them, and in detail at the characteristics of the paintings found. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 address the hypotheses about universality and status by investigating the vernacular qualities of wall painting in terms of materials and techniques required, who was doing the paintings, and their cost.

Through the identification of a range of iconography, and the classification of paintings in accordance with the system described above, Chapter 10 suggests possible sources for wall painting designs. Chapter 11 addresses the key issue of the significance of painted decoration at the vernacular level. It draws on the various strands of the research in order to understand why particular forms of decoration might have been chosen, and what social and cultural meaning they may have had.

Chapter 12, Conclusions, reassesses the hypotheses in the light of the foregoing discussions, explores additional insights arising from the research, and suggests areas for further work.

In the interests of additional clarity, the thesis has also been divided into three main sections as follows: Section 1, Contextual Background (comprising Chapters 1 – 5); Section 2, Findings (comprising Chapters 6 – 9); Section 3, Discussion of Findings (comprising Chapters 10 –12).

Chapter 3
Context – Physical and Economic

This section outlines the context for painted decoration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries looking firstly at the reasons for selecting the area covered by the research and then discussing its physical characteristics. Relevant political and economic factors which may have a bearing on the context are examined and then the chief characteristics of vernacular buildings of the period are discussed. The social and cultural background which may have had an influence on painted decoration is considered in the following chapter.

Area of study

The purpose of this research is to establish not only the extent of the survival of wall paintings, and thereby obtain an indication of their original incidence, but also to establish what they reveal about society and culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The area of study should therefore be manageable, in that it is not so wide as to preclude in-depth study, and meaningful in that it has some social and cultural cohesion.

The Marches area has been selected as no published work on wall paintings exists on wall paintings in this area, yet the indications are that both the original incidence and the survival of wall paintings are high. Work undertaken to date on wall paintings has concentrated on south-east England, rich lowland areas near to London with a strong tradition of timber framing. In contrast to this, the Marches are a mixture of upland and lowland, geographically distinct from the south east and with a very different background historically, economically, politically, socially and culturally. Yet, in common with the south east, it was an area of relative prosperity in the sixteenth century and seventeenth centuries and has a strong tradition of timber framing.

In defining the Marches as an area of study (and no attempt is made here to define the Marches *per se*) political and economic factors must be taken into account and these in turn are influenced by the physical geography of the area[1]. The Marches lie between the Welsh mountains in the west and the lowlands of the Midland plain to the east, extending from the Dee estuary in the north to the Severn estuary in the south. This broad zone, approximately 100 miles long, is an area of great diversity physically, though having some unity in its transitional location between highland and lowland. To the north is the South Cheshire and North Shropshire Plain, crossed in the north by the River Dee, containing the meres around Ellesmere and rising to the foothills of the Welsh mountains in the north west. To the south of Shrewsbury are the South Shropshire Hills, an area of irregular uplands dissected by narrow river valleys, whilst to the east is the ridge and valley landscape characterised by Wenlock Edge. Further south is the gentler landscape of the Herefordshire Plain, surrounded by uplands which rise to the south west into the Black Mountains. South of this is the Forest of Dean plateau which is cut through by the River Wye to give some of the most picturesque landscape in the country. Always to the west the land is rising

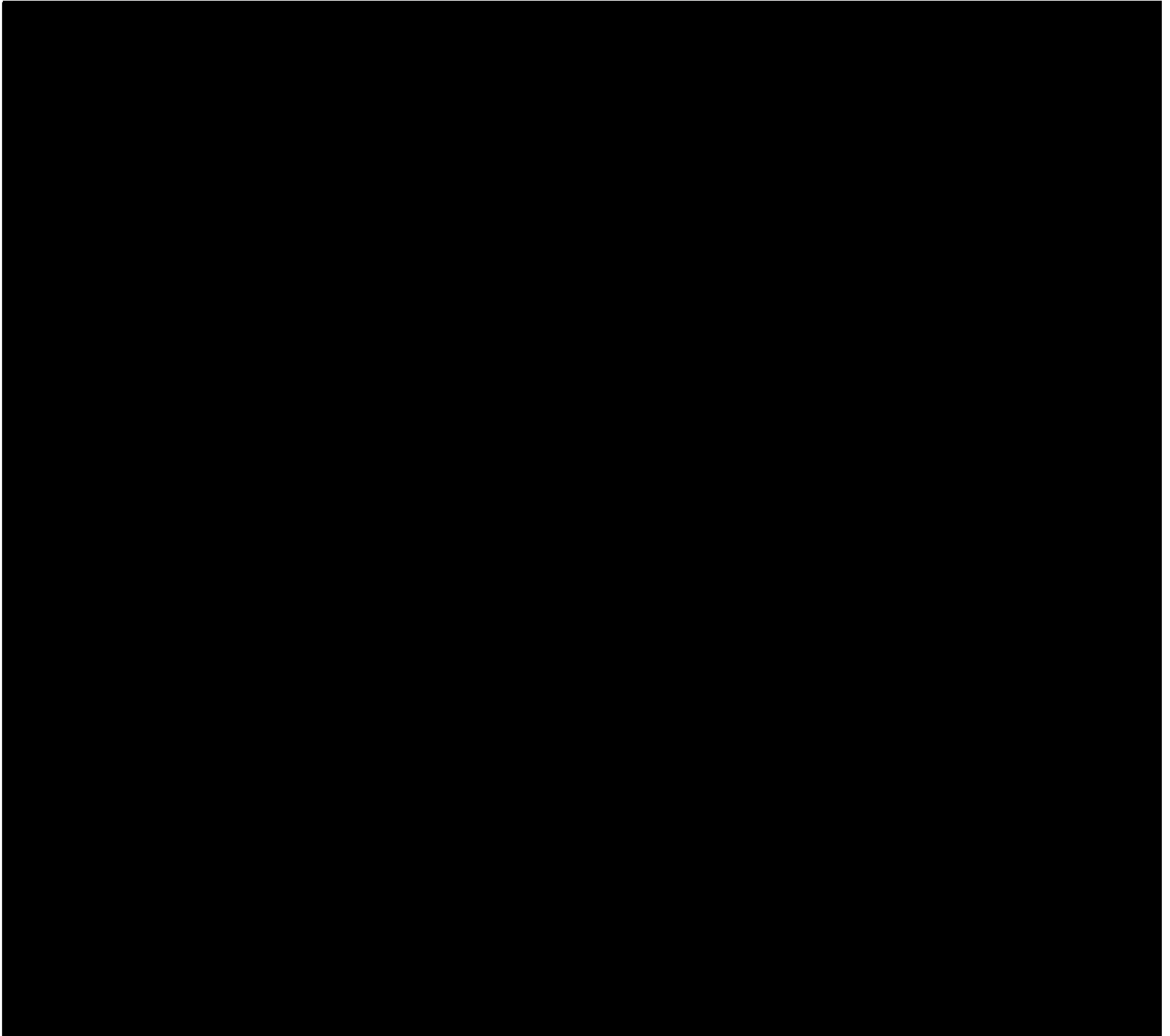
[1] The following account is based on Smith, 1988; Thoresby Jones, 1946; Vergil, 1972; Rees, 1940

from the foothills to the inaccessible Welsh mountains proper, whilst to the east the land drops away to the Midlands Plain. The mountains are breached only at the coastal plains to the north and south and by the main river valleys of the Dee, Severn, Wye and Usk.

Having identified a broad geographical zone, it is necessary to look at how this has influenced the development of the area in order to provide a context in social and cultural terms. It appears to have been always transitional 'border' country, not readily conquered by invading forces pushing west. A line of Iron Age hill forts runs north-south along the border zone, capping many of the well defined, isolated hills, though insufficient is known of the function of these to establish to what extent they were military. Roman forts also abound in the area, though few are found west of the Welsh mountains, suggesting that the inhospitable Welsh mountains were left to the native Celts. The extent of early Anglo-Saxon penetration of the Marches has not been clearly established. Place name evidence suggests a relatively small Saxon population but the reality is probably much more complex with dominance of Celts and Saxons fluctuating over time. Not until King Offa constructed the famous dyke was the dominance of the Anglo-Saxons firmly established. Yet other dykes constructed at approximately the same time follow the line of Offa's Dyke but at a distance of up to 10 miles away, suggesting that even at this time conflicts continued and the border between England and Wales was a zone rather than a fixed line (see Map 1).

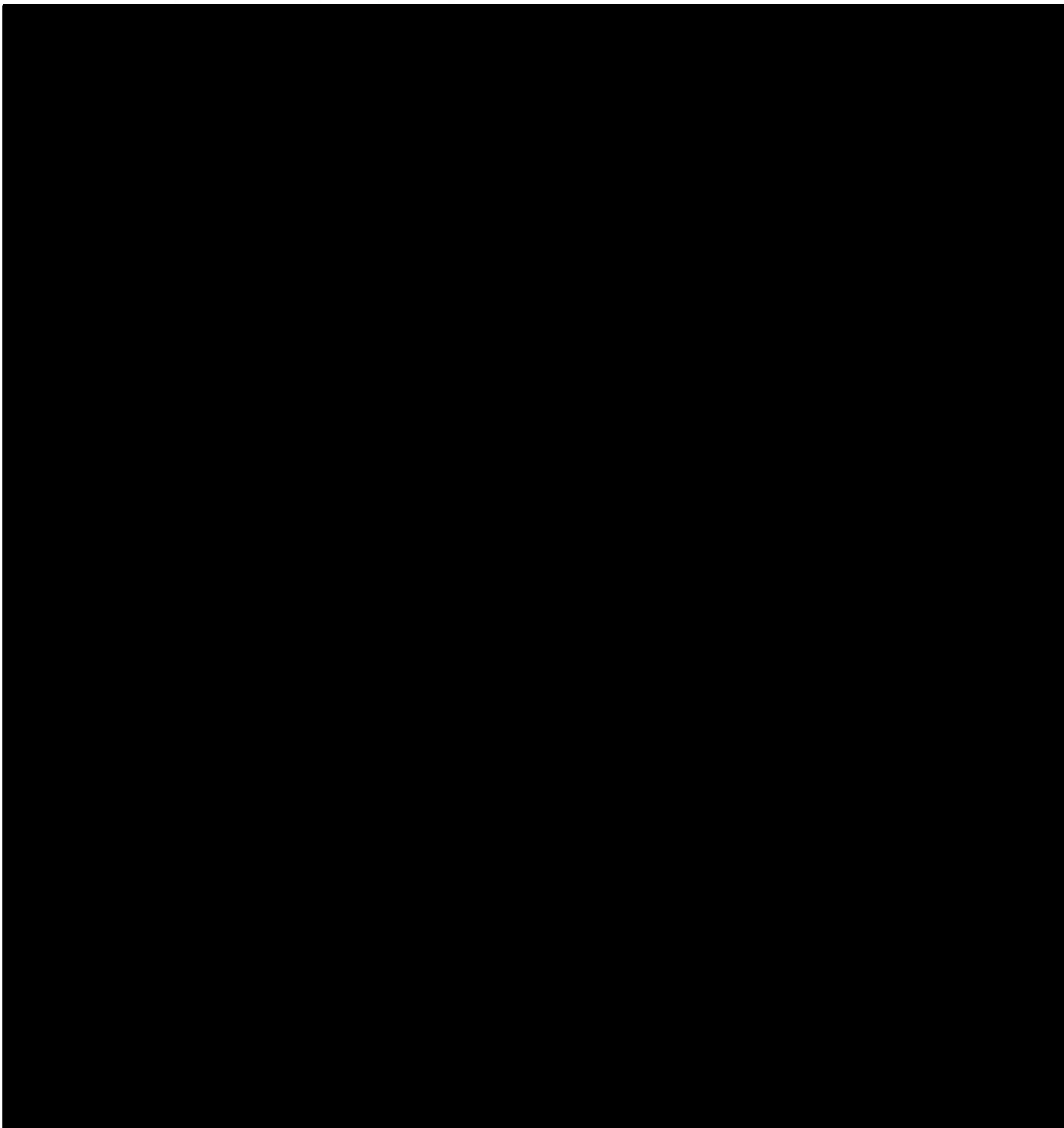
The greatest influence on settlement in the area were the Normans, who conquered England easily enough but struggled to keep control over the troublesome border lands. The solution adopted was to grant to certain Norman barons all those lands on the borders that they could conquer. These border lordships occupied a broad zone roughly between 35 and 50 miles wide running north to south, largely west of Offa's dyke, though extending east into Shropshire and Herefordshire. The higher ranges of the Welsh mountains halted the westward expansion of the lordships, except where the Severn valley breaks through, allowing Roger de Montgomery to reach the coast at Cardigan Bay (see Map 2). Having gained control of these border lands, the Marcher lords ruled these as petty kingdoms, each lordship exercising its own laws and customs. Welsh laws inhibited the gentry from amassing large estates and wealth which could threaten the power of the Marcher lords. The relative poverty of the Welsh gentry is discussed in Chapter 4. Not until the Acts of 1536 and 1542 were the Marcher Lordships abolished and English law extended to the whole of Wales. By the mid-thirteenth century, 153 lordships had been established, largely based on Anglo-Saxon commotes or settlement cells, each controlled by a castle. Initially, these were motte and bailey castles but where a town was successfully established alongside the castle, these were replaced by more substantial stone castles. The establishment of a borough encouraged the growth of these settlements as trading centres and this proved an effective way of retaining control over the disputed border territory. Despite the constant ebb and flow of the border depending on the varying fortunes of the Marcher lords, the lordships generally flourished and, with this, a series of border market towns developed. Some of these failed in the later middle ages but many prospered and by the mid-fourteenth century, Ludlow was one of the most prosperous market towns in the country. Monmouth and Chepstow ranked close to Ludlow whilst Welshpool, Montgomery, Bishop's Castle, Clun, Kington, Knighton, Hay and Oswestry were all significant market towns of the

Map 1 - The zone of Offa's Dyke and the Anglo Saxon border



Source: Fox 1946

Map 2 Marcher Lordships in 1536



Source: William Rees 1940

Marches. Over time these developed trading links with the larger centres of Chester, Shrewsbury and Hereford and even further afield with Gloucester and Worcester.

Intermarriage between Norman settlers and Celtic families established cross-cultural ties and the constant interaction between border market towns and their hinterlands strengthened social and economic links across the border area. Even Owain Glyndwyr had links with the English court and married his daughters into the English families of the Mortimers, the Scudamores and Crofts[2].

In defining the western boundary of the area of study, the western limit of the Marcher lordships is useful in that it defines a distinct area that has some historical, political, economic, social and cultural unity. Further justification of this is lies in the contrasting architectural characteristics found east and west of the Welsh mountains. Smith found that the majority of pre-Hanoverian houses are found east of a line which approximates to, but is slightly to the east of, the western boundary of the Marcher lordships (see Map 3). Early hall houses are only found in any quantity here in the borderlands and the majority of the sixteenth and seventeenth century storeyed houses are also found here. West of this line there appears to be more cultural affinity to the poorer highlands of the north and west than with eastern Wales. He concludes that:

> The wealth of material culture associated with the lowland zone appears in strength in those parts of the highland zone closest to it, even where terrain is difficult. It is much less in evidence in more remote parts of the highland zone even where terrain is easy.[3]

The increasing inaccessibility of the Welsh mountains as one moves west, the consequent boundary of the Marcher lordships and the architectural divide between east and west Wales in terms of survival of pre-Hanoverian houses all indicate a western boundary of the area. For ease of documentary research, an arbitrary boundary following that of the county boundaries which succeeded the Marcher lordships at the Act of Union in 1536 will be taken as the western boundary of the study area.

To the east the boundary is even more arbitrary as the Marches merge into the Midland Plain. This perhaps reflects the uncertainty prevalent in the sixteenth century as to where the boundary was. Polydore Vergil, writing in 1555, divided England into several regions, one being the six counties 'towards Wales'[4]. These were Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire. In discussing Wales, he considers the River Severn sets the boundary, where it separates the Welsh from the English and he refers to 'recent writers' who place the town of Hereford on the border[5]. The Council of the Marches was originally set up in 1471 in an attempt to establish some control over this troublesome border area and comprised Wales and the English Counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire and Cheshire. It was reorganised by Henry VIII in 1536 after the Act of Union and included Wales and the *six* English counties bordering Wales of Herefordshire, Worcestershire,

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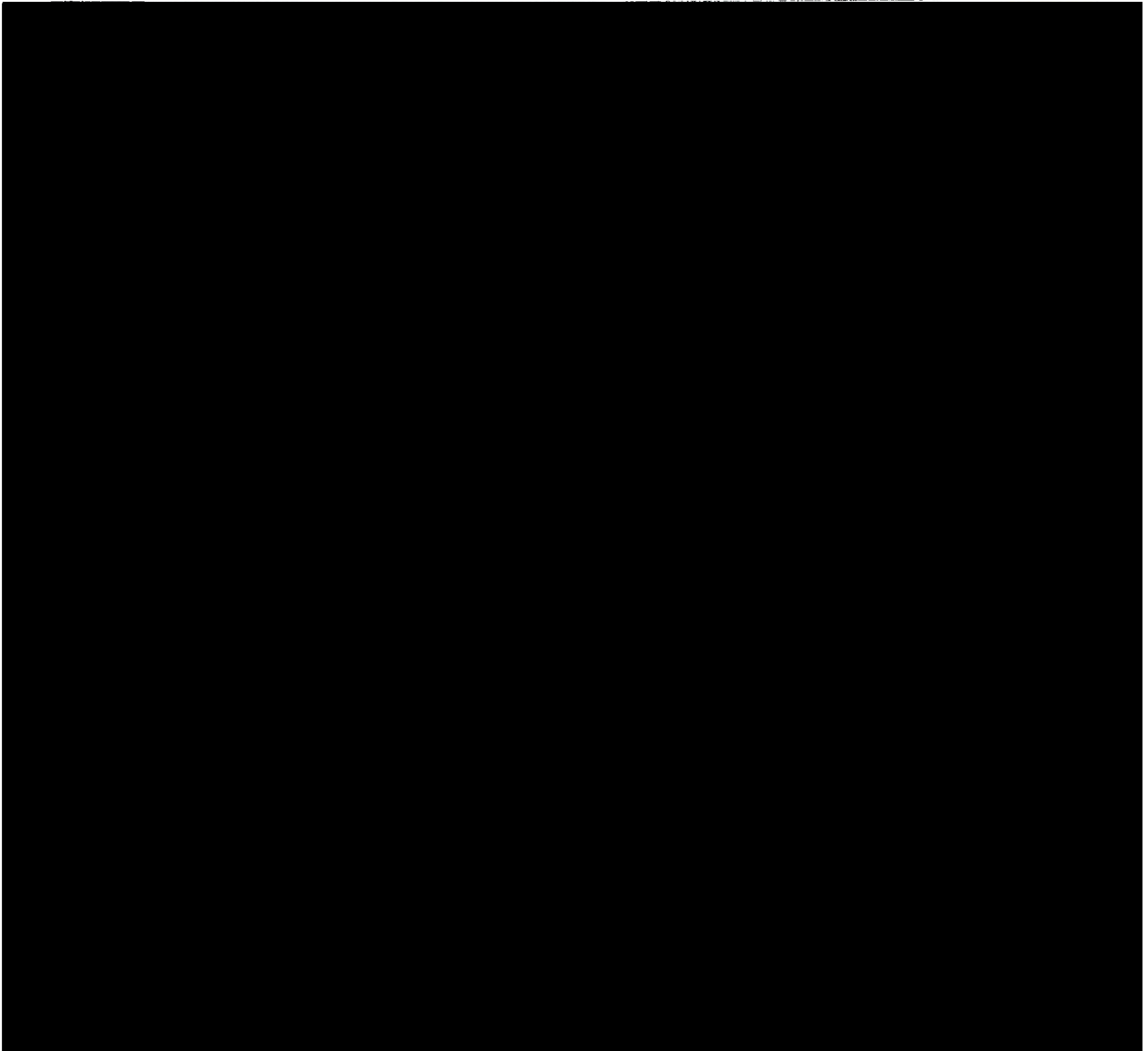
[2] Thoresby Jones, 1946, p.7.
[3] Smith, 1988, pp.434-435.
[4] Vergil, 1555, reprinted 1972, p.4
[5] ibid., p.8.

Map 3 - The distribution of pre-Hanoverian houses



Source: Smith 1988

Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Cheshire and Monmouthshire, the latter being considered as a special case as part of England[6]. The Council was responsible for the administration of this area until 1688, though Cheshire was excluded in 1569. During this period, the Council was based in Ludlow but made extensive journeys into Wales and the rest of the Marches to carry out its business.

The physical geography of the eastern zone is less helpful than the west in determining a boundary, The River Severn must indeed have constituted a boundary, as suggested by Vergil, certainly to the southern Marches but the main market towns of Gloucester, Worcester, Bridgnorth and Shrewsbury, situated at important bridging points, will have served to weaken the river as an effective barrier. The core of the southern Marches lies to the west of the River Severn whilst to the north it covers the plain of north Shropshire and south Cheshire and includes the western fringe of Staffordshire but material factors influencing culture and society may well be found beyond this. For the purpose of this research, the eastern boundary, initially at least, will include the whole of the six counties described by Vergil, as 'towards Wales'.

The general perception today of the Marches is an imprecise area centred along the border and the discussion above suggests that this was also the case in the period of study. The area selected is, therefore, inevitably arbitrary. Bearing this in mind, the research covers the Welsh counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire, Montgomeryshire, Radnorshire, Breconshire, Monmouthshire and Glamorganshire and the English counties of Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire (see Map 4).

Characteristics of the area

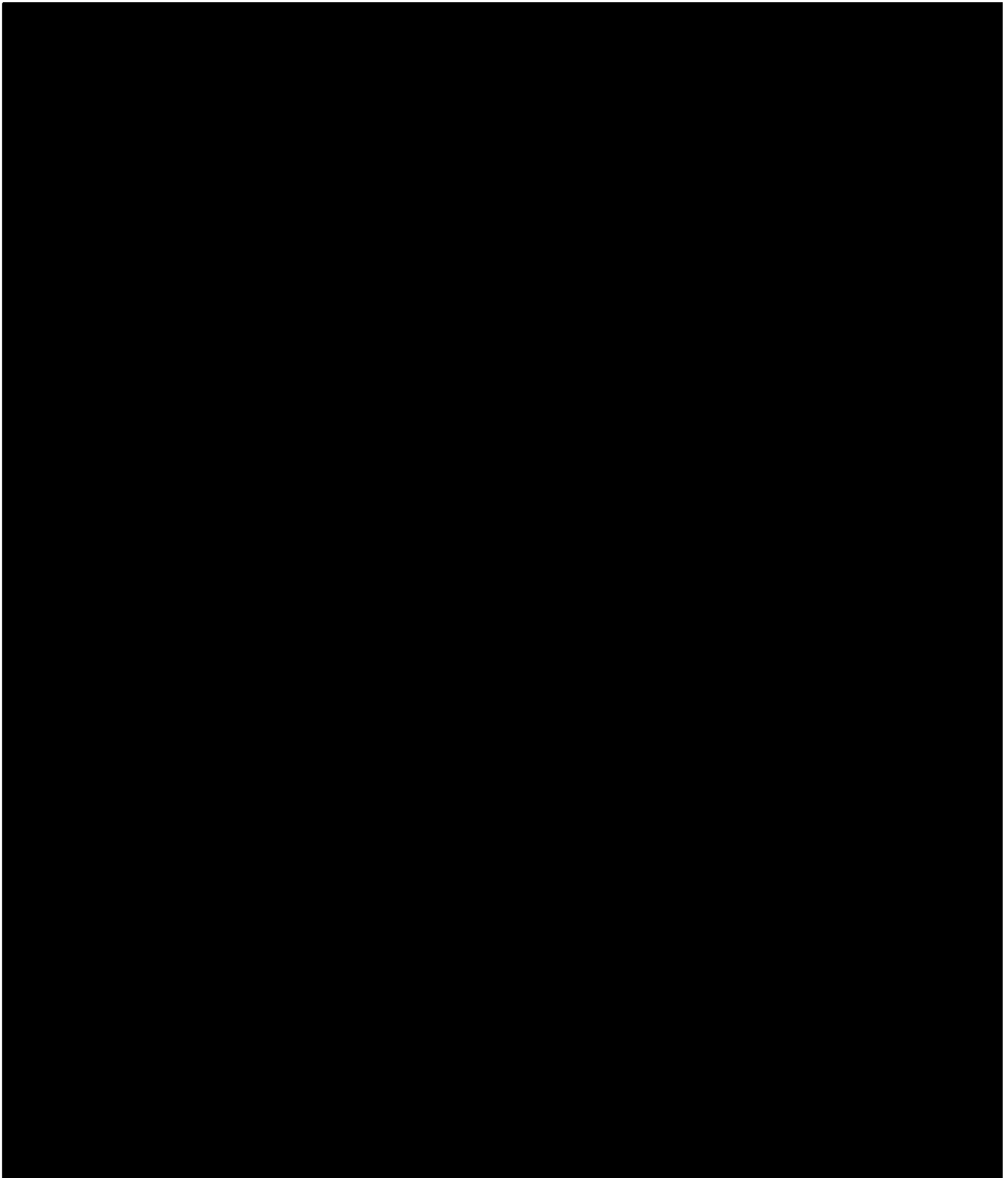
Despite the unity argued for above, there is considerable diversity of landscape and the principal division, common throughout the country, is between upland and lowland. In Wales, the border lowlands and south coastal plain had more in common with the adjoining English lowlands than they had with the neighbouring Welsh uplands. This diversity is manifest in the agricultural economy.

Whilst there were large tracts of fielden country in the area it was mostly pasture and woodland with two significant consequences. Firstly the open arable fields, which characterised much of the West Midlands in the medieval period, were much smaller in the Marches and formed only part of the farming system. Enclosure started in the fourteenth century and much of the area appears to have been enclosed by the end of the sixteenth century, without the trouble experienced in other areas more dependent on the open field system[7] . Shropshire was exempted from an Enclosure Act in 1597 on the grounds that 'it was best treated as pastoral country'[8]. Freedom from the open field system allowed for individuals to diversify, specialise and experiment at will.

Secondly, the pasture and woodland, much of which was described by contemporaries in the sixteenth century as barren, bad pasture or heath and waste[9], had the potential to support the rising population in the sixteenth and early

[6] Rees, 1940, p.52
[7] Rowley, 2001, p 181
[8] quoted in Rowley 2001 p.181
[9] Thirsk, 1967, p.99

Map 4 - The area of study



Source: John Speed circa 1610

seventeenth century. As pressure on land increased, wasteland was brought into cultivation and woodland could be cleared to make economically viable new holdings[10]. In addition much land, both arable and pasture, was successfully improved during this period. Improvements in arable land in Herefordshire were commented on by contemporaries in 1597[11]and Rowland Vaughan of New Court in the Golden Valley successfully experimented with flooding meadows and published a book on this in 1610 *The Most Approved and Long Experienced Water Workes, containing the Manner of Winter and Summer Drowning of Meadow and Pasture.* This technique meant he could graze his mowing meadows until late spring thereby enabling him to keep large numbers of sheep and cattle all year round yielding a surplus of meat, cheese and butter for market [12].

The area as a whole had long been important for wool, which had been the source of much wealth throughout the Middle Ages. One of the finest private houses surviving in the country from this period is that built by the Ludlow wool merchant, Laurence of Ludlow, at Stokesay in the thirteenth century. Most famous for its high quality was the wool from around Leominster, being regarded as the finest in England. In 1454 'Lemster ore', as it was known, was valued considerably higher than any other in the country, at £13 a sack The next highest was wool from Shropshire at £9 5s 4d and wool from the rest of Hereford lagged behind at £5 6s 8d a sack. This was still more than double the value of wool from areas such as Sussex.[13] By the sixteenth century well-developed wool and cloth markets existed in Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Leominster, Welshpool and Knighton. The powerful Draper's Company of Shrewsbury was evidence of the wealth which could be generated from this source.

Cattle were important throughout the area, being bred on higher ground and sold at local fairs or markets for fattening on lower ground. Many of the market towns had cattle markets[14] which also acted as centres for ancillary trades such as leather and glove-making. Corn markets were less important as farmers generally grew sufficient for their own needs and not for market so that in times of shortage corn had to be imported from the lowlands of the south east.

Whilst the traditional agricultural practices predominated some significant specialisation developed[15]. Parts of north-west Shropshire, around Whitchurch, Ellesmere and Oswestry, began to specialise in dairying for a growing urban market[16]. In Worcestershire and in Herefordshire, in the area between Hereford, Bromley and Ledbury, hop-growing developed early as a specialisation which is reflected in its vernacular farm buildings[17]. Also in Herefordshire, fruit production is mentioned in the fourteenth century, developing apace so that it was referred to as the 'Orchard of England' in 1657 [18]. Apples predominated and the fruit was either sold at market or used in cider-making, which has also left its mark in many local

[10] Hey, 1974, p.34
[11] Thirsk, 1967, p.100
[12] ibid., pp.100-101.
[13] Herefordshire VCH, vol. 1,1975, p.408
[14] Thirsk, 1967, p.590
[15] ibid., pp. 99-112 and 113-160
[16] Thirsk, 1967, p.4 and Rowley 2001, p.181
[17] Thirsk, 1967, p.100 and Rowley, 2001, pp.181-182
[18] Beale, *Herefordshire Orchard: A Pattern for All England* 1657, quoted in Rowley, 2001, p.182

farm buildings. In Worcestershire, pears were more successful and those least suitable for eating were used to make perry. Fuller, writing in 1662, comments that perry was one of the chief commodities of Worcestershire[19]. Vineyards were known in the Middle Ages in Herefordshire, when there were at least thirty-five and these were developed again in the sixteenth century, though viticulture was always an occupation of the gentry, not part of mainstream agriculture[20]. This is significant for this research, however, as one of the wall paintings surveyed in Bewdley features scenes from a vineyard (Beale's Corner [181]).

The growth in the market towns of the Marches is evidence that the area shared in the general prosperity of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. These dealt in a wide range of commodities as well as agricultural produce[21]. Local markets were supplemented by fairs where again a whole range of goods would be sold as well as the chief commodity of the fair[22]. Whilst some of this would be locally produced, commodities from much further afield, including imported goods, could be traded at these fairs. Ports such as Gloucester, Worcester, Bewdley, Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury and Cardiff would be the source of these goods as well as London.

The Marches, as a border region, may have seemed remote from the capital at one time but by the sixteenth century there was nothing to suggest isolation or backwardness in the region as a whole. The range of goods which could be purchased in a local market town was vast and included many exotic commodities. As part of this research, inventories of tradesmen in the Marches were examined for evidence of pigments[23] (see Chapter 7). Not only were pigments found in shops in the locality but also an enormous range of other goods is evident, many of which were imported. There were exotic spices such as cloves, pepper, mace, nutmeg, cinnamon and cardamon; textiles from Padua, Cadiz and Normandy and 'wrought velvet', which normally came from Italy; foodstuffs such as rice, almonds, treacle and dates; other household goods from Flanders and Venice (glass) and apothecary goods included lapis lazuli and mummy (used for medicinal purposes as well as for a pigment). These represent only a fraction of the goods in the shops, which included goods for every conceivable purpose from all-over the country as well as abroad.

It is abundantly clear that there was extensive movement of people within the area and between the Marches and the rest of the country. News, ideas and fashions travelled with people as well as goods. Such free communication is important in considering the sources of design for painted decoration.

One other, unique, factor had a major bearing on the social, economic and cultural development of the area and Ludlow in particular, and this was the Council of the Marches. It has been argued above that this was one of the defining unifying characteristics of the area. When the court was in session in Ludlow, it brought with it the lords and gentry who were its members and officers and also people

[19] Freeman, 1952, p.620
[20] Thirsk, 1997, p.138
[21] Thirsk, 1967, pp.589-592
[22] Nightingale, 1995
[23] Inventories from the Dictionary of Traded Goods & Commodities 1550-1800 (University of Wolverhampton project), examined as part of this research

petitioning the Council. The town burgesses made a petition to Henry VIII in which they refer to 'the great accesse of straungiers' in the town[24]. These people needed housing, clothing, feeding and sundry other services which provided an affluent market for local craftsmen and merchants. The increase in wealth and status this afforded the town set it apart from the rest of the Marches, a distinction which is still discernible today.

The court made regular visits throughout the area in the course of its business, and the Council House in Shrewsbury, a building found to have wall paintings [149], was provided for this purpose. These progresses were occasions of great pomp and ceremony and an opportunity for the gentry and others of local standing to display their status.

Thomas Dineley accompanied the Duke of Beaufort, who was President of the Council of the Marches, on his progress in 1684 and kept a detailed account of the journey. At each town he was met by the most senior gentry of the area who accompanied the retinue into the town where he was received by the local dignitaries of the corporation. It appears that all the gentry from miles around would turn out for the occasion and the streets would be lined with the entire population of the town. His arrival back in Ludlow from Worcester is just one example from the many described in minute detail and it is worth looking at for the information it provides on status and the relationship between those of greater and lesser standing, customs, costume and how the local population responded to such an event.

The Duke of Beaufort was met a mile short of Ludlow by his Officers who had been waiting for his coming. As he approached the mace was shouldered by one of them at which point all the Officers and others belonging to Ludlow Castle and the Duke's retinue and family 'became uncovered and fell into their places two by two'. Dineley then lists all the people, grooms, servants, officers and gentry who proceeded the Duke into Ludlow, describing the rich livery, the sumptuous embroidered cloths covering the baggage, the quality of the horses and their caparisons, again richly embroidered, who paraded two by two before the Duke. Finally, behind the twenty-two pairs of men rode the Duke of Beaufort himself 'in Glorious equippage'. Behind him came the Earle of Worcester and Sir John Talbot, High Sherrif of Shropshire and 'a great number of loyal gentry from the neighbouring counties'. This was followed by more coaches each drawn by six horses, conveying the Duchess of Beaufort, the Countess of Worcester, their daughters and their women with a great retinue riding by. Amid much clamouring, drum-beating, trumpet-sounding and bell-ringing he was met at the gate of the town by the bailiff and councillors and accompanied to the Castle. In the square before the Castle he was presented with 'a banquet of sweetmeats consisting of half a dosen of marchpanes and wines' after which he attended a reception in the Castle with those 'equal to his quality'[25].

The reception was similar in all the towns, villages and houses of the gentry he visited, differing only in scale according to the size of the settlement. Such progresses in the Tudor period would no doubt have been occasions of similar, if not

[24] Wright, 1852, p.373
[25] Banks, 1888, pp.52-56

greater, ceremony and it is reasonable to argue that the social and cultural influences emanating from this would have had an impact throughout the Marches

Vernacular buildings in the Marches

The defining point of vernacular architecture is that it is local to a specific area and, whilst there may be common elements found throughout a region or even nationally, there is much local variation in building type, materials, details and dates. It is not the purpose of this research to give a detailed vernacular profile of the Marches. Using studies already carried out this section aims to give a general picture of the sort of buildings lived in by people who may have had wall paintings during the period of study[26]. These studies are based on standing buildings which represent only a fraction of the buildings which would have existed. As the rate of survival varies according to, *inter alia*, how well the house was built in the first place which in turn depended in part on the wealth of the house builder, more information is available on the houses of the better-off than the less well-off who built less substantial houses. Probate inventories which name the rooms of a house have been used to supplement the evidence on the ground and there are other, albeit limited, documentary records which can illuminate this further.

There is a time dimension as well as a spatial one to consider in this discussion. It is suggested in this thesis that the period from around 1550 to 1625 is when most painted decoration was undertaken and it is this period which forms the focus of the discussion on vernacular building. This cannot be seen in isolation however, as the buildings in the area at this time would have been a combination of the newly built and those surviving from previous generations which were adapted and added to meet changing needs. Nor was the period in itself static. A newly built house of c.1575 may have been altered and extended one or more times by 1625. Over the area as a whole, there was much building activity during this period, both in terms of new building and in altering existing buildings. Hoskins's concept of the Great Rebuilding[27] has some relevance here, though the situation is more complex than he suggests[28]. Also, new ideas in housing spread at different rates throughout the region. The latest fashion in building in Shrewsbury or Ludlow, for example, in the 1570s may not have reached the more remote parts of the Welsh counties until the 1600s. Another significant factor relating to Wales is the relative poverty of the Welsh in relation to their English counterparts which meant that, in general, their houses were smaller and innovations appeared later, though exceptions are many. In trying to take a snapshot of the broad characteristics of the buildings in this period these factors must be borne in mind. The social and cultural significance of the changes in housing that took place are discussed further in Chapter 4. Here, an attempt is made to summarise the types and significant characteristics of houses found.

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[26] Smith, 1988, Mercer, 1975, RCHM, 1931, 1932, 1933, Moran, forthcoming publication, 2002, Mercer, forthcoming publication, 2002 – no page numbers available for these.
[27] Hoskins, 1953.
[28] Moran, 2002 and Mercer 2002.

Materials and construction

Villages like Weobley in Herefordshire, whose centres remain almost entirely timber framed (see fig.3.1) perhaps give the best impression of the appearance of a typical settlement in the Marches during the period of study. Over most of the area, almost all houses would have been timber framed with wattle and daub infill panels. The biggest and most important houses surviving from the Middle Ages may have been constructed of stone but these were not common. Mercer points out the almost total absence of stone building in Shropshire in the two hundred years up to the mid-sixteenth century. In some parts of the area, notably parts of south and east Wales, and parts of Hereford bordering Wales such as the Golden Valley, stone was the vernacular building material. Of these, only the Vale of Glamorgan had a good freestone. Elsewhere buildings with external rubblestone walls often had timber internal walls. Brick was being used in the second half of the sixteenth century but only amongst the social élite. Brick houses would not have been sufficiently widespread to feature significantly in the landscape but would have made a dramatic impact locally where they were found.

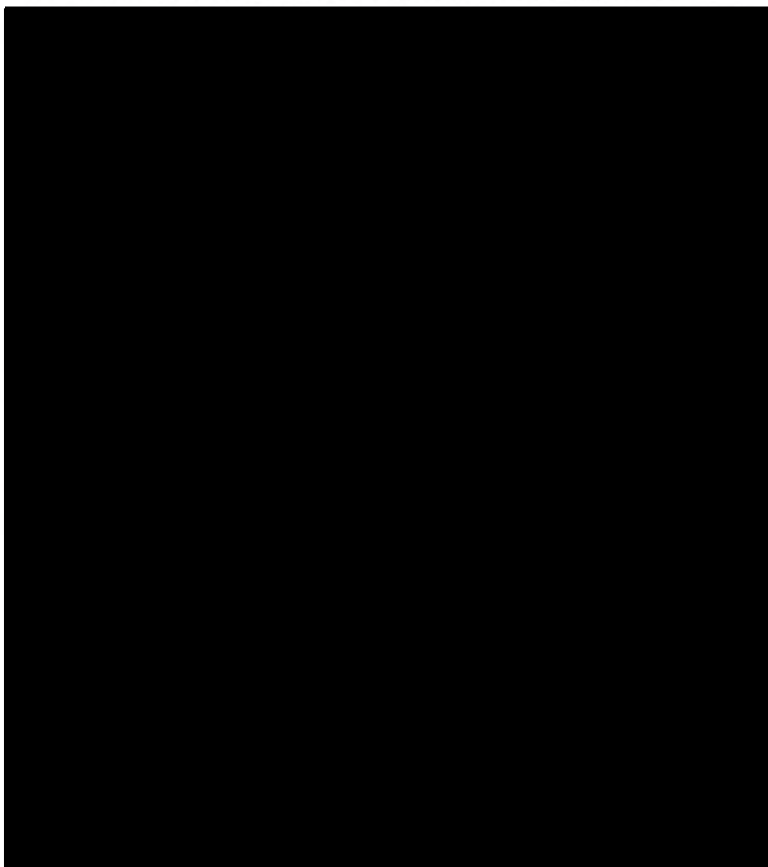

Fig.3.1 Weobley, Herefs.

Timber-framed buildings were constructed using either crucks or box framing techniques and sometimes both can be found in the same building. Several cruck-framed halls with contemporary box-framed cross wings have been found in Shropshire and in Wales and many had box-framed wings added later such as High Grosvenor, Shropshire [145]. The area is at the heart of cruck country which spans both sides of the Welsh border. Over 450 cruck buildings have been recorded in the Welsh counties[29] and nearly 300 examples have been recorded in Shropshire[30]. The Shropshire examples date mostly from the fifteenth century. The fact that they have survived indicates that they were well built and these were probably the homes of yeoman farmers and wealthy peasants. That they were also used for poorer housing is suggested by the house built by the Worfield parish in Shropshire for Goodwife

[29] Smith, 1988, pp.395-399c
[30] Moran, 2002

Garbot in 1581-2. For the thatching, the carriage of the thatch, the digging, carriage and application of the clay daubing, the 'poles' for the roof, the crucks, the wall plate, the door post and boards for the door, the churchwardens paid six shillings.[31] This can be compared to Dyer's estimate for the cost of a peasant house of three bays in the early fifteenth century at between £2-£3 and the 46s 8d allowed to a farmer at Hughley, Shropshire, in 1472-3 to build a new hall and chamber[32]. Clearly not everyone was building to the same standard.

Crucks were not confined to peasant housing. Possibly the grandest private house in Shropshire to be built in the medieval period is Lawrence of Ludlow's Stokesay Castle [138], referred to in the previous section, which has a cruck-framed hall. But Mercer suggests that for higher status houses cruck halls were superceded during the fourteenth century by base-cruck halls, which afforded a better opportunity for a lofty open hall. In Shropshire and Herefordshire base crucks were a sign of higher status and several surviving ones have wall paintings, of which Amberely Court [48], Swanstone Court [34] and The Hyde [35], all in Herefordshire are good examples. Only a handful of base crucks have been recorded in Wales and Smith suggests these are aristocratic houses.[33] Mercer speculates that these may have been the homes of the English officials of the Marcher lordships, recruited from the minor gentry of the border counties, bringing their style of housing with them[34].

Surviving buildings indicate that by the mid-sixteenth century crucks had been entirely superseded by box-framing, although the reference to Widow Garbot's house suggests that houses of inferior construction continued to use this technique until the end of the century at least. Box framing was more versatile in that it lent itself more readily to alterations and additions by adding additional storeys – an important point in towns (see 53 Broad St [104]) - and, more importantly perhaps, to external decoration. Close studding is often found on the most prominent elevations with square framing on less important ones. Where square panelling is used the status of a building can be indicated by the number of panels between the sole plate and wall plate: the greater the number, the higher the status. Square framing also lent itself to decorative infill panels. The virtuoso display at Little Moreton Hall [3] represents the epitome of this form of decoration.

Box framing was the technique favoured for the storeyed ends to cruck halls where it seems to have been an indication of status. Whilst the earliest box-framed wings in Shropshire date from the thirteenth century, the earliest hall recorded is that at Great Binnal, c.1460 [71] and it is during the fifteenth century that they became common[35]. It would have been this technique that the majority of house builders would have selected for new building during the period of study, particularly as it allowed for a full-height upper chamber.

House types

The transition from medieval to modern plan forms took place gradually over the period of study in the Marches. Evidence from surviving houses and probate

[31] TSAS 3rd Series, vol. 10, 1910, pp.69-70.
[32] Dyer, 1989, p.167 and VCH Shropshire, iv, p.112
[33] Smith, 1988, p.401
[34] Mercer, 2002, ch.8.
[35] ibid.

inventories suggest that much of this transition took place in the latter part of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century, with Wales usually lagging behind a bit. Many of the people who were commissioning painted decoration in their homes would have inherited houses which had been in existence at the end of the fifteenth century and which would have had a medieval plan form. In larger houses the open hall with one or two storeyed cross-wings would have been the norm. Smaller houses would still be characterised by the open hall and would have had one or two storeyed ends. For many, a single room, possibly partially lofted over, would have served all their needs.

It is likely that those houses of better construction were adapted to changing contemporary needs rather than demolished and rebuilt, whereas those of lesser standing inheriting houses of inferior construction may have made a fresh start and built replacement dwellings in a more modern style. The typical modernisation of existing houses has been well documented[36]and involved as a minimum inserting a chimney-stack and ceiling over the open hall, not necessarily done at the same time[37]. The position of the inserted stack was significant in that it determined the way circulation within the houses changed. The earliest position for the enclosed stack was on the lateral wall of the hall and this is found mainly in higher status houses, for example Plas Uchaf [193]. A chimney backing onto the cross passage was the most common way of providing cruck-framed halls with an enclosed hearth and is also found in newly built houses. Both of these allowed the retention of a cross passage. However the most common position for the chimney-stack in the area was in the space previously occupied by the cross passage, allowing the formation of a central lobby entry. Sometimes this would be a single stack but increasingly back-to-back fireplaces were formed, providing a very economical way of heating the two ground floor rooms. More rooms, particularly parlours were provided and increasingly these were separately heated. The additional accommodation was frequently provided in the form of a cross-wing or in the rebuilding of one or both ends and there are many examples of such modernisations, for example Harp House, Bishop's Castle [92]. The changes were tending overall to more comfort and privacy, the separation of uses into specialised rooms and more symmetry in external appearance with an emphasis on the front elevation. The social and cultural significance of these plan forms is discussed in Chapter 4. This section looks at the type of housing prevailing in the area during this period.

The greatest information survives for the homes of the better-off both in terms of their buildings and documentary records relating to their lives. Nevertheless numerically there would have been fewer of these than smaller houses and cottages. At the end of the sixteenth century larger houses would typically have had three units[38] dominated by the hall, with service accommodation at the lower end and private accommodation for the house owner and his family at the high end. The plan was strongly influenced still by the medieval house but by this time the hall would

[36] for example in Brunskill, 1997, Johnson, 1993 and Quiney, 1990
[37] Machin,1994, p.23 and Moran, 2002
[38] A unit or cell is a functional space within a house, such as the hall, parlour or service accommodation. It may be of one, two or more bays. A unit may subdivided into two or more rooms e.g. the service end may subdivided into a buttery and a pantry.

have been single storeyed with a chamber above. These would have been the homes of minor gentry and wealthy yeomen. Gentry of greater standing could well have had much more accommodation in the form of a larger hall with additional accommodation in ranges around a courtyard. In the medieval house the service rooms would be found beyond the cross passage with a parlour behind the high end of the hall. In the late sixteenth century new houses were still being built following this form. The reasons for this are complex and are discussed in the next chapter. Other plan forms were emerging, however, both as a result of modifying existing houses and from the opportunities provided by new building. These depended principally on the position of the stack, the stairs and entry and the multiple variations in plan form which could result are discussed by Brunskill[39]. All the time these were developing towards the Renaissance ideal of a centralised, symmetrical plan with separation between the rooms used by the master of the house and his family and those used by servants. On the way to achieving this there were many '..extremely odd houses (which) were the result of unsuccessful rustic attempts to conform to the Renaissance ideal'.[40]

Mercer discusses some of the issues facing these builders who were reluctant to let go of the old style yet sought to build in the new. Many houses retained the cross passage for example, particularly in Wales and those of higher status. Although this was losing its functional significance, old traditions die hard and Mercer suggests that even those who were seeking to build new houses in the fashionably symmetrical style were prepared to make sacrifices of convenience in order to retain an entry at the low end of the hall[41]. As the seventeenth century progressed more builders abandoned this in favour of the more convenient, centrally positioned front entrance. This was no longer the main access for all but became the higher status entrance and a side or rear access was provided for servants and lower status visitors.

The fully developed double pile plan was not widespread in the area until the second half of the seventeenth century. Its early appearance at Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86] in 1582 is remarkable in that it seems to have been the only example in Shropshire for several years, with no others having been recorded until after 1600[42]. In Wales, Smith records a single early example in Breconshire of a similar date.[43] Its adoption lower down the social scale was generally delayed until much later in the seventeenth century.

Fewer two-unit houses survive from the medieval period than larger houses although this does not reflect their original incidence. These were generally the homes of husbandmen or artisans and possibly yeomen (at least in Wales) and would have been present in great numbers, varying significantly in size and in status. The fully storeyed houses indicate a higher status compared to the single or one-and-a-half storeyed houses and the quality of carpentry is another indicator. The ubiquitous hall was the principal room and the second unit could have provided either a chamber or a service room or, in many cases where the unit was divided, it provided both. Many

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[39] Brunskill, 1997

[40] Smith, 1988, p.226

[41] Mercer, 2002, chapter 9 cites the examples of Apley Castle, Shipton Hall, Ludstone Hall and Benthall Hall.

[42] ibid.

[43] at Newton, St. David's Without, Brecs. Smith, 1988, p.233.

examples survive as newly built in the late sixteenth century and the number of survivors increases throughout the seventeenth century. It is unlikely that many were built with open halls, although in Shropshire open halls were recorded well into the last quarter of the sixteenth century.[44]

Many would have needed to accommodate activity or storage in relation to business as well as providing domestic storage. Often the first floor was used for storage, though in fully storeyed houses, one might expect first floor chambers to be used for sleeping.

There is very little evidence on the homes of the landless labourer, and for the most part archaeological records have to be relied upon. It has been assumed that these were of too flimsy a construction to survive[45] and many probably were (see fig.3.2) but there is increasing evidence that peasant housing could be quite substantially built[46]. Ellis Hanmer was fined in 1583 for building his single unit cottage on waste land in the parish of Myddle, Shropshire[47]. Far from being a poorly-built structure, this timber-framed cottage still stands. It was extended in the seventeenth century to give a two-unit dwelling (see fig.3.3). Other single-unit houses survive in Shropshire from the late sixteenth century [48] and Smith has identified Welsh examples[49]. The single room had to accommodate all uses - cooking, eating, sleeping, storage and entertaining - though many had a loft over to supplement this space. One-and-a-half storeyed cottages would have eased the situation to some extent but for the poorer sections of the population their homes would have had little in the way of comfort and privacy and possibly limited opportunity to decorate the interior. There is no evidence of how many survived from the medieval period to be replaced in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century, nor is there evidence of how many people lived in this type of accommodation but the numbers must have been substantial.

Not all of the simple houses were for the poorest in society. Full two-storey single-unit houses could provide quite superior accommodation. Coal Farm, Barry [211-212] was built originally as a single unit in c.1560 and extended about twenty years later to make it a two-unit house, when it became the home of a minor gentry family.

Timescale

It was suggested above that the transition from the medieval house to the Renaissance one took place in the latter part of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth century. So far, there has been no discussion of more precise dates for when this transition occurred, deliberately so as there is much variation throughout England and Wales in the occurrence of these changes. In the south east these changes occurred during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Johnson found in Suffolk that the open hall tradition came to an end after the early sixteenth century[50]. Smith uses a date range from the late sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth

[44] Moran, 2002
[45] Mercer, 1975, pp.8-9
[46] See discussion in Grenville, 1997, pp.121-156
[47] Hey, 1974 p.34
[48] Mercer, 2002
[49] Smith, 1988, pp. 202 and 220-221
[50] Johnson 1993, p.64

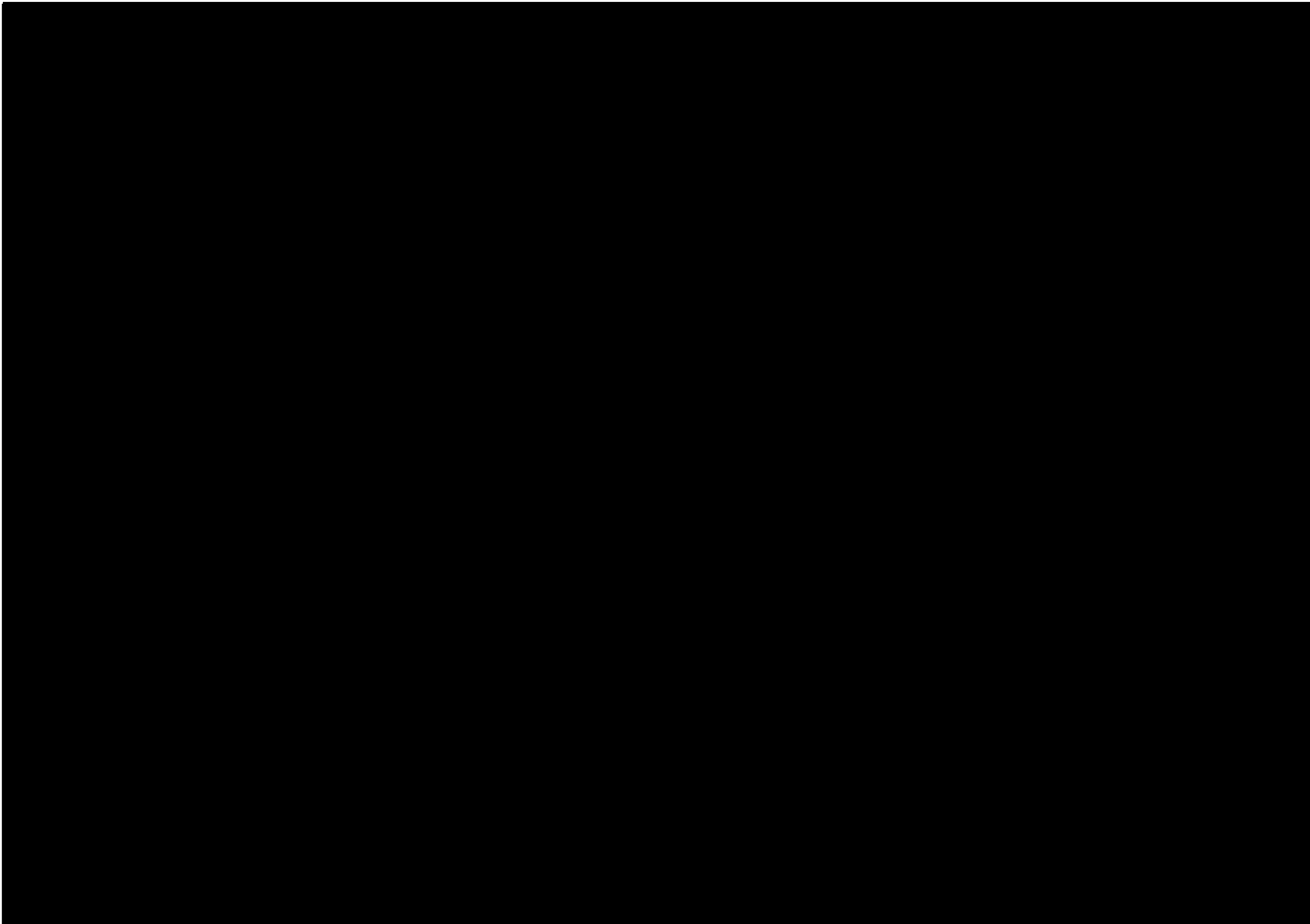

Fig.3.2 Cottage interior, Hendy, Caerns. (Smith, 1988)

Fig.3.3 The Oaks, Myddle, Shrops.

century for Wales, with local variations within this. In looking at gentry houses, Cooper sees this transition occurring principally in the sixteenth century. In the area of study, although published material is limited, the transition appears to have taken place from the second half of the sixteenth century until around the 1620s.

The wide date ranges indicate that this was a gradual process, happening over generations. Sometimes small changes were made to existing house, sometimes old houses were drastically remodelled and added to (for example 4 Belmont, Shrewsbury [110]) or completely new houses built. Machin has looked at the costs of inserting stacks and ceilings and concluded that it would not be unreasonable to have carried out these building operations over a number of years because of the cost[51]. Johnson found continual alterations in the houses he looked at in Suffolk, with changes at least every generation. Most surviving houses show evidence of this continual process. Wright, looking at gentry houses in Norfolk, concluded that the single most important factor in determining alteration to houses was family circumstance, usually through inheritance or marriage.[52]

It is impossible to compress all the characteristics of the vernacular houses of the Marches into this short summary. The aim has been to pick out the relevant general characteristics and from this to give an idea of the sorts of houses that may have had painted decoration. The houses of the gentry and yeomen are clear candidates for this whereas those of the landless labourer are less so. Many must have been of a similar quality to the cottage recorded at Strata Florida in the nineteenth century, fig.3.4, and it is difficult to imagine that these had any form of painted decoration.

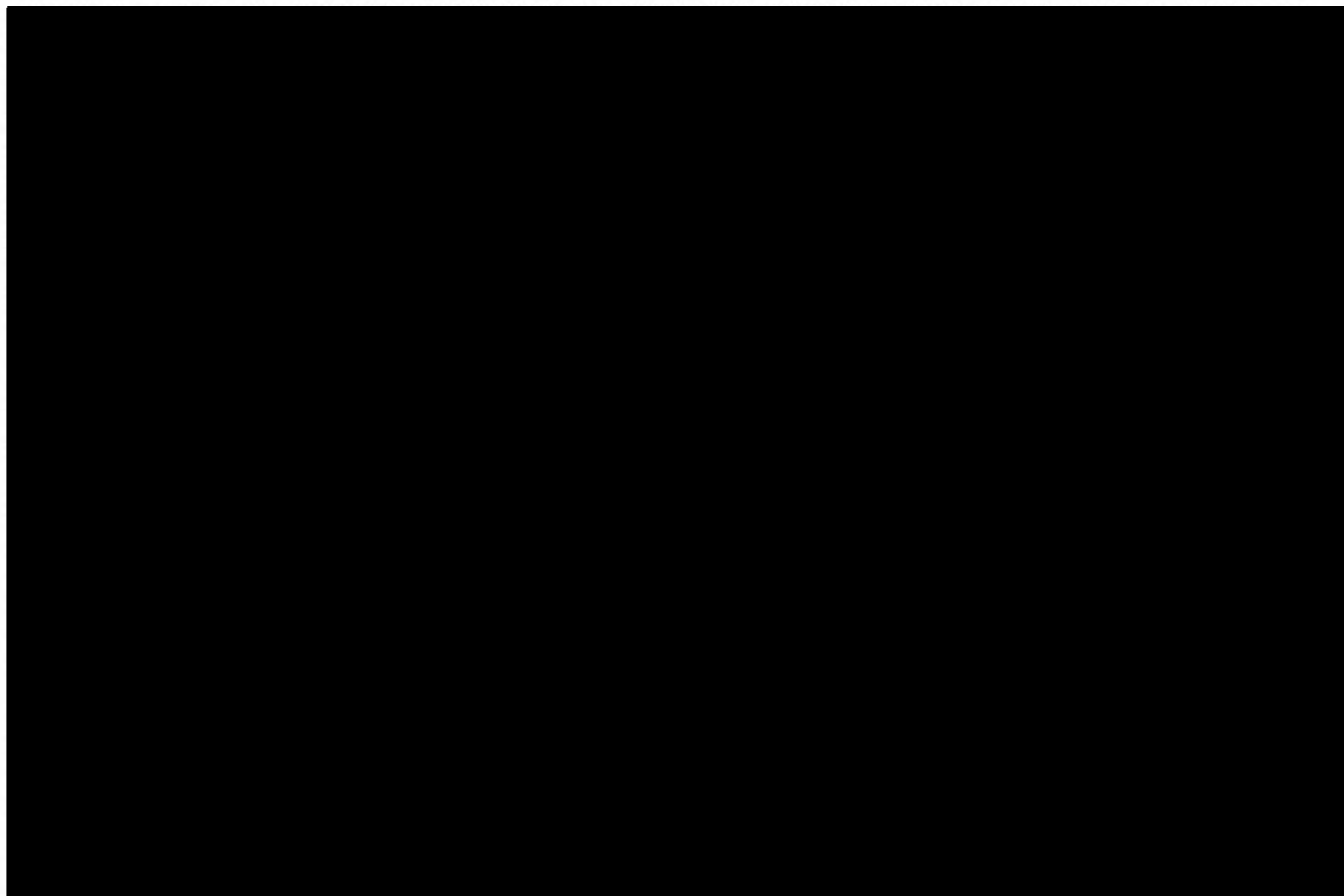

Fig.3.4 Cottage interior, Strata Florida, Cards. (Smith, 1988)

[51] Machin, 1994, p.23. See also Mercer, 1975, p.203, Thatchers Hall, Hundon and plate 13
[52] Wright, 1990, vol. 1 pp.507-508

Chapter 4
Context – cultural

Changes in Housing in an Age of Transition

The change in plan form from the medieval open hall to the almost universal adoption of the Renaissance or Georgian plan, by way of a variety of transitional, or sub-medieval, house types is widely accepted[1]. What has received less attention are the underlying reasons for the changes and their social and cultural significance. These changes were part of a broader transition from a medieval to an early modern society [2] and, it is argued in this research, wall painting is a feature of this transition. This section discusses some of the underlying reasons why house plans changed and the implications of this in terms of the decoration people had in their houses.

The key factor in the changing plan form was the enclosing of the open hearth, for centuries a symbolic focus in the open hall. An open hall in this discussion refers to one that is open to the roof allowing smoke from the open hearth to escape through the roof. Whilst those in houses of higher status can be lofty, open halls in the houses of humbler people were much more modest in scale. Whatever the size, this was the principal room in the house where communal activities were carried out. In a feudal society held together by a mutual acknowledgement of status, the open hall was the place where status was displayed, acknowledged and reinforced on a daily basis[3].
Once an open hearth was enclosed, there was no practical reason for the hall to remain open to the roof. The ceiling over the open hall to create an upper chamber followed on from this. In some houses, initially at least, this chamber was little more than a loft to be used principally for storage or servants' accommodation,[4] but in many houses this became the great chamber, taking on some of the functions of the open hall and marking the hall's diminishing importance as the principal focus for social interaction. Favoured guests would no longer be entertained in the hall, amongst the servants, but in a more exclusive private chamber. In addition, with the greater use of the upper floor came the need for better access and circulation. The narrow winding staircase which had so long served to give access to the upper floor was gradually replaced by wider, more convenient, well- or dog-leg staircases and, for some, the grand staircase.

From a practical point of view these developments presented new opportunities for decoration. The relative absence of soot and smoke meant that interior surfaces could be kept cleaner and the increased availability of glass meant that more daylight was entering rooms so that they could be seen more clearly. Decoration such as panelling, plasterwork and wall painting flourished as a result.

The technology required for these fundamental changes in plan form had long been available, for fires were enclosed in chimney-stacks and storeyed structures were

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[1] Mercer, 1975 and 2002; Brunskill, 1997; Johnson, 1993; Cooper, 1997 and 1999; Smith, 1988, Grenville, 1997, Pearson, 1994
[2] Gaimster and Stamper, 1997
[3] Johnson, 1993, pp.52-61
[4] ibid., p.85

ceiled throughout the medieval period. Yet it was not until the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that these changes were taking place in the Marches, as part of the Great Rebuilding. Other developments in the form of the building with more parlours, service rooms and chambers served to reinforce the break with the old traditions. Therefore, reasons other than practical ones have to be sought for the abandonment of the open hall and the concomitant changes in plan form taking place.[5]

Johnson sees an explanation in the change from a feudal society to a capitalist one that was characterised by the divisions of social class.[6] If the former required the open hall with its communal gathering of all social levels for its confirmation, the increasing division of society into classes required the opposite. The segregation of the master of the house and his family and favoured guests from servants was fundamental to the acknowledgement of his position.[7] The decrease in the size of the hall, which marked its lessening importance and the increase in the average number of rooms is given as evidence of this.

Whilst accepting the importance of these explanations, Mercer, considering higher status vernacular houses, argues that the changing relationship between those who worked on the land and those who exercised property rights over it was more important. As cash payments increasingly replaced rents in kind or labour dues and as local government and justice was increasingly administered by local officials, the manor *per se* diminished in importance. The open hall was no longer needed to accommodate all its former uses associated with manorial activities and as a local court[8]. For Mercer, the question was not why the open hall was abandoned but why it persisted for such a long time. Whilst the reasons for this are complex and multifaceted, status must be considered as one particularly significant factor.

Status has ever been a key element in house design, and indeed still is today. In the late sixteenth century, for those with social aspirations or even those anxious to maintain a certain social standing, the demonstration of status was a crucial issue. The house provided an opportunity to convey to the world at large the social standing of its owner through its design and decoration. Gentry status was the aspiration of social climbers, and armigerous standing even more so. In an age when many new gentry were ascending the social ladder (and looked down upon for doing so by the old gentry), demonstrations of ancient lineage were prized. The open hall, with its connotations of manorial status and ancient lineage provided exactly the credentials that the status conscious needed. For the nouveau gentry the surest way to be assimilated into the ranks of the old gentry was by emulation.

In some of the major gentry houses halls open to the roof were still being built as late as the early 1600s, but their function had changed to that of an impressive entrance hall. Some wanting to retain the distinction of the lofty hall at the same time as having a chamber over it resorted to ceiling it at a higher level than the adjoining rooms. Mercer noted this at Wilderhope in Shropshire, c.1590[9] and an

[5] See Johnson, 1993, Cooper, 1997, Mercer, 2002 and Grenville, 1997

[6] Johnson, 1993

[7] ibid. – see sections on interpretation of 'open', 'transitional' and 'closed' houses

[8] Mercer, 2002, ch 9

[9] ibid

example was recorded in the course of this research at Upton Court, Herefordshire [52].

The desire for privacy is often quoted as another reason for abandoning the open hall and for the proliferation of private rooms, although Mercer dismisses this on the grounds that privacy was nothing new. Luxurious private rooms at Stokesay, Clun Castle and Caus Castle are cited as medieval examples of privacy in Shropshire[10]. Johnson and Cooper both suggest a new awareness of the individual and a concern for personal development as reasons for the increase in private rooms citing the more frequent appearance of studies in probate inventories as evidence of this[11].

The fundamental changes in plan form were not confined to larger houses. Lower down the social scale this transition is still discernible. The smaller house retained the hall as the principal living room but the parlour developed as the room where guests would be received. In the lobby entry house, the parlour could be entered directly from the lobby without going through the hall. This would be the 'best' room of a small house. Halls were generally ceiled over by the early seventeenth century but the chambers over the hall not necessarily given the same status as in larger houses. Johnson noted in Suffolk that hall chambers were often bereft of goods in inventories, although in the north Shropshire inventories examined in the course of this research such rooms were mostly used for sleeping, at least after the 1590s. The phenomenon of going upstairs to sleep was still relatively new in the late sixteenth century and, whilst it may have been a common practice in higher status houses, in vernacular buildings the ground floor chamber or parlour was the room most used for sleeping by the master of the house. This gradually changed so that going upstairs to bed was the norm by the late seventeenth century. In the north Shropshire inventories examined 9% had sleeping provision upstairs by 1600 with the majority of people still sleeping on both floors in 1650. In the inventories examined, these chambers were also sometimes furnished with chairs, suggesting an entertainment function as well. This has implications for painted decoration in that where it is found on the first floor it can reasonably be assumed that the room had a use of some status, not merely for storage or other service use.

In what was an inherently conservative society, changes tended to happen gradually. Most existing houses were adapted in stages and the full transition could take many years, if not a generation or two, to complete. In the Marches this was happening generally in the second half of the sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century, lingering on longer in Wales. This period of transition is exactly when wall painting was most common.

Decoration

It is not surprising that the changes to the fabric and patterns of use are reflected in the decoration of houses. In the medieval house, decoration of the structure focused on expressing the hierarchy of the house. Interiors were generally dimly lit compared to modern houses and were also sooty as a result of the open hearth so decoration had to be of a nature that was appropriate to these conditions. Within the open hall,

[10] Mercer, 2002, ch. 9
[11] Cooper, 1999 and Johnson 1993

the dais and canopy gave obvious architectural distinction to the high end of the hall which was often lit by a large window, giving it further emphasis. The central truss dividing the upper and lower ends of the hall was the focus for carved decoration, usually moulding and cusping, of which there are many examples surviving in the Marches such as Old Gwernyford [187], Swanstone Court [34] and Shootrough Farm [125]. More subtle indicators of status were also employed on the central truss. The fair face of timber always faced the high end of the hall and in many cases the decoration facing the dais is superior (for example at Shootrough Farm a double cavetto moulding faces the upper bay and the less expensive quarter-round moulding faces the lower bay[13]). At the low end of the hall the spere truss was the main focus for decoration because it terminated the view from the high end and many examples of decorated spere trusses are given by Smith, Mercer and Moran[14]. Cusping to windbraces, carving of posts and brattishing to wall plates and the dais rail were also common. The high end of the hall was sometimes given the additional decoration of a woven hanging or painted cloth hung on the dais partition.[15] Decorated window heads, particularly on windows lighting the high end of the hall and the solar were usually the only external form of decoration. Otherwise the external appearance of the medieval house was quite plain.

The contrast between the decoration of the medieval house and that of the Renaissance could not have been more marked. The latter is characterised by decoration following the rules of classical architecture as set out in pattern books and developed by the emerging group of educated 'architects' and craftsmen. Whilst designs may have lost some of their detailing and meaning as they moved down the social scale, they were working to established principles. Of particular interest to this research is the decoration of the transitional period, as the medieval form of decoration slowly gave way to new forms until the maturity of Renaissance style was reached.

The Renaissance period has been called the 'age of display' but the transitional period arguably was even more so. Flamboyant, riotous, ostentatious, showy and swaggering are some of the adjectives that might best convey the more undisciplined approach to decoration compared to Renaissance houses. That is not to say Renaissance elements were not included in this vocabulary of decoration (it is argued in Chapter 6 that the typical form of wall painting which characterised the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century has a certain classical language) but they were not always used in the 'correct' classical manner which characterised the Renaissance house.

Certainly, both externally and internally the transitional or sub-medieval house excelled in decorative display. The external elements which make up this display generally include close studding, carving, jetties, decorative panels, decorated chimney-stacks, dressed stone detailing, multi-storey porches, gatehouses and heraldry. Internally the medieval focus on the roof was transferred to the ceiling frame and that of the open hearth to the fireplace, both receiving ornamentation in the transitional house. Plasterwork, panelling, door and window surrounds and staircases were other architectural features receiving decoration. This is the context

[13] Moran, 2002 , chapter on cruck houses
[14] Smith, 1988, pp.94-139, Mercer, 2002, ch.8, Moran, 2002, chapter on cruck houses
[15] E.g. the reconstruction of Bayleaf Hall, Weald and Downland Museum

in which painted decoration is found - the form and extent of it is discussed fully in Chapter 6.

The hall, which was the traditional focus for decoration, continued to receive attention but the great chamber, where it existed, replaced the hall as the primary focus for display. Ground floor parlours, which were increasingly used for the reception of guests provided another opportunity for decoration as did other first floor chambers and the access to them - the grand staircase which replaced the narrow winding stair (see Harvington Hall [162]).

What is more difficult to grasp is the meaning of this display. In looking at the gentry house, Cooper argues that architectural display was announcing to the outside world the attributes of the owner in ways which emphasised his learning, his civility and his standing in the local community[16]. He submits that the sixteenth century gentry followed Aristotle in his belief that 'Appropriate display by the man whose wealth and standing merit it, is a virtue and even a public duty'[17]. Stubbes, writing in 1570 was vituperative in his attacks on unseemly ornament, yet justified the use of rich ornament in the houses of those of high estate:

> 'For as cloth of gold, aras, tapestrie and such other rich ornaments, pendices and hangings in a house of estate, serve not onely to manuell uses and servile occupations but also to decorate, to beautifie and become the house, and to shew the rich estate and glorie of the owner'.[18]

Renaissance detailing would advertise a man's classical education, prominent decorated chimney-stacks would show his wealth, heraldry would announce his pedigree to the world. Yet this display is also found at levels below the gentry.

There is little doubt that at any level architectural display was intended as an announcement of the owner's standing. In an age of social mobility and aspiration to higher status, any means of proclaiming one's standing to the community at large, by those who wished for advancement, would be seized upon. Bolstering one's status by bogus display was not unknown, particularly in the use of spurious heraldry, when an ancient line was highly desirable. Nor did people stop there. A contemporary reference in Francis Thynn confirms that it was not unusual to build sham features purely for display. In his *Debate between Pride and Lowliness*, pride and lowliness are personified in a pair of velvet breeches and a pair of cloth breeches. In part of the debate, a bricklayer is challenged on his workmanship:

> Then I called the Bricklayer alone.........
> The breeche of cloth to him this chalenge toke:
> Of fortie chimneys that by him were built,
> In one house there are scantly five that smoke,
> So was there much good bricke and mortar spilt......
>
> The velvet breeches herunto replyed,
> The chalenge was both false and slaunderous

[16] Cooper, 1997, pp.120-121
[17] ibid., p.121
[18] Stubbes, 1583, unpaginated

And want of smoke to be his fault denyed
But rather of the dweller in the house
Which was no fault in houses where he dwelt
Ibuilt for pleasure cheefly, and for shewe.[19]

By the time the transition to the Renaissance house was complete the prevalent decorative style was more ordered, restrained and classically correct. Johnson argues that this form of decoration masked its structure. Instead of architectural expression as a vehicle for communicating status he suggests that social position within the house was indicated by material wealth as evidenced by the increase in moveable goods recorded in inventories,[20] a widespread phenomenon much commented on.[21]

Wall painting is just one of a wide range of decorative elements employed in the transitional or sub-medieval house. This section has sought to place it in its wider context, to review current thinking on the significance of developments in house plans and decoration during this period and to understand some of the meanings embodied in these changes. These ideas will be referred to again in Chapter 11 when the significance of painted decoration is considered.

Painted cloths

These remain an enigma in the visual environment of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Very few survive at the vernacular level (and those that do, apart from a few fragments, date from the late seventeenth century or later), yet seemingly they were a common item in houses of all status. What is of interest to this research is the prevalence of painted cloths, the period when they were in common use and the nature of decoration they provided.

In the absence of survivals, contemporary references have to be relied upon for evidence. It is known from probate inventories that very many houses had painted cloths with incidence being most frequent in the sixteenth century, diminishing significantly in the first half of the seventeenth century, after which they are rarely mentioned. In Stratford nearly half of a sample of 168 inventories for the period 1570-1630 had painted cloths, mostly in the sixteenth century[22] and in Nottinghamshire over half the inventories in the second half of the sixteenth century mention painted cloths[23]. In the north Shropshire inventories examined as part of this research painted cloths are mentioned in a third of the inventories in the last quarter of the sixteenth century. After 1600 the number drops to less than 10% (see Table 4.1).

[19] Thynn, 1841, p.43
[20] Johnson, 1993, p.107
[21] Cooper, 1997, p.124, Johnson, 1993, p.126 –128 and evidence from the North Shropshire inventories examined as part of this research.
[22] Jones, 1996, p.71
[23] Watt, 1994, p.197

Table 4.1
Incidence of painted cloths by date range and inventory value in Wem, Market Drayton and Whitchurch, 1535-1650[25]

	<£10	£10-19	£20-29	£30-39	£40-49	£50-59	£60-79	£80-90	>£100	Total
Pre 1550	4	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	10
1550-74	5	5	2	3	4	1	2	0	I	23
1575-99	6	8	12	11	2	4	4	2	5	54
1600-24	5	10	8	6	3	3	3	3	3	44
1625-50	0	3	1	1	0	1	2	0	2	10
Total	20	29	24	23	9	9	11	5	11	141
% of total	14.2	20.6	17	16.3	6.4	6.4	7.8	3.5	7.8	100

The bed hangings can be inferred from their inclusion alongside beds and bedding in inventories and these comprised at least a fifth of the painted cloths in the north Shropshire inventories. For the rest their mention in the inventory did not give an indication of whether they were wall or bed hangings, apart from one which mentions the painted cloth 'upon the brest waule'[26]. What is not known is whether and if so, how many, of the painted cloths on walls covered the entire wall as many wall paintings do. Evidence from contemporary illustrations suggests that in the hall some were hung only behind the dais to give distinction to the high end of the hall (see fig.4.1) In other rooms they may similarly have been hung only on one part of a wall.

So far, evidence has been put forward for their widespread use in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century but not for their decline. The negative evidence in probate inventories in the seventeenth century is not necessarily indicative that painted cloths were no longer in use. It has been suggested that it could, in fact, mean that they were so commonplace and of such little value that they were not worth mentioning.[27] Spufford found chapmen whose stock included coarse linens described as for 'painting' and for 'ordinary painting'[28] in the late seventeenth century and in 1619 George Wood, a member of the Stationers Company, was granted a patent for an invention for printing linen cloth with colours, which caused consternation amongst other printers who feared they would be put out of business[29], suggesting that printing cloth was a common practice. No indication was given as to the use of the cloth. Against this is the evidence provided by Stow in his much-quoted remark '...but now that workmanship of staining is departed out of use in England'[30]. This is based on a complaint by the Painter Stainers Company about

24 [footnote deleted]
25 Probate inventories for north Shropshire 1535-1650, Wem. SRRC
26 Probate inventories for north Shropshire 1535-1650, Wem. SRRC
27 Spufford, 1984, p. 112
28 ibid, p.112
29 Jackson, 1957, p.142
30 Stow, 1603, p.317

others encroaching on their painting work leaving them short of work as staining, one of the techniques for 'painting' cloth, was no longer practised. Whilst this must be treated with some scepticism, as the Painter Stainers did not always give an objective view (see Chapter 8), the comment is likely to have been the result of the decline in the traditional demand for stained or painted cloth.(The Church had been one source of demand which declined in the second half of the sixteenth century and improved housing conditions may have been another reason for the decrease in painted cloths as their draught excluding functions assumed less importance.) Further evidence of their decline, or at least a change in their character, is given by Aubrey in the mid-seventeenth century. In describing the old fashioned house of a widow he was visiting he comments:

> She has a handsome darke old-fashioned house. The hall after the old fashion, above the wainscot, painted cloath, with godly sentences out of the Psalmes, etc., according to the pious custom of old times.[31]

Fig.4.1 Woodcut showing painted cloth or tapestry hanging (Caxton, pre-1501)

Because of this conflicting evidence and the lack of survivals it is difficult to draw conclusions with any certainty. However, on balance the evidence suggests that painted cloth as a hanging around the walls of the room died out in the first half of the seventeenth century, in part for reasons similar to those argued as part of this research for the decline in wall painting. The continued use of painted cloth in the seventeenth century could be related more to its continued use for bed hangings and the increase in soft furnishings found in many inventories, such as cushions and curtains, for which painted cloth would be in demand.

Painted cloths were not the poor man's tapestry, as has often been claimed for them. They were owned by rich and poor alike. Henry VIII had many listed in an inventory of 1542[32] whilst those of Bess of Hardwick still survive in the chapel there. At the

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[31] Aubrey, 1958, p.118
[32] Mander, 1997, p.125

vernacular level, the poor had just as many painted cloths as the better-off though doubtless the quality varied. Generally painted cloths were included as one item in an inventory and were rarely valued at more than 5s. Some were worth as little as 6d.

It has been assumed that painted cloths resemble tapestries[33], a claim supported by those surviving at Hardwick but not by the fragment from Lockers in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which is imitation panelling (those at Owlpen Manor, Gloucestershire, the White House, Aston Munslow, Shropshire and the ones acquired by the Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust are all late seventeenth century at the earliest and of a different character – for example none have a frieze with texts). It is known from contemporary references that they included figure subjects from historical and Biblical stories, often with a moralising text, as well as decorative work[34]. Their iconography is discussed further in Chapter 10.

For painted cloths to feature so prominently in the popular culture of the late sixteenth century they must have been an important element in the visual environment. That they have disappeared almost without trace is frustrating as it seems that a key piece of the jigsaw of painted decoration at the vernacular level is missing.

Status

Painted decoration in buildings served no structural function, nor was it essential for the proper finishing of a building for which a plain colour wash would suffice. It was entirely decorative in its function. This decoration may have been for the benefit of the owner of the building and its occupants and/or it may have been there to make an impression of some kind on visitors, in which case its purpose was display. It was there to signal some message to the viewer of the kind that occurs in the present age when houses and cars, for example, are used for decorative display and as status symbols. These are short cuts to be used by people to communicate their status to others, or more often, what they would like others to perceive it to be. This was also true, if not more so, in the early modern period, when the stakes were high for those who secured positions of authority based on their status.

This section looks at the issue of defining status in the early modern period and the implications of this. Drawing on both contemporary and modern writings[35], it sets the context for the discussion on the status of the buildings where wall paintings are found. These include the rise in the number of gentry, social mobility which accompanied this, the incentives for social advancement and the imprecise boundaries between social groups. These were all manifestations of a gradual restructuring of social order which was taking place in the early modern period.

Contemporary writers divided the population into various estates and degrees of people according to status. These have been variously categorised but, to encompass both town and country, the classical social hierarchy comprised noblemen,

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[33] Matley Moore, 1982, p.74
[34] Bullein, 1578, pp.80-95
[35] Principally Harrison ed. Furnival, 1887, Smith, ed. Dewar, 1982, Heal and Holmes, 1994, Barry and Brooks, 1994, Campbell, 1967

gentlemen, yeomen, citizens and burgesses, husbandmen, artisans and labourers.[36] The gentry, whilst the smallest in number, have received more attention than any other group. In contemporary writings this was probably a reflection of their importance as numbers increased significantly during the sixteenth century. As far as modern writing is concerned considerably more records are available concerning the gentry and therefore, there is more material for research.

Who were the gentry?

Whilst forming a cohesive group, it is clear that the gentry were not homogenous. Harrison discusses them at great length subdividing them into three sorts, i.e. the greater sort comprising the prince, dukes, marquises, earls, viscounts, barons, followed by knights and esquires and, lastly, simple gentlemen.[37] The first of these sorts is not encountered at the vernacular level, but there are examples of the latter two in the houses looked at in the course of this study, so it is worth examining what sort of people these were considered to be.

