

## THE MARKET CROSS

This is a former timber-framed market hall dated from the early to the mid 17thC.

There is a similar building at the Singleton open air museum near Chichester which has an external staircase. From evidence of some strangely cut timbers on the first floor here, experts have speculated that this could have had an external staircase.

A written survey for the Lord of the Manor in 1621, of Debenham properties, did not include this property, but its adaptation for use as a school is referred to in 1668.

The building has passed therefore through at least two major phases.

### Ground Floor

To begin with it was used as a market building, mostly open on the ground floor where market stalls would be sited, perhaps so that selling could take place to customers outside from between the main posts. The road outside was called 'Le Cheishill' which probably indicates the type of merchandise sold.

On the ground floor I would like to point out that the floor joists are upright, not laid flat in the medieval way – a giveaway feature dating the building to the 17thC.

Secondly the brick wall is obviously a secondary feature – notice how the main cross beam goes from one outside wall to the other, note the stop chamfers which indicate the original intention of providing a clear open space. This would indicate that the stair is a secondary feature. The original stair position, more of a ladder, is in the far right hand corner where a trimming beam has been inserted in the floor structure. Peer behind the top of the screen and you will see mortises for a window which could have been to a room under the stair, perhaps a cell for miscreants who had offended against the market rules.

Lots of the posts have arch brackets indicating the framing of a sort of shop front, over the years some have been moved. And what about the diagonal bracing – is it all original? I think that when the fireplace and flue was put in upstairs, the building started to wobble, and some additional diagonal bracing, and post strengthening was hurriedly inserted.

### First Floor

As referred to the first floor was converted to a schoolroom in about 1668 when the stairs, ceiling, and fireplace were added. Before that one assumes that it was used for market purposes, setting prices etc.

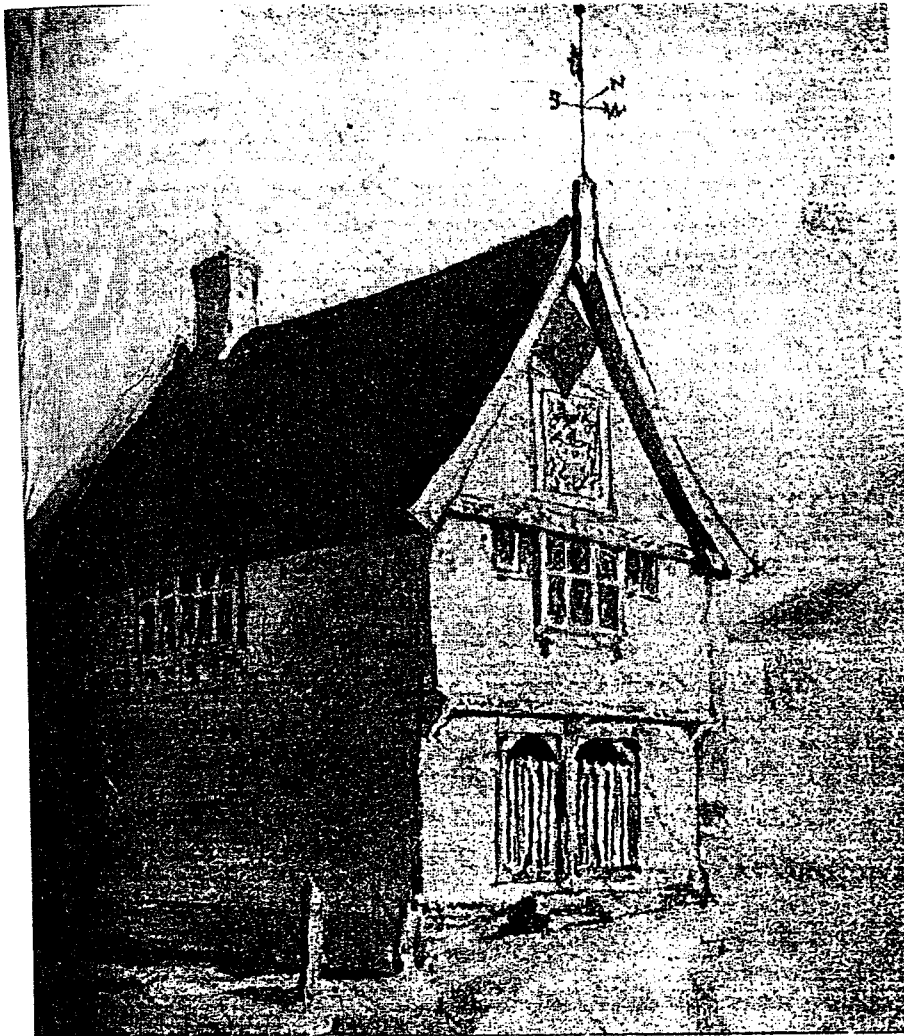
When we repaired the elevation facing Gracechurch Street a few years ago we discovered the evidence that as was expected the first floor fireplace was a later insertion. This was due to the presence of window mullion mortises precisely matching those that formed part of the window opposite facing the green.

