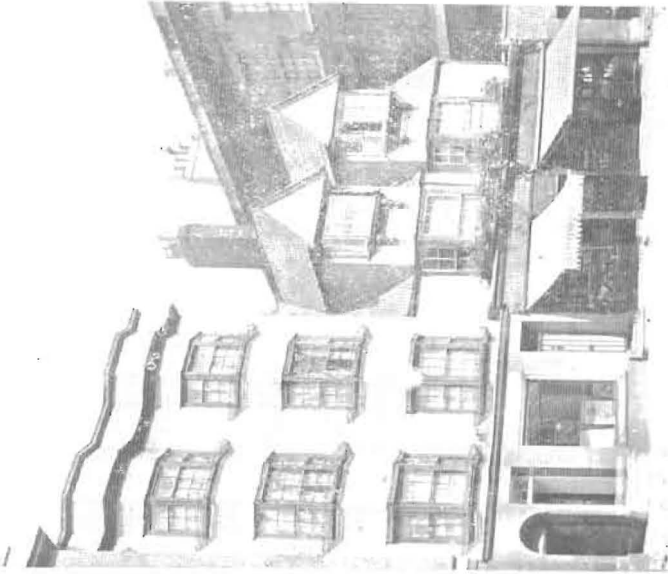




Early 17th century House in Pembroke Street, doomed to destruction by the street widening scheme.



Houses on the north side of High Street. [This group is a valuable foil to the College fronts.]

# OLD HOUSES IN OXFORD.

## Introduction.

A COMMITTEE was formed in Oxford in 1912 under the auspices of the Oxford Architectural and Historical Society to further the preservation, where possible, of such old houses in the city as are distinctly of architectural or historical interest.

Oxford was in former times rich in beautiful houses of many periods ; unhappily one after another has been demolished and there now remain only a few here and there to remind us of the civic antiquity of the town and to show us what was the character of its domestic architecture. It would be most lamentable, and in the eyes of the world at large a real disgrace, if the houses still standing should be destroyed and no example left of the citizens' houses in earlier and more artistic ages, thus reducing Oxford to colleges and churches standing in ordinary modern streets.

It is to these few remaining old houses of beauty and interest that the sub-Committee desire to draw attention. They hope to rouse public opinion, and to induce all the inhabitants of Oxford,

whether citizens or members of the University, to be ready to take action for their security. The Sub-Committee urge that Public Bodies such as the University, the Corporation, and the Colleges should be willing to incur even considerable pecuniary loss to preserve the old houses that are left to us to-day. We believe that the Corporation of Maidstone has recently set a good example of spending public money on the purchase of an ancient tithe barn in order to preserve it. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1913 by which the destruction of any building of approved beauty or historical value can be stopped. This Act has lately been put into force to save a fine old Georgian house in Dean Street, Soho, London; and the Sub-Committee is encouraged by this fact to believe in the possibility of staying the hand of the destroyer in Oxford.

The houses described in this pamphlet are chosen as among the finest in Oxford, and most of them are in danger of demolition. It will be noticed that the exteriors only are illustrated, but it should be understood that the interiors are also of considerable artistic interest. We wish to engage the attention of the Oxford public to prevent the destruction of any of these houses.—(C.M.T.)

## The Golden Cross, Cornmarket Street.

---

This has been an Inn from the time of Richard I. It was given to Osney Abbey in that reign and was immediately sold to a vintner named Mauger, and we hear of it by the name of Mauger's Inn or Mauger's Hall in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In 1327 William de Sharesulle, one of the King's judges, who had been sent to Oxford to inquire into an attack on the Abbey of Abingdon by men of Oxford, lodged at Mauger's Hall, and as the accounts of the city inform us, was given a present of wine which cost 3/7. About 1360 it was owned by one Gingiver and was called Gingiver's Inn. In 1370 it was owned by John de Stodley, and it was bought with the rest of Stodley's property by William of Wykeham. It was owned by New College for more than four hundred years (about 1390 to 1810), and for this reason has the arms of New College on one of the spandrels of the inner gateway. At first the College owned two inns, side by side, the Cross or Mauger's Hall on the north and the Bull or Sumner's Inn on the south; the former consisted of what is now the yard of the Golden Cross and the range of buildings on the north side; the buildings on the south side and the premises of Messrs. Hookham are on the site of the Bull Inn. In the 16th century New College added to the Cross the greater part of the Bull. The inn has had the sign of the Cross from as early as 1400.—(H.E.S.)

