

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE
TWELFTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL REMARKS.

AN enquiry into the state of Domestic Architecture in England during the twelfth century is attended with much difficulty. The comparatively few remains of domestic edifices of that period which have descended to our times, are either so greatly dilapidated, or so entangled with later alterations, that we are compelled to resort to early writings and evidences for materials to aid in describing their main features, and to determine the plan of construction usually adopted at the date of their erection.

Such writings and evidences consist of the more ancient accounts of the Exchequer; of early conveyances of property, prepared late in the twelfth, or at the beginning of the thirteenth, century, and of notices in chronicles and other writers. The process of evolving any considerable amount of information from these sources is painful and laborious; but whoever would successfully pursue this subject must have recourse to it. The deeds referred to are especially important; the boundaries and descriptions of property set forth in them frequently supplying valuable facts for consideration and comparison; and it is chiefly from an assemblage of isolated facts that we can venture to speak, with any degree of authority, upon the character of the various buildings adapted to domestic accommodation either in the twelfth or succeeding cen-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2 DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE: TWELFTH CENTURY.

ture. There is also another species of information which must not be overlooked, viz. illuminations in ancient manuscripts, but unfortunately these pictorial decorations are comparatively scarce anterior to the thirteenth century, and are, generally speaking, not to be too greatly relied upon as evidences of architectural style; however, they frequently afford useful hints as to minor details which should not be disregarded.

It results from a comparison of these various authorities that in England, particularly in the southern parts of the country, ordinary manor-houses, and even domestic edifices of greater pretension, as the royal palaces, were generally built, during the twelfth century, on one uniform plan, comprising a hall with a chamber or chambers adjacent. The hall was generally situated on the ground floor, but sometimes over a lower story which was half in the ground; it presented an elevation equal or superior to that of the buildings annexed to it: it was the only large apartment in the entire edifice, and was adapted, in its original design, to accommodate the owner and his numerous followers and servants; they not only took their meals in the hall, but also slept in it on the floor, a custom the prevalence of which is shewn by numerous passages in early authors, particularly in the works of the romance writers.

In mediæval Latin this apartment, and, not unfrequently, the whole building, is termed "*aula*;" thus the royal palace was styled "*aula regis*," both in legal records and in chronicles. When the French language became generally used, the hall or building was called "*la sale*" or "*salle*;" but in Saxon and Norman times alike the chief mansion was vernacularly designated a "Hall^a;" a place named "*halla Haroldi*," or "Harold's hall," occurs in the sheriffs' accounts for Hampshire throughout the reign of Henry the

^a Anglo-Saxon *heall*. In Domesday *halls* are frequently mentioned as at- tached to manors. See Ellis's Introduction to that record, vol. i. p. 232.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

GENERAL REMARKS.

3

Second^b. Hence the origin of the modern word “hall” as applied to a country residence.

There is every reason to believe that this plan of building, so well fitted to the usages of domestic life in medieval times, was that which obtained most extensively not only in the twelfth but also in the preceding century. A house on this plan appears in the Bayeux tapestry. A valuable writer, Alexander Nequam, or Nequam^c, who lived under the reigns of Henry the Second, of Richard the First, and John, in describing the various parts of a house^d, enumerates the hall, the private, or bed-chamber, the kitchen, the larder, the sewery, and the cellar. His notice may be applied generally to all domestic buildings of any magnitude in the twelfth century. Such, and no more chambers, do the “king’s houses” at Clarendon, Kennington, Woodstock, Portsmouth, and Southampton, appear to have contained, according to the Exchequer accounts of the time of Henry the Second. The hall is constantly referred to as the chief feature in all those edifices, and the only respect, probably, in which the houses of that monarch differed from the ordinary manor-houses of his time was, that they were on a greater scale, and had always

^b Under the head “Mienes.”

