

**General Meeting held at the Herts County Museum,  
on November 1st, 1901, at 8.30 p.m.**

Present—Mr. H. R. Fox Bourne, in the chair; also Messrs. F. W. Kinneir Tarte, A. F. Smith, G. Gaffe, C. H. Ashdown; W. Page, R. J. Hillier, and Mrs. Knight, Hon. Secretaries, and many others.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

The following new members were duly elected:—Mr. J. Woolman, proposed by Mr. Whitford Anderson. Mr. A. Montiville Evans, proposed by Mr. R. J. Hillier. Mr. J. Blake, proposed by Mr. H. J. Toulmin. Mr. J. J. Ford, proposed by Mr. G. Gaffe. Rev. G. Edwards, proposed by Dr. Wingrave. Rev. H. Worthington, proposed by Mr. A. E. Ekins. Mr. F. Beal, proposed by Mr. F. W. Kinneir Tarte. Mr. A. J. Rhodes, proposed by Mr. H. J. Toulmin. Mr. Walter Millard, proposed by Mr. F. G. Kitton. Mr. J. Denker, proposed by Mr. R. J. Hillier. Mr. W. Fisk, proposed by Mr. Whitford Anderson. Mr. R. Seymour Fannin, proposed by Mr. R. J. Hillier. Mr. and Mrs. Henderson, proposed by Mr. R. J. Hillier. Mr. Ernest Hart, proposed by Mr. F. G. Kitton. Mrs. Horace Slade, proposed by Dr. Wingrave. Miss Brown, proposed by Mrs. Knight. Miss Crowdy, proposed by Mrs. Knight. Mrs. Masters, proposed by Dr. Wingrave. Miss E. S. Wolfe, proposed by Mr. R. J. Hillier.

Mr. A. Whitford Anderson then read his paper upon:—"The Lesser Domestic Architecture of Hertfordshire." The lecture proved extremely interesting, and opened up many new channels for research. It was extremely well illustrated by very beautiful lantern-slides made by Mr. Whitford Anderson himself, and which showed what a vast amount of work had been gone through in preparing them. At the conclusion, a very hearty vote of thanks was passed to Mr. A. Whitford Anderson for his most interesting lecture, and also to Mr. C. H. Ashdown for so kindly managing the lantern.

W. WIGRAM.

**The Lesser Domestic Architecture of Hertfordshire.**

BY A. WHITFORD ANDERSON, A.R.I.B.A.

When I was honoured by a request from your Hon. Secretary to deliver a lecture to you, I chose the subject of Cottages, which I have enlarged sufficiently to include the smaller town houses, as it is a subject to which I believe very little attention has hitherto been directed in Hertfordshire, and to which a Society like ours should pay pressing and immediate attention, not so much with the idea of preserving all the old houses, which would be quite impossible, as of obtaining, without delay, as complete records as possible of those that remain. A number of the examples I shall show you to-night have disappeared since I have photographed them.

Before entering on the subject immediately before us, it might prove interesting, as well as helpful to the proper understanding of what follows, to take a brief survey of cottage building in England from early times.

When our Saxon forefathers arrived in this country during the 5th century, they found a type of civilization they were unaccustomed to, and which they never adopted. Coming, as they did, from a cold country, where timber was plentiful, to another country very similar in climate to their own, they preferred to continue to build in the material to which they were accustomed, which was wood. The Roman methods of building in brick were forgotten, even the art of brick-making almost disappeared for many centuries, though tiles continued to be used on the roofs of the better class of Saxon dwellings.

The description of Herot Hall in the epic of Beowulf, gives a vivid conception of Saxon timber architecture of the 5th and 6th centuries.

It is not, however, palaces, but much humbler dwellings we have to deal with here, and we really know very little of these before the Conquest, except that they must have been very primitive erections, formed of "stock-lif," or timber posts with roofs covered with straw or shingle.