The buildings as they stand (Plate I) afford an excellent example of an old inn built round a courtyard, and are mainly of fifteenth century date, and of half-timber construction. The inn is entered from Cornmarket by two archways, the outer of the seventeenth century with Doric columns, the inner with fine mouldings and four-centred arch of the fifteenth. The latter marks the position of the original ground floor front. The upper stories overhung the lower, and there are indications of the brackets which supported them on either side of the arch, but as in many other cases the ground story has been brought forward to the plane of the top story, encroaching on the pavement. The range of buildings on the north side was probably built about 1430. The ground floor has been much spoilt by the addition of modern bays, but the upper story with its fine oriel windows, coved eaves, and simple steep-pitched roof is almost perfect. Across the oriels on the inside there are delightful arches with traceried spandrels.

The premises at the further end of the yard have been practically rebuilt and are uninteresting, but the south side is very picturesque. Apparently the front of the fifteenth century building was remodelled in the latter part of the seventeenth century, for the gabled bays are evidently of this period. There are a few moulded stone fireplaces in this part of the building and a simple staircase with turned balusters, but nothing else of interest is left. The buildings at the Cornmarket end are quaint, irregular structures of uncertain date, much repaired in recent years. They do not at present form part of the inn.—(F.E.H.)

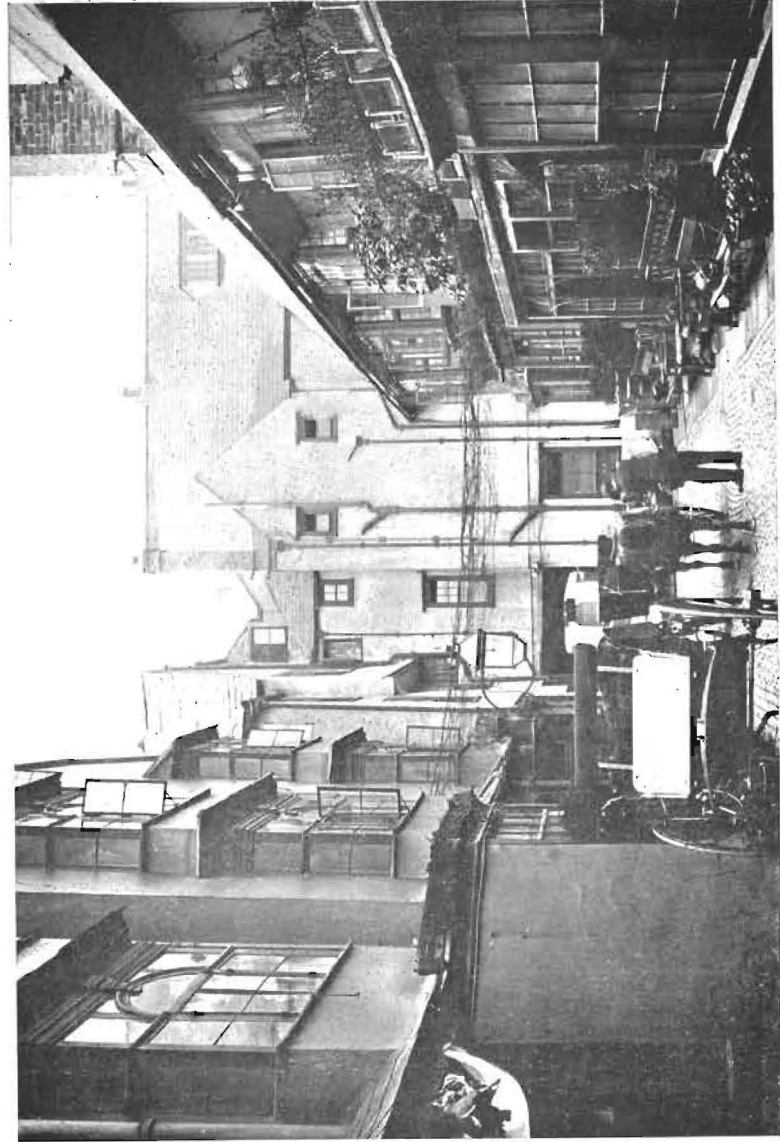


PLATE I.—Golden Cross, 15th century—the gables on the left are of the second half of the 17th century.

