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978-1-108-07349-3 - Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England: Volume 2:

From Edward I to Richard II, with Notices of Foreign Examples

John Henry Parker

Excerpt

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## DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

### CHAPTER I.

#### GENERAL REMARKS.

THE reign of Edward the First was one of the most brilliant and flourishing epochs in the whole history of England. At home the people enjoyed peace and prosperity, and made rapid progress in civilization. Abroad some of the finest provinces of France owned their obedience to the English crown. These happy results were in no small degree due to the personal character of the monarch; bred up from his earliest youth in the French wars, and early entrusted with the government of the important province of Aquitaine, he shewed all the qualities of a great king, his prudence and sagacity equalled his valour, and he succeeded in attaching the people firmly to his cause by the wisdom and the liberality of his measures.

The good effects of his policy may be traced for above a century after his time in the hearty adherence of the natives of Gascony and Guienne to the English cause; far from feeling themselves to be degraded vassals, they were proud of belonging to the English party, and even to this day the people have a fond tradition of the flourishing days of the English rule<sup>a</sup>. Nor was his government at home less marked by wisdom and firmness, or his people less flourish-

<sup>a</sup> In proof of this we need only quote the popular proverb, "*Quand nous sommes Anglais nous sommes toujours riches,* *quand nous sommes Français nous sommes toujours gueux.*"

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ing<sup>b</sup>. At that period France was more advanced in civilization than England, and Edward laboured to introduce and encourage the arts in England by bringing over choice workmen and artists from France. A marked change in the style of architecture took place, and this change was evidently of French origin, though the new style was brought to greater perfection in England. The window tracery in geometrical forms, which is the most striking feature of the new style, appeared in France some years before it was introduced into England, but once introduced here it soon took root and flourished in a most wonderful degree<sup>c</sup>. Simultaneously with the rapid development of Ecclesiastical Architecture, similar progress was made in Domestic buildings; not only were the halls enriched by the introduction of the new style of windows, but the plans of the houses themselves were improved and enlarged, and the number of offices increased.

The reigns of the Second and Third Edwards are scarcely less distinguished in the annals of architecture than that of the First. There is abundant evidence that these monarchs all took a warm interest in its progress, more especially of Domestic architecture, and there can be no doubt that their personal influence was generally felt. The favours, the honours, and the emoluments heaped upon William of Wykeham by Edward the Third were chiefly earned by his skill as an architect displayed in rebuilding the royal palace at Windsor. The three reigns combined are called by some antiquarians the Edwardian period, and this period comprises the most brilliant and glorious epoch

<sup>b</sup> The knights and barons of France, who had been at home accustomed to handsome hotels, richly ornamented apartments, and good soft beds, were by no means pleased at the poverty they had to encounter.—Froissart.

<sup>c</sup> The variety of designs which were

here invented is extraordinary, and unrivalled in any other country. In France the same figures are constantly repeated, especially the trefoil, and this continued until the vagaries of the Flamboyant style began to mark the fall of Gothic architecture.

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## GENERAL REMARKS.

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in the whole history of the Art. It was exactly for this period and no longer, that the Decorated style prevailed; in other words, the Art was then in the highest state of perfection: previous to this period it was still in progress, and immediately afterwards it began to decline. The Domestic architecture of this brilliant epoch in our history is scarcely less worthy of attention than the Ecclesiastical; considered as mere masonry it is impossible to surpass the accuracy, the firmness, the high finish of the work of this period. The sculpture is equally beautiful, and in its wonderful fidelity to nature is unrivalled. Nor was the skill of the architect behind that of his workmen; the admirable manner in which the plans and designs are arranged, and the ingenuity with which difficulties are overcome, may be equalled, but cannot be surpassed.

In the reign of Richard the Second the last change of the Gothic styles took place, and though the Perpendicular style is admirably suited for Domestic buildings, it must still be considered as a decline from the highest perfection of the Art. Such structures as the colleges of Wykeham, the roof of Westminster Hall, and many others, shew that the architects of the time of Richard the Second can hardly be said to have declined, though the change then introduced was the beginning of the fall. This is one of the periods where an overlapping of styles must be looked for. Some buildings of this reign belong rather in style to the next century, while others belong almost entirely to the style then dying out. Just as in the reign of Edward the First, the Early English and Decorated styles are singularly intermingled, so is it in the time of Richard the Second with the Decorated and the Perpendicular. The change began indeed in the latter years of Edward the Third, but the instances are not numerous enough to be considered otherwise than as rare exceptions to the general rule.