The houses, or rather the huts of these villeins were of the rudest description.\* They were formed by setting up on the ground two pairs of poles, each pair sloping and connected together at the top, the two pairs being connected together at the apex by a ridge-pole; the intermediate space was then filled in with smaller timbers and wattle-work filled with clay and finished on the top with turf. The length of such a building or "bay," as it was called, was usually 16 feet, which was determined by the width occupied by four stalls for ploughing-oxen, which were usually under the same roof. The bay of 16 feet was the unit, and houses of larger size were simply formed by adding bay to bay, so that, when we find in the old monastic accounts descriptions of houses of one, two, three or more bays we can tell the dimensions of the buildings.

---

\* Addy, "Evolution of the English House."

Shakespeare, in "Measure for Measure," makes one of his characters declare that

"If this law hold in Vienna ten year, I'll rent the fairest house in it after three-pence a bay."

As time advanced, these huts were improved by raising the roofs on vertical side walls of timber-framing, still, however, filled with wattle and clay. This state of things continued up to the 14th century, when the rise of the farmer class, and free labour, began, consequent on the Lords of the Manor letting farms at fixed rents in money or kind instead of service. Up to that time the smoke from the hearth was allowed, in the humbler cottages, to find its way out of door or window as it best might. Chaucer describes a poor widow's cottage of this period in his "Nonne Preestes Tale."

"Full sooty was hire bour, and eke hire hall."

It was not until the time of Elizabeth that any real improvement was made in the condition of the labourer's cottage, but even well on in her reign Bishop Hall thus describes a copyholder's house.

"Of one bay's breadth, God wot, a silly cote,  
Whose thatched spars are furred with sluttish soote,  
A whole inch thick, shining like blackmoor's brows  
Through smoke that down the headlesse barrel blows.  
At his bed's feete feaden his stalled teame.  
His swine beneath, his pullen o'er the beam."

It was about this period, the end of the 16th century, that a great change in the ownership of land took place, tending to create a demand for smaller dwellings, so much so indeed, that Elizabeth had to pass an Act "for avoiding of the great inconveniencies which are found by experience to grow by the erectinge and buyldinge of great numbers and multitude of cotages which are daylie more and more increased in manye parts of this realme." \*

The greatest building time was the end of the 16th, and beginning of the 17th centuries. It seems probable that the more ornate woodwork of the smaller houses is a mark of the earlier period, as there were then plenty of skilled craftsmen to spend time on cottages, but later on, owing to the increased amount of building, only the larger houses could be decorated as before.

---

\* Neville, "Cottage Architecture in Surrey."

It should also be remembered that the use of bricks by the poorer classes, only became general about the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, though the wealthier classes had used them from the beginning of the 15th century.

As I do not know of any examples of cottages, or the smaller houses in Hertfordshire, earlier than the reign of Elizabeth, we shall begin our scrutiny from that period, only premising that, in approximating dates, I go by the external appearance only, as probably in many cases the internal framing of a cottage or small house may be older than the front.

The earliest cottages I can show you which have an authentic date are the Almshouses at Barley, which were erected about the year 1540. Though plain, they have the characteristic Tudor arched doors. The chimney, as is usual, projects considerably at the end of the Almshouses, and has regular brick offsets covered with tiles. Projecting chimneys are among the most picturesque features of 16th and 17th century houses, and were so built to save room in the house owing to the enormous fire-places of those days. The long straight stair enclosure projecting out in front of the main building is a feature to be noted. The dormer windows are, I believe, later additions.

The "White Lion" at Walkern is probably of not much later date, the doorway being quite Perpendicular in character, though the wavy type of barge-board points to a later period in the 16th century, when, as I have before indicated, the more skilled craftsmen were getting scarce, owing to increasing building. The boarding at foot of walls is probably not original, but was put in as a patch when the lower part of the plastered front decayed.

In the 15th century, English Inns provided merely wine and ales and shelter for man and beast, and it was not until the 16th century that food was provided as well.\*

There was another type of building erected during the latter half of the 16th century, formed of vertical posts of timber placed at short intervals from each other, the spaces being filled in with brickwork or lath

---

\* *Social England*, Ed. by Traill.