^c Alexander Nequam is said to have been born at St. Alban’s, in 1157; he was master of the grammar school in that town some time between the years 1188 and 1195; he had previously a school at Dunstable. The punning answer of abbot Warin to Nequam’s request to have the school at St. Alban’s, is recorded by Matthew Paris; “Si bonus es venias. Si nequam, nequaquam.” “Vitæ viginti trium S. Albani abbatum,” ed. Wats, 1640, p. 94. In 1213 Nequam was elected abbot of Cirencester:—“Annales Prioratus de Dunstaple,” ed. Hearne, p. 67. There is extant, however, a writ of King John, appointing him one of three

commissioners to investigate the king’s right to the patronage of the priory of Kenilworth, dated 30th August, 1213, at which time he was not abbat of Cirencester; his election seems to have occurred between August 1213 and May 1214, as on the 19th of the latter month the sheriff of Somerset and Dorset was ordered to put him in possession of the temporalities of the abbey in those counties. Rot. Pat., vol. i. p. 103 b.; Rot. Claus., vol. i. p. 204 b. According to the authorities quoted by bishop Tanner, Nequam died in 1217. Bibl. Brit. Hib. 541.

^d In his treatise “de nominibus utensilium.” Cotton MS. Titus, D. xx.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4 DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE: TWELFTH CENTURY.

a chapel annexed to them. The instruments of sacred use, and furniture necessary for such chapels, were transferred from place to place with the sovereign; and thus in the most ancient household accounts extant, we find notices of the cost of hiring sumpter-horses, or carts, to carry “the king’s chapel.”

The roof of the hall, when too large to be covered by a roof of a single span, was supported, according to its size, on one or more ranges of pillars of wood or stone. Marble columns, for the king’s hall at Clarendon, are mentioned in an account of the year 1176^e. Necham says “in the hall let there be pillars at due intervals^f.” Sometimes there appears to have been only one range of such supports, which, extending longitudinally through the room, reached to and carried the ridge or crest of the roof. But halls were frequently divided by pillars and arches of wood or stone into three parts, or aisles, like a church. One of this description remains at Oakham castle, Rutlandshire, being part of the structure erected by Walkelin de Ferrers about 1180. The manor-house of Adam de Port, at Warneford, in Hants, a portion of which still exists, seems to have been built on this plan. Another existed until lately at Barnack, in Northamptonshire^g. The engraving shews the remains of the arches which divided the hall. The hall at Winchester, now appropriated to the County Courts, and which was built very early in the thirteenth century, is a fine example of this arrangement. Mr. Smirke has proved clearly^h that it never was a chapel, as many persons believed it to have been. The greater part of the episcopal palace at Hereford appears to have been originally a hall with pillars and arches of wood. The refectory of

^e Rot. Pip. de eod. anno. tit. Hants.

^f “In aula sint postes debitis intersticiis distincti.”

^g It was destroyed about the year 1830.

^h Proceedings of the Archæological Institute at Winchester in 1846.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