Contemporary definitions varied and there was no universal agreement as to what constituted a gentleman. This in itself is pertinent, as it reflects this uncertainty within a society whose social ordering was being slowly restructured, although contemporaries no doubt could read the more subtle signs not accessible now and ascribe status quite accurately. Heal and Holmes discuss the often contradictory characteristics of the gentry in depth and address the nuances of status which could place a man crucially a rung higher or lower on the social ladder.[38]

The most widely quoted contemporary definition of a gentleman is that given by Harrison and repeated by Sir Thomas Smith[39]:

> Whosoever studieth the lawes of the realm, who so abideth in the universitie giving his mind to his booke, or professeth physicke and the liberall sciences, or beside his service in the roome of a capteine in the warres, or good counsell given at home, whereby his commonwealth is benefited, can live without manual labour, and thereto is able and will beare the port, charge, and countenance of a gentleman, he shall for monie have a cote and armes bestowed upon him by heralds (who in the charter of the same doo of custome pretend antiquitie and service and manie gaie things) be called master, which is the title that men give to esquiers and gentlemen, and reputed for a gentleman ever after.[40]

Embodied in this is the requirement for education, public or military service and wealth obtained without manual labour. Ancient lineage, much prized by those who could claim it and much sought after by those lacking it[41], is passed over as this could be bought. Others, notably those of old gentry families, were not so ready to dismiss the requirement for an ancient line, whilst some considered virtue of greater importance than a long pedigree. Harrison and other contemporary writers were possibly idealistic in giving more emphasis to the noble attributes of the gentry.

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[36] Wrightson in Barry and Brooks, ed., 1994, p.28
[37] Harrison, pp.105-106
[38] Heal and Holmes, 1994, pp. 1-19
[39] Harrison, 1887, p.176. It was also used by Barnabie Rich , *Roome for a Gentleman,* 1609, p.18
[40] ibid., p.128-129
[41] Heal and Holmes, 1994, pp.34-37

Thomas Adams, writing in the early seventeenth century was perhaps more realistic when he said 'first riches, and then honour, for it is lightly found....and reputation is measured by the acre'[42].

For many of the gentry in Wales the problem was not ancient lineage but lack of wealth. Welsh laws of inheritance inhibited the amassing of large estates, accounting for their relative poverty in the sixteenth century and preoccupation with descent. Fuller, in his *Worthies of England* quoting the proverb *As long as a Welsh pedigree*, comments:

> Men (who are made heralds in other countries) are born heralds in Wales; so naturally are all there inclined to know and keep their descents, which they derive from great antiquity: so that any Welsh gentleman (if this be not tautology) can presently climb up, by stairs of his pedigree, into princely extraction. I confess, some Englishmen make a mock of their long pedigree (whose own, perchance, are short enough if well examined).[43]

Social mobility and imprecise boundaries

This lack of consensus on what constituted gentry and - within the ranks of gentry - who was qualified to bear arms, was a manifestation of the increase in numbers of gentry and the movement up within the ranks of gentry. The Heralds' visitations were necessary, as Mercer bluntly puts it, 'as a means of recognising worth and rebuking presumption'[44]. Given the exponential increase in numbers of applicants, it was clearly unrealistic to rely on ancient lineage, a fact recognised at the time. Rather than confirming status by checking pedigree, Smith comments:

> Or if he wil do it more truly and of better faith, he will write that for the merittes of that man, certaine qualities which he doth see in him, and noble actes which he hath done... he giveth to him and his heires ... these armes. These men be called sometime in scorne gentlemen of the first head.[45]

The unspecified 'certaine qualities' would be those noble attributes of gentry which, publicly at least, aspiring armigers would subscribe to. In reality, there would be other factors, not least of which would probably relate to money, but which would undoubtedly include local standing. This is a widely used term covering how an individual was regarded by his neighbours, where he stood in relation to those above and below him socially. It is not something which can be readily measured, certainly not at a distance of four hundred years, yet it appears to have been a key determinant of social advancement.

The same problems attended those aspiring to reach the first rungs of the gentry ladder. These were people coming from the ranks of yeomen, merchants, tradesmen, professionals and, in fact, it appears to have been open to anyone with sufficient money and ambition. In the absence of definitive criteria with any consensus, there seems to have been a number of indicators of status against which individuals would be scored, consciously or subconsciously. The greater the score, the higher up the

[42] quoted in Heal and Holmes, 1994, p.9
[43] Freeman, 1952, p.679
[44] Mercer, 2002
[45] Smith, ed. Dewar, 1982, p.72

social ladder an individual could be placed. These indicators include wealth, preferably from land but certainly not from manual labour; involvement in public affairs, education and manners, lineage and, again, local standing. One had to be seen, very publicly, to have the necessary characteristics of gentry by one's neighbours, in order to be assigned this rank. Bearing 'the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman' would have been crucial. These elusive qualities must have been clearly perceived by contemporaries for, on the ground, there must have been little difference between the better-off yeoman, for example, and his lesser gentry neighbours[46].

Similar circumstances applied to those lower down the social scale seeking advancement. In the absence of clear definitions there were key criteria, which could raise the husbandman, for example, to yeoman status or allow artisans to progress within the ranks of their guild. Clear-cut distinctions of status were also blurred by marriages between differing social groups, often to the mutual advantages of all concerned. The impoverished gentry marriages with wealthy merchants are often quoted and many merchants were in fact of gentry origins.[47] Between 1560 and 1620 around fifteen per cent of the members of the Draper's Company in Shrewsbury were sons of gentry.[48]

Benefits of social advancement

To achieve pre-eminence above one's neighbours seems to be an abiding motivation which is still present today. But, apart from the social cachet of moving up the social scale, there were very real material benefits to be gained from higher social rank.

The holding of some position of power within the community was a key motivation. The principal position in local administration was that of the Justice of the Peace. A significant increase in the number of JPs in the post-Reformation period arose in part from the increased burden put on local administration by the Crown and Parliament but also to meet the demand for such positions in the later sixteenth century. For some this was a desire to serve for the common good, but for too many, Bacon observed, it was to advance private interests 'as in overthrowinge an enemy or maynteynige a frende'.[49]

The Council of the Marches, acting as a provincial government in the Marches, provided another supply of much sought after positions, although again subject to the same abuse. When Henry Earl of Pembroke was Lord President from 1586-1601, he was instructed by the Queen to make changes in order to remedy abuses by the Members of the Council who were more interested in furthering their friends' interests than in the administration of justice and who were claiming unnecessary allowances for their journeys and attendance in so doing.[50]

Within the towns, positions of aldermen, councillors and other administrative posts plus those within local guilds and associations provided opportunities for individuals

[46] Campbell, 1967, pp.23-24
[47] Heal and Holmes, 1994, p.8
[48] Mercer in Ford, 1992, p.160
[49] quoted in Heal and Holmes, 1994, p.168
[50] Dineley, 1888, p.xvii

to exercise power and influence amongst their neighbours at the same time as being seen to be acting in the public good. Engagement in public affairs increased local standing which in turn brought more opportunity to acquire ever more advantageous positions.

This is not to suggest that all were seeking to advance their social status. Then, as now, many were content with their position in life and aspired more to behave creditably in their daily life, settle their children in marriage and fulfil their duties rather than to seek social advancement. 'It is better to be the head of the yeomanry than the tail of the gentry' runs an old English proverb[51]. Whilst some may have advanced socially through the marriage of their children or increased wealth, these would not necessarily be the social climbers that existing gentry made them out to be. It is worth noting that the contemporary writers who most ridicule those making social progress are the very ones most threatened by it and their bias must therefore be acknowledged. Campbell quotes several examples of yeomen who could be regarded as gentlemen by their neighbours on account of ancient lineage and wealth but would not style themselves gentry[52]. And the scorn heaped upon social climbers by contemporary playwrights could have inhibited more sensitive would-be gentry from claiming this status. A character in *The Blind Beggar of Bednal Green* deploring his son's pretension to being a gentleman admonishes him:

> Come, off with this trash,
> Your bought Gentility, that sits upon thee
> Like Peacock's feathers cock't upon a Raven[53]

Nor was ridicule the only burden jumped-up gentry had to bear. The acknowledgement of higher status brought with it the liability of increased taxes[54]. Harrison, rather patronisingly, saw no harm in these social climbers commenting:

> No man hath hurt by it but himselfe, who peradventure will go in wider buskens than his legs will beare, or as our proverbe saith, now and then beare a bigger saile than his boat is able to susteine.[55]

Some positions of authority undoubtedly were a heavy financial burden and were not so readily sought. For example Heal and Holmes highlight the avoidance of the position of High Sheriff because of the costs involved[56] and in Hereford the office of mayor seems to have been a doubtful honour for similar reasons.[57] Whatever the reasons inhibiting personal desire for social progress, there were many who looked beyond them further and higher, and pursued their advancement with vim and vigour.

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[51] Campbell, 1967, p.21
[52] ibid., pp.51-53
[53] ibid., p.51
[54] Heal and Holmes, 1994, p.11
[55] Harrison, 1887, p.129
[56] Heal and Holmes, 1994, pp.172-175
[57] Slocombe, 1972, pp.360-361

Informal designation of status

Wrightson takes a different perspective on the issue of status[58]. Whilst accepting that the distinctions of rank and degree were of great importance, he argues that in practice these were used on formal occasions, for example in making a will or in legal documents, and that in day-to-day contact within the community, more informal distinctions were made. People were divided into *sorts*, and indeed much literature of the time makes reference to different sorts of people. Harrison starts off his chapter on 'degrees of people' by saying 'We in England divide our people commonlie into four sorts'[59].

The term was used from the beginning of the sixteenth century in a neutral, purely descriptive sense but from around the third quarter of the century it began to be used differently. It was often used in a comparative sense for example when referring to the 'better' sort as opposed to the 'meaner' sort, or distinguishing 'learned' sort from the 'vulgar' sort. When used like this the sorts were polarised, with one sort being more favoured than the other and invariably it was used by those in the more favoured sort with pejorative overtones attached to the less favoured sort.

Wrightson argues that the more favoured sort encompassed those social groups which had some authority over the less favoured groups, the 'baser', 'meaner', 'poorer' sorts. If the latter comprised the labourers and poor husbandmen, the former included not only the gentry and wealthier echelons of the yeomanry, merchants and professionals and it also extended down to those husbandmen who held some position in the local community, such as churchwarden. At a time when members of the social élite could well be absent from a locality for long periods or engaged on other more important affairs, the day-to-day running of the community may well fall to those lower down the social scale. The practicalities of such social lumping together would have benefited the higher ranks and been flattering to the humbler members of this 'sort'.

What is interesting and relevant to this research is that Wrightson identifies a shift in the use of this language of 'sorts', as he refers to it, occurring in the 1630s but starting in the 1620s. This is the emergence of a third sort, the 'middling' sort, comprising those such as yeomen, merchants, professionals and husbandmen who were clearly distinct from the gentry above them and also from the labourers, poorer husbandmen and artisans below them. Whilst the individuals within these groups had not changed their status, circumstances had changed which meant that they formed a more cohesive, albeit disparate, group whose interests were no longer necessarily aligned with the gentry. The nascent grouping of the 1620s became firmly established after the Civil War when this 'middling' sort played a part independent of, and sometimes in opposition to, the gentry.

The period between the emergence of the dichotomous use of 'sorts' in the 1570s and the tripartite use of the term in the 1630s encompasses that characterised by the social unease which resulted from the increase in the number of gentry, the concomitant social mobility and preoccupation with formal distinction of status.

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[58] see discussion in Barry and Brooks, 1994, pp.28-51
[59] Harrison, 1887, p.105

There is a general consensus that indicators of status could be quite subtle and fluid and it is difficult from this distance in time to read the determining characteristics defining specific social groupings. Local standing of an individual within his community crops up time and again, at all social levels, and display is closely linked with this. These are not characteristics unique to the early modern period, but they were expressed architecturally in a very distinctive fashion.

Costume

Perhaps the most effective outward expression of social status was costume, not least because it is readily updated to keep in fashion. In the absence of any other indicator of a person's station in life, people were ranked according to their attire. The interest in this aspect of society is twofold. Firstly it is an indicator of the desire to display status, real or assumed, and secondly, the patterns on the textiles used may have been a source for designs for painted decoration.

In an age of social mobility and aspirations it was easy to assume a higher rank by wearing clothes imitating social superiors. Sumptuary laws, for which there were ten proclamations between 1559 and 1597, regulated what different degrees of people could wear and there were penalties for transgression. These followed on from Henrician and even earlier sumptuary legislation. Whilst the justification for earlier legislation was to prevent impoverishment and temptation to robbery, in 1533 reasons of social distinction were given. The aim was not to inhibit social mobility but social emulation and the legislation was very specific in what people could wear.[60]

The concern was that a person's standing should be made explicit by their appearance, thereby avoiding the inadvertant mixing of ranks. The fact that this was a restatement of previous laws suggests that it was not complied with and a further proclamation in 1577 on enforcing the statutes of apparel would support this. An almost total lack of recorded prosecutions for breaking these laws indicates that they were largely unenforceable[61].

Underlying this was the threat felt by those of higher social rank of invasion from the lower orders. And there was also the growing puritanical force against the ostentation of dress, the excesses of which were the subject of scorn and ridicule by some contemporary writers. In 1583, Philip Stubbes attacks pride of apparel as the most sinful form of pride, as it was clearly on display. With unmitigated contempt, he argued that it was not lawful for private subjects to wear sumptuous attire:

> But now there is such a confuse mingle mangle of apparell in Ailgna (England), and such preposterous excesse thereof, as everyone is permitted to flaunt it out, in what apparell he lust himselfe, or can get by anie kind of meanes. So that it is very hard to knowe, who is noble, who is worshipfull, who is a gentleman, who is not: for you shall have those, which are neither the nobylitie gentilitie, nor yeomanry, no nor yet anie magistrat or officer in the common welth, go daylie in silkes, velvets,

[60] Hughes and Larkin, 1969, vol.2 p.278
[61] Youings, 1984, p.111

satens, damasks, taffeties and such like, notwithstanding that they be both base by byrthe, meane by estate and sevyle by calling[62].

A fervent Puritan, his is a partisan stance, but it is nevertheless indicative of the social undercurrents of fashion. He berates those who dress above their station as it caused them to think more of themselves than they ought. He ridiculed ludicrous fashions that 'rather deforme us than adorne us, disguise us, than become us'.[63] 'Deformed and ill-favoured' ruffs were an especial target. 'They have great and monstrous ruffes' which were made of cambrick, holland or lawn '....some be a quarter of a yard deep, yea some more, very few lesse.' When it was windy and rainy ' they goe flip flap in the winde like rags flying abroad, and lye upon their shoulders like the dishclout of a slut.'[64] Ruffs became popular in around 1560 and were small compared to the much wider ones, with round ends, which had become fashionable by the time Stubbes was writing. Ridiculous devices were invented to support these, including wire under-propping and starching. This latter method may have been partially responsible for the proclamation in 1596 prohibiting the unlicensed manufacture or sale of starch, as grain which was much needed for food was being used for making starch.[65]

Protecting home interests was also behind the restrictions on imported cloths, which in turn may have increased the demand for foreign textiles. If only the highest social ranks were permitted to wear these, then this would increase the demand to imitate social superiors. Women in particular seem to have sought foreign cloths, attracting Stubbes' scorn, 'farre fetched, and deare boughte, is good for ladyes they say.'[66]

Nobility and gentry were allowed gorgeous attire to 'innoble, garnishe and set forthe their byrthes, dignities, functions and callings but for no other respecte'[67]. Similarly magistrates and those holding public office could wear costly ornaments and rich attire to dignify their calling 'and to demonstrate and shewe forth, the excellency, and worthiness of their offices, and functions, therby to strike a terrorre and fear into the harts of people, to offend against the majesty of their callings'.[68]

In practice, it is likely that people, of whatever rank, would dress as fashionably as their inclination and purse would permit, particularly women, a fact acknowledged by Stubbes: 'Every poor yeoman's daughter, every husbandman's daughter and every cottager's daughter wants costly gowns to flaunt and will have them, even though parents owe more than they are worth'[69]. And it was probably difficult to distinguish the wife of gentry status from the better-off yeoman's wife. An engraving of Nonsuch dated 1582 and based on an earlier view by Hoefnagel includes a line of women of differing social status, yet the difference in their dress is in fact quite subtle (see fig.4.2).

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[62] Stubbes, 1583, facs. reprint 1972, unpaginated
[63] ibid.
[64] ibid.
[65] Hughes and Larkin, 1969, vol. 2, p.166
[66] Stubbes, 1583
[67] ibid.
[68] ibid.
[69] ibid.

All but the countrywoman (far right) appear to have some decoration in their costume. Not surprisingly the most elaborate costume is that of the noble lady (second from the right) who has a fur trimmed closed gown, decorated underskirt, sleeves and partlet, a ruff and feathered hat. The richness of the costume diminishes with social status. Whilst it is impossible to distinguish from the detail of this engraving the fabrics from which the costumes are made, there is clearly some distinction between ranks. Also of interest in this engraving is the fact that four of the figures hold posies of flowers, three of which are in outstretched arms as though the flowers are being offered. This attitude is similar to that found in two of the paintings [85 and 212], discussed in Chapter 11.

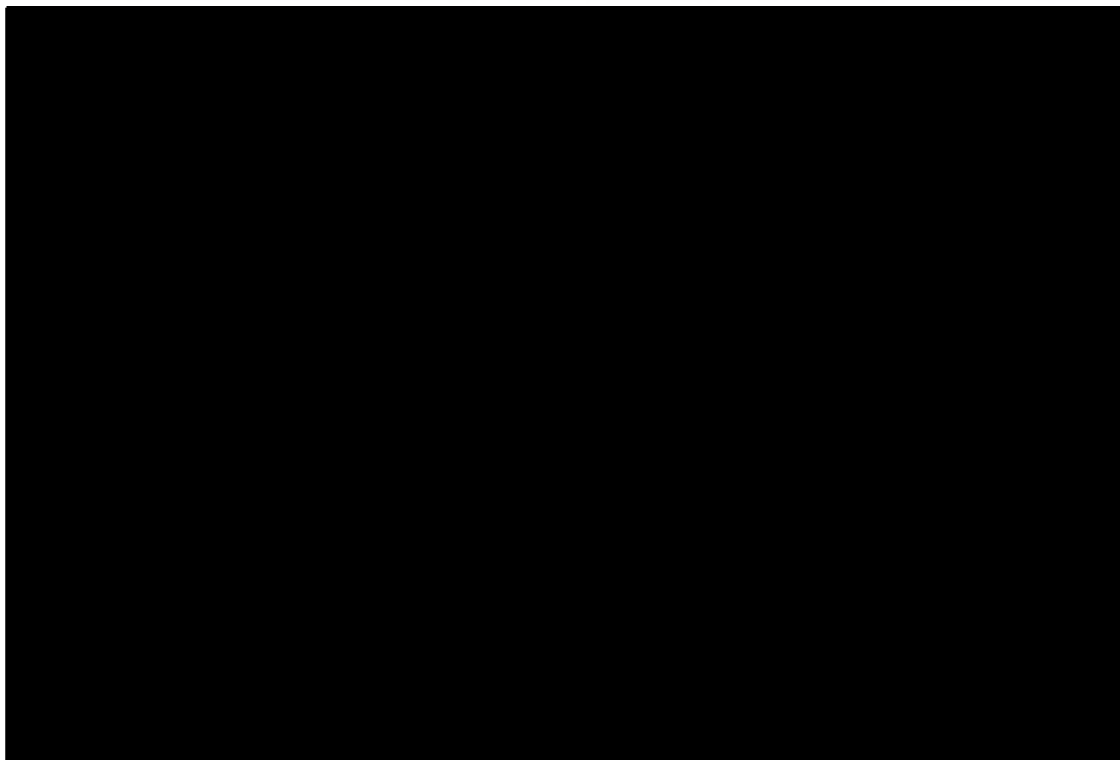

Fig.4.2 Detail of Hoefnagel's map published by Braun and Hogenberg's *Civitates Orbis Terrarum,* 1574, reproduced in Ashelford, 1988, p.116

Education

The questions of who was educated and in what ways are important for a number of reasons. They have relevance for the issues of status, for education was one of the indicators of status. Looking at the iconography of wall paintings those with painted texts suggest a level of literacy, so it is significant to consider who could read and those with classical allusions may be indicative of a higher level of education. The issue of education will also be referred to in looking at sources of design and the significance of painted decoration. For the purposes of this research it is especially useful to make a distinction between those who received a basic education in reading, writing and arithmetic and those who received more advanced education.

Elementary education

A common feature in painted decoration is a frieze containing a biblical or moralising text. This obviously implies that the householder and also those likely to view the painting could read. Whilst there are no figures on literacy rates for the Marches, it is generally accepted that there was a significant increase in the early

modern period and by the middle of the seventeenth century many could read[70]. In just under a thousand probate inventories examined for North Shropshire, one fifth mentioned books indicating that at least one person in the household could read. Watt reviewed literacy rates for the first half of the seventeenth century and found literacy was closely related to social status and varied significantly from region to region (by the 1640s roughly 30% of adult males in rural England could sign their names with up to 78% in London)[71]. Petty schools, providing elementary education, seems to have existed in most parishes by the end of the sixteenth century[72] (there were at least two in Shrewsbury[73]) and were available for all. But this opportunity was taken up more often by the children of yeomen rather than those of lesser standing. The reason was not so much the cost of school, because sometimes children of the poor would attend free of charge, but that these children could not be spared from labour.[74]

Literacy rates in towns were generally higher than those in rural areas, in part due to the employment opportunities open to the children of artisans. Boys not receiving formal education would often be apprenticed and their masters had a duty to ensure they learnt basic literacy and arithmetic. Some girls were apprenticed in trades such as weaving or sewing but, overall, literacy rates amongst women were lower than for men[75].

Motives for learning were not always related to social aspiration, though contemporary literature often gives this impression (see Thomas Wilson's comments below). Greater emphasis on the written word permeated all aspects of society after the Reformation. Those unable to read would be denied access to an increasing number of elements within their own community. Cheap print, aimed at all sections of society, was widely available, as discussed in the next section, and the topics covered by penny broadsides touched on affairs of interest to all, including news, political and religious propaganda, astrological predictions and advice, songs, histories, sensational, sexual and fantastic material[76]. Those who could not read would be excluded from this important element of popular culture.

Also many people, of all social standing, had bonds and engaged in business dealings which involved written documents. Whilst it was not essential to be able to read to participate, it would be a powerful incentive[77], as would involvement in litigation, which was not the sole preserve of the gentry. In 1600 70% of those involved in pleas in the two main common law courts – the King's Bench and the Court of Common Pleas – came from outside the landed gentry and included lesser gentry, yeomen, merchants and artisans[78].

Progression beyond elementary education was increasingly possible as the number of grammar schools established in this period testifies. Many wealthy merchants and

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[70] Spufford, 1979, p.171-183, Coward, 1988, p.86
[71] Watt, 1994, p.7.
[72] Coward, 1988, p.86
[73] Champion, 1994, p.40
[74] Spufford, 1979, ch.6
[75] Barry and Brookes, 1994, p.53
[76] See Watt, 1994, chapter 1 and ballad collection in Early English Books Online
[77] Spufford, 1979, ch 8
[78] Barry and Brooks, 1994, p.123.

craftsmen (and some women –see the Vaughans of Hergest Court in Chapter 6) gave endowments to set up schools, usually in the town of their birth. Shrewsbury School, which was founded in 1552 with money from a wealthy merchant, had become one of the largest in the country by the 1580s with around three to four hundred pupils. Here the sons of major gentry mingled with those of local townsfolk, the latter being charged at a considerably reduced rate[79]. Classics were studied and there was a strong emphasis on drama, a subject exercised when the pupils were called upon to enact pageants and displays in honour of the visit from the Council of the Marches. (In May 1581, the Lord President, Sir Henry Sidney who was leaving Shrewsbury by barge, was met by a group of scholars on an island downstream of the castle, 'dressed as green nymphs with willow branches tied to their heads, they recited verses across the water:

> And will your honour needs depart, and must it needs be so.
> Would God we could like fishes swim, that we might with thee go.

This apparently brought the Lord President close to tears.)[80]

Higher education

The rise in attendance at grammar schools was paralleled by an increase in higher education, as witnessed by the number of new colleges founded at Oxford and Cambridge in the early modern period. The sons of the gentry traditionally went on to university with a period at the Inns of Court where the study of the liberal arts prepared them as gentlemen and a knowledge of the law befitted them for their role in life in public service and, for the landed gentry, in dealing with their estates. Not surprisingly, they increasingly encountered classmates from grammar school who were sons of yeomen and merchants. Spufford comments on the marked increase in 'plebeian' matriculands at Cambridge in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. This category included merchants, professional artisans and also peasants[81].

If the motives for learning to read and write did not necessarily indicate a desire for social advancement, the pursuit of higher education probably did. There are many references to those of lower status achieving high positions as a result, in the first instance, of higher education[82], a phenomenon condemned by those gentry who felt their positions threatened by those of lower rank. Thomas Wilson, the younger son in a gentry family, complained about the lessening of opportunities for posts in the church, the law or the army, the traditional destination for those in a similar position. The cause being that it was:

> Now permitted to yeomanrye and merchauntes to set their broode to the studye of comon laws, that faculty is so pestered, yea many worthy offices and places of high regarde, in that vocation (in ye olde time left to support the gentle linage) and are now pre-occupated and usurped by ungentle and base stocke.[83]

[79] Champion, 1994, pp.38-39
[80] ibid, p.40
[81] Spufford, 1979, pp.174-175
[82] See for example, Campbell, 1967, p.36
[83] ibid., p.44

It was not just public service that attracted the educated. The professions provided another lucrative career for many, not just those of gentry standing. The boom in litigation in the sixteenth century made law an attractive prospect and it is not a coincidence that lawyers were found to have been the owners of several of the grandest houses covered in the fieldwork (see Chapter 6). Lawyers were drawn approximately equally from gentry and non-gentry backgrounds but attorneys and solicitors came from the same social groups as the retail and mercantile trades[84]. The majority of apothecaries, surgeons and medical practitioners also came from social backgrounds outside landed gentry [85].

Ever conscious of status, disputes arose within professions about those not properly educated and there were moves to exclude the self-taught (See the account of Richard Prynce, lawyer, Chapter 6). The distinction was drawn, usually by the gentry, between those whose profession required a study of the liberal arts, involving book learning, and those involved in the mechanical arts, which involved training through some sort of apprenticeship. Yet there are many examples of those who succeeded in professions without attendance at university, making use of the large numbers of books which were published during the sixteenth century specifically to disseminate knowledge within professions and to a wider public. In particular translations from Latin enabled wider access to knowledge. There was a belief amongst many that it was wrong to keep people in ignorance by 'locking up the treasure of knowledge in untranslated Latin works'[86]

What were people reading in the Marches

In 1585, Roger Ward, a Shrewsbury publisher, was imprisoned for failure to pay a debt of £240 to John Betton, a draper in the town. This was not the first time Ward had been imprisoned. The Stationer's Company had taken him court previously for unauthorised publishing. This time all his lands and goods were seized to pay the debt, which involved making a detailed inventory of his stock. This has survived to provide a unique insight into the availability of books in a provincial town. Over five hundred titles are listed, covering a wide range of subjects. Of note are several grammar school text books, presumably in demand by Shrewsbury School. The presence of the school could reasonably be expected to inflate demand to some extent, but the size and extent of the stock is astonishing. To support such a stock, Ward must have had a significant number of educated and interested customers.

Religious books include bibles, psalters, prayer books, endless books of sermons, communion books and psalms, with 42 copies of 'singinge psalmes alone', numerous works by Calvin, moralising books, including the *Debate between Pride and Lowliness* mentioned above, and many books on religious propaganda such as 'persuasion against papistry', 'popishe monsters' and 'Knewstub against popery'.

The classics include works by Ovid, Tully, Aristotle and Horace. There are books on philosophy, physics, logic and history. Practical books on household management include cookery books and herbals. More light-hearted are romances, traditional stories such as Aesop's Fables, Nine Worthies, poetry and songs. The pursuits of

[84] Barry and Brookes, 1994, p.114
[85] ibid, pp.113-114
[86] ibid, p.121

gentlemanly leisure are catered for with gardening books including the skills of grafting, and, of particular interest for this research are five copies of the 'Arte of limninge'. Ward also stocked ballads, pictures (presumably engravings), maps and a whole range of writing materials.[87]

Whether other provincial towns had access to a similar range of reading material is not known. Probate inventories rarely mention the titles of books – in the north Shropshire inventories mentioned above, the only books identified are Bibles and some ABCs. The inventories of local tradesmen however, which were examined in the course of this research primarily for evidence of pigments (see Chapter 7), contain some references to books, mostly elementary books but that of Elizabeth Hurt, a Coventry mercer, contains a list of fourteen titles, with several copies for most of them. These include Ovid, Virgil, Terence, Latin books, primers and grammars, Aesop's Fables, religious and philosophical books, ballads and six dozen 'small books'. Helpfully, this inventory includes the value of the books which range from 2d for primers and Latin books to 16d for a copy of Virgil. Most of the others were valued at between 6d – 10d, and the ballads were 12d for a hundred[88]. Given the volume of books recorded it is possible that she also acted as a bookseller.

Print

Closely allied to the growth in education and partly responsible for it is the development in printing in the sixteenth century. Once the preserve of the Church and the very rich, books became accessible at the vernacular level, which the stock of Roger Ward clearly shows. Apart from its connection with education, the increasing availability of printed material provided potential sources for design for painted decoration, which is discussed further in Chapter 10 and, equally important but more difficult to pin down, it was a medium for expressing shared cultural values.

Most of the books published at this time had some form of illustration, usually a title-page only, but some had extensive illustrations. For example, the 1532 Antwerp edition of the Bible had two hundred woodcuts, one edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* had a similar number[89] and the 1636 edition of Gerard's Herbal has nearly as many with a plant illustration on the majority of pages. These were mostly taken from continental prints, both woodcuts and engravings, which proliferated in the sixteenth century. Title pages could be made up from a single piece of wood or metal or from several compartments intended to make up a single design[90] although these could be reused in different title-pages. The subjects were wide-ranging, including Biblical subjects, classical and contemporary literature, printer's devices and emblems and some were pure ornament. [91]The latter were originally intended to help professional craftsmen in designs for their work, such as Thomas Geminus' *Morysse and Damshin renewed and encreased Very profitable for Goldsmythes and Embroiderars*, 1548. They were sold either in sets or as single sheets or, by the1520s, as pattern books. Whilst not all prints originated on the continent, it is

[87] Rodger, 1958, pp.247-262
[88] Inventories from the Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities 1550-1800
[89] Wells-Cole, 1997, p.ix
[90] McKerrow and Ferguson, 1932, p.xi
[91] Wells-Cole 1997, p.5

widely accepted that the majority were and those that were produced in England, apart from the very simple designs, were heavily influenced by, if not directly copied from, continental ones. As such, they were responsible for introducing Renaissance elements into the vocabulary of design at the vernacular level.

Not everyone, however, was buying these books and prints, or at least in great quantities. If a fifth of the north Shropshire inventories mention books, four-fifths did not. What almost everyone would have had access to are broadside ballads. These were a major element in popular culture, sung by travelling minstrels, at intervals in plays and a common recreation in which all, rich and poor alike, participated[92].That they were sung in the houses of nobility as well as in alehouses and the humblest of houses, is indicative of their widespread appeal.

Prior to cheap printing, these were disseminated orally but in the sixteenth century the single sheet broadsides became the most common method for new songs to be communicated. The format of the ballad sheet was fairly standard, featuring an illustration, occasionally having some relevance to the content of the song, followed by the words. As these were intended to be sung the tune is usually specified e.g. 'to the tune of ....' indicating that these were well known tunes (see fig.4.3).

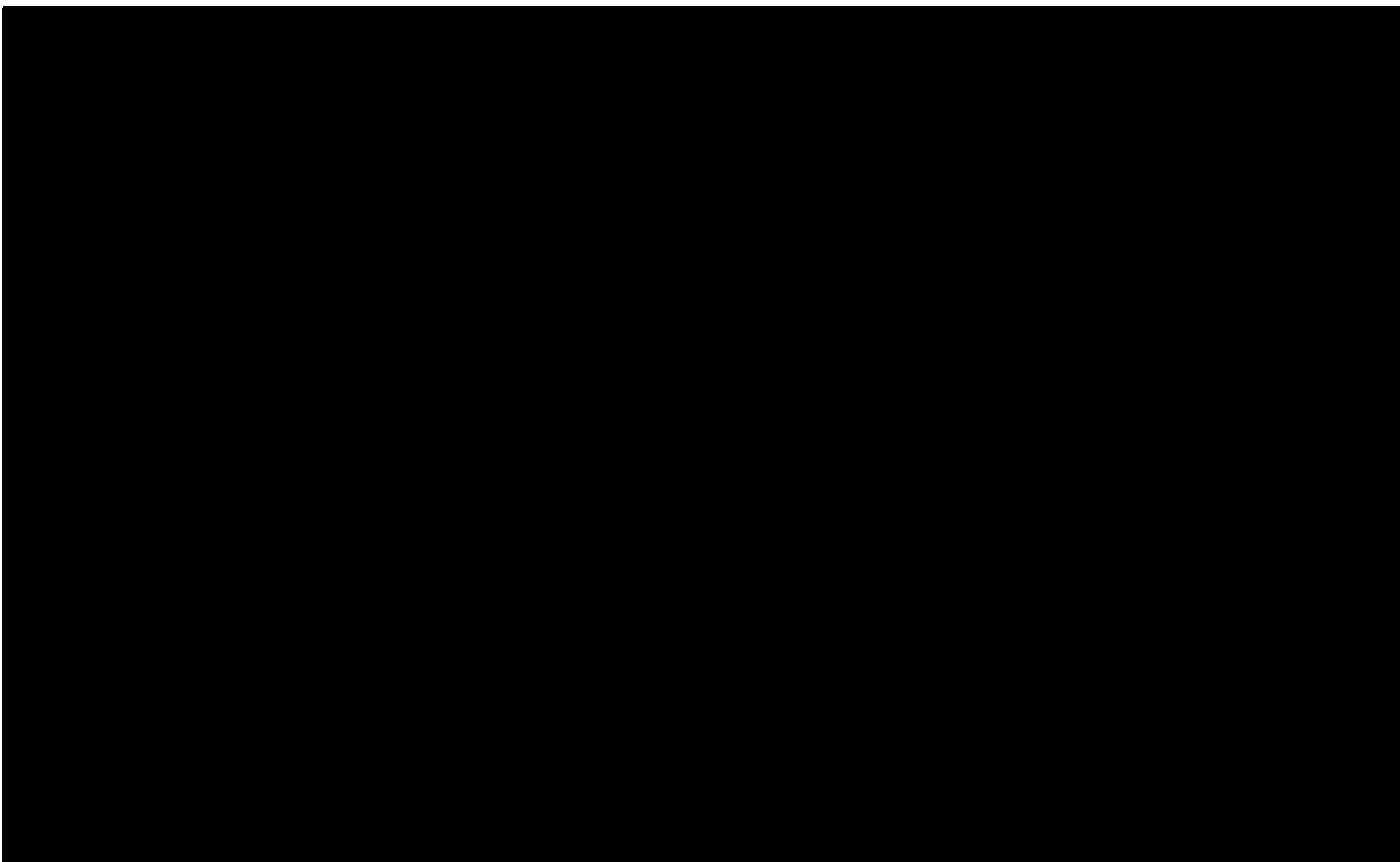

Fig.4.3 Typical ballad sheet

Three thousand distinct titles were published in the second half of the sixteenth century. With minimum print runs of around 1000 –1250 each, Watt has calculated that around three to four million ballad sheets were circulated. These were usually sold as single sheets mostly costing less than one penny[93]. The ballad singer would also sell his printed songs whilst others were sold by travelling chapmen who would bring a regular supply of new ballads, or were bought from the local alehouse or

[92] Watt, 1994, Ch.1
[93] ibid., p.11

shop. In Coventry (see previous section) there were over a hundred in the shop, valued at a fraction of a penny each. Roger Ward had a huge stock of them - 'one reame and 6 quire ballates' – which is over 600 ballads (one proper ream has 480 sheets and a quire has 24) in addition to which he had another box of them. Even though they are often referred to as penny ballads, many would have cost less, which meant that all but the very poorest could afford to buy them. Watt found evidence of ballads and other printed material being pasted or pinned onto walls or hangings of houses, even humble cottages, as a form of instruction and decoration.[94]

Common cultural reference points which had meanings readily accessible to the population as a whole are in part due to the developments in print in the sixteenth century. This is an important consideration for the discussion of the significance of painted decoration.

This chapter has sought to set out some elements of the cultural background in which painted decoration was carried out. It is not a comprehensive account of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century culture and society. Only those elements have been selected which, during the course of this research, seemed to be of greatest relevance. Some of these will be explored further in Chapters 10 and 11 in looking at the sources and significance of painted decoration.

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[94] ibid, p.221

Chapter 5
Decoration in churches

One of the paradoxes of the increase in display and rich ornamentation in the latter part of the sixteenth century is the parallel growth in Puritanism and restraint in decoration. The tensions this aroused in relation to costume have been referred to above. The wider social tensions arising from this are not the subject of this thesis but it is useful to acknowledge them and to touch on some manifestations of this in relation to decoration in the church.

The Reformation had transformed the interior of churches and how people worshipped there. The pre-eminence of the visual image gave way to the spoken and written words as a means of communication and learning in the church. This involved more than the obliteration of images from the church. It required a change in mental attitudes to worship. People who were commissioning wall paintings in the 1570s when painted decoration became much more widespread, had grown up in the immediate post-Reformation period when these changes were gradually taking place. Display and visual richness were primary characteristics of Elizabethan society, yet not in the churches. This section looks at what was happening to decoration in the churches in the post-Reformation period with a view to establishing what decoration may have been found in churches in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and understanding the significance of the changes in the visual everyday environment.[1]

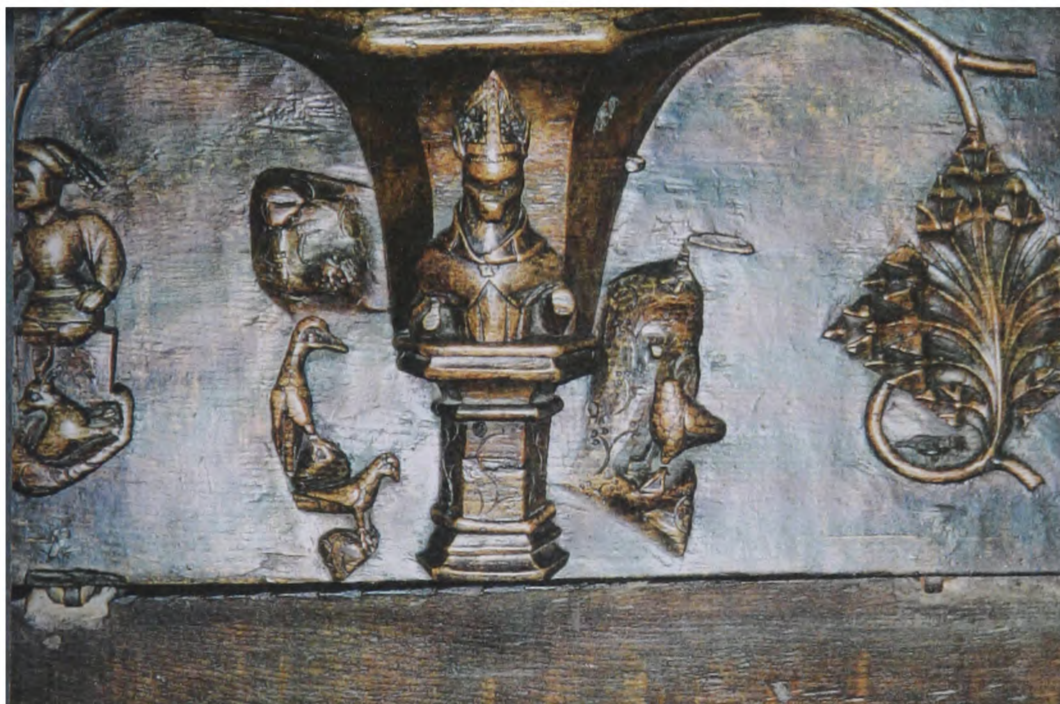

Fig.5.1 Misericord, St. Laurence's Church, Ludlow, Shrops.

Prior to the Reformation, the interiors of churches were richly decorated. In many cases all possible surfaces would have had some ornamentation. This applied to small country parish churches as well as large important ones, including fittings as well as the decoration on the fabric of the building. The total visual experience would be the result of several centuries of decoration which would have been continually renewed and added to. Often the structural elements received

[1] This discussion on based on Rouse, 1991, Aston, 1988, Duffy, 1992, Watt, 1994, Frere and Kennedy, 1910 and Hughes and Larkin, 1969.

embellishment such as carved capitals. Fittings such as bench ends and misericords were also favourites for carving, (see fig. 5.1) which could be purely ornamental or it could include figurative or symbolic designs.

Walls were almost always painted and Tristram's works give an indication of the extent and richness of this[2]. Subjects encompassed simple decorative schemes - bible stories, saints and the story of their lives, and moralising themes. The purpose of the paintings was not just decoration for its own sake but for devotion, as images were a fundamental part of worship, and instruction. In a society which was largely illiterate, the church relied heavily on visual communication for teaching purposes.[3]

The emphasis on the storytelling function of the paintings is apparent from the lack of realism in the execution of figurative schemes. In these it is clear that realism was not the prime concern. For example, figure size depended on the importance of the subject and movements would be exaggerated to convey an appropriate message. The main paintings occupied the principal spaces on the walls and ceiling. Pillars, window reveals and other incidental spaces often had decorative schemes subsidiary to the main scheme or were painted with pure ornament for its own sake (see fig. 5.2).

Nor was painting restricted to walls. Those elements within the church not subject to wear and tear such as rood lofts, were also probably always painted. Traces of paint can sometimes still be detected on surviving fabric. Monuments, encaustic patterned floor tiles, stained glass or patterned windows all contributed to the rich, colourful interior of the church. It is important to remember that this would have been a vivid contrast to the homes of most people, who would rarely encounter such ornament or these rich colours outside the church (see fig.5.3).

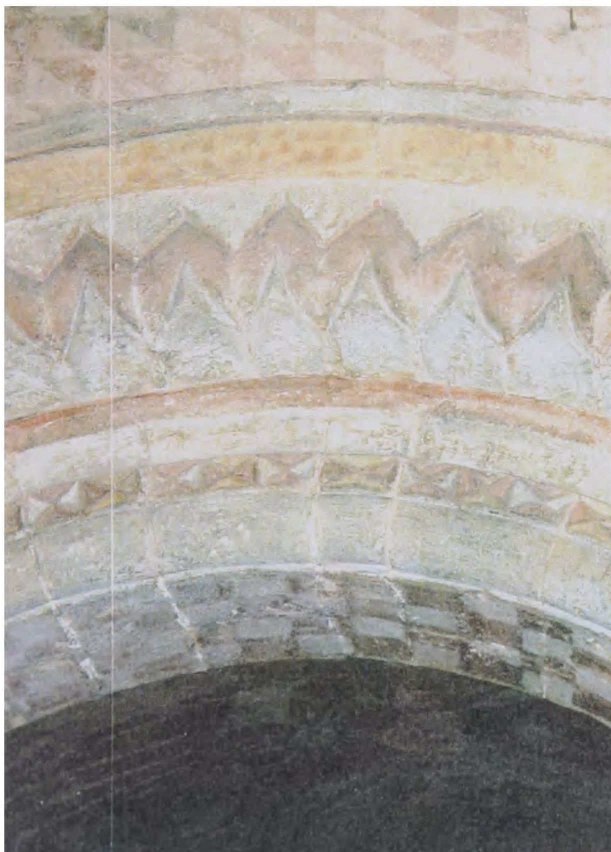

Fig.5.2 St. Mary's Church, Kempley, Glos.

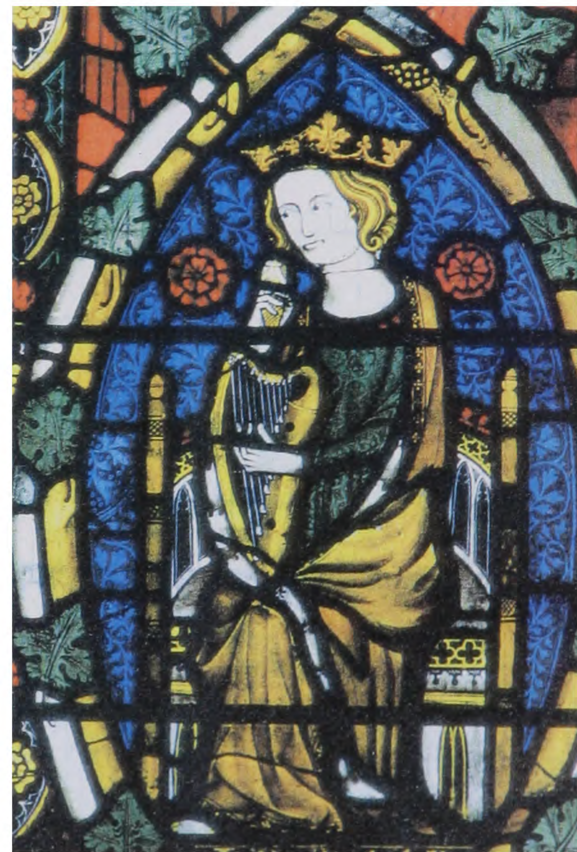

Fig.5.3 Stained glass window, St. Mary's Church, Shrewsbury, Shrops

[2] Tristram, 1944, 1950, 1955
[3] Rouse, 1991, p.35

How much decoration survived the Reformation?

Laws relating to images following the Reformation are numerous, shifting and confusing, reflecting a lack of consensus on the subject between the moderates, concerned with banning 'abused' images - those that could be touched and used for worship - and the radicals who wanted to remove all images from the church. The laws changed quite frequently during the following forty years, becoming more or less tolerant of images, according to the beliefs of those framing the laws and the political circumstances of the day. Given the complex and sometimes contradictory array of ecclesiastical articles, injunctions, parliamentary statutes and royal proclamations, it is not surprising that implementation at the parish level was inconsistent. The zeal with which godly Protestants did away with all images in some parishes contrasts with the grudging fulfilment of the will of the crown by the churchwardens in others[4]. And there is a time dimension to this as well. Changes on the ground took place over a long period and the 1570s seems to have marked a turning point when more images were lost in the churches. By this time a generation had grown up with the new religion no longer regarding the images in the church with the same reverence.

Aston and Watt both suggest that the some elements of decoration in the church would have survived at least into the seventeenth century.[5] The carving on the structure of the church, which was largely pure ornament, would not have fallen into the category of idolatrous images. It would not offend *per se* and, being difficult to eradicate, it survived. Statues and those images which could be touched and therefore potentially used as icons, were more dangerous than images out of reach. Following a similar line, the more realistic the image, again, the greater the danger it posed as an icon. Churchwarden's accounts of the 1540s and early 1550s abound with references to images of saints being removed. Those elements in the church associated specifically with old forms of worship were particularly vulnerable whereas those which might serve a useful purpose in the Reformed church might escape the iconoclasts.

Stained glass presented a problem. Much of it depicted saints and other idolatrous images but it served a vital function in keeping the church weatherproof. Reports of the smashing of windows during this period may be exaggerated. Glass was very expensive and there was a specific duty to reglaze openings if the glass was lost. The general responsibility of the upkeep of the church was divided between the parishioners, who were responsible for the nave and the rector, who was responsible for the chancel. In these circumstances, it is difficult to believe many churchwardens would willingly destroy their glass. A compromise was sometimes achieved by whitewashing the windows to obscure the images, though this must have been an unsatisfactory compromise. Churches would have been quite dark without the additional blotting out of light which whitewashing would cause.

Harrison provides an illuminating commentary on the survival of glass:

> ...all images, shrines, tabernacles, roodlofts and monuments of idolatry are removed, taken down, and defaced; only the stories in glass windows

[4] Duffy, 1992, p.568

[5] Watt, 1994, pp.176-177 and Aston, 1988, p.92

> excepted, which, for want of sufficient store of new stuff and by reason of extreme charge that should grow by the alteration of the same into white panes throughout the realm, are not altogether abolished in most places at once but by little and little suffered to decay, that white glass may be provided and set up in their rooms. (1577)[6]

There was still sufficient glass surviving in windows for them to have been included in the injunction of 1559 which concerned the abolition of images including those in windows[7].

Monuments and brasses were often highly decorative elements and were in one of the categories of images which were tolerated under Tudor law. It was considered proper to honour the memory and good deeds of the dead and funeral monuments were expressly exempt from destruction. They also survived in many churches, again sometimes with defaced elements[8].

Wall paintings, which are the most directly relevant form of decoration to this thesis were in theory vulnerable to iconoclasm. But, in the initial wave of destruction at least, it was 'abused' images that were targeted, that is the accessible, realistic ones with iconic potential. The pure ornament, which was often found in subsidiary locations would not have been a prime target. But possibly neither were the images which were generally flat, two-dimensional representations. Realism was not the aim, nor the achievement, of medieval painters and it is possible that many of these images escaped the initial whitewashing. Whilst there is much evidence of whitewashing walls in churches in the 1540s, there is also contradictory evidence of wall painting surviving.

At Chichester, for example, there is a record of the painting of the Passion of Christ in the cathedral being whitewashed over as late as the 1580s. It is recorded that some 'wellwishers' - supporters of the old religion - rubbed at the whitewash so that 'it is almost as bright as ever it was'[9].

In *As You Like It,* c.1599, Shakespeare refers The Ages of Man, a common theme in churches in the medieval period, as painted around a wheel. The fragments of such a wheel survive on the north wall of SS Peter and Paul in Leominster, at Kempley in Gloucestershire and in a secular building, Longthorpe Tower near Peterborough. Similar iconography is used in the Lisle Psalter. Pamela Tudor-Craig speculates that Shakespeare would have been likely to have picked up this imagery in church rather than from a manuscript source, suggesting that such wall painting survived until the late 16th century at least[10]. The repeated instructions in visitation articles throughout the late 16th century to ensuring the removal of all images is further evidence that they survived. There would be no need to press continually for their removal otherwise.

It is more likely that the 1540s references to whitewashing churches related only to those parts of the church which had idolatrous images. As the date of limewashing

[6] Harrison, 1877, p.31
[7] Hughes and Larkin, 1969, p.123
[8] See Llewellyn, 2000 for a full discussion on post-Reformation monuments
[9] Quoted in Duffy, 1992, p.583
[10] Tudor-Craig,, in Saul, ed., 1992, p.108

the entire church is material in considering whether the church was a source for designs, which is discussed in Chapter 10, the churchwarden's accounts for St. Laurence, Ludlow were closely examined for evidence on this. The first record in the churchwarden's account for the walls being whitewashed is in 1542 and subsequently there are regular references to making clean the walls and whitewashing them. This is comparable to other records, for example those mentioned by Duffy and Tewkesbury churchwardens' accounts[11]. However, the references are not clear as to exactly what was being whitewashed. The amounts of lime used and labour specifically for this purpose are not clear so it is difficult to assess whether the whole church was done at this time. Further examination of the accounts provides evidence that the church was not completely whitewashed until much later.

In 1572 there is an entry for Edward Derby 'for fower horsses and him selfe to go to Bewdley for lyme *to make an ende of whitting the church*' (my italics). This suggests that the task had been going on for some time. A local workman was then paid 10s for whiting the church. Master craftsmen were being paid consistently 9d – 10d per day in the same accounts, other workmen being paid 8d. If it was a master craftsmen, then it would mean the whitewashing of the church took 12 days. If it was done by a less skilled workman, which is more likely as whitewashing is not a skilled job, then this would have taken 15 days. Previously, in 1548 a workman was paid 15d 'for whitlyminge the churche ij dayes work and for a busshelle and a whop of lyme'. The discrepancy in the amount of time taken to whitewash the church - 2 days - compared to 12 or 15 days in 1572 suggests that in the 1540s only part of the church was whitewashed.

In support of this, the costs of painting can be compared with those of the other churchwardens' accounts examined. In 1578 at least 15 ½ days was spent whitewashing St Michael's in Tewkesbury at a cost of 11s 2d (possibly also another two days, as the accounts are not specific) and in Oswestry in 1608, it cost 26s to whitewash the church.[12] These are all large churches. Even allowing for some wage inflation in the late 16th century, it seems that the charge of 15d for two days labour and materials for whitewashing the church in Ludlow in 1548 is unrealistic and that this can only have referred to part of the church, the rest being unpainted until 1572. This means that the decoration on the walls of the church would have remained as a source of design for local craftsmen until this time.

Apart from the above, there is ample evidence in the journal of William Dowsing written during the 1640s to suggest that extensive decoration existed in churches until the mid 17th century. His journal is limited to the county of Suffolk, though he also visited Cambridge, and his account makes depressing reading in terms of the destruction of the decorative elements in the church, particularly of stained glass windows. For example:

> 2. At CLARE, Jan. the 6th (1643). We brake down 1000 Pictures superstitious; I brake down 200; 3 of God the father, and 3 of Christ, and the Holy Lamb, and 3 of the Holy ghost like a Dove with wings; and the 12 apostles were carved in Wood, on top of the Roof, which we gave order to

[11] Duffy, 1992, p.480 and G.R.O.PA154/2, St. Michael's churchwarden's accounts
[12] Day, 1970

> take down; and 20 Cherubims to be taken down; and the Sun and Moon in the east window, by the King's arms, to be taken down.[13]

The 'pictures' referred to would have been stained glass and this must have been a lavishly decorated church. In this church, as in many other visited by Dowsing, not even decoration on the roof, which could never have iconic potential, escaped. Nor, did a representation of the sun and the moon:

> 61. STOW-MARKET, Feb. the 5th. We gave order to break down about 70 superstitious Pictures; and to levell the Chancel, to Mr. Manning, that promised to do it; ...[14]

Again this would have referred to stained glass images. Mr Manning evidently carried out his promise as the churchwarden's accounts for the year include for 16s - 'Laide out for the towne paide to ffyler for glassinge where the pictures were battered out'.[15]

Over 150 churches were visited by Dowsing in less than fifty days and these churches lie within an area which was more Protestant than most parts of the country and where one would expect iconoclastic injunctions to have been carried out more zealously than elsewhere. There was clearly plenty of decoration left for Dowsing and his deputies to destroy as late as the 1640s.

Post-Reformation decoration

Apart from survivals from the Reformation, the local church was also the object of much decoration in the late sixteenth century. Royal Arms were introduced into churches after the breach with Rome in 1534, providing a constant acknowledgement of the link between church and state. Whilst few survived the iconographic turbulence prior to Elizabeth's reign, many examples survive after her accession, often accompanied by laudatory phrases or ' God Save the Queen'. Cautley illustrates examples in Lower Quinton, Greens Norton, Kenninghall and Basingstoke[16].

By James I's accession, many churches had Royal Arms. In a licence granted by Archbishop Abbot in 1614 to John Serjent, a painter stainer of Hitchen, it is stated that ' Royal Arms are set up in all or most part of the Churches and Chapells within the said realm' but instructing him 'to survey and paynte in all the churches and chapels within the Realme of England, the Kinges Majesties Armes in due form, with helme, crest, mantel and supporters as they ought to be, together with the noble young prince's, and to wrighte in fayre text letters the tenn commandments, the beliefe and the Lord's prayer, with some other fruitfull and profitable sentences of holye scrypture'.[17]

The shift away from images for religious instruction to the written word is marked by the widespread use of painted texts, from the 1560s onwards. These had a

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[13] White, 1885, p.15
[14] ibid., p.21
[15] ibid., p.45
[16] Cautley, 1934, illustrations 4-13
[17] Cautley, 1934, pp.35-36

decorative as well as an instructive use. After a wave of iconoclasm in 1559, Elizabeth became concerned about the destruction in churches and ordered:

> ..that the tables of the commandments may be comely set, or hung up in the east end of the chancel, to be read not only for edification, but also to give some comely ornament and demonstration, that the same is a place of religion and prayer.[18]

Figure fig 5.4 shows the exceptional quality of the texts painted at Abbeydore. This provides another indication of the extent of literacy as texts could only be an effective means of communication if people attending church were sufficiently literate to read them.

Prior to the Reformation, the Church had a virtual monopoly on decoration and colour. By the end of the sixteenth century decoration and brilliant colours were, seemingly, everywhere (the landless labourer's cottage excepted). The key argument of this chapter is that changes in the decoration of churches, as a result of the Reformation, were highly influential aspects of the visual environment in which decoration at the vernacular level took place.

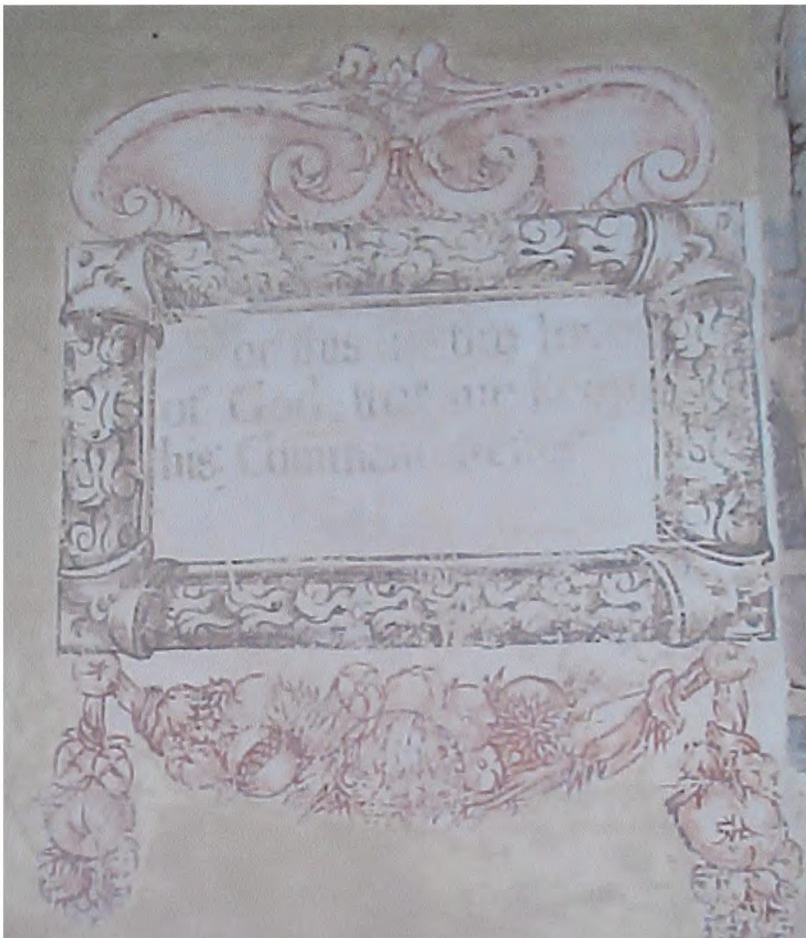

Fig.5.4 Painted text, Dore Abbey, Herefs.

[18] Quoted in Aston, p.362

Section 2

Findings

Chapter 6
Key findings of the fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out in order to obtain information which would illuminate the discussion of the hypotheses, and also in order to determine what exactly was surviving in terms of wall paintings. The first part of this chapter will concentrate on establishing the type of houses where wall paintings were found, and will attempt to assess the dates of main building phases and the status of these houses. Those found in inns - ten buildings surveyed - are excluded from the first part of this discussion as their characteristics may not be typical of domestic buildings. The chapter will then focus on some of the people living in these houses who are likely to have commissioned the wall paintings. The third section will look at details of the paintings found. This will include the types of wall painting surviving and their context; typical characteristics of painted decoration and an assessment of the date when paintings were executed.

Building details

At the outset it was postulated that wall paintings might be found in all types and status of houses. The extent to which this can be confirmed through the fieldwork is questionable. Map 5 indicates the location of the buildings surveyed. This shows that wall paintings existed in buildings throughout the geographical area studied but the incidence is not uniform. It is widely accepted that the survival of buildings on the ground is not a representative sample of the buildings existing at any one point in the past. Buildings have been lost for a variety of reasons, though decay of less well built ones is a main factor. Poorer people generally had less well-built houses which have not survived in the same numbers as the houses of the better-off members of society[1]. This is reflected in the geographical distribution of the buildings surveyed and their status.

Rooms serving the same function have been given different names by contemporaries and by modern writers. To avoid confusion, the principal room will be called the hall, the more private ground floor room will be called the parlour and first floor rooms will be called chambers.

Size

In looking at building types and dates, general statements of broad trends will be used rather than specific figures and percentages. This is because there is incomplete data for some buildings. For others, assessments, particularly of date or original size, were too difficult to make with any degree of certainty because of later alterations. Full archaeological surveys were not carried out as part of the fieldwork but where these are available, they have been used. Bearing this in mind, the following general conclusions can be made with some confidence.

The majority of houses are of three units or larger. Typically this would comprise, as a minimum, a hall, a parlour and service accommodation. Larger houses would have more parlours or chambers, especially on upper floors and more specialised service

[1] Machin , 1994, p.28 and Currie, 1988

Map 5 - Location of wall paintings surveyed

rooms. The functions of these rooms and how they were changing in use during the period of study was discussed in Chapter 4. Most of buildings are two or more storeys in height and many open halls would have been ceiled over during the period of study.

Few, if any, of these larger houses, would have remained as open halls by the mid-seventeenth century. Over half the inventories mentioning rooms in north Shropshire include a chamber over the hall (56%) and these included a much larger proportion of small houses than large houses. The lack of reference to a hall chamber does not necessarily indicate its absence, rather that there were no goods of value there (see Chapter 4 for a discussion on the use of first floor chambers).

Two-unit houses make up only 15% of the buildings and these are mostly in towns and are of two to three storeys in height. Only six were modest two-unit houses or one to one-and-a-half storeys high and were mostly in rural locations.

The ground floor area of the buildings was calculated where possible. In some cases this was a very rough estimate made by simply pacing around the outer walls. For others it was possible to measure the outer dimensions and some measurements were taken from survey drawings, in which case an accurate figure is given. Allowing for a degree of error, buildings have been placed in broad categories of ground floor area (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Estimated ground floor area of buildings surveyed

size	*2-unit*	*3-unit*	*>3-unit*	*total*
<500 sq ft	9	3	0	*12*
500-750 sq ft	3	9	4	*16*
750-1000 sq ft	6	3	6	*15*
1000-1250 sq ft	2	7	7	*16*
1250-1500 sq ft	1	4	6	*11*
1500-2000 sq ft	0	9	9	*18*
>2000 sq ft	0	2	28	*30*
not known				*70*
total	*21*	*37*	*60*	*188*

Even allowing for overestimates where later extensions may have been included, the size of houses is striking. More than three-quarters of the houses are over 750 sq ft, and a significant number over 2000 sq.ft. These include some houses which might be classed as polite which may skew the results but notwithstanding this, the overall size of houses surveyed is large. This broadly reflects the national picture in terms of surviving houses. Machin carried out a similar exercise for farmhouses and found a range of 300-2,200 sq.ft. He comments on the exceptional size of medieval survivals, cautioning against accepting them as a typical representation of their period and found medieval houses generally larger than later survivors (1550-1650)[2].

[2] Machin, 1994, p.28

Date

Dates of the main building were assessed, followed by the date of any additions or alterations. Pre-1500 houses were evident from medieval elements in their construction such as crucks, arch-braced roof trusses, brattished wall plates, cusped timbers, traceried windows and the presence of an open hall. 59 of the buildings can be dated with some confidence prior to 1500 and 8 of these are known to date from the fifteenth century from dendro-dating. Not surprisingly, these are nearly all larger buildings of three units or more. Only 5 are two-unit (see Table 6.2). In all, 60% of the buildings where the date could be assessed with some certainty date from the period before the 'Great Rebuilding'. Yet the last quarter of the sixteenth century saw an upsurge in building activity with a further quarter of buildings being constructed at this time. It is estimated that 85% of the buildings surveyed were in existence by the end of the sixteenth century.

Table 6.2: Estimated date of main building

date	*2-unit*	*3-unit*	*>3-unit*	*total*
pre 1500	5	16	38	*59*
1500-50	15	9	11	*35*
1550-75	3	5	6	*14*
1575-00	17	13	19	*49*
1600-25	2	6	4	*12*
1625-50	0	1	0	*1*
1650-75	1	3	0	*4*
1675-00	0	2	3	*5*
not known				*9*
total	*43*	*55*	*81*	*188*

One of the reasons for looking at the date of the building is to throw some light on when the paintings may have been executed. The findings of this study suggest that this is primarily from the late sixteenth century and the first quarter of the seventeenth century. It is not just new building that is relevant but all building activity. When additions and alterations are looked at, then this period emerges as the one with the greatest building activity.

60% of additions to buildings are estimated to have taken place during this period with the remainder mostly continuing throughout the seventeenth century. Fairly firm dates are known for 24 building phases, either from dendro-dating or documentary evidence and these are in accordance with the general figures, that is 58% fall within 1575-1625 (see Table 6.3). These alterations are to late sixteenth century buildings as well as those from earlier periods. Typically, alterations included adding a chimney-stack, ceiling over the hall, the addition of a cross-wing (e.g. at High Grosvenor [145] and Sutton Court Farm [73-75]) and internal rearrangements. They suggest an accelerated impetus to keep up with the latest architectural development in this particular period.

Table 6. 3: Estimated date of alterations and additions

date	*2-unit*	*3-unit*	*>3-unit*	*total*
pre 1500	0	0	1	*1*
1500-50	0	0	0	*0*
1550-75	2	3	1	*6*
1575-00	3	12	21	*36*
1600-25	4	4	5	*13*
1625-50	1	4	3	*8*
1650-75	1	1	2	*4*
1675-00	1	4	4	*9*
total	*12*	*28*	*37*	*77*

Status

A key underpinning aspect of this research is the issue of status. In order to understand what paintings mean, it is necessary to establish what kind of people had painted decoration in their homes. Houses as well as people can move up or down the social scale which means that it is not necessarily the original status of the houses that is relevant. In this section an attempt is made to assign a broad category of status to the occupiers of the buildings surveyed on the basis of their architecture during the period 1575-1625, the period when it is suggested that wall paintings enjoyed greatest popularity.

Defining the status of houses is a problem that has taxed many students of vernacular architecture[3]. One of the difficulties arises from regional variations in wealth which are expressed in building size and detailing. The contrast between the well-known wealth of the Kentish yeoman expressed in his large Wealden house and the relatively impoverished Welsh gentry is real[4] and is illustrated in a popular rhyme of the period intended to ridicule the knighthoods 'showered by the Earl of Essex on his officers after the raid of Cadiz (Cales)':

> A knight of Cales,
> And a gentleman of Wales,
> And a laird of the North Countree,
> A yeoman of Kent
> With his yearly rent,
> Will buy them out, all three[5].

Another related problem is that of the assumptions that are made in relation to social aspirations. The accumulation of wealth often meant that this was invested in housing and in many cases was displayed architecturally. This was not always the case though, because not everyone had aspirations to move up the social ladder and not everyone chose to lavish money on architectural display rather than, for

[3] Hall, 1991, Machin 1994 and Pearson, RCHME 1985 and 1994
[4] See Smith, 1988, p.55c-55d
[5] Quoted in Smith, ibid.

example, clothing or furnishings. Bearing this in mind, an attempt has been made to assess the status of the occupiers of the buildings surveyed. Details of how the assessment was made are included in Appendix 3.

Table 6.4: Status of occupiers

rank	*status of occupier*	*number*	*%*
1	armiger	22	12
	gentry known	14	7
	gentry assumed	30	17
	other high status	4	2
	subtotal	*70*	37
2	well-off yeoman/gentry	42	22
	well-off merchant/gentry	18	10
	well-off yeoman	3	2
	subtotal	*63*	*34*
3	merchant	5	3
	artisan/merchant	11	6
	yeoman known	3	2
	yeoman assumed	15	8
	subtotal	*34*	*19*
4	husbandman/cottager	1	0.5
	n/k	11	6
	not recorded	9	5
	total	*188*	

Three broad categories emerge as indicated in Table 6.4. Firstly, there are those of known high status, including armigers, gentry and others of high status such as the Bishop of Hereford. Nearly 40% of the houses belonged to people in this category and many of these (nearly a third) were armigerous. They occupied large houses mostly displaying their status quite prominently to the outside world in the form of detailing such as decorative timberwork, multi-storeyed porches, jetties and bay windows. Relevant examples include Althrey Hall, Bangor on Dee [196-198], Michaelchurch Court, Michaelchurch Escley [31] and High Grosvenor, Claverley [145]. There are exceptions to the overall large size in the Welsh examples, where a more modest size and external appearance belies a richly decorated interior, as at Gwernfyda, Adfa [225] and Coal Farm, Barry [212].

Another group, well over a third, was distinguished by houses sharing many characteristics of the gentry houses but their status could not be confirmed through any other source. These were likely to be the better-off members of society including lesser gentry and the well-off yeomen and merchants. For some of these, the size of their houses and the detailing displayed show little difference from known gentry homes. Lower Wythall, Walford on Wye [54], a well-off yeoman or lesser gentry

house and The Old House, Hereford [40], the house of a wealthy merchant who may have been of gentry status show just how blurred the distinction can be. On average though, their houses were smaller, but still usually over 750 sq ft. Whatever their exact status, the owners were interested in making a display in the external appearance of their homes.

Around a fifth of the houses surveyed probably belonged to those lower down the social scale. In rural areas these would have been yeomen and in towns they may have been artisans or less well-off merchants. An example of the former is 24 Upper Cound, near Shrewsbury [108] and 6-7 Dogpole, Shrewsbury [120], 28 Watergate St, Whitchurch [154] are examples of the latter. These are characterised by their smaller size, in terms of ground floor area and lack of ostentatious detailing. There are two cautions with this generalisation. One is that the ground floor area in towns is not so reliable as an indicator of overall size, as buildings tend to have more storeys. The other is the assumption that lack of ostentatious detailing is equivalent to lack of wealth and therefore status. This may be true in some, but by no means in all, cases. Only two houses are known from documentary sources to have belonged to yeomen: the Geddes, Pencraig [21] and Middle Farm, Batchcote [118] and both are plain.

Who lived in the houses?

One of the aims of the research is to understand the significance of painted decoration, in terms both of what it meant to those who decided to decorate their houses and what meaning it had for those viewing it. The analysis of status is an attempt to understand the sorts of people who might have wanted this form of decoration. Inevitably, broad generalisations are made, which can conceal telling detail. This section takes a closer look at some of the individuals who had painting in their homes, in the hope of putting some flesh on the bones of the generally bare information normally available. It is not necessarily a representative sample, but rather a selection from the information which has been gathered where the owners of the buildings are known. Most is known about the armigerous families who generally have left more documentary records of their past than social inferiors.

The Mathews of Castellymynach, Glamorgan

The first of the families discussed occupied a house in which two painted schemes have been found, one dated 1602 and the other dating possibly from the 1620s. The rise in fame and fortune - and indeed infamy - of the Mathews family of Castellymynach [207-209] is interesting in that it illustrates well some of the characteristics of the gentry - in particular, the Welsh gentry - which were discussed in Chapter 4. Their modest standing for most of the sixteenth century was changed after their connections by marriage to one of the major gentry families of Glamorgan, the Lewises of Y Fan, whose head was widely regarded as the most rapacious landlord in the county.

The first record of Castellymynach is of Robert Mathew who was Coroner of the county in 1425/6 and who built the three-unit open hall house which retains its fine

roof of five arch-braced collar beam trusses. An armigerous family of long descent, they were already of some standing in the county if not amongst the wealthiest[6].

The name Castellymynach, meaning Monk's Castle, is interesting in that there is no connection with either monks or a castle on the site. 'Mynach' could be derived from the Welsh for a bog but the 'castell' cannot be accounted for. The only 'castell' is the neighbouring Crege Castell which is built on an old ruin. The explanation which Davies submits is that Robert Mathew, not to be outdone by his neighbour, assigned the name 'castell' to give status to his home[7]. That the family was interested in furthering their status is evidenced by the early adoption of the surname Mathew, instead of the Welsh tradition of recounting ancestors and their descent. This step was taken by some Welsh gentry wanting to align themselves with the English and could have been a tactical move on the Mathews' part to ingratiate themselves with the English. The family had been sympathisers of Owain Glyndwr and this adoption of the English fashion of a surname could have been part of a policy to distance themselves from past indiscretions.

Robert Mathew also left his estate to his eldest son, instead of splitting it between all his sons according to Welsh custom, thereby facilitating the accumulation of a larger estate and wealth. His son William continued the custom of primogeniture, passing the estate on to his eldest son Robert who married an heiress and lived to a great age, dying in 1543. The impression is that the family were gradually consolidating lands and wealth but were never up with the major gentry in the county who held the positions of power and they remained poor relations to their cousins, the Mathews of Radyr.

Their status was to change during the second half of the sixteenth century, starting with the early death of Miles Mathew in 1570. This left his son Humphrey, a minor, as owner of the estate. He was probably still a minor when his mother Catherine remarried, starting the connection with the Lewis family of Y Fan. Sir Thomas Lewis was well known as a ruthless landlord and he was no doubt one of those gentry who, out of the public eye, if not in it, exhibited the less honourable attributes of the gentry, catalogued by Heal and Holmes[8]. The Castellymynach lands lying near to his own estate would have been very attractive, whatever the charms of Catherine Mathew.

Humphrey, whose birth date is not known, would have been quite young and impressionable and it is possible that a forceful figure like Sir Thomas exerted a strong influence on him as he came of age in managing the estate. Humphrey's marriage to Sir Thomas's daughter consolidated the lands and one can only speculate on how much say Humphrey had in his choice of bride. Sir Thomas did not agree the marriage settlement until just before his death, in 1593, ten or more years after the marriage.

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[6] This family history is based on research by J. Barry Davies published in *The Parish of Pentyrch*, 1963 and the Llantrisant and District Local History Society newsletter in May 1978, unless otherwise stated.

[7] Davies, ibid.,1978 p.8

[8] Heal and Holmes, 1994, pp.113-114

Whoever was instrumental in managing the estates, it was during this period that the fortunes of the Mathews rose, in part at the expense of their previously better-off cousins at Radyr. This branch of the Mathews family who had been in the first rank of Glamorgan gentry for most of the sixteenth century suffered financial problems in the late sixteenth century through the production of a large number of daughters. When George Mathew inherited from his father in 1615 the estate was so encumbered he had to sell up and he moved to Ireland. His grandfather, Sir George, had three sons, two of whom failed to produce a male heir and the estate passed in succession through the three brothers. Between them and their father they produced over thirty daughters, for whom dowries had to be provided, and several illegitimate sons who were given sufficient income for life to maintain themselves as gentlemen.[9] Not surprisingly, their estates were unable to support this expenditure and they had to start selling land, some of which lay adjacent to the Castellymynach estate and the Mathews of Castellymynach were all too ready to purchase these lands. The tables had been turned and the previously poor relation was now in ascendancy.

Humphrey's son Thomas became High Sheriff in 1613, a position requiring considerable financial outlay, and Steward to the dowager Countess of Pembroke[10]. At the same time his younger brother became Under-Sheriff. By this time Humphrey had died, though exactly when is not known, and Thomas had inherited the estate. Acquisition of more land gave him the role of dominant landowner in the parish. He became a leading figure amongst the county élite and amassed considerable wealth, possibly not all of it legitimately. He appears in the Court of Star Chamber accused of 'perjury in the Consistory Court of Llandaff for use of false measures in buying barley; refusal to licence ale in houses that did not sell his ale; other misconduct....in office'.[11] One member of the Mathews family - one can speculate that it was Thomas- was involved in the illegal export of grain to Northern Ireland[12], possibly doing a deal with his exiled cousins. He was a ruthless and dishonest bully, much hated amongst his tenants, one of whom was reputedly the cause of his death by hiding a shoemaker's awl under the cushion of his chair. Thomas died from his resulting injury.

In 1644 his personal estate was valued at £331 5s 4d, which excludes his freehold land, copyholds and leases for life. These would have more than doubled this figure. Thirty years later, the estate of his grandson was valued at £797 7s 6d, of which £300 was his personal estate and the rest was accounted for by leases.

Either Humphrey or Thomas may have commissioned the earlier wall painting but the later one is certainly Thomas's responsibility.

The Vaughans of Hergest Court, Herefordshire

Emerging with more credit to their name are the Vaughans of Hergest [22]. They were descended from the major Welsh gentry family, branches of which appear in various parts of Wales and Hereford and illustrate the continuing Welsh influence in

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[9] Davies, 1999, p.9
[10] RCAHMW, 1982, p.138
[11] Davies, 1963, p.82
[12] Jones, 1973, p.20

West Hereford during the early modern period. Three other Vaughans also had houses with wall painting: at Tretower Court [188], Old Court Bredwardine, and Lower Trelydan [227].

A timber from the original building at Hergest now encased in later alterations, has been dendro dated to 1267, when Hergest Court was owned by Hywel ap Meurig, whose importance is confirmed by his being granted one of the three earliest Welsh coats of arms.[13] This family anglicized their name as early as the first decade of the 1300s, adopting the surname Clanvowe. The Vaughans purchased the estate from the Clanvowes about a hundred years later, sometime between 1400 and 1420 when it became the home of Thomas ap Rosser Vaughan of Hergest, the younger son of Roger (Rosser) Vaughan of Bredwardine, who was killed at Agincourt.

Despite its location in England, Hergest was a Welsh-speaking house during the fifteenth century and Thomas was a patron of Welsh bards, especially Lewis Glyn Cothi, who wrote a description of the house:

> Timber banded houses in stone towers
> Land with eight towers to give wine
> Compact houses of Tomas ap Rosser
> Houses on the plan of the tower of Alhambra[14]

This has undoubtedly lost something in its translation but it provides a useful indication of the size of the building at this time. (His literary interests are also evident in the book he produced on Arthurian legends, the *Red Book of Hergest* which is in the Bodleian Library.)

The sixteenth century saw the continuing prominence of the family, both locally and on the national scene. A Vaughan of Hergest was the High Sheriff in 1585[15] and Margaret Vaughan was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Elizabeth. She married Sir John Hawkins, recorded as 'a consummate seaman, a bold and skilful navigator, a first-class businessman, an original designer of ships and of strategy, in a corrupt age, an uncorrupt administrator of the Navy…'[16] He may well have been a regular visitor to Hergest Court as his wife maintained her connection with nearby Kington. She left a legacy to found the Lady Margaret Hawkins school there[17].

Assuming that there was some social intercourse between members of the family, it is possible that Rowland Vaughan of New Court in the Golden Valley, not far away, also visited the house. An enterprising farmer, he experimented with land improvement and in 1610 published a book entitled *The most Approved and Long Experienced Water Workes, containing the Manner of Winter and Summer Drowning of Meadow and Pasture.* [18] (see Chapter 3)

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[13] Unpublished research by Lawrence Banks, the current owner of Hergest Court.
[14] ibid.
[15] ibid
[16] Routh, 1990, p.402
[17] Banks – see note 13.
[18] Thirsk, 1967, p.100

In contrast to Castellymynach, the impression of this household is one characterised by the more virtuous attributes of the gentry. Education, good breeding, charity and hospitality are implicit in the records that survive.

The Charltons of Whitton Court, Shropshire

Francis Charlton moved to Whitton Court [135] in 1670 after the death of his grandfather and it was he who commissioned the paintings in the Great Hall[19]. His grandfather was a wealthy London goldsmith whose family originally came from Apley Castle in Shropshire and he bought Whitton Court in 1646 apparently to get back to the country where he was born. Francis' father, Sir Job Charlton was a distinguished lawyer holding high position both locally and nationally. He was knighted on his appointment as head of the Judicial Bench in the Council of the Marches and later created a baron, making him one of Harrison's greater sort of gentry (see Chapter 4).

From the age of nineteen, whilst his father lived at Ludford House, just outside Ludlow, Francis made his home at Whitton Court, not moving back to Ludford House until his father's death in 1697. During this time he carried out major refurbishments of the house including redecoration of the principal rooms. The wall painting dates from this period.

The Pakingtons of Harvington Hall, Worcestershire

Another relative newcomer on the gentry scene was Sir John Pakington, of Chaddesley Corbett and Harvington who purchased the manor in 1529. Yet again, he was a lawyer who had amassed large landholdings. When he died he owned 31 manors. He moved to Harvington Hall [181-192] on acquiring the estate as the old hall at Chaddesley Corbet was becoming ruinous, having been held previously by non-resident lords who had let it decay.[20] At this time the medieval hall appears to have comprised a fairly standard large hall, with a solar wing, services, a gatehouse and several outbuildings around a courtyard.

The estate passed via his brother Humphrey to John Pakington who died in 1578. Sometime during the sixteenth century the house was extensively remodelled, including ceiling over the hall, adding to the frontage block by the gatehouse and rebuilding the service buildings. Some of this was probably done by John Pakington, on the evidence of an inventory of his goods taken in the year of his death totalling £462 5s 8d, which refers to items in the 'hall, parlor and butterye' together and then lists 'chestes and coffers in all the chambers'[21], suggesting that the hall was ceiled by this stage. The kitchen and brewhouse are mentioned separately with no chambers over them. The hall ceiling has massive moulded beams with chamfered joists and floorboards laid parallel to the joists which suggests an earlier rather than late sixteenth century date for this work. But no other rooms are mentioned. If the major remodelling had been done by this date, one would expect the additional rooms to appear in the inventory.