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The existing remains of the fourteenth century are more numerous than those of the preceding periods, and a comparison of them sufficiently proves the enlargement of plan and increase of comfort, and of more civilized ideas. Many of the houses of the fourteenth century are of large extent and great magnificence, and testify to the wealth and prosperity of their owners. The bishops' palaces are among the most important, as at Wells, Lincoln, St. David's, Southwell, and Norwich. The houses and castles of the nobility are among the finest and best examples of this period. Penshurst has a glorious hall of the time of Edward II., and some other parts are of the same period, though the other sides of the quadrangle are considerably later. There is a remarkable deficiency of town houses of the fourteenth century in England, owing no doubt to their being usually built of wood, and so frequently destroyed by fire. This deficiency is abundantly supplied by the English towns in France, mostly founded by Edward I., of which an account will be given in a subsequent chapter. There is an equal deficiency of country houses of this period in France, owing obviously to the constantly disturbed state of the country, which rendered it necessary for the inhabitants to live together in towns for mutual protection, while the comparatively peaceful state of England rendered a moderate fortification generally sufficient, at least in the more settled districts.

Neither is there any deficiency of documentary evidence to the same effect. For though it is true that we lose the benefit of that series of records which enabled us to throw so much light upon the Domestic architecture of the latter half of the thirteenth century, yet their place is amply supplied by other documents of equal authority.

The Liberate Rolls, which in the time of Henry the Third abound in such minute directions relating to the

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construction of the royal houses, cease soon after the accession of Edward the First to afford any further information than the amount of the sums expended in building; and they preserve the same character down to the accession of Henry the Fourth. On the other hand we have now arrived at a period when building accounts are more numerous, and better preserved, than at any preceding time; a period to which belong the descriptive poems of Chaucer, and the inimitable chronicles of Froissart, besides the works of many other writers, which all contribute to elucidate the subject. At the commencement of this century we have the inventories taken of the lands and houses of the suppressed order of the Templars<sup>d</sup>, which supply many curious architectural details, much of which, however, must apply to the period of transition between the style of the thirteenth and that of the following period.

A common plan of manorial houses during the fourteenth century would appear to have been simply a parallelogram, with or without wings; for example, in the year 1314 Sir John Bishopsden of Lapworth<sup>e</sup> in the

<sup>d</sup> A specimen of these will be found in the appendix to the present volume.

<sup>e</sup> Ceo sont les covenans fees entre Mounsy Sire Joh'n de Byssopesdon' chivaler de une part e Will' Heose masoune Joh'n de Pesham de Roventon' de autre p't. Ce est a sav' qe les avaunt dys Will' e Joh' frount au dyt Sir' Joh'n a sun Maner de Lapworthe une mesoun p<sup>r</sup> porte de pere fraunche bone covenable e byen overe. La quele mesoun co'tend' en lounq deens murs qaraunte pees e en leyse dys e ut pees. E le foreyne mur s'ra ove les gables treys pees e demy epes sauns deus peyres desouys au foudem't de hors. E les denseyns murs serrount deus pes e demy epes dount la porte s'ra en my la mesoun. E de une p't la porte une chambre base ove une

chymeneye e garderobe etendue hors de la dyte chaumb<sup>e</sup> e ove fenestres e hus covenables e de altre p't la porte chaumb<sup>e</sup> saunt chimene e saunt garderobe ove hus e fenestres covenables. E la porte avant dite s'ra de Laour solum le devys le avaunt dite Sire Joh'n. E de amp't le entre de eyns la porte mur de pere ausy haut c' la porte au ques murs ceo jundrount deus coluns de Peir' sur les qes les foyles de la porte pendrount e s'ra la porte ava'nt dite ense'blem't ove les chamb<sup>s</sup> bases avaunt dites unse pees de haut du soyl jekes au trefs p'mereyns. E a de sus la porte e les dytes chaumbres bases s'ra un cha'b<sup>e</sup> estage de longour e la leysour avaundynt ove deus chimenes deus garderobes ete'dans hors de la dite cha'b<sup>e</sup> covenablem't ov hus e fenestres co-