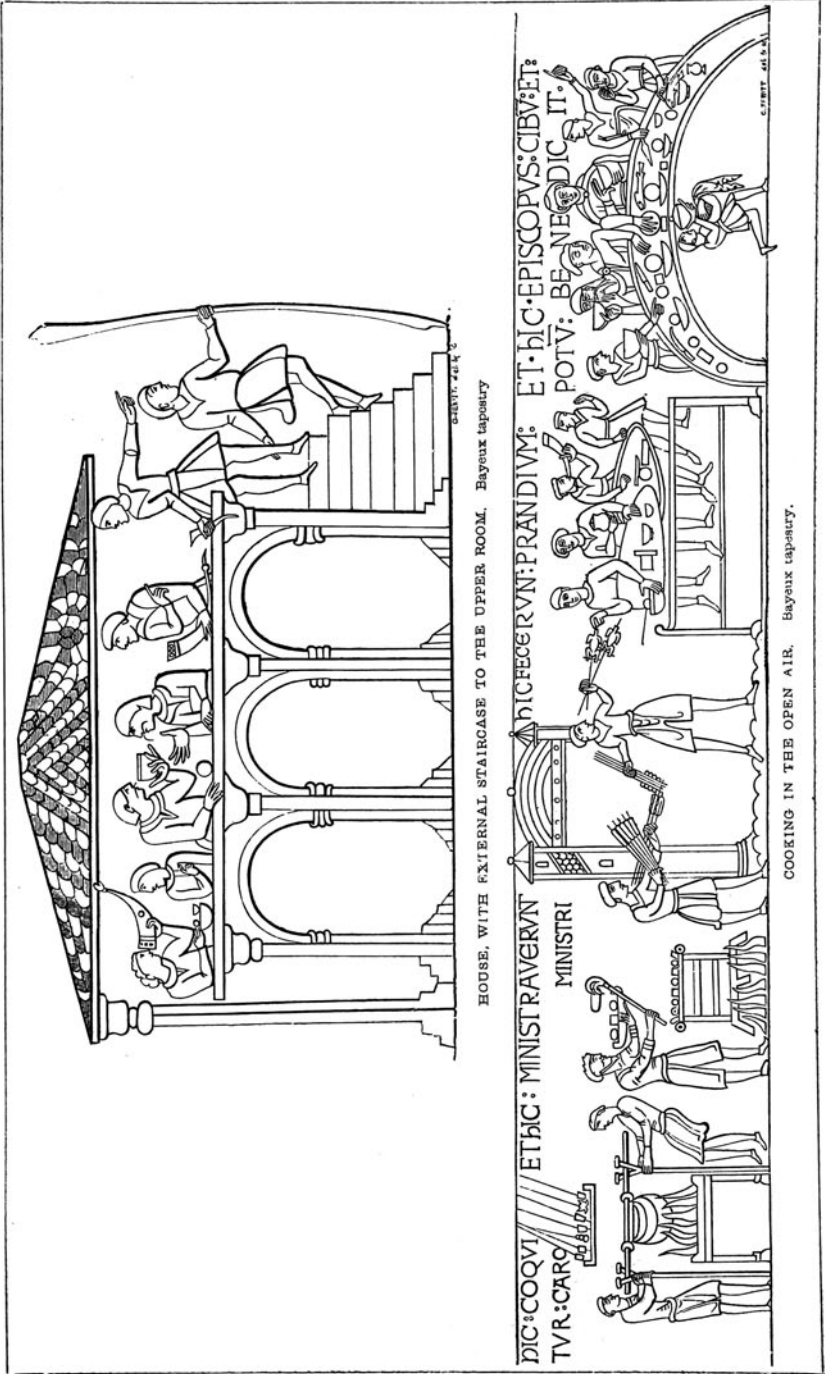
Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:
 From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century
 Thomas Hudson Turner
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE : TWELFTH CENTURY.



Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

GENERAL REMARKS.

5

the priory at Dover is a hall of magnificent dimensions, being 100 ft. long by 27 ft. wide, but it appears never to have been supported by pillars.

The private, or bed, room, annexed to the hall, there being frequently only oneⁱ, was situated on the second story, and was called, from an early period, the "solar," or "sollere^j;" the chamber beneath it, on a level with the hall, was called the "cellar," and used as such. It would appear that there was no internal communication between the cellar and solar; access from the latter to the hall being had by stairs of stone or wood within the hall or on its exterior. As to the kitchen, Necham remarks it was wont to be placed nigh the road or street. Accordingly we may observe in illuminations of the twelfth century, that the repast is brought into the hall, apparently from a court-yard^k. In the Bayeux tapestry is a representation of cooking going on in the open air. Of the position of the larder or buttery nothing exact can be said; it was probably annexed to that part of the hall which Necham terms the "vestibule," like a buttery-hatch in one of our Collegiate halls.

At Appleton in Berkshire there remains the entrance doorway to the hall of a Norman house of this period,

ⁱ Henry the Second had a manor-house at King's Sombourn, Hants; in the 7th of his reign the sheriff claimed an allowance of £12 for "the works of the chamber of the king and queen there." Rot. Pip. de eod. anno. The fashion of having but one private room which served alike as a sitting and bed-chamber continued for some time after the twelfth century. Thus in 1287, Edward the First and Queen Eleanor were sitting on their bed-side, attended by the ladies of the court, when they narrowly escaped death by lightning. See Walsingham, "Ypodigma Neustriæ," p. 71, ed. 1574.

