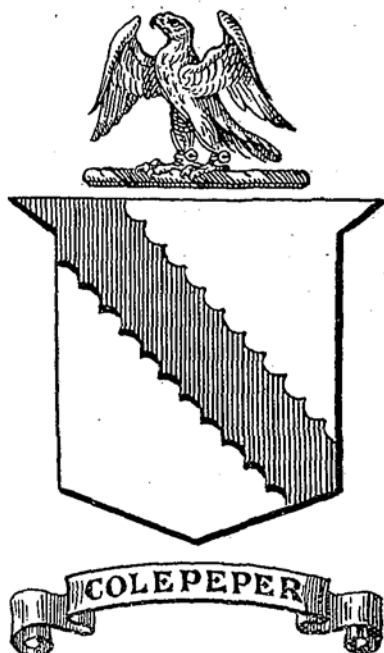




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THE MANOR OF OLD SORE, NEAR PLAXTOL IN KENT.

BY J. F. WADMORE, A.R.I.B.A.

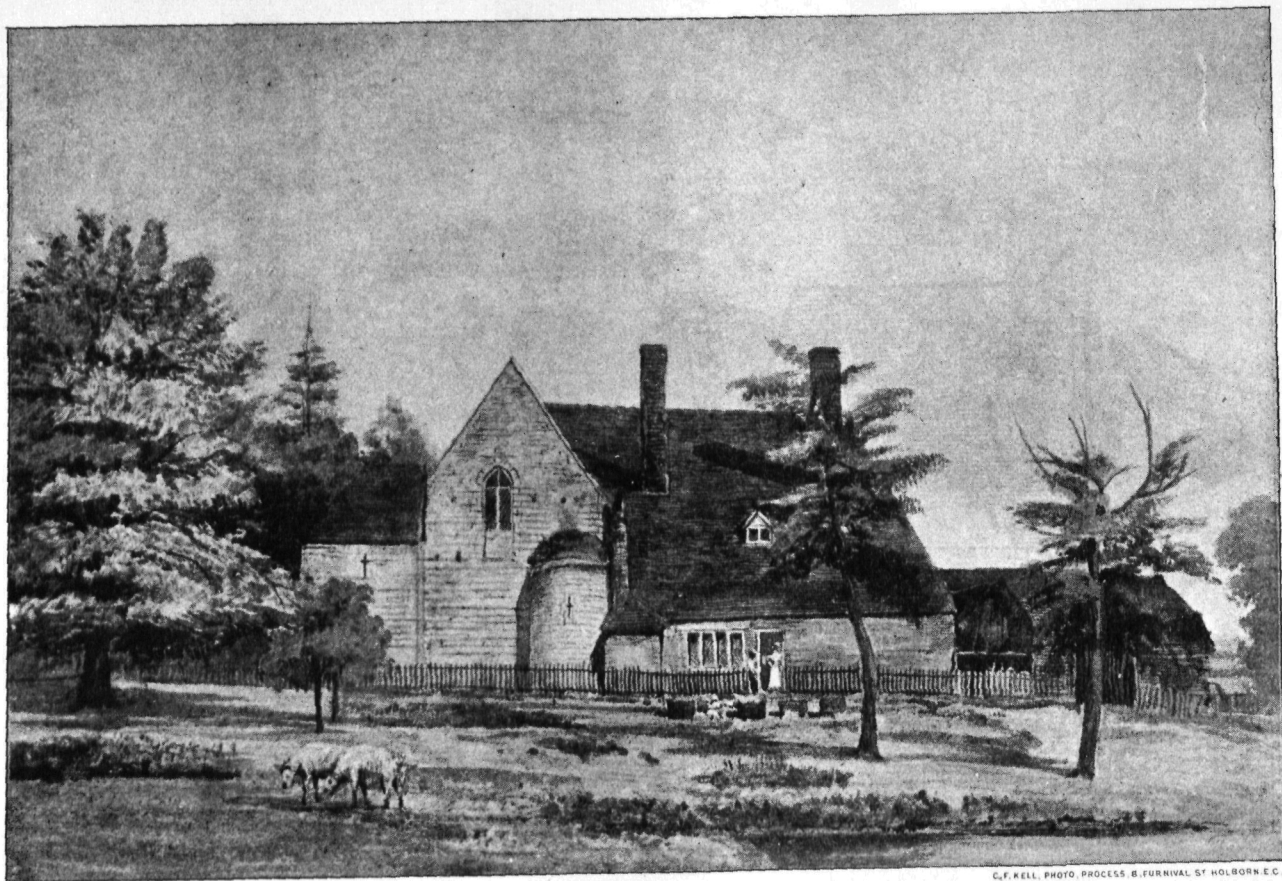
THE Manor of Sore* is mentioned by Hasted as appertaining of old time to the Preston branch of the Colepeper family, and was held by them conjointly with the Manor of Oxenhoath,† and the Manor of Great Hoo, by the yearly payment of a pair of gilt spurs. The remains of the old Manor-house of Sore is about five miles to the north-east of Tonbridge, and three and a half from the Borough Green Station on the London and Chatham Railway, in the parish of Wrotham.