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[19] Forrest, 1924, pp.154-158
[20] Hodgkinson, 1938, p.3
[21] Hodgkinson, 1962, pp.10-11

The building of the first floor great hall and withdrawing room and second floor chambers was more likely the work of John's son, Humphrey Pakington, a noted recusant who was heavily fined and imprisoned for his faith. Harvington was sequestrated by the Crown in 1591 and Humphrey occupied his own house as a sub-tenant during this period[22]. Not only was he responsible for the remodelling of the house but it was he who commissioned most of the extensive paintings which are found throughout the principal rooms.

His most notable achievement, however, was the construction within the house of a series of eight priest-holes, probably the finest remaining in the country. Humphrey was a close friend of Thomas Habington of Hindlip Hall, a recusant stronghold which had eleven priest-holes. The two worked together as part of a Jesuit network and used the same designer and craftsmen to create 'safe' temporary accommodation for Jesuit priests.

His recusancy accounts for the chapels on the second floor and the unusual iconography of the small chapel which is discussed later.

The Grants of Coal Farm, Glamorgan

Lower down the social scale is Jane Andrew, fig.6.1, whose family appear to have been typical of the minor gentry/better-off yeoman sort. She was probably the daughter of Nicholas Andrew of Cadoxton Court and Jane, daughter of James Button of Worlton, 'gent'. They had freehold lands in the parish of Barry before 1562.[23] Sometime between 1575 and 1582 she came into the possession of Coal Farm [211-212], taking over the lease from William Henry. At this time the house consisted

Fig.6.1 Jane Grant, Coal Farm, Barry, Glamorgan

simply of a three-bay hall with a spiral stone staircase by the fireplace leading to the first floor and was probably built c.1560.[24] Around 1580 Jane married Alexander Grant, also recorded as having prominent local connections. In the early 1580s,

[22] ibid., p.1
[23] Thomas, 1991, pp.92-93
[24] Smith, 1988, p.271 and RCAHMW file record, 1970

Alexander borrowed £60 from a Rees Thomas which is when the house was extended to provide a parlour wing[25]. The painting can be dated to around this time from the costume.

Jane and Alexander left Coal Farm in 1584 and in 1594 a James Andrew took over the lease of the farm, and obtained a licence from the lord of the manor to sublet the holding[26]. Whether Alexander had family business that drew him elsewhere or whether Jane's family had greater need of the farm, there is no record. What is known is that they moved back in 1600 and lived there until Jane's death in 1610.[27] During this time Alexander borrowed money again, this time £24 from a William Naylor and styled himself 'gent'.

The Grants fall into the category of better-off yeoman/lesser gentry discussed in the first section of this chapter. Typical of many Welsh families, their house is much less ostentatious than their English counterparts of the West Midlands. In fact there is no external ornamentation whatsoever. The good quality carpentry internally and the chamfered stone door surrounds are the only distinguishing architectural details.

Richard Prynce of Whitehall, Shrewsbury, Shropshire[28]

Modesty was not amongst Richard Prynce's virtues and his is a typical story of aspiring gentry getting rich through the increase in litigation in the second half of the sixteenth century. He was the son of John Prynce, a shoemaker, who prospered in the leather trade and acquired the position of keeper and guardian of the hospital of St.Giles in Shrewsbury after acquiring the lease and appropriating the endowments. Born in the 1520s, of these relatively humble origins, Richard Prynce started his legal career as a clerk to a Shrewsbury lawyer. By the time of his death in 1598 he was a leading figure in the town and one of the major gentry in the county. Between 1578 and 1582 he built his grand mansion house, Whitehall [86] one of the most impressive houses in the county. It is a full three storeys high and double piled with three gables to each elevation and crowned with clusters of tall, decorative chimney-stacks and a later belvedere. When viewed from the centre of the town, which is on a hill, it would have been very prominent.

He began practising on his own in the borough court in 1547 until 1551 when he was admitted burgess being described at the time as *literatus*, meaning a self-educated man, rather than a scholar.[29] Formal education as a barrister was not required at that time to practice at the bar. He was admitted, belatedly, to the Inner Temple in 1554 but never called to the bar. This does not seem to have impeded his career, although he has a place in legal history as a result of this. His lack of professional qualification was the subject of a dispute in 1589 with another lawyer from Ludlow, Richard Broughton. Whilst the law suit *Broughton v Prynce*, or 'Prynce's case' as it

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[25] Thomas, 1991, p.93
[26] Griffiths, 1981, pp.61-62
[27] Thomas 1991, p.93
[28] The information on Richard Prynce is from an unpublished paper by W.A. Champion entitled 'Prynce of Abbey Foregate: the making of the legal town gentry', 1994, used with his permission
[29] J.H Baker, *The Legal Profession and the Common law*, 1986, p.129, n.16 quoted by Champion, ibid.

became known in law reports, was never settled it established the principle that no advocate could practise unless he had been called to the bar.

As his practice prospered, so he became well connected amongst the leading gentry culminating in his marriage to the daughter of William Leighton of Plaish Hall. He was MP for Ludlow in 1558 and for Bridgnorth in 1559 and held public office until 1573. In 1584 he was granted arms. During his successful career as a lawyer, he acquired lands and property on Abbey Foregate, just outside the centre of the town, including the site on which he was to build Whitehall, though he appears to have acquired the leases by unscrupulous means. When he died he had lands in Longden near Pontesbury, Baschurch and Montgomery as well as in Shrewsbury. His close friends to whom he had conveyed lands and manors included a yeoman and a draper, the latter referred to as his loving friend, as well as esquires including William Leighton, and gentlemen.[30]

Though he was an eminent lawyer and public figure, he seems to be known as much for the pursuit of his personal interests as for his public service. In 1585 he was involved in a disagreement with the town's burgesses over their customary right to graze cattle outside the town walls. Having taken out a lease from a landlord of part of the land, he challenged the town's rights to use the commons. He sowed part of the land with barley and then sent his farm-hands to impound the burgesses cattle.[31] This incident ended literally in mud-slinging and was not the sort of behaviour the gentry were expected to display in public. Prynce was 'new'gentry, his pedigree going back no further than his grandfather[32] and one can imagine the disdain with which older gentry must have regarded him.

Other gentry

Someone of the pedigree of John Hereford at Sufton [19] in Herefordshire, who would have been responsible for the painting there, had little in common with the likes of Richard Prynce. There were Herefords (the name is no coincidence) at Sufton in 1155 when Walter de Hereford was High Sheriff and they are still there to this day. John married the daughter of Richard Lee of Langley, another old gentry family and was well established amongst the county élite. In the same circle would be Rowland Scudamore of Caradoc Court [39], Herefs. whose brother, Sir John Scudamore of Holme Lacy was only a few miles from Sufton. But this was no ancient seat for Rowland. He only bought this estate in 1596 having moved from Churcham in Gloucester.

Two High Sheriffs have already been encountered, at Castellymynach and Hergest Court. Two more have been identified at Sontley, Denbs.[191] and Upper Dolley, Rads. [230]. Robert Sontley, who was High Sheriff in 1598 and 1611[33] could trace his ancestors back to the thirteenth century. Four generations of Sontleys as lords of the Manor of Sontley were recorded before 1300 and the line continued unbroken

[30] Forrest, 1920-1921 p.123
[31] Champion, 1994, p.19
[32] Grazebrook and Rylands, 1889, p.410
[33] Lloyd, 1881, p.145

until the late eighteenth century. Included in his ancestors were famous Welsh bards.[34]

Several others are recorded as holding public office usually as MPs or JPs, though Sir Thomas Bromley of The Old House, Dogpole in Shrewsbury [121] figured on the national scene as well as locally, holding office at court. As a trusted advisor to Henry VIII he was one of the king's executors and received a bequest of £300. He was subsequently appointed by Queen Mary as Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench and presided over the trials of several of the leaders of Wyatt's rebellion. His handling of the trial of Sir Nicholas Throckmorton was considered unsatisfactory and incurred the displeasure of the Queen who nevertheless rewarded him with a sum of £80 for his work in the House of Lords[35].

Four of the gentry were known to be recusants, the most noted amongst them being the Pakingtons of Harvington Hall [160-171]. The Giffards of Boscobel achieved fame in the seventeenth century as the family sheltering Charles II when he took refuge in the legendary oak tree. Little else is known about Sir Rowland Whitbooke of Penkridge Hall [117] other than that he was a wealthy wool merchant from Bridgnorth. Nor is much more known about the Gomonds of Dippersmoor Manor [67] except that James and William Gomonde were recorded in the list of Catholics in 1574.[36]

The Kyrle family represent the wealthy yeomen who became gentry during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. They were a long established yeoman family in south Herefordshire whose wealth enabled them to set up one of the sons at Old Hill Court [62]. One of the Kyrles became an MP in 1645[37]. Close relatives held the office of High Sheriff three times. John Kirle in 1608-9 and possibly again in 1628 (though this John Kirle is recorded as baronet) and James Kirle was High Sheriff in 1629[38].

Finally, it is worth looking at two more gentry whose houses had painted decoration noted in their inventories. John Allenson of Wem, described by his apprisers as 'gent' died in 1647 and had very little in his household that would distinguish him from a poor yeoman or husbandman. There were no luxury goods here, only old tables, stools and chairs, four bedsteads and the usual household stuff. His goods were valued at only £9 11s 4d. One of the fourteen rooms in his house was described as 'ye painted Chamber' and in it he had the frame of a table and a bedstead worth 3s 4d.[39]

In contrast, the estate of William Bentley of Edstaston, near Wem, who died in 1618, was much more valuable. His goods included featherbeds, linen, curtains, carpets, seventeen cushions, china dishes, a picture, a looking glass, books, a sundial, silver ware and expensive apparel as well as extensive functional goods. Amongst his

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[34] ibid., pp.141-142
[35] W.A.Champion, unpublished research.
[36] Duncumb, vol VI, pt.3, 1913, p.32
[37] Duncumbe, vol.V, 1897 p.189
[38] ibid.p.102
[39] SRRC Inventories for Wem 1530-1650

goods were 'the bedes in the bygere paynted Chamber' worth £4 and 'the bedd in the lytle paynted Chamber' worth £3.[40]

None of the other inventories for the north Shropshire towns mentioned painted chambers. This evidence suggests that the gentry were certainly commissioning wall paintings in their homes but the lack of evidence for painted chambers in lower status houses does not necessarily mean that others were not. Records for those below gentry status are fewer but some survive to give an idea of the other sorts of people who had paintings in their houses.

Merchants

Robert Saunders of Broad St in Ludlow [104] epitomises the merchant on the make. He owned an ironmonger's business in one of the most prestigious streets in the town which prospered during the late 1590s, sufficient to enable him to purchase two and a half burgages along the street and to lease two more[41]. As the base for the Council of the Marches, Ludlow attracted an affluent clientele. Local businesses could take advantage of the considerable opportunities this afforded for the accumulation of wealth and social advancement. He was three times bailiff of the town and his son married the daughter of Edward Waties, one of the Justices of the Council of the Marches and Recorder of Ludlow.

His wealth was displayed in the new frontage block he built onto his medieval open hall which is a full three storeys high, with jetties to each floor. The ground and first floor have close-studded timber framing and the top storey has a decorative lozenge pattern.

Francis Hughes who lived in Friar St in Worcester [172] from the 1570s until his death in 1613 had a much less ostentatious house. He is recorded as being a brewer and a surgeon. When he took over the building it was used as a shop, probably by John Ewes, a tailor but having no need for a shop he converted this to a parlour and the painted decoration dates from this period[42].

4 Belmont, Shrewsbury [110] had been in the ownership of the Marshall family since the early sixteenth century when Roger Marshall inherited it on his father's death in 1580. The insertion of the ceiling in the open hall and the painted decoration probably date from around this time. He was admitted to the Draper's Company in 1579 but, unlike most members, not as a participant in the cloth trade but as a staple, that is as a dealer in wool. He provides another example of a wealthy merchant marrying into a gentry family for he married Katherine, daughter of Edward Mytton, esq. As with others of his standing, he became an alderman and served as one of the two bailiffs of Shrewsbury in 1602-03.

Two innholders have been identified, both from the seventeenth century. 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch [87] was either built as an inn, The Raven, around 1625 or became an inn very soon after and Richard Deaves, who died in 1634 was probably

[40] ibid.
[41] Lloyd, 1979, p.19
[42] Hughes and Molyneux, 1985, p.30

the innkeeper[43]. His estate was valued at over £128, making him by far the wealthiest innkeeper in the town at that time. He had his own riding horse and silver plate as signs of his wealth. There are records for seven other innkeepers in Whitchurch at around the same time, none of whom had anywhere near that wealth but on average, were worth less than half of that[44]. Over sixty years later, John Mason of the Lamb Inn at Iron Acton [7-8] was worth a similar amount, though not in real terms, leaving goods valued at £127 8s 4d in 1697. The amount of bedding in Richard Deaves' inventory, worth £30, suggests he received a significant income from resident guests and this was supplemented by farming for he had corn worth over £13 in the ground and in the house.

Yeomen

There were three principal farms in Betchcote, Shropshire in 1538[45]: Upper Farm, Middle Farm [118] and Lower Farm. Whilst none of the existing farmhouses dates from before the late sixteenth century, two of the farm buildings at Middle Farm contain cruck trusses and probably date from the fifteenth century[46]. Living here in the late sixteenth century and first half of the seventeenth century were the Wildings. Nine wills and three inventories survive from 1557-1637 for Wildings of Betchcote or Smethcote (the parish) and one can surmise that some probably lived at Middle Farm as there are at least two branches of the family in this run of wills. The family appear to have been reasonably well-off yeomen, though their wealth was decreasing over time rather than increasing. Richard Wilding who died in 1557 was worth £125 with over £100 of this being in livestock, including 320 sheep; another Richard Wilding who died in 1584 was worth £54 6s 10d of which £54 was for livestock and John Wilding, who died in 1637, was described as a tanner. His goods were worth £50 19s and only £27 13s 4d of this was for livestock. Over £14 was for hides and leather. He may have been of a different branch of the family or he may have diversified into the tanning business to supplement the declining farm income. In 1627 Mathew Wilding was still primarily farming and was described in his will as a yeoman.[47]

The house would have probably have been built by the Wilding who died in 1603 and either he or possibly Mathew Wilding may have had the house decorated.

Little is known of Thomas Whyte of the Geddes, Pencraig, Herefordshire [21] except that he was recorded as a yeoman and living there in 1603 and by the early eighteenth century the Geddes was a gentry home[48]. The wall painting at Seed Farm, Cradley in Herefordshire is now covered over but it is recorded as dating from the early seventeenth century. The farm was occupied at this time by Richard Nokes who died in 1617 and who is described as a yeoman[49].

[43] Moran, 1999, pp.87-88
[44] Whitchurch inventories 1530-1650
[45] VCH, vol VIII, p.149
[46] M. Moran unpublished research on Shropshire houses.
[47] PCC wills vols.III, IV and VI and transcripts of wills and inventories provided by the owners of Middle Farm, Mr and Mrs Carter.
[48] Duncumbe vol VI, 1913, pts 1&2, p.108 and p.115
[49] PCC wills, vol.V.

Whilst there is limited information available for these yeomen, what is significant is that they had wall paintings in their houses, none of which is particularly ostentatious. The character of the painted decoration inside is discussed later.

Painting details

This section looks at the form and design of painted decoration and where it is found within the building. Criteria for dating are explored and the date of paintings assessed accordingly. The skill exhibited in the execution of the painting is used to assist in dating and also for estimating costs. These are considered further in Chapter 9. Different types of painting are categorised in accordance with the classification described in Appendix 1 and possible sources of design are discussed in Chapter 10. The significance of the paintings is discussed in Chapter 11 in relation to the owners and their possible motives in commissioning the paintings.

One of the hypotheses is that wall paintings were mostly painted within a short period of time during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Some occur earlier and some later and it is argued here that these, particularly the later ones, are of a different character than those forming the bulk of painted decoration. In order to compare earlier and later examples, typical schemes of the principal period will be discussed first.

Dowles Manor, near Bewdley [177], demolished in 1986, had the most complete schemes in the Marches (see figs.6.2-6.5). Decoration covered all the walls from floor to ceiling in all the principal rooms of the house - the hall, parlour and two first floor chambers. The Town Council Offices in Ledbury provide the only comparable surviving scheme fig.6.6. Both buildings show clearly the distinctive elements of a typical painting comprising frieze, main panel and dado. The frieze varies from as little as a few inches to around two feet in depth and may be a simple, continuous pattern as in the parlour at Dowles, fig.6.3, a more complex repeat pattern as in the hall at Dowles, fig.6.2 or divided into sections like the one in the Town Council Offices in Ledbury [42]. This has compartments containing a biblical text in a strapwork border alternating with a floral motif with the compartments separated by a simple guilloche band. The frieze is usually separated from the main panel or 'filling' as Reader called it [50], by a similar band or border. This was often a form of guilloche and 'eyelet' holes or glyphs were also common. Fig.6.6 illustrates typical bands.

The design of the main panel invariably bore no relationship to the frieze. Again this was often divided into compartments separated by a band which may be the same as the frieze band or completely different. Where the main panel included a figurative scheme this was often, but not always, 'framed' with an architectural element such as an arcade or window or door opening as in the portraits at Dowles Manor (see fig.6.7).

One of the principal characteristics of the typical schemes is that they covered the entire surface of the wall and in some cases the ceilings as well. The exception to this is where the lower part of the wall was panelled. The pattern usually extended

[50] Reader, 1935, p.248

Fig.6.2 Dowles Manor, Worcs., hall

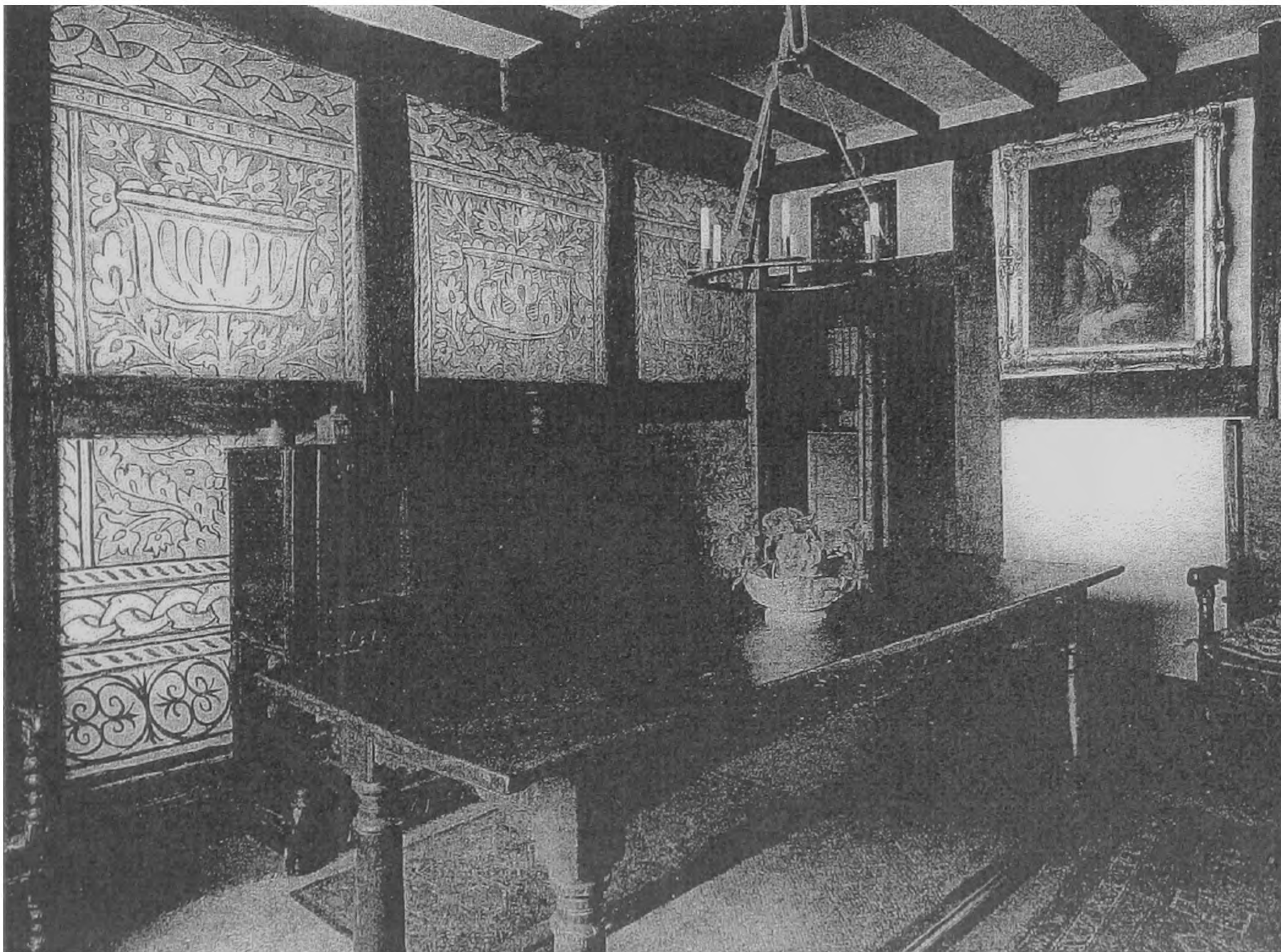

Fig.6.3 Dowles Manor, Worcs., parlour

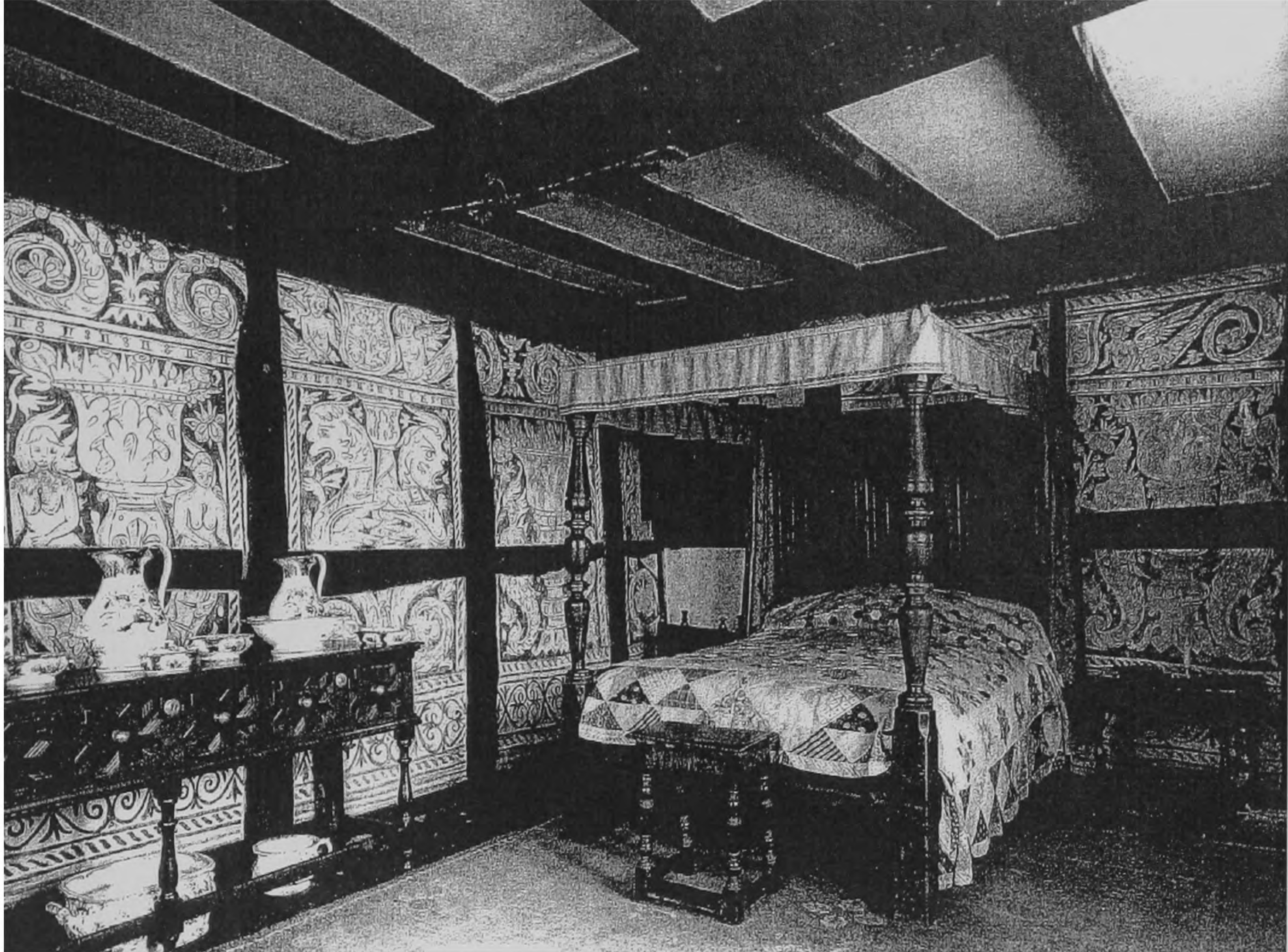

Fig.6.4 Dowles Manor, Worcs., first floor chamber

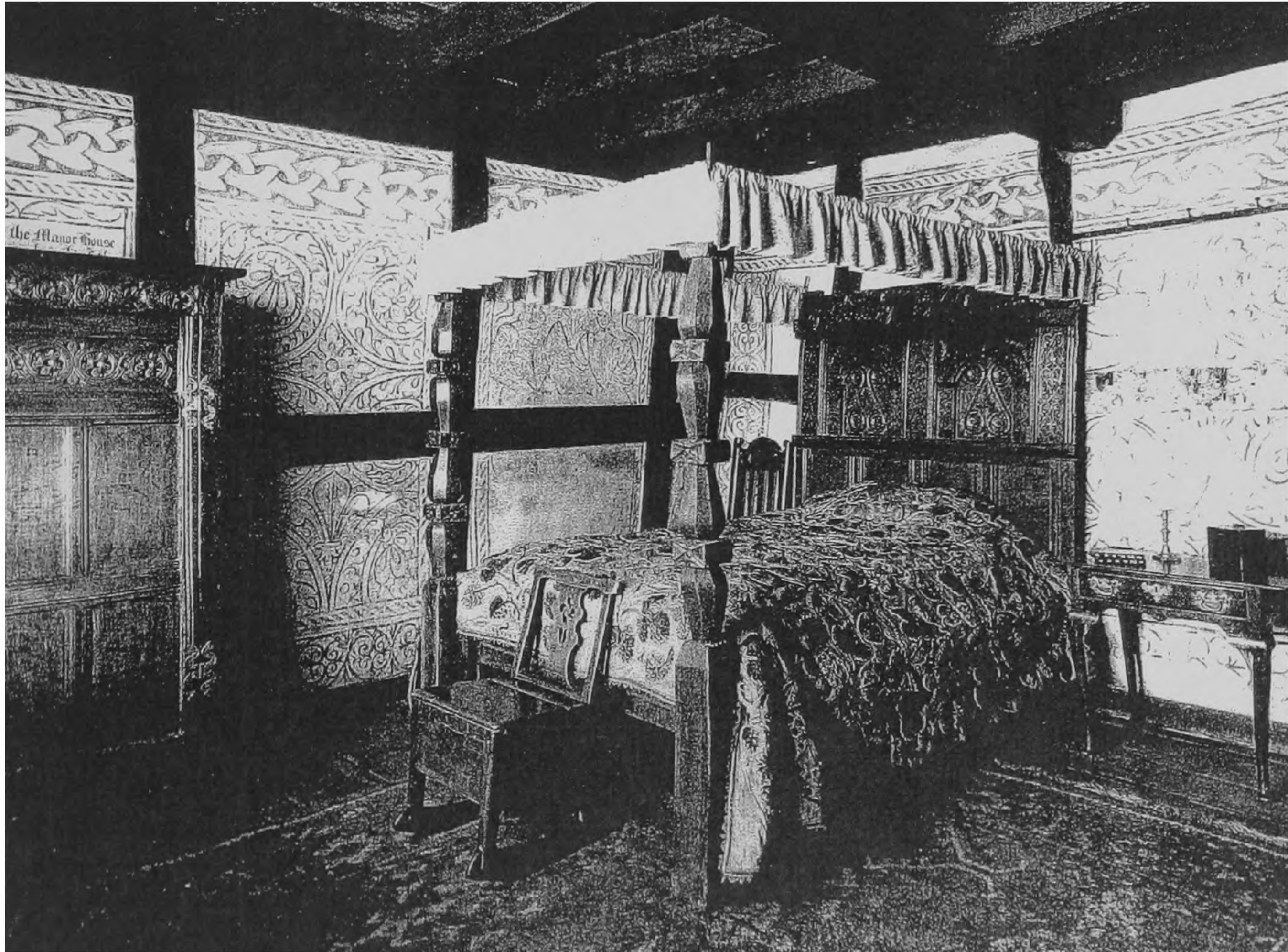

Fig.6.5 Dowles Manor, Worcs., middle chamber

Fig.6.6. Town Council Offices, Ledbury, Herefs.

Fig.6.7 Portraits at Dowles Manor, Worcs.

over any changes in the surface, such as timbers, infill panels, soffits, without any interruption in the pattern, although the pattern was adapted to be accommodated in the space available. At Little Moreton Hall for example, the panelling is regularly set out over the whole of the lower wall except by the door where the panel is reduced in width to fit the space, see fig.6.8. The paintings at Dowles were untypical in that each compartment was designed to fit into the width of an infill panel, though not the height. Whilst the painting had been lost from the timbers at the time when they were photographed, the main design for each panel was uninterrupted horizontally. Not so with the panels at the Town Council offices in Ledbury: here the pattern ran right across the surface of the wall not heeding the change in structural material. The painting has been lost from the timbers so the pattern is interrupted both vertically and horizontally.

The last main element in a typical scheme was the dado. This has not survived in many paintings, probably as it is the most vulnerable to wear and tear. At Dowles Manor the same simple guilloche band separated the main panel from the dado. At the Town Council Offices in Ledbury there is no band separating the two. Again, the

design of the dado was usually totally unrelated to the design of the rest of the painting. The marshalling of this exuberant painting into these strict elements has obvious classical allusions. It is not found in medieval painting. The painting at Bramall Hall [6] dated to c.1500 extends all over the wall. It has a frieze which is completely different in character and technique and it is suggested this was a later addition similar to the dated 1610 work.[51]

Fig.6.8 Imitation panelling, Little Moreton Hall

One other characteristic which has been noted is the presence of a blank section in an otherwise completely painted wall. This strongly suggests the existence of a heavy piece of furniture already in the room before the painted scheme commenced. Behind the bed in fig.6.5 is blank space[52] and part of this is just visible to the left hand side of the bed. There is a similar blank space in the Small Chapel at Harvington Hall and examples have been noted elsewhere in the country.[53]

Not all paintings conformed originally to a tripartite pattern. Those specifically designed for a single panel, such as an overmantel are the most common exceptions. It is nevertheless useful as a basis for assessing the character of the paintings and ascribing an estimated date. After around 1625 wall paintings declined in numbers and changed in character. This change was marked by more restraint in the design, so that paintings became more consciously designed in relation to the room and that they were more accomplished. These are the general characteristics against which the paintings will now be evaluated.

A total of 233 paintings were recorded in detail in the course of the fieldwork, though as some houses had more than one scheme which has not been recorded separately, this figure should be regarded as a minimum in terms of surviving schemes in the 188 buildings surveyed. Few of the paintings are as clear or complete as the typical ones just described, although some have fairly complete elements.

[51] Field notes of David Park, Courtauld Institute
[52] Country Life, March 16th 1945, p.467
[53] For example Reader, 1935, p.275

Taking these as a guide, the overall scheme for many of the paintings may be conjectured from the surviving fragments.

Location

No clear pattern emerges as to the location of paintings other than that they were in the principal rooms of the buildings where they would be most seen by the owner of the house and his guests. With only one exception, they are never found in service rooms. The exception is a simple red ochre scroll pattern onto limewash in the buttery at Stokesay Castle [139], which is one of the few pre-Reformation paintings in the area of study.[54] Why this should be here cannot be satisfactorily explained. The room is very poorly lit and this detailed pattern would have been barely visible.

Table 6.5 Location of painting

Location	*number*	*%*
g/f hall	37	16
g/f parlour	53	22
f/f hall	2	1
f/f chamber	90	38
attic/ 2nd floor chamber	10	4
circulation space	6	3
chapel	3	1
other/n/k	36	15
total	*233*	*100*

The majority of paintings are found in first floor chambers, including those referred to as Great Chambers. On the ground floor, more are found in parlours than halls though this does not necessarily reflect the original incidence of wall paintings. Ground floor rooms have generally been subject to more changes in decoration than first floor rooms, particularly in the twentieth century when many wall paintings were destroyed. Other locations include circulation spaces such as stairs and passages, notably at Harvington Hall [160-162], attics and chapels (see Table 6.5).

Thirty houses have evidence that more than one room was painted and in some all the principal rooms of the house had painted decoration. Harvington Hall [160-171] and Dowles Manor [177] are good examples of this.

Extent

The entire surface of the walls appears to have been originally covered in the majority of paintings surveyed as described in the typical examples above. Where

[54] dated by English Heritage to the fourteenth century on stylistic grounds. Munby, 1993

painting survives on timbers only or conversely on panels only, the evidence of the design suggests that many of these too, covered the whole wall. Where ceiling joists are painted it is likely, given precedents elsewhere, that the undersides of the boards between them were also painted[55]. Only a small minority were deliberately designed to fit an architectural space such as a frieze or overmantel and these mostly date from the later seventeenth century (see Table 6.6).

Table 6.6 Extent of painting

extent	*number*	*%*
all over	134	58
ceiling only	15	6
fireplace	4	2
overmantel	16	7
frieze	3	1
panels only	19	8
timbers only	22	9
others/nk	21	9
total	*233*	*100*

Type

The advantages of classifying the paintings into some comparable groupings have been discussed in Chapter 2 and the broad categories defined by Rouse were found to be relevant to the Marches paintings - figurative; decorative; architectural motifs; texts and heraldry. Some paintings have elements which fall into more than one category. Friezes often contain texts, which fall into one category, within a strapwork border, another category, and have a main panel of yet another design. Table 6.7 summarises the types of design found.

[55] See for example Apted, 1966, Carrick, 1989, the Master's House, Trinity College, Oxford

Table 6.7: Type of design

Type	*sub-category*	*number*	*%*
1 - Figurative	A - religious	7	3
	B - classical	2	1
	C - miscellaneoous	22	9
	subtotal	*31*	*14*
2 - Decorative	A - renaissance	21	9
	B - floral/foliate	77	33
	C - geometric	34	15
	D - Shropshire scroll	16	7
	E - miscellaneous	36	16
	F - landscape	4	2
	subtotal	*188*	*81*
3- Architectural motifs	A - panelling	16	7
	B - arcading	1	<1
	C - other	6	3
	subtotal	*23*	*10*
4- Texts	A - gothic	15	6
	B - later	4	2
	subtotal	*19*	*8*
5 - Heraldry	A -personal	8	3
	B - royal	3	1
	subtotal	*11*	5

1. Figurative

Rouse recorded sufficient classical/allegorical figures in wall paintings in the South East for these to have separate categories. In the Marches, only two classical schemes were found; The Court House, Richard's Castle [61] and 14 St. Owen's St., Hereford [44] both dating from the late seventeenth century.

Religious painting after the Reformation was a sensitive subject and the laws regulating acceptable iconography were discussed in Chapter 5. These were aimed mainly at painting in churches but, in theory at least, they also related to domestic painting. 'Safe' subjects were those which had no iconic potential, such as those from the Old Testament or the Apocrypha. Five of the seven religious paintings fall within this category. The story of Susannah and the Elders is told in the frieze at Little Moreton Hall [3]; the Black Lion, Hereford [26] has depictions of people breaking the Ten Commandments; the Batch, Sidbury [142] had a panel of the Sacrifice of Isaac, now lost; 4-6 Castle St, Ludlow [80] had several scenes now covered over including Daniel and the Lion's Den and Jonah and the Whale and 5 Widemarsh St, Hereford [45] had two Old Testament scenes, one of Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dream and one of Joseph presenting Jacob to Pharaoh, now in the Old House Museum in Hereford.

Clearly unacceptable images in the post-Reformation period were of the kind found at the King's Head Mardol [76], depicting the Last Supper, images of saints at The

Commandery in Worcester and the figure of Christ in the chapel at Bramall [6] see fig.6.9. These all date from before the Reformation. This latter image was painted over with the Ten Commandments after the Reformation. The painting in the Small Chapel at Harvington Hall [164] is not a figurative scheme but is nevertheless a religious painting. Red and white 'gouttes' symbolising the passion cover the walls[56]. This dates from the late sixteenth century when such imagery would be quite unacceptable. As discussed above, the Pakingtons were a well known for their recusancy and the decoration in this chapel is consistent with this.

Fig.6.9 Chapel, Bramall Hall, Cheshire

Other figurative schemes include hunting scenes, mostly late-seventeenth or early-eighteenth century though that at New Hall dates from the second half of the sixteenth century and is quite different in character. Traditional hunting scenes feature men on horseback hunting foxes but this one, depicting a man on foot hunting a stag, has a more Germanic feel as though it had been copied from an imported hanging[57]. A long-legged, long-beaked ostrich-type bird appears at 43-49 St John's, Worcester [175] and in a slightly different form at Cotton's House, Market Drayton [81], where it is amongst other fanciful creatures based on deer, dog and rabbit forms and set in a woodland scene.

Perhaps the most intriguing paintings are those featuring what appear to be portraits. The nobility sat for portraits dressed in their most expensive and fashionable clothes and many of these survive as a valuable source of information both about the individuals and society in general. Lower down the social scale, it appears that this was also a common practice. Ten paintings have male and/or female figures in portrait-like poses and these are easier to date because of the costume details. The earliest is at Bramall Hall which probably dates from the early sixteenth century

[56] Matley Moore, , 1940, p. 285
[57] In a dialogue on wall decoration, Shakespeare refers to a 'German hunting, in water work' in Henry IV, part II, Act II sc.1 –see Chapter 4

Fig.6.10 Althrey Hall, Bangor-on-Dee

Fig.6.11 New Hall, Ticklerton, Shropshire

though the figures are in late medieval costume. The female holds sheet music, and the male plays a lute. The background is scrolling foliage with grotesque figures and animals. This painting has no parallel and has so far defied full explanation. The deliberate depiction of archaic costume is rare. Mostly contemporary dress was used and there is a long precedent for this[58]. Figures 6.1, 6.7 and 6.10-6.12 illustrate some of these figures.

Fig.6.12 Angel Inn, Pershore, Gloucestershire

At Althrey Hall [197] (fig. 6.10) there is a painted panel set against a background of an imitation paned textile hanging, depicting Elis ap Richard and his wife Jane Hanmer. The costume can be dated to between 1545-1560[59] , with a 1550s date more likely but as Elis ap Richard died in 1558 it probably dates from between 1550-1555. The others are twenty years or so later, judging from the costume. That at Dowles Manor (fig.6.7) was painted around 1580 and the costume of the female figure at The Angel Inn in Pershore (fig 6.12) is very similar so again a 1580s date is suggested. The figure of Jane Alexander at Coal Farm (fig 6.1) can be fairly firmly dated to around 1580 from documentary records as well as the costume. She married in around 1580 but had left Coal Farm by 1584. The figures at Onion Farm, Lymm [2] are of a similar date. They are barely discernible against the busy background of foliage and, unlike the other paintings with male and female figures, they are not together but at extreme ends of the panel. The male and female figures at Harp House, Bishop's Castle [92] are a little later, judging from the woman's very wide French farthingale and the man appears to be wearing falling bands with a wide gap between the edges rather than a ruff, a fashion which appeared after 1585 in court circles[60]. At New Hall (fig.6.11) the figures pose as in a portrait but there is more of a story here to unravel than in other figurative schemes. The 'portraits' occupy only one panel of three surviving panels, the other two depicting further figures with

[58] Rouse, 1991, p.18

[59] RCAHMW file report and information from Dr Aileen Ribeiro, Courtauld Institute

[60] Ashelford, 1988, p.63

Fig.6.13 Hare in dado, New Hall, Ticklerton, Shropshire

Fig.6.14 Beale's Corner, Bewdley, Worcs.

musical instruments, a demon-like figure and a hare running across the dado (see fig.6.13).

The paintings at the Geddes, Pencraig [21] and Beales Corner, Bewdley [181] also have stories to tell which are not immediately accessible. The former has three surviving panels, each containing two figures in archaic mi-parti costume holding archery gear, except one which has a figure in a full length, fur lined gown. At Beale's Corner a fairly complete scheme survives, although it is difficult to make out in parts. Set in a vineyard, there are scenes depicting seasonal tasks associated with the growing and harvesting of grapes. Incidents such as a fox and a coiled snake intrude on the scene and the story is presented through a superimposed trellis work in ochre which distances the content from the viewer (see fig. 6.14).

The possible significance of these schemes is explored in Chapter 11.

2. Decorative

Over 80% of the paintings contain purely decorative elements of widely ranging character. These can be subdivided into broad groups including renaissance; floral/foliate; geometric and miscellaneous designs.

i. Renaissance designs

Whilst this covers all classically inspired designs most of them fall within the category of antiquework, the name given to grotesque decoration. Henry Peacham's contemporary view of it is perhaps the most appropriate description:

> The form of it is a generall, and (as I may say) an unnaturall or unorderly composition for delight sake, of men beasts, birds, fishes, flowers etc. without (as we say) Rime or Reason, for the greater variety you shew in your invention, the more you please, but remembering to observe a method or continuation of one and the same thing throughout your whole work without change or altering. You may, if you list, draw naked boyes riding and playing with their paper-mils or bubble-shels upon Goates, Eagles, Dolphins etc. the bones of a Rammes head hung with strings and beads and Ribands, Satyres, Tritons, Apes, Cornu-copia's, Dogs yoackt etc. drawing Cowcumbers, Cherries, and any kind of wild trail or vinet after your own invention, with a thousand more such idle toyes, so that herein you cannot bee too fantastical. The late dutch peers in this kind excel all others.[61]

Figs. 6.15-6.17 illustrate some of the schemes which fall into this category. Several feature a central vase or baluster with figures symmetrically disposed around it. Others are simply 'unorderly compositions ... without rime or reason' incorporating human and animal forms as well as fruit and vegetation.

Not all are antiquework, though. Some symmetrical, stylised patterns are renaissance inspired, (see Chapel Farm, Wigmore [27]) and there are some classical architectural motifs such as the painted classical column at Newport Guildhall [131].

[61] Peacham, 1606, pp.35-36

Fig.6.15 Barnaby House, Ludlow, Shrops.

Fig.6.16 99 Westgate, Gloucester

Fig.6.17 26 Hereford St, Presteigne, Rads.

ii. Floral foliate designs

By far the largest category of painting is that including floral or foliate designs, encompassing a third of all paintings. These vary considerably from stiff stylized flowers as at Cruckmeole Old Hall, near Shrewsbury [119] to free-flowing realistic schemes as at 27 High Town, Hereford [20]. There is a wide range in between these extremes and they may be found equally in a frieze or the main panel. The simplest and earliest floral motif is the single stencilled flower which is common feature in medieval paintings in churches and is found in the Bishop's Palace in Hereford [43] and the Guildhall, Newport [132]. A later variation on this is the single Tudor rose found at Stokesay Castle [138] and The Old House, Dogpole, Shrewsbury [121]. Often a single flower is used to fill a compartment in strapwork designs, as in the Town Council Offices, Ledbury [42] or 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch [87] or, in the case of 6-7 Dogpole [120], in the centre of imitation panels. A running vine trail was a popular design for carving and plasterwork and it is also found painted onto ceiling joists at 26-32 Friar St, Worcester [172].

In the course of the research similarities between designs were looked for to see if this revealed anything about the source of design or its significance. Some broadly similar designs could be picked out. Vertical bands of alternating designs of floral motifs occur in several schemes, and a stylized pomegranate is common in these such as those at Althrey Hall [197] and Shootrough Farm [125]. An acanthus leaf scrolling around a horizontal stem is found as a frieze in the Old House, Dogpole [121] and Cotton's House, Market Drayton [81] and a variation of this occurs at Castellymynach]207] as a border without the horizontal stem. The stylized single flower seems to have been a common motif used in association with another design, often as a half-flower or even a quarter-flower as appropriate to fill in spaces. A zigzag border, for example, usually has a half flower filling the spaces, as at Shootrough Farm [125] and Cruckmeole Old Hall [119].

Perhaps the most striking design in this category is a distinctive scroll pattern which has been found almost exclusively in Shropshire. The most complete surviving example is at Churchyard Farm, Neenton [130] (fig. 6.18). Sixteen examples have been identified, fifteen in Shropshire[62] and one just over the border in Herefordshire. This seems to be a particularly regional design because there are no other recorded examples elsewhere in the country. It is very symmetrical with four foliate scrolls diametrically opposed forming a square, with stylized flowes in the interstices, a full flower in the centre, half flowers at the side and quarter flowers in the corners. Each square is separated by a band of running motif, usually a guilloche. The frieze has a different motif often a zigzag with stylized flower, or imitation fluted panelling. All have differing characteristics, for example some have highlights of one or more colours, some have a hatched background, suggesting that they are not done by the same hand (see fig.6.19). None are in urban houses.

[62] This includes Dowles Manor, which is now in Worcestershire but was in Shropshire until 1895

Fig.6.18 Churchyard Farm, Neenton, Shropshire

The scrolling leaf design in the painting at the Vicar's Choral [36] is quite different and is reminiscent of that at Bramall Hall [5]. This also has flowers and animal figures and, at one end, male and female figures in late medieval costume. It is possible for the Vicar's Choral painting to date from earlier in the sixteenth century as the building was constructed in around 1473.

No other strong similarities were noted between schemes in this category, though the fragmentary nature of many surviving paintings means that often the overall design cannot be determined.

iii. Geometric designs

Like the floral/foliate designs, this category includes a wide range of schemes. Strapwork designs covering the whole of the main panel are the most striking. The Town Council Offices perhaps has the most complete of these and that at Swanstone Court, has some similarities with this. Painting on timbers only, survives at 17-19

Fig.6.19 Examples of Shropshire scroll pattern

Watergate St, Whitchurch [87], Penkridge Hall, Cardington [117] and 43 High St, Bromyard [33] but enough remains to suggest a strapwork design. Fragments of strapwork of a similar design, now difficult to make out survive at Michaelchurch Court, Michaelchurch Escley [31] and also at 99 Westgate, Gloucester [10].

In looking for similarities between schemes, zigzags with simple stylized flowers are commonly found, used as borders or friezes though the painting at Gwernfyda [225] is more complex than most. Chevrons, usually on ceilings, are similarly common, as at Newport Guildhall [133-134], Great House, Newchurch [231], The Hyde, Stoke Bliss [35]. A type of chevron occurs on the corner post at Dairy Farmhouse, Sutton [77], but is more elaborate. Alternate black and white squares or lozenges form an effective element in some designs such as the Porch House in Bishop's Castle [105].

Stripes with floral motifs have been noted above in several instances but they may also occur as bands of plain colour. At Althrey Hall, in the room adjacent to the one with floral stripes, the walls have alternate stripes of red-brown and grey [196]. Harvington Hall has two rooms with stripes, one yellow ochre and white [168] and the other has stripes imitating different coloured marble which are now very difficult to discern [170]. Old Sufton, Mordiford [19] has a form of striped decoration which is unlike any others, with red diamonds on a black ground alternating with plain white stripes.

iv. Miscellaneous decorative designs

The guilloche and its simpler variant the *S* – line have been mentioned as frequently used for friezes and borders. It was also used to great effect on ceiling joists, as at 23 Brookend St, Ross on Wye[17-18].This has several other simple line patterns, see fig.6.20, variations of which are found in a number of other paintings. Paintings at Sutton Court Farm, Stanton Lacy [74-75] are very similar to that at Middle Farm, Batchcote [118] and there is a more sophisticated version in the frieze at Whitehall [86]. All include the fleur-de-lys motif which is also commonly found in other designs (see Whitehall [86], Hergest Court [22] and The Malt House, Easthope [102]). Amberley Court, Marden [48] and 136 Frankwell, Shrewsbury [102] both have scrolling designs but the overall pattern is difficult to discern. Amongst the other miscellaneous designs the friezes in the Middle Chamber and parlour at Dowles Manor [177] and that at the Whittington Inn [157] are notable for their almost exact similarity, including colours (see fig.6.21).

v. Landscapes

Either as a background to a figurative scheme or as a design in themselves, landscapes which can be identified are of particular interest. At Manor Farm, Astley Abbots [70] now lost, the hunting scene was reported to be set against a background depicting the town of Bridgnorth. Also now lost, the painting of the Sacrifice of Isaac at The Batch, Sidbury [142] had the setting of the house as its background. Late seventeenth century overmantel paintings at Upton Court [52-53] show what are probably idealised background landscapes with snow covered mountains. Later still at the Broadgate in Ludlow [94], the overmantel has a painting which can be clearly identified as Dinham Bridge in Ludlow in the late seventeenth or possibly early eighteenth century (an illustration from the Duke of Beaufort's progress

Fig.6.20 Patterns from 23 Brookend St., Ross-on-Wye, Herefs.

Fig.6.21 Similar patterns at Whittington Inn, Staffs. and Dowles Manor, Worcs.

through the Marches in 1684 shows a very similar scene[63], see fig.6.22). Caradoc Court [39] had landscape panels above an all-over floral pattern in an attic room. This also has been lost and it is impossible to identify the landscape from the surviving photograph.

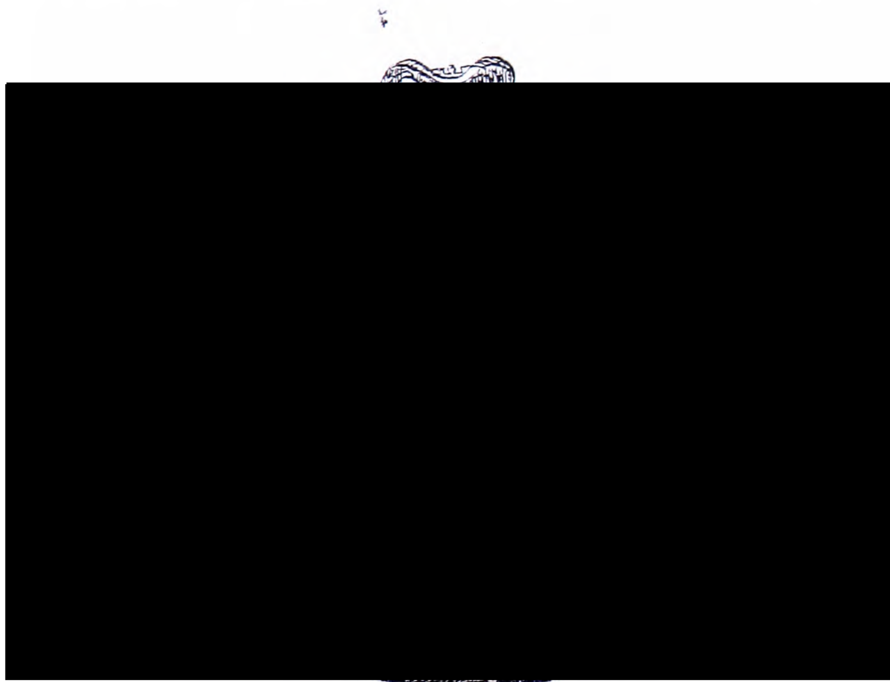

Fig.6.22 Dinham Bridge, Ludlow, Shrops. c.1684

3. *Architectural motifs*

Rouse included arcading as a separate category in his classification, reflecting the number of paintings which have imitation arcading in the south-east. Only one example was found in the Marches, at 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch [88]. This is quite unlike those typically found in East Anglia (see, for example, fig. 6.23). One imitation of plain close studding is found in a second floor chamber at Harvington Hall [169] which has three close-studded, timber-framed walls and the fourth painted in imitation of this. The Chestnuts, Lower Stone [13] may also represent close studding.

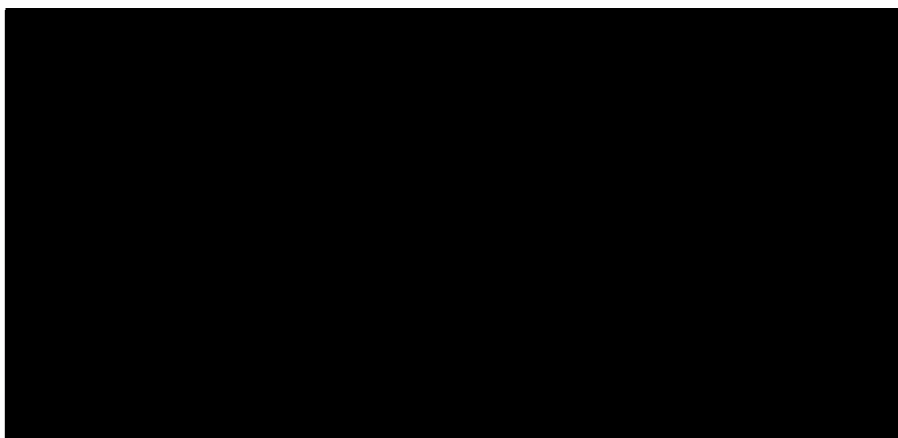

Fig.6.23 Painted arcading, 61 High St, Amersham (Reader, 1941)

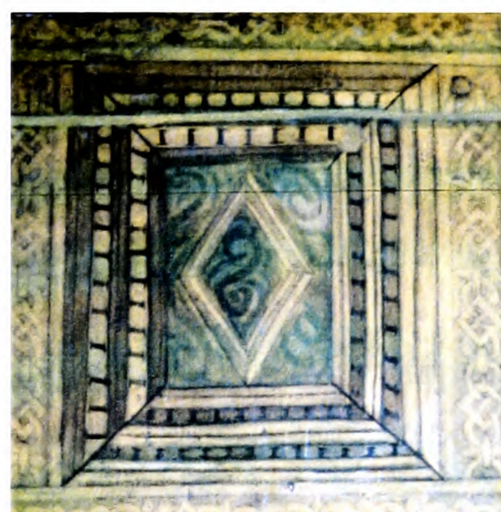

Fig.6.24 Details of imitation panelling, Little Moreton Hall

Imitation panelling however, is well represented in fifteen paintings. As with other types, they vary enormously in complexity and detail. Sometimes this design covers

[63] Dineley, 1888, p.53

the entire main panel and in others it is restricted to the dado or to half wainscoting. This reflects the practice for real panelling which often only part covered a wall and had either hangings or painting above it. In the building accounts for the Draper's Hall in Shrewsbury, discussed in Chapter 8, the specification included for half wainscoting the walls and painting above it in antiquework.[64] The Town Council offices in Ledbury [42] illustrate the use of imitation panelling as a dado and Little Moreton Hall [3] uses it as a main panel.

The simplest and crudest examples are those like Astley Town House [182]. More difficult to make out because of its overpainting, is that in the parlour at Sutton Court [73]. Often, the centre of the panel has a motif, reflecting inlaid panelling. At the Town Council offices in Ledbury and Old Hall Farm [146], this is quite simple but others are more complex. Little Moreton Hall has a further detail within the diamond-shaped centre panel (see fig.6.24) and Goose Green Farm, Yate [11] has three different designs, comparable with examples illustrated by Reader[65]. Whilst not imitation panelling, the actual painted panels at Harvington Hall [167] are included in this category.

The most intricate design is that at Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86] which is not obviously imitation panelling. This can only be determined by the mitres at the corners of the panels, which are large, 34 inches square, with 4 inch stiles and rails. The central part of the framing for the panels is unpainted and has nail holes which suggests that real timbers may have been nailed onto the wall to provide three-dimensional stiles and rails and the imitation panelling was painted within this framework. The overall pattern does not coincide with the actual timbers even though this would have been easy to achieve in a design like this.

Included in other architectural features is a representation of the staircase at Harvington Hall [162]. The real balusters, handrail and newel post form one side of the staircase and an exact copy of this is painted on the wall on the other side providing the illusion, not very convincing, of a staircase open on both sides. There are similar examples elsewhere in the country, e.g. Church Farm, Elmdon, Essex; Rothampsted Manor and 76 High St, Hoddesden in Herts, and the Merchant's House, Marlborough.

Perhaps the strangest architectural imitation is that at Gledlom, Yseifiog [195], now no longer visible. In a rubblestone house, the stone crosswall of a first floor room is painted in a representation of square-panel timber framing. Included in the painting is an odd composition of birds, stylized roses, circles and random geometric forms. There are examples elsewhere in the country of imitation framing, usually close studding with arcading[66], and in Lancashire a parallel was found in the painting of imitation crucks of heavy scantling over much lighter crucks.[67] But none have been recorded in stone houses.

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[64] SRRC 1831
[65] Reader 1941, p.201
[66] For example Carrick, 1989, pp.24-26
[67] McClintock and Watson, 1983, p.56

4. Texts

Of the fifteen paintings containing text, half conform to the typical pattern of having the text in decorative borders within the frieze. The best preserved is that at the Town Council Offices in Ledbury [42]. Support for the dating of the typical schemes is given by the frieze at Castellymynach [207] dated 1602. Religious or moralising texts predominate, though two cannot be clearly deciphered and one, at 45 Muxton Lane [128] refers to drinkers but the text has not been identified.

Three other texts are dated. Two are later in the seventeenth century - that at Glyncywarch [215] of 1664 and 22 High St., Shrewsbury [95] dated 1688. Neither follows the typical pattern of text in the frieze but are separate panels, the latter on a ceiling and the former as an unrelated panel on the wall. A painted panel from the Master's House at St Katherine's Almshouses in Ledbury [56] is dated 1617. At the Black Lion in Hereford [26] and Great Binnal, Astley Abbots [71] the texts give references to the subject of the paintings which are the Ten Commandments and Nine Worthies respectively.

All the texts are in English apart from that at the White House, Great Ness [107] of which only a fragment - *que manere suam* - remains which has not been identified.

5. Heraldry

Royal heraldry provides further useful clues on dating. The Stuart Arms are found at 53 Broad St, Ludlow [104], and at Castellymynach [208]. The Lamb Inn, Iron Acton [8] has William III's arms. The Stuart Arms at 53 Broad St are interesting in that the dragon supporter of the Tudors has been retained instead of the unicorn. Otherwise the arms are clearly Stuart. The owner of this building, socially-aspiring Robert Saunders, is discussed above. His connection to the Council of the Marches, by the marriage of his son to the daughter of a leading member may have prompted this display of Welsh patriotism celebrating the origins of the house of Tudor.

Whilst it was quite common practice for armigerous families to display a coat of arms externally on their houses, there are several examples of personal heraldry in interior paintings. Two of these can be dated to the late seventeenth century – 1682 at Whitton Court [135] and 1680 at Eye Manor [24].

Date of painted decoration

Exact dating has proved to be difficult as there are so few dated examples and limited evidence against which paintings can be assessed. This problem has faced other writers on wall paintings who have generally opted either to assign a vague date or to make unsubstantiated guesses[68]. Sometimes, the building's archaeology or documentary evidence has been used to narrow a date range but in many cases, the dates given are not explained. The hypothesis is that the majority of paintings date from the period 1550 -1625 but the fieldwork yielded only five dated examples, three of which postdate this period so other evidence has to be employed if any date range is to be substantiated. The incidence of dated paintings *per se* could be

[68] Reader, 1935, Rouse, 1989

misleading in any event as dating architectural features has been more common in some periods than others.

Firstly, it has been argued above, that the character of painted decoration changes after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Prior to this it is characterised by an all-over decoration, divided into frieze, main panel and dado. In some cases the ceiling is also painted, boards as well as joists. After this, it is suggested that the decoration becomes more restrained, generally more accomplished and architecturally conscious. A comparison between the painting at Castellymynach [207] and Whitton Court [135] illustrates this (see fig.6.25). The former, which is quite crudely executed, conforms to the typical layout of all-over painting whilst the latter is restricted to the frieze only and is much more sophisticated in technique. The other, later, dated examples, at Glyncywarch [215] and the Lamb Inn [7-8] are simply initials, arms and/or text with a date. These examples are too few in number to provide a benchmark against which other paintings can be assessed. To provide a more reliable base, all the known dated examples in England and Wales have been analysed. Forty-two paintings were recorded from various published and unpublished sources as well as fieldwork. Details of these are contained in Appendix 4. Twenty seven predate 1625 with three of these dating from the mid-sixteenth century. Details of twenty one of these are known and all but two conform to the typical model of all-over decoration. The content of all but one of the post-1625 paintings is known and none of these are in the characteristic all-over decoration style. Most are decorated panels with arms and/or initials or else architecturally designed features as, for example, at Fore Hamlet, Ipswich, dated 1657 (see fig.6.26).

If it is accepted, then, that paintings until around 1625 were characterised by the typical all-over decoration with frieze, main panel and dado, then this can be used as a rough dating feature for the paintings surveyed. As so many of the paintings surveyed are fragmentary it is not possible to assess the character of all of them. Only 129 schemes contained sufficient evidence to enable them to be judged as falling within the typical form of all-over decoration or otherwise. Of these 60 conform to the typical pattern and a further 11 ceiling paintings have the characteristics of all-over decoration. Of the 58 not conforming to this pattern 34 are known to be later and are mostly stencils, initials or arms. Three are late seventeenth or early eighteenth century hunting scenes. This is in accordance with the character of later dated schemes nationally. Six are earlier sixteenth century schemes and four are painted panels. The other atypical group includes those paintings imitating architectural features such as timber framing and balustrades.

If the fragmentary schemes are assessed on the basis of their similarity to more complete schemes, then a further 70 paintings fall into the category of having the typical form. Only eight probably do not conform to this pattern. There is insufficient information on a further 23 to make any judgement. This means that a total of 141 paintings could be classed as typical of the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century character, which represents about two thirds of those whose character could be determined (see Table 6.8). Whilst acknowledging that this is speculative, the fragments are distinctive enough to assess them with some confidence.

Fig.6.25 Dated friezes at Castellymynach, Glamorgan and Whitton Court, Shrops.

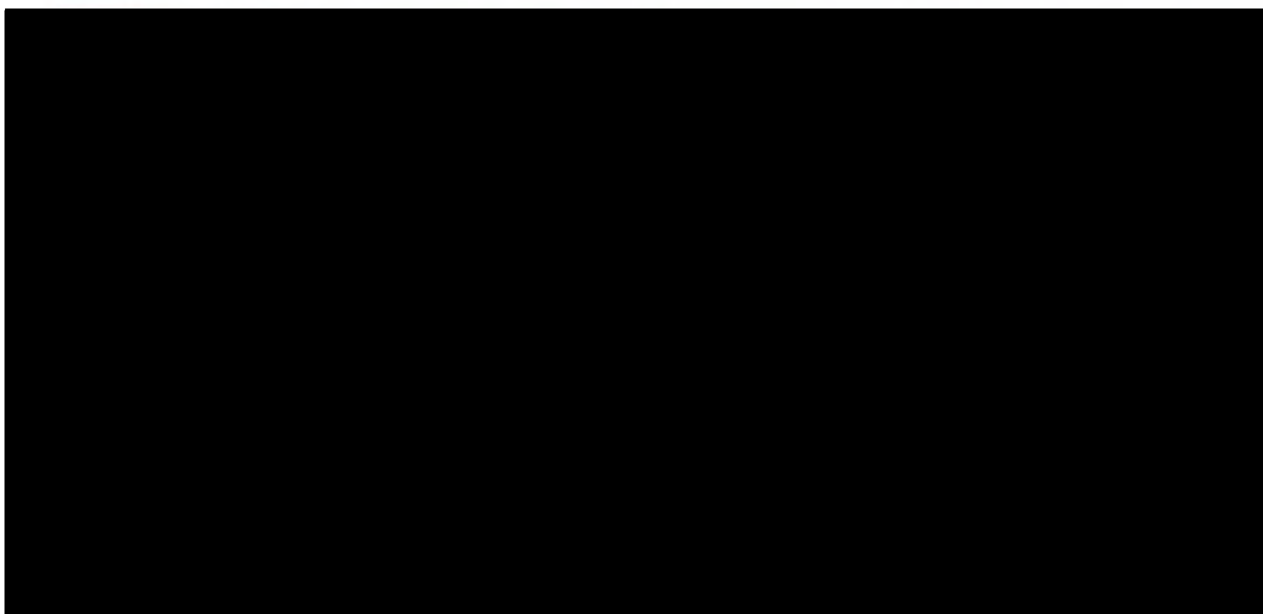

Fig.6.26 Fore Hamlet, Ipswich, Suffolk (Andrea Kirkham)

Further assistance in dating is afforded by costume details for those containing figures. The dates for some of these are discussed above. The earliest fairly firm dating is that at Althrey Hall, c.1555. The paintings at New Hall possibly date from the late 1570s and those at Coal Farm, Onion Farm, the Angel Inn and Dowles Manor are all around the 1580s. The Harp House figures can be put a bit later to the 1590s. That at Glebe Farm, Aston Munslow [69] is clearly later dating from the mid-seventeenth century and is of a different character from the earlier ones.

Only one painting can be accurately dated from documentary sources: the Council House, Shrewsbury [149]. The bailiffs' accounts for 1582 include an account from the painter detailing the work done, which included painting all the principal rooms[69]. This account is referred to further in Chapter 8.

Table 6.8 Character of paintings: conform to typical layout?

	number	*percentage*
conform	71	31
probably conform	70	30
subtotal	*141*	*60*
do not conform	58	25
probably do not conform	8	3
subtotal	*76*	*33*
not known	16	7

Those not conforming to the typical pattern include 34 known to be late 17th c or later; 3 probably late 17thc ; 6 early 16thc or earlier paintings; 4 painted pa 2 fireplace decorations; a royal arms; a staircase representation; gouttes in a chapel; stripes and imitation framing.

Another main criterion for dating is the building's archaeology. Several paintings have survived behind panelling, which can be dated from the first half of the seventeenth century. This suggests the paintings were no longer in favour at this date. It is likely that they survived several years before being covered over in which case they would probably have been painted not later than the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Related to this is the fact that it appears to have been common practice to overpaint one scheme with another and in one example analysed three schemes are identified.[70] If wall paintings were popular within just a short period then the overpainting would have been done within approximately twenty years[71]. On this basis, where there is evidence of overpainting, it is suggested that the latest scheme is early seventeenth century and the earlier scheme late sixteenth century.

The last piece of evidence to support the end of the date range proposed is that of the date of the building itself. The majority of buildings or alterations to buildings have been found to date from the late sixteenth century or early seventeenth century. Very

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[69] SRRC 3365/521

[70] Aythens Cottage, Cradley. Pigment analysis by Catherine Hassall.

[71] See discussion in Chapter 8

few appear after this date. Yet the survival of buildings increases significantly as the seventeenth century progresses. If wall painting continued to be a popular practice throughout the seventeenth century then this would be reflected in the buildings recorded. The negative evidence here supports the hypothesis that there was a decline in painted decoration after 1625.

The evidence for placing painted decoration in the last half of the sixteenth century rather than before this is not so clear. Pre-Reformation paintings such as the Commandery, Worcester [183], bear a stronger resemblance to church paintings rather than the later domestic paintings. Apart from the iconic character of the subject matter which would not normally be found after the Reformation, the stencil patterning of the background is typical of medieval church paintings. Only a few fall within this category. Bramall Hall [6] is thought to date from the turn of the sixteenth century on account of the costume of the figures, which is late medieval and the gothic character of some of the human and animal figures. The typical all-over decoration with frieze, main panel and dado does not seem to appear until the middle of the century. Reader suggests a date of around 1540 for the earlier scheme at Pittleworth Manor, which was overpainted in 1580, though no evidence is given to substantiate this[72]. The pattern is one of imitation cut velvet or brocade, not dissimilar to that at Althrey Hall. If it is accepted that overpainting was commonly done within around twenty years, then the early scheme at Pittleworth Manor could easily be from the 1550s or around 1560.

The earliest which has been dated with some confidence to c.1547 on account of its heraldry, is that at the Old Flushing Inn, Rye, discussed by Reader[73]. This has a frieze of renaissance design and main panel of flowers and animals of a more gothic character separated by a rope-pattern band. Reader uses this as an example of the transition between the 'native' wall painting tradition and the 'new' style. He argues that there was a complete break in the native tradition following the Reformation and that it was not until a generation later that domestic decoration flourished, having adopted a completely new style. An earlier example of a Renaissance frieze is found at Acton Court, Iron Acton, in the royal lodgings built for Henry VIII's progress with Anne Boleyn in 1535. This is well-executed antiquework with a roundel centrepiece. The ceiling was also painted but the walls beneath the frieze were panelled[74]. The antiquework noted by Leland in c.1540[75] at The Olde House, Chenies, Bucks is an early example, hence it attracted the attention of Leland as something worthy of being recorded. A late fifteenth century date has been suggested for the painting at Ceely House, Aylesbury which also has the over-all pattern with a frieze and main panel[76]. The pattern is one commonly found in the late sixteenth century based on one of Serlio's ceiling designs, published in 1537[77]. Admittedly this design is a simple pattern and it could have been in use prior to this, Nevertheless, Serlio's publication was widely influential and this early date is questionable.

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[72] Reader, 1935, p.277
[73] ibid., pp.258-259
[74] Starkey, 1991, pp.123-124
[75] See Chapter 1
[76] Chenevix-Trench and Fenley, 1990-92, pp.8-9
[77] Serlio, Bk.iv, fo.69, 1537

The painting at Althrey Hall [197] displays the typical characteristics and dates from the 1550s. Others have been suggested as dating from the third quarter of the sixteenth century by Reader and Rouse[78] and it seems likely that painted decoration became popular after around 1550 and increasingly so as the century progressed. Placing a painting with any accuracy in the second half of the sixteenth century is therefore difficult without further archaeological or art historical evidence. The main reason for ascribing a date not much before the last quarter of the sixteenth century is that this is when much building activity was undertaken, in the form of new building and in the remodelling of existing buildings. The paintings followed on from this building work, possibly not immediately, but not long after. Many were concealed behind panelling during the seventeenth century and it is unlikely that freshly painted rooms would have been panelled. In support of this Harrison makes no mention of wall paintings – only painted cloths which suggests that they were not widespread when he was writing. Whilst his work was first published in 1577, when there must surely have been wall paintings he was familiar with (see Carrick, 1989), he was actually writing in the early 1560s[79] when, it is argued here, wall paintings were just becoming more popular.

It is against this background that the date of the paintings was assessed (see Table 6.9). Only nine predate the mid-sixteenth century and a further twelve have been assessed to date from the third quarter of the sixteenth century. Of greatest significance is that three-quarters of all the paintings fall within the period 1575 to 1625. The evidence of the paintings and buildings together suggest that the majority fall in the first half of this period. The accuracy within this date range is open to question but the overall dating of the paintings to this period can be done with confidence for the reasons described above. One of the latest ones in this range, 17-19 Watergate St [87] of c.1625, had characteristics of the later paintings in that it is much more complex and finely modelled than the earlier typical schemes.

Table 6. 9: Estimated date of wall paintings

date range	*number*	*percentage*
pre-1500	6	3
1500-50	3	1
1550-75	12	6
1575-00	96	49
1600-25	50	26
1625-50	5	3
1650-75	7	4
1675-00	17	9
subtotal	*196*	*101*
1700+[1]	*14*	
n/k[1]	*23*	
total	*233*	

[78] e.g. Rouse, 1989, pp.433-446, Reader, 1935, pp.282-286 and Reader, 1936, pp.251-262
[79] Smith, 1583, pp.8-9 and 157-162.

Equally significant is the decrease in the number of paintings immediately after this period. These are not easily dated and they could well fall in the earlier, pre-1625 group. They include the painting in the chapel at Althrey Hall, Bangor on Dee [198], the seascape with imitation tapestry hangings at Castellymynach, Cardiff [209] and the floral motifs in a rough diamond pattern at Berllan-Deg, Mons. [217]. By the late seventeenth century there is an increase in numbers again but not a significant one and these are of a totally different character. Several of these could well be as late as the eighteenth century, such as the stencil work at the Sun Inn [106] and Yew Tree Farm [116].

Quality

An assessment of the quality of the execution of the painting was made essentially to assist in costing the paintings (that is, how long the painting would have taken to paint) and to illuminate the discussion on who might have carried out the work. It can also contribute to the discussion on the date of the paintings as it has been suggested above that the more accomplished paintings are generally later. The assessment is based on the skill exhibited and the complexity of the technique such as the degree of modelling and the number of colours used.

Most paintings demonstrate limited skill both in design and in painting technique although a competence in certain areas such as the regular setting out of a pattern, is seen in most paintings, the techniques for which are discussed further in Chapter 8. Few have schemes in full colour or with modelling even of limited colours. Only 12% have been assessed as exhibiting a high level of skill in their execution and these are mostly the 'easel' type panel paintings such as the overmantels at Upton Court [52-53] or the frieze at Whitton Court [135], both later seventeenth century paintings. In fact, nearly half the well-executed paintings are later than the typical date range. Earlier examples of skilled work include the antiquework at 45 Muxton Lane [128] and various schemes at Harvington Hall [such as 160,161,167].

This is not to suggest that the rest in general are poorly done (though some, for example the painting in Barnaby House[103], could be described as such) but rather that they are simple in design and technique. This difference can be clearly seen in comparing the paintings at Whitehall and 24 Cound (see fig.6.27) which have very similar patterns but the former has a much higher level of skill in its execution.

Conclusions

The fieldwork set out to survey all the buildings known to have painted decoration dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the area of study. It was *not* a sample survey. As work progressed and an increasing number of buildings were found to have wall painting it became evident that the scope of the survey would have to be reduced. This was achieved by concentrating on the core of the study area – Shropshire, Herefordshire and the Welsh counties – surveying these comprehensively and using only readily accessible examples from the counties on the fringe of the study area such as Cheshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. The aim was to obtain a comprehensive picture of one area. It was revealed by the fieldwork that geographically wall paintings were found throughout the area studied.

Fig.6.27 Whitehall, Shrewsbury and 24 Upper Cound, Shrops.

If wall painting was a widespread practice throughout the period of study, in houses of all status, one would expect the buildings surveyed to reflect the characteristics of buildings surviving from this period - that the larger and better built houses survive from the earlier part of the period with smaller houses increasing in their survival rate throughout the seventeenth century. This is not the case. Most of the houses are large, in fact the majority are very large and only a small minority could be classed as small houses. This in itself neither supports nor refutes the hypothesis that wall painting was universal as the date of the buildings needs to be considered as well. Contrary to the general trend in survival rates, nearly all the buildings date from the sixteenth century or before. What *is* significant here is that some small houses dating from the sixteenth century had painted decoration. There is, unfortunately, insufficient information available to suggest whether this proportion reflects the overall survival rate for small houses for this period. Size is not the only factor determining the status of a house. Using architectural detail and other evidence from documents to assess the status of the houses, it emerged that there was a range of owners from yeomen to armigerous gentry who were commissioning wall painting in their homes. The almost complete absence of husbandmen and cottagers in this category could reflect the lack of survival of their homes rather than their lack of engagement in decorating their homes with wall painting. Evidence from the fieldwork, therefore, remains inconclusive in relation to the existence of wall paintings in houses of all status.

In contrast to this, the evidence on the dating of wall paintings suggests that the date range put forward in the hypothesis of 1550-1625 could be narrowed further to 1575-1625 with the incidence of wall paintings falling off significantly after this date. The painted decoration found later in the seventeenth century was of a different character altogether from the earlier decoration. Whilst building activity in the form of alterations and additions to houses continued throughout the seventeenth century, there was a concentration in the late sixteenth century and early seventeenth century corresponding to the period when wall painting was popular. This in itself cannot account for why this form of decoration was adopted at this particular time. Chapter 11 explores further the possible explanations for this.

In relation to the character of the paintings, the form with a frieze, main panel and dado emerged as a defining element in the character and dating of decoration. The origins of this form and its relationship with emerging Renaissance architecture in the sixteenth century warrants further investigation. Another interesting result which could be explored further is the quality of the painting. Whilst it is true that the paintings exhibiting greater skill are found in some of the higher status houses the converse is not always the case. Many high status houses have very crude (and sometimes badly painted) schemes. Insufficient evidence was obtained to draw any conclusions on whether the sophistication of the design or execution of the painting was greater in towns than in the countryside

Chapter 7
Materials, their availability and cost

The principal concern of this chapter is to look at exactly what was involved practically in wall paintings in terms of techniques, whilst the following two chapters look in turn at who was painting, and at the cost of painted decoration. These three chapters aim to establish whether wall paintings were, in fact, vernacular. Information of this kind provides the evidence necessary for testing the hypotheses that wall paintings were widespread, and were found in houses of all status. Whilst the fieldwork demonstrated that there was a significant number of houses with wall paintings, the issue of status could not be accurately assessed. Most of the wall paintings surveyed were in houses of those belonging to the higher social ranks. The differential rate of survival of vernacular buildings favouring the better-built houses of the wealthier members of society means that this evidence does not necessarily reflect the original incidence of wall paintings. Other evidence is needed to assess whether it was feasible for wall painting to have been common throughout the social scale.

Most of the published work on the technical aspects of painting for this period considers élite work rather than painting at the vernacular level. The processes involved therefore had to be worked out from published work on artists' techniques, both modern and contemporary and through the discussion with an artist[1] who undertakes wall paintings using traditional techniques and pigments. Put very simply, painting involves the application of pigments on to a surface such as lime plaster or limewash. This surface is called the *ground*. This ground is applied to a *support*, which carries the painting. This may be a canvas or wooden panel or, in the case of the examples studied, the wall or ceiling of a building. The pigment is applied to the ground with a *medium* to help it adhere, which varies according to the nature of the ground and the function of the painting. Media include oil, water with size (a form of animal glue) or gum, limewash, lime water and egg or casein (from milk) tempera.

It appeared from the fieldwork that out of a wide range of pigments available for painting, only a limited range of pigments was being used for wall painting. An attempt was made to identify exactly what these were. In a sample of cases microscopic analysis was carried out. In other cases, where information was available, documentary sources were used and the remainder have been determined inductively from visual analysis based on the experience gained from microscopic analysis and related to known pigment samples. A phenomenon which emerged from this was the practice of overpainting one scheme with another. The implications of this are significant as it suggests that painted decoration was only intended to be temporary. This section will also look at evidence for this. The cost and permanence of pigments, the medium used and the finish of a painting are all material factors in assessing the longevity of painted decoration.

A key element in assessing painting at the vernacular level is the availability of materials. Evidence for this has been obtained from probate inventories of local tradesmen, contemporary references and rate books.

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[1] Aidan Hart, Shrewsbury

Preparation

The preparation of a painting can determine its essential character as much as the actual execution of the painting. Some demonstrate very little preparation, whilst others are executed on a fine smooth ground. An understanding of this can assist in establishing how simple or complex a process was involved in the paintings studied.

In most of the buildings looked at, the support is a timber-framed wall with wattle and daub infill panels (for example, Cotton's House, Market Drayton [81]). In some cases it is stone (for example Barnaby House, Ludlow [103]) and in a very few examples it is brick, (for example Harvington Hall, Worcs [165]). This reflects the vernacular building materials of the area at that time. In the case of ceiling decoration the support is usually timber.

As far as can be substantiated, the usual practice was to apply the paint on to a ground, usually limewash. Where the surface of the support was very uneven, as was often the case with timber-framed walls and rubble stone, one or more coats of lime plaster may have been applied to make the surface more even. Where the wall was very rough, initial plaster coats may have been quite coarse with the top coat only being the finest plaster which was then finished with a coat of limewash. Notwithstanding this, in vernacular houses it was rare to achieve a uniformly smooth finish, as the time and materials involved would make it expensive. The quality of the surface in the Nine Worthies passage at Harvington Hall [161] is exceptional. Rougher finishes are more common. In Cotton's House the timber frame is clearly exposed and forms a different surface to that on the infill panels. In Barnaby House the rubblestone wall has only been roughly plastered. It would have taken much more plaster to fill in all the voids on a rubble stone wall to achieve a uniform surface so only enough plaster has been used to achieve a continuous surface without any holes in it. The jointing of the brick wall at Harvington Hall shows through the thin plaster layer, in contrast to other parts of the building, such as the Nine Worthies passage, where a smoother surface is achieved. It is not unusual in timber-framed buildings to find that the timbers and infill panels have simply been limewashed without any preparatory plastering. Where paint was being applied directly onto timber, whether it was part of the timber frame, panelling, ceiling frame or doors, a coat of size was often applied as a sealant to provide a less absorbent surface and to allow for freer movement of brushstrokes.[2]

In higher status houses and in much of the decoration found in the later seventeenth century, a much smoother ground is prepared and its underlying support is not expressed. A good example of this is Whitton Court, near Ludlow [135]. In some cases the effect may have been achieved with the use of gypsum plaster, which was a much more expensive material, not readily available at the vernacular level. It gave a smoother, whiter finish and dried much more quickly than lime plaster. This would be a significant consideration if oil paint was to be used soon after the plastering was done as lime plaster could not be painted in oils for two to three years (as the lime takes this long to cure).