## Nos. 26, 27 & 28 Cornmarket Street.

The houses at the corner of Ship Street (Plate II) may not be attractive in their present condition; they are, indeed, disfigured by ugly windows and hideous advertisements. But a careful examination shows that they are substantially the same beautiful gabled houses as those which appear in old prints of Bocardo as seen from the south. The two upper stories of the Ship Street front project boldly over those below, and those of the Cornmarket front once did the same, but the lower stories have been brought forward to the plane of the top story, with a fine disregard for the rights of the citizens, and two of the three gables have been destroyed. The old angle-post, with moulded impost, of typical fifteenth century form, remains at the north-west angle, and other posts may be seen inside, supporting the front of the house. The original windows must have been something like those of the Golden Cross. They probably had well moulded mullions, dividing them into narrow lights which may have been traceried heads, cut out of thin boards, and certainly had leaded glazing. The constructional timbers were perhaps exposed, or the walls may have been covered with plaster as at present. The roof was once covered with stone slates; it is now slated with thin blue Welsh slates and the effect is pitiable. The top drawing on the opposite page gives an idea of this building in its original state. It is interesting to note that the old prints show windows of the late seventeenth century type as occur on the south side of the Cross. This building has been one of the most beautiful in Oxford, and it is very sad that it should be so degraded and disfigured. It is, moreover, in danger of destruction, though at a small cost it could easily be made a thing of beauty. No. 26 has now been partially reconstructed and the advertisements obliterated.—(F.E.H.)

5



PLATE II.—Nos. 26, 27 & 28 Cornmarket Street.

## No. 3 Holywell Street.

The two lower stories of this large early seventeenth century house (Plate III) are of stone, now colour-washed, but the dormers, the massive oak timbers of which are exposed internally, are of wood framing, plastered. The present dormer windows have Georgian sashes and do not look happy; the original windows were probably projecting wooden oriels like those of the "Black Horse."\* In the lower part of the house the old mullioned windows remain, though they have been fitted with rather clumsy wood casements instead of their old lead lights and iron casements. There is a charming two storied bay, and the arched entrance doorway of the seventeenth century has a fine carved hood of the Georgian era. The removal of the old grey stone slates some years ago, in favour of repellent red tiles, has deprived this house of a great deal of its charm. The back of the house has been added to again and again and is of little interest.

The principal rooms on the ground floor have simple eighteenth century panelling and in the kitchen there are interesting fittings, including a dresser with quaintly shaped ends. On the upper floor, reached by a handsome staircase with turned balusters of the Georgian period, there are two more panelled rooms, one of the seventeenth century, contemporary with the house, the other of the same style as those below. The floors are of old, wide oak boards, and the roof timbers are original and of great size.—(F.E.H.)

\* See p. 9.



PLATE III

No. 3 Holywell Street. Early seventeenth century. Sashes in Gables eighteenth century.



No. 100 Holywell, seventeenth century.



No. 13 Holywell, early seventeenth century.

## Nos. 13 & 100 Holywell Street.

The houses in Holywell Street are mostly of the early seventeenth century. No other Oxford street can show so many interesting old houses, some built of stone, some constructed in timber framing. Nos. 13 and 100 (Plate IV) are delightful specimens of the lesser stone buildings of that time, simple in their detail, and of beautiful proportions. The gable of No. 100 is perhaps the earlier; the hollow-moulded strings and mullions are almost Gothic in section, so an Elizabethan date is not impossible. Beneath the pink-wash there are walls of excellent ashlar and the roof retains its old stone slates, which are, however, laid in the modern way with leaden valleys. The rest of the front is of recent date.

No. 13 is distinguished by two charming stone dormers of exceptional height. The upper mullioned windows are original, and have convex mouldings, but those of the first floor have had their mullions removed. The ground floor windows have been taken out and replaced, as in so many other cases, by shuttered Yorkshire lights of eighteenth century date. The front walls are of rubble masonry, coloured-washed, and the roof is of tiles. The back of the house, with its single high-pitched gable, must have been very pleasing when the old plaster remained, but modern roughcast has taken its place. There is a central passage to the yard and the house appears always to have been divided into two cottages, each with three rooms, one above the other, reached by steep winding stairs at the back. The interior is absolutely plain, but the floors and stairs are of wide oak timbers and the roof is ancient.—(F.E.H.)