The "White Horse" Inn, Bishop's Stortford.  
*(Photo. 1896).*



The "Black Lion" Inn, Bishop's Stortford.  
*(Photo. 1896).*



and plaster. The "Black Lion" Inn at Bishop's Stortford is a somewhat elaborate example. This building is said to have been used as the stables to Bishop Bonner's House, which stood opposite, during the reign of the "Bloody Mary," and a date a little before the middle of the 16th century would suit its architecture.

You will notice, especially on the first floor in front, a range of windows extending completely across the front. This was a characteristic feature of 16th century houses, and was condemned by Francis Bacon, who declared "he could not see where to get out of the light." The window-tax of 1696 caused many such windows to be built up. The space between the upright parts is filled with lath and plaster, as is also the case with a similar type, but much less elaborate example at Stevenage, which probably dates from the latter half of 16th century. As a general rule, the earlier buildings have the vertical posts placed close together, but as timber became scarcer, it was economized by placing the posts farther apart, with or without diagonal braces, or by forming large panels filled or covered with lath and plaster, or frequently filled in with brickwork. The picturesque arrangement, as here shown, of a projecting gable at each end of the front, was one very commonly adopted in the 16th and 17th centuries.

King's Farm, Rickmansworth, has been a good example of this type, but it has been sadly marred at a subsequent date by building up against the front. It is said that William Penn was married in this house in the year 1672. Note the segmental arches over the lower windows which are very similar to a built-up door head in a humbler, but probably as an ancient example at Buntingford. At King's Farm the projecting upper storey stands on a moulded beam supported by wooden brackets, as was also the case at the "Black Lion," Bishop's Stortford; in the example at Buntingford, and also in the house I have just mentioned at Stevenage, being less pretentious, the upper storey rests on the projecting ends of the first floor joists, strengthened by brackets. Both types were in common use, the ends of the joists in the better class of houses being frequently cut into shapes and moulded.

There is a picturesque old farm-house at Pirton of

the vertical post type, the filling in between being in this instance of brickwork. The greater width of the posts in this example is to my mind a distinct improvement.

Portions of an old house at Aldbury, facing the old stocks on the village green, have the filling-in of brickwork, even in the projecting gable, which must entail a considerable strain on the joists below. This is, I should say, a later example, probably 17th century, as we find the framing here being formed into panels.

The next examples are probably also 17th century. The first is an old cottage at Chipperfield, which has a long low upper storey projecting on the ends of joists. The vertical posts here are much further apart, and are strengthened at intervals with curved diagonal braces. The portion facing the roadway is an 18th century addition.

An old house, now demolished, at Bridge Place, Watford, had also a projecting upper storey, of timber and brickwork standing on joists, though spoiled by a later addition.

The origin of projecting upper stories and gables did not arise from a mere love of the picturesque, but had a useful purpose to fulfil. In the 14th and 15th centuries in towns there were no shops as we have them now. Some, more especially ale-houses, were in cellars or vaults beneath the dwelling-houses of the merchants, but most of the wares were exposed in open booths outside their doors; and, in order to protect these in some measure from the weather, the stories and gables above were projected over the narrow streets of those days, in many cases almost shutting out the sky altogether. The projection over the lately demolished alley to Church Street, Watford, must have been excellently adapted for shelter. It is only in the towns that any great projections are to be met with, but it became the fashion to build in this manner, and the country buildings were copied from those in the towns, though, as they were not required so much for shelter, the projections were, in most instances, much less.

The last example I give of a cottage with the vertical posts is at Hadham Cross, and is evidently very late in the style. Indeed the date on the dormer is 1697. It

has a dormer window in the centre, and an oriel window supported on a very common type of wood and plaster cove. The roof of this cottage is thatched.

There is a curious, and so far as I know, unique timber-framed house, of probably late 17th century date at Little Almshoe, near Ippollitts, where the filling-in between the timber is of tiles laid flat, like the thin Roman bricks.† The effect is soft and pleasing.

I may say, in passing, that all the timber-framed houses I have come across bearing dates belong to the 17th century, though it is quite possible that portions of their internal structure may be older.

I now come to another type of house which shows no timber-framing externally. The timber-framing is still there, though the vertical posts are placed much further apart and form panels, either filled with brickwork or lathing, but mostly the latter. The whole front is then covered with plaster.