Gypsum only occurs in limited locations in Britain. Some native supplies of gypsum were found in parts of Derbyshire, the Trent Valley in Staffordshire, Devon,

[2] Personal communication from Dylan Roberts, RCAHMW

Yorkshire and Sussex[3] though much of the gypsum used in high status buildings was imported from France, hence its common name, Plaster of Paris. It is a bulky material and would be expensive to transport[4]. It is unlikely that it would be used extensively at the vernacular level in most parts of the Marches, which are far from native sources, because of the cost of transport

The unevenness of the surface in timber-framed buildings was exacerbated by the differential movement of the frame and the infill panels, particularly in a newly-erected building. These were made using green oak and the subsequent drying out of these timbers caused some distortion of the frame. This movement could continue for several years, though the main shrinkage was in the first few years. Whilst infill panels are flexible to some degree, gaps inevitably appeared between the frame and infill panel. These could be readily filled with lime mortar or daub and finer cracks covered with lime wash. Such gaps were a notorious source of draughts, as Shakespeare indicates in *Hamlet:*

> Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
> Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:
> O! that that earth, which kept the wind in awe,
> Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw[5]

This is likely to have been partially responsible for the popularity of painted cloths discussed in Chapter 4 which covered the gaps, although the evidence from the north Shropshire inventories suggested they were used as much for bed hangings as they were for wall hangings.

The making good of the gaps between the frame and the infill panel is significant in determining when the painted decoration was executed. If an overall wall surface was to be painted in a decorative pattern at the time the house was built, or soon after, the pattern would become distorted and fragmented. It would need to be painted-in when gaps were infilled, further disrupting the pattern. However, none of the substantially complete schemes examined showed signs of having been made good as a result of movement of the timber frame. Conversely, several showed signs of previous repairs to the infill panels before the painting was applied. This suggests a conscious decision by the owner of the house not to carry out a decorative scheme when the house was being built, but preferring to wait a few years. In this case the existing workmen on site probably did not do the painting, a significant point which is discussed in the next chapter. It also means that a building date cannot be reliably used as a date for the wall painting.

The example of Shootrough Farm [125] provides clear evidence of a painted scheme which was executed much later than the original construction of the building. The structure is of cruck construction, dating from the mid-fifteenth century[6] and the principal timbers are exposed in the ground floor hall. These have moved quite significantly as the frame dried out and are well out of plumb. At some time in the late sixteenth century, the whole wall was painted, though only that on the timbers survives. The posts, which are now distorted, show a pattern which is vertical in

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[3] Airs, 1995, p.129 and Bristow, 1996 (ii), p.8
[4] ibid. pp.136-143
[5] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 5 Sc.1
[6] Madge Moran, unpublished survey report

relation to the room but not parallel to the edge of the posts. The pattern has 'corrected' the distortion of the frame. In many cases it is clear that a gap has formed between the infill panel and the frame soon after construction which has been filled with a lime mortar and then the whole surface has been painted over, continuing over the plastered gaps.

However, in the medieval period, when timber was used as a support for panel painting, it was often covered with linen or canvas which was then covered with a chalk and glue ground, to prevent the painting from cracking should there be movement in the timber and to provide a smoother ground. This technique persisted into the late sixteenth century in the execution of wall painting. Linen or canvas has been found covering the joints between the frame and the infill panel in a number of the buildings surveyed such as the remaining wing of a rather high status house, 45 Muxton Lane, Telford, (fig.7.1), at Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86], 4 Belmont, Shrewsbury [110], 17-19 Watergate St., Whitchurch [87-88] and Onion Farm, Lymm [2]. This technique was also noted by Rouse at Great Pednor, Bucks[7]. Strips of linen could be similarly used to cover faults in the timber to allow a continuous surface to be maintained. An example of this outside the Marches is in the Golden Cross, Oxford, where strips of linen or paper were found covering knots or splits in the timber to even out the surface[8]. There were also fragments of linen on the timbers in the remains of the painting at Old Idsall House, Telford [123], but no paint on the timbers themselves.

Fig.7.1 45, Muxton Lane, Telford, Shrops., showing linen covering joint

Canvas may have been used for the ground in some cases, although no examples were found in the Marches. In the Golden Cross, Oxford, the painted decoration over the chimney-piece on the first floor is executed directly onto a canvas which is stretched out over the wall, whereas in the rest of the room the decoration is painted directly on to the wall. This canvas is certainly reused as it is now upside down. A putto, which is quite unrelated to the exposed decorative scheme, can be discerned upside down on one part of the canvas. It is possibly a recycled painted cloth, used

[7] Rouse, 1948, p.91

[8] Granville and Burbidge, *Conservation restoration of murals and painted woodwork, Golden Cross, Oxford*, unpublished report, 1989

to provide a workable surface over the chimney breast which would otherwise have proved too uneven to plaster.[9]

One known example survives of the use of paper as a ground. The frieze at Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire [3-4], contains a series of images depicting the story of Susannah and the Elders alternating with sections of black letter text. Most, but not all of these images are painted onto paper which has been pasted on to the wall, either before or after painting (fig.7.2). No other examples are known in this country. This might just be an accidental survival of this ephemeral material although consideration must be given to the possibility that paper was once more common as a ground.

Fig.7.2 Little Moreton Hall, Ches., frieze

Media

Having prepared the ground for the painting, the medium to be used had to be selected. This varied according to the function of the painting and its ground. At the vernacular level, availability and cost were also material, if not prime, considerations. The two most likely media were oil or water with gum or size. In fact only a few oil paintings were found and these were mostly on timber, for example those at Combermere Hall, Cheshire [1], painted on to panelling. Only one, that at Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86], appears to have been done in tempera but this is a later restoration and the original medium is not known. These are much finer paintings than the majority looked at in the fieldwork which were principally executed in

[9] ibid.

water-based paints and reflect the status of the buildings where they have been found.

The scarcity of wall paintings in oil is not because the techniques were not well known but rather that this technique was more appropriate for exterior use and for more permanent paintings such as easel painting. The use of oil as a medium for painting was widespread, certainly by the fourteenth century, and the techniques involved would have been well known to painters of the day. Any exterior painting would have required an oil-based paint to ensure some weather-resistance. The materials required for oil painting included pigments and an oil medium such as linseed oil. A drier could be added to speed the drying process, though simply heating the oil would improve its drying properties. Driers included certain pigments such as red lead, white lead and verdigris. These would be heated up with the oil, though they would darken the colours of the painting. Sometimes a varnish was used for a finish, though this would not be applied for a long time after the painting was finished. If applied too early, the varnish would penetrate the pigments, affecting the colours. Various resins were used to make varnishes, including rosin, obtained from pine trees, which was the most common, and mastic. The materials for oil painting would not necessarily be more expensive than for water-based painting and the painting would certainly have lasted longer, but it would have taken much longer to paint an entire room in oil paints.

By far the majority of paintings were done with cheaper water-based paints. For these a binder was usually added to the water to help the pigment stick to the ground. In medieval church paintings lime water was often used to bind the pigment to the lime ground. There has been no research into whether limewater was used in these domestic paintings. At the vernacular level, where a pale colour was desired, pigments were sometimes added directly to a limewash. This limited the number of pigments which could be used as several common pigments have an adverse reaction to fresh lime, though they could be used safely on a lime ground which had carbonated. What certainly was used was size or gum, to thicken the water so it could hold the pigment and to help it stick to the wall surface.

Size was obtained primarily from animal skins and was known as common size, though finer size could be made from other animal sources such as glovers' leather and parchment. Isinglass was also used as a paint medium but it was very expensive and for this reason was unlikely to have been used for the type of wall paintings commonly found at the vernacular level. Gum, which was widely imported, was obtained from certain tropical trees, such as gum acacia which is the source of the gum arabic, frequently mentioned in inventories. Native trees, notably the cherry, could also yield gum. The size or gum was boiled up in water until the right consistency was achieved and ground pigment added to it. It was then ready to use.

It is worth noting that, unlike oil and tempera paintings, which are insoluble in water, walls painted in water-based colours (that is, most of the paintings investigated in the course of the fieldwork) could not be washed without damaging the painting. At a time when interiors were still far from soot-free, despite improving chimney technology, these must have been prone to soiling and could not be satisfactorily cleaned. In analysing the paint samples it was clear that in some cases there was more than one scheme of decoration and that these were separated by a layer of dirt, usually soot or smoke deposits. These were painted over with a layer of

limewash which acted as a ground for the next scheme. This is seen clearly in the case of Aythens, Cradley [68], (see figs.7.3-7.4). This supports the suggestion that the paintings were only intended for short term decoration which would very possibly be painted over within a generation.

Pigments

Pigments are the final element in considering the technical aspects of wall painting. They are the substances which give the colour to paint. They can be used on their own or mixed with other pigments including black and white, to give different shades and colours. Many pigments were known in the early modern period and were essential in the dyeing industry. They were also used to make inks as well as for painting. The dyeing industry may well have been an important source locally for some of the pigments used in the Marches.

It is significant to identify which pigments were used and what considerations determined this for a number of reasons. Firstly, it has been suggested that painted decoration was intended to impress, to display the wealth and social standing of the householder. In this case, imitating the decoration found in higher status houses would be one of the factors determining the choice of colour. Clear, bright, stable colours were expensive to achieve and were used widely in royal palaces[10]. It was these colours, the more garish the better, that might have been the aspirations of the fashionable.

Cost would be another factor. The expenditure on painted decoration would have to be proportionate to its anticipated life. It has been argued that the decoration was only seen as temporary with a life of perhaps twenty years. In this case, the permanence of the pigment would not be a crucial factor. The stable clear bright colours, which were mostly inorganic pigments, would not be seriously affected by exposure to sunlight over time. However, the sought-after bright colours could be achieved more cheaply in some cases with organic pigments. These tended to be fugitive on exposure to sunlight, some fading at a faster rate than others. If the paintings were only intended to have a short life, their impermanence would not be a significant factor in the choice of pigments.

The choice of pigments would also be influenced at the vernacular level by their availability. Specialist colourmen supplying pigments operated in London in the seventeenth century but a search through probate inventories has not revealed any evidence of colourmen in the Marches. Therefore, it is necessary to identify who was trading in pigments and how pigments were traded in the Marches. It is known that pigments were part of the stock-in-trade of grocers and that they operated both from shops and at fairs[11]. Small market towns may not have had a grocer's shop and here

[10] Eric Mercer, 1953
[11] Nightingale, 1995

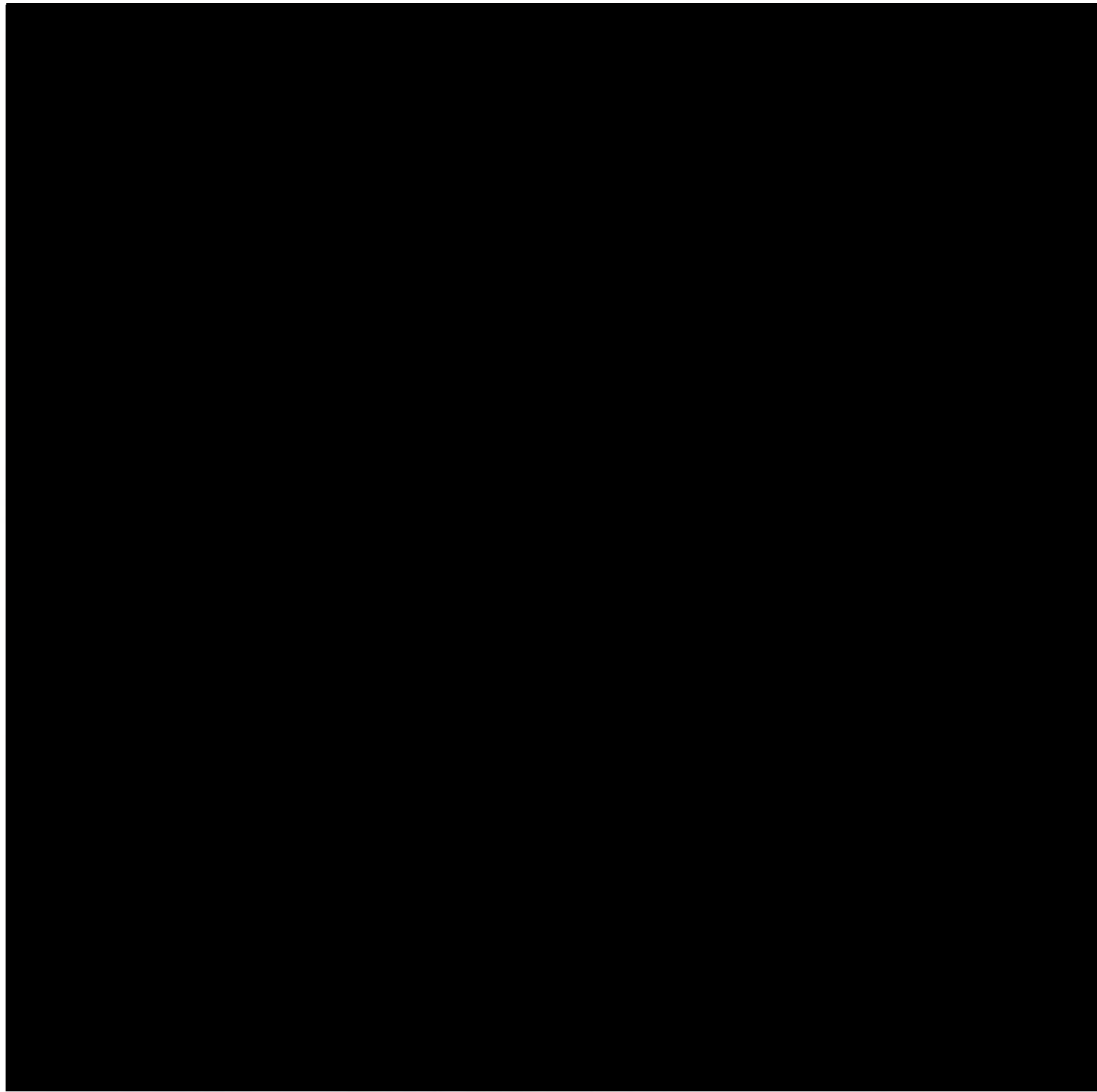

Fig.7.3 Paint sample showing layer of dirt, Aythens, Cradley, Herefordshire [x 500]

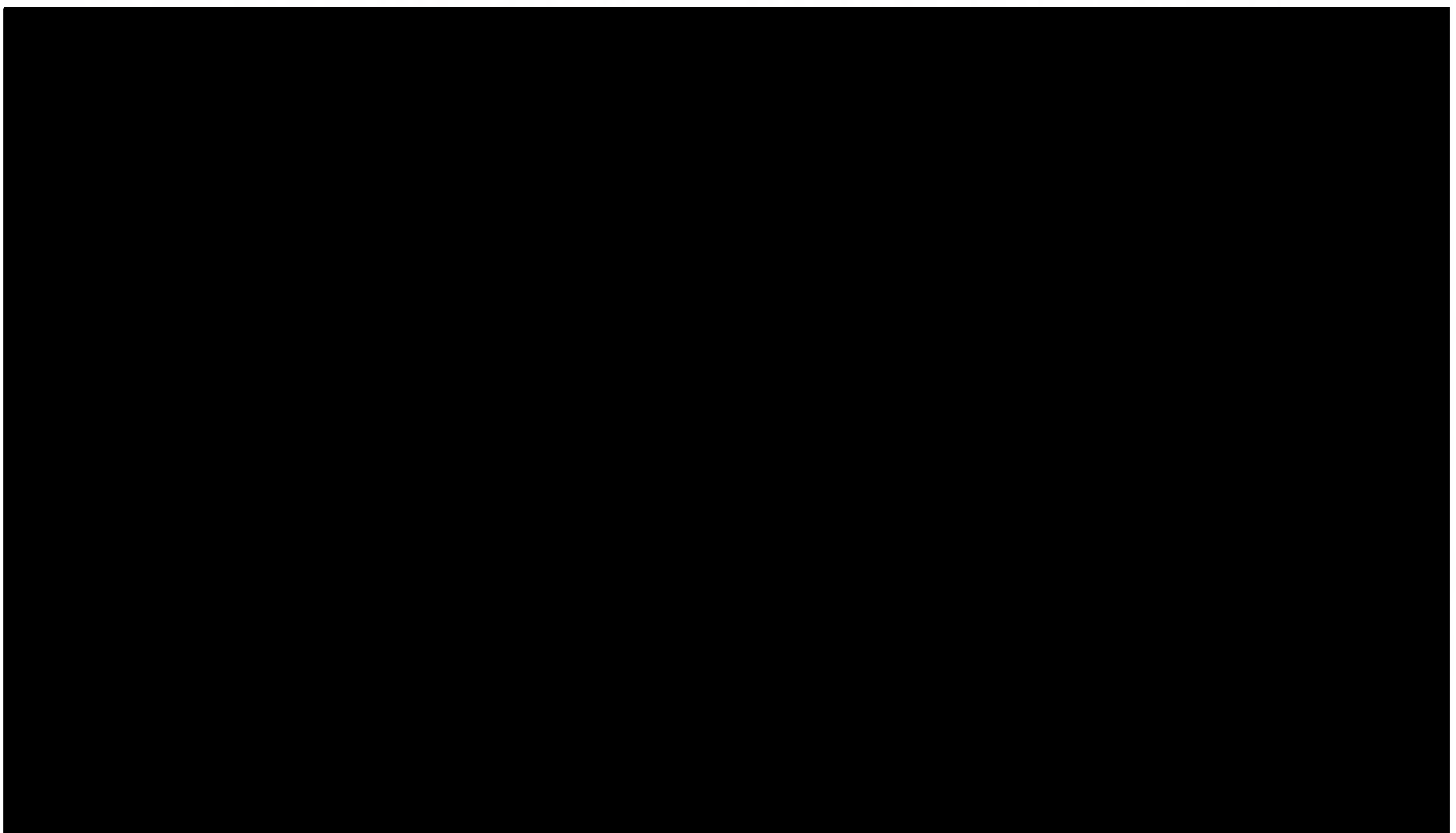

Fig.7.4 Paint sample showing layer of smoke deposits, Aythens, Cradley, Herefordshire

it was the mercer, ironmonger or general merchant who stocked pigments[12] and some were probably made up by the craftsmen themselves. The choice of pigments could be expected to fall within this range of those sold or produced locally.

It is appropriate now to examine those pigments found in the houses surveyed in terms of the criteria of fashionable colour, cost and availability. An assessment of pigments used is contained in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Assessment of pigments used in paintings surveyed

	Number of pigments identified			
Pigment	Visual analysis	Documented analysis	Microscopic examination	Total
Charcoal	}	}	7	}
Lampblack	}154	}13	0	}177
Coal	}	}	3	}
Lime	}141	}13	5	}163
Chalk	}	}	4	}
Gypsum	0	0	1	1
White lead	1	0	0	1
Red lead	24	1	6	31
Red ochre	62	9	4	75
Umber	3		1	4
Yellow ochre	54	8	5	67
Orpiment	1		3	4
Vermilion	1		1	2
Madder lake	0		0	0
Other red lake/roset	13		3	16
Organic yellow	0		1	1
Woad/indigo	15		4	19
Unidentified green pigment	15		0	15
Not known	43		0	43

Microscopic analysis was carried out on the paintings from the following buildings:
Onion Farm, Lymm [2]
Barnaby House, Ludlow [103]
Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86]
28 Watergate St, Whitchurch [154]
17-19 Watergate St, Whirchurch [87-88]
Church Farm, Withington [151]
Aston Hall Farm, Little Wenlock [150]
New Hall, Ticklerton [85]
Aythens, Cradley [68]
Blakelands, Bobbington [158] (by Lisa Shikede, unpublished research, Courtauld Institute)

The visual analysis involved an assessment of the colour in relation to known pigment colours. Some pigments can be identified with reasonable certainty in this way, such as the red and yellow ochres. In some cases the pigment used is known from documentation. In order to confirm the exact pigment used, microscopic examination is necessary. Nine paintings were sampled for microscopic analysis to confirm the pigments used. The sample included typical colour schemes found in a

[12] see Appendix 5

high proportion of buildings and more unusual schemes with pigments difficult to assess by visual analysis.

The margin of error in a visual analysis can be high for some pigments such as the carbon blacks, when it may be difficult to distinguish between charcoal, lampblack and coal. But this is not material to the present discussion, as the cost and availability of these pigments is broadly similar. Likewise, chalk and lime are indistinguishable once lime has carbonated but, as both were readily available and similar in cost, the exact pigment used is not a critical issue. This is not the case with all pigments, however, so in order to establish the significance of the pigments used, the characteristics and preparation of likely pigments must be examined first. An indication of the colours some of these pigments produced can be seen in fig.7.5. This is a reconstruction, by the scientific department at the National Gallery of the colours used by Holbein and others at Greenwich in 1527.

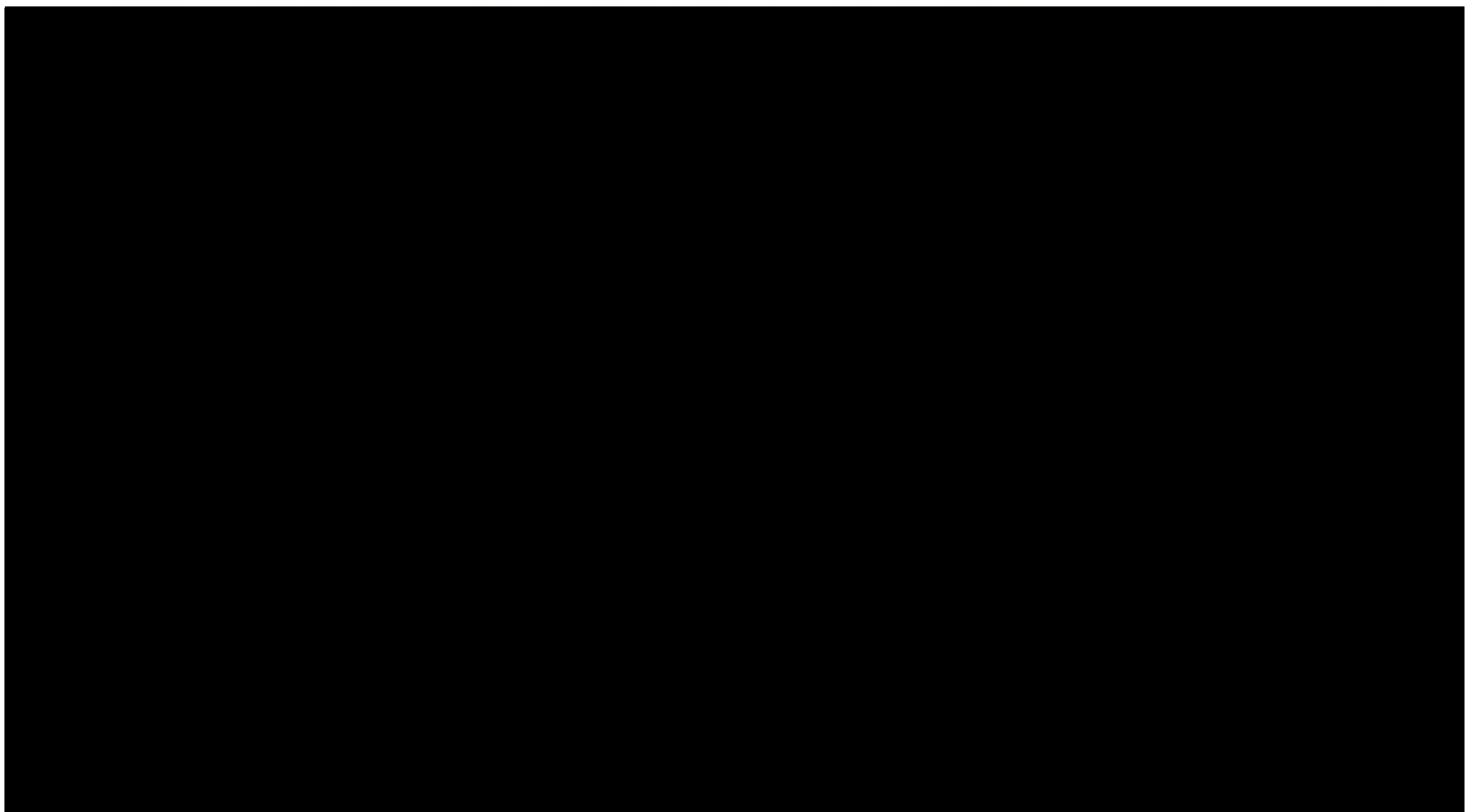

Fig.7.5 Colours used by Holbein at Greenwich, 1527

Pigments can be divided into the two broad groups of inorganic and organic. Inorganic pigments can be subdivided into a further two groups: those which are naturally occurring such as the earth pigments like ochres and umber; and those which are manufactured such as white and red lead and verdigris. Earth pigments are found in many parts of the country, yielding a range of colours including yellows, reds, oranges, purples and browns. These may used raw or in their burnt state. Artificially prepared pigments, such as white lead and verdigris have a long history and techniques for their manufacture were well known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The transactions of the fledgling Royal Society demonstrate that scientific experimentation in this period sought to improve these techniques[13]. These inorganic pigments are generally stable and can provide a full range of colours. Some, such as the ochres could be produced very cheaply although others were very expensive either in terms of raw ingredients or manufacturing process.

[13] For example Vernatti, 1673, p.935

Organic pigments include elements such as the carbon blacks and those made from insect or vegetable dyes mostly fixed on to a base such as chalk. A wide range of colours could be achieved using dyestuffs but many had a serious drawback in being fugitive on exposure to sunlight. Yet these could last in the relatively dimly lit rooms of contemporary houses for several years, until fashion or circumstances prompted redecoration. Their fugitive nature would not therefore be a constraint to their use. Other writers have extensively discussed the pigments available both for artists and for house painting[14] but these have not covered pigments which might have been used in vernacular houses during the period of study. This discussion focuses on these pigments and seeks to identify those most likely to have been found in painted decoration at the vernacular level.

In practice, it seems that only a limited number of readily available pigments was used. One of the disputes between the Painter-Stainers Company and the Plasterers in the early seventeenth century resulted in the plasterers being restricted to the use of six pigments, 'Whiting, Blacking, Red-lead, Red-oker, Yellow-Oker and Russet' and 'mingled with Size only'[15]. Whiting usually refers to chalk and the blacking will almost certainly refer to a carbon pigment, some form of charcoal or lampblack being the most widely documented ones. Russet[16], or roset, was one of the cheapest red organic pigments which, like many organic pigments, tended to fade on exposure to light. It appears to have been very popular, probably because it produced a gorgeous, rich pinkish red.

It is pertinent to ask why these six pigments were selected. The answer could well be because these were the most frequently used, readily available, cheapest pigments which were in greatest demand by all sorts of tradesmen. Consequently these could not reasonably be the sole preserve of the Painter Stainers. In this case one would expect these to be the colours found most frequently in the paintings studied. The analysis of fieldwork data has confirmed this to be the case, as Table 7.1 illustrates very clearly. The only exception is roset, which has not been positively identified, though the unspecified organic reds which were identified in the analysis could well have been roset. Given its fugitive nature, this is not surprising as most examples would have disappeared. There are several instances of faded pink colours which are very likely to be organic and there were very many cases where a painting scheme had lost at least one of its colours. By far the majority of paintings, nearly one third, are simply in black and white or primarily black and white with just highlights of one or two other colours.

White pigments

White was the basic ground colour used and the white pigments commonly used at the time were chalk, lime or white lead[17]. White lead provided a dense opaque pigment and was valued for its fine white finish. It was much more expensive than chalk or lime and, given that it was largely painted over and its fine white finish would not be appreciated, it is unlikely that it was widely used at the vernacular level.

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[14] See principally Harley, 1970, Bristow, 1996 (ii); Cennini, 1960
[15] Englefield, 1936, p.75
[16] The term 'russet' was also used to describe the external painting of brickwork with red ochre
[17] Bristow, 1996, ii, p.6

Black pigments

In some cases the black was a charcoal pigment produced from crushed wood charcoal. Whilst peach stones and vine stalks were used to produce the finest pigment, willow was used for ordinary purposes, was readily available and cheap to produce. Charcoal blacks have a bluish cast and there are many examples of blue-blacks in the schemes recorded, such as Barnaby House, Ludlow [103]. Lampblack was produced commercially and was widely available, but it could also be produced in the home from, as its name suggests, the sooty deposits from lamps and candles (it was also known as candle black), which were collected by brushing off the soot. Henry Peacham gives a useful contemporary description of this:

> Ordinary lampblack. Take a torch or a link, and hold it under the bottom of a lattern basen, and as it groweth to bee furd and black within, strike it with a feather into some shell or other, and grind it with gumme water[18].

John Smith, in his book on art, describes lampblack as being the most widely used black pigment on account of its 'plenty and cheapness'[19]. The notebook of John Abbott, a Devon plasterer of the seventeenth century is a rare survival of a working pattern book. It contains a collection of drawings and instructions for painting derived from a variety of sources published much earlier including recipes for pigments. In it he recommends lampblack as 'it is a perfect blacke and most used amongst painters'[20]. Lampblack can appear as a brown-black where impurities are included in the sooty deposit, which occurs when the deposit was collected too close to the flame.[21] Both lampblack and charcoal would be cheap, readily available sources of black pigment. Coal was known to have been used as a pigment during the sixteenth century and from the end of the century it became more widely used as a fuel, though its use as a pigment seems to have declined in the late seventeenth. 'Sea-Coal' is mentioned by Norgate in 1648[22] and by John Smith[23] in the first edition of his book in 1676 but not in the second edition in 1687. If it was available as a household fuel, then it is likely to have been used by local craftsmen.

Ochres

After the predominantly black and white schemes, those based on earth colours are the most common. Red and yellow ochres mixed with white and black pigments can produce an extensive range of colours and, with highlights using small amounts of green and blue, paintings in full colour can be achieved. Ochres have the advantage of being stable, cheap and readily available. They are naturally occurring oxides of iron and are found in several parts of the country, the exact colour varying from source to source. A high quality ochre was produced in the Forest of Dean within the Marches with colours ranging from a dark purple to an orange red. It is probable that much of the red ochre used in the Marches came from here. Other native supplies which were readily accessible were found in Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Witney in Oxfordshire.

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[18] Peacham, 1606, p.60
[19] Smith, 1687, p.17
[20] Chenevix-Trench, 1986, p.24
[21] Katherine Hassall, personal communication
[22] Norgate, 1997, p.59
[23] Smith, 1676, p.14

Oxfordshire also yielded large quantities of high quality yellow ochre which were widely used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. An interesting account of the extraction of ochre in the second half of the seventeenth century and its treatment to make the cakes of ochre as sold is given by Robert Plot in his *Natural History of Oxfordshire* in 1677. The ochre was found to the south of the road from Oxford to Wheatley in a vein between two and seven inches thick and lying at a depth of between seven and thirty feet. There were two kinds of ochre produced, stone ochre and clay ochre. The stone ochre was ready for use as soon as it was dry whereas the clay ochre required more extensive preparation:

> because of the natural inequality in its goodness, they wash and steep two or three days in water, and then beat it with clubs on a plank into thin *broad cakes*, of an equal mixture both of good and bad: they then cut it into squares like Tiles, and put it on hurdles laid on trestles to dry, which when thoroughly done 'tis fit for the *Merchant*

There are other sources more local to the Marches which could well have been used, these pigments being of inferior quality but also significantly cheaper. The Golden Valley was the source of the 'Bristol Oker' referred to by several writers[24] and parts of Wales, particularly Merioneth, Caernarvon and Anglesey, also yielded suitable, if duller, pigments.

Brown pigments

A related earth pigment used to produce brown colours is umber, both in its raw state and burnt. The best quality umber was imported from Cyprus but some inferior quality native umber was found relatively local to the Marches, in Oxfordshire, Derbyshire and Flintshire. Umber was identified in five paintings, two of these by microscopic analysis. However browns could also be produced by mixing red ochre and black, which was cheaper and it is possible that some of the brown colours were produced in this way rather than using umber.

Red pigments

Of the colours used for highlight, red is the most common and if this was not produced from red ochre then it was probably red lead, which was another relatively cheap and widely available pigment. Red lead was produced from roasting white lead, although the process seems to have been too complex for a local craftsman to have undertaken. It was very useful as a drier as well as a pigment and was produced on a commercial scale.

These are the colours found most frequently in the paintings examined in the course of the research and they coincide with five of the six colours allowed to the Plasterers. The sixth colour, roset, has been more difficult to identify, probably because it is an organic pigment which is very fugitive and will have faded in most situations. The faded brownish pink colour in the painting at Penkridge Hall, Cardington [117] may well be roset because this is the colour to which roset normally fades. It was made from a red dye obtained from brasilwood, a tropical tree

[24] Bristow, 1996, ii, p.31

(which gave its name to the country Brazil[25]) the bark of which was boiled up with alum and chalk to produce a red lake[26]. This produced a rich bright pinkish red and was probably the most widely used and cheapest lake. Its impermanence must have been well known as it fades very quickly to a brown colour. The sample in the scientific department at the National Gallery, (fig.7.5), which is not exposed to any sunlight, faded significantly within three years. In 1553 William Cholmeley, in his project for dyeing cloth in England, refers to it as 'disceytfull brasell, and complains that it is a 'fauls colour'[27] yet despite this, its use was widespread presumably because the immediate richness of its colour was highly prized and it was not intended for any permanent use. Higher quality lakes were produced from insect dyes extracted from lac, kermes and cochineal and from the roots of madder. The latter was extremely important to the dyeing industry and produced a good strong red which was relatively light fast.

Vermilion produces a clear red that was highly prized in medieval painting but it was expensive and has a tendency to blacken. Traditionally it was often mixed with red lead to produce a scarlet colour. The bright red in the painted panel in the Master's House at St. Katherine's Almshouses, Ledbury [55] may well include vermilion, though this is not a true scarlet and it may equally well have been pure red lead. Abbott refers to 'Vermilion Red for Armes', suggesting heraldic use was more likely for this costlier material.[28]

Yellow pigments

Clear bright yellows were very difficult to achieve. Orpiment, or King's Yellow as the manufactured pigment was known in the eighteenth century, produced a good yellow colour but as a sulphide of arsenic it was highly poisonous and offensive to use. As one later writer cautioned, even if one small apartment of the house is painted with King's Yellow 'the smell cannot be confined but sends its vile efluvia into every corner of the house'[29]. A further disadvantage was that this could not be used in contact with any lead or copper-based pigments. Cennini advises against its use on a wall because of its tendency to blacken on exposure to air.[30] Notwithstanding this, it produced a good yellow when used in a size medium and there are examples of orpiment in the fieldwork. Massicot, or lead tin yellow was another expensive, and in this case pale yellow, pigment although no examples of this were found.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the organic yellows produced from vegetable dyes in a similar way to organic reds were called, confusingly, 'pinks'[31]. The term pink referring to a light red colour was not used until the early eighteenth century. Pinks could also include green and brownish organic pigments. The term 'lake' was restricted to the organic red pigments. Unripe buckthorn berries, broom and weld are well-documented vegetable sources for pinks. All are native plants and would have been available locally. Some cultivation of weld is recorded in the mid-

[25] Harley,1970, pp.132-133
[26] A *lake* is an organic pigment produced from red vegetable dye
[27] Tawney and Power, 1953, Vol.3, pp. 137 and 139
[28] Chenevix-Trench, 1986, p.23
[29] Vanherman, 1828, p.26
[30] Cennini, 1960, p.29
[31] Harley, 1970, p.97

seventeenth century in the Wye Valley, Gloucestershire and the Cotswold hills and it was also picked wild.[32] Weld, also known as Dyer's Rocket, was widely used in the dyeing industry and it is possible that local dyers were the source of some of the vegetable dyes used to make pinks, although it was entirely feasible for local craftsmen to obtain their own dyes to make pinks. Norgate includes a recipe, said to have been given by Sir Nathaniel Bacon, for making a pink from broom:

> About midsomer take as much greene weed called in Latin *Genestella* tinctoria (widdow weed) as wilbe well boyled and covered in a pale of water, but let the water seeth well and be scumed before you put it in. You will know that it is well sodde, when the leaves and barke will strippe from the stalke drawn through your fingers. Then take it from the fire, and powre it into a wooden bowle or pale through a cloth, till all the water be strained through, then cast the weed away.
> Take this water and set it on the fire againe, and when it begins to seeth, put into it the quantity of halfe an egshell of ground chalke, or else the powder of egshell finely ground, mingle this chalke with a little of the water of your kettle in a dish after the manner of thickning the pot, then put into it a handfullof powdered Allome and take it from the fire when it begins to seeth, then put to it a little jelleyd size, broken small with your hand and as it were strewed all over the superficies of your colour, and soe let it stand. This size is put in to make the water seperate from the Colour, then take off the scume and put it into a Jarre glasse, and set it where noe sun comes and it wilbe an excellent yellow.
> But the maine colour is that which sinks to the bottome, from which you must (after it hath stood shelving an howre or two) draw away the water by philter. Then powre out the rest into a thicke linnnen bagge, setting a dish under neath because the first drayning will carry colour with it, which you may after put into the bagge again; and soe let it hang twenty four howres, or twice soe long if need bee. Then take it out of the bagge and slice it, and lay the slices upon Cap paper in a dish, and dry it in an Oven after the bread is drawne, and keepe it for your use, at midsomer the herb is in Flore.'[33]

Sir Nathaniel Bacon's painting, ' Cook Maid with Still Life' in the Tate Gallery uses a broom pink for the yellow pigment.[34]

Saffron produced a good bright yellow and has been documented as a pigment source, though mainly for illuminated manuscripts, as it is very fugitive. It was widely grown but it was very expensive. The anonymous painter writing in the flyleaf of his copy of John Smith's *The Art of Painting*, now in the Bodleian Library, notes 'Plaintree is a good wood to be coloured with Indian Varnish. Ye first ground you make with a good yellow (with orpiment or saffron)'[35]. This suggests that, despite its fugitive nature, it found some use as a paint pigment.

There is, not surprisingly, very little evidence of organic yellow pigments in the fieldwork. Their fugitive nature means that those which may have been used have faded beyond recognition and it is impossible to assess their contemporary use. It is quite feasible that they were used with the more stable but dull ochre to brighten it up and, whilst the ochre survives, the organic yellows do not.

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[32] Thirsk, 1997, p133
[33] Norgate, 1997, p.99
[34] Information from Jo Kirby, National Gallery
[35] Smith, 1687 Bodleian shelfmark 8° 2 89 med

Blue pigments

The most sought after colour was probably a clear bright blue and the best pigment for this was the vastly expensive ultramarine. It was so expensive that it would not have been found at the vernacular level. Azurite, commonly known as blue bice, was widely used in royal buildings in the sixteenth century[36] though its relative expense makes it unlikely to have been used extensively in vernacular building. In the early seventeenth century, an artificially produced blue, blue verditer, was available, largely superseding the natural blue bice pigment and became extensively used in distemper. Smalt was also used in royal buildings and was suitable for use in distemper though its cost would normally again prohibit its use in vernacular building.

However, people could more readily afford the duller and somewhat fugitive blue produced from indigo and woad. Although woad is a native plant it was not produced commercially in England until the 1540s. Prior to this it was imported, principally from Toulouse, Piedmont and Tuscany. Its use was essential to the dyeing industry and some evidently found its way into paint pigments. During the second half of the sixteenth century, the increasing cost of imports stimulated the home production of woad. After initial encouragement from the government, restrictions on its growth were imposed in the late sixteenth century. It was known that woad exhausted the soil and there was concern that it was threatening the production of corn at a time of crisis. The alternative of imported indigo was pursued. The increase in imports of indigo and the decline in the imports of woad lead to the common misconception that the use of woad ceased after about 1600. In fact, home production of woad continued to increase. It was too lucrative a crop to be abandoned readily. Whilst it undoubtedly exhausted the soil if grown year after year on the same land, it fitted well into a system of crop rotation. Moreover, it assisted in the fermentation of indigo dye and the two were often used together. Another advantage was that its roots burnt to give potash[37], an essential material in the dyeing trade and in the production of organic pigments.

It was certainly widely produced in the 1580s as Queen Elizabeth issued a proclamation that woad production had to cease in any town through which she was passing, on account of its noxious smell[38]. It was still being produced 100 years later when Celia Fiennes described its production in the 1690s in Gloucestershire as she too noted its smell which, she said, was 'so strong and offencive you can scarce beare it at the Mill', adding ' I could not forse my horse neare it".[39] Woad dye is still made in France in a traditional manner producing a range of blue colours. Indigo was more expensive to buy but it produced a much more intense colour and therefore required less pigment than woad to produce the same effect. Used on its own it gives a very dark blue. It was often mixed with lime to give a lighter blue and a small amount of indigo could go a very long way.

Woad and/or indigo were identified in several paintings studied and there is documentary evidence of its use as a pigment. It is specifically mentioned as being

[36] Mercer, 1953
[37] OED
[38] Hughes and Larkin, 1969,vol.2, p.516
[39] Bristow, 1996, ii, p.14

used for painting grotesques on a white ground by the French writer d'Aviler in 1691[40]. Other organic blues included pigments made from mulberries, bilberries and elderberries. In fact one of the recipes from John Abbott's notebook suggests that to make a blue: 'Boyle Allum with mulberies.'[41]

Green pigments

Fifteen of the paintings examined included a green colour but the exact pigments are difficult to determine by visual analysis. Green earth was known as a pigment but there are no references by English writers to it in the early seventeenth century[42]. It was readily available in some parts of the country and was very simple to make, requiring only washing and grinding. Malachite, a natural mineral pigment, gave a good green which could be used on walls. Too much grinding could make it lose its colour, as is the case with some other minerals such as azurite. It was usually fairly coarse and may not be suitable for fine delicate work. Verdigris, a green manufactured from the corrosion of copper, was certainly available and suitable for wall painting use in a size medium, though it would react with lime and could not be used in distempers or where the ground is fresh lime plaster or limewash. Many paintings were found to have a limewash base and, not surprisingly, no examples of verdigris have been identified. However, its use should not be discounted. If the painted decoration was not done until a few years after the house was built, then any lime surface would have had time to cure and verdigris could be used, provided a fresh limewash ground was not used. Another pigment to avoid using with verdigris was white lead as 'they are mortal enemies in every respect'[43], though the two could be used together in oil. Green verditer, another manufactured pigment, was also available in the late sixteenth century and its use has been recorded in stage sets.[44]

Organic green pigments were made in the medieval period from ripe buckthorn berries, iris flowers, honeysuckle, nightshade, elder and mulberry leaves. Other berries and flowers may have served equally well. It is possible for some of these to have been used for wall painting, possibly mixed with other pigments, but many would be too fugitive[45].

More likely in many cases is that the green was produced from mixing blue with yellow. Seventeenth century sources suggest that pink (i.e. the organic yellow pigment), whether made from berries or weld, was primarily used to provide a green. Colour lists for green often included pink and a blue pigment such as blue bice, verditer or indigo.[46]The materials for pink and an organic blue were readily available and relatively cheap. Cennini recommends mixing two parts orpiment with one part indigo to make a good green for painting walls in secco.[47] In three of the samples subject to paint analysis green was made from mixing indigo with ochre or orpiment, which could give a good stable colour. A mix of lampblack, lime and yellow can also produce a green but of a dull sludgy colour. Any mixes using pinks may no longer be identifiable as the pigments have faded.

[40] ibid., p.14
[41] Chenevix-Trench, 1986, p.23
[42] Harley, 1970, p.70
[43] Cennini, 1960, p.33
[44] Information from Jo Kirby, National Gallery.
[45] Harley 1970, pp.79-80
[46] ibid., p.98.
[47] Cennini, 1960, p.32

The practice of overpainting

Overpainting one scheme with another had been noted on site where a top scheme had worn away in places to reveal an earlier scheme underneath, seen most clearly at Sutton Court Farm [73]. This has been found elsewhere in the country[48], the most well-known example being at Pittleworth Manor, Hants. Five of the samples were tested for evidence of overpainting and this was found in two with a possibility of a third existing. In one case, Aythens, Cradley, three schemes were identified (see fig.7.6). Whilst the evidence provided by so few examples cannot be used on its own as proof that overpainting was a common practice, when considered with evidence of the likely use of fugitive organic pigments, it is reasonable to hypothesise that this was a common practice.

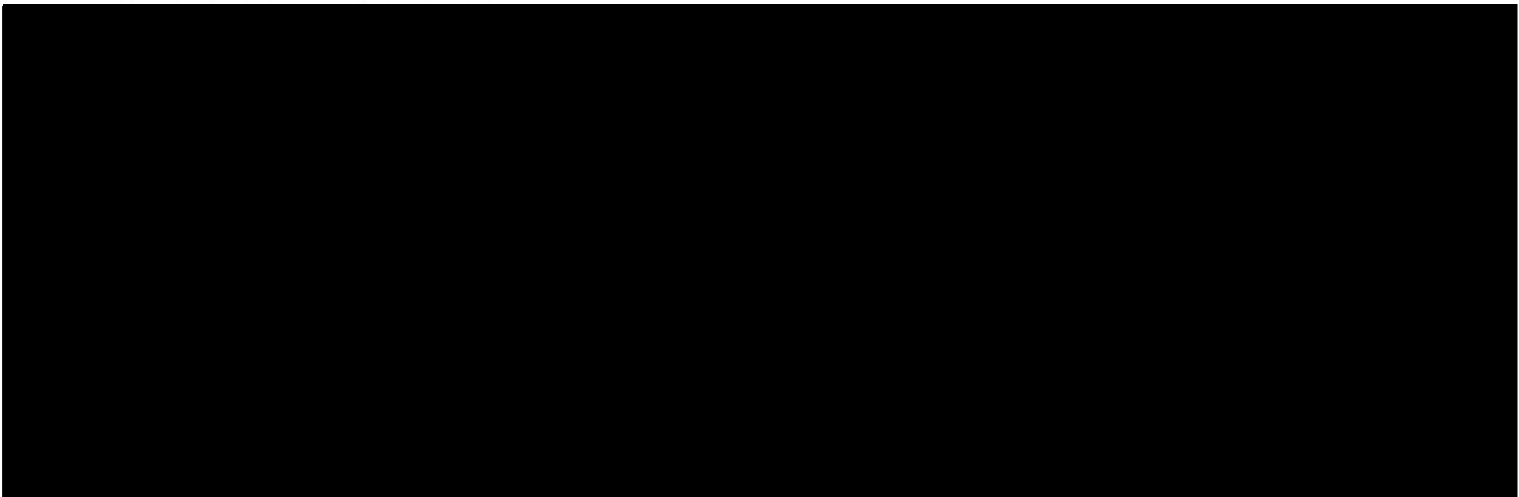

Fig. 7.6 Paint sample showing three schemes at Aythens, Cradley [x 200]

Availability of materials

One of the key aspects of vernacular painting is that the materials had to be available locally and at a reasonable charge. Evidence of this is needed to substantiate the hypothesis that wall paintings were widespread and affordable at the vernacular level. Information on the availability of materials required for painting can be found in the inventories of local tradesmen. A comprehensive search through the inventories for three north Shropshire towns together with a selection of tradesmen's inventories in the Midlands and Hampshire has been used to identify the extent to which pigments and other raw materials could be purchased in local market towns.

The inventories of seventeen tradesmen mentioned materials which could be used for painted decoration. The inventories have been analysed to identify: 1) ready-made pigments; 2) materials which could be used to make organic pigments, consisting of vegetable dyes and bases for lakes and pinks; and 3) other goods which could be used for painting, including materials for varnishes, size and oils. The results of this analysis are contained in Appendix 5.

All but four tradesmen sold ready-made pigments, mostly between two and four different ones, though one had over ten pigments. Some of these pigments may have had other uses, notably in making drugs and in fact druggists or apothecaries were established stockists of pigments in the medieval period. The most commonly found pigment was verdigris, found in twelve inventories. Whilst there are references to

[48] In Suffolk, information from Andrea Kirkham, and Reader, 1935, pp.277-278

this being used in house painting[49], it was used where translucence was required and as a drier or varnish. Its predominance in tradesmen's shops possibly reflects its use for dyeing linen, producing greenish and yellowish colours[50]. Red lead was the next most common pigment, found in seven inventories, followed by white lead in five cases. Not surprisingly, earth pigments are found commonly, with yellow ochre the most frequently mentioned, followed by red ochre, Spanish brown and umber. These earth pigments were not used in the dyeing industry and were therefore almost certainly used for paint pigments although red ochre, or raddle, was traditionally used for marking sheep as well. A wide range of other pigments was also found including lampblack, vermilion, general, verditer, blue and green bice, mummy and orpiment. Lampblack could be readily made at home so its infrequent appearance probably owes more to this than its rarity in use, as fieldwork suggests it was widely used. Perhaps it is more surprising that it is found at all in the inventories. It may be that the commercially produced pigment was superior to the home-produced one.

Mummy, as its name suggests, was made from lumps of mummified flesh obtained from large communal tombs in the area of the Pyramids. The export of mummies from Egypt was illegal in the sixteenth century but nevertheless travellers to the area returned with considerable supplies. The account by some English travellers in 1586 of their visit to a cave full of mummies supports this. They were let down by rope into a cave where they walked over the mummies and viewed them by candlelight:

> They gave no noisome smell at all, but ar like pitch, beinge broken; for I broke of all parts of the bodies to see howe the flesh was turned to drugge, and brought home divers heads, hands, arms, and feete for a shewe. We had bought also 600lb. for the Turkie Company in peces, and brought into Ingland in the Hercules, together with a whole bodie. They are lapped in 100 doble of cloth, which rotton and pillinge of, you may see the skinne, flesh, fingers, and nayles firme, onlie altered blacke.[51]

As this passage suggests, it was principally used made up into a drug, though it was tried out as a pigment and produced a transparent brown. It is highly unlikely to have been used in house painting, earth colours being more suitable and readily available. However, it is indicative of the inventiveness of the period, when all sorts of materials were tried out for use as pigments.

Alum was essential in making organic pigments and it is found in twelve of the inventories indicating that it was widely available. However, this could reflect its importance in the dyeing industry. It was the principle fixative for most vegetable dyes and had the advantage of brightening colours. [52] The same is true for the vegetable dyestuffs found. Madder was a very common dyestuff, as well as being used for a lake pigment, which gave fast orange-reds and could be mixed with a number of other dyes to produce a wider range of colours.

The fugitive nature of saffron limited its use for dyeing and pigments, though it produced a clear bright yellow and was clearly used in some circumstances as a pigment[53]. The limited anticipated life of the paintings may have meant that it might

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[49] Bristow, 1996, ii, pp.22-23
[50] Kerridge, 1985, p.167
[51] Harley, 1970, pp.142-3
[52] Kerridge, 1985, p.166
[53] see note 44

have been used by local craftsmen, possibly mixed with a more stable duller yellow. Weld and broom, however, were clearly stronger candidates for bright but fugitive yellows.

The presence of indigo in nearly a third of the inventories is a testament to the government's success in encouraging its import. A lawsuit recorded in 1631-2 in Shrewsbury concerning a contract to supply indigo to Aberystwyth suggests that the pigment could be bought much further afield than these market towns[54]. No woad appears in the inventories, though it was undoubtedly available, for the two were frequently used together. Rate books for 1657 and 1660 mention woad, including 'tholose woad'[55] indicating that supplies were still being imported from this traditional source. Again these were widely used in the dyeing industry to produce a range of blues and also, mixed with yellow pigments, to give greens.

It is impossible therefore to suggest the extent to which these materials may have been used for pigments. What is significant, however, is that they were available at the local level should craftsmen wish to supplement their palette of duller inorganic pigments with clear bright colours.

A wide range of other materials which could be used for paintings was also found, though again most of these could be used for other purposes. The most commonly mentioned material was green copperas which was used to make inks, as a drier and as a mordant in the dyeing industry and white copperas was also used as a drier. Resins were used to make varnishes (which were sometimes applied over water based paint on wood grounds); gums, parchment pieces and isinglass were used in binding media, turpentine was used for a varnish and other oils used as media or driers. 'Painters oil' (John Twice, 1583) indicates its specific use as does the reference to 'painters hair' (Lambert Vibert, 1622).

Nearly all the pigments found in the fieldwork or materials to make them appear in local merchants' shops. The exceptions are charcoal and coal which could certainly have been made by local craftsmen, and lime and gypsum, which would not be found in any case in a merchant's shop. Whilst lampblack is mentioned, it only appears in one inventory, and charcoal is not mentioned at all. These two pigments were the most commonly used ones, being found in nearly all the paintings. This lack of evidence in inventories supports the view that these were not traded goods but were in fact made by the craftsmen themselves.

These local craftsmen would, therefore, have ready access to the materials they required to undertake painting work at the vernacular level. What is not evident from any contemporary records found is the link between the dyeing trade and the production of organic pigments. At the vernacular level in the provinces, it is highly likely that craftsmen would make the maximum use of all potential sources of pigments. If a small amount of pigment was required, it would be entirely possible for a craftsman to obtain the waste from a dyeing vat, either the scum off the top or the residue of say indigo or weld, and to use this to make an organic pigment. This would reduce the cost and the labour required significantly. Craftsmen would have ready access to dyers who would be found in most towns.

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[54] SRRC 3365/1959- information supplied by W.A.Champion.

[55] woad from Toulouse, France – SRRC, information supplied by W.A.Champion

Cost of Materials

Not only was it necessary for pigments to be readily available, they had to be affordable at the vernacular level. Table 7.2 shows the costs of the pigments in London and the provinces. Those in London are based on the actual prices pigments were sold for whilst those in the provinces are based on valuations in probate inventories. The costs of the materials used for making pigments is also included but only for London. Table 7.3 contains prices for some mineral pigments based on London prices, which are useful for comparative purposes. The London prices may be artificially high as they are based on pigments bought on a small scale for heraldic work. The small scale and the better grade pigments used for higher status work could both inflate the price. Some low grade pigments could be significantly cheaper and could still produce perfectly acceptable results in house painting. Despite this, the prices are a useful indicator of the relative cost of different pigments. Chapter 9 considers how much pigment was used for a typical scheme. The purpose here is to look at the cost of the pigments found in the course of the fieldwork relative to those available at the time but not found in the fieldwork.

Table 7.2 Cost of pigments and related materials in London and the provinces (prices per pound)

		1580-1600[56] *london*	*1580-1600*[57] *provinces*	*1600-1640*[58] *provinces*
pigment	Lampblack	2s		
	White lead	4d	3d	3d -4d
	Red lead	4d	2d	2d-3d
	Red ochre			2d
	Yellow ochre		<1d -2d	1d
	Spanish ochre		2d	
	Umber			
	Indigo	4s		4s 6d-5s 4d
	Verdigris	4s	1s 8d-3s	1s -2s 8d
	Orpiment	1s	4d	
	Vermilion	5s-8s		
	Roset	1s 4d	6d	
	Pink			
Vegetable dyes				
	Brasil			2d
	Madder		4d	
	Logwood		4d	
Other materials				
	Alum		4d	2d -3d
	Copperas		2d	2d

[56] Unpublished research carried by Jo Kirby, National Gallery, London
[57] Prices as quoted in inventories, see Appendix 5
[58] ibid

Table 7.3 Cost of more expensive pigments not identified in the fieldwork (prices per lb in the London area[59])

pigment	*1573-1600*	*c.1630*
Azurite (bice)	6s 8d - 48s	
Malachite	5s	
Verditer	6s 8d	
Lead tin yellow[60]	3s-6s 8d	
Ceruse	1s	
Red lake- synoper	10s –48s	
General	3s 4d	
Smalt		6-15s

The most commonly found pigments in the sites investigated in the fieldwork were lime/chalk, carbon blacks, red and yellow ochres, and red lead. Of these, the former two do not appear as traded goods in the provinces. In the case of the carbon blacks it has been suggested in this chapter that this was possibly because these were produced at home by the craftsmen themselves[61]. The cost of lampblack recorded in London is surprisingly expensive and inexplicable for it was one of the most commonly used pigments and noted by John Smith, for its cheapness. The predominant white pigment was lime and this was produced locally almost universally as a principal building material and it would not have figured in traded goods.

This leaves the ochres and red lead of the main pigments as traded goods and these cost only a few pence per pound. Yellow ochre was the cheapest pigment at 1d –2d per pound with red ochre a close second at 2d per pound. Red lead on average could cost a little more at 3d per pound.

The sixth pigment allowed to the Painter Stainers was roset. Whilst this has only had a possible identification in three samples, it is suggested that it was much more widespread but has since faded. The materials required to make this pigment include brasil, alum and chalk, all of which again only cost a few pence per pound.

Other pigments found which were more expensive include indigo, vermilion and orpiment, though the latter may not have been significantly more expensive than the ochres. It is recorded as being valued at 4d per pound in Newport though it was 1s per pound in London.

Indigo has been identified in a number of schemes, in some cases mixed with a yellow pigment to create green. It was imported from various sources, most coming from the Middle East. It gave a similar blue to woad but pound for pound, yielded a much more intense pigment and therefore less was required. Often it was used in conjunction with woad and is indistinguishable from woad in pigment analysis. Vermilion was found in at least one vernacular building, though its use was sparing.

[59] See note 56 above
[60] General is a form of lead tin yellow
[61] see Peacham, 1606, p.60

Whilst verdigris was very commonly available, it has not been positively identified in the fieldwork. The greens which have been identified are mixes of blue and yellow and documentary evidence suggests that this was a common source for greens. The verdigris found in inventories is more likely to reflect its use for purposes other than a pigment, such as in the dyeing industry[62] .

Not surprisingly, none of those pigments listed as more expensive have been positively identified in the fieldwork. That is not to suggest that they were not used but that their use would not have been widespread in vernacular houses. They are more likely to have been used in higher status buildings or in easel paintings. In contrast to this, pigment analysis of wall paintings in Suffolk has shown that some of these more expensive pigments may be found, especially blue verditer[63]. However as the status of the houses has not been assessed (but it is known to include some high status houses) a direct comparison cannot be made.

Conclusions

The painted decoration found in most of the timber-framed buildings of the period of study is unlikely to be contemporary with the construction of the building, though it may have been done within a few years. The inevitable movement which follows the erection of a timber-framed building would have been well known to householders who would have been prepared for the regular maintenance of infilling of the gaps between the frame and the infill panels. Knowing that this would continue for several years, it is likely that householders would defer decorating their rooms with decoration painted directly onto the fabric of the buildings until this movement had reduced significantly or ceased. An examination of the preparation of paintings in the fieldwork supports this. In some cases, the painting dates from a much later period than the original construction of the building, such as that at Shootrough Farm. No evidence has been found to throw light on whether the same deferment of decoration was relevant in stone or brick buildings. There is no functional reason for this to be the case.

The cheapest and simplest method of painting was using water-based paints, either in a limewash or using size or gum media. It is this type of painting which was found almost universally in the fieldwork. This would not give a waterproof finish. Any soiling of the walls and ceiling, which could be expected given the presence of open fires in the majority of the rooms, could not be readily cleaned off. Instead a new scheme would be painted over the soiled one, with a plain coat of limewash as a ground. This is clearly visible in some of the paint samples subject to microscopic analysis supporting the contention that these were only intended as temporary decoration to be renewed as and when required.

Supplies of artist's pigments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are associated with specialist colourmen, primarily in London, or travelling sellers of grocery goods visiting major fairs. If the same sources were used for domestic wall painting, then their availability would be limited and the cost of pigments would reflect this. The evidence of the fieldwork is that vernacular pigments were extensively used, that is, those which could be made by the craftsman himself or were readily available at a very local level. This vernacular palette was based on the

[62] Kerridge, 1985, p.167
[63] Andrea Kirkham

pigments allowed to the plasterers, as general craftsmen, in 1603 in their dispute with the Painter-Stainers Company. These, with the exception of roset, were predominantly dull colours. In order to brighten up this palette with richer, more fashionable colours, it is suggested here that this is likely to have been supplemented with limited amounts of brighter colours, particularly organic pigments. The raw materials for making these may well have been obtained from the local dyer, possibly as dyer's waste, suggesting the cost of obtaining these was small. The fact that many of these would be fugitive would not have been a material consideration if the decoration had a limited life.

The evidence in this chapter supports the key hypotheses that painted decoration could be widespread and found at all social levels - it was a relatively cheap, short-term form of decoration which a wide range of people could use. It also points to the unreliability of using paintings to date buildings and vice versa, of suggesting a building date may be the date of a painting. In addition, emerging from this is the likelihood of a strong connection between the dyeing industry and the local production of organic pigments.

Chapter 8
Painters – or other craftsmen?

The argument presented in the previous chapter, regarding the need for materials to be readily available at the vernacular level, holds true also when the availability of the craftsmen who carried out the work is considered. There is a common and plausible assumption that itinerant painters were responsible for the painted decoration in secular buildings, but close examination suggests that at the vernacular level this hypothesis cannot be sustained. The only identifiable body of craftsmen specialising in painting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England was the Painter Stainers' Company who controlled the profession or craft, as it was called, in London. In the provinces, these painters probably joined other craft guilds, for example in Kingston-upon Hull they belonged to the Goldsmiths Company, in Coventry they are mentioned along with cardmakers, saddlers and masons and in Shrewsbury they are found in the Saddlers' Company. Whilst there were clearly some specialist painters practising in the Marches there is no evidence of any substantial number of dedicated painters and they appear to be too few in number to be organised into specialised guilds. Yet wall paintings were very widespread. An explanation of this apparent anomaly which is explored in this chapter is that they were executed by other craftsmen who were readily available and at a charge affordable at the vernacular level.

To support this hypothesis evidence for the existence of painters nationally and locally within the Marches will be examined to establish how many dedicated painters there might have been. The work done by the painters of the Painter Stainers' Company will then be investigated to see what commissions they undertook and who was encroaching on this work in London. In an attempt to establish who were the painters of the provinces at the vernacular level, the records of building work have been examined and the relative status of these 'painters' is compared to the specialised painters. This will contribute to the assessment of the cost of this form of decoration and whether it was within the means of the householder which is considered further in the next chapter.

Evidence for Painters

John Smith in his book on painting published in 1687 advises gentlemen 'that live far remote from great Cities where Painters usually reside' on how to instruct their servants in housepainting.[1] Whilst this undoubtedly refers to plain house painting, by extension it can be taken to suggest a dearth of painters in the countryside. In support of this contention, the Tudor wage rate assessments, which fixed the maximum wages for the most commonly found craftsmen, cite painters only in London, the city which could be expected to lead the fashion in painted decoration and where other painting work was concentrated. Painters are not listed in any other of the towns.[2] Donald Woodward in his extensive research on building craftsmen in northern England only mentions two painters.[3] His conclusion that there was little

[1] Smith, 1687 pp.2-3
[2] Hughes & Larkin, 1964-69
[3] Woodward, 1995, p.22

beautifying of public buildings is open to question, given the physical evidence of surviving decoration in buildings. A plausible alternative explanation is that they were not done by painters but by local craftsmen.

Table 8.1: Incidence of Painters and Painter Stainers in Indexed Wills 1500-1700

Index	Painter	Painter stainer	Stainer	Limner	Cit.+ painter	Cit.+ painter stainer	Other *	*TOTAL*
Oxon[4]	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	*8*
Lincoln[5]	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	*3*
London II[6]	7	4	1	0	5	7	7	*31*
London III[7]	5	8	0	1	0[8]	21	3	*38*
Surrey[9]	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	*3*
Berkshire[10]	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	*3*
Sudbury[11]	9	0	5	2	0	0	1	*17*
Suffolk[12]	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	*3*
Beds.[13]	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	*3*
Chelmsford I[14]	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	*14*
Chelmsford II[15]	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	*6*
Ely (Arch)[16]	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	*5*
Ely (Const)[17]	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	*1*
PCC vol V[18]	2	0	0	0	0	8	1	*11*
PCC vol VI[19]	0	7	0	0	0	0	1	*8*
PCC vol VII[20]	2	9	0	1	0	0	1	*13*
PCC vol VIII[21]	1	10	0	0	0	0	0	*11*
TOTAL	*70*	*42*	*6*	*5*	*13*	*28*	*14*	*178*

**Others include pastellers (8), picture drawers (2), picture maker (1), illuminator (1), and Sergeant Painters (2)*

Table 8.1 lists the incidence of painters in the published wills available which are indexed by occupation in England in the 16th and 17th centuries. This covers mostly London and the Home Counties. In two hundred years, 178 painters appear, over a third of these being in London, possibly more as the location of the PCC wills is not recorded. The total figure includes related occupations such as stainers, limners and

[4] Barrat, D.M., 1981 and 1985
[5] Hains, 1991
[6] Fitch, 1974
[7] Fitch, 1985
[8] The Painters and Stainers joined companies in 1502
[9] Webb, 1990
[10] Hawse, 1975
[11] Sergeant, 1984
[12] Sergeant, 1979-80
[13] Cirket, Stuart, Wells and Pickford, 1993-4
[14] Emmison, vol.1 1982
[15] ibid., vol 2, 1982
[16] Thurley, 1976
[17] Thurley, 1994
[18] PCC Vol V 1605-1619
[19] PCC Vol VI 1620-1629
[20] PCC Vol VII 1653-1656
[21] PCC Vol VIII, 1657-1660

picture makers. It must be recognised that wills are not a comprehensive record of the inhabitants of an area but they do give an indication of the relative incidence of occupations. One county where wall paintings have been studied in detail is Essex. Here thirty-six painters who could be associated with painting in the county have been identified, though not all resided in the county[22]. The records of the Painter Stainers' Company, discussed below, state that there were above 400 painters in the city of London in 1664[23] indicating, as might be expected, that there were many more than show up in wills. The presence of this significant number of painters in the south east means that they could be called upon to undertake painted decoration in secular buildings. What is not evident is, of course, is whether they were in fact responsible for this painting.

In contrast to this is the incidence of painters in the Marches over the same period. An extensive search has been made through local records, especially in Shropshire, to identify those referred to, or calling themselves, painters. The search included wills held in the local record offices of Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Cheshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire, the National Library of Wales and PCC wills, churchwardens' accounts, and in Shropshire, guild records, bailiffs accounts and other local records.

In Cheshire, four painters are recorded, all outside the Marches proper. In Worcestershire the wills of five painters are recorded and the diary of Prior More, which includes an account of painted cloths, refers to Thomas Peynter and Thomas Kings as painters in 1532[24]. In Gloucester, only one painter is recorded, who died in 1614. The churchwarden's accounts for St. Michael's Church in Gloucester include payments in 1574 to John Bowre for books of gold and red lead, suggesting he was a painter and later references include payments to 'the paynters for their work'[25]. The churchwarden's accounts for Tewkesbury in 1607 make several references to payments to 'the paynter', without naming him. Other craftsmen are named and appear regularly, which suggests that the anonymous painter was not a local man and was employed for one specific task. Whether he came from the Marches area is impossible to determine. The Welsh probate records have no painters in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, though deeds relating to a property in Cardiff (1707-81) include premises late in the tenure of William Hunt, 'armes painter' deceased[26].

The most exhaustive search has been done in Shropshire, yet here only a handful of painters have emerged from the records. One, Richard Adams, an arms painter from Ludlow, executed a heraldic pedigree for Richard Pryse of Goegerddan in Cardiganshire in1590.[27] The fact that someone in Cardiganshire had to look as far as Ludlow, 100 miles away, for an arms painter suggests that there was no-one more local with the necessary skill. In Shrewsbury the painters belonged to the Saddlers Company, or to give it its full title, the Company of Saddlers, Painters, Plumbers,

[22] Carrick, 1989
[23] Englefield, 1936, p.128
[24] Matley More, 1982, pp.73-79
[25] G.R.O.PA154/2, St. Michael's churchwarden's accounts
[26] NLW Bute D94/1-21. I am grateful to Hilary Peters of the NLW for her assistance with the Welsh records.
[27] NLW Rolls 226

Glaziers, Lorimers, Fuysters and Spurriers[28]. The tax and muster lists of the masters for the sixteenth century include three painters in 1524, three in 1569 and four in 1587 (two of these also appear in the 1569 list)[29]. John Mason 'peynter', possibly the same John Mason who appears in the 1524 list, was paid 12d in 1548 by the Shrewsbury bailiffs for painting the gown of the 'Abbot of Marrall', a Lord of Misrule who disported through the streets of Shrewsbury at Maytime[30]. Two more painters have been identified in suit lists for 1535-9[31] and a further one in the Shrewsbury Burgess Roll of 1583[32]. The widow of a Shrewsbury merchant, Christian Pellitor, who died in 1604, left Edward Gough the painter 'my husbands cloke and one payer of breechis'[33]. No painters were found outside the main towns of the area, which suggests that the painters clustered in towns of regional importance where they were more likely to find work.

Three of the four painters in the 1587 muster list belong to one family: Jefferey Cley who was warden in 1569, John Cley who is known to have worked as a painter and general builder on the Council House in Shrewsbury in 1582 and Homfrey Cley, Jefferey's son, who came to a discreditable end. He was convicted of murder in 1595 after a brawl in town and taken to his place of execution where he was reprieved, but only temporarily, whilst his friends tried to save him.[34]

All the evidence suggests that there was not a substantial body of dedicated craftsmen calling themselves painters, practising in the area during this period. There were certainly insufficient to account for the extensive painted decoration executed in the area at the time. To account for this, the work of other craftsmen needs to be investigated to establish who might be responsible for painted decoration. The records of the Painter Stainers' Company can assist in this. The Painter Stainers' Company only had jurisdiction over the City of London, suburbs and liberties but their disputes with various other companies provides information on two issues which can inform the question of who was engaged in painting work in the Marches and other provinces. Firstly, they detail what work the painter stainers were undertaking and secondly, they indicate who was encroaching on this work and therefore had the necessary skills to paint.

Underlying these disputes are the fundamental aims of the guild, which were to provide mutual assistance, the preservation of order in the fellowship and restrictions 'for the good of the craft'[35]. It is the latter which are of particular interest in indicating who was undertaking what, in terms of painting work.

The work of painters

Looking first at the nature of the work of the painter stainers, the Company records reveal details of the scope of their work. Staining was described as the craft of

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[28] I am grateful to W.A.Champion for providing me with references on the Saddlers Company and some of the other references to Shrewsbury painters.
[29] S.R.R.C.3365/172; 3365/1061; 3365/2251.
[30] Somerset, 1994, i. 201, ii. 658
[31] S.R.R.C./1023
[32] H.E.Forrest, Shrewsbury Burgess Roll, p.229
[33] Inventories from the Dictionary of Traded Goods and Commodities 1550-1800, MY1604PLLC
[34] M Lyster (possibly), *Early Chronicles of Shrewsbury*, mss printed in TSAS, Vol III, 1880, p.334
[35] Englefield, 1936, p.39

producing on plain woven fabric both coloured and figure subjects, usually in watercolours which stained the fibres of the cloth. Painting included working in oils as well as water-based paint and normally referred to work on more solid objects such as timber, stone, plaster and iron. Where cloth was being painted, the paint was applied onto a ground, usually of limewash, on the surface of the cloth. The painters and stainers joined companies in 1502 and seemed to have worked together without the distinctions between the two areas of work being an issue, though the techniques involved were quite different. They became known as painter stainers and the references to stainers generally die out after the end of the fifteenth century[36]. Stow suggested that the practice of staining had died out by the end of the sixteenth century. In his *Survey of London* of 1603 he states 'now that the workmanship of staining has departed out of use in England.'[37] This has led to some confusion amongst writers who have used the terms 'painting' and 'staining' interchangeably and it has been taken to mean that painting died out at this time.[38] It is more likely that the use of stained and painted cloths declined, at least in the form that had been common in the sixteenth century [39].

Notwithstanding this, the records of the Painter Stainers' Company refer to staining in the late sixteenth century as though it was still a widespread practice[40], references which continue throughout the hundred years following this in disputes with other crafts guilds. One of the disputes with the Heralds in 1684 contains the most explicit, albeit disparaging, reference to this aspect of the painter stainers work which suggests that staining cloths continued until the late seventeenth century:

> The term steinors might properly be attributed to these inferior classes of painters, as they were for a long time after their incorporation day labourers whose daily wages were settled and who were to work in oyl and size colours, and that upon timber, stone, iron or lead: so that they were discriminated from several other sorts of painters... These Painter Steyners then, comprehend no Painters of other denomination than Steinors, and are a race of mechanical artificers so very low that, like other day labourers, their hire and daily wages were settled by Act of Parliament ... wages that were no larger than 16d which were due to the meanest mechanicks of that age... The Trade then of a Painter Steinor is of such a mean low manner of steining or painting that Plaisterers could invade it.[41]

The Heralds, referring to the activities of stainers whose profession it is to 'stein calicoes', proceed to define 'stain' as to 'contaminate' or 'defile' or 'daub' and that when the painter stainers were incorporated they were understood only to 'daub signs and stein or paint houses and to stein or colour timber...'[42]. Despite its clear prejudice, this passage is useful in listing these activities of the painter stainers. It also makes clear the social distinction of the Heralds, emphasising that they were not mere craftsmen like the painter stainers.

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[36] Fitch, 1969, 1974, 1985
[37] Stow, 1603, Mansion House edition 1916, p.317
[38] Reader, 1932, p.123-124
[39] see discussion on painted cloths in Chapter 4.
[40] Englefield, 1936, pp.67-69.
[41] ibid., pp.157-158
[42] ibid.

The plasterers, too, are dismissed as mechanical tradesmen by the Heralds and the painter stainers equated with them. The original meaning of 'daub' was 'to coat with plaster, mortar, clay or the like'[43]and the plasterers were known as 'Dawbers' when they were incorporated. By the late sixteenth century 'daub' was used to mean 'to plaster with some sticky or greasy substance, smear' and by 1630 it was used to mean 'to paint coarsely and inartistically'.[44] This additional meaning may well have its origins in the disputes between the painter stainers and the plasterers, who clearly undertook painting work, though this is not documented. There is certainly a sense that the word is used pejoratively throughout the references in the Painter Stainers Company.

That the work of the painter stainers included painting signs is confirmed in other records of the 16th century, for they were reprimanded more than once for not making the likeness of Queen Elizabeth sufficiently complimentary. Sir Walter Raleigh dismissed such portraits as the work of unskilful and common painters and by the Queen's order these were 'knocked in pieces and cast into the fire'[45].

Pageants were frequent events in Tudor England, and not only in London[46], and preparations for these kept the painters busy. In 1566, Richard Baker, a painter stainer was contracted to assist with the inaugural ceremony of the Ironmongers Company, making all things incidental to the pageant including banners, streamers, painting targets and escutcheons.[47] In Shrewsbury in 1562 Jefferey Cley contracted with William Lyngham 'to paynte certayne scutches and badges and other woorke for the playe' for a total price of 4s 11d.[48]

In their Book of Ordinances of 1582, the work of painter stainers is described as;

> lymming, washing or laying... or working any kind of colours.....with oil size, gum, or any other kind of temperature or mixture, or gilding with gold or silver or other colouring, painting or staining upon any silk, cloth, wool, leather, stone, iron, lead, tin, plaister, paper, parchment, vellum or other thing.[49]

These ordinances followed the granting of the Royal Charter in 1581 which was the result of the painter stainers petitioning Queen Elizabeth in 1575. In this petition much is made of the poor workmanship prevailing (particularly in 'counterfeyting of your Majesties picture'[50]) through the want of proper regulation of the work. Whilst claiming rights to execute these higher status works, the painter stainers also lay claim to the humbler work. They argued that when their workmen were getting old and their sight failing and hands shaking, then they relied on the grosser work of

[43] OED
[44] ibid.
[45] Englefield, 1936, p.53
[46] See Dineley's account of the progress of the President of the Marches, Banks, 1888, for example pp.52-56
[47] Englefield, 1936, p.55
[48] SSRC 3365/1856. I am grateful to W.A. Champion for this reference.
[49] Englefield, 1936,p.67
[50] ibid.p.56

house painting to get their living.[51] In fact the petition of 1664 referring to over 400 painter stainers in London makes explicit that:

> the greater part not attaining to the perfection of workmanship have usually lived upon the grosser part of the science as painting upon timber, stone, iron and such like... [52]

Who else was painting?

The same disputes which occurred as a result of the painter stainers protecting their sphere of work and which, consequently, reveal so much about the nature of the work they undertook are, not surprisingly, very helpful in detailing who was encroaching on this work. The plasterers, or 'daubers' as they were referred to, were their most troublesome competitors. The petition of 1575 contains the first reference to the 'intermeddling' of plasterers in the painter stainers work, this dispute running for well over a century:

> And now for the lack of good orders both Plasterers and others doth entermeddle in the same science, for that they perceive that the Painters have no power to restraine them, to the great sclander of the art and science of painting and utter decay and ruyne of all suche as woulde gladly endevour them selves to be good workmen in the same science[53].

Continuing representations by the painter stainers against this encroachment led to the Act of Parliament of 1602 restricting the plasterers to the use of six colours - the six most common ones[54] and size medium only and they could not undertake any work using oil based paint, which included most external work. This suggests that, whilst the plasterers may not have encroached upon the higher status work of the painters, they certainly undertook the humbler work of house painting. This Act proved ineffective as, in a further dispute with the plasterers in 1626, the painter stainers complain about the plasterers, ignoring this law, presuming 'to make sundry works and paintings contrary to the spirit thereof'[55].

John Abbott's notebook lends further support to this. The inclusion of instructions for the preparation and use of paints suggests that more refined painting work was customarily undertaken by plasterers. Of particular interest to this discussion is the section on mixing colours and applying them. The text itself is nearly all taken from either *A Very Proper Treatise, wherein is sett forthe the Arte of Limming* (1573) or from John Bate's *Mysteries of Nature, and Art* (1633)[56]. His directions, however are not restricted to humble house painting work but include for painting on cloth[57], either in watercolours or in oil and he also refers to painting on 'wood, stone or the like', painting over maps and printed pictures, using gold and silver, the use of varnish and painting in oil. [58] To what extent plasterers undertook all this work is not

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[51] ibid. p. 130
[52] ibid.p.128
[53] ibid. p.57
[54] See discussion in Chapter 7
[55] Englefield, 1936, p.95
[56] Bristow, 1996,ii, p.207
[57] This is not a cloth hanging he describes but a cloth nailed to a wall or to a purpose-made frame.
[58] Chenevix-Trench, 1986, pp.21-25

known, but its inclusion in a plasterer's notebook, indicating a perceived area of work, is significant in itself.

Whilst the painter stainers received some sympathy and support from the Crown in their disputes with the plasterers, there is no evidence that this was the case with the Heralds. It is significant that it was the painter stainers who initiated proceedings in the disputes with the plasterers but it was the Heralds who were the petitioners in their quarrel with the painter stainers, probably because it was those who considered themselves to be superior who sought to protect their position from those of lowlier status. The Heralds did not normally undertake the actual painting work themselves but employed their own painters. Particularly lucrative was the arrangement of heraldic funerals, which was a major source of income for the Heralds. The painting of coats of arms and other heraldic devices on all manner of funerary objects certified the armigerous status of the deceased. This would be an extremely important opportunity for the public display of status. Only the Heralds, they argued, were in a position to confirm this status and they made several representations to the Earl Marshall in the late sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century about the unlawful encroachment of the painter stainers on this work[59]. Various disputes with the Heralds rumbled on throughout the period of study, neither giving way on this very profitable area of work.

Others must have also presented a threat to their position for in the 1620s not only were they busy with their squabble with the Heralds but they appear to have been vulnerable to encroachment from all sorts of other craftsmen as well. Matters came to a head in 1626 when the Company instructed their lawyer to take action against 'certain strangers and freemen' of other companies using the art of painting but who refused to pay the pledges and duties, including:

> Bricklayers, Carpenters, Wyermakers, Boxmakers, Imbroydermakers, Turners, Joyners, Drummakers, Coachmakers, Virginal makers, Plummers, Glaziers, Armourers, Hottpressers and more especially the 'Plaisterers' or 'Daubers'[60].

Of particular relevance are the building craftsmen including plasterers or daubers as they not only feature frequently in the Painters Stainers Company records as encroachers but they also appear in building accounts at the vernacular level in the countryside. What is also of note is the range of other encroaching craftsmen.

The 'Imbroydermakers' are interesting in that many of the sources for decorative patterns come from embroidery designs. Whether they were significant in undertaking work in the provinces is uncertain, for no wills relating to this occupation were discovered. The same is true for the other non-building craftsmen mentioned. Their presence in any significant number in the Marches is doubtful but remains a possibility.

In 1664, the Plasterer's Company, responding to a complaint by the painter stainers, argued that in the country, bricklayers and glaziers commonly laid oil paint on

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[59] I am grateful to Timothy Duke, Chester Herald, of the College of Arms for this information.
[60] Englefield, 1936, pp. 94-95

timber and iron[61]. Glaziers certainly are candidates for the work as there is evidence of a close association between glazing and painting work. Walter Gedde's *Book of Sundrie Draughtes, principaly serving for glasiers: and not impertinent for plasterers, and gardiners: besides sundry other professions,* was published in 1615. This contains a collection of designs and instructions on setting out including, in the appendix, details of how to make colours for glazing. Some of these designs are similar to wall paintings found in the Marches[62], (see fig.8.1) and further evidence for the close association between the two crafts can be found in building accounts. For example, in 1574 the glazier Robert Collins was responsible for glazing at Tewkesbury, 'paynting the dyall in the churche' and for 'whitlym'.[63] In the 1630s, Thomas Leversage was employed as a glazier and painter at Trentham Hall[64].