## No. 1 Grove Place (The Black Horse).

This very characteristic example of old Oxford building is remarkable for the variety of its windows. The well recessed stone mullioned window on the left is probably Elizabethan, the two gabled timber dormers with projecting windows, divided into six narrow lights by moulded wooden mullions, and supported on shaped brackets, are of the seventeenth century, c. 1630; the first floor window on the right is a three-light casement with the leaded glass flush with the unmoulded mullions, dating from the end of the seventeenth century, and the ground floor windows are shuttered Yorkshire lights of the eighteenth century, protected by a continuous moulded cornice. There is a gable with a chimney at the back of the house, but all the old windows have gone.

There were originally two rooms on one floor, a central doorway, and a passage to the back yard on the right. In recent times a kitchen has been added at the back. There is little of interest inside save a simple stone fireplace in one of the attics, and the old roof with its trusses and wind braces, which is covered with thick old red tiles. The staircase is modern.—(F.E.H.)



NO. 1 GROVE PLACE (The Black Horse).



NO. 35 HOLYWELL, Restored, as in the seventeenth century.  
(See next page).

## No. 35 Holywell Street.

Though the front wall of the lower story is built of stone and may be older than the rest of the house, No. 35 Holywell may be classed as a timber house of the early seventeenth century. The date 1626 is carved on one of the corbels. The three dormers appear to have had oriel windows at one time, but these have been displaced by sliding Yorkshire lights, probably in the eighteenth century. The eaves project boldly, and are supported by elaborate carved and pierced grotesque brackets, and by huge oriel windows of the first floor. These have been badly mutilated; originally they must have been like those of the house known as Bishop King's Palace, but they were distinguished by little two-light windows, one on each side, which still remain on the inside. The brackets supporting the oriels are carved. The ground floor windows are sashes with narrow side lights and shutters, very usual in eighteenth century Oxford building, but one of these is a recent insertion. The proportions of this front are particularly beautiful, and the back, which is charmingly irregular, and retains some of its original windows, is almost equally attractive. This is largely due to the effect of the high pitched roof with old Stonesfield slates.

There is a very plain eighteenth century fireplace in the ground floor room on the right, and the first floor room on the left has seventeenth century panelling and a really fine stone fireplace, which has lost its overmantel, probably a gorgeous Jacobean composition, the place of which is now occupied by plain Georgian panelling.—(F.E.H.)