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## 6 DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE: FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

county of Warwick, knight, covenanted with two masons for the erection of a convenient house of free-stone at his manor of Lapworth. This building was to be forty feet in length within the walls, and eighteen feet in width; the end walls with the gables were to be three feet and a half in thickness, and the back and front walls two feet and a half; the doorway was to be in the middle of the house; and on one side of it they were to construct a base-chamber with a fireplace and a wardrobe extending out of the said chamber, with proper windows and doors; and on the other side of the same doorway there was to be a chamber without a fireplace and wardrobe, but with fitting doors and windows. The principal doorway was to be of such size as the said Sir

venables a le ordeynem't de le ava't dyt Sir' Joh' e la cha'b<sup>e</sup> sovereyne ava't dite s'ra neof pees de haut de gites a de souz jeques au tref a de sus, e a de sus les sovereyne gites s'rout alures de per' de deus pees e demy haut. E s'ra la dite porte issy fete qe un pount t'nes byen ceo acordera solum le ordeynem't le ava'nt dyt Joh'n e le dyt Will' Heose e Joh' de Pesham ou un de eus t' verount franche per' bon e covenable p' le dyt overeyne p'fer'. E le dyt Sir' Joh' la per' f' carier de la q'rer' Joh' de Pesham de Roventone jeques a le overeyne ava't dyt ou de ausy p's In sy le dyt Will' de plus loyns la vod' quer'. E le dit Sir' Joh' t'vera merym charpentie sabeloun chaus prest saunt detramise de le ava'nt dyt overeyne. E les ava't dytes Will' e Joh' ou un de eus p'frount tot le overeyne ava't dyt ava't Le Touz Seynsp'cheyn aven' ap's la 'fexioun de cet covenant ava't dyt, e p' ce covenat fer' e p'former ausi e ava't est dyt Je Joh' de Byssopesd' moy oblige p' moy e p' mes heys e p' mes exeq'tors estre tenez e les ava't dys Will' e Joh' ou a un de eus en Vynt e sing mars a payer a deus t'mes, ceo est a saver a la purificaioun

n're Dame p'cheyn aven' apres la 'fexioun de cete escyt doze mars e demy E quant la dyt overeyne s'ra finye solum la forme ava't recorde aut' doze mars e demy e p' cete overeyne en la forme e au jour ava't dyt leaument a fer' nos ava't dys Will' r' Joh' de Pesham de Roventon nos obliouns r' grauntoms de estr' tenez juntem't e severaumn't p' n' e p' nos heys a le dyt Sir' Joh' e a ces heys en Vynt lyveres de esterlynges a payer ap's la Qu'seyne de Touz Seinz p'cheyn aven' ap's la 'fexioun de cete covenat e n' avaunt dys Will' e Joh' de Pesham voloms egrauntoms p' n' e p' n' heys qe le dyt Sir' Joh' e ces heys p'rout destreynde touz nos teneme's en Roventon' en qe meyns qe il devyne't e ce destresse gard en 'tre gaie e plage issynt qe p' bref ne sant bref ne seyt deliver' si la qe les vynt lyvres seyent paye ou le overeyne p'fet solum le covenat ava't dyt. Em teymoynanse de cete chose nos John' Wille e John' auny mis nos seus. Escreyt a Lapworthe le lundy p'cheyn ap's la feste Seynt Martyn *en le an du regne le Rey Edward fyz le Rey Edward setyme.*

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## CONTRACT FOR A HOUSE AT LAPWORTH.

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John should determine ; and on each side of the entry there was to be a stone wall as high as the doorway, to which walls two columns of stone were to be affixed on which the leaves of the door might be suspended ; and this doorway, together with the base chambers, to be eleven feet in height from the ground to the first rafters. Above the doorway and the two base chambers they were to build an upper chamber (*chambre estagée*) of the length and width of the house, with two fireplaces, two wardrobes projecting out of the same chamber, and with fitting doors and windows, according to the directions of the said Sir John ; this “sovereign chamber” to be nine feet high from the floor to the rafters, and alures<sup>f</sup> of stone two feet and a half in height were to be raised above the roof timbers. The principal doorway was to be so constructed that a drawbridge might be fitted to it. The masons appear to have been lessees of a quarry ; Sir John engaged to lead the stone from it at his own costs, and also to find timber, carpentering, sand, and lime. The contractors bound themselves, in sureties, to complete the building within a year from the date of the covenant. Sir John de Bishopsden engaged to pay twenty-five marks for the entire work by two equal instalments, that sum being equal to about 200*l.* modern currency.

We have in this instrument an early example of what is modernly termed a self-contained house, in which, exclusive of the wardrobes or closets, there were only three rooms. Yet the ancient arrangement of having one large apartment, or *hall*, is still preserved ; “the sovereign chamber,” extending the entire length of the mansion, was forty feet long and eighteen feet wide, sufficiently capacious for the entertainment of guests, and the daily resort of dependents. From

<sup>f</sup> The word alure commonly signifies a passage, but is here used for the parapet only.