The use of plaster for external work on timber houses was remarked on by Harrison,\* who wrote during the reign of Elizabeth, about the year 1570, as being an extraordinary instance of novelty and improvement.

My first example is a very good one, probably late 16th century, of an old Inn at Barkway. It has three well-proportioned overhanging gables supported on carved wooden brackets. It is the almost invariable custom to form the roof over the bay-window or oriel, by projecting the gable or storey above, over it, as in this example, and there is almost always a drip-board of some kind over the lower windows to throw the rain off, a feature I shall speak of later on.

While speaking of windows, I might say that in the old cottages, glass in the windows, being costly, was almost unknown. The description in "The Courtship of Miles Standish," of the house built by John Alden is a good picture of the type prevailing in England before the sailing of the "Mayflower" to New England in 1620.

"Meanwhile Alden at home had built him a new habitation  
Solid, substantial, of timber rough-hewn from the firs of the forest.  
Wooden-barred was the door, and the roof was covered with rushes;  
Latticed the windows were, and the window-panes were of paper,  
Oiled to admit the light, while wind and rain were excluded."

† Two chimneys, built of similar tiles, may be seen at Codicote.

\* Harrison's England.

Glass seems to have been rare even at the middle of the 18th century, as an old inhabitant of Hertford, who died about 1830, informed Turner, the Historian of that town, that he remembered when the Market Place had only one glazed shop in it, the other houses and shops being lighted through lattices of wickerwork.

The "White Horse" Inn at Bishop's Stortford is another fine and early example with elaborate barge-boards to the gables. It has several steps up to the door, a common feature, other examples of which I shall mention presently. Between the windows are heraldic devices modelled in the plaster, a mode of decoration I shall treat of later on.

The yard of this Inn shows a small example of how the bedrooms were usually arranged in the additions which were built to meet the increase of coaching. They opened directly on to a covered passage facing the yard. These passages were sometimes entirely enclosed, as in this example, but more often left open in front, with a handrail running round, as in the recently demolished building at the back of the "George" Inn at Watford.

There is a picturesque old building at Baldock with steps up to the door, which shows the curved form supporting the oriel windows, similar to the example at Hadham Cross. This feature is found straight also as well as curved, as in the old house in the churchyard at Royston. This house at Baldock bears the date 1632.

A somewhat similar old house exists at Royston, also with steps up to the door, with a quaint assemblage of tiny oriel and bay-windows, some of them semi-circular on plan.

It is those seemingly haphazard gables, dormers and bays, together with the over-hanging storeys, which must have made our old towns and villages so delightful to look upon, but the modern bye-laws have put an end to them for ever.

The "George and Dragon" at Codicote is a very good example of this old work. It has several gables, all differing in magnitude, but the balance of the whole is well sustained.

There is an old plastered building in Bancroft, Hitchin, with a curious coved plaster cornice, broken

into, at intervals, by the windows underneath. There is another similar cove under the eaves of an old thatched cottage at Barkway, and another example may be seen at Piper's Farm, in the Herts portion of the Parish of Caddington, where, however, the timber framing shows through the plaster.

In the old Inns which used to abound on all the main roads out of London, in the coaching days, it seems to have been found difficult to obtain sufficient height for the yard gateway, when built over, to allow a stage-coach to pass under. This was sometimes done by encroaching on the floor above, thus reducing the height of the room, as was done in a house, once an Inn, at Baldock. A better and much more effective method was, however, arrived at, as in the picturesque arrangement at Buntingford, by raising the roof over the yard entrance bodily and placing it on a higher level with its gable facing the street. A similar treatment may be seen on an old house in Hitchin. This bears the date 1729 on the plaster-work, but I should say that the building itself is a century older.

At Stevenage may be seen another example of a raised roof over the gateway. In this case the sloping roof faces the roadway, and the effect is not so satisfactory as the gable. The "Angel," at Watford, shows a similar treatment, but the raised portion is not confined to the portion immediately over the gateway.