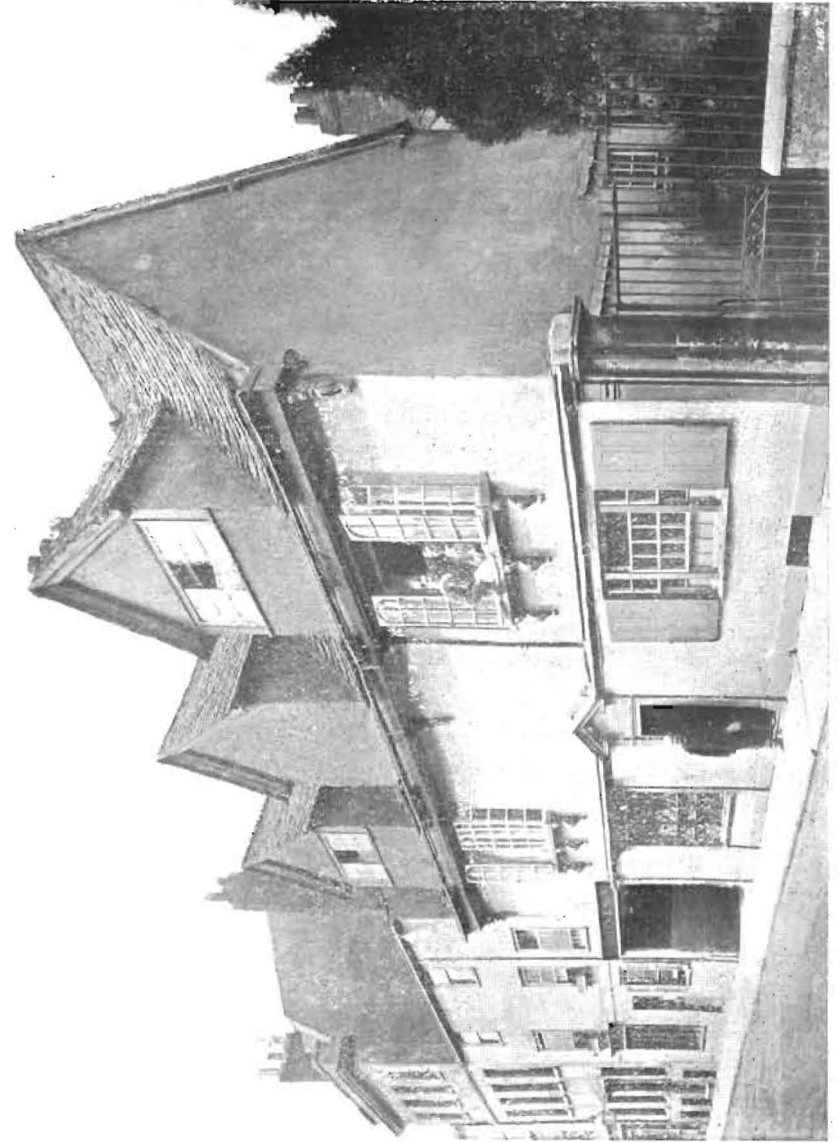


Photo. Tarrant, Oxford.

PLATE V.—No. 35 Holywell Street.



## 129a High Street (Kemp Hall).

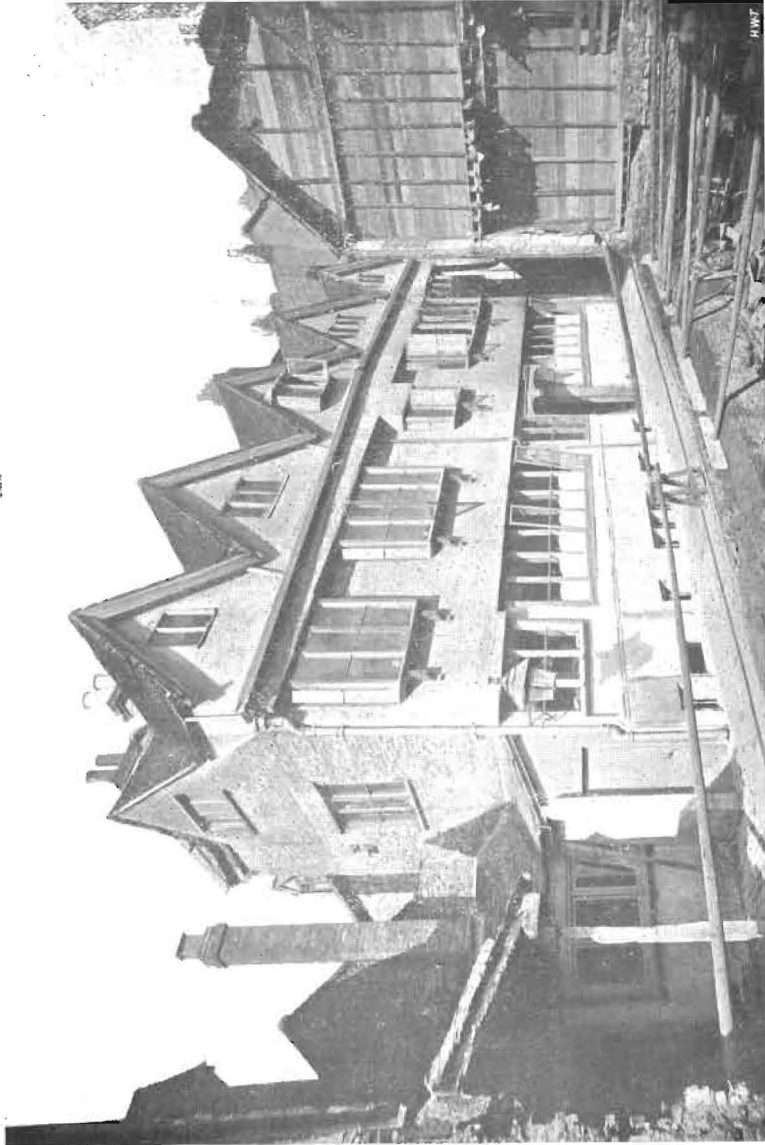


Photo. Transit, Oxford.