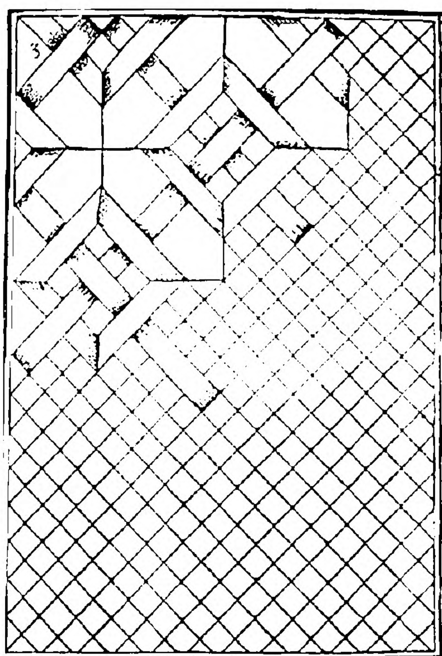

Fig.8.1 Pattern from Gedde and painting at 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch, Shrops.

In the first quarter of the seventeenth century, Richard Kinges appears in the Tewkesbury churchwarden's accounts for painting work and whiting as well as other general building work. He was employed primarily as a mason but was also employed to clean gutters, make a gallery and work on the clock[65]. At Hardwick, John Balechouse or Painter, as he was known, is an exceptional example of a painter and general building craftsman. He was employed as clerk of works at Hardwick, first appearing in the building accounts in 1589. He seems to have been responsible for making decisions on site about all aspects of building work[66]. The trust placed in him by Bess of Hardwick implies that he must have had a good working knowledge of building construction. Yet the finely worked painted cloths in the chapel, (fig.8.2) are thought to be his work, indicating that he was an accomplished painter. A further painting from Hardwick Hall, 'The Return of Ulysses to Penelope', (fig.8.3) has also been attributed to him, which again exhibits his skills as a painter though the composition here is awkward. What is particularly unusual in this instance is that a painter with these skills had sufficient knowledge of general building work to supervise the building of a grand house such as Hardwick.

[61] ibid. p.129
[62] This does not necessarily mean that Gedde was used as an original source. See Chapter 10.
[63] Litzenberger, 1994, p.34
[64] Staffs CRO.D593 R 1/2
[65] Litzenberger, 1994, p.137
[66] Durant and Riden, 1984

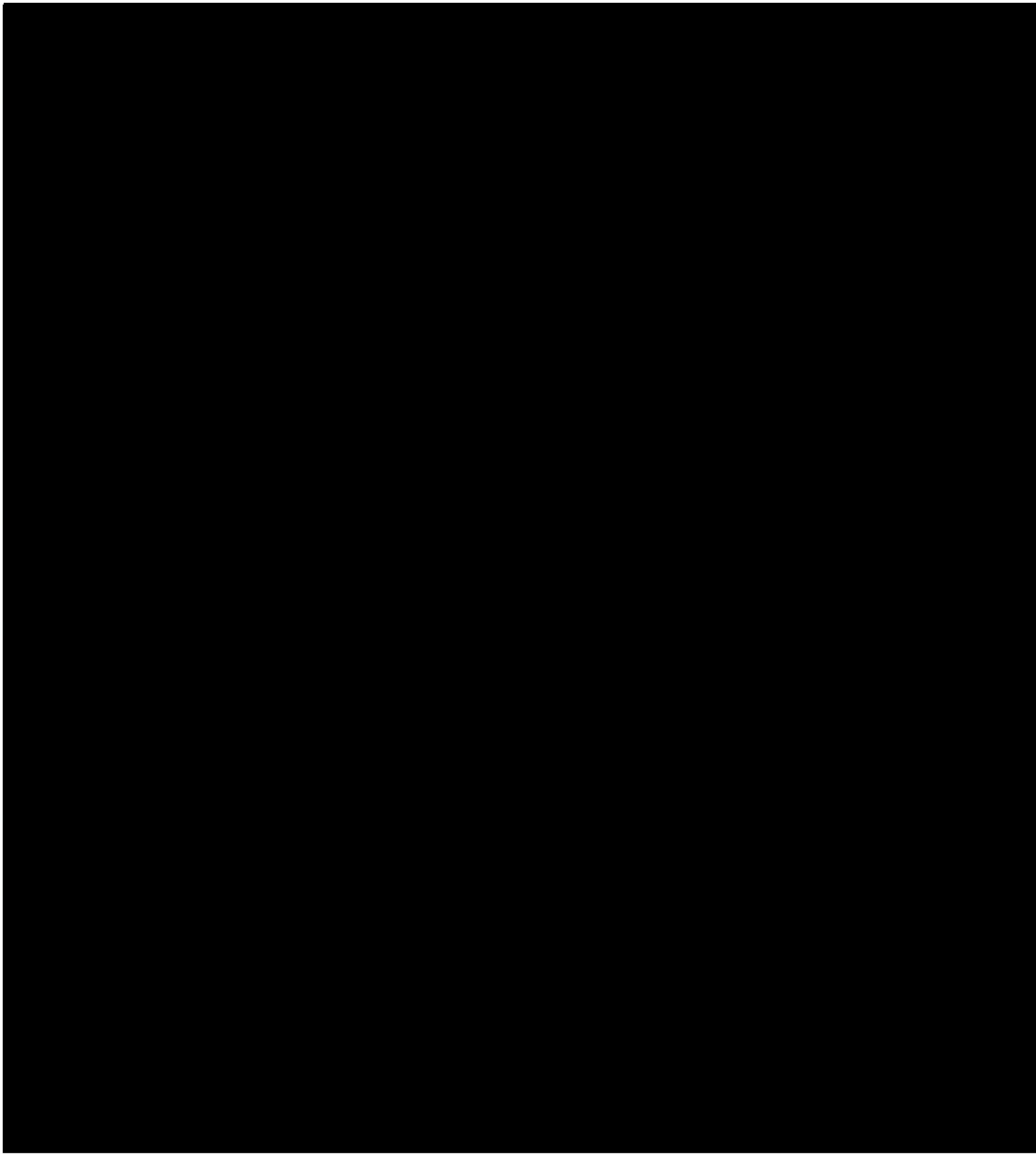

Fig.8.2 Painted cloth in the chapel, Hardwick Hall (Wells-Cole, 1997)

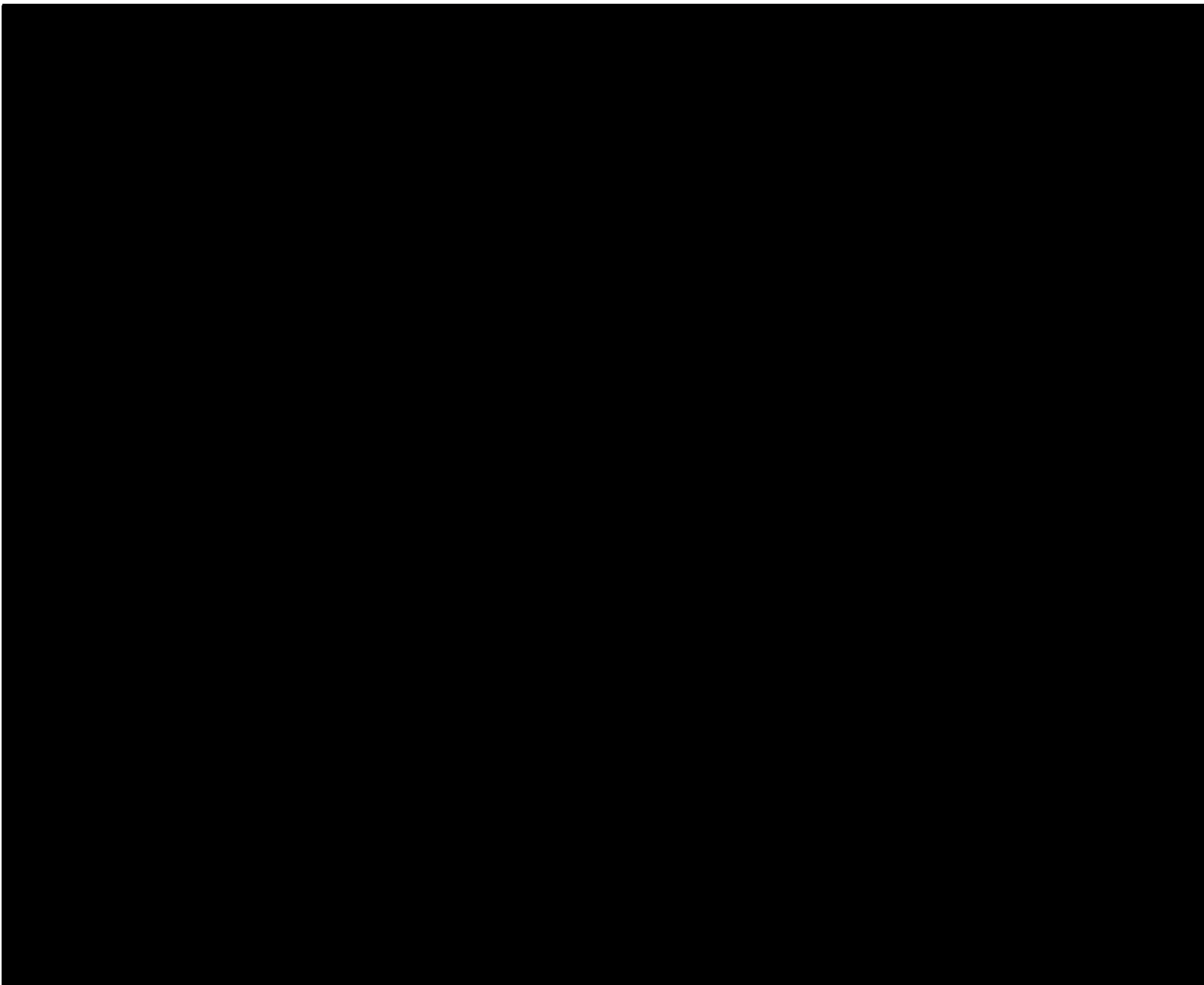

Fig.8.3 Painted cloth, Hardwick Hall (Wells-Cole, 1997)

These examples suggest that it was not unusual for a variety of building trades to be linked with painting. Whilst in many cases this may be plain house painting, in others competent, skilled work was executed, such as that at Hardwick. The painted decoration found at the vernacular level can be characterised as falling between these levels of accomplishment.

Given the level of expertise involved (discussed in more detail below), it would be eminently feasible for those craftsmen who were to be found on a building site. such as bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, plumbers, glaziers and plasterers, to undertake any painting work required whilst they were on site. This is illustrated by yet another complaint by the litigious Painter Stainers' Company in 1664 relating to workmen who were employed on building or repair work. These workmen, they submitted (and the allegations were primarily concerned with the plasterers), were undertaking unauthorised painting work to the detriment of the Painter Stainers Company. The plasterers responded to this complaint by referring to the country bricklayers and glaziers arguing that '...whereas the Builders are at liberty to take the Plasterer, Bricklayer or Painter to colour his buildings, if this Act should pass he should be tyed to the Painter only.'[67] They also submit that it was more practical and cost effective for an owner to have the workmen undertake the painting whilst the scaffolding was in place, rather that put an additional scaffolding charge on the bill when the painters came.[68] The painter stainers disputed this disingenuous allegation, arguing that they worked off a ladder as they only had a pot of paint to hold, whilst the plasterer needed a scaffold because of the weight of his material and for his labourer. In any event, if the painting work was plain colour washing which followed on immediately after the plastering work, it would not be difficult to organise the workmen to use the same scaffold.

Evidence of whether this practical consideration was significant in influencing an owner to employ a separate workman for the painting is not recorded. If the workmen on site had the necessary skills it would seem sensible for them to complete the work. That this happened extensively is suggested in a later passage of the same dispute. The painter stainers claim that whilst 'in every house throughout this realm the Plaisterer is set on work, and the Painter not in one house amongst a hundred.' [69] In most cases this is more likely to have applied to plain colour washing or whitewashing than to decorative painting.

Some of the building records support this impression. At St. Michael's in Gloucester it was the plasterer who was 'washing' the church in 1567[70], and in Tewkesbury it was the general building craftsmen who were 'whitinge' and 'whytlyming'[71]. This must have been a very common experience. In 1579 the craftsman making the window for the Draper's Hall in Shrewsbury was painting it as well. The accounts record:

> Raffe Sanford for a clerestorie wyndowe in our halle 17 -

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[67] Englefield, 1936, p.129
[68] ibid. pp.129-130
[69] ibid. p.130
[70] GRO PA 154 2
[71] Litzenberger, 1994, p.25 and p.137

colouringe of twentie staves for the same wyndowe 10d[72]

The evidence of the fieldwork suggests that many of the paintings were not contemporary with the original building in which case the craftsmen working on the building would not have done the work. However the significant point in this dispute is that these craftsmen were capable of carrying out painting work. What is not clear from these records is whether this is plain house painting or decorative work. For decorative painting the craftsman would need not only familiarity with the raw materials and techniques of applying paint, but also basic skills in setting out patterns and other decorative work.

Skills required

Some form of preparatory drawing or setting out was necessary for most wall paintings, even where the design was being executed freehand. Long straight lines, vertical, horizontal or diagonal could be achieved by using snap lines, which involved 'snapping' a taut string covered in soot or other powdered pigment, against the wall to be painted. True vertical lines were achieved using a plumb line and the centre of a space was fixed using intersecting diagonal lines. A grid could be formed by simple measurements along the snap lines.

In a pattern such as that at Swanstone Court [34] the horizontal and vertical lines would have been snapped first. The centres of the flowers could then be measured along a centre line and the details completed freehand. A similar technique would have been used for all those in Shropshire with the scroll design (fig.6.18).

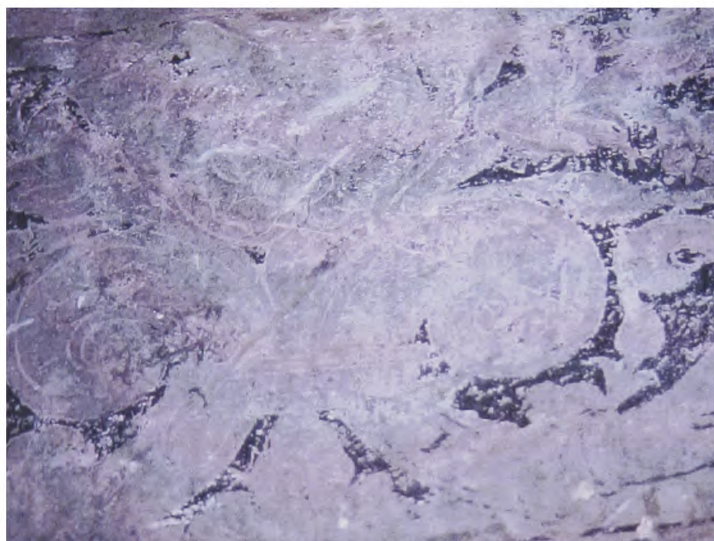

Fig.8.4 4, Belmont, Shrewsbury showing incised lines

For more complex designs, after the basic setting out of the surface to be painted, the pattern could be sketched in outline directly onto the surface using charcoal or dilute pigment[73]. John Abbott recommended 'a blacke led pen, or a coale made sharpe at the end' for making a draft.[74] Some surviving paintings have a black outline but it is more likely that these were a deliberate part of the design (copying woodcut

[72] Shrewsbury Draper's account book, SRRC 1831
[73] Babington, Manning and Stewart, 1999, p.17
[74] Chenevix Trench, op.cit., p.21

illustrations) or they are the result of later intervention rather than sketch outlines intended to be covered in the finished painting.

Where the design was complicated, such as in antiquework design, this could be traced from a drawing using a blunt-pointed instrument. The pressure applied would leave an incised line in the plaster, such as that at 4 Belmont, Shrewsbury, (fig.8.4). In this case, the timbers have been covered with linen and plastered over to give a more even surface. This had the added advantage of allowing the 'tracing' to continue over the timber.

Another common way of transferring a design to the wall was by pouncing. This technique involved piercing a paper design with tiny holes so that it could be reproduced on to the wall when it was rubbed over with a gauze bag of powdered pigment, usually charcoal. The tiny holes allow the powdered pigment to pass through onto the ground. The original drawing could be preserved by placing another sheet of blank paper under it when piercing it and then using this paper for pouncing. The embroidery pattern book by Richard Shorelyker, *A Schole-House for the Needle* published in 1632, contains instructions for copying patterns by pouncing and also for enlarging the patterns by the means of grid squares (fig.8.5). The antiquework design at Chapel Farm, Wigmore [27] was set out in this way[75].

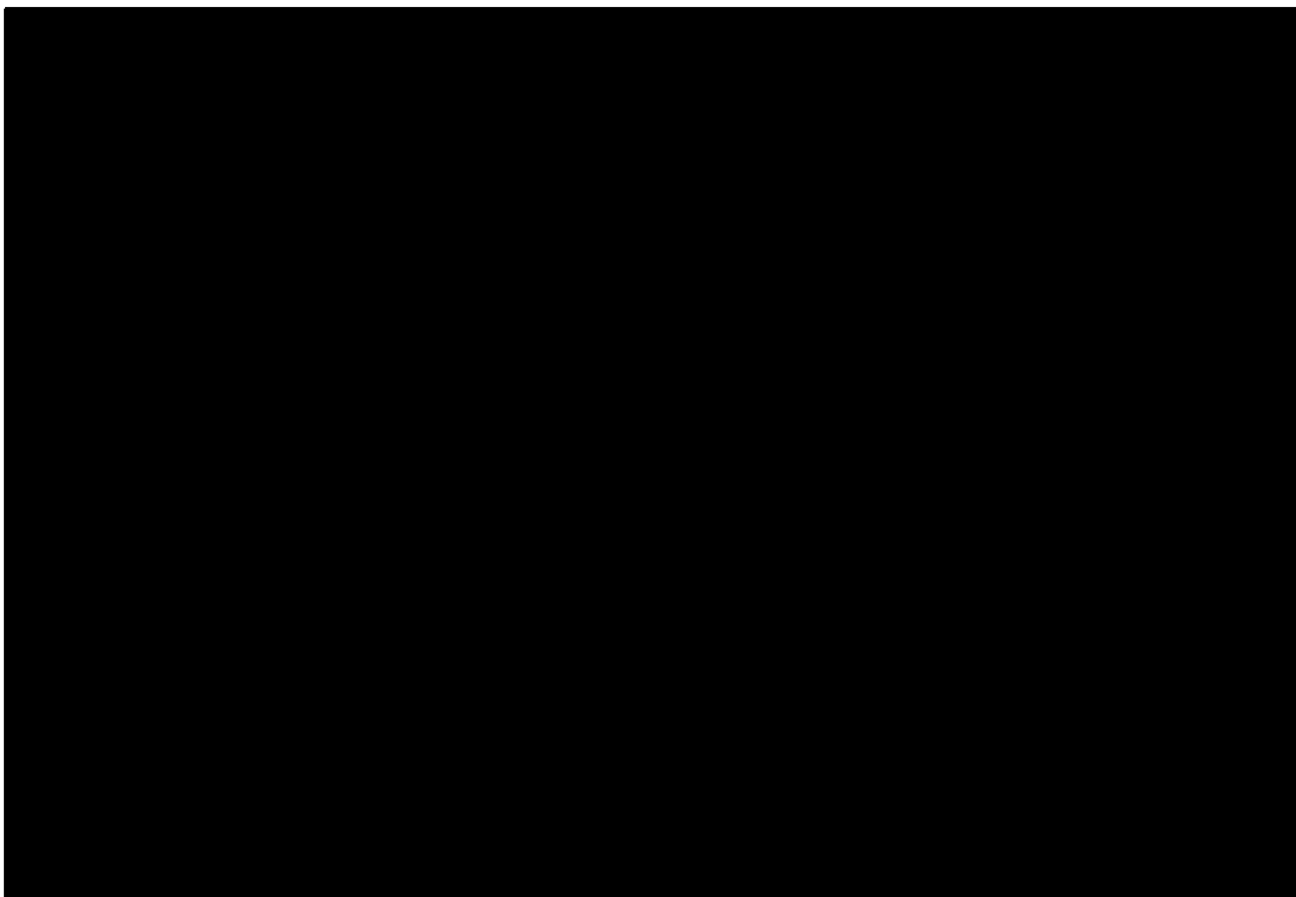

Fig.8.5 Pattern from Shorelyker's *Schole-house for the Needle*

Stencilling was undoubtedly used for setting out patterns, though it has been suggested that it was not widely practised. Reader, writing in the 1930s, claimed to know of only one example[76]. Certainly stencilling was frowned upon by the Painter-Stainers Company who, ever ready to protect their own interests, in 1626 sought a ban on the practice, which they considered as 'false and deceitful work and

[75] Perry Lithgow Partnership, *Wall Painting Conservation Record, Chapel Farm, Wigmore*, 1995, unpublished.

[76] Reader, 1935, p.261

destructive to the art of painting, being a great hinderer of ingenuity and a cherisher of idleness and laziness in all the beginners of the said Art'[77]. The very existence of the petition demonstrates that stencilling was perceived to be a common practice.

In some cases stencilling was used in conjunction with other techniques and it is not immediately obvious, particularly where it is used for the basic setting out. This is illustrated in the case of Whitehall, Shrewsbury, where both stencilling and freehand work have been used. Although this was substantially restored in the early twentieth century it is useful nevertheless to show how the different techniques can be combined. Here the painting looks to have been stencilled as there are smudges of paint on the black ground reminiscent of those resulting when a stencil is removed. The black ground was painted first, then the pale design blocked out and then modelled and, finally, a black outline was added, filling any gaps between the two (fig.8.6). It is clearly skilled work and finely finished. The minor differences in style in some details, such as the centres of the flowers, indicate that more than one craftsman was involved. This example is not obviously stencilled, but the technique appears to have been used for setting out with the finishing done freehand.

Fig.8.6 Detail of painting at Whitehall, Shrewsbury

Plain stencilling, used on its own rather than as a framework for setting out freehand work, is much easier to identify. The repetitive pattern, smudge marks and the identical repeat of slight irregularities are all clues to its use. Only three examples of plain stencilling were found, such as The Sun Inn, Clun [106] and these date from the later part of the seventeenth century or even later.

Painters in the Marches and neighbouring counties

Most craftsmen who have been traced in the Marches who called themselves painters seem to have been engaged on the finer work of heraldry, arms and other painting work using oils. Certainly Richard Adams of Ludlow, mentioned above pursued this work and John Davies of Worcester was also painting in oils rather than simply size colours commonly used for house painting interiors. Whilst the oils he possessed may have been used for painting the exterior of houses, his inventory of 1620 suggests that he worked on artefacts rather than house painting. His possessions included pictures in the hall, a stocked shop and 'In the working chamber one table borde, oyles, collers and all other implements belonging to the

[77] Englefield, 1936, p.95-96

same' valued at £3.[78] The working chamber suggests that the painted artefacts were produced there. References to a 'shop' frequently means a workshop but in this case there is a 'working chamber' and a 'shop', suggesting the latter may well have been used for selling goods produced in the working chamber. These painters may also have undertaken house-painting work but there is no evidence to support or refute this.

John Cley is an exception to these as it is known that he was employed on painted decoration in vernacular buildings. The accounts he submitted for work to the Council House in Shrewsbury in 1582 include for painting the hall black, yellow and red and the lady's chambers yellow and red. Frustratingly, there is no visible evidence today of this decoration but a tantalising story suggests the decoration may survive beneath the present plaster. In the 1970s some alterations were being carried out involving the removal of a section of wall which was at the high end of a first floor chamber, probably the great chamber. The architect noted that several of the timbers removed had a painted pattern on them of a floral scroll design.[79]

Looking at the inventories of painters outside the Marches but also in the provinces, similar evidence emerges that primarily they were employed on picture painting or other painted artefacts rather than house painting. Table 8.2 shows the wealth of painters by value of inventories and includes references to painting and farming goods. Wills survive for eight painters in Oxfordshire, five of which have inventories. Of these, two include pictures. In one of these 'a parsell of picktors and other lumber' was in the shop[80] and the other refers to 'all my other pictures with all implements and utensills belonging to my shop and trade of painter stainer'[81]. The pictures mentioned could well refer to engravings or other patterns used for setting out paintings but this is by no means certain at this late date. Another inventory refers to the grinding stone in his shop[82].

[78] WRO John Davies 1620
[79] Personal communication from Andrew Arrol, architect, Shrewsbury
[80] Oxon Wills, John Hawkins 1692
[81] ibid John Rixon 1701
[82] ibid. Edmund Wise 1691

Table 8.2. Wealth of painters and other building craftsmen by value of inventory

Painters	*Date*	*Location*	*Value*	*Goods*
John Slater	1741	Cheshire	£16 06 05	Cattle, barley, oats
John Capper	1580	Cheshire	£30 02 11	Cattle, corn, leather
William Strange	1616	Worcestershire	£9 12 00	
John Davies	1620	Worcestershire	£33 17 00	Pictures,oil colours & other implements in working chamber
Edmund Wise	1691	Oxfordshire	£14 00 00	Grinding stone in shop
John Gardner	1640	Oxfordshire	£20 11 06	Pigs, geese, sheep, beasts
John Hawkins	1692	Oxfordshire	£19 04 06	Pictures, pestle and mortar
John Rixon	1701	Oxfordshire	£18 11 06	Pictures, implements etc belonging to trade of painter-stainer, mare, ox
Richard Hossell	1587	Oxfordshire	£02 08 04	Patterns belonging to painter's trade
Charles Mathers	1721	Carmarthen	£78 04 10	Pictures, colours for painting £1
Plasterers				
Peter Pickering	1688	Cheshire	£18 03 00	Cattle, hay, corn
Richard Brownfield	1663	Cheshire	£25 00 08	Cow, swine, ladders
Roger Woodcock	1647	Cheshire	£23 12 04	
Thomas Sadler	1664	Cheshire	£60 17 00	Bees, corn, hay
John Webster	1684	Cheshire	£24 11 01	Cattle, bees, hay , corn
John Lockett	1681	Cheshire	£23 04 00	Sheep £6, dwelling house £10
Thomas Winnington	1715	Cheshire	£07 15 01	Cattle
Other building craftsmen				
Richard Bradley crptr	1648	Wem	£23 19 06	
Richard Hussey crptr	1621	Wem	£19 15 08	
William Haynes crptr	1650	Market Drayton	£88 15 10	
Thomas Atton brckly	1631	Whitchurch	£57 00 02	
John Barrow carptr	1640	Whitchurch	£14 07 08	
Edward Proffitt joinr	1634	Whitchurch	£76 16 08	

The inventories are all towards the end of the period of study, when there is evidence that painted cloths were produced in workshops[83] and easel paintings were becoming increasingly common, and when wall painting had largely died out as a common form of domestic decoration. The only inventory mentioning painting goods from the late sixteenth century is that of Richard Hossall in 1587[84]. His inventory includes 'patterns for the painters trade' making explicit the function of the patterns and there is no mention of pictures. Nor does he have any oils or colours in his goods. With a total value of his goods at £2 8s 4d he was worth less than many other building craftsmen of the time, suggesting he was not employed on high status, remunerative work.

That some of the painters supplemented their income by farming is indicated by several inventories which include cattle, sheep and other livestock and crops. This was the norm for building (and other) craftsmen who would rarely rely on a single occupation for the family income. Throughout the country agricultural holdings were an important source of additional income, ranging from very modest holdings to quite substantial farms. Sir William Coventry, writing in around 1670 commented that few building craftsmen 'rely entirely on the Trade as not to have a small Farm,

[83] Most surviving painted cloths date from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and are of a very similar style suggesting a common workshop source.
[84] Havinden, 1965, pp.249-256

the Rent of which they are more able to pay by the gains of their Trade'[85]. These were more common, not surprisingly, amongst village craftsmen than their urban counterparts. Other by-employments, such as spinning, weaving, victualling, shopkeeping and moneylending were common everywhere, though opportunities in towns were greater than in the rural areas. They provided some insurance against times of unemployment which were common for all but the most highly sought after craftsmen. They were also the means by which an itinerant craftsman's family could sustain itself during his periods of absence.[86]

At the very local and vernacular level the records of the Draper's Company in Shrewsbury provide some evidence which would support the view that it was primarily local craftsmen who undertook painting work. These include details of a lease dated April 20 1577 to Andrew Lewes of the Draper's Hall for 21 years; 'reserving to the company the hall and great chamber at all meetings, and the kitchen and buttery at their dinner'[87]. The Company were to pay Lewes £35 to complete the building of the hall, £10 in hand, £10 at Michaelmas 1577 and the residue on 25 March 1577/8. The lease includes details of the schedule of works and who was responsible for the work:

> Imprimis to make up the walls and plaster them with lyme.
> Item to halfe waynscott the hall/with benches/, myter and ciphar joint, and to *paynte the rest upon cloth with Antick work.* (my italics)
> Item to waynscott the great chamber /with benches/, with miter and cyphar joint.
> Item to syle the hall and great chamber and to coloure the posts and wier trees[88] with grene.
> Item to make the wyndowes and clerestoreys of the whole house and to glase them.
> Item to flowre the great chamber, the galery and the ij other chambers with seasoned bourds.
> Item to flowre the hall with paving tyle and to bourde it under the table j stepp a foot height.
> Item to make the doores for the whole house, with hinges and locks and all things thereunto belonginge.
> Item to Cover the whole house with Harneg tyles.
> Item to make a fair stair to the galery.
>
> To conclude I will upon my charge make up all things about the said Draper's hall except that which Roger Smyth the carpenter should doe.
> Item I the said Andrew Lewes will fynysh the aforesaid buyldinge, videlicet, the hall, with the flowre, walls, windows, glasing and doore by Mychaelmas nexte and the reysdewe of the buylding in generall by the xxv daye of Marche come twelve monthes.
>
> Andrew Lewes[89]

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[85] Sir William Coventry, *An Essay Concerning the Decay of Rents and their Remedies*, BL Sloane MS 3828, f 208, quoted in Airs and Broad, 1998, p. 47.
[86] Airs, 1995, pp.163-164 and Woodward, 1995, pp 236-244
[87] SRRC 1831
[88] Spine beams - I am grateful to Edmund Weiner for his interpretation of this.
[89] SRRC 1831

The document is unclear whether Andrew Lewes, who appears to be a general building craftsman, or Roger Smyth the carpenter, painted the walls in antiquework and also undertook the plain colour painting. Roger Smyth may have been responsible for all the work involving the use of timber, that is joinery work as well as carpentry work and any carving. The distinction between these crafts, which was rigorously upheld in London and the larger cities, became blurred in the smaller towns and could well have been undertaken by the same person.[90] That is, Roger Smyth may have undertaken the erection of the timber frame, the wainscotting and benches, flooring with boards, the ceiling frame, window frames, doors and stairs. This would leave Andrew Lewes to do the rest - making up infill panels, plastering, painting, glazing, floor tiling, roof tiling and fitting ironmongery. Woodward found there was considerable overlap between the work of bricklayers, tilers and plasterers and that they were 'often one and the same person'. Similarly he found plumbers' and glaziers' work was often done by the same person.[91] The records of the Painters Stainers Company refer specifically to bricklayers and glaziers undertaking painting work in the provinces and it is entirely conceivable that Andrew Lewes could turn his hand to a whole range of building crafts which included both plain and decorative painting.

The reference to painting on cloth is interesting. This is not dissimilar to the painted cloths referred to at Bettenhall in Worcestershire in Prior More's diary and in the inventory of his goods. These appear to have covered the upper part of several rooms and were sewn together to make a continuous surface[92]. (The painted cloths in the possession of the Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust dating from the late seventeenth century are made up in this way.) Alternatively it may refer to lining the wall with linen or a similar fabric to prevent the painting from cracking as the timbers in the newly erected hall moved as they dried out. By 1650 this cloth, which was referred to as the old painted cloth from the hall, was in a bundle in the room over the porch – further evidence of the demise of painted cloths.

The mention of green paint for colouring the 'posts and wier trees' in the hall and great chamber is puzzling. Antiquework was invariably painted black and white and at this date the paintings usually covered timbers and infill panels alike. To pick out the structural timbers in green is curious. It is also expensive as green pigments were not cheap to produce. The records of the Draper's Company unfortunately throw no further light on this.

Further evidence for the range of work undertaken by local craftsmen is found in two accounts for work to the Council House in Shrewsbury, one for painting and gardening work and one for general building repairs[93]. The first is an account submitted to the town bailiffs of Shrewsbury by John Cley in 1582 who, according to the muster lists for the Saddler's Company, was primarily a painter but he also seems to have been a general building contractor. The first part of his account is for laying out the garden and planting, including making beds, planting rose trees and all sorts of vegetable seeds. The second part of the account is for painting the interior of the Council House. The colours used for each room are specified in detail. His

[90] Woodward. 1995. p.19
[91] ibid. pp.19-21
[92] Matley More. 1982 pp.73-79.
[93] SRRC 3365/521

account for the gardening work includes labourers, 'servants as well men as maydes' who were paid 6d a day. There is no mention of any labourers in the painting work suggesting that John Cley undertook this work himself. Painting and gardening are not commonly found as overlapping crafts in documentary sources, although Walter Gedde's book aimed principally at glaziers includes gardeners as potential readers. It has already been demonstrated that it was common for plasterers and glaziers to be connected with painting work. The same skill of pattern making was relevant to contemporary gardens (see fig.8.7).

The second account is for 'reparacons' done to the Council House at approximately the same time in 1582, though a certain amount of new building or alteration seems to be included. Work by several building craftsmen is mentioned including the same Roger Smyth, carpenter who worked on the Draper's Hall. John Cley provided labourers paid 6d a day[94]. If the work was being done at the same time as he was on site undertaking gardening work, he may have hired out his labourers for general building work. In any event, being a well-known local craftsmen who had a workforce of labourers and who had already worked on the Council House, he may have been called upon to supply labour when required.

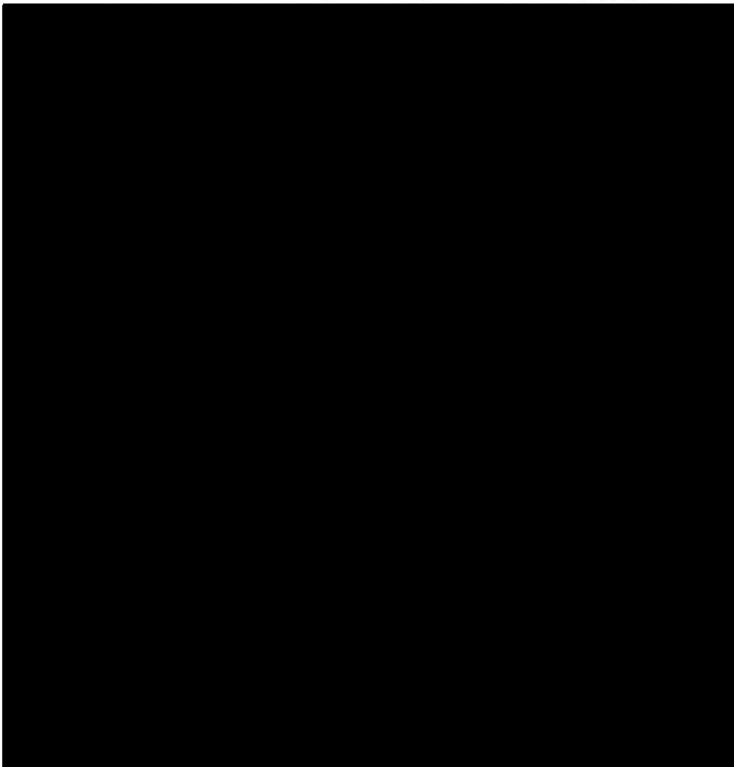

Fig.8.7 Garden at The Old House, Dogpole, Shrewsbury

Generalisations cannot be made from these few examples but the evidence provided can be used to support the general view represented by the records of the Painter Stainers' Company, that there was insufficient painting work to support many specialised painters working full time on painting. Consequently, it is likely that craftsmen who undertook painting work, particularly in the countryside, relied heavily on other work as well, including farming, to support themselves and their families.

Labour costs

Having identified local craftsmen as the most likely painters of vernacular buildings, it is possible to work out the labour rate for this form of decoration. The costs of raw

[94] ibid.

materials have already been assessed and labour is the other main element in the equation. If the daily rate of the craftsmen is known and if the length of time taken to execute the painting can be estimated, then a rough idea of the total cost of this form of decoration can be arrived at. This is explored further in the next chapter.

As evidence for the existence of painters in the Marches is very elusive, it is not surprising that records of their wage rates are correspondingly thin. In fact the remuneration of painters nationally is very poorly recorded. Royal Works provide the most detailed accounts which, whilst obviously not directly relevant to vernacular buildings, are useful for comparative purposes.

At the highest social level, the Sergeant Painter was not only paid much more than any other painters for whom there are records but he also seems to have been paid at much higher rates than his colleagues. Mercer, in his analysis of royal works[95] found that at Greenwich, in 1582-83 the carpenters were paid £33 13s 4d for erecting a range of timber buildings. In the same year, George Gower, the Sergeant Painter received £187 13s 11d for his work there. In 1591-2 at Hampton Court just over £200 was spent on the carving, casting and erection of an elaborate fountain with a statue of Justice. The Sergeant Painter's bill for the painting of it came to £123 6s 8d which is over half of all the other charges. In 1594-5 the Sergeant Painter was paid for his 'attendance' at Greenwich at the rate of 5s a day, more than double the sum paid to the Master Mason and Master Carpenter, who received 2s a day for attendance and more than the 4s a day allowed to Her Majesty's Surveyor.[96] This is indicative not necessarily of artistic merit but of the esteem in which decorative work was held. Far from being 'fine art', much of this work was related to display, a vital element in the role of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs. Revels accounts and accounts of Royal Works reveal that vast sums of money were actually spent on temporary works and other works of display. The Whitehall banqueting house erected and extravagantly decorated for the visit of Duke of Alencon in 1581-2 is one example.[97] Other schemes detailed in Royal Works include painting 576 yards at Westminster in black and white, presumably antiquework; painting 'yellow and green spotted' on walls at Whitehall; colouring chimneypieces using expensive pigments, such as that at Hampton Court in 'fine byce, lack and other rich colours' and the frequent use of gilding.[98]

Nor was this lavish decoration restricted to interiors. There are references to the painting of exterior brickwork, at Whitehall and Westminster in black and white antiquework, which must have been striking indeed. In 1604-5 de Crete was engaged in 'laying in antique work seven yards upon the lower part of a brick chimney' and in 1609-10 the exterior of a staircase and new brick buildings near the Council Chamber were painted in antiquework. The selection of specific parts of an elevation suggests that this treatment may have been restricted to the most conspicuous parts of the exterior. This practice seems to have been most popular in the early years of the seventeenth century after which it died out completely[99].

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[95] Mercer, 1953
[96] ibid., p.151-152
[97] Personal communication from Jo Kirby, National Gallery based on unpublished research
[98] Mercer, 1953, p.153
[99] ibid, p.160

The account for the repainting of the Privy Barge in 1630 reveals another area of work which was executed at a comparable level of lavishness. John Dessant, who was then Sergeant Painter demanded an allowance for:

> repairing refreshing washing and varnishing the whole boddye of HM pryvie Bardge and mending with fyne goold and fire cullers manye and divers parts thereof as about the Chaire of State, the dores and most part of the anticks abovt the windows which were spoyled and defaced the two figures at the entrance being most newe cullered and painted the Mercury and the Lyon which was fyxed in the Stearne likewise being newe painted wher it was defaced, and Taferells in many parts being newe gilt and starred with fine Biso which are to be sett on the topp of the bardge, the two figures Justice and Fortitude moste agayne being newe painted and guilt, the Border and outsyde of the Bulk being newe layde fine whit and toused over with greene according to the custom heretofore as also owars beloging to the Tow Bardge being in number thirty-six new painted and cullered.
>
> Som £38 13s 4d[100]

All things pertaining to painted display whether in revels, pageants, banquets or buildings were the prime task of the Sergeant Painter and his remuneration reflects the prestige accorded to this work.

This sort of work is far from comparable to the painted decoration found in vernacular houses which, it has been argued above, was more likely to have been executed by craftsmen other than dedicated painters. There are, not surprisingly, very few wage rates relating to painters available outside London so the wage rates of plasterers, bricklayers and glaziers have been analysed, where available, as these are the craftsmen which the records examined suggest are most likely to have undertaken painting work. In the Tudor wage assessments, these are considered to be amongst the 'second sort' of craftsmen, rather than the master craftsmen, and therefore earned rather less than, say, a master carpenter or master mason. Appendix 6 shows the relative wages of these craftsmen and painters in a number of towns over the period 1560-1658 which covers the period when most of the wall paintings were executed. The figures are based on published studies of wages rates[101], Tudor wage assessments[102] and individual local or painter-specific building accounts. This is a small sample only used for comparative purposes but the trends are generally in accordance with those identified in wage rate studies of the period.[103] Where winter and summer rates were given, the summer figure has been used. These wage rates are mostly derived from accounts in towns, where wages were generally higher. For this reason, the rates quoted here may be too high for farmhouses and other rural buildings.[104] These figures show that wages in London and the south east are, not surprisingly, generally higher than the North and Midlands. They also reveal that the

[100] Englefield, 1936, pp.98-99
[101] Rogers, Vol 5, 1887, Phelps Brown and Hopkins 1981 and Woodward, 1995
[102] Hughes and Larkin, 1969
[103] ibid.
[104] Information from a discussion with Blake Tyson based on his work on building accounts in Cumberland and Westmoreland

period was generally one of steadily rising wage levels. An approximate cost for the labour element of painted decoration can be assessed against these figures.

The only reference to painters in the Tudor wage rate assessments was in London, where their wages were equal to, or slightly higher than, plasterers and glaziers. Throughout the period examined, the wages of painter stainers, glaziers and plasterers in London were fixed at between 13d and 14d per day, though one of the disputes of the Painter Stainers' Company with the Heralds mentions the wage rate being fixed at 16d a day[105]. In the few references to painters mentioned specifically in building accounts, they earned the same as other craftsmen. Zachary Kirkes, working at Trentham Hall between 1633-36, was paid the same as many other craftsmen on the site - 8d per day - though this surely included some element of food and drink, as it is considerably below the average rate for a craftsman otherwise. The painter at Rushton Hall in 1600 was paid 12d per day, the going rate for a building craftsman at that time.

The Tudor wage rate assessments are useful for comparative purposes but are not necessarily an accurate reflection of rates paid. For example, in Chester which is the nearest town in the Marches where wage rates are available, there appears to have been a deliberate attempt by the assessors to peg wage levels significantly below the market level. They were trying to curb what they saw as excessive rates of pay and instructed the officers of the craftsmen's guilds to 'receive and give from time to time such wages as shall be appointed by the mayor for the time being'.[106] The attempt appears to have failed as the craftsmen were paid similar rates to those in other towns outside the south east - 9d a day in 1560-90 rising to around 12d a day in the first quarter of the seventeenth century[107]. In Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Gloucester and Tewkesbury craftsmen's wages in the period 1560-80 are very similar at 8d-10d a day, with drink included in some of these.

Throughout the sixteenth century, payment by the day was the most common method of undertaking building work. This involved the person commissioning the work, usually the building owner, in sourcing and supplying materials, arranging transport, providing any equipment necessary on site, finding craftsmen and accommodating them where necessary. The administration of this system could be unwieldy on large building projects as it involved close supervision by the owner, co-ordinating the work of different craftsmen, ensuring supplies of materials and labour at the time they were needed and keeping detailed accounts of the work of each employee. This led to the increasing use during the sixteenth century of alternative methods of undertaking building work such as contract work and piecework, even on small building projects like repairs and painting. These systems had the advantages of requiring less organisational input from the owner and they became more popular during the seventeenth century.

Contract work could involve the owner either entering into a contract with a single contractor to undertake all the required work or using several contractors for different aspects of work. In the former, the contractor would normally be responsible for acquiring all the necessary materials and equipment, arranging

[105] Englefield, 1936, pp. 157-8
[106] Woodward, 1995, p.188
[107] ibid.

transport and procuring the appropriate craftsmen for the job. The advantage of using several contractors was that conditions could vary between contracts to suit the owner and a degree of flexibility was possible which could take account of changing circumstances, which would be lacking in a single general building contract. This involved more work for the owner but allowed him more control should problems arise through, for example, poor workmanship or organisation by a single contractor.[108] The third method of arranging work was by piece rates, and this emerged in the seventeenth century as a popular method of working for specialised building work. Rates could be varied according to the degree of complexity and skill required which reflected more accurately the relative cost of skilled craftsmen[109].

As far as painting was concerned, all three methods of undertaking the work were employed, though it seems from the records available that painters often provided their own materials. The selection of pigments required specialised knowledge which was best left to the craftsman. This was certainly the case with the Sergeant Painter whose bills often included for paints as well as his attendance. Sir Thomas Tresham's painter bought his own materials, for which he was reimbursed and was paid by the day for his labour.[110]At Rushton Hall and in the churchwarden's account for Tewkesbury and Gloucester, the painters were also paid by the day, though there is no indication of who provided the materials.

The painting work done by Thomas Selby at Bramshill in Hampshire for Lord Zouche in 1615 was charged at piece rates. Painting windows in 'faire white oyle' cost 12d each and casements 'faire red in oyle' cost 8d each. This presumably reflected the more expensive white pigment rather than the time taken to paint in different colours. However the cost of painting little doors at 2s 6d in 'faire timber cullour in oyle' compared to large doors at 5s , clearly reflects the labour input. Selby provided his own materials for the work, which he had obtained on credit. Lord Zouche was slow in paying his bills which created some financial difficulty for Selby, causing him to petition his employer for payment:

> stuffe belonging to the work cost 20 markes for which your honour
> yet oweth your petitioner and for which your petitioner is yet
> indebted to dyvers men who seek daylie to arrest your said petitioner
> for the same.[111]

Paying by the yard was a common method of paying for repetitive painting. Rogers gives a price of 1s 6d a yard for painter's work in 1609 though he qualifies that this must have been for careful work, as it was only 8d a yard in 1691 and 7d in 1699. He also has a price for colouring and varnishing wainscott at 4d a yard in 1662. The antiquework that de Crete was laying on the chimneys at Westminster in 1604-5 was paid at the rate of 3s a yard, though this was external work and may therefore have been more costly as the work may have involved using oil paint and would have been done off ladders or scaffolding.

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[108] Airs, 1995, chapters 8 and 18
[109] ibid., chapter 18
[110] BL., Addit. MSS 39836,f363
[111] Cope, 1883, p.121

Work at the Draper's Hall in Shrewsbury between 1577 and 1586 was carried out using different methods of charging most appropriate for the work to be done. For the major building project of erecting the hall in 1577, Andrew Lewes agreed to carry out all the work in the schedule, mentioned above for the fixed sum of £35, which was adhered to. Unfortunately, no indication is given of the relative cost of the painting work. In 1586 for carrying out small repair jobs, John Alen and his man were paid 9d and 7d respectively by the day for 'making broken walles' and 'lathyng and plasteryng'. When further new work was required for the hall, small contracts were entered into with separate craftsmen including the carpenter, Roger Smyth, who weatherboarded the end of the hall and Raffe Sandford, who made a clerestory window and painted it. [112]

The arrangement for payments to John Cley for work to the Council House, Shrewsbury, does not conform to any of the established methods of undertaking work. He carried out a schedule of painting work, presumably at the request of the bailiff but without an agreed price. His account makes it clear that the costs ' ffor my paynes and travell' were £1 16s 4d. There is no indication of materials costs. He invites the bailiffs to suggest a price for his work 'what shall please your worships'. The bailiffs allowed him only 20s[113]. There is no obvious explanation for the shortfall other than that the bailiffs considered he was grossly inflating his price (fig 8.8).

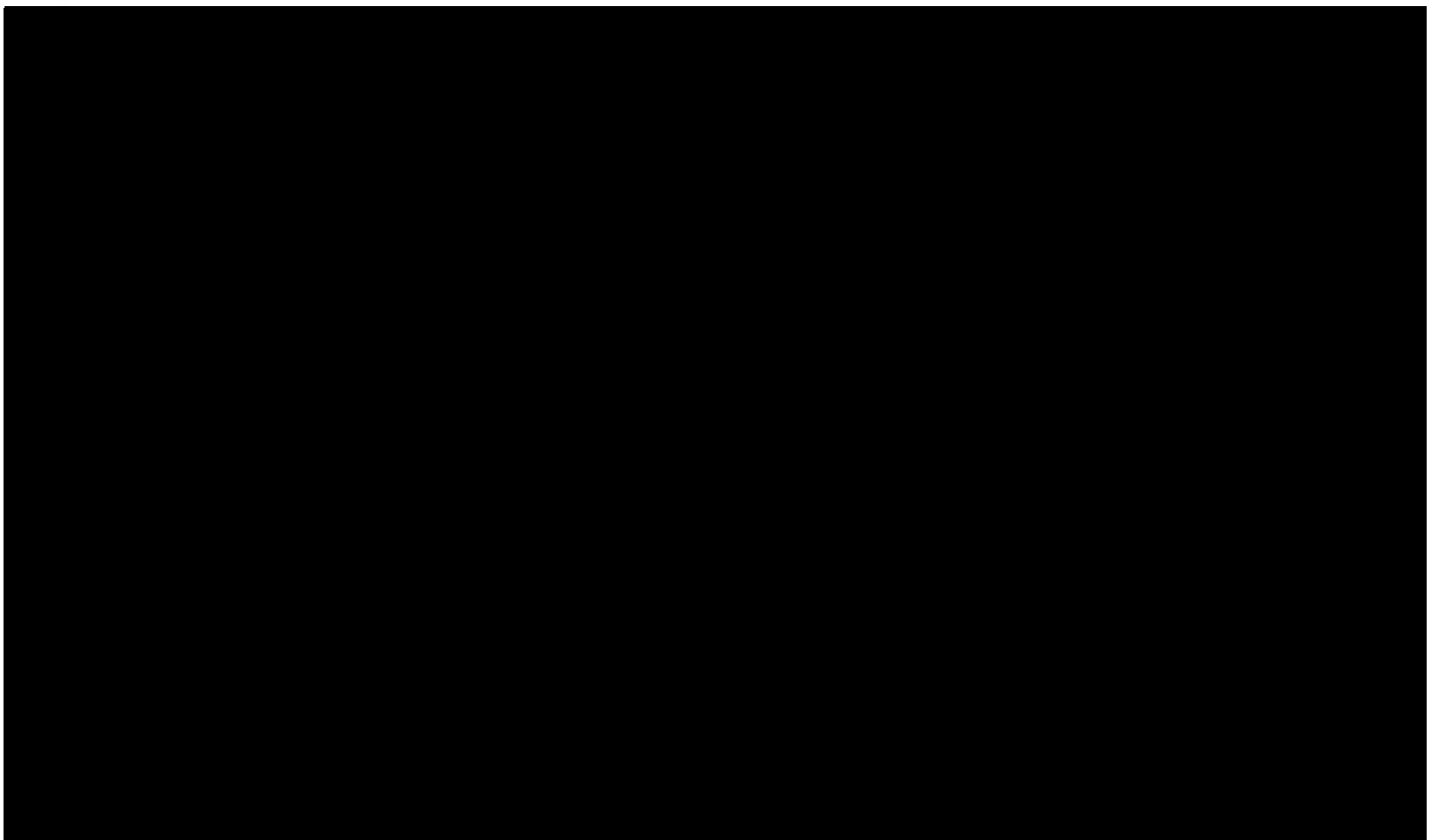

Fig.8.8 John Cley's account for painting at The Council House, Shrewsbury

Airs has suggested that the wage rate figures used by Phelps Brown and Hopkins are a simplification of the true situation, at least in relation to country house building. He suggests that a range of wages for the same craftsmen on the same site was not unusual and that this represents the variety of terms on which craftsmen were employed and the length of time in the same employment. For example, a craftsmen

[112] SRRC 1831/2/2
[113] SRRC 3365/521

on piecework generally earned greater remuneration than those on day rates and those employed over long periods tended to be paid at a static rate whilst incoming craftsmen may have been paid at higher rates[114]. Documentary evidence at the vernacular level is too sparse to comment on whether this is relevant to painted decoration. The only records incorporating differential rates for craftsmen relate to the Council House but there is no indication as to why this is. However, there is no reason to suppose that the laws of supply and demand did not apply at the time and that if painting skills were in demand but readily available, then the going rate for a craftsman would apply.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn for the detailed evidence considered in this chapter. It would not be unreasonable to conclude that the typical wall painting was executed by a local craftsman, possibly a plasterer, glazier or a general building craftsman. He may have been specifically employed to do the painted decoration or he may have been carrying out other work to the building at the same time. He is unlikely to have been engaged on painting in a newly erected building, unless he was painting on cloth, as Andrew Lewes was at the Draper's Hall. Whilst he would not have been formally trained in fine art or even drawing, he would have been capable of executing quite complex schemes with the aid of simple setting out techniques and patterns.

Where a simple decorative scheme was involved, he may have been paid by the day for his work, at the going rate for a building craftsman. For more complex designs, such as the black and white antiquework which was painted as an all-over design, he may well have been paid by the yard. For larger projects or those involving more than one room, he may have charged by the room or for the job as a whole.

If painting was his primary occupation or if he specialised in finer work, it is likely that he would have to travel some distance for employment. He is unlikely to have survived entirely off painting and he would invariably have supplemented his income with some other building work or small-scale farming.

The society he was working in was one where lavish display and all things indicative of wealth and status were held in high esteem. Painted decoration made a major contribution to this, as was reflected in the Sergeant Painter's remuneration. Despite this, at the vernacular level, it appears that the labour cost for painted decoration was charged for at a reasonable rate. The next chapter considers the overall cost of painted decoration and whether this would have been within the purse of the aspiring house owner.

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[114] Airs, 1995, Chapter 18

Chapter 9
Cost of painted decoration

Cost is a key element in considering how extensive wall painting might have been at the vernacular level for it is unlikely to have been widespread unless it was readily affordable. An attempt is made in this chapter to establish the cost of painting *per se* and also to relate this to other building costs. This provides some useful information, although firm conclusions cannot be drawn from it. If painting was only a small proportion of the building costs then it is quite feasible that the painting was seen as a short-term decoration to be refashioned within ten to twenty years. However, if the cost was quite high, it could be an indication of how much householders were prepared to pay to secure an impressive decorative scheme. This discussion argues that although the decoration was seen as temporary, it was nevertheless held in high regard and householders were prepared to spend significantly if necessary on this form of decoration in order to establish or maintain their social standing through display.

There are very few records for the painting of vernacular buildings in the period of study and only two building accounts which include painting have been found in the Marches, both unfortunately for schemes which no longer survive. A framework has therefore been constructed for the purposes of the present research in order to cost painted decoration. This framework uses a combination of the limited documentary evidence available, modern knowledge of the techniques of traditional painting and common sense. A sample of painted schemes was selected from those studied in the fieldwork and costs have been estimated for these on this basis. The sample was based on selecting one example of each type of painting found, that is from the very simple water-based monochrome decoration to the full colour, oil-based examples. The cost of a wall painting has been broken down into three elements: the preparation of the surface, the cost of the raw materials, and the labour cost. Each of these elements has been costed separately. Costs of pigments and media have been discussed in Chapter 7 and wage rates of craftsmen were addressed in Chapter 8. What is not known from documentary sources is how much preparation was necessary, how much pigment was used and how long it would have taken to do the work. This has been assessed with the assistance of a painter specialising in modern wall paintings using traditional techniques[1]. The approximate costs arrived at for this sample are compared to the few known records of rates for painting in order to test the validity of the estimates. Although this method of costing involves a certain amount of speculation and can only give a broad indication of the costs, nevertheless it can provide a framework for evaluating different categories of painting according to cost. The wall paintings surveyed have been assessed for cost on the basis of the sample schemes.

Preparation

In many cases, the preparation would have been limited to a coat of limewash. It has been argued in Chapter 7 that painting was not undertaken until several years after buildings were completed, in which case some sort of finish would probably already have been applied. Fig.9.1 shows the cross section of a paint sample from 28

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[1] Aidan Hart, Shrewsbury

Watergate St., Whitchurch [154]. The initial plaster finish is clearly visible as the bottom layer, separated from the limewash ground of the painted decoration by a carbonation layer, a thin white line which represents the carbonation of the lime plaster as it dried out over a period of time, though this could have been as short as a few months, depending on environmental conditions. It is assumed that most paintings were carried out on a freshly limewashed ground. Even if the existing finish of the surface was adequate, it is likely that some soiling would have occurred, given that rooms were usually heated by open fires and lit by candles or lamps. Soot soiling occurs very quickly in these conditions. Rather than paint on a soiled surface, it is likely that a fresh coat of limewash was given. This is also clearly visible in fig.9.1.

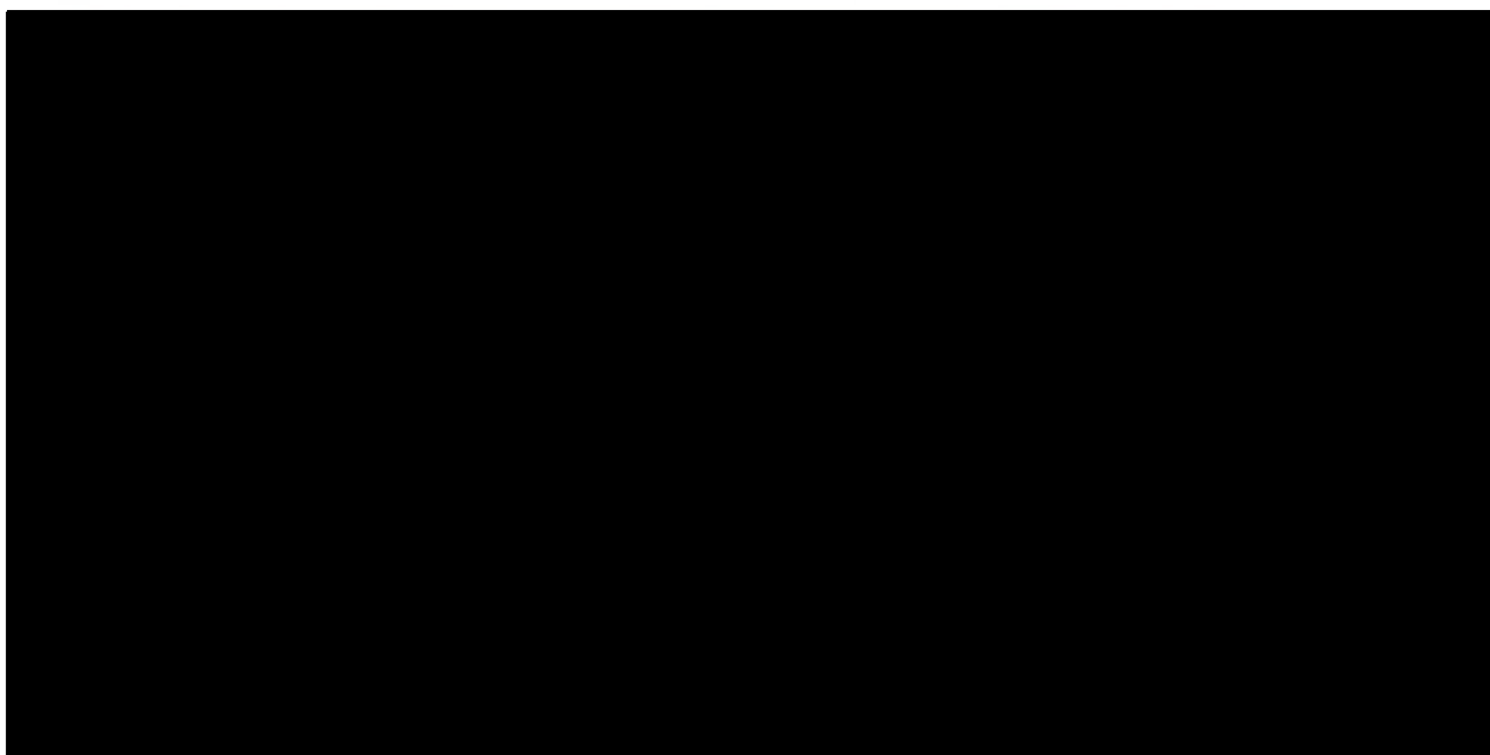

Fig.9.1 Paint sample from 28, Watergate St, Whitchurch, Shrops. showing carbonation layer

Limewash would have been very cheap to make and the ingredients were universally available. It was made either by mixing lime or chalk with water or by adding size to this mixture, which would bind the pigment more securely to the surface. Common size, made from animal skins, would be used for making limewash and could be made very cheaply by the craftsmen at home. It is also likely to have been available ready-made locally. Mixing the lime or chalk with water and adding the size to produce the limewash ground would be a very simple process for a craftsman or householder to undertake.

Bristow quotes a number of prices for limewashing, mostly from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for work of varying quality and complexity. The cost of materials and labour for plain limewashing in buildings above the vernacular level is suggested to have been around 1d per sq. yd. at this time.[2] It is likely to have been less than this in the late sixteenth century but on the basis of Bristow's figures, the cost for a room 12 feet by 16 feet and 8 feet high would be 4s (assuming one window, one door and a fireplace, giving a surface area to be covered of around 48 square yards). This seems high. It would not take more than three hours to limewash

[2] Bristow, 1996, ii, pp.112-113

this area, with not more than one hour for preparation of the limewash. At a labour cost of 10d per day this would cost around 3-4d. The materials cost would be minimal, possibly 1-2d for an unbound limewash, maybe double this for a size-bound limewash. This would give a maximum total of 6d for limewashing a room with a surface area of 48 square yards – a fraction of the cost compared to Bristow's figures.

Although it has not been possible to find documentary references to the cost of making up limewash, it is likely that the cost of raw materials would have been negligible. Basically, limewash could be made simply by mixing slaked lime and water, with size added to bind it if necessary. Bristow has suggested that areas less prone to wear and tear such as ceilings would be suitable for simple whitewash and that for areas where people or objects might rub against the surface, a size-bound limewash was more appropriate.

Rogers quotes a wide range of prices for lime in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the price varying according to the distance from a lime kiln. Whilst these refer principally to building work in the south east, they are a helpful indication of cost, which may in fact have been less in the Marches. Taking an approximately median price of 10s a load, this works out at 3¾d a bushel (on the basis of one load containing 32 bushels)[3]. One of the probate inventories examined includes an item for a quarter and a half of lime (12 bushels) valued at 4s. This works out at 4d a bushel, indicating prices in the Marches may not have been so different from those quoted by Rogers, though one example cannot be used to generalise.

Assuming this record refers to quicklime, this gives a cost of less than ½ d a gallon. One pint of lime could make approximately 2 gallons of limewash when mixed with water and/or size[4]. This could cover approximately 75 square yards, the equivalent of the surface area of the walls of quite a large room - over 24' by 16', much larger than the typical room where paintings have been found in the fieldwork. Even allowing for two coats as a preparation for the painting, the cost of the materials would be less than 1d. The only comparable reference found to quantities required is in Salzman, who quotes from a Westminster building account of 1351, where a bushel (i.e. 8 gallons) of chalk dust and 4 gallons of size was used for whitening the walls of the downstairs chamber[5]. No indication is given of the size of the chamber but being a royal palace, it is likely to have been significantly bigger than the hall or chamber in a vernacular building.

No costs for common size have been found. This was probably obtained locally from someone specialising in making animal glue or from a local general merchant, though it could have been made by the craftsman himself. It involved boiling up animal skins - often glovers' waste - in water, and was messy and smelly. The resultant size would be mixed at a rate of about one part size to twenty parts of water.[6] This would depend on the quality of the size. The probate inventories of the tradesmen examined for presence of pigments also showed that some - just four -

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[3] Rogers, 1887, vol VI, pp.481-3 and p.544
[4] Jane Schofield, *Basic Limewash SPAB* Information Sheet 1, 1985
[5] Salzman, 1967, p.157
[6] Assessment by Aidan Hart

stocked glue, though the type of glue is not specified. It is likely that this was a more specialised glue than that used for common size, otherwise it would occur more frequently. Valuations range from 2d-6d per lb. Rogers quotes between 2½d and 6d[7] per lb. This again suggests that prices quoted by Rogers are not too dissimilar from those found in the Marches. Common size may well have cost less than the glue bought in the local merchants.

Whether the limewash was bound or unbound, the materials cost for preparing a ground for a painting was small, possibly as little as 2d for a typical room. Assuming it would take not more than three to four hours to prepare and limewash the walls, the total cost for preparation could be around 5-7d. Rather than pay the labour charge for this simple task, it is possible that many householders limewashed their own houses, reducing the cost to around 2-4d. In fact the interiors of houses were regularly limewashed and this cost is not specific to painted decoration.

Amount of pigment used

In order to estimate how much pigment was used in each painting, an experiment was carried out to see how much area a given quantity of pigment could cover. This can only give a rough estimate but it is useful to establish an approximate cost of the pigments.

Twenty grams of yellow ochre were measured out and mixed with water to a consistency similar to that found in the majority of paintings. This was then painted solidly on to paper. The paper had absorbency similar to fresh limewash. Most painting would have been executed over a layer of fresh limewash, so the quantity used could be comparable. Older limewash would have a very absorbent surface.

The area covered by the paint mixture was measured. This gave an estimate of the amount of pigment required for coverage per square yard, which was about half an ounce.[8] A similar coverage could be expected for all the pigments used in the samples, though some allowance should be made for application of different thicknesses. Typically, the paint was applied quite thinly, though not in all cases. Some, such as the painting at 17-19 Watergate Street, Whitchurch [87] have colours built up in quite a complex way (fig.9.2) but the majority have only a thin layer of a single pigment (fig.9.3).

In relation to the sample of paintings selected for costing:

- the coverage of a pigment is estimated to be half an ounce per square yard
- the overall area of the painting is estimated from the surviving painting and the size of the room.
- the proportion of the surface covered by each pigment is estimated from a simple visual analysis
- where the scheme is painted onto a limewash ground, only the coloured pigments are considered.

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[7] Rogers, 1887, pp.574-595

[8] 20gm. (0.706 oz) of pigment covered an area of 1.37 sq.yds. This means that 1 sq.yd would require 0.52 oz. of pigment i.e. about half an ounce

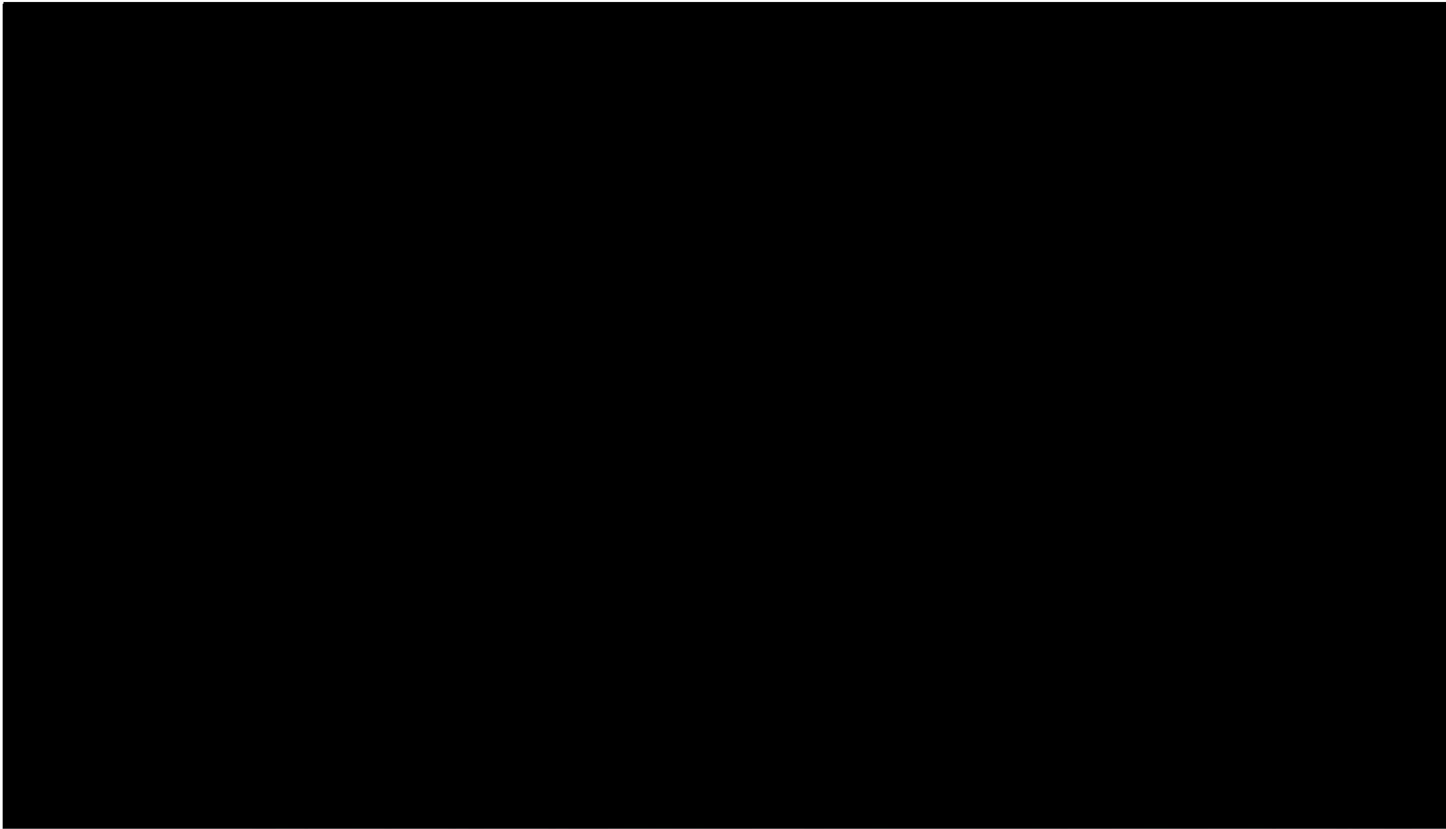

Fig.9.2 Paint sample from 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch, Shrops.

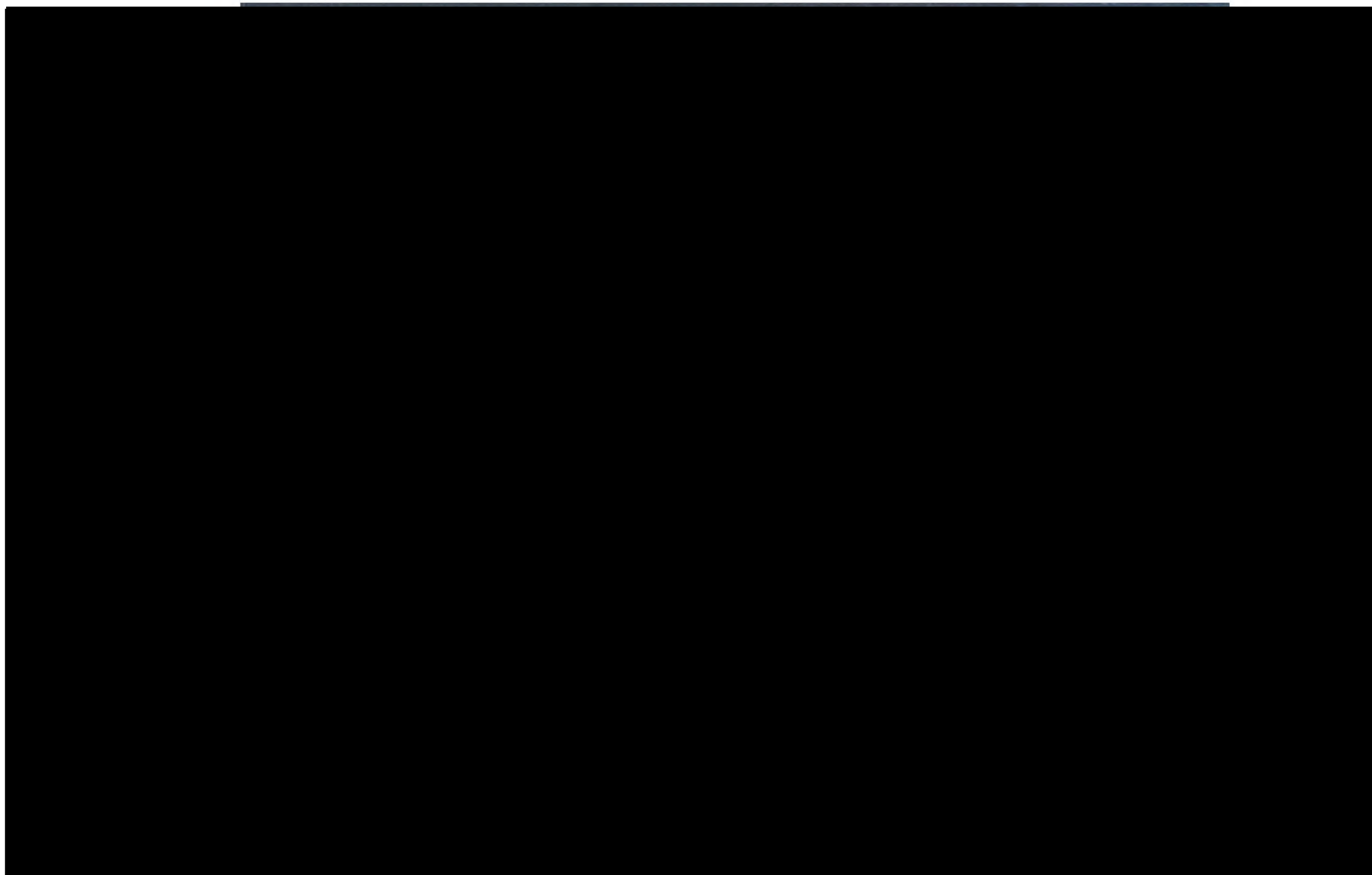

Fig.9.3 Paint sample from. 28, Watergate St, Whitchurch

- areas are over- rather than under-estimated in order to give a maximum possible cost.

Pigments costs are based on those contained in Chapter 7, Table 7.2. Where a range of costs is given, the maximum is used. The assessment of how much pigment was

used and how a cost was arrived at is given in much greater detail in Appendix 7. These estimated costs are very rough but they are nevertheless useful as an indicator of the range of likely costs. In particular, they show that the cost of the pigments would probably have been very small, in most cases just a few pence. The range is 1-4½d for a total scheme with the simple black and white schemes, which are by far the most common, mostly costing less than 2d for the whole room

Cost of media

In addition to the pigment cost, there would be the cost of the medium. In most cases this was size though there are a few examples of oil and one in egg tempera. It has not been possible to estimate the amount of size used, but it was certainly less than that required for limewashing. Size would have been very cheap and a typical room would not have required more than 1-2d worth of size for mixing pigments at most. Similarly, oil would not have been very expensive and would not cost significantly more than size. An allowance of 2-3d would be reasonable.

Although one example of egg tempera medium was found, the pigment analysis showed this to have been an early twentieth century restoration. No other examples of egg tempera were found and it is unlikely that this medium was widely used at the vernacular level for house painting. For comparative purposes the amount of medium required was estimated and costed up. This painting, at Whitehall, Shrewsbury, would have required about nine dozen eggs. Rogers gives a price of between 1¼-6d per dozen for the period of study, the variation partly accounted for by the time of year. This was mainly in Oxford, Cambridge and London, where prices are likely to have been higher than in the Marches. On this basis the median costs would have been between 11¼d and 4s 6d. In rural areas it is likely that eggs would have been home produced so the costs would be much reduced.

Cost of labour

So far, the costs of the painted decoration have amounted to only a few pence for the whole scheme - the amount is too small to give a meaningful cost per square yard. The main cost element would have been the labour charge and this would vary significantly according to the complexity of the design and the quality of execution. Whilst there are some documentary references to the cost per yard of painting, these are for higher status buildings and the complexity and quality of the work can only be guessed at.

In order to establish some basis for costing the painted decoration in the vernacular buildings examined, an assessment of the labour involved in the sample schemes has been attempted and from this a labour charge arrived at. The following assumptions have been made in this assessment:

- the work was carried out by skilled craftsmen who, more than likely, were not painters but who would have some competence in this field.
- craftsmen were paid at the rate of 10d per day. This seems to have been an average wage for about the turn of the century in the Marches. The cost of later and earlier paintings can be adjusted according to the going rates at the assumed date of the painting.

- the length of the working day was 10 hours. This is an average taken over the year. In winter working days were much shorter and in summer much longer than 10 hours. This also takes into account breaks for breakfast, dinner and tea.
- the area originally painted was the entire surface area of the walls/ceiling minus an allowance for a fireplace, windows and doors.

The assessment was made with the assistance of the painter referred to above and the details of how these assessments were made are contained in Appendix 8.

The broad statement that the finer painted schemes were estimated to have taken longer and therefore cost more than the simpler schemes masks some interesting information. One of the crudest schemes, that at Barnaby House [103], was amongst the most expensive in terms of labour because of the complexity of the setting out involved. Cost of labour does not, therefore, equate with fineness of execution. The level of skill of the craftsman is the ultimate determinant of the quality of a scheme. Another interesting result was how cheap it could have been to have a bold striking design painted all over the walls or ceiling of a room. That at 23 Brookend St., Ross on Wye[17-18] is a good example of a simple, effective and cheap scheme. The amount of modelling would increase the labour cost significantly, as seen in Whitehall [86]. Most, however, had a single layer of paint which would keep the costs down considerably.

Total cost of sample schemes

Using all the information collected on the costs of painting, the sample schemes were costed on a rate per square yard and a total cost for the scheme as a whole. The assumptions and provisos have been clearly expressed and it is accepted that the costs are only a rough indication. It is nevertheless useful in considering how widespread wall paintings would have been and who could have afforded them. The cost of preparing the walls or ceiling by limewashing has been omitted on the grounds that this would have been done anyway, whether further painted decoration was being executed or not. The cost of the size medium for mixing the pigment is negligible in most cases.

The simplest scheme, that at 23 Brookend St., is estimated to have cost less than ½d per square yard. Decoration survives on the joists and spine beams and probably extended onto the underside of the floorboards as well,[9] but this has now been lost. It consists of simple repeated brush strokes in a blue-black pigment, probably charcoal, in a variety of patterns onto a limewash ground. No setting out or other preparatory work would have been needed yet the result is a rich striking effect that is achieved at minimal cost per square yard. The upper room where this is found was originally very long, over forty feet, and the whole scheme can be estimated to have cost 5s 6d in labour and around 4d for pigments and size.

Slightly more complex and requiring some degree of setting out is the scroll design painted on the chamber walls at Churchyard Farm, Neenton [130], which is estimated to cost less than 1d per square yard. This is of particular interest as sixteen

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[9] Based on precedents elsewhere such as 26-32 Friar St, Worcs [172], Trinity College, Oxon and Apted, 1978

examples of this design have been recorded. All are fairly crudely but competently painted, requiring an estimated one and a half hours for painting one square yard. This typical sized room (11' 8" by 18') would have an estimated labour cost of around 2s 6d to decorate with pigments and size costing another 2d.

Where a more intricate pattern has been employed which required stencilling or pouncing then, not surprisingly, the labour charge increases significantly. The decoration at 45 Muxton Lane, Telford [128], which is very carefully painted, is one of the better quality antiquework designs found in the fieldwork. This would require about an hour in preparation per square yard and a further four hours to paint. Slightly smaller than the chamber at Churchyard Farm, Neenton [130], this room would have taken much longer to paint although the materials cost would be similar. At a rate of 6d per square yard, the total labour cost of the room is estimated at 18s 6d.

Considerably inferior in quality is the painting at Barnaby House, Ludlow [103], which nevertheless would have involved extensive setting out and would have similar high labour cost but low materials cost of around 3-4d. Even though it is crudely painted it involved a considerable amount of work[10]. There is evidence that it went all around the room and could therefore have cost as much as 30s at a rate of 8d per square yard for labour.

The imitation panelling at Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86] is much more finely executed. Unlike the other schemes costed, there is a considerable amount of modelling in the pattern here involving several layers of paint. The design is very carefully and accurately set out and painted, which is reflected in the estimated cost. A figure of 14d per square yard is suggested as a labour cost for this scheme, with the total labour cost of decorating this room (20'6" x 10'8") estimated at £2 10s. Whilst it is not known if the original scheme was executed in egg tempera, the existing restored one uses this technique and preparation costs have therefore been based on this[11]. Pigments and medium are therefore more expensive than other schemes at around 1s 3d.

The painted panelling at Harvington Hall [167] is also carefully executed yet quite simple. The intricate Moresque pattern in the centre of each panel is the main labour element. Only one panel survives which is estimated to have cost around 10d in labour and about 6d in pigments and medium. It is known that the painted panelling originally went all around the room but it is not known how extensive this was.

The most expensive scheme estimated is that at Upton Court, Little Hereford [52-53], involving two painted overmantels. This is not directly comparable to the others as it is late 17th century and the paintings are more akin to easel paintings in that they are painted in oil, on wooden panels and framed rather than the all-over decoration found in the other, earlier schemes. Although these are fairly crudely painted, each has been estimated to have taken two to three days to complete. This would have cost between 3s 4d -5s. Expressed as a cost per square yard, this would be between 5s 6d - 8s 4d, much higher than the next most expensive scheme, at Whitehall.