In this room notice (i) the mortises which still contain pieces of sawn off timber around the wall which would have taken a desk top, (ii) the fireplace that would have been originally rendered, not exposed brickwork, and (iii) the pretty ceiling with fleur de lys and Tudor roses. The first floor is slightly larger than the ground floor due to the front and rear jetties (cantilevers), notice the very stout main posts set in from the front and rear walls. Further notice the wind bracing which is arched on the side elevations but inverted or sagging on the front elevation. The room has some original 17thC windows,

with wonderful ovolo mullions; notice how the windows in a 17thC timber-framed building are part of the timber framing.

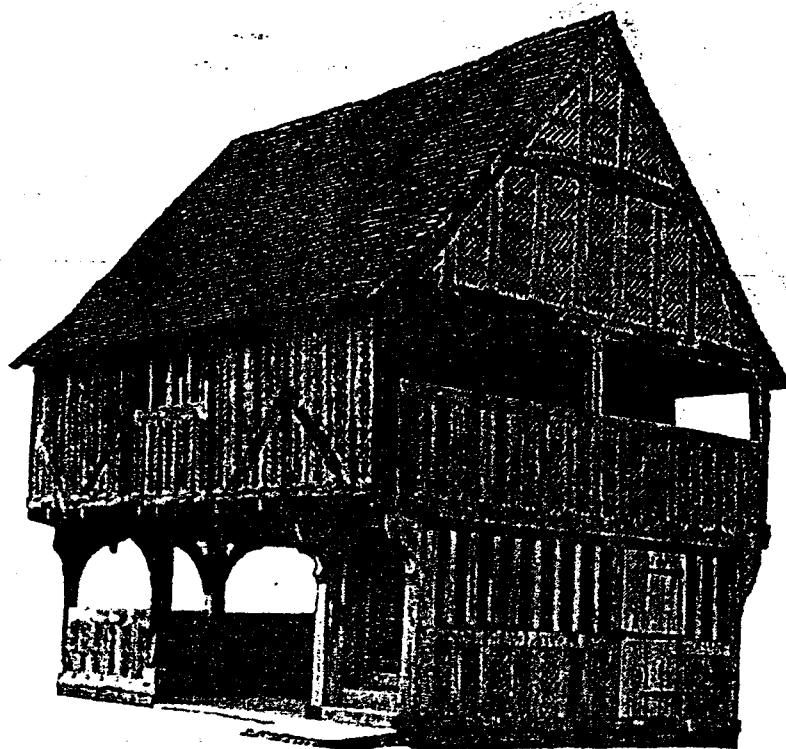
### **Second Floor**

We do not know if this room had any original use other than storage, but it has an original window. It has a typical 17thC roof consisting of principal rafters supporting purlins mortised in at low level supporting common rafters, cut back with collars and clasped purlins at upper level, and arched wind braces.



● The Market Cross.

‘An early 17<sup>th</sup> Century Market hall built on the presumed site of a former Market Cross, also used later for Sir Robert Hitcham’s School. Initialled J.G.W. (John Green Waller), taken from the original Dove notebook.



● Market Hall from Titchfield, Hampshire re-erected at The Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, in West Sussex.