PLATE VI.—Kemp Hall, 129a High Street.

Kemp Hall is a fine house of timber construction, dated 1637, reached from High Street by a narrow passage with a good seventeenth century door, at the side of Carters' charming little gabled shop. Unfortunately Kemp Hall has been so built in that it is very difficult to examine the front. It stands on a basement of stone, apparently contemporary with the plastered timber work above it. The present ground floor windows are modern but the front doorway is original and has a quaint hood with pendant arches. The overhanging upper stories have oriel windows with very wide lights, which are not so effective as they were before their leaded glazing was replaced by modern sheet glass. There are five gables above, which do not correspond with the windows below. Only the centre gable window is an oriel, the other gables having flat windows of two, three, or four lights. The roof is of old tiles.

The staircase is remarkably rich seventeenth century work with cut and carved newels, pendants, and fretted balusters. The doors opening off the landings are excellent work, richly panelled. A few of the old stone fireplaces have survived, but they have been painted and otherwise ill-treated.

It is interesting to note that this little book has been printed in this fine old house, now occupied by Messrs. Fox, Jones & Co., Fine Art Printers and Publishers.—(F.E.H.)

## No. 1 Rose Place (Bishop King's Palace).

The fine many-gabled house in St. Aldate's, known as Bishop King's Palace, is the finest existing house of its period—1628—in Oxford. As in many other houses otherwise of timber construction the end wall, facing St. Aldate's, is of thick stone work, and has a gable with a moulded coping of fantastic outline; the windows in this wall are well moulded and evidently date from the same time as the house. The ground floor of the north front has been spoilt, but the two upper stories have glorious ranges of wood oriel windows, supported on carved corbels of Dutch type, one of which bears the date. The walls are decorated with the moulded plaster work which was once such a characteristic of Oxford timber building. The two western gables are lower and simpler and are possibly of earlier date, though they have evidently been remodelled to harmonise with the rest of the front. Internally there is much linen-fold panelling; one room has a very richly ornamented ceiling of modelled plaster, and a dignified stone fireplace. This is one of the most beautiful houses to be found in any town, and it seems almost incredible that it was at one time doomed to destruction in order to widen St. Aldate's. Its careful preservation is much to be desired, and it is not unreasonable to hope that some day the ugly little building at the north-east corner may be removed; the upper windows should be reglazed as originally with leaded panes, and the roof again covered with stone slates or hand-made tiles instead of the cold and smooth Welsh slates that now disfigure it. This building is now undergoing thorough repairs and some restoration.—(F.E.H.)



PLATE VII.

No. 1 Rose Place (Bishop King's Palace). Dated 1628.

## 82 & 83 St. Aldate's (Littlemore Hall).



PLATE VIII.

Littlemore House, St. Aldate's. Re-modelled cir. 1640, or later.

This property belonged to the priory of Littlemore and was originally known as Margaret Hall, subsequently as Mariole Hall. But if it ever were an Academic Hall it ceased to be so by the year 1400, and what is now visible has no academic connection.—(H.E.S.)

It is evidently a mediaeval structure, for a drawing in the Buckler collection shows the doorway to the passage with a well-moulded fifteenth century arch, but the whole front was remodelled in the late seventeenth century. It is of stone, but the mullioned windows of the ground floor, which still survived in the early part of the nineteenth century, have been destroyed, and insignificant shop fronts have taken their places. The first floor windows remain, and have beautiful moulded frames and mullions of stone. The dormers, as in several other cases, are of timber construction. Their projecting windows have been cut back and now have modern mullions and casements, but the old moulded sills, supported on quaint shaped brackets, are still in position. When perfect these gables must have been very much like those of the Black Horse.\* The roof was covered with stone slates, but is now of dreary blue Welsh slates. However, the pitch of the roof has not been altered, and the chimney is an old one of thin bricks, a rare survival in a town house.—(F.E.H.)