[10] This was the most difficult scheme to estimate on account of its crudeness of execution and the labour element may be significantly overestimated.
[11] Nine dozen eggs have been estimated at 1 shilling

Pigment costs would also have been more expensive at around 8d for the total scheme.

Costs based on documentary sources

Allowing for the fact that these estimates can only be a very rough guide, it is useful to compare the costs per square yard with those found in documentary sources. These do not indicate any preparation costs, such as the limewash ground, which are negligible per square yard. Nor do they generally include pigment and media costs. As these too are generally negligible per square yard, mostly less than 1d, it is not significant therefore whether or not they are included in the documented costs as a rough indication only of cost per square yard is being sought.

The accounts of royal works, discussed in the previous chapter, provide the most precise records of the cost of paintings but these, inevitably, are the least relevant to paintings at the vernacular level. In some cases the Sergeant Painter directed the painting work of others and in others he did the work himself. In these cases the cost of the work was extremely high, though it invariably included the cost of his materials which were usually expensive. For example in 1597, Leonard Fryer Sergeant Painter executed a particularly elaborate scheme at Oatlands on some existing panelling and was paid:

> for pryming and stopping with white leade all the wenscott about the gallery and after leying the pannelles and battens of the same with soundry cullours curyously grayned with a grayne called flotherwoode alsoe garnishing all the pannelles and Battens with various rebeskes of fyne goulde the edge round about layde with silver in oyle cllours every pannell within having a square draught with a moriske wrought with fyne goulde and within the same a duble compartment with soundry other droughtes about the goulde and silver of markatree the creste round about wrought with leaves and paternosters of fyne goulde and silver all conteyning ccvj square yardes at Xs the yard[12]

There are some painted panels in the survey area such as that at Harvington Hall [167], but none match the sumptuousness of this design. Harvington Hall is estimated to cost 2¼d for the pigments and 2d for labour giving a total of 4¼d per square yard.

Much less elaborate and more familiar to the Marches was the antiquework carried out by de Crete in 1604-5 to chimneys, at three shillings a yard. This is much higher than the cost estimated for the antiquework at 45, Muxton Lane, Telford [128], at just over 5d per square yard including the pigment. An unknown, but significant, amount must be attributed to it being at high level and to the waterproofing required for external work. External painting was common in the royal palaces and a few examples at the vernacular level have been noted[13], but none in the Marches.

Given that the annual income of the Sergeant Painter could be ten or even twenty times that of a craftsman in the Marches (but included the cost of materials), these

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[12] quoted in Colvin, 1965 vol.IV, part II, pp.212-213
[13] Carrick, 1989, p.10

figures are useful for comparative purposes only. In contrast to this is the account for the plain work carried out by bricklayers at Somerset House in 1611-12 'for finishing with white mortar ashlar ways the front of the house towards the garden at sixpence the yard and pencilling the said front at threepence the yard'[14]. These figures, which presumably again included the cost of scaffolding or the increase in time taken for working off a ladder, are more comparable to those estimated for the sample paintings.

Rogers gives a price of 1s 6d a yard for painter's work in 1609, although he qualifies that this must have been for careful work, as it was only 8d a yard in 1691 and 7d in 1699.[15] The former figure is comparable to that arrived at for Whitehall, which is indeed very careful work. No indication is given of the type of painting the other figures relate to but they could be broadly comparable to the median costs estimated, allowing for some increase in labour cost during the seventeenth century. Rogers also has a price for colouring and varnishing wainscot at 4d a yard in 1662, which is considerably cheaper than that at Oatlands[16].

The painting of cloths involved a similar activity to painting walls, hence the union of the painter stainers in 1502 and the lack of differentiation between their respective trades in the records of the Painter Stainers Company. Some accounts survive for the painted cloths which are useful indicators of the cost of painting. The diary of Prior More, of Bettenhall, Worcestershire, includes accounts for several painted cloths at Bettenhall and Crowle in Worcestershire. The accounts give a price of 2d per yard for painting at Crowle[17]. Also included is the cost of canvas and linen cloth from which a rate per yard for the other painted cloths can be estimated.

Lynnyn cloth for ye lyttle hawle at Batnal	s	d
Item for lynyn cloth for bordurs to ye lyttul parlor within the lyttul hall and ye parlour at Batnall	12	0
Item for the peyntyng of ye same to Thomas Peynter	3	4
Item for sowyng of ye honggyng sayes in qe seyd parlors & for thryd		12
Peyntyng of bordurs. Item payd to Thomas Peynter for peynting ye bordurs in ye lyttal parlor withyn ye lyyttul hawle	5	4
Item for lynnen cloth for bordurs to peynt for the hall at Grymley	2	5
Item for the peyntyng of the same to Thomas Peynter	2	8
Item for xviii ells of canvas for peynted Bordurs to Crowle	6	9

[14] quoted in Mercer, 1953, p.160
[15] Rogers, 1887, vol. V, p.657
[16] ibid., p.657
[17] Quoted in Matley More, 1982, p.75

Item payd to Thomas Kings for peynting of the bordurs of
my chambur & ye deyesse at Crowle conteynyng
xlvi yeardes price of every yearde 2d   Summa 7/8

Lynnen clotthe Item payd for xxxvi ells of sultwych for to make borders to peynt with price the elle 4½d Summa	13	6
Item to John Taylor for soyng the hangyngs with says in the Lords Chamber at Crowle & the Deysse in the hall there with other work	7	6

The cost of the cloth works out at about 3½d a yard[18].

If the rate of 3½d a yard is assumed for all cloth, then item 1 for the little parlour within the little hall and the parlour is for approximately 41 yards. If the cost of painting this was 3s 4d (item 2) then this works out at 1d per yard. However, there is another item (4) for painting the little parlour within the little hall of 5s 4d suggesting that item 2 refers only to the parlour at Bettenhall. If this is the case then the cost works out at 5d a yard - comparable to the hall at Grymley which required approximately 8¼ yards of cloth costing 2s 8d to paint at 4d a yard.

The total cost of the painted cloths including the cloth and labour (and presumably the painters' charge included his materials as none are mentioned separately) varied from 5½d a yard at Crowle to possibly 8½d in the little parlour and main parlour at Battenhall. (In 1576, Kings College, Cambridge purchased 38 yards of painted cloth at just under 8½d a yard.[19] Assuming these were new, this gives a comparable cost.) If the cloth cost 3½d a yard, assuming a standard width of 36", then the cost of preparation, materials and painting ranged from 2d to 5d per square yard. This is very similar to the costs arrived at for the sample of paintings costed.

In Prior More's inventory, there are references to various painted cloths, this time bought in London, which were valued at 5½d a yard. Some of these were of complex antiquework pattern: 'folery work with dyvers beestes and full (fowles-birds)'[20]. Whilst this is comparable with the cost of the cloths at Crowle, those at Bettenhall cost much more than this. The difference could be accounted for by the cost of cloth, which has been assumed to be a standard 3½d or possibly by depreciation, in that the cloths were not robust and some wear and tear could have significantly reduced their value. Also, the accounts reflect an actual cost, whereas the inventory contains an estimated value.

Another local example of painting on cloth is in a contract entered into by Jefferey Cley[21]. In 1562 he contracted with William Lyngham to paint one piece of linen cloth at the rate of 3d a yard.[22] This may have been for a play or pageant as it is

[18] An ell is 45 inches
[19] Rogers, 1887, vol. 4, p.575
[20] Matley Moore, op.cit., p.73
[21] See Chapter 8
[22] SSRC 3365 1856. I am grateful to W.A. Champion for this reference.

mentioned with other works 'for the playe' and may therefore have been quite crudely done. This is within the broad range of 2d to 5d assessed for the painted cloths at Battenhall and Crowle.

Costs of wall paintings surveyed

The documentary evidence suggests that the costs worked out for the sample schemes may be sufficiently accurate to be worth applying to the rest of the paintings surveyed, though again with the proviso that these are rough estimates. Rather than assign precise costs, broad cost bands have been used which are more appropriate given the speculative nature of the exercise. Firstly a cost per square yard was estimated by assessing the paintings surveyed on their broad similarity to the sample schemes in terms of pigments used, technique and labour costs and placed in one of the broad cost categories. In some cases, the scheme was too fragmentary to assess and therefore costs per square yard have not been obtained for all schemes. The results of this are shown in Table 9.1. Where the extent of the original scheme is known, a total cost for the painted decoration has been estimated, again using broad cost bands. Figures for total costs are shown in Table 9.2 and are much less complete as the original extent of the painting could not be ascertained for many paintings.

Table 9.1 Estimated cost per square yard of wall paintings surveyed by status of building[23]

*rank**	*<1d*	*1d-6d*	*6d-1s*	*1s-2s*	*>2s*	*total*
1	20	23	14	5	12	74
2	28	19	7	4	2	60
3	13	14	3	1	1	32
4	0	1	0	0	0	1
n/k	8	1	1	0	0	10
total	*69*	*58*	*25*	*10*	*15*	*177*

Table 9.2 Estimated total cost of wall paintings surveyed by status of building

*rank**	*<1s*	*1s-5s*	*5s-10s*	*10s-15s*	*15s-20s*	*>20s*	*total*
1	7	12	2	1	2	3	27
2	3	4	4	1	0	2	14
3	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
n/k	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
total	*12*	*18*	*6*	*2*	*2*	*5*	*45*

* *Assessment of rank*
Rank 1 - armigerous, known gentry, assumed gentry, other high status
Rank 2 - well-off yeoman gentry, well-off merchant gentry, well-off yeoman
Rank 3 - merchant, artisan merchant, known yeoman, assumed yeoman
Rank 4 husbandman cottager

[23] See Chapter 6 for a discussion on ranking of status

Simple cheap decoration, costing less than 1d per square yard, comprises well over a third of the paintings surveyed. This is not confined to lower status houses but is found in houses of all status surveyed from the homes of highest status to the humble yeoman. At the other end of the scale, not surprisingly, the more expensive schemes are almost exclusively found in high status buildings. These, however, are only a small minority of the total number of paintings surveyed (8%).

Looking at the total cost of schemes a similar pattern emerges. Over a quarter of the paintings for which a total cost could be estimated cost less than 1s - just over the typical daily wage of a craftsmen during the last quarter of the sixteenth century - with nearly half costing under 5s. Again, it is not just the less well-off who had the cheaper schemes. These figures suggest that those of highest social rank appear to have had no qualms about commissioning relatively cheap schemes to decorate their homes.

The cost of decoration in relation to other building costs

There is very little published information on vernacular building costs, nor did a search through local record offices yield much. It was nevertheless thought useful to attempt to relate the cost of painted decoration to other building costs in order to obtain some idea of the relative expenditure on this 'luxury'. It must be borne in mind, however, that the painted decoration was unlikely to have been done at the same time that the building was constructed.

Costs varied widely – a point recorded in the late eighteenth century but just as applicable in the late sixteenth century:

> Even in the same county and in the same parish, the expence will often vary considerably.... The distance from materials, the quality and price of those materials, the goodness or badness of the roads... the expence of the foundations, the price of labour, the season of the year, all tend to make a difference.[24]

Acknowledging this, Machin uses a range of sources to provide a 'best guess' for the cost of a durable building. Based on costs per great square[25] and average size of farmhouses and cottages, he estimates costs for 2 and 3-unit houses built in cob, stone or brick[26] but not timber frame, which is the most relevant to this research. If it is assumed that timber-framed houses cost more than stone (rubble) but less than brick, a median cost of £75 could be used for a 2-unit farmhouse and £140 for a 3-unit farmhouse in the period 1550-1650. In the Marches, the only comparable figure is that for the Draper's Hall in 1577 which cost £35 to build a hall, buttery, kitchen, great chamber over (plus other chambers). This is much less than Machin's average. Tyson has found in Cumberland and Westmoreland that costs were also considerably less than Machin's average[27].

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[24] Communications to the Board of Agriculture, 1, 1797, 8, quoted in Machin, 1994, p.28
[25] A great square = 100 sq.ft.
[26] Machin, 1994, pp.28-29
[27] Blake Tyson - personal communication

Equally important are costs for refurbishment and repairs as the fieldwork revealed that the majority of buildings where wall paintings are found date from before the last quarter of the sixteenth century and many of these were remodelled during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. However, even less information is available on repairs and refurbishment for comparative purposes. Of particular relevance to the discussion is the work done to the Council House in Shrewsbury in 1582. Repairs and refurbishment included decorative painting work to all the principal rooms as well as general repairs and setting out and planting the garden. The total cost was £26 and of this 20s was for the painting work. This represents around 4% of the total cost. The Draper's Hall account also included the cost of painting the painted cloth around the hall in antiquework. Assuming this antiquework design was of some complexity and well executed such as that at 45 Muxton Lane, Telford [128] the cost could be worked out on a similar basis to the painted cloth discussed above - labour, materials and cloth could be 8½d per square yard. This would give a total cost for the painted cloth of 29s 6d, which is again approximately 4% of the total cost[28].

Generalisations cannot be made on the basis of these two examples, particularly as both of these are high status vernacular buildings in the principal town where significant expenditure on display could be expected. These cannot be seen as representative in terms of the relative cost of painted decoration to building costs for the majority of buildings. Any estimates for this are inevitably 'best guesses' as they are derived from estimates for building costs. An attempt is made nevertheless using several examples. Churchyard Farm, Neenton [130] is typical of the large farmhouses surveyed in the course of the fieldwork and has a good example of the Shropshire scroll painting scheme found in many farmhouses, both in terms of design and quality of execution. The cost of decorating the principal chamber here is estimated at 2s 5d. If the cost of building this 3-unit farmhouse was around £140, then the proportion spent on decoration is less than 0.1%.

23 Brookend St [17-18] was probably originally a 3-unit house and had painted decoration on the ceiling of the ground and first floors. The total cost of this decoration is estimated at 11s for the two rooms. Basing its construction cost on that of a 3-unit farmhouse - £140 – the cost of painted decoration represents around 0.4% of the total cost.

In contrast to this, Barnaby House is a rubblestone town house dating from the fifteenth century but remodelled in the late sixteenth century. This included inserting a ceiling in the open hall and the construction of an additional bay. Using Machin's figures as a guide, the single unit addition plus alterations may be around half the cost of a 2-unit stone house, which is around £30. The antiquework painting in the new bay is of complex design. Its crude execution belies the time which it must have taken to set this out. A total cost for painting the whole room was estimated at around 30s which would be 5% of the total building costs. Of all the painting schemes costed, the time taken for this one was the most difficult to estimate and for the purposes of the costing exercise it was over rather than underestimated. It could well have taken half the time estimated which would give a figure of around 2.5%.

[28] The hall which had the painted cloth still stands and has been measured to obtain the area of painted cloth required to cover the walls above the 'halfe waynscott' - see Chapter 8

Costs for other examples become increasingly speculative as no costed precedents for contemporary building work are available and, indeed, the above are also highly speculative. Nevertheless, they give an indication of the relative cost. It would not be unreasonable to conclude that a small but significant amount of the cost of building works in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was devoted to painted decoration. The proportion was greater in higher status buildings where display was arguably part of the function of the building. This can be compared to some of the royal works, where painted decoration was a very significant proportion of the cost.

Conclusion

Most of the cost of wall paintings appears to have been in the labour charge. A high labour cost was indicative of a scheme of greater sophistication rather than skill. Schemes such as those at Barnaby House, Ludlow [103] and 26-28 Hereford St, Presteigne [232], appear very crude in modern aesthetic terms but they would nevertheless have been quite costly to paint because of the time involved in setting out the design. The converse is also true – simple schemes which could be quickly executed could provide a rich, effective decoration, such as that at 23 Brookend St., Ross-on-Wye, [17-18].

Given the speculative nature of the exercise of costing, only general conclusions can be drawn from the figures put forward in this research. The most important one is that painted decoration could be done at a relatively low cost and the cheaper schemes were not confined to the homes of the less well-off. This supports the hypothesis that wall paintings could be found in houses of all social status and it also lends some support to the suggestion that they were only intended for temporary decoration to be changed when fashion or inclination dictated. It was not so cheap however that the cost could be considered as insignificant - at least not by most people. There must have been a desire to have some form of display for a householder to have selected wall painting as a priority for expenditure over other more mundane but possibly functional goods. The significance of this explored further in Chapter 11.

Section 3

Discussion of Findings

Chapter 10
Sources for painted decoration

In discussing Elizabethan and Jacobean style, Mowl highlights its eclectic nature as craftsmen selected designs from sources at will and used them promiscuously in whatever context suited their needs. The principal sources, Gothic and Renaissance, in turn have assimilated those of other, earlier cultures - Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Celtic – to the extent that the original source for any one design is difficult to trace. The overwhelming characteristic is an exuberance, a magnificence that, to be appreciated Mowl argues, requires a 'hearty aesthetic appetite'[1]. Whilst he is essentially discussing the style of the élite, the wall paintings illustrated in this research suggest that the essence of this style made its way down the social scale. Here, the same eclecticism is to be expected as, in true vernacular fashion, craftsmen used whatever was to hand. Exactly what was to hand is the main concern of this chapter.

On the basis of the paintings found in the fieldwork, this chapter explores the visual environment experienced at the vernacular level for possible sources for the designs. One of the key questions in exploring this is who was responsible for choosing the design of the paintings. Depending on his principal work, a craftsman would probably have had a stock of designs which could have been built up over time as his experience grew. The patron may have had access to other sources for designs that a local craftsman would not normally have encountered, for example in books or through visiting other gentry houses. In practice, designs may well have been a combination of both. The question of who selected the design matters in that it could have some bearing on the significance of the painted decoration.

Print sources

The range of printed illustrations which were in circulation has been discussed in Chapter 4 and includes title pages and illustrations in books, ballad sheets and continental prints. The illustrations encountered at the vernacular level may not be originals but woodcuts or prints copied from other published work. The source of design for a wall painting based on a print can, therefore, only be speculative.

Ornament prints

Recent writers have demonstrated how much influence print sources had on art and design in the early modern period[2]. A product of the developments in the printing industry, decorative prints were first produced in Germany and the Low Countries but quickly spread into England. Goldsmiths were the first to realise their potential in helping craftsmen to design their work. Initially they were sold as single sheets but by the 1520s ornament prints were sold in sets. The speed with which they were taken up testifies to their popularity and effectiveness of dissemination. One of Serlio's designs, published in his *Architettura,* 1537, was reproduced on the ceiling

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[1] Mowl, 1993, pp.11-22
[2] Principally Wells-Cole, 1997 and Snodin and Howard, 1996

of Wolsey's closet (Hampton Court) soon after 1537, the chapel at The Vyne, Hampshire before 1540 and the Warden's lodging at New College, Oxford in 1541.[3]

The use of both subject and ornament prints for designs in a variety of media and used in a wide range of contexts has been explored at length by Wells-Cole. Painted decoration was one medium inspired by prints and there are several documented cases. The rare set of painted cloths at Hardwick Hall have been shown to have been based on New Testament illustrations and suites of prints. The painter, most probably John Balechouse, selected different elements from a number of prints to make up the total compositions[4]. In contrast to this, The Cupid and Psyche paintings at Sir Thomas Smith's house, Hill Hall, are taken almost directly from prints by the Master of the Die and Agostino Veneziano after Michiel Coxie[5].

These are just two of the very many examples of decoration which have now been traced to print sources. Whilst most of the current research on sources has focused on houses of the élite, some examples have been traced lower down the social scale. The rich plasterwork found in some Devon houses, such as Dean Head, Swimbridge, and a house in the Butterwalk, Dartmouth are based on print sources[6]. The use of print sources for painted decoration at the vernacular level is less well explored. Carrick has noted a number of print sources for wall painting in Essex, notably Eastbury House, Barking[7] and Watt claims a print source, albeit loosely translated, for the story of the Prodigal at Knightsland Farm, South Mymms, Herts.,[8] the depiction in this case using only selected elements from the original. This has been found in other cases by Wells-Cole who suggests the use of individual features of a print rather the whole composition was common when a less accomplished artist was copying an illustration.[9] Despite this, he remains sceptical on the use of continental prints at the vernacular level[10].

It is ironic then, that the one definite subject print source which has been identified in the Marches is one featured by Wells-Cole – The Sacrifice of Isaac at the Batch Sidbury [142]. This is taken from a print designed by Pieter de Iode and engraved by Egbert van Panderen c.1600[11] (see fig.10.1) and appears to have enjoyed widespread popularity as it has been found in overmantels in High St, Oxford, Boston House, Brentford[12] and Woodstone Manor near Peterborough, an embroidered book cover of 1613 now in the Victoria and Albert Museum[13] and as a wall painting at Hospits Farm House, West Bergholt[14]. The cost of an engraved print has been calculated at between 6d and a shilling, which would represent roughly between a half and a full day's wages for a craftsman in the late sixteenth century. Woodcuts came much

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[3] Wells-Cole, 1997, p.11
[4] ibid., pp. 276-285
[5] ibid, p.210
[6] ibid., pp.162-163
[7] Carrick, 1989, figs. 58-77
[8] Watt, 1994, pp.203-204
[9] Wells-Cole, 1997 p.8
[10] ibid., p.299
[11] ibid., 1997, pp.121-123
[12] Carrick, 1989, figs. 277-278
[13] Wells-Cole, 1997, pp.122-123
[14] Carrick, 1989, fig. 279

cheaper. many as little as 1d[15]. It would not be beyond the means of a craftsman operating at the vernacular level to purchase a print or two. On the contrary, it might be considered a reasonable investment for his business. The inventories of painters discussed in Chapter 8 include 'pictures' which could well relate to engravings (see Table 8.2).

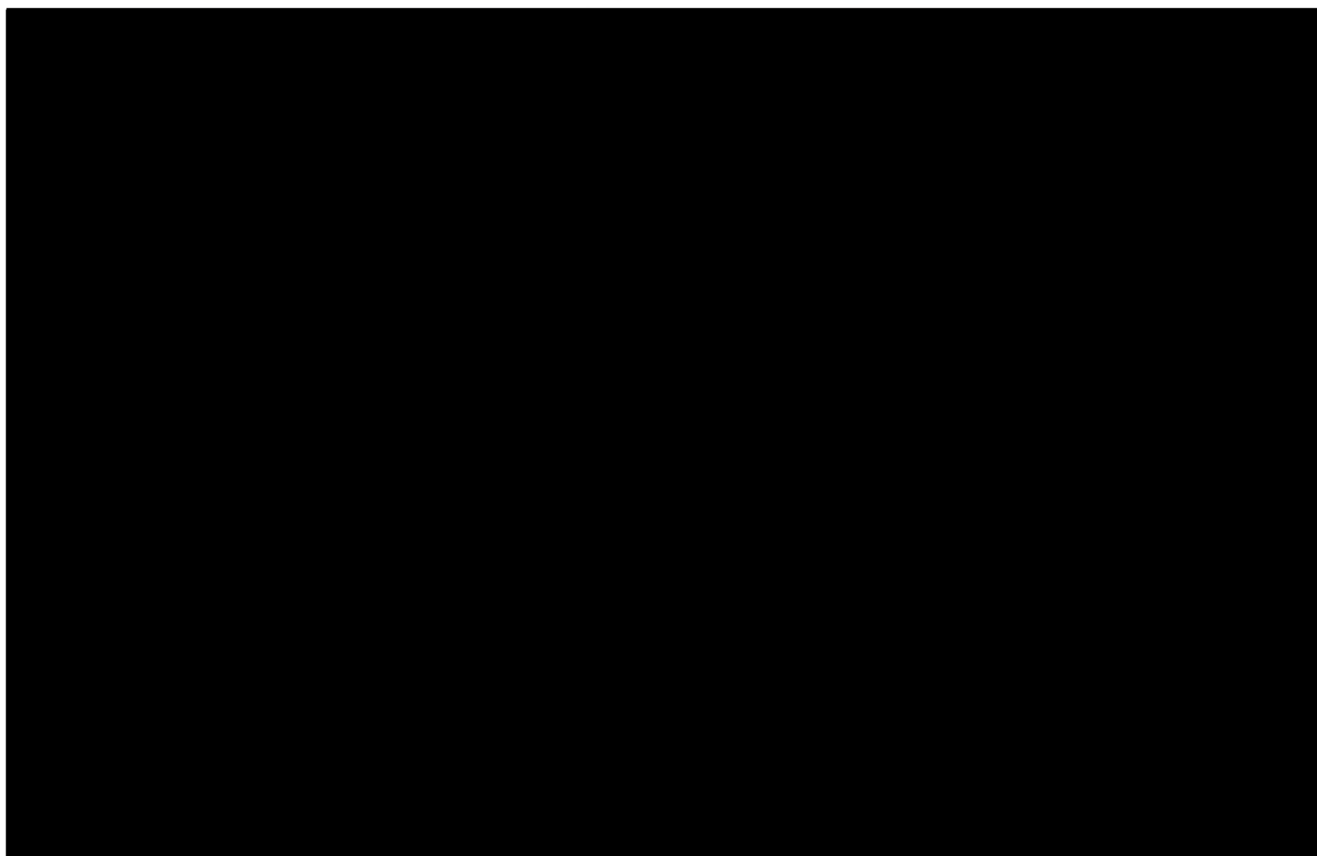

Fig.10.1 *The Sacrifice of Isaac* at The Batch, Sidbury, Shrops. and the print source

That prints were readily available is given support by the evidence of Roger Ward's stock, which included '3 pictures in collers' and '20 pictures not colored'[16] The other point to consider here is the one raised at the beginning of this section about who was responsible for the design. It might not be the craftsman who supplied the print but the house owner commissioning the painting, in which case the means of the craftsman are irrelevant.

More evidence has been found for the use of ornament prints in the wall paintings surveyed. Serlio's ceiling pattern, which was used at Hampton Court (see above) has been noted descending down the social scale to vernacular buildings by Reader[17]. Two instances based on other designs of his were noted in the Marches, at Michaelchurch Court [31] and 99 Westgate, Gloucester [10] (see fig.10.2) and a variation involving an additional diamond-shaped feature of strapwork is found at 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch [87]. In all of these the design is used on a wall rather than a ceiling. Geminus uses a similar design in his *Morysse and Damashin renewed and encreased Very profitable for Goldsmythes and Embroderars*[18], and it appears again on the floor in the portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Eworth, 1560-70 (see fig.10.3). But much earlier than either of these is the Westminster Retable, (see fig.10.4) which is almost identical to the pattern reproduced by Serlio. Later yet attributable to none of these is the design on a modern wall in Iran (see fig.10.5.).

[15] Watt, 1994, p.188-9
[16] Rodger, 1958, p.262
[17] Reader, 1941, pp.197-199
[18] Victoria and Albert Museum, Print Collection, 19009

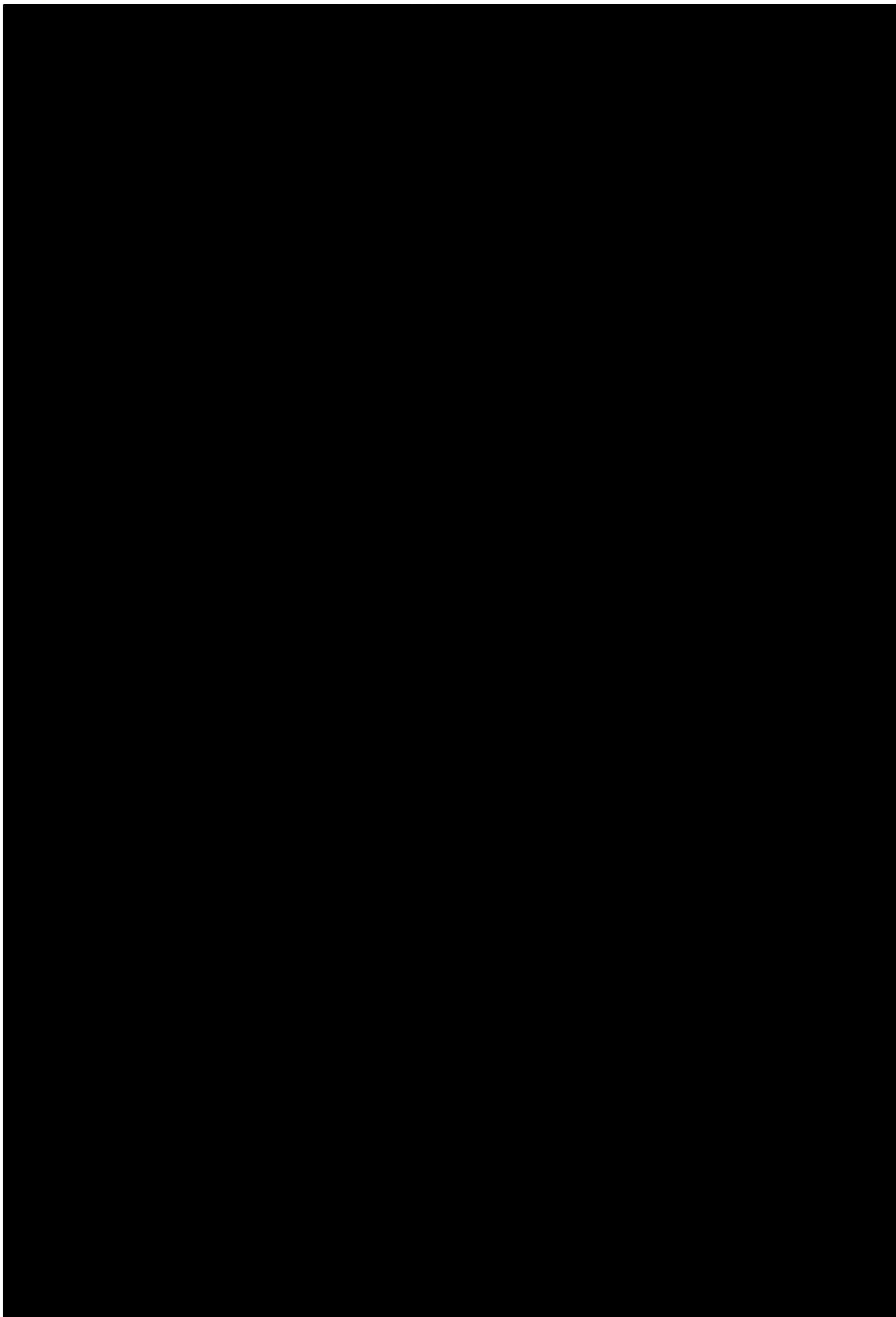

Fig.10.2 Similar patterns at 99 Westgate, Glos., Michaelchurch Court, Herefs., and Serlio prints

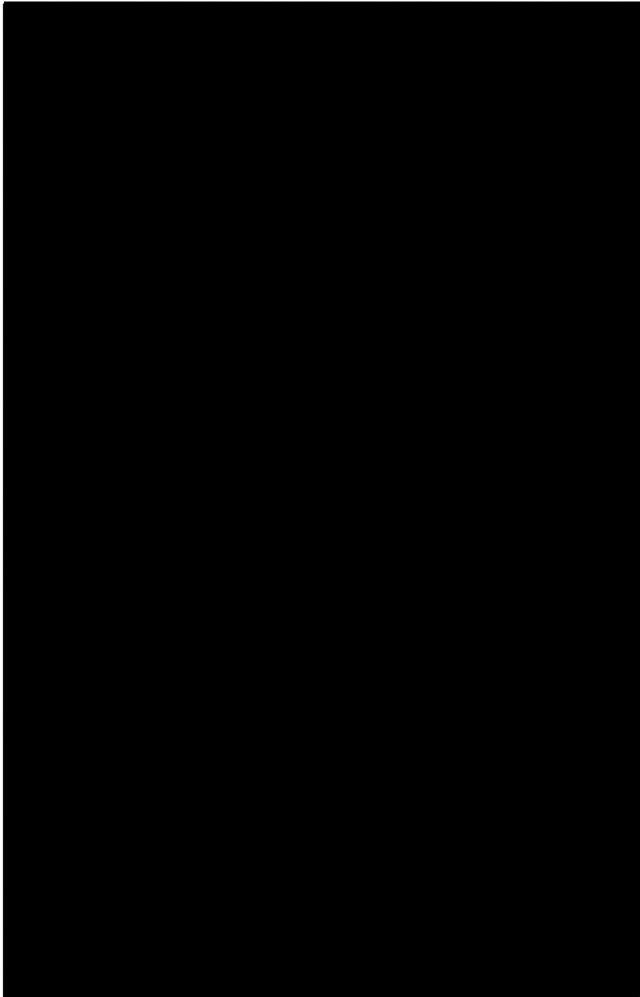

Fig.10.3 Portrait of Henry VIII by Eworth

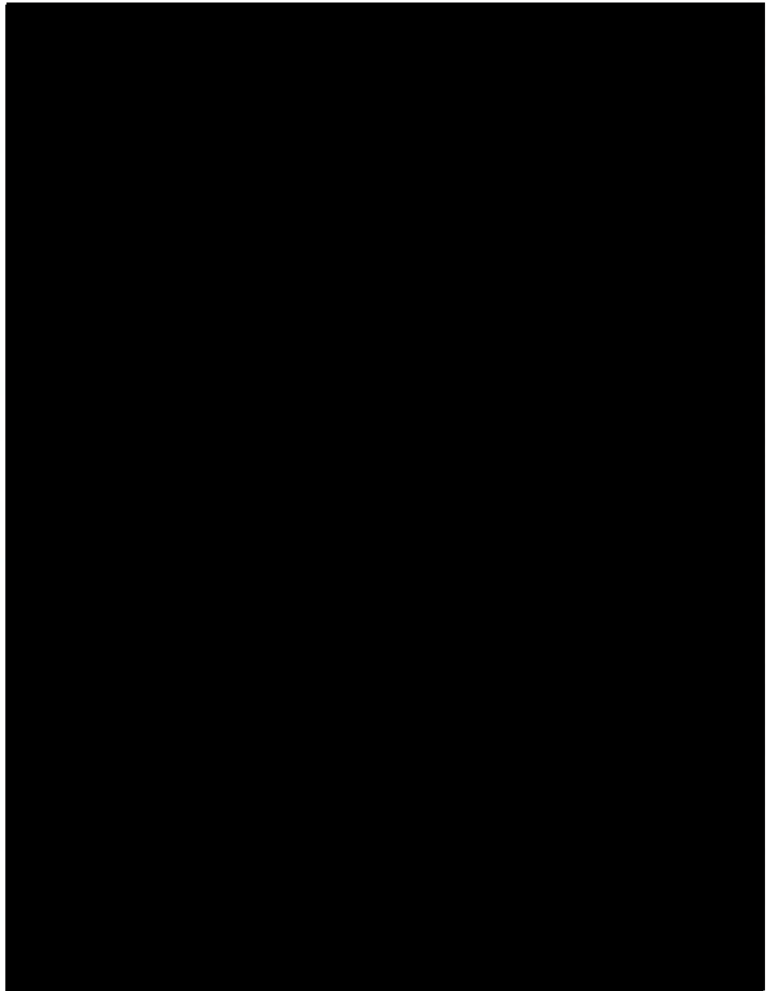

Fig.10.4 The Westminster Retable

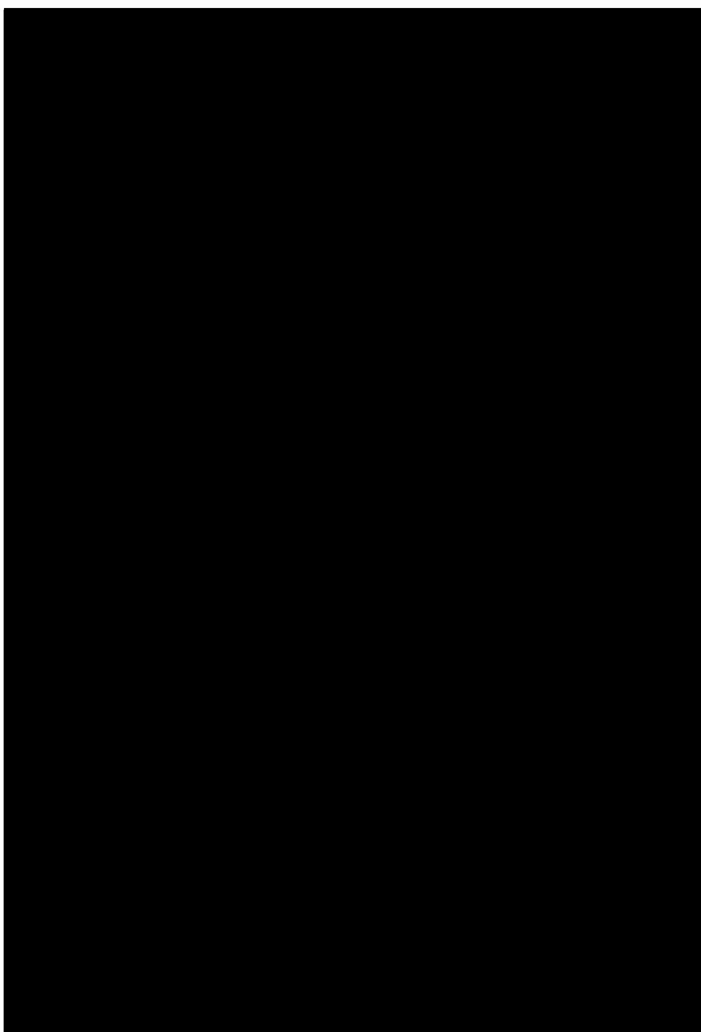

Fig.10.5 Wall decoration in Iran

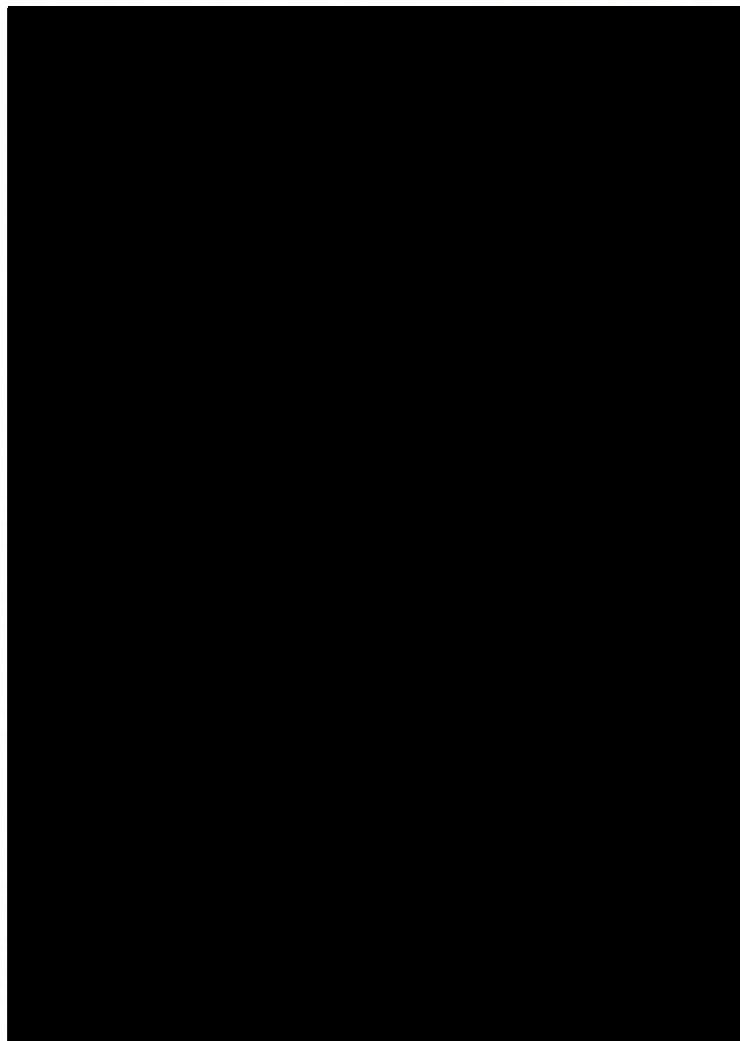

Fig.10.6 Strapwork detail from Gedde

This pattern is one of Middle Eastern origin which found its way into both the Italian and English design vocabulary long before Serlio and it highlights one of the problems in trying to identify sources. Whilst it may be possible to point to a possible source, such as a Serlio engraving, it can rarely be proved that the craftsman actually used this source. Like Walter Gedde in the early seventeenth century[19], it seems likely that Serlio collected together elements of traditional designs and reworked them. Some of these elements had already made their way across Europe in the Middle Ages. Gedde reproduces several of Serlio's basic designs, including the one in fig.10.2[20] and the additional strapwork element found in 17-19 Watergate St[21] (see fig.10.6). He probably also collected designs from a number of other sources as suggested by the subtitle of his book *'principaly serving for glasiers: and not impertinent for plasterers, and gardiners: besides sundry other professions'*. Certainly many buildings, predating his book by decades, have glazing patterns similar to those he reproduces. Owen's Mansion in Shrewsbury, dated 1588, is just one example (see fig.10.7). This point is considered further in looking at existing buildings for possible sources of design.

Fig.10.7a Comparison between 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch and Maynard's Tenterden, Kent

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Serlio's work had a major impact on English (and Welsh) designers. If not directly using Serlio as a source, it is likely that the above paintings were derived in some way from his work, perhaps by a pirated print. Evidence of a print source for 17-19 Watergate St., rather than a craftsman's interpretation of a design seen elsewhere, is supported by the similarity of the design to that at Maynard's in Tenterden, Kent. It is too close a likeness to be a coincidence (see Fig. 10.7a). Moreover similar designs occur in Suffolk[22] and one in Chepstow

[19] Gedde, 1615
[20] ibid., p.2
[21] ibid., p.38
[22] For example 28A Abbeygate, Bury St.Edmunds. Information from Andrea Kirkham

was recorded by the RCAHMW (now demolished)[23]. Whilst the elements of the design are common the juxtaposition of these elements in houses hundreds miles apart suggests a common source based on a print rather than an itinerant craftsman.

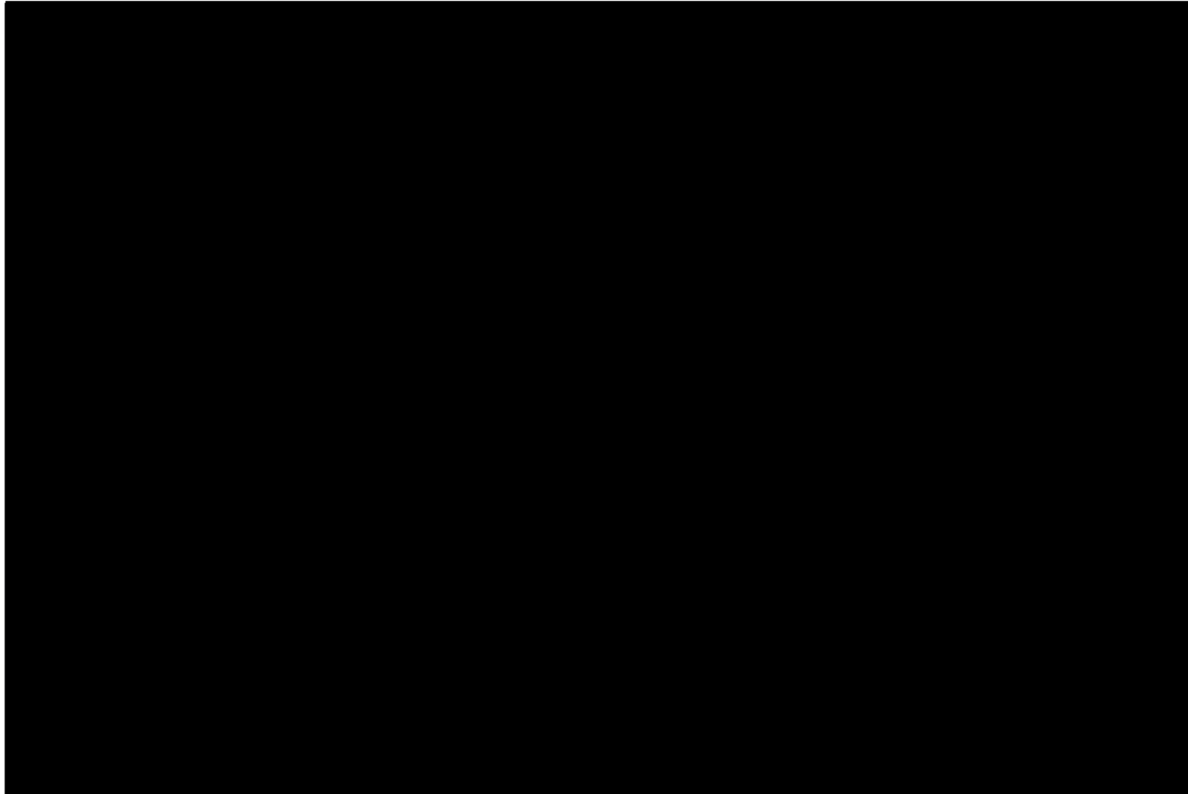

Fig.10.7 Pattern from Gedde and glazing pattern at Owen's Mansion, Shrewsbury

Books

Some of the antiquework designs may have come either from prints or possibly from title pages and book illustrations. Continental prints had a major influence on title-page designs right through the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century[24]. Whilst no direct source has been found, the paintings at Barnaby House, Ludlow [103] and 26-28 Hereford St Presteigne [232] bear a strong resemblance to crude woodcut title-pages. A compartment with putti supporting Royal Arms appears in several publications of the 1520s and 1530s[25] (see fig.10.8), which is similar to the putti supporting the roundels at Barnaby House. Grotesque work around a central baluster features in many prints with a variety of detail, the individual elements of which a craftsman could copy at will (see fig.10.9).

One title-page which has been traced as a direct source of particular importance, as it relates to one of the few dated paintings, is that of the frieze at Castellymynach, dated 1602. This is taken from the title-page (fig. 10.9) first published in 1535 and subsequently used for several books including the Bible, an almanac, Statutes, John Shute's *The first and chief groundes of architecture* in 1563 and a Welsh Prayer book in 1567[26] (see figs.10.10 and 10.11). One or other of the latter two titles would most probably have been the source, though which one and who was the owner - the craftsman or Humphrey Mathew - one can only speculate. Mathew's inventory unfortunately makes no mention of books. What is interesting is that a design that

[23] RCAHMW record for the Bush Hotel, Chepstow
[24] McKerrow and Ferguson, 1932, p.xvi
[25] ibid., p.8 and Plate 10
[26] ibid p.98 and plate 110

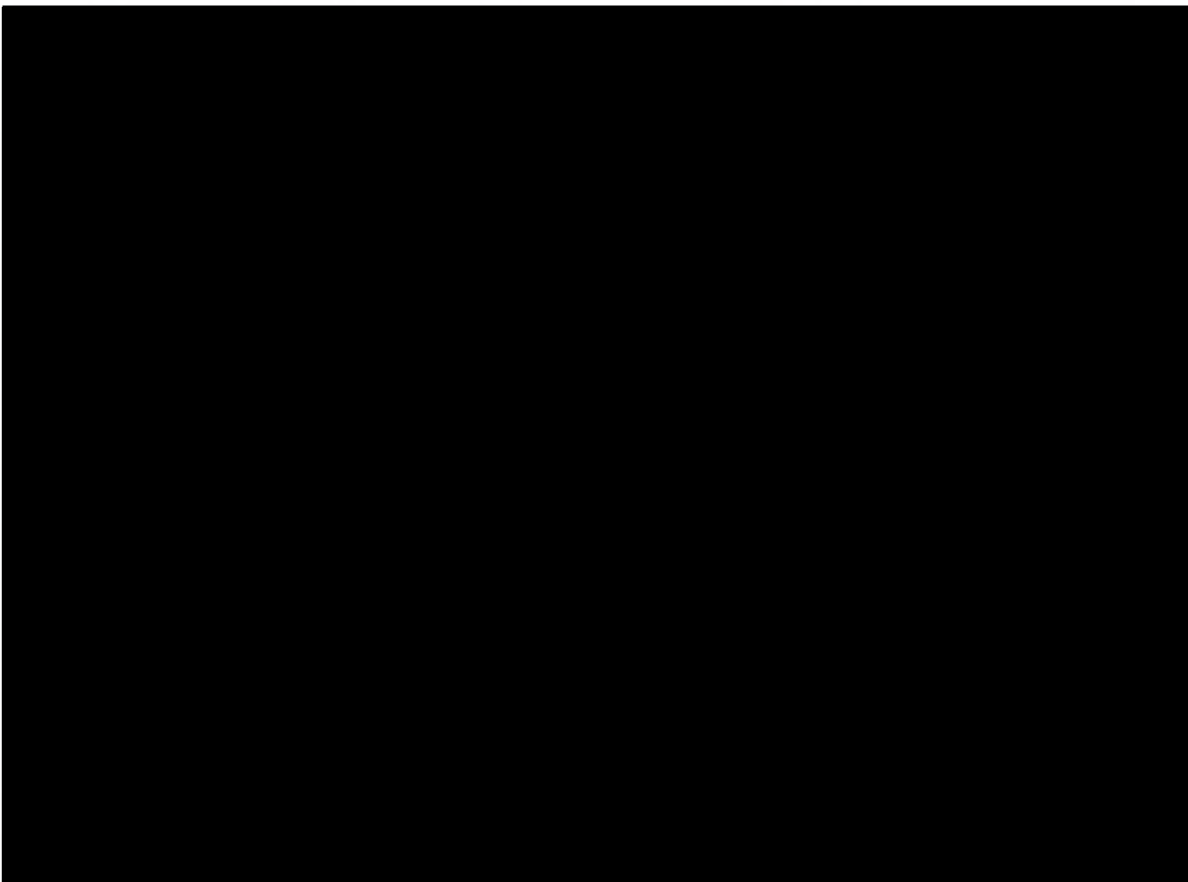

Fig.10.8-9 Title-pages, 1521& 1559 (McKerrow and Fergusen, 1932, nos.10 & 110)

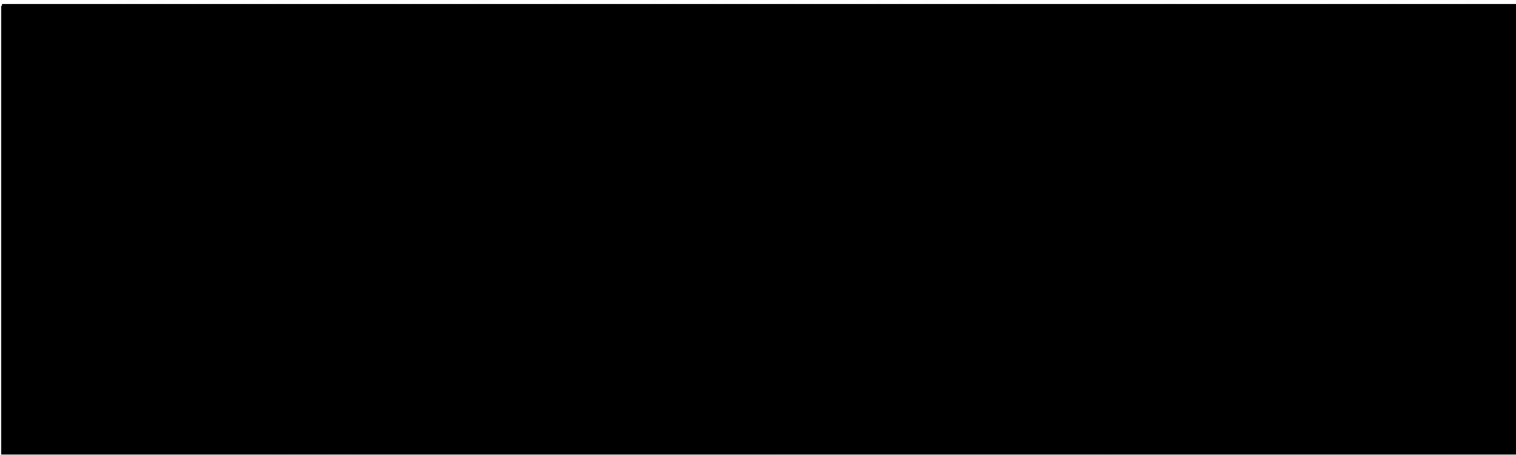

Fig.10.10 Frieze at Castellymynach (Smith, 1988, pl.86)

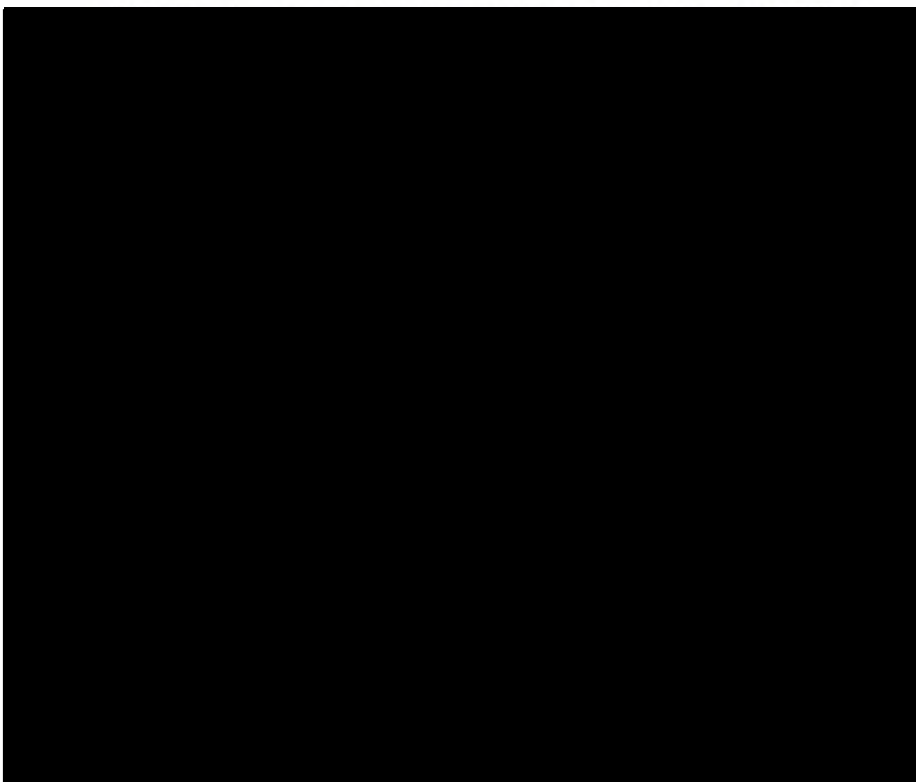

Fig.10.11 Detail of frieze at Castellymynach (reconstruction drawing by RCAHMW) and title page border

was first published in 1535 was still considered fashionable nearly seventy years later in 1602. The 'shelf-life' of designs was considerable, a fact which is confirmed in John Abbot's notebook[27].

The main panel design and other antiquework designs such as those at Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86] and Chapel Farm, Wigmore[27] were probably set out using some sort of pounce pattern which in turn could have been based on a print or title page. The craftsman would not necessarily have to own an actual print to have a pounce pattern. A design from a print would have to be enlarged first and this would then pricked through onto a more durable paper or vellum which could be used for setting out the painting. More than one pattern could be produced at a time and it may be these that circulated amongst craftsmen and which were the patterns referred to in Richard Hossall's inventory[28].

Emblem books have been identified as possible sources for decoration by several writers[29]. Their use for embroidery patterns has been widely acknowledged, the most striking evidence for which is found in Elizabeth I's wardrobe[30]. Plasterwork based on emblems is found at Blinkling Hall and emblem books have also been identified as the source for painted decoration[31]. In fact, the publisher of Alciati's *Emblematum Libellum* in 1550, specifically recommends them for this purpose:

> ... if anyone wishes to fill out what is empty, adorn what is bare, give speech in imagination to what is mute or assign thought to what is irrational, he may take from this emblem book, as from a well-stocked cupboard, something that he may inscribe or engrave on the walls of his house, the glass in his windows, on curtains, hangings, pictures, vases, statues....in short on every piece of equipment, anywhere at all[32].

Apted identified emblems from a number of sources for the ceiling of Rossend Castle, including an ostrich from Rollenhagen's *Nucleus Emblematum Selectissirorum* (1611-13)[33], (see fig.10.12). The object in the bird's beak is the clear link, rather than the portrayal of the bird. The ostrich at Cotton's House, Market Drayton [81] is painted in a very similar way to that at Rossend Castle but has no object in its beak. The one at 43-49 St Johns, Worcester has a different pose. Nevertheless the ostrich appears to be quite a popular motif and is included in a number of emblem books[34]. Any one of these could have provided the source for those found in the Marches. There is no obvious parallel source for the other animals found at Cotton's House but, as happened with the subjects prints mentioned above, the composition could be made up from a number of different sources.

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[27] Bath, 1998, p.49, 61-62
[28] See Chapter 8 and Table 8.2
[29] Freeman, pp.90-91, Bath, 1994, pp.359-370, and forthcoming book *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland,chapters 4 and 5,* Carrick, 1989, figs. 327-8 and 375-77
[30] See Ashelford, 1988, Chapter 4,
[31] Carrick, p.179-187, Apted, 1966, p.55 and Bath, forthcoming publication, *Renaissance Decorative Painting in Scotland*
[32] Alciati, 1550, p.2
[33] Apted, 1978, pp.82-83
[34] Peacham, *Emblemata Varia*, 1976, fo.11, Whitney, 1586, p.51

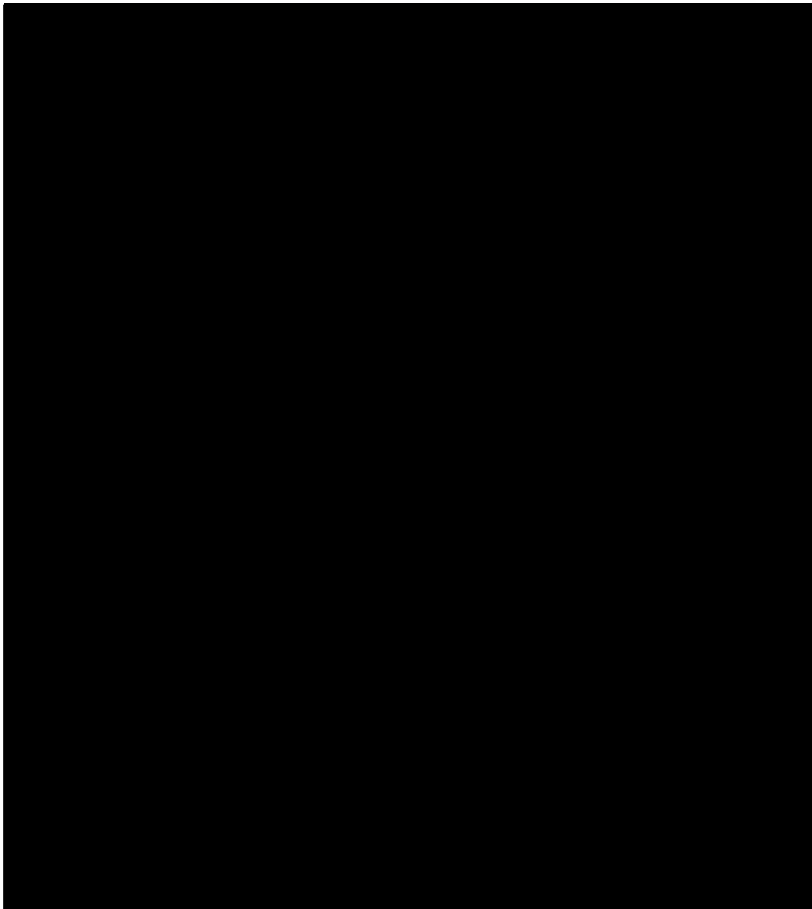

Fig.10.12 Ostrich from Wither's *Collection of Emblemes,* 1635

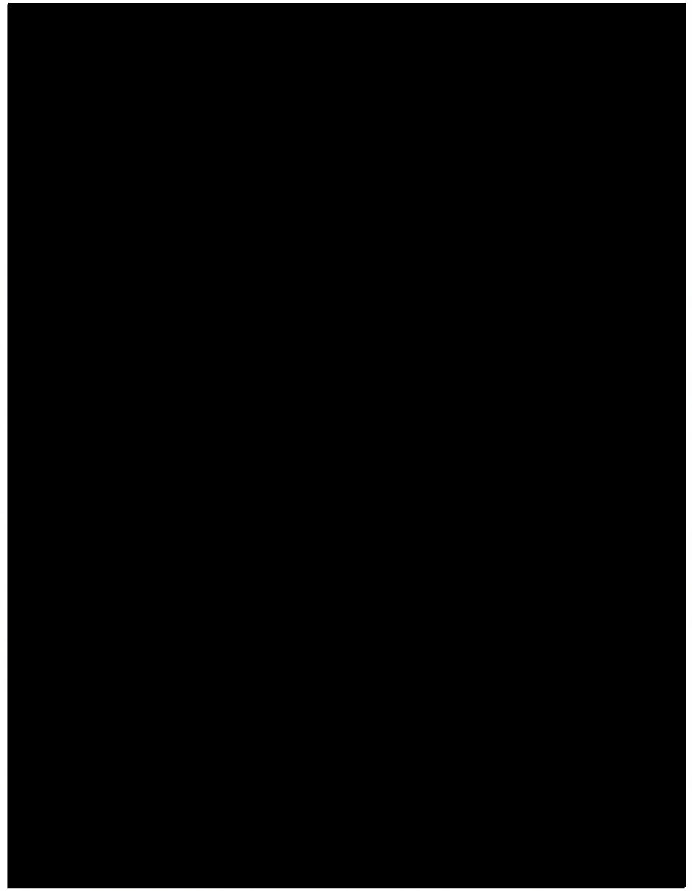

Fig.10.14 Snake from Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes,* 1586

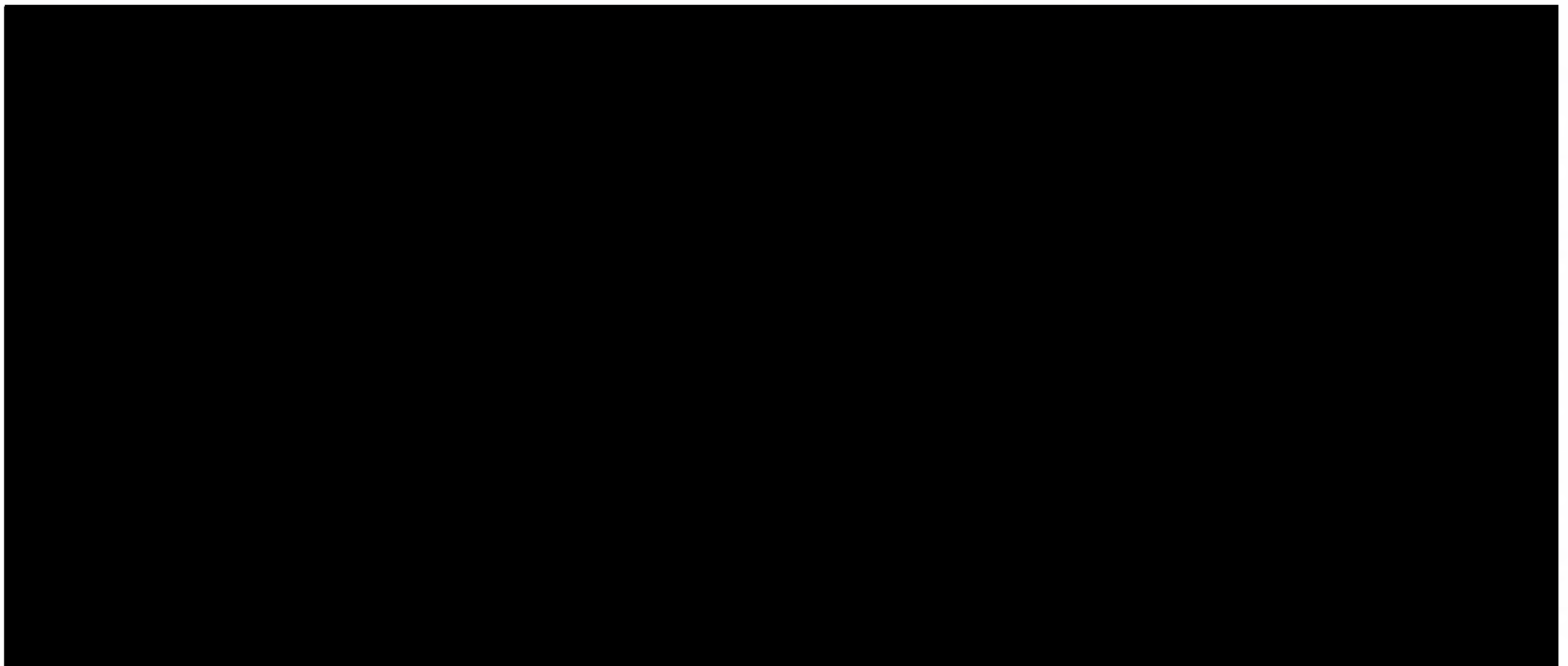

Fig.10.13 Detail from Beale's Corner and Fox from Whitney's, *A Choice of Emblemes,* 1586

At Beale's Corner in Bewdley [181], the complexity of the iconography suggests some allegorical or symbolic elements. No print source has been identified but as with other compositions, this painting could encapsulate a number of images from different sources, one of which may well be emblematic. The scene with the fox is reminiscent of the story of the fox and grapes in Aesop's *Fables* although no illustration in a contemporary edition has been found with a similar picture. However, Whitney's emblem based on this features a fox in a vineyard with trellis work very like that at Beale's Corner (see fig.10.13). The angle of the fox's leap is almost identical. Also in Whitney is a coiled snake, although the similarities are not so striking here (see fig.10.14).

If isolated elements are extracted, then emblem book sources could be feasible for a number of other paintings – a hare, a lute, archery figures. They were part of the visual currency of the period and, as such, candidates for sources. It is questionable whether the original significance was still current in elements of emblems taken out of context. This is considered further in the next chapter when the meanings embodied in the emblems are discussed.

Other books which provided a source for craftsmen were pattern books which have been discussed in Chapter 8 and those comprising sets of prints have already been mentioned above. Often designed for a specific medium they were used extensively by a range of craftsmen, as noted in relation to Gedde's *Book of Sundry Draughtes*. Apart from Shorelyker's pattern book for embroiderers, Thomas Trevelyon published patterns principally for embroidery in 1608 and 1616 but, again, these could have been collected from other sources and they could be used in other media[35]. Embroidered slips were used in appliqué work (see fig.10.15) and this form of design appears in painted decoration where a flower motif fills a compartment as in 17-19 Watergate St, Whitchurch [87 and 88] or in the panelling at 6-7 Dogpole, Shrewsbury [120]. Equally possible is that these were derived from a herbal, as the illustrations in Gerard's *Herball*, for example or Peter Treveris' *The Grete Herbal*, follow a similar convention (Roger Ward had a copy of Treveris and an old Dutch Herbal in his stock).

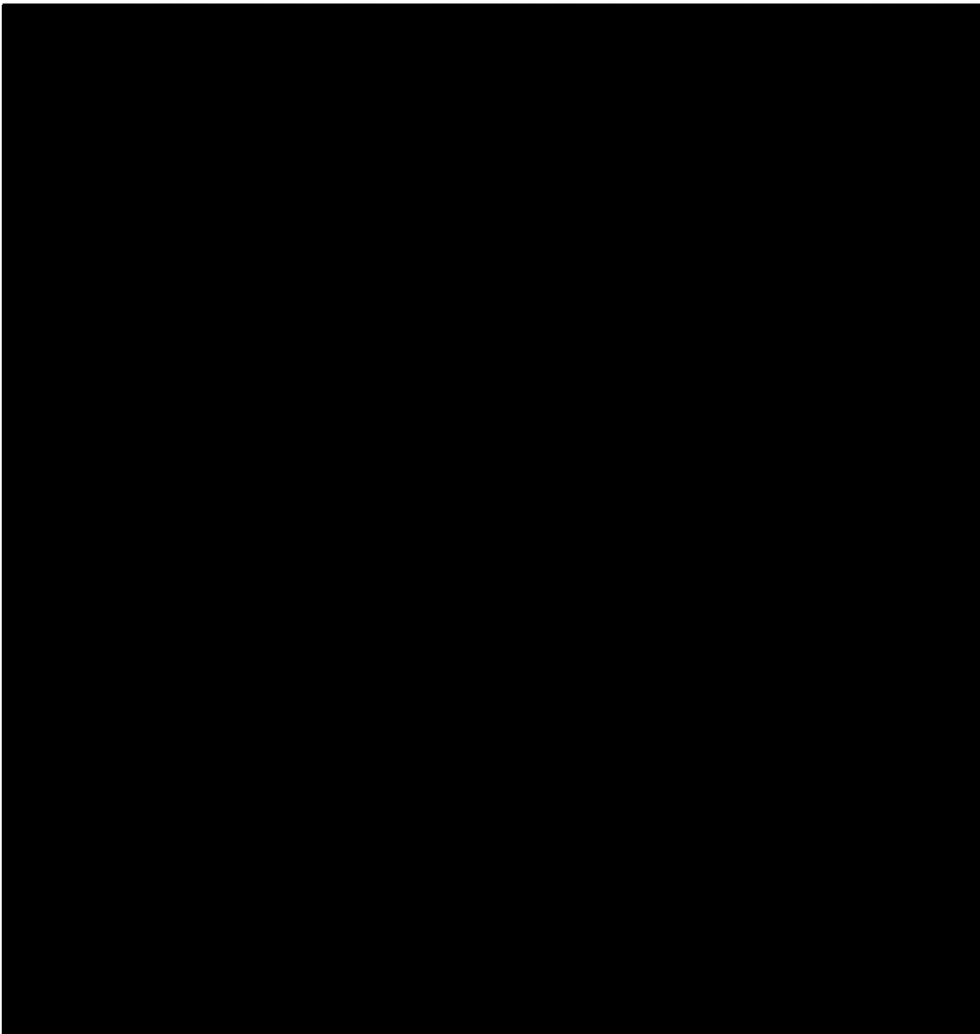

Fig.10.15 Embroidery slips in the Victoria and Albert Museum (King and Levey 1993)

The Bible provided the main source for texts found in friezes, many copies of which would be found in the community. Sternhold and Hopkins' *Booke of Psalmes collected into English Meeter*, 1549-1562 was the source for part of the text in the

[35] Nevinson, 1938-40, p.3

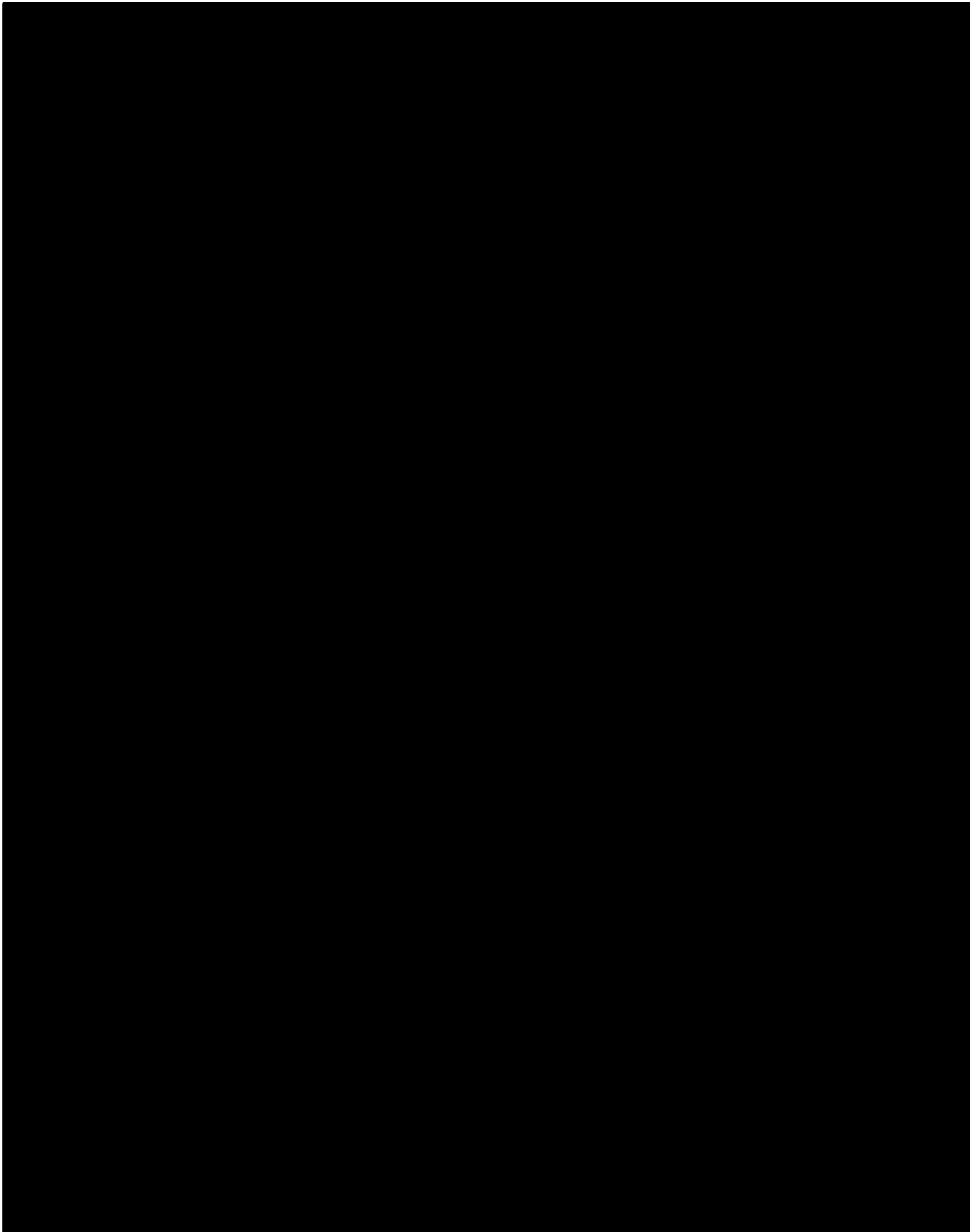

Fig.10.16 Text borders at 5 Honey Hill, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, Town Council Offices, Ledbury, Herefs. and Old Sontley, Denbs.

Town Council Offices in Ledbury [42]. Where this is used the regular rhythm is more appealing than the remainder of the text which is taken from Proverbs, using the *Geneva Bible*, 1557-1560 and Psalm 111 from the Psalter printed to go with the first Prayer Book of Edward IV, 1549.[36] The fact that three sources were used

[36] Sources researched by Lilian Sanders, 1991.

suggests that the owner was very specific in what he wanted. The quote from Aubrey given in Chapter 4[37] suggests Psalms were very popular for texts on painted cloths.

Many other texts are too fragmentary to identify. Homely wisdom and moralising instructions are meted out in rhyming couplets. These may have been taken from ballads, emblem books or possibly they were well-known sayings current in popular culture. The similarity of the black-lettering to printed text has been noted by Watt[38]. Interestingly, these homilies are often framed in the same strapwork design which is found elsewhere in the country, for example at Pittleworth Manor in Hampshire, in Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk (see fig.10.16),Old Sontley [191] and the Town Council Offices, Ledbury [42]) suggesting a common source or a popular convention for framing texts.

Ballad sheets

The other main print source, the one most widely available, was that of ballad sheets. Hundreds of these are likely to have been in circulation in a community at any one time, either at home or in inns and alehouses (see Chapter 4), easily accessible for craftsman and patron alike. Covering a wide range of subjects, the illustrations offered enormous potential as source material. Landscapes and seascapes could be directly copied with or without the additional 'event 'of the illustration. Individual figures could be used clad in fashionable clothes, working clothes or in some identifying costume, such as that of a cleric. Soldiers in contemporary garb or dressed as ancient Romans could be selected, with accompanying weaponry and chariots. Everyday images of houses, church, town and village scenes, including animals, were depicted with ordinary folk going about their daily business or engaged in a range of events. Fig.10.17 illustrates a typical example which would have been available to the craftsman. The painter of the seascape at Castellymynach [209] would not necessarily have needed a familiarity with ships or the sea, although the ships in this paintings are very well executed and suggest a more accomplished painter than most. The archery figures at The Geddes, Pencraig [21] could well have been copied from a ballad illustration as could any of the 'portrait' figures. The crudeness of the woodcuts is echoed in the wall painting figures suggesting this form of depiction was the norm, even at quite a high social level.

Intricate moresque patterns, reminiscent of Geminus' designs form the borders found on most ballad sheets. These are also found as borders on several of the emblem books and as incidental decoration in many published books. Derivatives from these could form the basis for any number of purely ornamental designs (see fig.10.18).

Shropshire Scroll

A design which has been found in sixteen separate houses in one limited area surely had a common source but so far the origin of the distinctive scroll pattern found in Shropshire has been elusive. An immediate and obvious explanation would be that they were all done by the same painter but the similarities between the paintings

[37] Section on painted cloths
[38] Watt, 1994, p.192

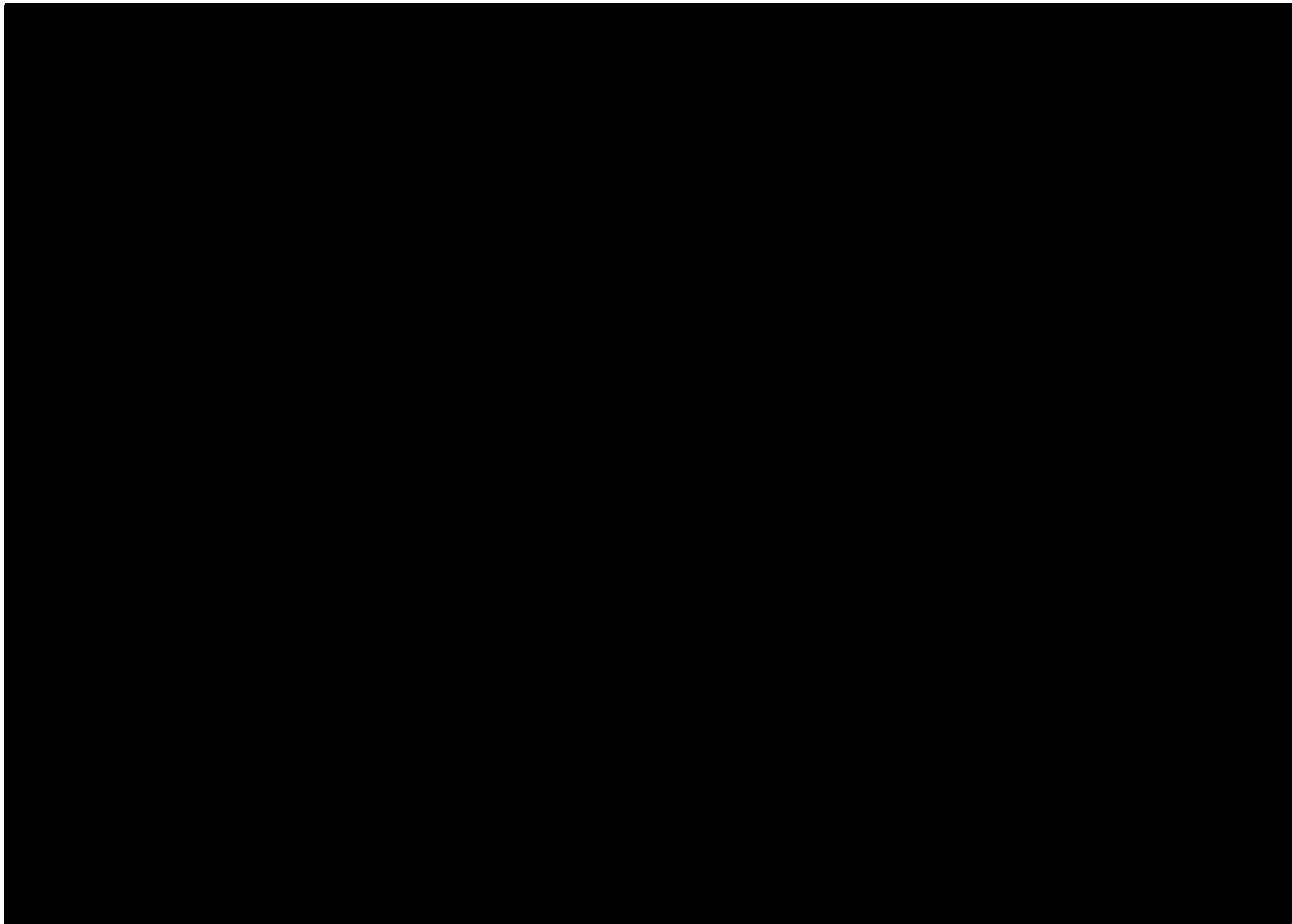

Fig.10.17 Typical ballad sheet

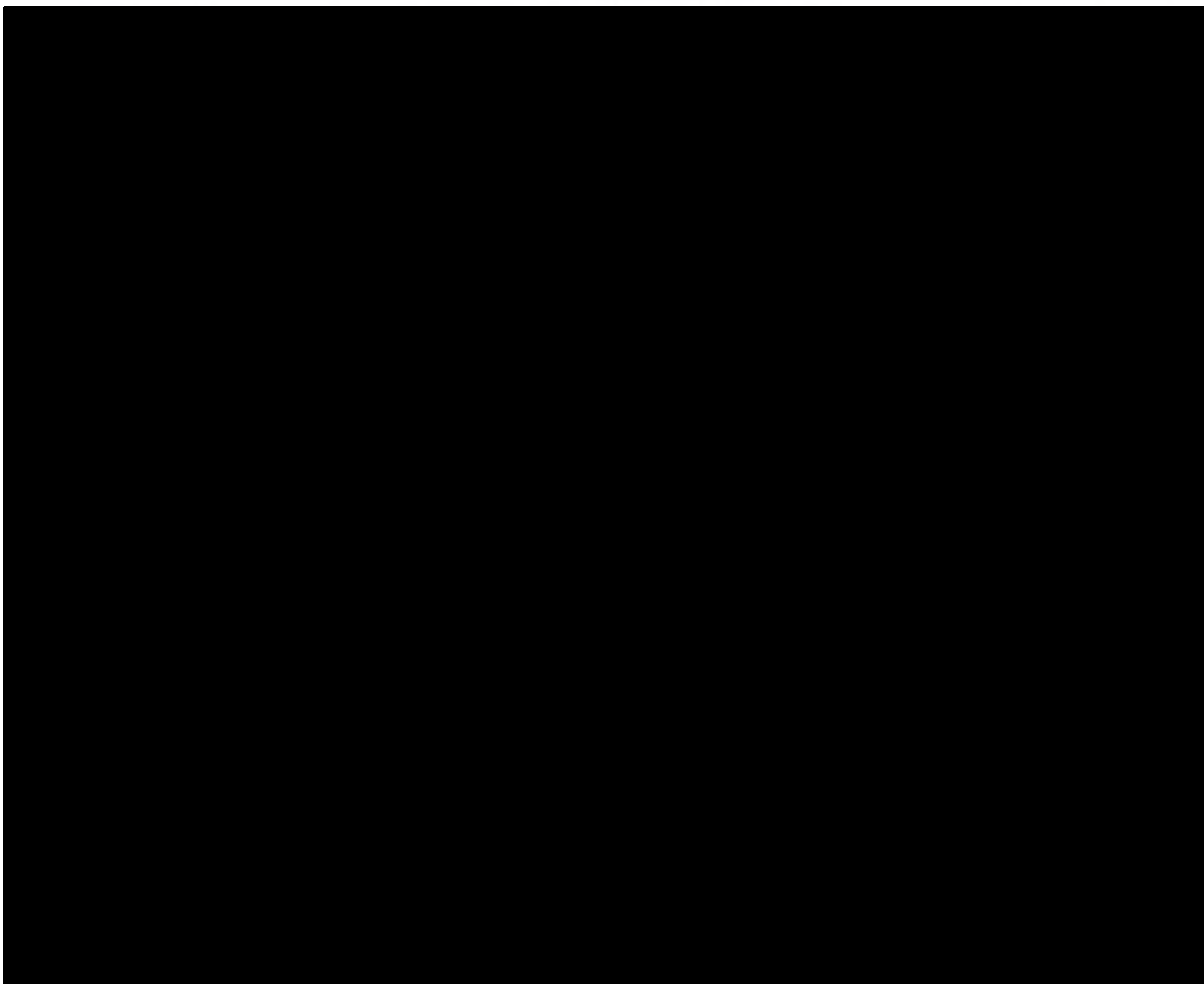

Fig.10.18 Moresque border of ballad sheet

ends with the design. The quality, character and detail of the execution vary in each case. Another explanation may be that house owners copied one from another but that would not explain why there are so many of one particular design rather than any other. In Essex, where there are a number of buildings with a similar design – that of interlinked circles – a pattern book source can be traced, in this case Gedde, and in Suffolk there are similar interlaced moresque designs in several houses which have parallels elsewhere in the country and are derived from early Middle Eastern sources.