You will have noticed that nearly all the buildings I have illustrated are roofed with tiles, one or two only being covered with thatch. Slates were not introduced until a much later period, in this district at least.

I can only mention a few more out of the many examples of lath and plaster buildings in Hertfordshire, before passing on to speak of some special features.

The "Buck's Head," at Little Wymondley, shows the common arrangement of a gable at each end of the building, and also the usual method of finishing off the apex of a high roof where it abuts on a lower one, by leaving the projecting apex of one roof as a little gablet appearing over the ridge of the lower roof, so as to avoid having a specially made tile, which would be necessary were the ridges at the same level.

The "Bull," at Whitwell, has the gables over the bay-

windows raised high above the eaves of the main building, a most effective arrangement. It has also a bold wooden sign-bracket, instead of the ordinary iron one.

There is another building at Buntingford, with the gable raised above the eaves, though not to such a great degree as at Whitwell. This was a very usual arrangement, not only as giving increased headroom to the rooms within the smaller gable, but it prevented two dripping eaves meeting together at the same level in the angle.

Church Street, Watford, had, until their demolition a few years ago, a very dilapidated row of old lath and plaster houses. It was in one of those houses that Cromwell is traditionally said to have lodged when he passed through Watford.

The old house facing the Market Place, at St. Albans, is a well-known example, and I believe it is principally due to the energy of some members of this Society that this ancient landmark is still spared. It bears the date 1637 on one of the angle brackets.

The "Hit and Miss," Watford, is a simple example. It has recently been restored, and has now quite lost its old character. Though in this particular instance, the bending of the old beam under the projecting upper storey was probably caused by age and the weight over, that is not always the case, as the old cottage builders had frequently to use what timbers they found at hand, and straight timbers of any length were probably costly. A house may be seen in George Street, St. Albans, with a long moulded beam, the bend in which seems due to nature, and the woodwork under it has been cut to fit.

Ashwell has a number of old houses in its main street, with quaint bay windows and projecting gables.

The old gabled houses in Farthing Lane, Watford, are examples of lath and plaster work of the 17th century, though it is probable that the tile-hanging in the gables is of later date, as vertical tiling does not appear to have been used until well on in the 18th century.

The old Inn at Hare Street near the Hormeads, is also a good example, and there are many others scattered throughout the towns and villages of Hertfordshire.

There is a feature in many of the larger cottages of



Church Street, Watford (demolished in 1893).  
(Photo. 1892).



Old Almshouses near the Church at Barley.  
(Photo. 1897).



this county which deserves some notice, as the effect is generally good. It is that of making the entrance to the house through a wholly or partly enclosed projecting porch with a small room and gable over. The old Vicarage in Fenn's Close, Watford, is a good example. This porch is open at the sides, the openings being filled with moulded balusters. It is, I think, of late 16th century date, and there is some curious Elizabethan panelling on the old wicket-gate giving entrance to the porch.

Another very similar porch exists at an old farm-house at Buck's Hill Bottom, near Chipperfield, and there is, or was, another good example at Little Berkhamstead.

Other porches are entirely enclosed, as at the old brick and timber house at Buckshill, which has the date 1696 carved on the wooden lintel of the doorway. This porch has been recently covered with roughcast instead of the original smooth plaster.

You will also notice, in the gable, that the diagonal braces in the timber-framing having decayed, they have been replaced with bricks. I have met with the same thing in many old cottages, and the decay was probably due to the difficulty of making a water-tight joint on a curved or sloping surface of a timber.

An old farm-house at Belsize, near Sarratt, has a very well-proportioned half-timbered projecting porch, and there is also the old Inn at Baldock to which I alluded when speaking of yard gateways.

The picturesque old Inn at High Wych, near Sawbridgeworth, shows a slight variation, the lower part of the projecting porch being continued on one side along the front, so as to increase the size of a room. This, however, may have been a subsequent addition.

The old practice of forming weather-boards over the doors and windows to throw off the rain, adds greatly to the appearance of many of the houses, especially when elaborated into little tiled roofs or porticos, breaking up the surface of what might otherwise be a flat monotonous front. This may clearly be seen at French's Farm near Chipperfield, where a bold projecting tiled canopy over the upper windows throws a deep shadow under it, and saves the front from being common-place. The way the canopy is returned on to the main roof is also worthy of note.