The partition on the south side of the passage way is apparently of the fifteenth century, and there are two seventeenth century ceilings of modelled plaster. The pattern on one is exactly the same as that on the ceiling of the room over the common gate at Oriel College.

\* See pp. 8 and 9.

## No. 38 Cornmarket Street (The Plough Inn).

The timber and plaster front of the Plough Inn with its single gable appearing above two others is very quaint and perhaps unique. It is of the second half of the seventeenth century, for the large first floor window with its wide lights and unmoulded mullions is dated 1665, but the ground floor windows are Victorian, as usual. The side of this inn towards St. Michael's Street with its chimney gables and dormers is a simple and beautiful example of seventeenth century building in stone, spoilt by obtrusive posters which render it an eyesore.

There is a panelled dado and mantelpiece in one of the rooms, perhaps contemporary with the front, while a stone fireplace in another room on the first floor may be rather earlier. It is said that two other stone fireplaces have been taken out in recent years.—(F.E.H.)

It belonged to Osney Abbey before 1250, and still belongs to Christ Church.—(H.E.S.)

N.B.—The shop occupied by Mr. Twining (No. 53) in this street, is a small picturesque house with two gables, probably mediaeval, but remodelled in the early eighteenth century. It is also well worth preserving.—(C.M.T.)

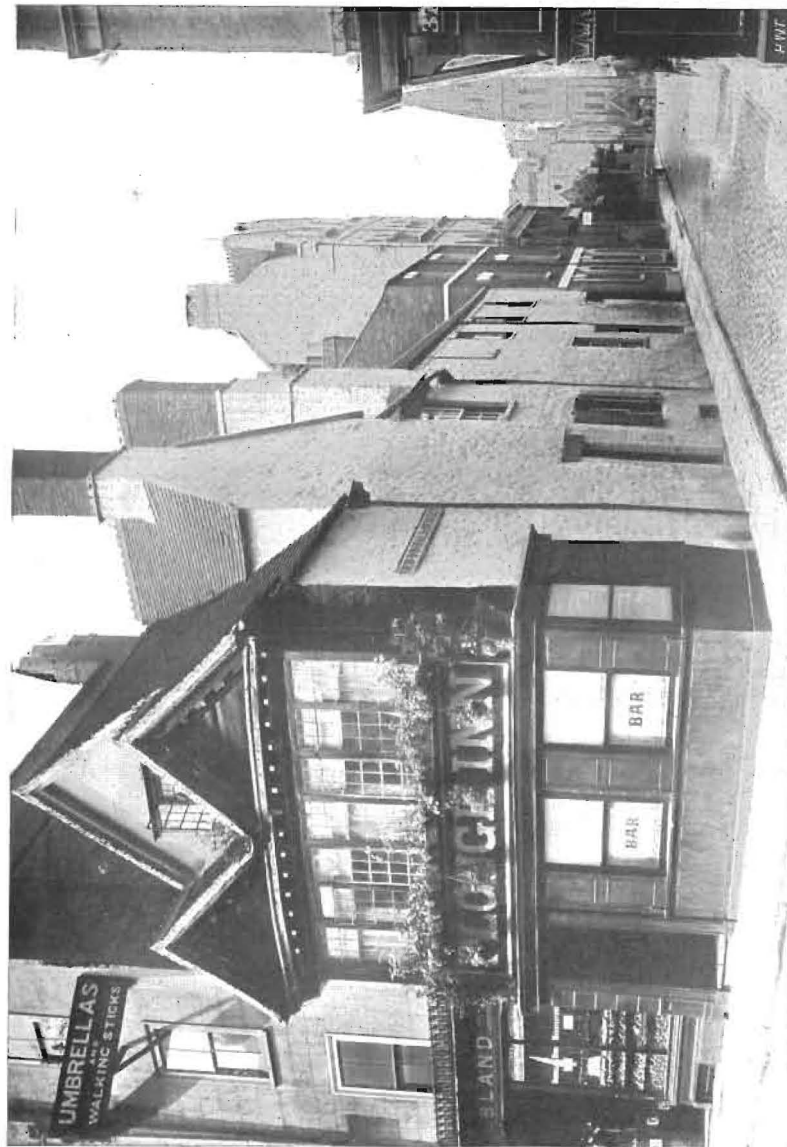


PLATE IX.—No. 38 Cornmarket Street (Plough Inn).