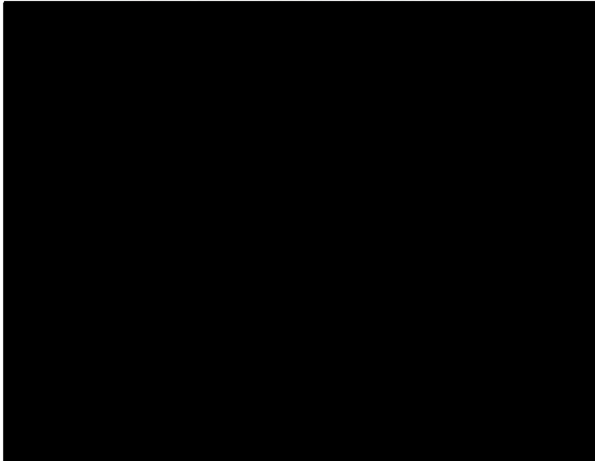

Fig.10.19 Byzantine scroll pattern (Glazier,1995, p.32)

The stylized flowers in full, half and quarter flower forms were part of the traditional design vocabulary but the nearest source which has been identified for the scroll work is Byzantine (see fig.10.19) which is unlikely to be the one used by local craftsmen. Echoes of the design are seen in medieval ironwork, embroidery and manuscript illuminations but none exactly reproduce the design. The only other clue is the hatching which is found in some of the paintings. This is reminiscent of a printed illustration, although no print or title page has been discovered bearing any resemblance to this. Hatching is found on many antiquework paintings, suggesting their print origin but it could also have developed as a convention in painting any decorative design even on paintings taken from other sources. Its origin remains a mystery.

Textiles

In 1598-9 Leonard Fryer was paid £40 8s 4d ' for layinge and newe workinge xviij yerdes square of *Draperie* worke upon a brycke and plastered wall' (my italics) at Whitehall[39]. Exactly what this was is not known but it reveals, uncontroversially, that textile patterns were used as a basis for wall painting design. Drapers were more likely to deal in woven textiles than embroidered ones, giving some clue as to the type of design which this might refer to.

Woven textiles

Woven textiles are characterised by their repeat pattern symmetrical about a central axis. They were produced in strips about two feet wide, several strips being sewn together when a wider piece of fabric was required or, for decorative purposes, when alternating, contrasting fabrics were used (called paning). A wide range of designs could be produced although large motifs such as the artichoke and pomegranate set

[39] Quoted in Croft-Murray, 1962, p.27

about a meandering stem were common for high status fabrics. Of Middle Eastern origin, these designs were popular in this country from the second quarter of the fifteenth century until near the end of the seventeenth century.[40]

Many of the expensive cut velvets, damasks and other rich fabrics that were imported from the continent feature these designs. As luxury materials for the rich, they were used for hangings, furnishing and large element clothing such as capes. Fig.10.20 shows their use in contemporary settings. No higher recommendation as to its standing could be given than the selection by royalty of these fabrics for their clothing of state, as illustrated in figs.10.21 and 10.22. Given this context, they were reminiscent of opulence and splendour and therefore much sought after as imitative design. It is not surprising therefore to find representations of these fabrics painted on the walls of houses, such as Althrey Hall [197] and Dippersmoor Manor [66]. Fragments of pomegranate motifs have been identified at 99 Westgate, Gloucester [10] and Shootrough Farm [125]. Here the painting is incomplete but the overall size can be estimated from the half of the pattern that exists.

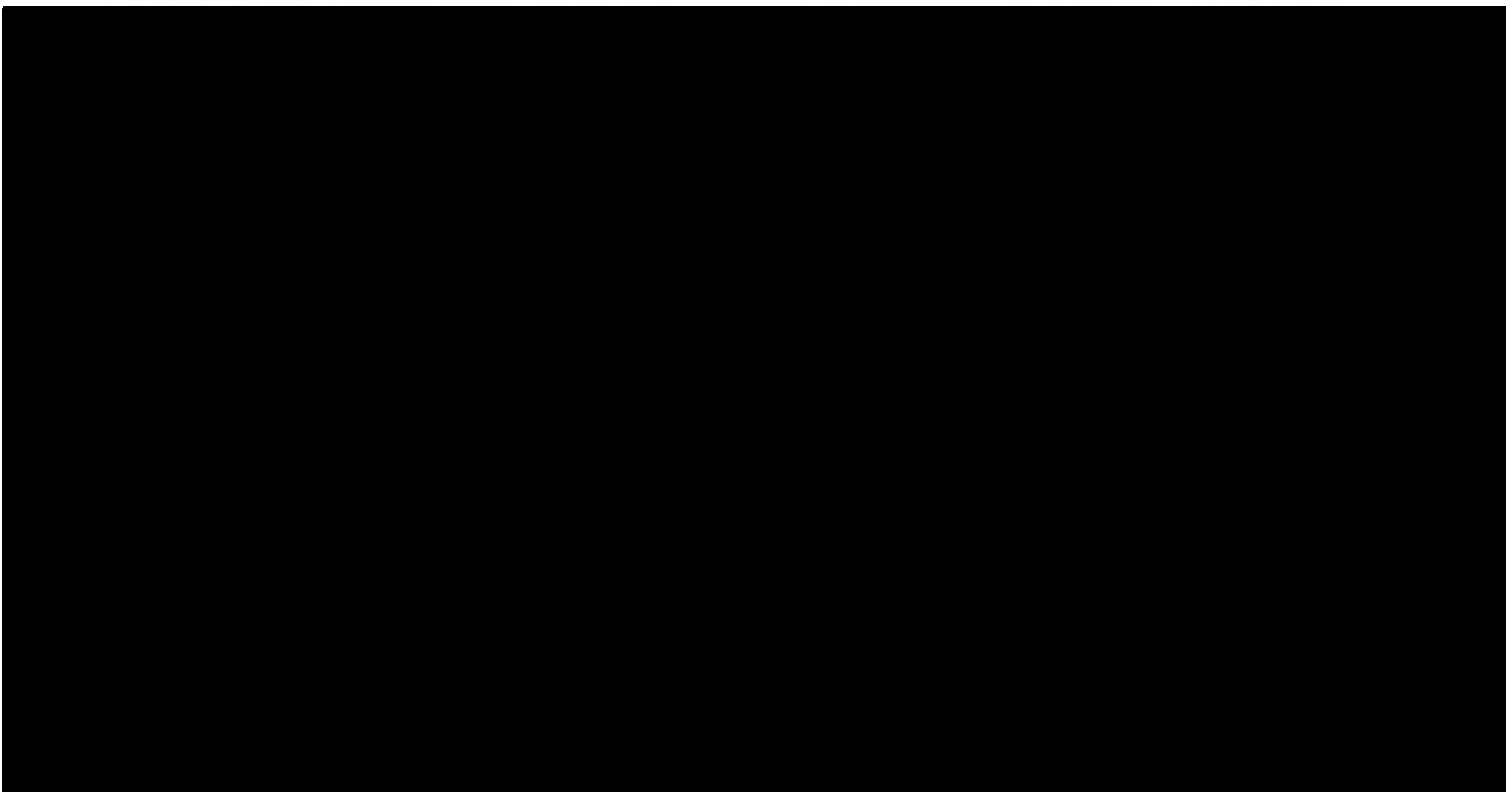

Fig.10.20 Woodcuts showing textile hangings

At the vernacular level, it is highly unlikely that an original imported fabric would be the source for a craftsman to copy. Such fabrics were not listed in the inventories of local merchants nor were they likely to be sold by travelling chapmen. They would be too expensive. Some high status houses may have had such fabrics which could be copied or they could have featured in the trappings of the Council of the Marches (see Chapter 3). Equally possible is that a painted cloth provided the source or a printed counterfeit cloth, which reproduced the pattern of the more expensive cloth by printing on material such as fustian or linen using a woodblock. In the 1490s a petition was filed involving a leading London carver, James Hales, who had not completed the carving of an altar table he had been paid for, the reason allegedly being that he had been engaged:

[40] I am grateful to Clare Brown of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Textile Dept. for this information.

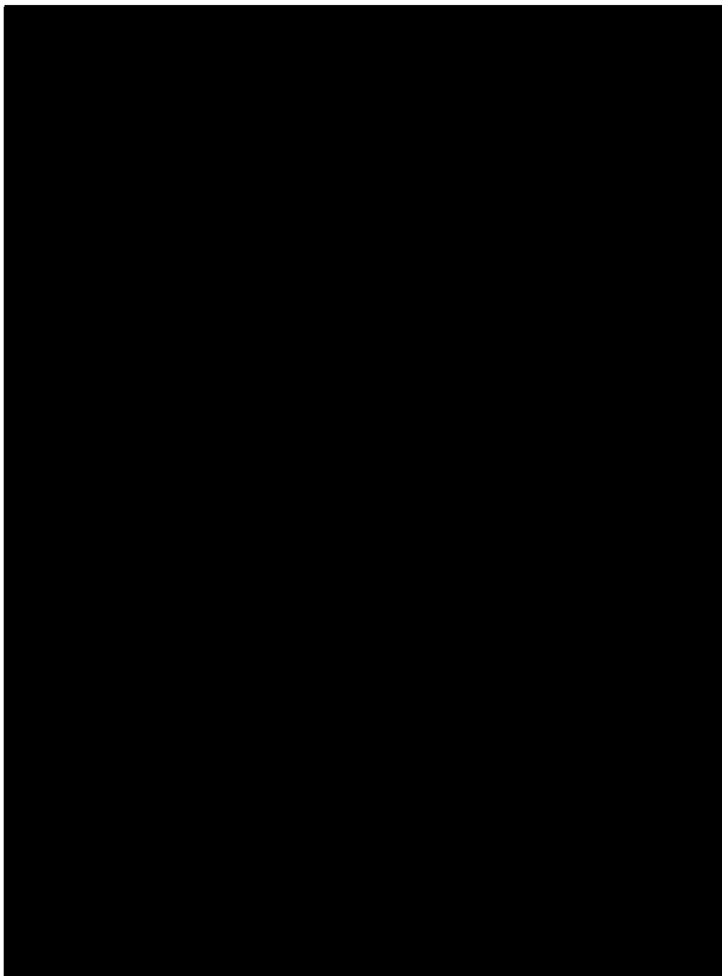

Fig.10.21 Portrait of Henry VII (Hearne 1995)

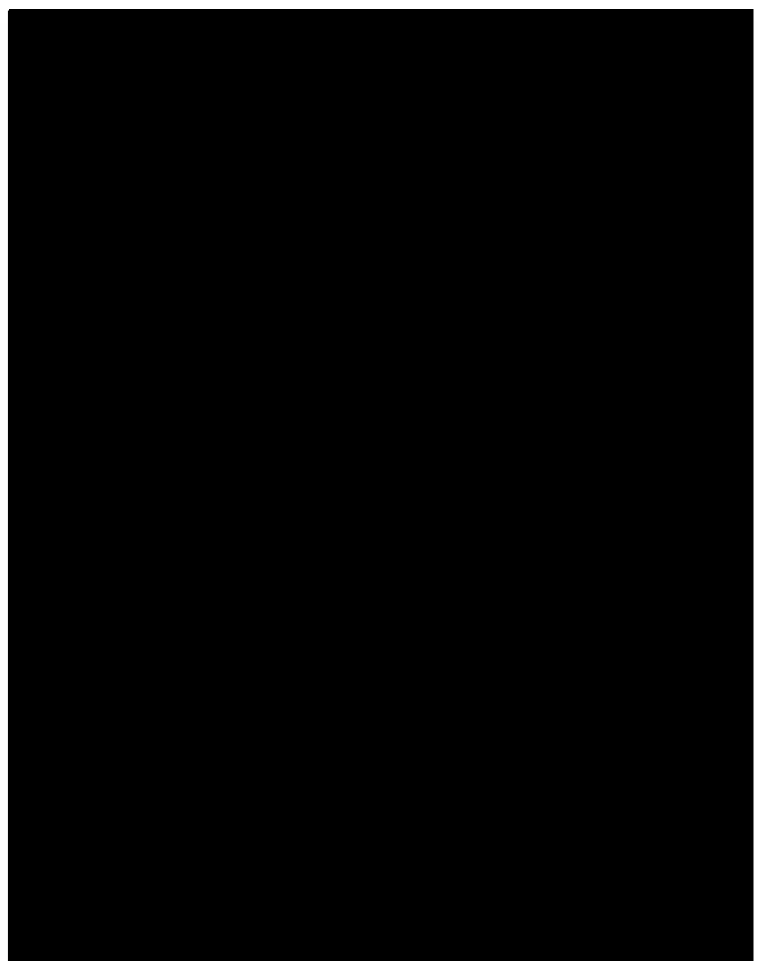

Fig.10.22 Portrait of Princess Elizabeth (Hearne 1995)

About a full deseitfull occupacion to make fustions with werkes to be like damaske wherby many a person is deceyved, for therby hit is sold for dowble the price and yet hit is never the better in effect to the werer but occasion of pride. And many a simple body is disceyved so therby that they bye hit for silk.[41]

'Fustions with werkes' refers to patterned cloth such as the printed fustian surviving in the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1530 (see fig.10.23), also featuring large stylized flower motifs. These were still being produced in 1600.[42] Much cheaper than the imported damasks and velvets these would almost certainly have been available via local merchants, the chapman and at country fairs. It would be possible to make a pounce pattern from a piece of such a cloth, without destroying it, though there is no evidence that this was done.

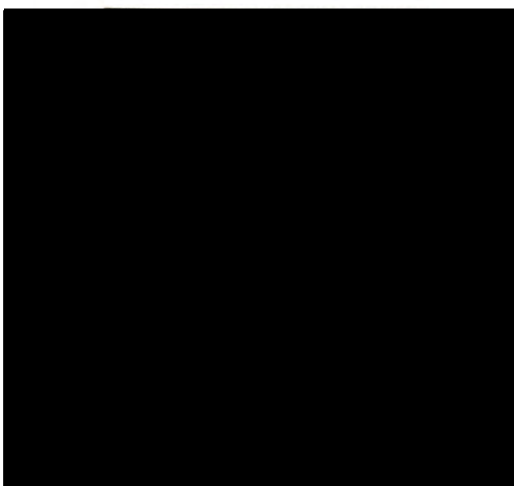

Fig.10.23 Printed fustian in Victoria and Albert Museum

[41] Quoted in Mitchell and Sonday, 2000, p.99
[42] ibid, p.106

Given the widespread appeal of these fabrics it is not unusual to find similar examples elsewhere in the country but the similarity between the design at Althrey Hall [197] with that at 18 High St, Halstead in Essex is remarkable (see fig.10.24). In both of these a pomegranate-based imitation fabric is alternated with one having a white diamond pattern with a red flower at the centre of each diamond on a black ground. Perhaps it is coincidence or possibly a common source was used that has not been identified.

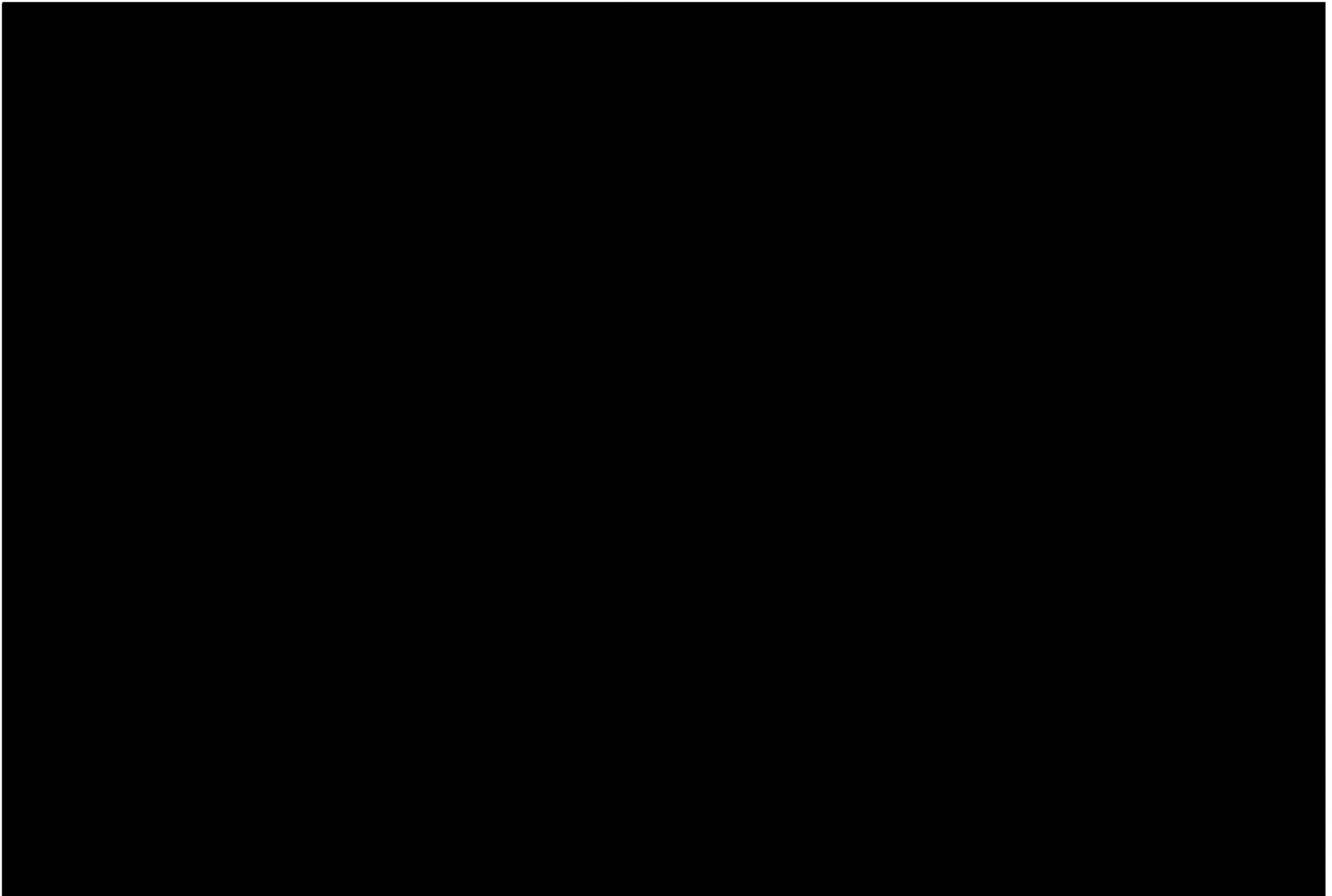

Fig.10.24 Comparison between Althrey Hall and 18 High St, Halstead, Essex

Occasionally plain stripes are found decorating the walls of a room, as at Althrey Hall in another first floor room [196], Harvington Hall [68] and Upper Dolley [230]. These may be imitation paned hangings. At the Vyne, Hampshire, there is a small closet with vertical black and white stripes with a scalloped top as though this was an imitation paned hanging hung on nails. There is a reference to a hanging probably for this room, but then the painted stripes would be underneath. It has been suggested that this may be for basic decoration when the tapestries were stored away in the lord's absence[43]. In the case of Althrey Hall, there is a decorative frieze featuring fruits which would make more sense in juxtaposition with a tapestry than the plain stripes.

[43] Annabel Westman, paper given at the conference on *The Tudor and Stuart Interior*, Victoria and Albert Museum, February 2002

Embroidered textiles

Embroidery allowed a much freer design which was not constrained either by the width of a loom or the need for a repeat symmetrical pattern and it was therefore suitable for overall design. In addition to the embroidered slips mentioned above,

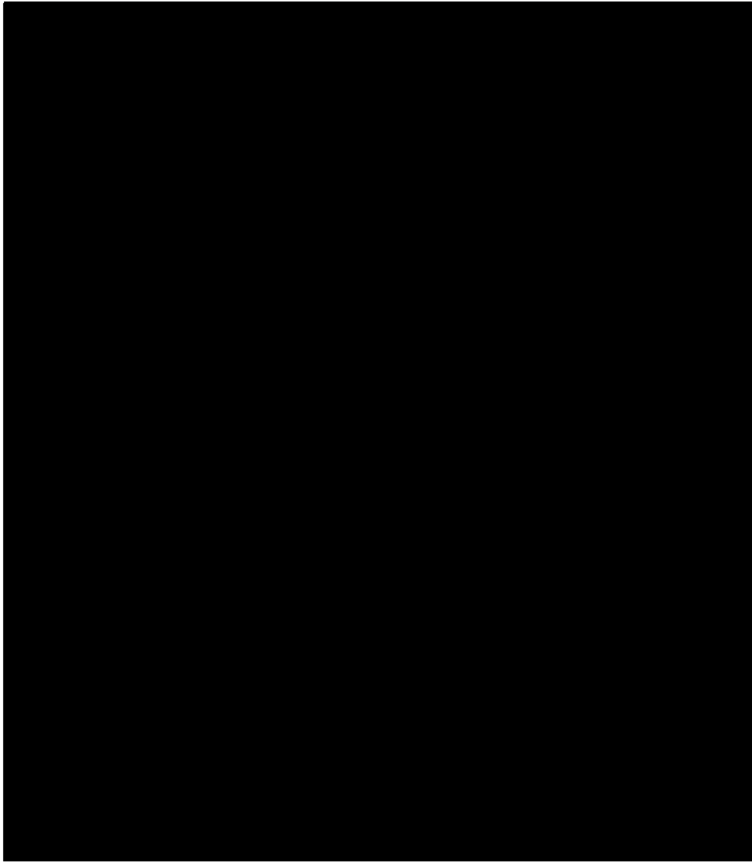

Fig.10.25 Embroidery design in the Victoria and Albert Museum (King and Levey, 1993, no.53)

Fig.10.26 Blackwork design from Trevelyon

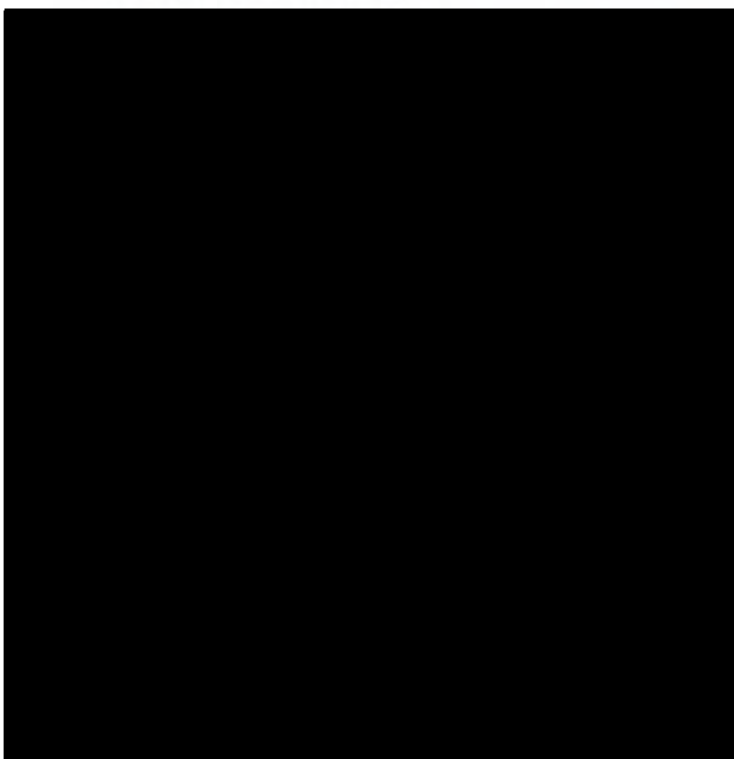

Fig.10.27 Jane Bostock's sampler, Victoria and Albert Museum (King and Levey, 1993, no.47)

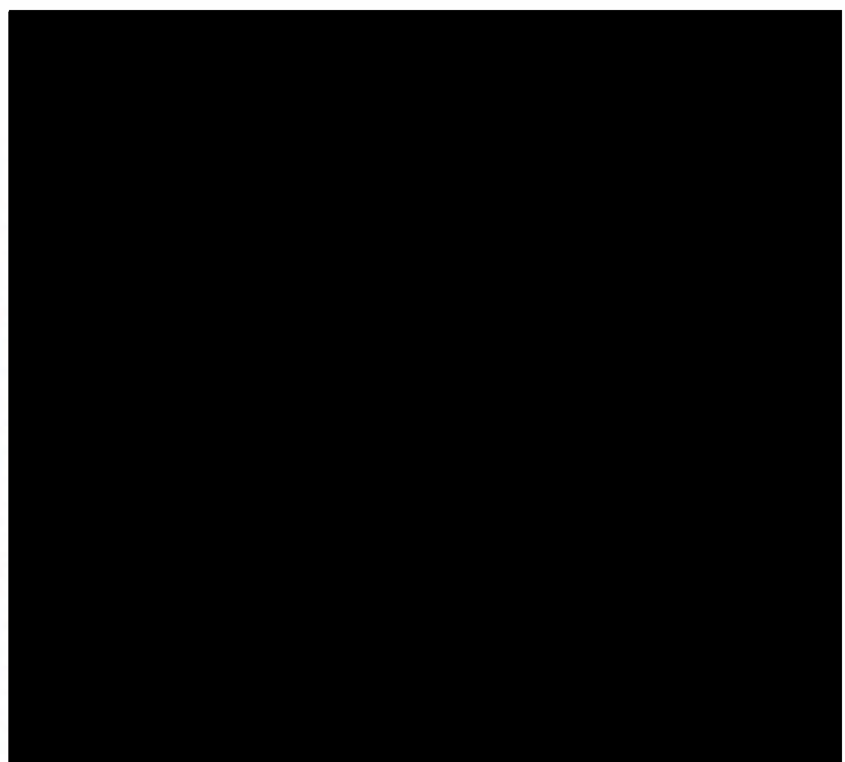

Fig.10.28 Reproduction of painted cloth at Bayleaf Hall, Weald and Downland Museum

large scale overall patterning was used, such as that in the large chapel at Harvington Hall [165] which is similar in character to a typical domestic embroidery design. (see fig.10.25). Blackwork designs appear to have been the basis for some simple wall paintings such as that at Hall Farm, Ditton Priors [153], which looks like one of Trevelyon's patterns (see fig.10.26) and that at Brick House, Adforton [49]. Embroidery would have been an important skill for women at vernacular level to acquire - they would have made cushions and furnishings as well as clothes. Samplers were used for testing out designs such as Jane Bostock's sampler of 1599, (fig.10.27) combining medieval patterns with Renaissance strapwork and stylized floral motifs. Regardless of the original source for embroidery design, all these decorative elements would have been available locally to draw on for wall painting patterns.

Existing hangings

A likely source, possibly a major source, which is also now lost is that of painted cloths. From the fragments that survive and contemporary references it is evident that the subjects were similar to wall painting. In the Victoria and Albert Museum the fragment of the painted cloth from Lockers features imitation panelling with a jewel motif in the centre. The painted cloth at Bayleaf Hall in the Weald and Downland Museum, a reproduction based on evidence found in the house, features the large scale stylized flower motif, (see fig.10.28) whilst the Draper's Company chose antiquework for the painted cloth that decorated their hall (see Chapter 8). Shakespeare makes several references to painted cloths including a hunting scene, Nine Worthies, the Prodigal Son and Lazarus, all subjects which are found in wall painting. William Bullein in *A Dialogue against the Fever Pestilence,* 1573, describes in detail the 'faire clothes with many wise saiynges painted upon them' found in an inn. These include religious, historical, moralising, anti-papist and allegorical subjects.[44] Mander and Baker have detailed inventories which also include historical, allegorical and religious subjects [45].

The religious or moralising texts they contain are also referred to in several sources. In *As You Like It* Orlando replies :

> ...I answer you right painted cloth, from whence you have studied your questions.[46]

The quote by Aubrey in relation to the old fashioned house he visited is given in Chapter 4[47]. He refers to the painted cloth containing godly sentences taken from the Psalms, 'according to the pious custome of old times', suggesting a widespread practice. Harrison helpfully details the typical subjects for painted cloths found in Essex:

> The wals of our houses on the inner sides in the like sort be either hanged with tapisterie, arras worke or painted cloths,

[44] Bullein, 1578, pp.80-95
[45] Mander, 1997, pp.125-126, Baker, 1937, p.137 and p.158
[46] Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act III, Sc 2, 291-293
[47] Dick, 1960, p.118

wherin either diverse histories, or hearbes, beasts, knots, and such like are stained[48].

An early sixteenth century German painted cloth, fig.10.29 might indicate one type of design which was found in painted cloths in England, for it is known that they were imported on a large scale, although the main source was the Netherlands. The volume of imports led to rioting in 1517 when disaffected Londoners looted the houses of alien craftsmen. Their leader, John Lincoln, complained that:

> "..the Duchemen bring over Iron, Tymber, lether and Weynskot ready wrought, as Nayles, Lockes, Baskettes, Cubbordes, Stooles, Tables, Chestes, girdles, with pointes, saddles and painted clothes so that if it were wrought here, Englishemen might have some worke and lyvinge by it."[49]

Even allowing for the highly protectionist nature of the craftsmen's guilds, there still seems to have been a problem as the Painter-Stainers were complaining:

> Painting of Cloths is decayed, and not an hundred Yards of new Painted Cloth made in a Year here by reason of so much Painted Flanders pieces brought from thence.[50]

Shakespeare's reference in Henry IV, part II, is to a *German* hunting, suggesting an imported cloth, which the iconography of the hunting scene at New Hall [83] corroborates.

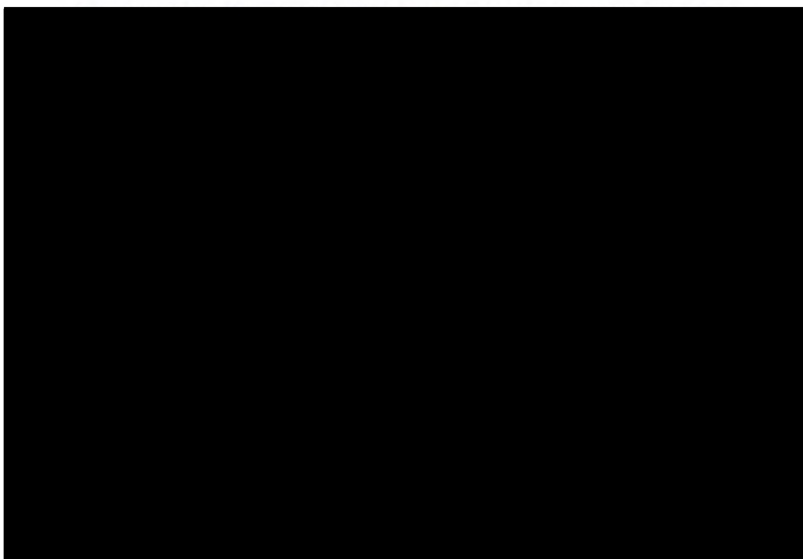

Fig.10.29 German painted cloth (Greysmith, 1976)

The quality was likely to be similar to that found in wall paintings; that is, extremely variable. Some were stencilled, others were printed, especially later ones and many were done freehand, presumably using the same range of techniques as for wall painting. Whilst there is evidence (from probate inventories) of their popularity declining during the second half of the sixteenth century and at least into the first quarter of the seventeenth century, painted cloths of widely varying designs would have been readily accessible to craftsmen. It would be surprising if these were not used as a source for wall painting.

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48 Harrison, 1877, p.235
49 Whibley, 1904, vol. I, p.156
50 Tawney and Power, 1953, vol.I, p.138

Tapestries were expensive, and even Bess of Hardwick bought some of hers second-hand[51]. Only one of the north Shropshire inventories mentions an 'arras'[52]. Nevertheless, the form, if not the detail, was copied, possibly from a painted cloth rather than the real thing. Typically tapestries had a border all round often of 'fruitages' with a main panel containing the story. 'Forest work' including a hunting scene, verdures or biblical histories were common themes. The painting at Castellymynach [209] was clearly intended to imitate a tapestry or painted cloth as it has a painted scalloped edge with nails imitating a hanging and a typical tapestry border (see fig.10.30). That at High Grosvenor [145] is reminiscent of a verdure tapestry.

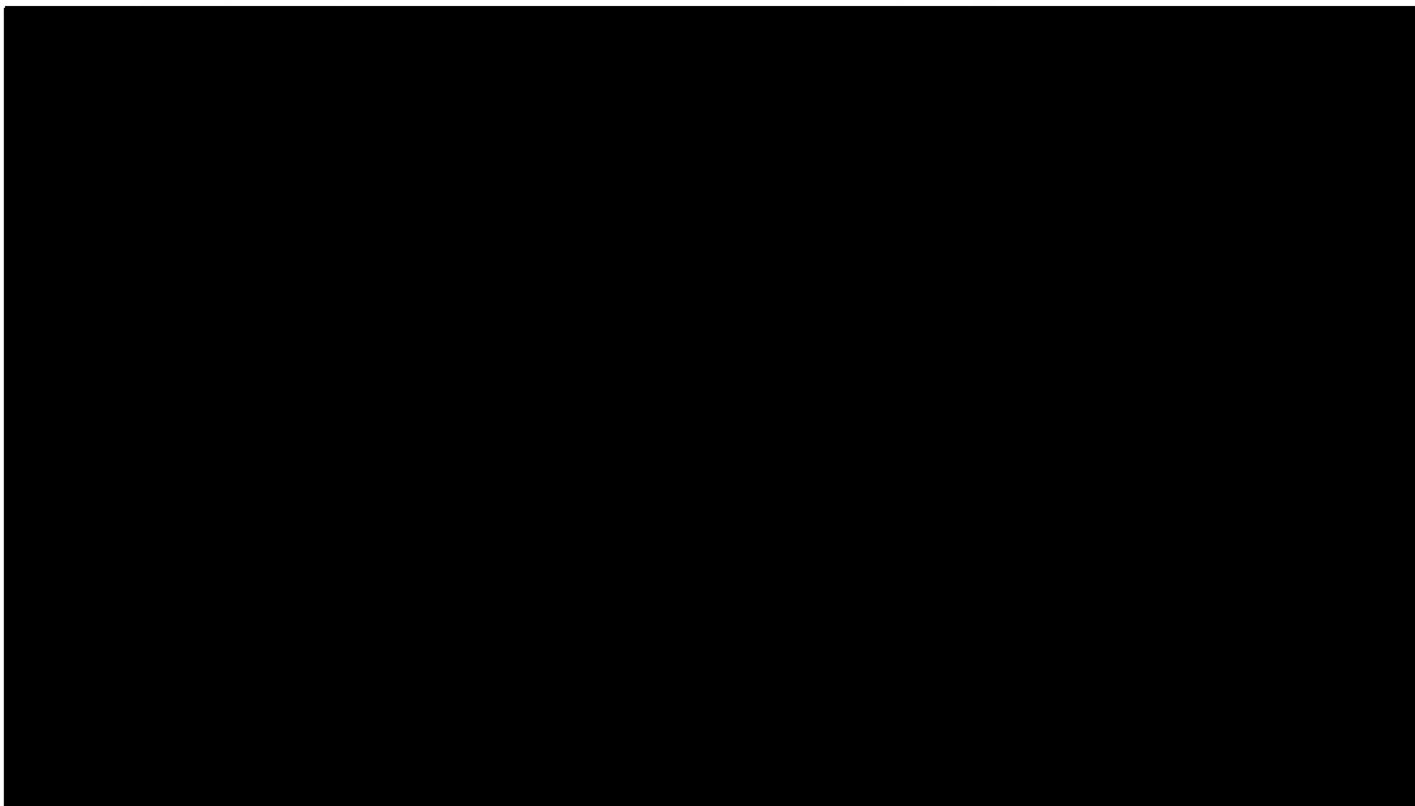

Fig.10.30 Imitation hanging at Castellymynach, Glamorgan

The Church as a source of design

It is relatively easy to identify sources when they survive as in prints or pattern books but much more difficult to speculate on sources that no longer exist. The fact remains that for most people, the local church still probably had the richest visual environment that they encountered. The extent of survival of decoration in a church has been explored in Chapter 5 and it is clear that many artefacts remained after the Reformation including stained glass windows, carving and even much wall painting.

For subject paintings, even religious ones, the church would be an unlikely source as any figures would most probably have succumbed to the iconoclasm of the post-Reformation period and, anyway, the character of religious paintings had totally changed. Watt has suggested that the stories on the walls of churches were transferred onto the walls of alehouses, where they would be available for all to see[53] but there is very little evidence of this. The subjects in ecclesiastical paintings are

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[51] Annabel Westman, Tudor and Stuart Interiors conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum , February 2002.
[52] North Shropshire inventories 1535-1650 – James Bradley, d.1620, Market Drayton
[53] Watt, 1994, pp.195-196

entirely different[54]. There would be little demand for the traditional style of painting found in pre-Reformation churches. As a source of ornament, however, a church had great potential. The walls would have been covered, if surviving examples are typical - and there is nothing to suggest they are not - in between the stories and in the incidental spaces with running scrollwork, zigzags, chevrons, lozenges, stylized flowers, guilloches, floral motifs, vine trails, diapers, dots, wavy lines, animals, birds, grotesques. Many examples are illustrated in works on medieval church painting[55]. Glazier discusses the origins of some of these going back into antiquity, some of which survive in ancient buildings and artefacts such as Cretan wall painting, Greek vases, Roman mosaics[56]and - closer in time and place - illuminated manuscripts. The running acanthus leaf about a stiff stem for example, is found in the medieval period for manuscripts and embroidery, it was used extensively as a border in emblem books (see fig.10.31) and it is found as a frieze in a number of paintings in the Marches and elsewhere (see fig.10.32 - 10.36).

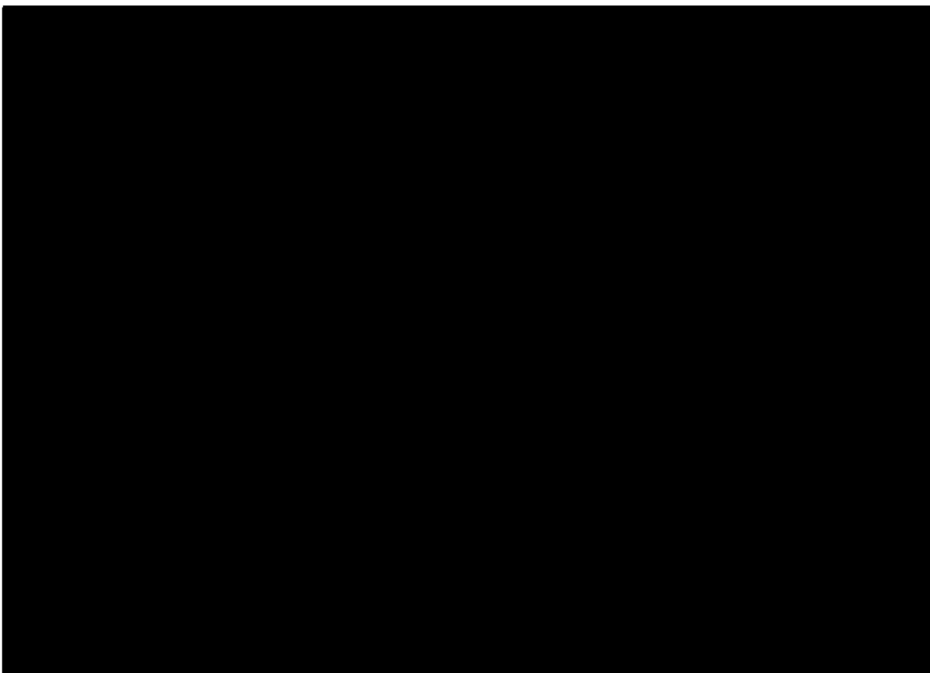

Fig.10.31 Example of running acanthus leaf pattern

The original source for the motifs is not the prime concern of this study - the point is that they were part of a traditional vocabulary of ornament, which remained to be used as a source by craftsmen in new ways. The deliberate secularisation of artefacts in the church would, by the late sixteenth century, have removed any qualms people may have had about using designs from a church in their homes. Figs.10.37 and 10.38 illustrate some traditional elements of design from churches and in the wall paintings surveyed.

Church textiles were also recycled in the community for secular use. Bess of Hardwick claimed back some rich fabrics from the local church, donated some years earlier by a member of the family, which were re-used in appliqué work[57]. During Queen Mary's reign St.Laurence's Church, Ludlow, had painted cloths for the high altar and the Lady Chapel, cloths to cover the gaps where images had been removed, a hanging cloth before the rood and a 'crosse clothe', which must have been quite an

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[54] See Keyser, 1883, pp. 333-402 for a list of subjects found in churches
[55] See Tristram, 1944, 1950, 1955 and Rouse, 1991
[56] See Glasier, 1899
[57] Annabel Westman, Tudor and Stuart Interiors conference at the Victoria and Albert Museum, February 2002.

Fig.10.32-36 Acanthus leaf borders at Cotton's House, Market Drayton, Shrops.; The Old House, Dogpole, Shrewsbury, Shrops.; Castellymynach, Glamorgan; The President's Lodging, Trinity College, Oxford; and in a medieval manuscript

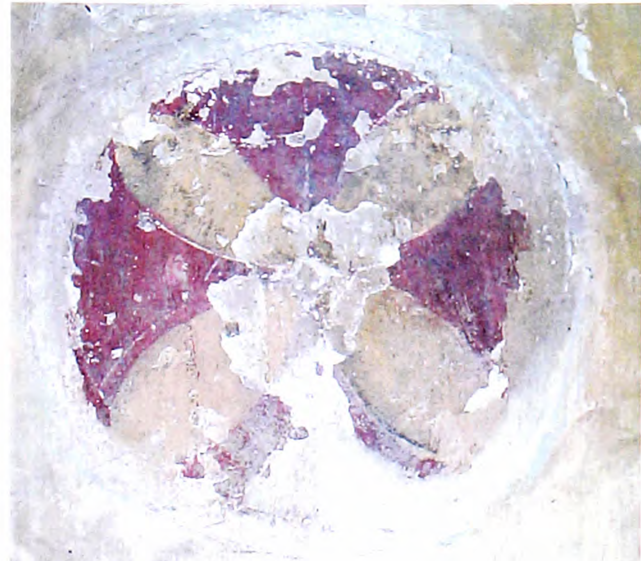

Fig.10.37 Traditional elements of design in churches in the Marches

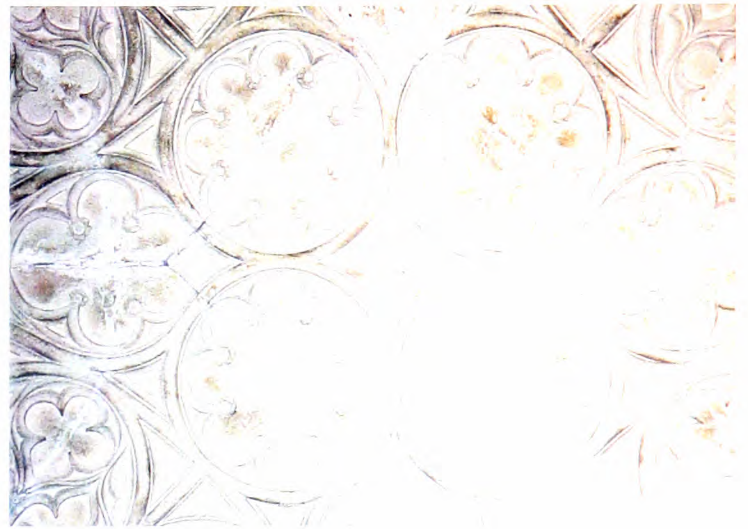

Fig.10.38 Traditional elements of design in churches – Gloucester Cathedral; pew end Tong

elaborate article as it cost 6s 8d to paint and was made from one elle of fine Holland costing 23d[58]. Money was spent on the purchase of five yards of chequer lace and on mending copes – one red silk and one red velvet – and 'the wevers sute of vestements, and a coope withe whyte lyos and ij other copes with the flowerdeluce'[59]. A few references to textiles appear in the churchwarden's accounts after the end of Mary's reign, including 'the taking out of the signe of the crosse out of an altar cloth'[60], but most were presumably sold off to local residents who purchased various other artefacts from the church. As a large and wealthy church, St. Laurence's may have had more textiles than most. However, all churches would have had some which would have been sold off within the community, the designs for which would have been available for craftsmen to copy.

Like wall paintings these textiles would have featured an eclectic range of designs and motifs of both native and exotic origin[61]. The abiding appeal of some motifs, presumably because of their adaptability for different circumstances and ease of execution, has been demonstrated in the case of the strapwork of Serlio's ceiling designs. A similar strapwork motif, again of Middle Eastern origin is found in the early fourteenth century Syon Cope (see fig.10.39) and on the wall of the Town Council Offices in Ledbury (see fig.10.40). The incidence of a similar wall painting in Debenham, Suffolk, (see fig.10.41) suggests a widely circulating contemporary source. Very close to this pattern is that at Penkridge Hall, parallels for which are found in 3, Cornmarket, Oxford and again in Debenham, Suffolk, (see figs.10.42 – 10.44). However, rather than searching for a source or reading any significance into their similarity, all these could be explained as the result of simple geometric patterns based on circles and squares overlapping in some way or another. The simplicity of the production of such patterns is illustrated by Gedde[62] and the filling of the resulting compartments with floral motifs was again an established convention.

It is not just decoration that survived the Reformation which could have been of interest to the craftsman but also work which was carried out afterwards. If the fabric of the church was neglected, monuments to mark the passing of the wealthy were not. The late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century saw a boom in funerary work. Llewellyn's work on post-Reformation monuments indicates the extent of their popularity and including several in the Marches[63]. St. Laurence's Church at Ludlow, not surprisingly, excels here. Some prominent members of the Council of the Marches and their families are commemorated here including Edward Waties who erected a monument 'in memoriall of himself'. St Bartholomew's at Tong has a fair display by the Vernons and the Harfords are remembered at Holy Trinity, Bosbury in two extravagant monuments. It was not unusual for the gentry to involve themselves in the design of their monument, to ensure it conveyed exactly the right message to posterity. The result was that the latest architectural styles may be seen by all in the local church.

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[58] Wright, 1869, p.61
[59] ibid., p.61
[60] ibid, p.137
[61] See King and Levey, 1993, pp. 33-44
[62] Gedde, 1615
[63] Llewellyn, 2000

Fig.10.40 Town Council Offices, Ledbury, Herefs.

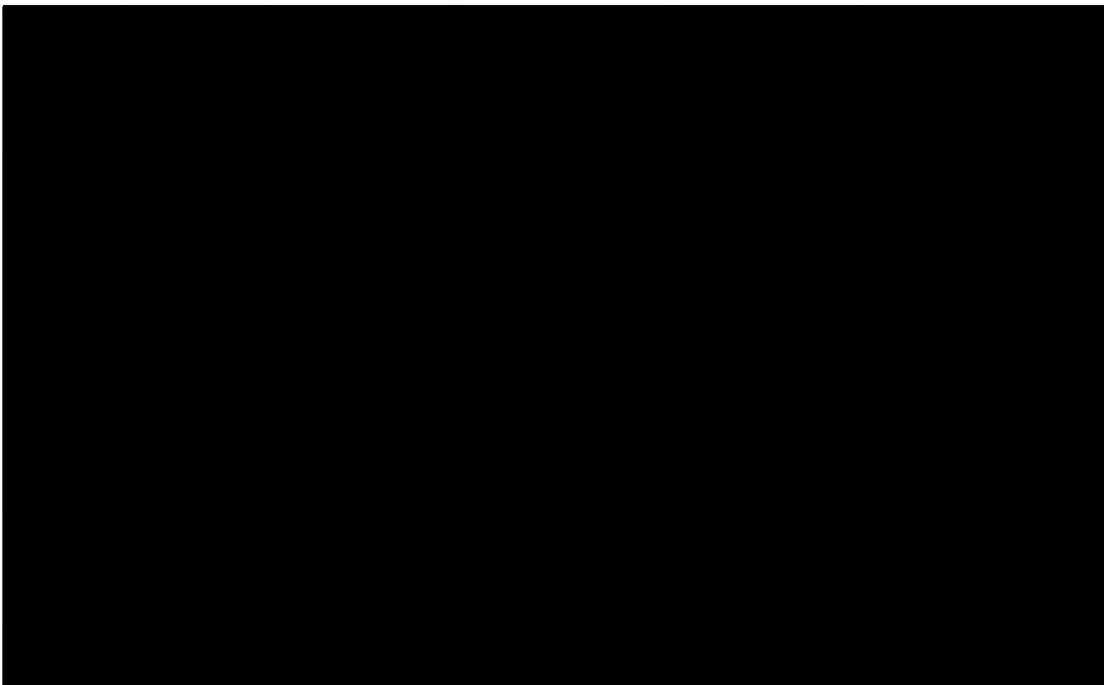

Fig.10.41 Wall painting in Debenham, Suffolk (Kirkham, 2002)

Fig.10.42 Penkridge Hall, Shrops.

Fig.10.43 3 Cornmarket, Oxford

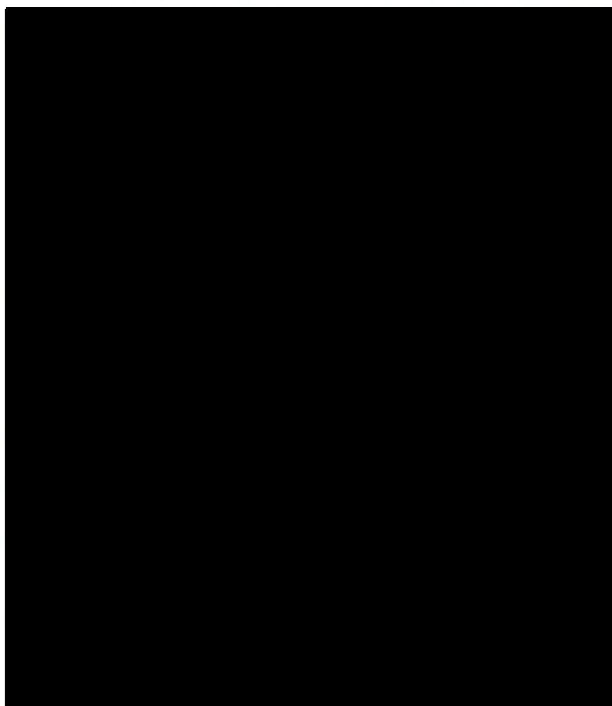

Fig.10.44 Debenham, Suffolk

Much less flamboyant were the painted commandment tables and texts which were also appearing in churches at this time, such as those at Abbey Dore (see fig.10.45). Often with decorative borders or set in cartouches, these may have been copied for secular use.

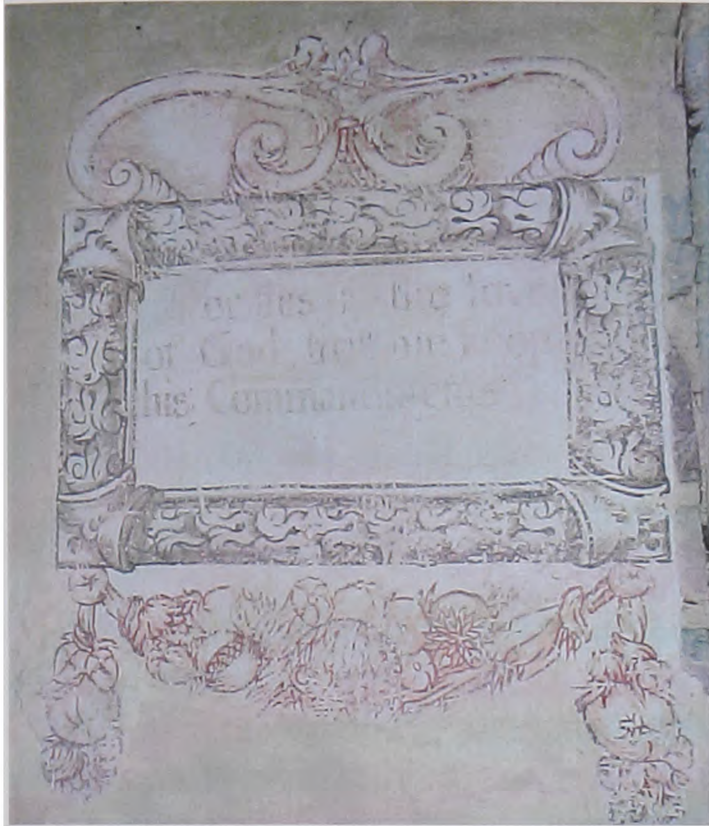

Fig.10.45 Painted text, Dore Abbey, Herefs.

Not only was this post-Reformation decoration a quarry for design ideas, the craftsmen executing the work would be the very same ones working on other buildings, reusing the same basic designs, modified as necessary to suit the context.

Existing buildings

Other decorative elements from an existing building could also have been copied, especially by building craftsmen who encountered designs in different media, such as carved woodwork, plasterwork and existing painted decoration. One can speculate that such decoration in higher status buildings was imitated lower down the social scale. Panelling may be an example of this. Examples of imitation panelling which have been found copied the plain, small square panelling which became common in the second half of the sixteenth century when panelling was still quite an expensive item. The fluted frieze which often accompanied this was also reproduced in wall paintings, see Churchyard Farm, Neenton [130] and Shootrough Farm [125-126], where it is found on all four sides of the painted panel. There is a chest in St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury with similar fluting on all four sides. This does not necessarily indicate a source, but rather that this use of fluting was in currency at the time. The quality of some of the paintings (see fig.10.46) begs the question as to whether imitation in itself was the aim, or whether panelling simply provided a pattern of intrinsic merit that it was thought desirable to reproduce. This is probably true of all sorts of decorative elements which were found in existing buildings. Rather than the craftsman seeking to imitate, he used them for their own sake. For example, the coffered ceilings found in some higher status houses may have provided the source

for strapwork designs on walls rather than a Serlio print. Here, there could be no pretence of imitation.

Fig.10.46 Crude panelling, Sutton Court Farm, Stanton, Shrops.

Copying wall painting from other buildings would certainly have been an option. Inns and alehouses were the focus of much decoration both around the walls and on doors. As there was no bar, drinks would be delivered to different rooms which would have to be identified – probably by a painting. One of the most popular establishments in Shrewsbury, The Gullet Inn (now demolished), had room names such as the Swan, Dragon, Raven, Crown, Rose, Exchequer and Pomegranate[64], probably after the paintings on the door[65]. Several wall paintings have been found in public houses in the Marches and many more are recorded by Reader and Rouse, such as The Golden Cross, Oxford and The White Swan, Stratford. The latter is one of the best examples of painting in a sort of stage set - in this case draperies are shown framing the main characters in the story of Tobias and the Angel (see fig. 10.47). The framing of figures in an opening is found in printed works and manuscripts dating from the medieval period, but the draperies clearly belong to the stage.

Fig.10.47 The White Swan, Stratford, Warwickshire

[64] SRRC 49/71. I am grateful to Bill Champion for this information

[65] The inventory of 1620 for Richard Meade, innkeeper of Woodstock names chambers after birds and animals.

As an important element in popular culture, the theatre may also have been a source for designs for wall painting. Stage painters may well have been the same people who were responsible for the painted cloths found in many houses and even wall painting. Fairly rough work would probably be the standard they worked to as this was all that was required for the stage. (Those employed in painting for royal pageants were paid only 4d a day, not the wage of a skilled craftsman[66].) The fact that painted cloths were generally cheap and affordable by the less well-off would support this. If similar subjects were employed for painted cloths as wall painting and if they were done by stage painters, then some ideas for painted decoration may have been influenced by scenery in plays.

It is possible that the craftsman who painted the design at 24 Upper Cound [108], also worked on Richard Prynce's Whitehall [86] six miles away in Shrewsbury (see fig.6.28). The two patterns are almost identical in form although the technique used is much simpler at Cound - there is no modelling of the pattern. Unfortunately, the Whitehall painting has been heavily restored and it is not known whether the original was so well painted. A description of the decoration when it was discovered beneath plaster in the early twentieth century confirms the basic design ' ...it was then revealed that the walls of this and the adjoining room were covered with arabesque frescoes in squares with wide borders. There were three different patterns repeated several times'[67]. Pigment analysis has shown that the colours were the same. It is possible that a pounce pattern was made from the one used at Whitehall and used to create a similar wall painting at 24 Upper Cound, or else the same pattern was used, albeit slightly modified.

Gedde suggests his patterns would be 'not impertinent' for gardeners, meaning designers of knot gardens, which were popular during this period. Stamper describes one at Shifnal Manor laid out in the 1590s incorporating a heart-shaped bed symbolic of the Catholic sympathies of the owner (the Earl of Shrewsbury)[68]. Certainly the plasterer, John Abbott, was drawing knot garden designs in his notebook[69] and the Shrewsbury painter, John Cley, was responsible for laying out the garden at the Council House in Shrewsbury. It is possible the same patterns for knot garden may be found on walls.

A host of other building elements carried designs eminently suitable for copying - glazing patterns, tiles, overmantels, plasterwork, screens - mostly employing a vernacular vocabulary of motifs incorporating traditional and Renaissance elements assimilated over generations, which could be easily reproduced in a variety of media. Add to this the myriad of other artefacts found in everyday life containing decoration - pots, trenchers (which have been found to depict emblems[70]), turkey-work carpets, clothes - and it is clear that craftsmen, even with those with the dullest imagination, were not short of sources to help in designing a wall painting.

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[66] Personal communication from Jo Kirby, National Gallery, based on unpublished research on Revels Accounts

[67] Brochure (n.d.) called *Whitehall Residential Club* by H.E.Forrest p.5, (SRRC) researched by W.A. Champion.

[68] Stamper, 1996, p.9 and 12

[69] Wells-Cole, 1997, p.160

[70] Bath, 1994, pp. 359-370

Conclusion

Few painters or designers in any field create works entirely out of their imagination. Always other sources are searched for inspiration or to solve a particular problem or simply for copying. It is worth recognising that the craftsman working at the vernacular level would not be required to produce innovative designs. Rather, his job was to put together a coherent decoration, competently executed which met the needs of the house owner. He would have worked within established conventions supplemented by source material around him or supplied by his patron. Most commonly encountered would have been painted cloths, ballad sheets, other woodcut prints and decoration in his local church. A host of other decorated objects would have supplemented this. If he was a building craftsman rather than a specialist painter, then he would be influenced by any patterns prevalent in his trade. Glaziers and plasterers in particular would have been familiar with laying out strapwork patterns and the jewel-ornament bands used as a vertical for a border might have been the work of a joiner or plasterer (see figs.10.48 -10.49).

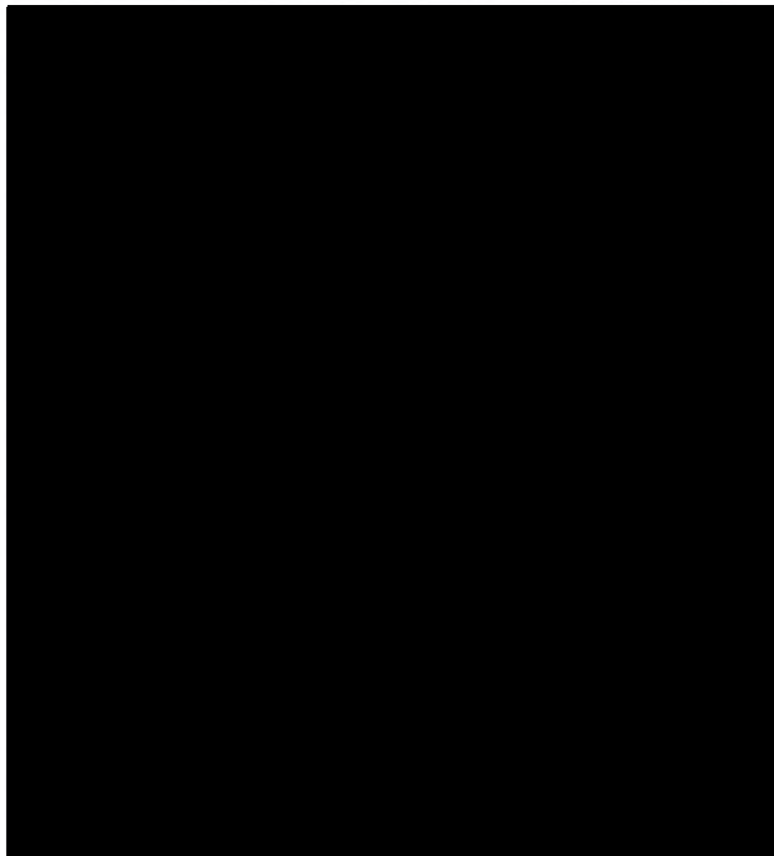

Fig.10.48-49 Jewel ornament, Castellymynach and Plastirion, Denbs.(Smith, 1988, pl.87)

However, it is more likely that the owner selected the basic theme for the wall painting. The text around the room in Ledbury [42], for example, using three separate sources, suggests it was carefully and deliberately chosen. There would have been sufficient imagery in the visual environment for the patron to specify exactly what decoration he wanted. It is argued in the next chapter that the iconography had some specific meaning for the owner of the house, in which case he would almost certainly have been involved in the decision of what to paint.

Chapter 11
The significance of painted decoration

Why would Richard Barnaby, a member of a long-standing, wealthy gentry family choose to have what must be acknowledged as poorly-done antiquework painted around the chamber of his newly-built parlour or Sir John Moreton of Little Moreton Hall have imitation panelling, crudely executed and fooling no-one, when he could surely have afforded the real thing? Lower down the social scale, why did so many Shropshire farmers choose to have the bold scrolling design seen at Churchyard Farm Neenton [130]?

Decoration can have different meanings to different people and the same decoration can change in meaning in a different context or another time. The main purpose of this chapter is to present some answers to the question of what the painted decoration meant to the person who commissioned it. This can, of course, only be speculation. Nevertheless, drawing on all the different strands of this research, in the discussion of the context and the findings, an attempt is made here to understand why a particular form of decoration might have been chosen.

It would be helpful to clarify two key terms as they are used in this chapter. The 'meaning' of a painting refers to its *intrinsic* meaning - that is, whatever is actually denoted in the decoration. The 'significance' of a painting, on the other hand, refers to a wide range of additional kinds of meaning that are related to the painting in its specific location – that is, connoted meanings of a practical, social, cultural or religious nature.

Howard has pointed out the importance of context in relation to portraits[1] and this was equally important at the vernacular level in relation to wall painting. If the owner intended the painting to convey a message to the viewer, then the question of who would see the painting is crucial. A painting in the hall of a house would have a different set of viewers from one in a chamber. The very selection of a wall painting rather than a painted cloth in itself is significant. These are all factors extrinsic to the meaning of the painting.

The paintings encountered in the research would mostly not qualify as works of art in the modern sense, nor were they intended to. They must be viewed from a sixteenth century perspective. The visual environment within the community which set the parameters for the choice of design also reflects contemporary aesthetics at the vernacular level. For example, people depicted in various media were clumsily drawn and outlined in black. Croft-Murray notes that in churches painted figures degenerated in the early sixteenth century: 'the handling becomes coarser, the modelling fainter, the figures stiff and stunted, with much use of harsh black outlines (perhaps under the influence of the contemporary devotional woodcut)'[2]. This was an aesthetic which persisted for a long time at the vernacular level, perpetuated by title-pages and ballad sheets. A pattern may be set out reasonably uniformly or imitation panelling fairly squarely but if a mistake or two was made then this was

[1] Howard, 1995, p.8
[2] Croft-Murray, 1962, p.14

acceptable. If something got in the way of the pattern - a door or a post - then the pattern could be stretched out or squeezed in to make it fit. Precision was not the aim. As was argued in Chapter 8, artists were not employed for the most part but rather local craftsmen and rough-and-ready was the standard they were working to. The decoration was not designed for eternity – just for as long as it would take everyday dirt and dust and the soot and smoke from an open fire to obscure it. (Easel paintings, intended for a longer life, were often covered by a curtain to protect them[3].) The significance of wall paintings must be considered against this background.

Traditional decoration

The previous chapter identified a number of elements found in painted decoration which were called, for want of a better word, 'traditional' motifs. Despite Reader's assertion that after around 1550 there was a complete break with the Gothic tradition[4], there are plenty of examples of traditional motifs being used. Many of these have their origins in antiquity and what meaning they had originally has been lost. These have been adopted and adapted by different cultures over time and their meaning has shifted accordingly. The zigzag and guilloche, stylized flowers and scrolling foliage are abiding motifs found decorating many elements in the visual environment. These fall into the category of ornament which Gombrich argues gratifies a primitive demand for a sense of order.[5]It is not the purpose of this research to look further into their history. What is of interest is why someone would choose a traditional design rather than anything else either for all or part of his painting.

One simple practical answer could be that local craftsmen could execute these motifs without too much difficulty. They are based on simple repetitive lines which are easy to draw from memory, and anyway, there would be local examples to follow if necessary. Mostly these are used in incidental elements of the painting – for borders and the frieze. They would be familiar and would offer a safe choice in design for a conservative taste.

At another level, the traditional motifs could be seen as associating with a medieval past, or the old religion. The alternative ornamental designs were 'antiquework', discussed below, which were first introduced in the reign of Henry VIII. Their association on the one hand with the Reformation, and on the other with a pagan classical world, may have made some people uncomfortable. Far better, if one was not ready for such modernity, to stick with the old and familiar. Traditional motifs are of course used in conjunction with other motifs and there is plenty of evidence of their use in a wide range of contexts.

Imitation textile hangings are also included as traditional decoration. This includes painted representations of tapestries and the expensive imported fabrics such as the brocades, damasks and cut velvets mentioned in Chapter 10. These were regarded as luxury hangings throughout the medieval period and painted imitations appear in some decoration of the period. The painted figures formerly at Baston Manor House,

[3] Foister, 1981, p.275
[4] Reader, 1932, p.119 and 1935, p.259
[5] See discussion in Harpham, 1982, p.41

for example, have costumes made of the expensive fabric with a pomegranate motif and a similar pattern forms the background[6]. It is not surprising that these visually rich hangings were selected by owners to be recreated on walls of their homes. Imitation tapestries such as those at Castellymynach [209] or Onion Farm [2] or the imitation paned textile hanging at Althrey Hall [197] give an idea of the splendour which could be achieved. Not only did they provide sumptuous designs but they also had connotations of wealth, as only the very rich could afford the real thing.

As with traditional motifs, another reason for opting for imitation textiles as a design could have been that they could be considered as 'safe'. There was nothing contentious in them and they would suit a conservative taste. They, too, could also be seen as holding on to the past, a link with the old religion or, at least, a rejection of the new. This is purely supposition but some weight may be given to it by the example of the Presidents's Lodging at Trinity College, Oxford. Here, what was a private room of the President of the College is decorated with an imitation paned textile hanging with an acanthus leaf frieze and a roundel with the sacred inscription *IHS*. The ceiling has a running vine leaf motif (see figs.11.1 and 11.2). It has been suggested that the painting was done in the mid 1550s when the college, which had been dissolved in 1544, was refounded by Thomas Pope, a Catholic[7]. The latest in fashionable design would have been readily available to Pope and for any craftsman to copy but instead he selected entirely traditional motifs for walls and ceiling alike.

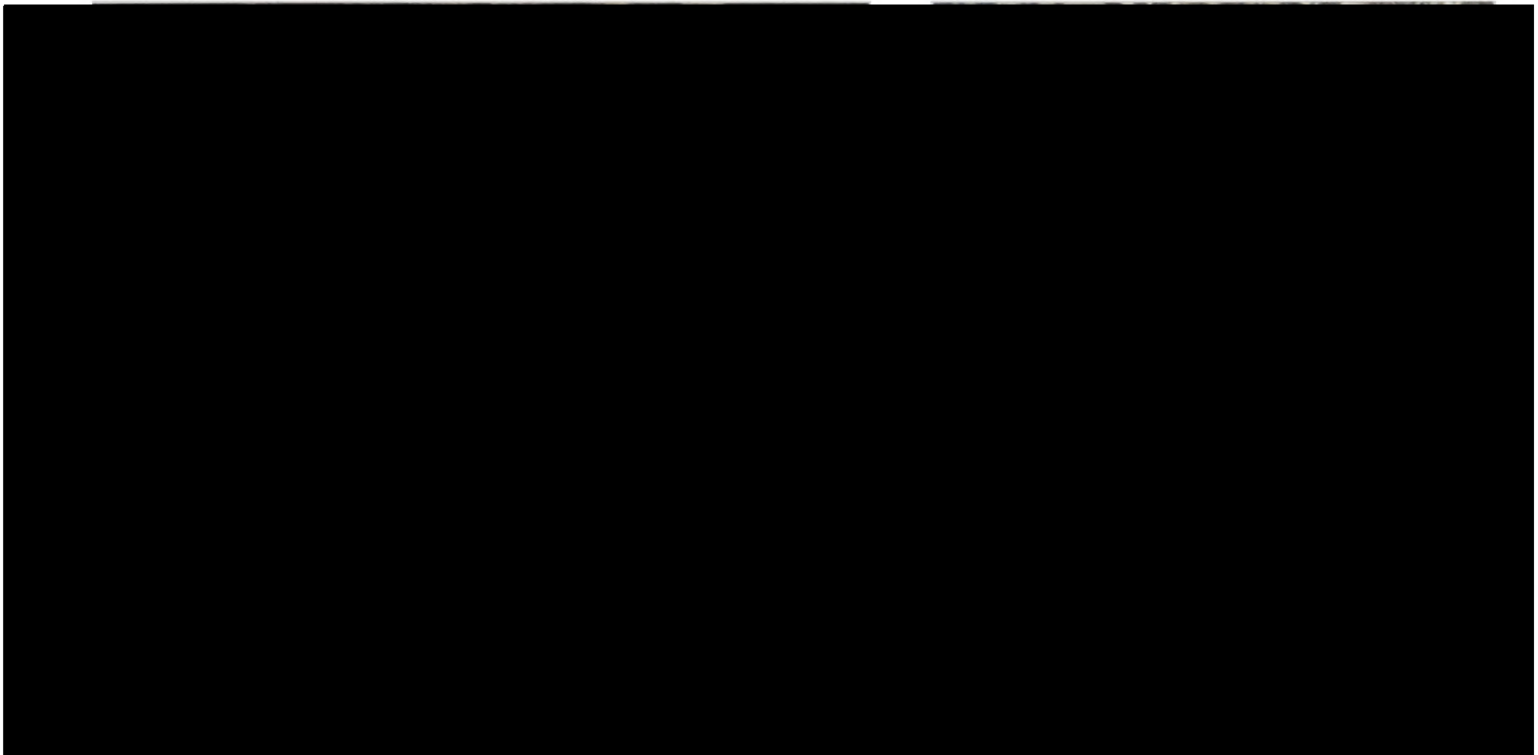

Fig.11.1-2 The President's House, Trinity College, Oxford (Trinity College)

Perhaps this was reinforcing his adherence to the old religion and giving added weight to the re-establishment of Catholicism under Mary. To counter this, one of the most noted recusants in the Marches area, John Pakington of Harvington Hall, chose antiquework as the design for the hall, stairs and passageways, although 'Catholic' decoration is found elsewhere in the house.

[6] Illustrated in Croft Murray, 1962, plates 15 and 16

[7] Bryan Ward-Perkins, Trinity College magazine, 1986 and E.Clive Rouse, report on the paintings, March 1986 (Trinity College Archive)

Renaissance decoration

The alternative to traditional motifs for pure ornament was grotesque or antiquework. After its first introduction, it rapidly became very fashionable, taken up first by the élite and then percolating through to the vernacular level. Harpham has discussed the nature and meaning of the grotesque at length[8] and it is worth looking at some of his points in order to understand what this form of decoration was, why it so quickly became popular and what meaning it had.

The word 'grotesque' was first used 1480 in relation to the paintings discovered in the remains of Nero's palace in Rome, dating from around 100 BC. The distinctive style consisted of:

> graceful fantasies, anatomical impossibilities, small beasts, human heads, and delicate, indeterminate vegetables, all presented as ornament with a faintly mythological character imparted by representations of fauns, nymphs, satyrs, and centaurs.[9]

This decoration in turn was influenced by eastern decoration such as that in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon from the 6thc BC. (This emphasises the difficulty of trying to trace a primary source for decorative motifs.)

As contemporary decoration in Rome it received criticism for its decadence by Horace and Vitruvius, who in c.27 BC attacked such designs:

> On the stucco are monsters rather than definite representations taken from definite things. Instead of columns there rise up stalks; instead of gables, striped panels with curled leaves and volutes. Candelabra uphold pictured shrines and above the summits of these, clusters of thin stalks rise from their roots in tendrils with little figures seated upon them at random. Again slender stalks with heads of men and animals attached to half the body.
>
> Such things neither are, nor can be, nor have been. On these lines the new fashions compel bad judges to condemn good craftsmanship for dullness. For how can a reed actually sustain a roof, or a candelabra the ornaments of a bagle, or a soft and slender stalk a seated statue, or how can flowers and half statues rise alternatively from roots and stalks? Yet when people view these falsehoods, they approve rather than condemn.[10]

In the fifteenth century, artists viewing these paintings saw in them a new vocabulary of designs which could be used for ornament and marginal designs. The main point was that grotesquework was considered to be empty of meaning and so could stand independent of the main picture or decoration. Aware of Vitruvius' criticisms, Raphael used the grotesque in the Vatican Loggias as marginal work to his series of paintings of the history of the world as revealed by the Bible, combining Christian and pagan elements into one design. Whilst Vitruvius had seen this form of

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[8] Harpham, 1982

[9] ibid., p.26

[10] Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, trans. and ed. Frank Granger, 1934, vol. II, p.105, quoted in Harpham, 1982, p.26

decoration as decadent and absurd, to Raphael it embodied vitality, confidence, mastery and inspiration[11].

These grotesques, and the ones they inspired, were executed in fine detail, and there was nothing raw or crude in them. They constituted finely drawn and articulated forms with realistically expressed elements, whether architectural, human, animal, vegetable or foliate. Symmetry and proportion were paramount. But it *meant* nothing, signified nothing. There was no narrative content, all was done for its own sake, for the intrinsic merit of the composition, for its purely ornamental function.

The Italian artists who first introduced the grotesque into Britain may well have understood the meaning, or rather the lack of it, embodied in the decoration but it is questionable how many of those copying it did. Other Renaissance decoration became incorporated such as cartouches, classical vases, terms and caryatids and all was lumped together under the term antiquework. Title pages used antiquework as marginal ornament, although the fineness and delicacy of detail which characterised the original grotesquework did not lend itself to woodcuts. It was often used as a frieze in wall painting, although few of those paintings surveyed had only a frieze in antiquework. Reader illustrates several examples in the south east[12]. Most of the examples of antiquework in the Marches, however, cover the entire surface of the wall, as in 45 Muxton Lane [128], Chapel Farm, Wigmore [27] and 4 Belmont, Shrewsbury [110]. Used like this, the original significance of the decoration is lost - that is its purely decorative function as a neutral foil to a main picture. What it had become was a highly fashionable form of decoration with another meaning. Antiquework signified the exotic – it was not indigenous decoration, although Harpham suggests that its ready acceptance was in part due to the popularity of medieval drollery which found expression in the grotesque. More importantly perhaps, antiquework signified status for it was much in favour amongst the aristocracy. As an expression of Renaissance learning, it was quickly adopted amongst the élite as a favoured form of decoration.

The choice of antiquework could therefore have a number of meanings. It could give pleasure to the owner in that he felt up-to-the-minute in terms of fashion and undoubtedly this is what he would have intended to convey to the viewer. But it could indicate more than modernity. It alluded to a knowledge of the classics. This knowledge was a mark of some form of higher education, which distinguished (in their eyes at least) the gentry from their social inferiors. A smattering of classical knowledge was common currency, if Shakespeare's references to it can be used as indicators, derived from popular stories such as the Nine Worthies, ballads and painted cloths. (Evidence from inventories mentioning painted cloths suggests that classical subjects were a popular theme.) By making reference to a classical education the owner could be aligning himself with the sort of person who had such an education; that is to say, he had the badge of the gentry and his gentry peers would understand the classical allusion. For the socially aspiring, who had not quite achieved gentry status but wished to display the signs associated with this, a classically inspired wall painting might enhance his standing amongst his neighbours. Never mind that neither he nor his neighbours understood what its

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[11] Harpham, 1982, p.29
[12] Reader, 1936, pp.234 and 244

intrinsic meaning was, a passing reference might be all that was required. Surely that is all that is being offered at 26-28 Hereford St., Presteigne [232]. At Barnaby House, Ludlow [103], the antiquework incorporates roundels which appear to have contained heraldic devices. In this scheme, Richard Barnaby achieved a display of two key features of gentry standing - education and lineage. The crudeness of the execution was presumably not an issue given the sixteenth century aesthetic.

Looking at the context of the paintings, only two of those with Renaissance detailing were found in halls, the rest were in chambers or parlours where favoured guests of the owner and his family might be invited. This might be seen as reserving the exclusivity of erudition for those of higher rank.

Emblems

In sharp contrast to the grotesque, which intrinsically had no meaning, were emblems. These are illustrations with a written explanation in verse and headed with a motto or proverb published in books from the mid sixteenth century onwards. As was suggested in the previous chapter the illustrations with their decorative borders were used as a source of design. Freeman discusses how emblems, which are quite alien to the modern way of thinking, reflect the mind of the Elizabethan and Jacobean age, in which allegory was part of everyday life, and 'nothing had a single meaning and nothing lacked significance' [13]. Colour and decoration, gesture and action all had a double meaning; even individual flowers had a significance of their own.

Emblems became popular in Elizabethan England in part because they were fashionable and indicative of some education, requiring the use of reasoning to understand the intellectual content of the symbolism. Freeman suggests their rapid and widespread adoption amongst the social élite in the second half of the sixteenth century was in part a characteristic of the transition of thought patterns from medieval to the modern period. There is symbolism and allegory in medieval writing and ancient myths and legends. Emblems, which rely on allegory, can be seen as another way of drawing on these traditions, giving them an expression peculiar to the age[14].