It was visited by the Kent Archæological Society on the occasion of their Annual Meeting at Sevenoaks in 1871,‡ and the salient features of interest were pointed out by

* Hasted, vol. v., p. 23.

† *Ibid.*, p. 63.

‡ *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. IX., p. lxvii.



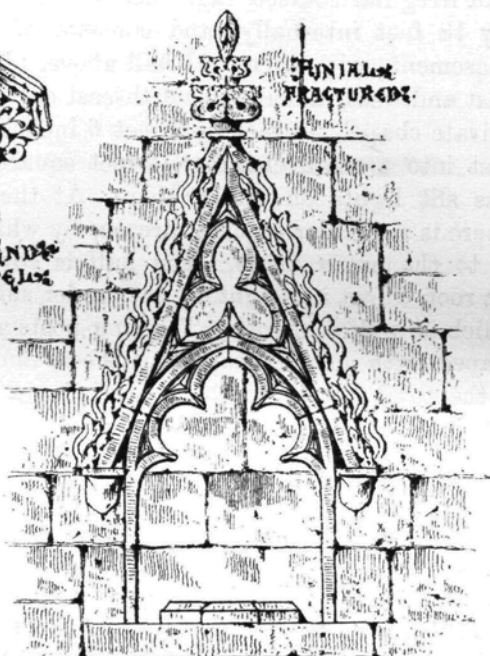
C.F. KELL, PHOTO. PROCESS B. FURNIVAL ST HOLBORN E.C.

OLD SORE, OXENHOATH, KENT.

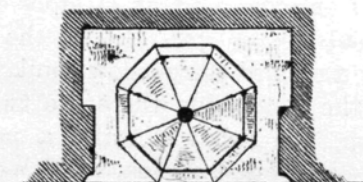
CHARLES MANOR HOUSE, OLD SORE
 PLAXTOL KENT
 PISCINA ON SOUTH SIDE



CHAP. EAST END
 CAPITAL



ELEVATION



PLAN

DRAWN BY JOHN SUTTON

the Rev. Canon Scott Robertson and Mr. J. H. Parker. It appears to me nevertheless that a short description of the building with the accompanying illustrations may be of some interest to the present members of our Society, and others not present on that occasion.

It will be seen that the main building, which is constructed of irregular coursed ragstone, is 28 feet 6 inches in length by 18 feet internally, and consists of a lower or vaulted basement, with a central hall above. The building stands east and west, and at the north-east corner opens out into a private chapel, 14 feet by 9 feet 6 inches, and at the north-west into a small chamber 10 feet square, which has four cross slit lights on either side. At the south-west corner there is a circular stone staircase, by which access is obtained to the upper floors. The hall is covered with a king-post roof, 8 feet in height to the under side of the tie-beam, which is well cambered. The king-posts are wrought, and champed with moulded caps, and bases, and strutted to rafters; the total height to the ridge being 23 feet. The hall has a fireplace on the north side, flanked by two* lights, and two windows, one at each end. There is also one on the south side, and a small aumbry or cupboard. A splayed opening at either end of the hall leads direct into the private chamber, and chapel.

Unfortunately the east-end window of the chapel has been destroyed, but on the north side there is an early Decorated stone cap, which may have formed a support for an arch over the window or altar; in place of which a door has been opened out, and a flight of stone steps, of modern construction, leads to the ground. At the west end of the chapel there is a crossed slit window similar to those in the chamber. On the south side there are two windows, one now blocked up, and (what is really a most interesting feature) an early Decorated piscina, with an octagonal stoup, enclosed in a raised stop; the whole arched over with a cinquefoil cusping and crocketed canopy, of which the finial only is wanting; the spandrils are filled with a trefoil cusping.

* Three of the windows in the hall are now blocked up.

The original stone circular stairs at the west end of the hall lead down to what is now the kitchen, and four additional steps give access to the basement, by the side of the doorway; in the kitchen there are the remains of a carved stone corbel.

The building has evidently been constructed previous to the introduction of gunpowder, as the crossed slits in the window are intended for archers only. The centre hall was flanked on the four sides with bastions from which they could be protected. On the south side (except in the present kitchen) all traces of these buildings have been destroyed by the erection of a more modern farmhouse. The lower portions of the building would be given up to servitors and domestics, and the arched chamber to stores and provisions, for the consumption of the lord of the manor on his periodical visits from one manor to another.