There is a somewhat similar device over the lower window of a quaint little house at Bushey, which affords protection from the weather in addition to the projection of the oriel above.

A thatched cottage at Barkway has a similar feature applied as a porch over a double door, while in another thatched cottage a little further on may be seen the more primitive and usual type of weather-boarding, consisting of simple sloping boards fixed on small brackets. It was to this cottage I before alluded as having a plaster coved cornice between the projecting end gables like those at Hitchin and Piper's Farm, near Caddington.

I have hitherto been speaking of timber-framed buildings filled with brickwork or covered with plaster, but there was another method used for keeping out the weather, by covering the outer faces of the house with horizontal over-lapping weather boarding. This was possibly in some instances substituted for plaster-work which had decayed, but in many cases was, no doubt, the original covering.

There is a good example of this style of building at Braughing, on a house which seems to have been of some importance, judging from the brick chimneys, which are somewhat elaborate and probably date from early in the 17th century.

There is another example at Watford, in Water Lane, where the upper storey only is boarded.

Small houses or cottages of the 16th and 17th centuries built wholly of brick, appear to be rare in this county, partly no doubt owing to the greater expense of brick, especially in the 16th century, but partly, also, no doubt out of deference to the traditional methods of timber-framing, and we find when brick is used to any extent, it is usually as a filling-in of timber-framing.

The Almshouses at Buntingford were built in the year 1684, and are of brick and stone of a somewhat elaborate character, but are good examples of the style. They may seem rather ambitious buildings to include within the scope of this paper, so I shall not pursue this subject beyond one example which clearly comes under the description "lesser architecture."

It is that of a small ale-house at Gosmore, near

Ippollitts; it is built entirely of brick, and probably dates from the close of the 17th century.

Some excellent examples of brickwork are, however, to be found in the chimneys of many of the old timber houses. Prior to the latter part of the 16th century, the chimneys in the better class of houses were composed wholly of lath and plaster. Leland, writing in 1558, expresses his amazement at the flues in Bolton Castle, which were carried up in the walls as we do now. He says, "I muche notyd in the haulle of Bolton how chimneys were conveyed by tunnells made in the syds of the wauls, betwixt the lights in the haulle; and by this means, and by no covers, is the smoke of the harthe wonder strangly conveyed." The cover referred to was a canopy of wood or plaster placed over the fireplace to convey the smoke to a louvred outlet in the roof. Another writer,\* who was born in 1626, says, "Antiently before the Reformation, ordinary men's houses, as copyholders and the like had no chimneys, but flew like louvre holes; some of them were in being when I was a boy." These canopies seem to have been used from a very early period; but in the beginning of the 17th century were prohibited in some districts owing to the danger of fire, the chimneys being ordered to be built of brick only.

Harrison, writing about 1570, says:—"There are old men yet dwelling in the village where I remain which have noted three things to be marvellouslie altred in England within their sound remembrance . . . . one is the multitude of chimnies latelie erected, whereas in their yoong daies there were not above two or three, if so manie, in most uplandish towns of the realme . . . . but ech one made his fire against a reredosse in the hall where he dined and dressed his meat." The "reredosse" may have been the wooden canopy over the hearth before alluded to, or have been merely the fireback.

There are some very good clustered chimney shafts on an old farm-house, called The Beeches, near Brent Pelham, probably early 17th century work. I might mention, in passing, two advantages in point of appearance, possessed by the old brick-work over the modern.

---

\* "Evolution of the English House," Addy.

In the first place, they employed large white joints of mortar between their bricks, about an inch thick, instead of the modern narrow ones. Secondly, the old bricks were much thinner and lighter in appearance than ours, the thickness of the old bricks averages two to two and a quarter inches thick; modern bricks are from two-and-three-quarters to three inches.

There is a good type of chimney to a farm-house at Graveley, which has a thin mask of bricks in front, crow-stepped, while behind are the usual sloping offsets covered with tiles.