The devising of emblems was considered to be one of the accomplishments of a gentleman. although they were also a normal tool for the poet, and emblems abound in the contemporary literature. As such, emblems would have formed part of the popular culture of the age and emblematic allusions would have been widely traded. Whilst illustration and text were complementary and interdependent, it was expected that the reference to one or the other would be understood. Deciphering allegories was a popular pastime although they could be very complicated and not always easy to understand. (An account of one emblem which failed to reveal its secrets is given by Jourdain who recounts that a member of the Vanee family sent 'the poet Waller, in 1639, a handkerchief so curiously embroidered that he could not discover the meaning of its riddling conceits, and proposed sending it to Oxford, to the astrologer, and calls for help of Sacherissa in his perplexity'.[15])

[13] Freeman, 1966, p.1
[14] ibid., p.4
[15] Jourdain, Jan. 1916, pp.30-31

In wall painting, emblems offer enormous potential for layers of meaning, all of which are speculative. First, only the illustration is used, immediately signifying that the owner has sufficient wit to decipher the image. Secondly, it could flatter the viewer in that he, too, having been invited into the room and hence to view the painting, would be assumed to understand what was before his eyes. In both cases a degree of sophistication and education is implied, reflecting well on owner and viewer. Yet it is equally possible that the essence of the emblems was part of popular culture. For instance, the case of the ostrich, symbolising vanity, must have been well known.

If the emblematic image was used in an appropriate context, then its intrinsic meaning may have relevance. The owner of Cotton's House, Market Drayton [81], where the painting is in a first floor chamber, may have been communicating a moralising message to a guest, or his wife even, concerning vanity. But, confusingly, given that the very nature of his wall painting embodies display and the owner may also be wishing to show off his sophistication and knowledge, there is another contradictory message. Was the owner trying to disassociate himself from vanity, one of the seven deadly sins, at the same time as indulging in it?

Or did he just like the picture of an ostrich? Also featured in the painting is a deer, a dog and a man and much else which has now been lost. If the emblematic way of thinking was prevalent at the vernacular level, then it is likely that there was some additional meaning embodied in this woodland scene. Insufficient evidence remains to suggest exactly what this might have been.

Stories

Closely related to emblems because of their symbolism and allegorical potential are the stories, the best preserved of which were found at Beale's Corner, Bewdley [181] and New Hall, Ticklerton [83]. There had been a long-standing practice of telling stories around walls in churches, so the transference of this narrative tradition to the walls of secular buildings is not surprising. Several examples exist elsewhere in the country, for example the story of the Prodigal at South Mimms Farm, Knightsland, Tobit and the Angel at the White Swan in Stratford, Lazarus and Dives at Pittleworth Manor, Hants. The difference at New Hall and Beale's Corner is that these are not religious and do not relate to identifiable stories. They appear to be specific to those particular buildings. As such, they would have been deliberately chosen and therefore would have had considerable significance for the owner. Whilst this significance was unique to the individual properties, if the meanings can be understood it can perhaps reveal more about owners and their thought processes than any other form of wall painting. Any explanation can only be conjectural but is nevertheless worth attempting to see if it illuminates the issue of significance.

All around a first floor chamber at Beale's Corner is a narrative featuring a vineyard with figures, male, female and a child, carrying out seasonal tasks – pruning and harvesting can be made out. Also featured are flowers and birds, a fox and a coiled snake (see figs.10.13, 11.3 and 11.4). The fox leaping up at a bunch of grapes appears to be based on the story of the Fox and the Grapes from Aesop's Fables and it was suggested in the previous chapter that an emblem book might have been the

source. None of the other images has been identified as being from a known source. What meanings can this have had for the house owner? Bewdley was a significant port in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The location of Beale's Corner right on the river front suggests that this was the house of a merchant. The first floor chamber containing the paintings overlooks the river. This might have been a private chamber for the family, or it might have been a room for conducting business where the merchant could entertain a client and at the same time keep an eye on the commercial comings and goings relating to his business. (In Newcastle, merchants' houses have been found to have high status decoration in top floor rooms. These it has been suggested were used for conducting business as they overlooked the port, and merchants and their clients could see their ships from these rooms[16].) An entertaining story around the room may impress a client and the emblem (sour grapes?) alluding to something which is now obscure, may flatter both parties. The large snake is not part of the normal wildlife of Bewdley and so it must have had some symbolic meaning, which again eludes the modern viewer but not necessarily a contemporary one used to an emblematic way of thinking. Vineyards were not typical in the English landscape but there was one just downstream of Bewdley at Ribbesford. As viticulture was an occupation pursued principally by the gentry one can speculate that the merchant was involved in some way, perhaps as an owner or marketing the produce, and was proclaiming to clients the status of his business.

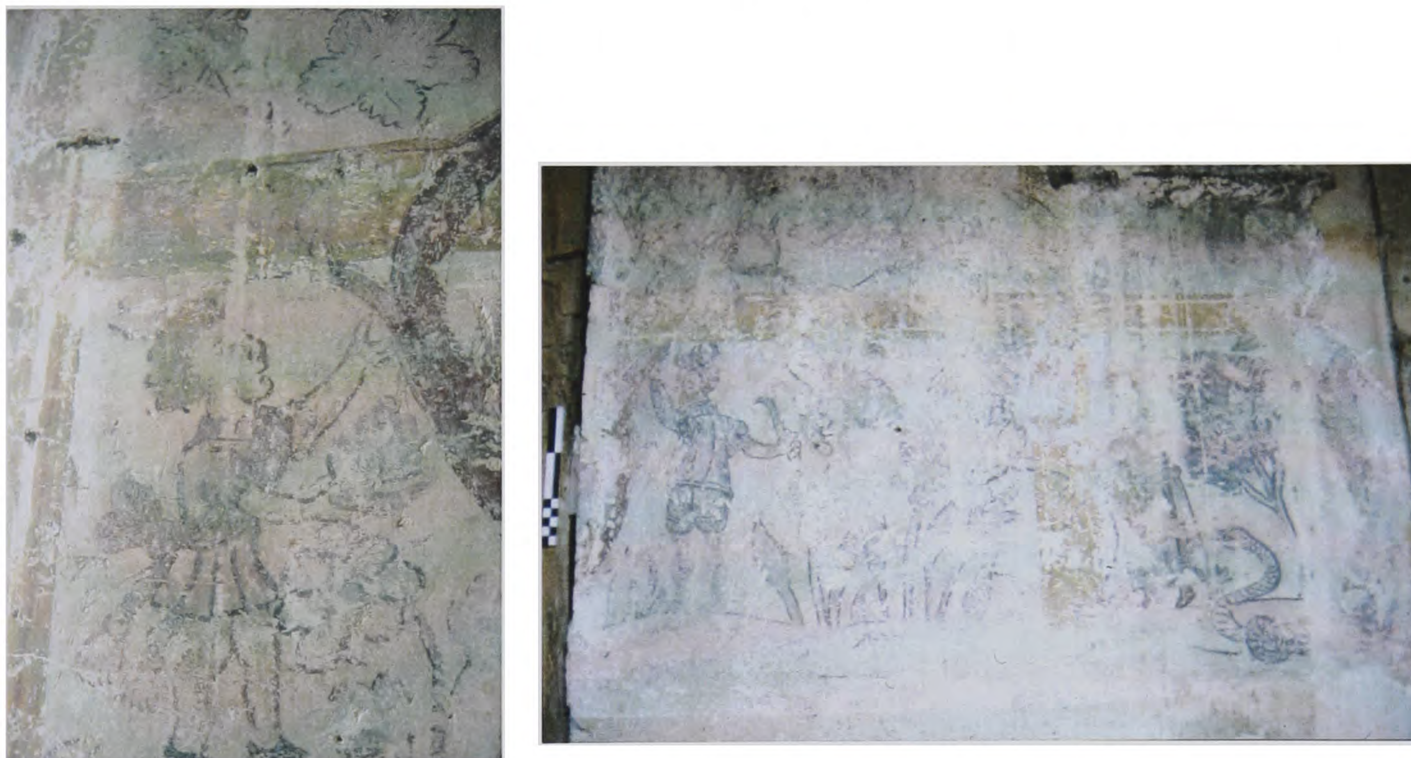

Fig.11.3-4 Details - Beale's Corner, Bewdley, Worcs.

If, as suggested above in relation to emblems, nothing had a single meaning and everything was imbued with allusion and allegory then it is difficult indeed to unravel the meanings embodied in this painting. Whatever the meaning, it is reasonable to assume that the painting had some significance for the owner over and above its purely decorative function. It is bold and striking in its design and created an attractive, rich entertaining decoration, which would involve the viewer's intellect in its allegorical references. It was a 'safe' subject in that the Aesop's Fables at least,

[16] Anthony Wells-Cole, conference on *The Tudor and Stuart Interior*, Victoria and Albert Museum, February 2002

were well known popular stories and the vineyard setting was an allusion to a gentry pursuit. Perhaps it was intended to be seen by people who, understanding the messages, would assign certain favourable characteristics to the owner (or his business). In turn they may have been flattered themselves through communicating in this more sophisticated language of symbolism.

New Hall, Ticklerton [83] contains a story of a completely different kind. This H-plan farmhouse was inherited by the Jenkes family in 1584, the same year George Jenkes was granted arms. He was living at the time at Wolverton Manor about two miles away with his wife (the heiress of New Hall)[17]. It is not known whether he moved to New Hall at this date but it is quite possible as this was the more modern building. Some time in the 1580s the parlour was painted with a story going all around the walls. Three panels survive, depicting figures with musical instruments with symbolic motifs woven in: a bird of prey – possibly an eagle, an ape or demon figure and a hare runs across the dado of one panel. The dado is well-executed black and white antiquework. The central panel has three figures (see fig.11.5), featuring a female holding a lute, and a male, who seem to be the principal figures in the story, with another female in a slightly subservient position holding a Tudor rose in one hand and a gillyflower in the other which is outstretched over the other woman's head. All are wearing costumes commensurate with gentry 'best dress'. The other panels feature male figures with a viol, hand bells and bagpipes (see figs 11.6 and 11.7). Whilst the figures have the naivety of an amateur painter's work, the overall composition and the detailing, picked out in red ochre, suggest that someone more professional was involved in their execution. An interpretation of this is inevitably conjectural but worth attempting if only to explore what meanings might be ascribed to it and consequently what it signified to the owner who commissioned it.

Firstly, the painting is located again in the parlour, so it was only for select viewing and not for general consumption. The figures are expensively attired, immediately announcing the gentry rank of the occupants. The playing of musical instruments was a gentry accomplishment, so again rank is marked. The main figures could be the owner and his wife in which case this could be seen as a form of portrait (discussed below) but there appears to be more to it than that. The figure holding the flowers is surely assigning some attribute to the main female by holding the gillyflower, a symbol of betrothal[18], over her. Subtly but quite distinctly the central female has the outline of her breasts quite visible which is unusual in portraits of this period as undergarments seem to conceal rather than enhance the breasts[19]. The musicians suggest a celebration of some sort, though the significance of the eagle and ape/devil is obscure. The eagle was an ancient symbol of power and victory or, allegorically, it signified pride. It was also used in the Renaissance as an attribute of sight, one of the Five Senses on account of its sharp vision. An ape was used as a symbol of taste whilst the hare symbolised lust and fecundity.[20]

One feasible explanation is that the painting represents George Jenkes Esq., shortly after entering the ranks of armigers, and his wife. He acquired New Hall via his

[17] Forrest, 1915, pp.55-56, unpublished building report, Madge Moran, 2001, SRRC Jenkes family records.
[18] Hall, 1996, p.57
[19] I am grateful to Madge Moran for pointing this out.
[20] Hall, 1996, pp. 22 and 109

Fig.11.5-7 Panels 1-3, New Hall, Ticklerton, Shrops.

marriage, hence the gillyflower (and possibly the hare, signifying their offspring). The musicians are celebrating his new fortunes and his wife is displaying her accomplishments appropriate to their new rank by playing the lute. The eagle signifies his pride in his new position and also his sharpness to the select viewers. That he merited the granting of armigerous status is reinforced by his play on the word taste, signifying his knowledge of and capacity to communicate in the same language as his new peers.

However, the ape could equally be a demon, in which case the painting could be read as George Jenkes vanquishing some evil. One of the musicians looks very much as though he has a tonsure and could therefore be a monk. He is shown in profile as is the ape/demon – the medieval way of representing evil figures. A whole new set of meanings could be derived if these images are introduced. Whatever the exact iconography, any number of interpretations could be made, all more or less guesswork for the modern mind. In the sixteenth century this ambiguity of interpretation was perhaps part of the 'game'. If the images presented were ambiguous and had multiple meanings at different layers, this would be exactly in accordance with the Elizabethan way of thinking. What is certain is that it had considerable significance for the owner. It is likely that he wished it to be viewed by a select group of people who were intended to assign certain favourable attributes to him as a result.

The Geddes, Pencriag [21], presents an even more puzzling story for the modern mind to unravel. This is one of the few houses surveyed known to be inhabited by a yeoman. Later alterations to the house make its development difficult to understand, including the original function of the room with the wall painting, although it was possibly a hall. On one wall, three panels survive, each depicting two figures holding archery gear. All are dressed in mi-parti costume with neck ruffs, except for one which has a full length fur-trimmed gown. Fragments of decoration are visible on another wall, including part of a building, and guilloche bands separate elements of the painting. Archery was archaic by the end of the sixteenth century for defence purposes, the date suggested by the costume, although it persisted as a sport amongst gentry. Insufficient survives to suggest what meanings the painting carried yet there is enough to surmise that here was another complex series of messages the owner was communicating to the viewers of the paintings.

As these examples illustrate, each painting depicting a story has the potential to provide information about the individual who selected it, his household and his circumstances, and its location within the house can indicate who was meant to participate in the viewing. It is reasonable to conclude that it was not unusual for a householder to select a highly personal scheme on his walls conveying to the viewers subtle messages designed to portray him in a favourable light.

Depictions of the Nine Worthies can be seen in a similar way. A well-known story of French medieval origin, the Nine Worthies was a popular theme for wall painting in the late sixteenth century. Traditionally made up of three pagans (Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Hector of Troy), three Jews (Judas Maccabeus, Joshua and King David) and three Christians (Charlemagne, King Arthur and Godfrey of Bouillon) there was sometimes variation in the heroes selected and it was not uncommon to substitute local heroes. Again using Shakespeare as an indicator, the

story must have been in common currency. Love's Labours Lost suggests a familiarity with the Nine Worthies as this is the pageant selected to present to the Princess[21]. That this knowledge was acquired through the medium of painted cloths is confirmed during the performance of this pageant. Costard attacks Sir Nathaniel:

> O! Sir, you have overthrown Alisander the conqueror! You will be scraped out of the painted cloth for this: your lion, that holds his poll-axe sitting on a close-stool, will be given to Ajax: he will be the ninth Worthy.[22]

Three paintings of the Nine Worthies were found in the buildings surveyed at Harvington Hall [161], Great Binnal, Astley Abbots [71] and the Prior's Lodging, Much Wenlock [124]. The latter two are both on the dais screen in the hall whilst that at Harvington Hall is in a second floor passage. It is tempting to suggest that the owner deliberately selected the position of the Worthies behind the dais in the hall to reflect a worthiness on his own standing. Viewers seeing the owner seated amongst the Nine Worthies were possibly intended to assign him similar characteristics. Watt has suggested that the great appeal of this theme is accounted for by the way it integrates various cultural strands - the interest in medieval chivalry of popular romances, the Renaissance interest in classical mythology and the Protestant focus on Old Testament figures.[23] It was certainly a 'safe' subject providing good entertainment and a starting point for storytelling.

Portraits

Amongst the Tudor élite, portrait painting provided yet another opportunity to proclaim one's standing to the world or at least to those invited to view the portrait. They were often commissioned to celebrate a particular event which marked a change in the sitter's life such as a marriage or elevation to a public office. Not only was this a chance to be seen decked out in rich clothes of the latest fashion but, in addition, emblems, devices, heraldry and text were all incorporated to ensure the full information relating to the sitter's status and achievements were recorded[24]. The portraits of Queen Elizabeth represent the full development of this art and considerable care was taken to ensure that the information being conveyed to the viewer was carefully managed. So concerned was Elizabeth to maintain control of her image that only licensed painters were allowed to depict her[25].

Surviving portraits are mostly of royalty and courtiers, yet those of lower rank also recorded events in their lives through portraits. Simon Forman, doctor and astrologer, married in 1599. Of very humble origin, the self-educated London doctor made such a name for himself through his cure for the plague that he counted many of London's élite amongst his clients. His wife had armigerous connections of which he was very proud and he bought all the trappings his new status demanded. In the year of his marriage he spent £50 on new clothes for himself and his wife as befitted

[21] Love's Labour's Lost, Act V, Sc I, 127-166
[22] Love's Labour's Lost, Act V, Sc II, 574-9
[23] Watt, 1994, p.212
[24] Hearn, 1995, p.10
[25] Englefield, 1936, pp.53-55

his rise in status and he had his portrait drawn[26]. In 1600 he records in his diary 'This summer I had my own picture drawn, and made my purple gown, my velvet cap, my velvet coat, my velvet breeches, my taffeta cloak, my hat and many other things'[27]. The original is lost but an eighteenth century engraving of this drawing survives.

In examining the significance of wall paintings, the discussion has so far emphasised the role which they played in advertising the status of the owner in some way or another, so it is not surprising to find a similar practice of portrait painting in decorating the walls of houses. However, there are significant differences in wall painting portraits from easel paintings. Unlike the portraits of courtiers which have survived, those at the vernacular level mostly depict male and female figures together in a companionable pose.

The painting at Althrey Hall is almost certainly that of Elis ap Richard, gentleman, who could trace his ancestry back for many generations, and his wife Jane Hanmer. The portrait is in a first floor chamber in a cross wing at the high end of the hall. The room is decorated with an imitation paned textile hanging all over the walls with pomegranate motifs painted on the wall plate and tie beam. The portrait, which is only small, 2 feet by 2 feet 6 inches, interrupts the decoration as an easel painting would do hung on a decorated wall. The overall effect is of a richly decorated room. Again the room is in a private chamber, possibly used for receiving guests, not in the main hall. The painting has been dated to around the mid 1550s[28] and what is particularly interesting is the ermine collar worn by the woman, a sign of wealth and high social standing. The man wears a fur-trimmed gown and has a forked beard, the latest fashion in the mid 1550s. Richard Ellis died in 1558 so the painting is likely to date from around 1555. As with many Tudor portraits of courtiers, this has dynastic connotations. Jane holds a crocus which could be read as a symbol of fertility which in turn would tally with Richard holding his codpiece with a red ribbon - they had nine sons and four daughters. Painted towards the end of his life, this picture could be read as a record of his achievements as head of a large family of ancient lineage producing children to secure its future.

The portraits at Harp House, Bishop's Castle [92], in a parlour, and Dowles Manor [177], in a first floor chamber, depict man and wife in companionable poses. There are no other symbolic elements. These could signify the harmony of a good household presided over by man and wife in an amicable relationship. Order and unity, godliness and charity were all laudable attributes embodied in the good household. Portraits such as these not only offered the opportunity to be recorded in fashionable clothes but they also suggested the virtues of the well-run household.

Probably painted to mark her marriage, in 1584, to Alexander Grant is the portrait of Jane Andrew at Coal Farm, Barry [212] [29]. She is invitingly holding out a bunch of three gillyflowers, a symbol of betrothal. There is no matching male portrait, although this may have been lost. What is interesting is the location of the painting, which is at the bottom of the spiral stairs leading from the ground floor hall to a first floor

[26] Rowse, 1974, p.93
[27] ibid., p.297
[28] Dating by the RCAHMW and Dr. Aileen Ribeiro, Courtauld Institute
[29] see Chapter 6 for family history

chamber. The hall has evidence of all-over floral scroll decoration. It was not unusual to paint portraits on top of a visually busy background, as for example at Onion Farm Lymm [2], which has an imitation tapestry background but in this case a location in the stairway was selected where it would be visible if the door was open. The exaggeratedly narrow waist, the inviting pose with symbolic flowers and its location at the foot of the stairs suggest it could have been deliberately placed there on the way up to the sleeping chamber and could arguably be seen as Jane Andrews openly offering herself to her husband, but quite who was intended to view this is less easy to surmise. The symbolism of the gillyflowers, originating in a Flemish wedding custom[30], appears to have been common currency at the vernacular level at this period (see New Hall, Ticklerton, discussed above).

Religious and moralising subjects

There were relatively few religious figurative subjects found in the course of the fieldwork but if the number with moralising and religious texts is included then this includes a significant proportion of wall paintings. As with other subjects, these too can have meanings on different levels. The truly godly may have selected a religious subject or text for personal contemplation and meditation and the edification of the household. The good householder, a virtuous aspiration for a worthy Protestant, had a responsibility for the religious and moral well-being of the members of his household. Painted texts or moralising stories could provide a framework for this and be referred to, as necessary, for greater authority[31]. The narrative potential would also have been significant – lively stories painted around the room made for good entertainment.

Some stories may have been valued for other, not so religious, entertainment. Watt has suggested the story of the Prodigal could be 'a pretext for a lively scene of loose women, feasting and merry-making'[32]. It is possible that some stories featuring women in a state of undress, such as Susannah and the Elders or Adam and Eve, could have been selected as they provided an excuse to have a naked woman painted on the wall. At Little Moreton Hall, this is probably not the case, as the story is confined to a narrow frieze quite high up, the figures are small and not visible at close quarters. An example from outside the Marches, however, illustrates this well. At Hoods, Wethersfield in Essex there is a large scale Adam and Eve on a wall in the hall. Unlike some rather crude depictions of this subject, here Eve is very attractively painted (see fig.11.8).

Without being unduly zealous, many may have chosen to finish off the decoration of their room with a religious or moralising text in order to assure all who visited of their Protestant credentials. For some the desire for order and harmony within the household may have prompted injunctions such as 'Fear God', whilst for others the selection of a religious text may simply have been continuing the tradition of painted cloths which, by all accounts, invariably contained moralising texts.

That the not-so-godly also chose to decorate their walls with religious subjects suggests another layer of meaning. Godliness did not appear to be one of the

[30] Hall, 1974, p.57
[31] Watt, 1994, p.227
[32] ibid. p.205

attributes of the Mathews at Castellymynach yet painted in the chamber for all to see is the moralising text 'the worlde is vaine & all therin/ yea man hymselfe because of synne'. The painting, probably the work of Humphrey Mathew (see Chapter 6) in 1602, suggests a weariness with worldly things and the vanity of mankind. At the time Humphrey was busy amassing an even greater fortune at the expense of his cousins and displaying this wealth in his newly refurbished house. It is difficult to believe that it was an expression of repentance for his vanity and greed, as there was no let up in the advancement in his fortunes. Rather it could be a public denouncement of these unfavourable attributes with the aim of distancing himself from them. It is tempting to suggest that other rapacious gentry on the make similarly decorated their walls with godly texts in mitigation for their most ungodly behaviour. That they were capable of such acts of hypocrisy is evident in the monuments they designed for themselves, including inscriptions extolling their gentlemanly virtues.

Fig.11.8 Hoods, Wethersfield, Essex

As with all decoration intended to display characteristics that were aspirations rather than reality, such as classical education, the drawback was that one's immediate neighbours would know this. There must have been few communities where one could convincingly pass off characteristics one did not actually possess. Yet people seem to have been willing to turn a blind eye to this. Appearances seem to have counted far more than reality.

Imitation - painted representations of textiles, panelling and architectural features

Nowhere was the facility to overlook reality more in demand than in the painted imitations which were the subject of so many wall paintings. Imitation panelling was by far the most common fictive subject. This ranges from the finely executed, such as that at Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86] to the remarkably crude at Sutton Court Farm, Diddlebury [73]. It also includes the fluted frieze commonly associated with panelling but rarely executed with any degree of conviction in wall painting (see Churchyard Farm, Neenton [130], for example). Whilst it is accepted that panelling was quite expensive in the late sixteenth century and much sought after – presumably for its practical qualities more than anything else – surely it was within the purse of someone like Sir John Moreton. At the time his wall painting was executed, he was lavishing money on the south wing including the gatehouse and the long gallery. It is possible that the owner of Sutton Court Farm could not have afforded real panelling but it is difficult to believe that some of the higher-ranking gentry, who also had fictive panelling, could not stretch to it. Some examples made a reasonable effort at imitation but others, such as that at 6-7 Dogpole, Shrewsbury [120], made little effort to convince.

The painting of a fictive balustrade on the wall of a staircase is another example of an imitation architectural detail. Whilst only one was found in the course of the fieldwork, at Harvington Hall c.1600 [162], others have been recorded elsewhere in the country[33]. They start appearing at a time when first floor chambers developed as principal reception rooms and grand staircases were inserted to give access. To have open balustrades on both sides of the staircase required more space than many houses could afford. The solution of painting a balustrade on a wall on one side to match the real balustrade on the other provided a workable compromise.

The rich patterning and colours of textile hangings, discussed above, made them obvious candidates for imitation as the real thing was ruinously expensive. However, rather than just copy the pattern some paintings also include painted representations of nails, hanging tapes and scalloped edges to imitate an actual hanging, such as that at Castellymynach [209] (see fig.10.30). No-one would be fooled into thinking it the real thing, yet it was commonplace to persist in this *faux* detail.

Whilst the modern aesthetic tends to shrink from such blatant fakery, it did not appear to trouble sixteenth century sensibilities. The aim of the owner in imitating costly hangings appears to have been to give an impression of expense and also, surely, delight in the intrinsic design of rich patterning and colours. The selection of imitation panelling similarly would be suggestive of wealth, comfort and the latest fashion. Those like Sir John Moreton and the owner of Old Hall Farm, Wall-under-Heywood [146] went a step further and had imitation inlay painted on the fictive panelling, adding to the visual richness of the display. The painting of real panelling with arabesques and cartouches was a common practice and this, too, was imitated on fictive panelling such as that at Goose Green Farm, Yate [11]. The result of all the imitations is design rich in surface texture and colour, reminiscent of luxury, wealth and status – all impressions the owner, presumably, wanted to convey. Howard, referring to higher status houses, has suggested that visitors were intended

[33] Andrews & Reader, 1941, pp.150-153.

to admire the expense of finishes and, where these were faked, then one could admire the skill of the faking as well as the impression of expense[34]. This is surely true lower down the social scale even where the quality of the faking, to modern eyes, displays little worthy of admiration. This comes back to a point made at the beginning of this chapter which is that the paintings must be seen from the contemporary aesthetic and not a twenty-first century one.

Wall painting and status

Most, but not all, of the houses surveyed belonged to the socially aspiring – well-off yeomen and merchants, lesser gentry and armigers. All of these had an interest in displaying their status either with a view to enhancing it or consolidating it – 'bearing the port, charge and countenance of a gentleman'[35]. Painted decoration was one way in which this could be achieved and, unlike external decoration which was difficult to alter, it could be brought up to date as fashions or circumstances changed. Yet simply to link wall painting with a desire to display status is missing the subtle messages embodied in the painting which, it is argued, the owner intended to convey to the viewer.

In Chapter 4 the indicators of gentry status were discussed, some of which were imprecise and subtle. These included *inter alia* education, public service, ancient lineage, virtuous conduct, manners and, of greatest significance for this discussion, local standing. How one appeared in relation to one's neighbours was critical and putting on a good display in the home was part of this. Looking back to some of the characters portrayed in Chapter 6, the significance of some wall painting in relation to status can be explored.

Apart from the moralising text that Humphrey Mathew had painted in a first floor chamber, discussed above, there is quite well executed antiquework around the rest of the walls in the same room and in another first floor chamber there are imitation tapestries with a seascape painted above them and traces of other paintings around the room. The antiquework, no longer in its first flush of fashion, would be a typical choice for gentry as it remained popular in the first half of the seventeenth century (although as its popularity spread down the social scale its cachet declined. Sir William Sanderson dismissed it as alehouse decoration in 1658[36]). Whether the frieze is taken from John Shute's *First and chief groundes of architecture* or a Welsh Prayer Book cannot be established (both use the same title-page), although the latter would reinforce the moralising text and Humphrey's display of piety.

The seascape in the chamber over the hall is was probably the responsibility of Thomas Mathew, who achieved high standing amongst the county élite. The significance of the seascape has not been discovered – possibly it was referring to Thomas' exporting activities although this is unlikely as these were illegal. It is unusual both in its subject matter - seascapes were not common decoration at this date[37] - and in its professional execution. The 'framing' of the seascape with an

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[34] Maurice Howard, introduction to the conference on *The Tudor and Stuart Interior*, Victoria and Albert Museum, February 2002

[35] Harrison, 1887, p.128. See Chapter 4 for full quote.

[36] Croft-Murray, 1962, p.27

[37] Peter van der Merwe, National Maritime Museum

imitation wooden frame indicates it was intended to be read as an easel painting. Together with the imitation tapestries, this scheme suggests expensive decoration in the very latest fashion – possibly reflecting Thomas' elevated position as Steward to the Countess of Pembroke. Whatever the significance, the point is that it was conveying messages of wealth, fashion, elitism and more to select viewers.

The remarkable paintings at Harvington Hall have been described in detail elsewhere[38], although the dates offered for some of the paintings are questionable and unsubstantiated. The decoration extends throughout the building and was executed over a long period of time. In addition to the surviving paintings, there is a record of the timbers of the open hall being painted bright yellow, red and green.[39] All the principal rooms were painted - and it is a large house – so that it would be virtually impossible to escape this visual assault. Hall, parlours, chambers, passages, chapels, stairs – all were densely covered with antiquework, floral/scrollwork, arabesques, trelliswork, stripes (possibly overhung with tapestries), imitation architectural details and a story of the Nine Worthies. There are almost too many meanings here to make sense of. If the owner was trying to signify good taste, sophistication, education and fashion, the excess of information embodied here is in danger of cancelling out its meaning. This overloading may be the reaction of modern sensibilities for there is certainly evidence of other buildings having more than one painted scheme (see Chapter 6) and excess of ornament was a characteristic of the age. Possibly the Pakingtons, as staunch Catholics, were recreating the dense imagery previously found in churches, not with any overt religious meaning (apart from the chapel) but simply as this was considered as 'normal' decoration.

In this case, it is surprising to find a house like that of Richard Prynce, the wealthy, *nouveau*-gentry lawyer of Whitehall, Shrewsbury, with so little painted decoration. Such as he had is of high quality and as swanky as any encountered in the Marches but it appears to have been limited to two small antechambers. Prynce was certainly one of the gentry who would ensure that his elevated rank had an appropriate degree of display so one can only surmise that the principal rooms into which these antechambers led were more magnificently decorated and that this decoration has subsequently been lost.

Less elevated than Prynce, although apparently just as ambitious, was Robert Saunders, the ironmonger of Broad St. in Ludlow. There is nothing unusual in the showy display of timber framing on the new frontage to his house but the royal arms painted prominently on the overmantel in his parlour might be seen as sycophantic. He was no doubt reminding visitors of his connection to Edward Waties, who held a high position in the Council of the Marches (and who erected a monument to himself - see Chapter 10), for he retained the Tudor Welsh dragon supporter on the Stuart arms. Royal Arms were highly decorative devices and in a domestic setting could not only confirm the owner's support for the monarch, implying he was a good, law-abiding subject, but could also subtly confer some status. It could be suggestive of some distinction the owner had above his neighbours and undoubtedly that was the intention of Robert Saunders (and also Thomas Mathew of Castellymynach, who

[38] Hodgkinson, 1938, pp.21-26 and Matley Moore, 1982, pp.284-287
[39] Hodgkinson, ibid., p.5

had Royal Arms in his hall). In the case of Thomas Bromley of the Old House in Dogpole [121], the royal badges displayed in his parlour were, in fact, signifying such a distinction. The crown, pomegranate and Tudor rose referred to his position at court as a trusted advisor to Henry VIII and as Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench under Queen Mary. In his retirement it would be seen to be entirely appropriate for the high office he previously held to be properly acknowledged.

Personal heraldry would be an obvious choice for a wall painting for the status conscious and would serve as a constant reminder to viewers of the owner's armigerous standing. In the absence of their own arms, it seems that some would 'borrow' those of relatives or connections by marriage to display in their homes[40]. However only seven examples of personal heraldry were found and one of these was a painted carving. It might have been the case that the medium of wall painting was too temporary for such a key display of status. Coats of arms are unlikely to have been perceived as elements of fashion and therefore a more permanent medium would be favoured. Certainly carved stone, timber or plasterwork coats of arms are more commonly found.

Hunting scenes have long been a favourite form of decoration. They are found in early tapestries and from the seventeenth century appear painted on overmantels in the manner of easel paintings. Several of the latter were found in the course of the fieldwork, all dating from the late seventeenth century or later. One much earlier hunting scene is that at New Hall, Tickerton [83], which has a Germanic character (hunting stag on foot) which, it has been suggested earlier, may have been taken from a German painted cloth. Hunting required wealth and leisure time and was consequently a sport of the gentry. By selecting a hunting scene for his walls, an owner was suggesting an engagement in this activity and by implication, an association with others pursuing this sport - his gentry neighbours. The message to the viewer is unambiguous in its intention to denote status.

Context

The question of who was intended to see the painting is obviously relevant in assessing its significance. If the iconography was deliberately selected with this in mind then it would be useful to establish whether any particular themes were favoured for the more public halls and which were more commonly found in more private parlours or chambers. The major drawback with this is that relatively few wall paintings were found in halls - only around a sixth of the paintings surveyed. This may be because halls were not painted in the first place as they were subject to most wear and tear and, having the principal hearth still suffered from the most soot and dirt. Or, they could have retained their painted cloths for longer and so wall painting was not necessary. More likely, however, is that they have been subject to the repeated and extensive changes over time and the wall paintings have been lost. Bearing the unequal incidence in mind, some generalisations can be tentatively suggested.

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[40] The arms decorating the porch at Gledlom, Ysceifiog [195] are those of Williams of Mertyn, the family the daughter married into. Butler, 1938, pp.132-33

Halls seem to be characterised by plainer traditional decoration of a purely ornamental form, which could be seen as more appropriate to the function of the room. In the majority of the houses looked at - gentry, aspiring gentry or wealthy merchants houses - the hall would still retain some functions of communality and be the principal room for receiving guests. As such, one would be anxious to make a good impression. Decoration painted all around the walls would provide a clean, fresh appearance. Traditional patterns used in a new way would be uncontroversial and understood by all, yet draw attention to themselves by the boldness of the design and brightness of colour.

Nearly all the more complex figurative and Renaissance paintings are found in parlours and chambers where paintings would be viewed by a more exclusive set of people comprising the master of the house and his family and favoured guests. Here more complex messages could be conveyed and it has been suggested above that this might have been to emphasise the exclusivity of the more sophisticated designs, flattering both owner and viewer. However many purely ornamental designs are also found in parlours and chambers so any generalisation must be viewed with some caution.

Layers of meaning

Despite the above, it would be wrong to consider wall painting simply as a tool for social mobility. As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, there were different layers of meaning which make up the significance of the painted decoration to the owner commissioning it.

At the most basic level this could be simply people taking pride in their home, making it look attractive for the pleasure it gave them and to impress family and friends. This was not necessarily anything connected with social aspirations, rather it was the householder, and his wife, making a good show. A painting decorating the walls of the hall would signify that the hearth was enclosed, that the windows were glazed and the hall was probably ceiled. It would mean that the walls had a finish on them sufficiently good to take a painting directly on to the surface. It is difficult to imagine opting for a painted cloth in these circumstances. Admittedly they were useful in that they covered gaps and poorly finished walls but they must have quickly become filthy and impossible to clean, and they were old fashioned. In a newly built or newly altered hall finished to a superior standard, it is likely that the owner would select a wall painting to decorate it, emphasising the modernity of his hall. Unlike painted cloths, when the walls became dirty and sooty (as they would still do with an open fire but not so much as with an open hearth) then the walls could be limewashed over and repainted.

Similarly, the newly fashioned parlour or chamber could be shown off to best effect with a wall painting rather than a painted cloth. For example, the attractive, clean fresh appearance of the parlour at High Grosvenor [145] could not be achieved with painted cloths. Perhaps it was the element of overpainting that Shakespeare was referring to in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, when the Host indicates Falstaff's room:

> There's his chamber, ... 'tis painted about with the story of the Prodigal, fresh and new.[41]

Regardless of the subject of the painting, therefore, there is some significance in the painting *per se* which was intended to impress visitors as well as giving pleasure to the owner and his family.

Beyond this, any attempt to grasp the full significance of the paintings becomes more difficult and speculative. Some of the potential meanings have been explored in this chapter although it is emphasised that much has to be supposition. The intrinsic meaning of many of the designs may have been lost in their translation into wall paintings and new meanings ascribed which need to be considered in relation to their context. A wide range of iconography was open to owners and craftsmen from which to select designs and this was drawn on indiscriminately. The appropriateness of the intrinsic meaning rarely got in the way as, for example, in the use of Serlio's coffered ceiling designs for walls (see Michaelchurch Court, Michaelchurch Escley [31] and 99 Westgate, Gloucester [10]). The result was, as Snodin remarked in relation to classical decoration, 'a glorious mix-and-match'[42]. Eclecticism was the order of the day. This meant that each element selected could have a different meaning and, if nothing had a single meaning then the complexity of the messages being conveyed becomes apparent. Add to this the symbolism, allegory and allusion which permeated all aspects of decoration and it is possible that even contemporaries may have had difficulty in interpreting some paintings. Without the benefit of contemporary cultural reference points, the present day task of understanding them becomes even more daunting.

However, it is not suggested that all painted decoration had such density of significance. The purely ornamental designs, such as the widespread Shropshire scroll pattern, may signify little more than a desire to modernise or freshen up the house, with a cheap and cheerful design. The floral scroll pattern, which intrinsically could signify safe and traditional, may have been popular for this very reason and the more people adopted it, the more it became fashionable as a design.

The wall paintings surveyed are unlikely to be a representative sample, simply because of differential survival rates. The houses of those higher status houses have survived in greater numbers than the less well-built ones of their neighbours. The iconography favoured by the less well-off can only be guessed at. On the basis of the few wall paintings surveyed in modest houses, one could suggest that simple patterns fairly crudely executed may have been favoured. Yet the example of Geddes, Pencraig [21] with its archers and gentleman dressed in a fur trimmed gown acts as a warning against such generalisations. There is no reason to assume that lower status necessarily signified fewer meanings. Nor is the converse true. There are plenty of high status houses with exceptionally simple, if not to say crude, painting.

[41] Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act IV, Sc.V, 6-10
[42] Snodin and Styles, 2001, p.50

Conclusion

Understanding the significance of painted decoration has been one of the important challenges of this research. The lives of ordinary people at the vernacular level are poorly recorded - their homes usually offer the only source of information into otherwise inaccessible aspects of people's lives.

The intangible qualities of the mindset of people commissioning the paintings may be glimpsed at through the subjects they chose to paint around their walls. The show of expense through richly-coloured, boldly-textured designs, the knowledge of wider cultural horizons hinted at with classical allusions, the communication in the sophisticated language of emblems and allegory, the emulation of courtiers and greater gentry in portrait painting – all these betray the social and cultural values not evident in other records at the vernacular level.

Chapter 12
Conclusions

This chapter attempts to synthesise the conclusions drawn from the research in order to review the research hypotheses set out at the start of Chapter 2. These will be considered in turn in the sections that follow. Following this are a number of other points of interest which emerged, which had not been anticipated at the outset. As the research progressed it became apparent that there were some areas of further investigation which might yield fruitful results. These are beyond the scope of this thesis but they are identified in this chapter as areas of potential research.

Review of Research Hypotheses

1. Universality

Universality is used here to refer to the related issues of building type and the geographical context in which different types of building are found. Type in this section relates to building construction rather than plan form or size. From the geographical perspective it was discovered in the fieldwork that wall paintings were common in all parts of the Marches (see Map 5). Rouse has suggested that wall paintings are found principally in timber-framed houses, less commonly in stone houses and only rarely in houses of brick construction[1] - the implication being that the construction material in some way determined whether the house had painted decoration. Within the Marches wall paintings have been found in houses principally of timber-framed construction but also in stone houses in the western parts of Herefordshire and in Wales – a variation which reflects the vernacular building materials of the area. Very few have been found in houses of brick construction as these were generally later when wall painting was no longer popular. Rouse's assertion is probably more a reflection of the research that was available when he was writing than a true reflection of the original incidence of wall painting.

Not only can they be found everywhere, but they are so widespread that it is suggested here that wherever a house dating from the late sixteenth century survives without too much alteration to its original fabric then it is highly probable that traces of wall painting may be found (see Appendix 9). Even if recognisable schemes do not survive the fragments are indicative that the painted decoration existed. Wall paintings are found in significant numbers in other parts of the country where there is a high survival of houses which existed in the late sixteenth century, notably the south-east, but not in areas where the Great Rebuilding took place later. In areas like the Pennines and the Lake District, where the vernacular threshold dates from the seventeenth century, there are very few wall paintings recorded. It may be that here wall paintings existed in houses which were replaced in the seventeenth century. Alternatively, the interior of the majority of houses prior to the Great Rebuilding may have been too poorly finished to provide a suitable surface for wall paintings. Whatever the explanation, by the time houses were being built in the mid-seventeenth century the time for wall paintings had passed and other forms of decoration had taken their place.

[1] Rouse, 1989, p.423

Another indication of the popularity of wall paintings is that many houses had painted decoration in more than one room. In some, all the principal rooms of the house have been painted. The best examples of this are Harvington Hall [160-171] and Dowles Manor [177].

2. In houses of all status

Status was a key concern throughout the research as it was felt that not only were wall paintings universal geographically but that their ubiquity extended throughout the social scale. However, the fieldwork neither proved nor disproved this hypothesis. The buildings surveyed in the course of the fieldwork were predominantly higher status, many of them being houses of the gentry or well-off members of the community. In the core of the Marches, the survey was exhaustive and comprehensive so the bias towards higher status buildings cannot be explained by sampling techniques. Rather it is probably the result of the differential rates of survival of buildings. It is widely accepted that higher status buildings were of better construction than those of the less well-off and consequently more have survived. The greater incidence of wall painting in these higher status buildings is likely to be a reflection of this. That some wall paintings were found in quite humble houses of yeomen and artisans points to the fact that at this social level people were commissioning this form of decoration. What is not known is how many.

Evidence of a different kind is needed to illuminate this question. Some evidence is provided by the analysis of the vernacular characteristics of painted decoration. For the majority of paintings the materials used were cheap and readily available, simple techniques were used and craftsmen were available locally who could carry out the work. Whilst costs varied considerably according to the sophistication of the scheme, simple schemes would be affordable quite low down the social scale. For example, a typical basic wall painting scheme may have cost little more than a day's wages for a craftsman. It is possible that services may well have been exchanged in kind, although this can only be speculation as such a transaction leaves no record. If this was the case then the cost would be limited to that of the materials only. These have been shown to be minimal for most paintings. It would be feasible, therefore, for wall painting to be found in houses of husbandmen and artisans as well as the wealthy and better-off. It is questionable whether the homes of the very poor had wall paintings as, at this date, most were of poor construction and, as suggested above, of too rough a finish to take a wall painting for which a moderately smooth internal finish is required.

The fact that people could afford a wall painting does not necessarily mean that they would, in fact, opt to have this decoration. In order to speculate on whether an owner would choose a wall painting and what form this would take, it is necessary to have some understanding of the *significance* of this type of decoration - what meaning it had for him. Social and cultural considerations, including those of status, are crucial to this and these are explored further in the discussion of hypothesis 5 below.

3. Itinerant painters

Embodied in the above is the conclusion that local craftsmen were responsible for many of the vernacular wall paintings found, rather than itinerant painters as has often been suggested. That there were itinerant painters is not disputed but it was probably not these who were responsible for the majority of the wall paintings. High status work which involved more expensive colours, specific skills and sophisticated techniques was more their sphere of work and embraced specialized activities such as arms painting.

However, the hypothesis that pattern books were used as a source of design could well be true. Indeed this supports the view that it was craftsmen other than painters responsible for the work, for assistance with the layout and design of paintings would be invaluable to a non-specialist. There is clear evidence for the use of common sources some of which were taken from published pattern books. However, not just pattern books but a whole range of other published material also appears to have been used. Whether or not the craftsman used the actual published source or a secondary source, from which he made his own pattern, is not known. The wide range of other designs which appear to have been taken from the contemporary visual environment supports the view that craftsmen made their own patterns which they used to reproduce similar designs in the form of wall paintings.

However, the design of the wall painting does not appear to have been the sole responsibility of the craftsman. It is argued in Chapter 10 that the owner would usually have had a significant input into the type of design. Therefore he could well have provided the pattern for the craftsman to copy although, for obvious reasons, it is not easy to substantiate this contention.

4. Date range from 1550-1625

Dating the paintings has been a challenge as very few paintings have actual dates painted on them. Unhelpfully, most of the dated examples are from the later seventeenth century and are not, it is argued here, typical of the painted decoration which has been the focus of this research. Consequently, other evidence has been used in an attempt to establish the date range.

First, there appears to have been a distinctive form of painted decoration in the sixteenth century and early seventeenth century characterised by bold striking designs covering the entire surface of walls or ceilings. This is divided into the frieze, main panel and dado, reminiscent of the Renaissance organisation of space. Dated examples elsewhere in the country conforming to this pattern fall within the period 1550-1625 – none fall outside these dates. In the later seventeenth century painting schemes generally are more limited in extent and appear to be more consciously architecturally designed as, for example, overmantels or friezes. In the buildings surveyed there are fewer of this latter type. In higher status houses extensive painting schemes are found such as that at Powis Castle, near Welshpool[2], but these have more affinity with easel paintings than vernacular wall painting.

[2] See Dineley, 1888, pp.67-69 for a full account of contemporary painted decoration at Powis Castle.

Further support to the hypothesis is given in the evidence of the buildings themselves. The incidence of wall paintings does not reflect the overall pattern of survival of buildings. Whilst the rate of survival of buildings increases during the seventeenth century, that for wall paintings does not. If wall painting had continued to be popular after around 1625 it would be reasonable to expect an increase in the number of paintings surviving during the seventeenth century. This is not the case - only a small minority of buildings surveyed date from the latter part of the seventeenth century.

The findings of the research support the argument that the overall wall painting schemes were essentially a Tudor form of decoration which continued into the seventeenth century and which were more or less defunct by 1625. They are not found much before the second half of sixteenth century probably because of limitations imposed by housing conditions: interiors were generally too dimly lit and surfaces too prone to soot and smoke deposits for wall paintings to have been clearly visible. Also, the point raised above in relation to the finish of interior surfaces would have applied to many houses earlier in the sixteenth century. The number of wall paintings appears to increase after about 1560 with a dramatic rise after around 1575 and then declining during the first quarter of seventeenth century. To ascribe this to changes in fashion, true though that may be, is too simplistic. Fashion is an expression of social and cultural values and changes in fashion are symptomatic of underlying shifts in these values. The significance of this is explored further below.

5. Significance

Originally it was thought that there may be some significance in the iconography of the painting in relation to the function of the room. One of the reasons for exploring this hypothesis was the recording elsewhere of religious paintings in attics[3] and it was thought that recusants might have favoured this form of decoration. Very little evidence of this was found – only at Harvington Hall, where there is overt Catholic decoration in the Small Chapel but a religiously neutral scheme in the Large Chapel. For the rest no obvious link was manifest between the iconography and the function of the room. However, when the overall significance of the wall paintings was considered, in terms of how it might illuminate the knowledge and understanding of vernacular life, then a subtle difference emerged in the type of painting in halls compared to the more private parlours and chambers. This difference may be due to coincidence of survival but the evidence suggests something more positive which gives an important insight into the social and cultural values of the period.

Wall paintings by their very nature involve an element of display. In some cases this may be simply the manifestation of the house owner's pride in his home but in others the display may be indicative of social aspirations. In view of this, the hypothesis needs to be widened further to suggest that iconography is linked not only to the function of the room but also to the status of the house.

Almost all wall paintings were found in the principal rooms of the house - halls, parlours and chambers - and the question must be asked as to who would see these. Painted decoration in the hall was on view to all in the house, household and visitors

[3] Benton, 1925-27, pp. 290-292 and Carrick, 1989, p.119-120

alike. Here, the decoration was mostly traditional - floral/scroll, geometric or other miscellaneous decoration seems to have been by far the most popular choice. The exceptions to this were male and female figures in contemporary dress, and also two schemes of the Nine Worthies, both themes designed, it has been argued, to assign favourable characteristics to the householder. The impression intended to be given out by wall painting in the hall, therefore may have been principally one of modernity, with references to the worthiness of the householder.

Paintings found in parlours and chambers were subtly different. These rooms were not so much private as *segregated* from the rest of the household. Whilst both were used for sleeping, the presence in probate inventories of chairs and tables in these rooms strongly suggests an entertaining function. Here, favoured guests would socialise with close members of the family and business would be transacted. It is in these rooms that generally the more sophisticated paintings are found. In addition to the themes commonly found in halls, these more segregated rooms had Renaissance decoration, imitation panelling and more complex figurative schemes. These, it is suggested, were intended to convey more sophisticated messages to the viewer about the standing of the householder. The participation of the viewer in this process could, in turn, mean the house owner assigned certain favourable characteristics to his guest. For example, Renaissance decoration could be a sign of classical learning and this was used as an indicator of status. The 'sharing' of this decoration may have assigned the attribute of education to both house owner and viewer. Similarly the use of emblematic and symbolic images assumed a sophistication in knowledge and taste shared by those invited to participate. The use of these more demanding paintings in parlours and chambers could be seen as flattering viewers as well as the house owners, suggesting a mutual affirmation of superior standing.

It was suggested in Chapter 4 in relation to status that, in reality, a person's status was probably ascribed on the basis of a number of subtle indicators which included education and his standing in the community, which in turn was an expression of who he mixed with. It seems that for a relatively short period wall paintings may also have played a part in defining this. They were invaluable as a powerful means of display and, being only temporary, they could be renewed on a regular basis to keep up with fashion. Unfortunately, this explains neither why wall paintings developed this widespread appeal nor why they declined so sharply in popularity after around 1625. In seems, in fact, that there is no clear single explanation for this, but rather a series of contributory factors, which were interlinked and which changed during the course of the early seventeenth century, causing a decline in the fashion of wall painting for decorating houses.

One of these factors is related to underlying social change during the period of their popularity. This period was one characterised by the social mobility discussed in Chapter 4. It could be argued that greater social complexity resulted in the need for new ways of expressing social aspiration. Wall paintings might therefore be seen as a transitional response to a transitional social order.

The findings of the fieldwork suggest that the higher status houses had the more complex figurative and ornamental schemes whilst, for the most part, the humbler houses had simpler ornament schemes. Although there are exceptions in both cases, the difference was noticeable. It is possible that it could be accounted for by the fact

that a greater number of higher status houses was surveyed but it is more likely, given the social and cultural climate, that the iconography selected was influenced by social aspirations.

At the more practical level there were distinct changes in architectural fashion following the appointment of Inigo Jones as Surveyor and probably due in part to his influence[4]. Decoration in royal palaces became much more restrained in colour and designed in proportion to the surface to be covered rather than the 'overall' treatment which characterised late sixteenth century decoration. The filtering down the social scale of this fashion is expressed in the more restrained decorative schemes which appear after the first quarter of the seventeenth century[5]. That is not to say that elements of show were entirely abandoned. Rather, they were transferred to objects rather than structures. Evidence of this is found in the increased use of panelling, which frequently covered wall paintings, and in material goods and notably soft furnishing appearing in inventories during the seventeenth century.

Other conclusions

In addition to providing evidence in relation to the original hypotheses, further information emerged from the research which led to other pertinent observations on vernacular life.

The technical analysis of the paintings revealed that wall paintings were probably only ever intended for short term decoration. This is supported by evidence from pigment analysis in Suffolk[6] which suggests that overpainting was common here as well. Several isolated examples recorded elsewhere in the south east[7] add weight to this. In royal palaces, it is known that painted decoration was frequently renewed[8] and it appears that a similar practice was prevalent at the vernacular level.

The penchant of the Tudor élite to have their portraits painted is well known but that it was also common at the vernacular level is not. Again, this is not peculiar to the Marches. Other examples have been noted in the south east. The portraits of the élite have been used as a mine of information about their social and cultural *moeurs* and it could be argued that the same applies to vernacular portraits. They illustrate the costume, presumably their best, worn by people of lower social standing. They show men and women as equals – a significant point in a patriarchal society – and in companionable poses. Embodied in the portraits are a number of messages relating to the values of a good household and respect within a relationship. The complex symbolism in some may hold the key to aspects of social and cultural life which currently evade comprehension – a point that holds good for the paintings in general.

The recurrence of elements in the design wall paintings in examples geographically distant suggest there were common sources and also provides information on the dissemination of fashion. Related to this, the meanings which wall painting

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[4] Mercer, 1953, p.163
[5] ibid., pp.162-163
[6] Information from Andrea Kirkham
[7] For example Reader, 1935, p.277
[8] Colvin, 1965 and Mercer, 1953

contained must have been widely accessible signifying common cultural reference points which acted as a shorthand to interpreting designs. Some of these meanings are quite complex suggesting a degree of sophistication in popular culture. Parallels could perhaps be drawn with Shakespeare's work, as a major source of information on culture at the vernacular level, although such an investigation is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Further work

Some of the conclusions relating to the significance of wall paintings are inevitably tentative as they are dealing with intangible issues and incomplete evidence. Further work which could either strengthen or nullify these claims would be of considerable worth. A comparison of the Marches with other areas known to have extensive wall paintings would be particularly informative in order to establish whether the conclusions drawn here have wider applicability. In particular, research into the character of wall paintings in different rooms and in relation to social standing could give more insight into the underlying significance of painted decoration. Significance can only be interpreted in relation to people so investigation into who commissioned the paintings would be essential. From a full comparative study it may be possible to establish whether the conclusions drawn from this research are peculiar to the Marches or are more generally applicable. Evidence from research to date in Suffolk, Essex and Buckinghamshire suggests that there is a greater sophistication in techniques and pigments used in some areas. The extent of this difference and the reasons for it would be useful to explore and again would be closely related to who was living in the houses.

Additional valuable areas of research would be in the fields of iconography and dating. The present research discovered that there were no discernible trends in iconography, either because there are none or because the wall paintings could not be dated closely enough. Further work to secure more accurate dating would be helpful as the iconography could then be placed more specifically in a historical context which in turn could assist in understanding issues of significance. The similarity of some designs found in different parts of the country is striking. Further work on identifying sources for these could help in understanding how information, ideas and fashion were disseminated.

Conclusion

This research started out as a study of a particular element in the decoration of vernacular buildings, motivated by the intuition that wall painting could hold important information about the lives of people at the vernacular level. Whilst not necessarily being able to reveal the significance of this form of decoration in all aspects, the research has demonstrated that wall paintings can provide an important insight into some of the more intangible and elusive aspects of vernacular life which were arguably of considerable consequence to contemporaries. Social and cultural values of the period are particularly difficult to access as surviving indicators of these are limited. Information gleaned from contemporary literature is commonly used as evidence but in a predominantly non-literate society this inevitably reflects values and concerns of the literate sector of the population. From the vernacular perspective, sources are much more limited. Documents and records such as wills

and probate inventories constitute an important resource but the buildings themselves provide the major source of information and it is essential to be alive to all the messages they can communicate. This research argues that wall paintings were a key element in vernacular buildings at a specific time during the transition from a medieval to an early modern society and are, therefore, a crucial record of changing social and cultural values.

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Appendix 1 Classification system for wall paintings

1		*figure subjects*
	A	religious figure
	B	allegorical figure
	C	classical figure
	D	miscellaneous figure
2		*decorative*
	A	Renaissance decoration
	B	floral/scroll decoration
	C	geometric decoration
	D	Shropshire scroll decoration
	E	miscellaneous decoration
	F	landscape
3		*architectural motifs*
	A	panelling motif
	B	arcading motif
	C	other architectural motif
4		*texts or inscriptions*
	A	gothic text/inscription
	B	later text/inscription
5		*heraldry*
	A	heraldry personal
	B	heraldry royal

Based on Rouse[1]

[1] Rouse, 1989, p.429

Appendix 2
Sample Survey Sheet

Table1 - survey results

index: address: parish: County

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Building type: Section: External Architectural Details

Size: Plan form:

wall mat:

arch det ext:

wall tech:

roof mat: windows:

MB actual date:

MB assumed date: doors:

Add actual date:

Internal Architectural Junction

Add assumed date:

room height: AD dec plas:

Area: AD fireplc:

AD spine beam: AD firplc mat:

AD cross beam:

AD doors:

AD stops:

AD panelling:

Pigments

DET mot:

WPS loc:

DET border:

WPS ext

Date - actual:

Date - assumed:

WPS ground:

WPS tech:

TYPE:

status of wp

WPS col:

cost wp per sq yd:

Sim to:

total cost of wp:

Memo:

Appendix 3
Assessment of status

The starting point in assessing status was the identification of gentry houses. Typical characteristics of gentry houses were identified from a number of sources on vernacular buildings[1] and from known gentry houses within the survey. These were discussed with vernacular architects working both within the Marches and outside to confirm their relevance to the current research[2]. These characteristics related size, height, plan form, section and decorative details, both external and internal and are shown in table A.3.

The houses surveyed were then assessed against these characteristics. Those houses displaying characteristics similar to known gentry houses were assumed to be of gentry status. Greater weight was given to those characteristics indicative of greater expense such as size and plan form than, for example, window mouldings, although an allowance was made for the generally less prestigious houses of Welsh gentry. Whilst this exercise was designed to be as objective as possible, some subjectivity was inevitable, particularly in defining the status of those of lower rank. Documentary evidence helped identify some known merchants and yeomen and others were identified on the basis of their similarity to the known merchant or yeoman houses but predominantly on the lack of characteristics of gentry houses. Smaller size and lack of detailing has been assumed to be indicative of lower rank. Whilst exact status is inevitably speculative, broad status divisions have been made with some confidence based on the information obtained form the fieldwork, documentary evidence and many years experience of studying vernacular buildings. The broad status bands are given in Table 6.4. External and internal details of each building are summarised in the Gazetteer.

[1] Fox and Raglan, 1994, RCAHMW, 1981 and 1988, Smith, 1988, Brunskill, 1997, Hall, 1983
[2] The late Eric Mercer, Madge Moran, Matthew Johnson

Table A.3 Building details used to assess status

External architectural detail	*Internal architectural detail*
hall and cross wings	cusped/decorated timbers
3-unit	decorative plasterwork
>3-unit	fluted panelling
2-storey	small fielded panelling
g/f height over 8 ft	large fielded panelling
jetty	decorated stone doorhead
decorative panels	wide boarded door
moulding to window	panelled door
moulded door surround	moulded window surround
carving	moulded door surround
lateral stack	carved stone fire surround
decorated/diagonal set stack	carved timber fire surround
porch	dressed stone fire surround
gatehouse	dais
hood mould	chamfered stopped joists
string course	carved panelling
storeyed porch	decorative staircase
decorated doorhead	plank and muntin panelling
heraldry	chamfered door surround
datestone	moulded joists
chamfered door surround	heavy section joists
close studding	decorated overmantel
bay/oriel window	moulded ceiling frame
double pile other	heraldry carving

Appendix 4
Dated examples of wall paintings nationally

date	address	county	description
1540	Cross Farm, Westerly	Somerset	
1566	Hill House Fm	Essex	crude initials and date
1580	Pittleworth Manor	Hants	Dives and Lazarus-all over
1582	Council House, Shrewsbury	Shropshire	floral/scroll- all over
1587	house, Bogle Lane, Lynstead	Kent	
1590	Saracen's Head, Southwell	Notts	
1597	Scarlett's Mill, Cowden	Kent	
1600	5 Sparhawke St, Bury St Edmunds	Suffolk	frieze but looks as though only a fragment
1602	Castellymynach	Glamorgan	grotesquework-all over
1603	Paramour Grange	Kent	strapwork (serlio) all-over
1603	Crown Hotel, Aylesbury	Bucks	floral/niches/text -all over
1605	house, Bogle Lane, Lynstead	Kent	
1605	Ansells End Farm, Kimpton	Herts	floral/scroll and royal arms -all over
1606	The Savoy Denham	Bucks	
1606	Southfields, Denham	Essex	frieze with guilloche
1606	Hoe St Fm, Roxwell	Essex	frieze of scrollwork above imit panelling -all over
1606	Old Manor House, Witham	Essex	Roundel of fish
1609	12 Chesil St, Winchester	Hants	floral/scroll -all over
1610	Bramall	Cheshire	Renaissance work -all over ceiling
1611	11 Harnet St, Sandwich	Kent	
1614	137 High St, Watford	Herts	royal arms/imit panelling -all over
1615	Cloville Hall	Essex	grotesquework -all over
1617	Grove House, Woodford	Essex	rural scenes -all over
1618	Bennet's Castle Farm Ho, Dagenham	Essex	frieze with date above imit panelling -all over
1623	Rogers, Newton	Suffolk	Life of Samson -all over
1628	Hospits Farm House, W Bergholt	Essex	cartouche with initials
1629	Deanery Tower, Hadleigh	Suffolk	architectural panel
163?	Mossgate, Pilling	Lancs	decorated panel with date
1638	All Saints Vicarage, Maldon	Essex	initials and date
1639	Byeways, Ousden	Suffolk	text panel
1642	Abbots Langley	Herts	royal arms
1654	Albyns, Stapleford Abbots	Essex	Initials and arms
1657	Fore Hamlet, Ipswich	Suffolk	frieze panel
1659	Wadham College, Oxford	Oxon	
1662	Netherwild Farm, Aldenham	Herts	strapwork panel with initials
1664	GlynCywarch	Merioneth	names of owners and text
1676	Slough House Fm, Halstead	Essex	Strapwork over fireplace
1682	59 Church St Coggeshall	Essex	two handled vase
1682	Whitton Court	Shropshire	frieze with initials and arms
1690	Lamb Inn, Iron Acton	Glos	initials and royal arms

Appendix 5
Painting materials found in tradesmen's inventories

The inventories have been analysed to identify firstly ready made pigments (1), secondly materials which could be used to make organic pigments, consisting of vegetable dyes and bases for lakes and pinks (2) and thirdly, other goods which could be used for painting, including materials for varnishes, size and oils(3).

Edward Brat, Worcs, Mercer, 1553

1. Verdigris, coal
2. Alum, madder, brazil
3. None

Peter Gough, Worcs, Mercery/apothecary, 1573 (NB painted cloths)

1. Yellow ochre, lapis lazuli, raddle, white lead, lampblack, general, verditer, verdigris, mummy, green bice, blue bice, (? black lead), red lead,
2. Alum, ? mandrake roots
3. Brushes, rosin, green copperas, white copperas, gum arabic, gum tragacanth, dragons blood, venice turpentine

Anthony Betenson, Newport, mercery, 1580

1. Yellow ochre, orpiment, red lead, verdigris,
2. Madder, roset, ? greens, saffron,
3. Pieces of parchment

Richard Horwood, Worcs, mercer, 1583

1. Verdigris, white lead, Spanish ochre, yellow ochre,
2. Allum, buckbrassil
3. Brushes, slickstone?, glue,

John Beare, Norfolk, mercery, 1589

1. Red ochre, spanish brown,
2. Alum, rosen

John Twice, Winchester, grocer, 1583

1. None
2. Madder, alum, brazil
3. Painters oil

William Perkins, Hill Morton, Warks, mecery, 1590

1. Verdigris,
2. Alum, madder, logwood,
3. Brushes, turpentine, green copperas, rosin, glue, fat copperas

John Stain, Derby, apothecary, 1615 nb painted cloths

1. Red mercury?, vermilion, verdigris, red lead, orpiment, coal
2. Bayberries
3. Gum, dragons blood, linseed oil, turpentine

Lambert Vibert, Winchester, mercery, 1622

1. White lead, red lead, ochre, (powder blue?), verdigris, raddle, ochre
2. Barberry, alum, lime, saffron, indigo
3. Painters hair, copperas, gum,

John Trym, Whitchurch, ironmonger, 1627

1. Orpiment, verdigris,
2. Madder, logwood, indigo, alum, brasilwood
3. Green copperas, gum,

Andrew Wilde, Market Drayton, mercer, 1628

1. None,
2. Logwood, madder
3. Green copperas, brushes

William Allen, Tamworth, mercer, 1604

1. Red lead, verdigris, coal
2. Alum, madder, brasil,
3. Copperas, green copperas

Thomas Harris, Charlbury, mercer, 1632

1. Red lead, verdigris
2. Saffron, indigo
3. Green copperas, bristle brushes, rosin

Mary Colley, Drayton, mercery, 1634

1. White lead,
2. Alum
3. Venice turpentine

Richard Sankey, Ormskirk, mercery, 1634

1. White lead, verdigris, lime,
2. Indigo, alum,
3. Rosin, eye? copperas, green copperas, turpentine, pitch

Godfrey Morgan, Builth, mercery, 1639

1. None
2. Indigo
3. None

John Wild, Market Drayton, mercer, 1639

1. Umber, verdigris, lampblack, rottenstone, yellow ochre, red lead
2. Alum, madder, redwood, logwood, chalk
3. Isinglass, burgundy pitch, mastic, dragons blood, white copperas, brushes, glue, gum dragon, gum arabic, rosin, turpentine

Appendix 6
Craftsmen's wages in pence per day

year	source	location	craftsman	no meat + drink
1561-73	Phelps Brown and Hopkins	generally south east	craftsman	10
1561-73	Woodward	York	craftsman	8
1561-73	"	Newcastle	craftsman	8
1561-73	"	Chester	craftsmen	9
1561-73	"	Durham	craftsman	8
1561-73	"	Hull	craftsman	9
1563	Tudor wage rate assessments	Rutlandshire	glazier	10
1563	"	Kent	glazier	11
1563	"	New Windsor	glazier	12
1563	"	London	painter stainers	14
1563	"	London	glazier	13
1563	"	London	plasterer	13
1563-72	Chuchwarden's accounts[1]	Gloucester	craftsman	9-10
1570	Tudor wage rate assessments	Chester	plasterer	6[2]
1570	"	Chester	bricklayer	4
1572	Chuchwarden's accounts[3]	Ludlow	plumber	10
1572	Chuchwarden's accounts	Ludlow	craftsmaan	9
1573	Tudor wage rate assessments	London	painter stainer	13
1573	"	London	plasterer	13
1573	"	London	glazier	13
1573-80	Phelps Brown and Hopkins	south east	craftsman	10-12
1573-80	Woodward	Carlilse	craftsman	11
	"	Chester	craftsman	9
	"	Durham	craftsman	8
	"	Hull	craftsman	10
	"	York	craftsman	8
	"	Newcastle	craftsman	9
1575	Tudor wage rate assessments	Chester	plasterer	41/2
1575	"	Chester	bricklayer	6
1576	"	London	painter stainer	14
1576	"	London	plasterer	13
1576	"	Canterbury	plasterer	12
1576	"	Canterbury	bricklayer	14
1576	"	Canterbury	glazier	12
1578	"	London	painter stainer	14

[1] G.R.O.PA154/2, St. Michael's churchwarden's accounts
[2] Assumed without meat and drink –not specified
[3] Wright, 1869

1578	Churchwarden's accounts[4]	Tewkesbury	craftsman	8-9
1580	Tudor wage rate assessments	London	painter stainer	14
1580-1629	Phelps Brown & Hopkins	south east	craftsman	12
1580-1590	Woodward	York	craftsman	9
	"	Newcastle	craftsman	9
	"	Kendal	craftsman	8
	"	Hull	craftsman	9
	"	Durham	craftsman	8
	"	Chester	craftsman	9
1580	Churchwardens accounts[5]	Oswestry	mason	9-10
1582-3	Bailiffs accounts[6]	Shrewsbury	craftsmen	8-10
1586	Drapers hall account[7]	Shrewsbury	plasterer	9
1585	Tudor wage rate assessments	London	painter stainer	13
1585	"	London	plasterer	13
1585	"	London	glazier	13
1589	"	London	painter stainer	13
1589		London	plasterer	14
1590-1629	Woodward	York	craftsman	13
	"	Newcastle	craftsman	11
	"	Lincoln	craftsman	11
	"	Kendal	craftsman	10
	"	Hull	craftsman	12
	"	Chester	craftsman	12
1594	Tudor wage rate assessments	Canterbury	bricklayer	14
1594	"	Canterbury	plasterer	14
1597	"	Chester	plasterer	8
1597	"	Chester	bricklayer	7
c1600	Building Accounts	Rushton hall	painter	12[8]
1606	Act of Parliament[9]	national	painter	16 max
1618	Churchwarden's accounts[10]	Tewkesbury	craftsman	9
1635	"	Trentham hall	painter	8[11]
1646	Rogers[12]	south east	house painter	24
1658	"	south east	painter	26

[4] Litzenberger,, 1994, p.25
[5] Day, 1970
[6] SRRC 3365/521
[7] SRRC 1831
[8] Assumed without meat and drink –not specified
[9] 4.Jac.1..c.20 stipulated that no painter might take more than sixteen pence a day 'for laying of any flat colour whatsoever, mingled or mixed with oil or size upon any timber, stone, iron or lead'
[10] Litzenberger, op.cit. p.135
[11] Meat and drink not specified but may be included, otherwise the rate is very low
[12] Rogers, op. cit. p. 657

Appendix 7
Assessment of pigment costs for sample wall paintings

One of the main difficulties with this assessment was obtaining a cost for charcoal or lampblack, as these are by far the most common pigments used, found in nearly all the paintings. The only documented price is one for London at 2s per pound for lamp black, which, if accurate, is much too high to be realistic for housepainting purposes when, for example, yellow ochre, another very common pigment, only cost 1d per pound. John Smith in 1676 recommends lampblack on account of its 'plenty and cheapness'[1].It is quite unimaginable that such an expensive pigment would be the most commonly used. In 1802 lampblack was valued at between 3d-6d per pound[2]. Whilst changes in the manufacturing process may have made its production much more efficient by this date, which could account for its cheapness, it is more likely that this price is comparable to the seventeenth century price with an allowance for some inflation of prices. It is entirely possible that the 2s recorded in London was a transcribing error and the price was actually 2d. Charcoal was valued at between 1¼-1¾d in the early nineteenth century.[3] It is also possible that craftsmen made their own black pigments, whether lampblack or charcoal, rather than buy them. Both were quite easy to obtain[4] and this could account for the lack of documentary evidence for a price. For the purpose of estimating the cost of paintings, a price of 2d per pound (i.e. 0.125d per ounce) is assumed for both lampblack and charcoal, which could well be an overestimate.

Assuming 1 square yard of painting required half an ounce of pigment the following were costed;

1. 23 Brookend Street, Ross on Wye [17]

Painted ceiling. Not more than 25% of the surface is covered with blue-black pigment over limewash.
Total surface area assuming 3 sides of joists and spine beams and underside of floorboards = 169 square yards.
Area of black pigment = approx. 25% = 42 square yards
1 square yard requires half an ounce of pigment, therefore amount of black pigment used is approx. 21 oz.
The pigment is a blue black and likely to be some form of charcoal. Assuming a price of 2d per pound. Using this price the pigment for the decoration would have cost less than 3d
Cost max.for total scheme =3d
= 0.018d per square yard

2. 45 Muxton Lane, Telford [128]

Approximately 37square yards of painting of which about half is covered with blue black pigment on a limewash ground i.e 18.5 square yards of pigment. This would

[1] Smith, 1676, p.14
[2] Bristow, 1996, p.57
[3] ibid., p.58
[4] See Chapter 7

need 9.25 oz of pigment. As with Brookend St above, it is likely to have been a home produced charcoal but assuming a cost of 2d per pound, the pigment for this decoration would have cost just over 1d

max. cost for total scheme =1d
= 0.027d per square yard

3. Upton Court, Herefs. [52-53]

This decoration comprises two painted overmantels;

i) parlour, 4ft by 20 inches (i.e. 0.737 sq. yds),

- vermilion – 1 sq ft., requiring less than half an ounce of pigment costing 6d max. per ounce[5] = 3d
- lampblack – 2 sq.ft., requiring less than half an ounce of pigment costing 0.125 per ounce = less than ¼d
- lead white – half a square yard requring half an ounce of pigment costing 4d per ounce = less than ½d
- brown, possibly umber – 1 sq.ft. requiring less than half an ounce of pigment. No prices are available but the cost would be less than ½d

max. cost for overmantel = 4¼d
=6.1d per square yard

ii) hall, 4ft by 2ft 6 ins (i.e.1.11 square yards)

- green (assuming a mix of yellow ochre and indigo) –half a square yard., requiring quarter of an ounce of each pigment at a negligible cost for yellow ochre (0.06d per ounce) and 4d per ounce of indigo[6] = approx. 2d
- red ochre – 1 sq.ft., requiring less than half an ounce of pigment costing ¼ d per ounce = less than ¼ d
- yellow ochre – 1 sq.ft. requiring less than half an ounce of pigment costing 0.06 d per ounce = less than ¼ d
- lead white – half a square yard. requiring half an ounce of pigment costing ¼ d per ounce = less than ¼d
- black – very small amount requiring negligible amount of pigment = less than ¼d

max cost for overmantel = 3d
=2.702d per square yard

Average cost for overmantels = 4.4d per square yard

4. Barnaby House [103]

Very crude antiquework design in blue black and white covering about 45 square yards.

- blue black pigment, covering about half the area, requiring 23oz of pigment, likely to be charcoal, at 0.125d per oz = c.2¾d

[5] Bristow, 1996, p.49 quotes a price of 5s 4d for vermilion in 1688
[6] This is likely to be an overestimate for indigo as the colour is very intense and covering power would be greater than for the other pigments

Cost for total scheme = c.2¾d

= 0.061d per square yard

5. Whitehall [86]

Approximately 43 square yards of black and white within imitation panelling. In this case the white is painted on after the black, rather than the black being panted directly on to the white limewash ground. It appears that the panelling was represented by batons nailed on which were then modelled in brown and ochre.

- black, covering about 40% -17.2 square yards., requiring about 9 oz of pigment at 0.125d per ounce for lampblack = 1d
- white, covering about 40% -17.2 square yards, requiring about 9 oz. of pigment, assuming white lead was used at 4d per pound = 2¼d
- brown and ochre, covering about 10% - 4.3 square yards requiring about 2 ½ ounces of pigment, assuming the use of ochres and umber with an average cost of 3d per pound= less than ½ d

Cost max. for total scheme = 2¾d

= 0.064d per square yard

6. Churchyard Farm, Neenton [130]

Simple black pigment on a white ground with red lead shading. Approximately 42 square yards.

- black pigment covering about 10% = 4 square yards, requiring 2 oz at 0.125d per ounce for lampblack = ¼d
- red lead covering not more than 20% = 8 sq. yds requiring 4 oz of pigment at 0.19d per ounce = ¾ d

Cost max. for total scheme = 1d

=0.024d per square yard

7. Harvington Hall [167]

Panelled door painted brown with Moresque pattern at the centre of each panel.

- brown pigment, covering 2 square yards, requiring 1 ounce of pigment, assuming umber pigment at 0.375d per ounce = less than ½d
- yellow ochre covering 2 square yards., requiring 1 ounce of pigment at much less than a ¼ d per ounce = ¼d max.
- black pigment covering less than 1 sq.ft., requiring less than half an ounce of pigment, assuming lampblack at 0.125 d per ounce = less than ¼d
- red pigment covering less than 1 sq.ft., requiring less than a half an ounce of pigment, assuming vermilion at 6d max. per ounce = 3d

Cost max. for total scheme = 4½d

=2.71d per square yard

Appendix 8
Assessment of labour costs

The following assumptions have been made in this assessment:

- the work was carried out by skilled craftsmen who, more than likely were not painters but who would have some competence in this field
- craftsmen were paid at the rate of 10d per day. This seems to have been an average wage for about the turn of the century in the Marches. The cost of later and earlier paintings can be adjusted according to the going rates at the assumed date of the painting.
- the length of the working day was 10 hours. This is an average taken over the year. In winter working days were much shorter and in summer much longer than 10 hours. This also takes into account breaks for breakfast, dinner and tea.
- the area originally painted was the entire surface area of the walls/ceiling minus an allowance for a fireplace, windows and doors.

1. 23-24 Brookend St, Ross on Wye [17-18]

- no preparation
- room 24'x c.40' x c.7' high
- area to be painted includes three sides of joists, spine beams and underside of floor boards = 169 square yards.
- estimated time for one side of one joist =10 minutes using a simple pattern, 20 minutes for a more complex pattern. The ceiling has a mix of the two, so an average of 15 minutes is used
- estimated time for decorating whole ceiling = 63 hours i.e. say 6½ days
- total cost = 5s 6d
- cost per sq. yd = **¼ - ½d**

2. 45 Muxton Lane [128]

- room 14'x 12' x 7'high
- preparation - pouncing
- area to be painted = 37 square yards
- at about 4 hours painting and 2 hours preparation per sq. yd, estimated time =222 hours i.e 22.2 days
- total cost = 18s 6d
- cost per square yard.= **6d**

3. Upton Court, Little Hereford [52-53]

- these are more akin to easel paintings and not strictly comparable
- two overmantels c. 3'x 2' = 0.6 sq yd
- each would take 2-3 days to paint
- total cost 3s 4d- 5s
- cost per square yard = **5s 6d - 8s 4d**

4. Barnaby House [103[

- room 14`8" x 18`6"x c.7`high
- preparation – rough setting out
- area to be painted = 45.1 square yards
- surviving panel is c. 3'9"x 6' i.e 2.5 square yards
- estimated time for surviving panel = 20 hours
- estimated time for whole room = 361 hours, say 36 days
- total cost = 30s
- cost per square yard = **8d**

5. Whitehall, Shrewsbury [86]

- room 20`6"x 10`3" x10`8" high
- area of painting – thirty six panels plus frieze, (the lower row of panels being shorter than the rest). estimated on the basis of surface area of the two long wall minus the area occupied by the stiles of imitation panelling = 43 square yards.
- one panel =2`10" square = 0.87 sq. yds
- estimated time for one panel – 8 hours (2 hours stencilling plus 4 hours painting plus 2 hours modelling giving a total of 8 hours)
- estimated time for total scheme = 598 hours, say 60 days
- total cost = £2 10s
- cost per sq. yd = **14d**

6. Churchyard Farm, [130[

- room 18'x11'8''x 7' high
- preparation -basic setting out points
- area to be painted = 42 square yards.
- estimated time for decorating whole room = 27 hours i.e. say 3 days
- total cost = 2s 6d
- cost per square yard = **0.714d**

7. Harvington Hall [167]

- panelled door c. 6` x 2`6"
- preparation – background painting, pouncing
- area to be painted =1.666 square yards
- estimated time = 8-10 hours, i.e. say one day
- total cost = 10d
- cost per square yard = **6.024d**

Appendix 9
Houses with wall paintings not included in the survey[1]

Cheshire
16, Northgate, Chester
Dorfield Hall, 1616
Hall Green Farm, Acton Bridge

Gloucestershire
Acton Court, Iron Acton, c. 1535?
Blackfriars, Gloucester

Herefordshire
Hill Court Walford –access denied
Hampton Court
Kinnersley Castle
Middleton Farm, Middleton on the Hill-overmantel, early 18thc
Hampton Court – ceiling painting
Old Court Bredwardine, Sir Roger Vaughan, kt. - early 15thc
Brinsop Court,Brinsop, Herefordshire
Penrhos Court, Kington
Seed Farm, Cradley
Cheyney Court, Bishop's Frome

Shropshire
Moat House, Longnor
The Friars House Shrewsbury, 2 armorial shields
Hargreaves Farm, nr. Shrewsbury
Apley Castle
Munslow Farm, Munslow
21, Coton Hill, Shrewsbury
The Feathers Hotel, Ludlow
Pitchford Hall, Pitchford, Nr. Shrewsbury
Munslow, Millichope Cottage
Manor Farm, Bedstone
Red Lion (now Lion Hotel) Shrewsbury, demolished
Gullet Inn, Gullet Shutt, Shrewsbury, demolished
Claremont St (formerly Doglane), Shrewsbury, demolished 1866
19 Mardol, Shrewsbury, dismantled 1954
Yew Tree Farm, Ryton
2 Yew Tree Cottages

Staffordshire
Brereton, Anglesey House, Hednesford
Old Grammar School House, Church Hill, Kinver
The Black Swan, Uttoxeter
Churchlee, Nr. Uttoxeter

[1] This includes buildings now demolished or where the wall paintings is no longer visible, buildings where access was not possible and those outside the core area of study. This list is not comprehensive.

Sinai Park, Branston

Worcestershire
The Old Rectory, Strensham
Ely Farmhouse, Grafton Flyford
Birtsmorton Court, Malvern Hills
Seecham Manor, Off Rowley Green Lane, Alvechurch
Ribbesford House, Bewdley
Stanford Court
St. Helen's , Worcester
Payne's Place, nr. Birtsmorton
1 Bear Hill Alvechurch
Hunt End Farm, Redditch (ruin)
Greyfriars, Friar St, Worcs,

Wales
Upper House, Standard St., Crickhowell
King's Head, Monmouth
65, Castle St., Abergavenny
Bush Hotel, High St., Chepstow
9, High St., Presteigne
19 High St, Knighton
37-40 Cross St, Abergavenny