Photo. Taunt, Oxford.

## No. 126 High Street.



PLATE X.

No. 126 High Street. Second half of seventeenth century.

This fine house is evidently of mediaeval origin, for the barge board is of the mid-fifteenth century. It has been partly destroyed, but the lower half remains on each side. It is of wavy outline and has sunk tracery. Sixty years ago such traceried Gothic barge boards were a common feature of the houses of Oxford, but almost all of them have disappeared. The front is of the late seventeenth century and is a magnificent example of street architecture, affording valuable inspiration to the architects of the present day. The enormous windows are provided without any effect of baldness or insecurity, and the bold timber construction is very much akin to the modern methods of building with steel frames or in ferro-concrete.

The windows, which stretch right across the facade, have wide lights, unmoulded mullions almost flush with the glass, transoms with a projecting moulding, semi-circular arches, and moulded key-blocks. These are all marks of late seventeenth century work. The cornices over the windows and the broken pediment are of advanced renaissance type. The latter is very unusual in this style of house and not exactly admirable, though most picturesque.

The ground floor is occupied by a modern shop front, altogether out of keeping with the rest of the building. The interior is not very interesting, but the front is such an ornament to the High that its preservation ought to be insured.

## No. 20 St Michael's Street.

---

There seems no doubt that No. 20 St. Michael's Street is a minor work of the great eighteenth century architect Vanburgh, the designer of Blenheim Palace. The enormous Doric order, the apron blocks and heavy keystones to the windows, which have no architraves, are all characteristic of his heavy and monumental manner. It is very important that this house should be preserved, for the other work of Vanburgh, the beautiful house once on the site of the Indian Institute, has been destroyed, and Oxford is none too rich in eighteenth century stone buildings. Moreover the design is of exceptional originality and dignity. Within there is a beautiful staircase with twisted balusters and the front rooms are panelled in late eighteenth century style with bolection mouldings and raised panels. In the ground floor room on the right there is a charming painted and carved alcove.

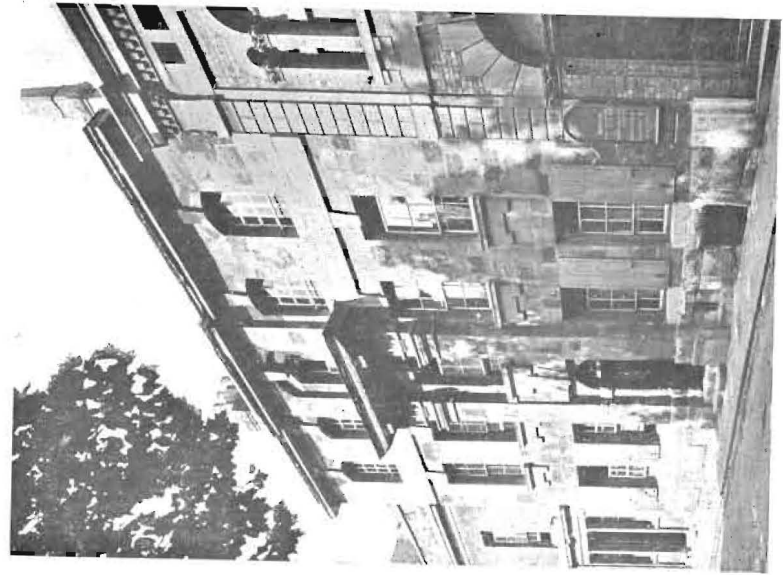
## No. 119 High Street.

---

This is an early eighteenth century building of timber covered with plaster, and is remarkable for its excellent proportions. The design is severely Palladian with fine pedimented sash windows having thin sash bars, a bold eaves cornice, and a dormer window in the roof, also pedimented. The shop front is not original and is of no merit.

No. 135 High Street is a very similar and probably a work of the same hand. The frontage is rather wider, affording more scope for the architect's design. Within there are several good panelled rooms, of the same date as the house.—(F.E.H.)

PLATE XI.



No. 20 St. Michael's Street (early 18th century)



No. 119 High Street (early 18th century).