^j The upper-chamber of a house is so called in the London assize of 1189. It is unnecessary to refer to the various explanations of this term that have been given; every ancient deed which has fallen under the author's notice proves that it was an upper room. The private room was however sometimes on a level with the hall.

^k As in the representation of Lot entertaining the Angels, engraved in Strutt's Horda, from the Cottonian MS. Tiberius, C. vi. There are many other examples which need not be enumerated.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6 DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE: TWELFTH CENTURY.

opening at one end of the vestibule or "screen," as it was often called; the two small doorways opening into the kitchen and buttery also remain, shewing that the arrangement of the hall was nearly the same as it still continues in Colleges and Inns of Court.

Such were the accommodations deemed necessary in a manor-house of the twelfth century; one might be larger than another, but the same simple plan appears to have been common to all. For defensive purposes it was enclosed by stone walls, or by a fence of wood, and moated. The walls or fence did not immediately surround the buildings. Necham says the hall should have a porch beside the vestibule, and also a court-yard¹; in this, the front and principal court, the kitchen was placed, and probably the stables. He speaks also of an inner court in which poultry should be kept^m. It would appear that, in addition to the outer defences, the entry to the hall-porch was sometimes protected by posts and chains, forming a sort of barrier, probably against cattle.

It is certain, however, that some houses were built during this century on a different plan, viz. in the form of a parallelogram, and consisting of an upper story, between which and the ground floor there was, sometimes, no internal communication. The lower apartment in such cases was vaulted, and the upper room approached by a flight of steps on the outside; it was the only habitable chamber, and in it were frequently the only windows and fire-place. The manor-house at Boothby Pagnell in Lincolnshire is a good instance of such a house, but as the chimney rises from the ground, it most probably had fire-places in both stories: at Christ-

¹ "Corpus aule vestibulo muniatur, juxta quod porticus honeste sit disposita; atrium etiam habeat" &c.

^m "Curia spectaculis communibus deservire debet, sed chors secretior vestiatur

altilibus, gallis et gallinis, aucis et anseribus" &c. Alex. Necham, "De Naturis Rerum." MS. Harl. 3737. fo. Hence domestic fowls were termed "cor-tile byrdes."

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

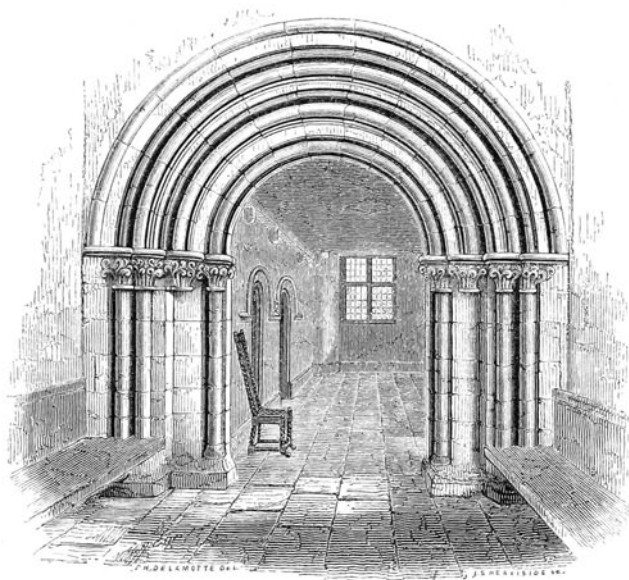
From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)

DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE—TWELFTH CENTURY.



DOORWAY OF THE HALL, APPLETON, BERKS

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07348-6 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 1:

From the Conquest to the End of the Thirteenth Century

Thomas Hudson Turner

Excerpt

[More information](#)