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the special clause in the covenant that the entrance-door which was clearly under a porch, should be adapted to a drawbridge, it is evident the house was intended to be surrounded by a moat, carried closely round the building; beyond the moat there would be another enclosure in which stables, barns, and other domestic offices were erected. Several examples of such an arrangement still exist, one of the best being Hever castle, in Kent<sup>g</sup>, although, in point of date, it belongs to the following century.

It will be observed that no mention occurs in this covenant of the materials of which the roof was to be made, and it is equally deficient as to the character of the windows; but it must be remembered the document is the mason's contract only. The contract for rebuilding old Darley Hall, in Derbyshire, specifies the details of the windows, and the number of lights in each. But as regards the roof it is most probable it was covered with wooden or stone shingles; that wood as a material for external roofing was still in use, although gradually giving way to other and better substances, is proved by letters patent granted by Edward the Second in 1314 to his mother-in-law Margaret, queen dowager of England<sup>h</sup>. They state the king had been informed that divers manor-houses and castles which she held in dower, and which were roofed with wooden shingles, were greatly in need of repair, and that they might be roofed at a less cost with slates, stone, or earthen tiles, than with such wooden shingles; he therefore grants her permission to unroof those houses which needed repair and to cover them with slate or tile, and at the same time leave to cut down and sell as many oaks and other trees in the woods of the manors and castles aforesaid, as may suffice to repay the

<sup>g</sup> The wooden stables at Hever are  
very curious, and not later than the

fifteenth century.

<sup>h</sup> Pat. part 2. 7 Edw. II. m. 16.

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## PLANS OF HOUSES.

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reasonable expenses incurred by her for new roofing the houses in question<sup>i</sup>.

But whatever variation there may have been in the plans of houses during this century, it is quite certain that a large chamber, or hall, was still a prominent feature in every building, even in farm-houses. Thus in the reign of Edward the Third a sale took place of certain unnecessary houses in the king's manors of Folly-John, Winkfield, Ascot, New Windsor, Old Windsor, Slough, and Eton, under the superintendence of William of Wykeham, then clerk of the works at Windsor. Master William sold to one William de Combe, one of the king's cooks, "a hall with two chambers annexed, a granary, with a gateway built over it, a stable and two barns," in the manor of New Windsor<sup>k</sup>.

It may be said, it is true, that granges or farms on royal manors were likely to be of a superior character to farm-buildings on other properties; but those who are acquainted with the state of the kingdom in the fourteenth century may have reason to infer that the royal estates were in no better condition than, if so good as, those of the Church and many of the wealthier nobility.

The hall sometimes occupied the whole height of the house, sometimes had a low ground story under it. The wings were commonly of two stories only, the cellar below and the solar over it. In other instances they form towers of three or four stories. The other buildings for offices and stables were so arranged as to form either a perfect quadrangle or three sides of a quadrangle, with the hall in the centre of the principal front, and the gatehouse in the centre of the open side opposite to it. These outbuildings were frequently of wood,

<sup>i</sup> At The Mote, Ightham, Kent, part of the shingle-covering still exists under a later roof.

<sup>k</sup> Roll among the Queen's Remembrancer's records at Carlton Ride, F. L. H. 943.

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and sometimes the hall also. The whole was surrounded by a moat, usually enclosing a quadrangular space, whether the whole of the space was occupied by buildings or not. Sometimes, as at The Mote, Ightham, it actually washes the outer walls of the house and offices; in other instances, as at Penshurst, there is a space between the moat and the buildings; in such cases there was always a wall or a mound and palisading immediately within the moat to enclose the baileys or court-yards. The entrance was protected by a gate-house with a portcullis and drawbridge. From the disturbed state of the times every house of any importance was fortified, and it was necessary to obtain from the crown a licence to crenellate or fortify before any house, at least any manor-house or gentleman's house, could be built. It is sometimes not easy to distinguish between a fortified dwelling house and a castle or fortress, which generally had habitable parts, such as Caernarvon and Caerphilly, and the other Welsh castles which partake of both characters, though certainly belonging rather to the class of castles than of houses. On the other hand many dwelling houses in the border countries were so strongly fortified as to be hardly distinguished from them, and yet do not lose their character of dwelling houses, of which class Brougham castle is a fine example.

Many houses of this century have each a small square tower attached to them, sometimes as places of security to which to retire in case of any sudden attack; in other instances as a mark of rank, as this was one of the usual distinct privileges of the nobility, although in towns wealthy citizens were sometimes allowed to have towers to their houses, and the use of a tower and belfry was one of the privileges of a corporate town, of which the citizens were occasionally deprived when they gave offence to the sovereign. Many of these belfry-towers, and also many houses