Looking at the style of architecture at present existing, I think for reasons hereafter given that we may put it down as between 1350 to 1360, and that the lord of the manor was Walter, a descendant of Sir Thomas Colepeper in the reign of King John.

The elder branch of the Colepeper family resided at Bay Hall* in Pepingbury, now Pembury, some interesting remains of which may still be seen, although the larger portion was demolished by Sergeant Amhurst shortly after he became the purchaser of the property in the time of Charles I.*

Sir Thomas Colepeper, the founder of the family, appears to have settled here as early as the time of King John, and to have been appointed "*Recognitor magnæ assisæ*" in Kent. He was succeeded by his son Sir Thomas, from whom was descended Thomas, who in the absence of Lord Badelesmere acted as Castellan of Leeds Castle, when Queen Isabella, the wife of Edward II., on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, demanded admittance, and was refused—a proceeding which so exasperated her that she appealed to the King, who subsequently laid siege to the castle and took it A.D. 1321 (which event is fully described in Mr. C. Wickham Martin's *History of Leeds Castle*).† Thomas escaped; his son Walter

* Hasted, vol. v., p. 267.

† Page 161; Pedigrees, p. 173.

was captured, and executed together with his younger brother Richard.

Sir John, the other son of Thomas Colepeper, appears to have obtained favour and promotion in the time of Edward III., and obtained licence in mortmain* to build and endow a chapel adjoining the church at Pembury for the celebration of masses for the souls of Walter and Richard, who were executed after the taking of Leeds Castle.

Another branch of the Colepepers,† Walter, the second son of Sir Thomas of Bay Hall, settled at Preston and Oxenhoath; by his wife Joan he left three sons—Thomas, the elder, of Preston Hall; Sir Geoffrey of Oxenhoath; and John. As appears by an inquisition taken after his death in 1327, when he was seised of estates in Broughton, East and West Farleigh, Yalding, Malling, Brenchley, Tonbridge, and Shipbourn, Thomas, the eldest son, dying without issue, his brother Geoffery succeeded to his estates in Preston and Oxenhoath. He served the office of Sheriff in the 39th and again in the 47th year of Edward III., leaving two sons, William of Preston Hall, and Sir John of Oxenhoath, Justice of the Common Pleas.

After the siege of Leeds Castle‡ the Manor and Castle remained in the King's hands, and the management of the same was entrusted to Thomas the Prior of Leeds Abbey; but inasmuch as this and other Royal residences had fallen into a bad state of repair in the time of Edward III., A.D. 1359, the King instructed his surveyor William of Wykeham to make a careful survey, and to put the Castles of Windsor, Dover, Hadlow, and Leeds in a fit state of defence, and to superintend the repairs, in which he was ably assisted by the Lord Prior of Leeds; and it appears to me highly probable (taking into consideration the characteristic features of Old Sore), that Sir Geoffery, while serving the office of Sheriff in 1365, availed himself of the valuable assistance of William of Wykeham, through his friend the Prior of Leeds, in designing and erecting a building, which

* Thorp, *Reg. Roff.*, p. 174.

† W. Martin's *Pedigree*, p. 174.

‡ *Ibid.*, *Leeds Castle*, Appendix, pp. 14, 15, 16.

may be utilized both for residential and defensive purposes, and at the same time be provided with a chapel, in which masses might be celebrated for his near kinsmen who were executed on the taking of Leeds Castle in 1321—a circumstance which appears to have been fresh in the minds of both branches of the family.

We have but to refer to Sir Geoffery's will to see the esteem and regard which he entertained for the Prior. It is dated "die lune next after the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary A.D. 1389," and attested at Croydon on the 5th of January 1390, and is as follows:—

"I* Galfrid Colpeper of West Peckham make my will in this manner. In the first place I leave my soul to Almighty God, the Blessed Mary, and all his Saints, and my body to be buried in the Parish Church of West Peckham aforesaid. Also I leave to the Prior of Leeds my best silver cup and cover and twelve spoons that he may pray for my soul and the soul of Walter my father. Also I leave to each of the Canons there xl^d. Also I leave to the parish Church of West Peckham c^s. Also I leave to the Vicar there xx^s. Also I leave to the Vicar of Wrotham x^s. Also to the Vicar of Hadlow xl^d. Also to the Carmelite brothers of Ailesford xx^s. Also to William Aungi v marks of current money. Also to Walter Aungi v marks. Also to William Godere x^s. Also to the Parish Church of Schyngledewell† a new chalice. Also to each poor person attending my funeral one penny. Also to Richard son of Isabel Musten vi^s viii^d. Also to John at Thane my servant x marks current money. Also I will that there be six poor people for holding six torches round my tomb on the day of my funeral, and that each of them have one coat. And that this my will may be faithfully carried out I appoint as my executor the Reverend lord and my particular friend Emericus Prior of Leeds and John my son. . . . Also I leave to Thomas at Crouch kinsman of Master John Colpeper vij^s. Also I leave to Margaret my sister xl^s. And the rest of my goods not before bestowed I leave to John my son and Katharine his wife."

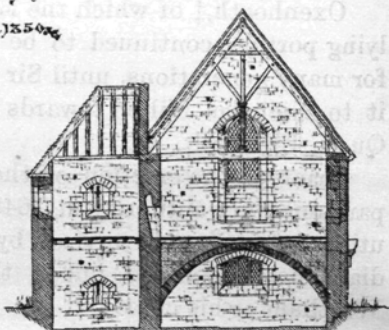
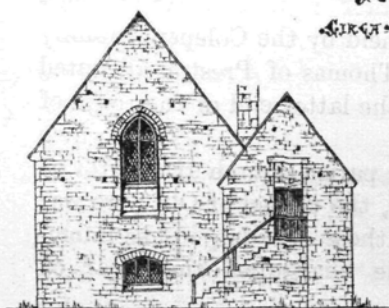
* Lambeth Palace Library, Courtney, f. 235^b.

† Shinglewell, by Ifield.

REMAINS OF OLD SORCE
 AN ANCIENT SEAT OF THE COLPEPER FAMILY
 OXENHOATH.

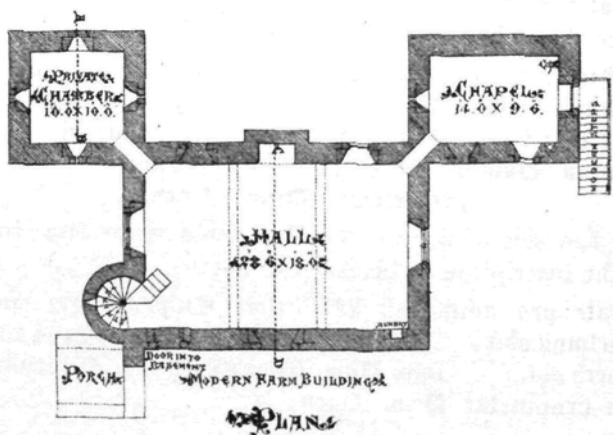
W. GENTLE

1850



PLAN OF ELEVATION

TRANSVERSE SECTION
 THROUGH CHAMBER AND HALL
 ON LINE AB AND CD



Scale of Feet

Drawn by John Sutton
 1854

Sir John, his son, died circa 1413, leaving his wife Katherine alive, to whom he bequeathed his Manor of Oxenhoath.* This will was proved at Lambeth on the 10th day of October 1414. Hasted† tells us that he was the founder of the Priory of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem at West Peckham.

Oxenhoath,‡ of which the Manor of Old Sore was an out-lying portion, continued to be held by the Colepeper family for many generations, until Sir Thomas of Preston alienated it to Nicholas Miller towards the latter end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

Prior to the erection of the parish church at Plaxtol by parliamentary authority in 1648, the chapel of Old Sore was utilized for Church services by those residing in the immediate neighbourhood under the charge of the vicar of Wrotham or his curate.

It seems to me that a lingering tradition of the untimely fate of Walter and Richard Colepeper, and the deeply-rooted grief of the Colepeper family, may be the cause of its still retaining the singular name of "Old Sore," an old English expression signifying§ grief.

Near the east door in West Peckham Church on a grave-stone is the following inscription in black-letter:—

*Hic jacet · Johanes · Colepeper · miles unus
Justiciarius · Domini · Regis · Communi · Banco
et Patri obiit · xxx^e die · mensis · Augusti
anno · Domini · MCCC animabus
· propicietur · Deus · Amen.*

By the side of the Communion table is an altar-tomb,|| with the inscription in black-letter:—

*Orate pro animabus Willielmi Culpeper qui quidem
Willielmus obiit die anno Dom' MCCCC^{xxviii} et Domina
Elizabeth obiit anno Dom. MCCCC^{xx} Quorum ani-
mabus propitietur Deus Amen*

* Lambeth Palace Library, Chichele, fol. 265^b.

† Vol. v., p. 63.

‡ *Ibid.*, 23, 4, 5.

§ *Prompt Parvalocum*, Camden Society's Publications, vol. liv., p. 405.

|| Thorp; *Roff*, p. 877.