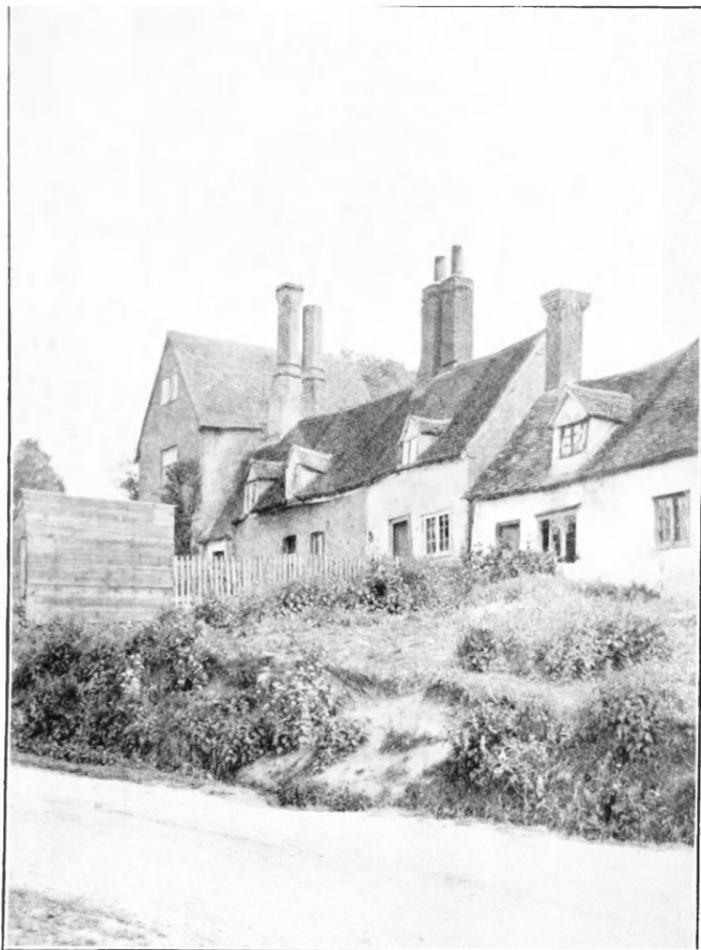
This may also be seen, though in a slighter degree, in a chimney at West Hyde, near Rickmansworth.

In Hertfordshire we have chimneys of many types and shapes. We have chimneys with enriched shafts, usually circular, as at the wooden boarded house I alluded to at Braughing, and at some of the larger houses, such as The Hall at Brent Pelham; we have chimneys with detached shafts, usually octagonal, with heavy moulded brick bases of a Perpendicular type and moulded caps. These are sometimes grouped as at Great Horstead, or in a row of two or three.

Two chimneys at Hadham Ford, and three at Stevenage, and the Parsonage Farm, Great Horstead have similar types of moulded bases, but some of them have more elaborate caps than others.

A very effective cap may be seen at Bury Green near Little Hadham, of a not uncommon type, where the shaft is octagonal, and the brick moulded cap, while retaining the octagonal form of the shaft beneath, has each of its eight sides curved on plan as segments of circles.

There is a very interesting example of a brick chimney at Rickmansworth, not only because it shows a broken outline on plan, as indeed all old chimneys do, but it has the only remaining example that I have met with in its original state of the prototype of the modern chimney-pot. I have met with five or six others, but they are now either demolished or covered with cement. It consists of a circular and slightly conical erection of brick on the top of each shaft, but is evidently not of a nature able to stand very long. This chimney also shows the crow-stepped mask before alluded to.



**Old Houses at Hadham Ford, near Little Hadham.**  
*(Photo. 1900).*



**Old House at Gosmore, near Ippolitts.**  
*(Photo. 1898).*



My next example is an old deserted cottage at Westwick Row, near Leverstock Green. I do not give it for its architectural beauty, but it is a very common type of Hertfordshire cottage, and it is a good illustration of our modern ingle-nook. In those days cottagers had to do their own baking, and every cottage was provided with a small oven, numbers of which may still be seen in every village. This particular cottage has a rather large oven necessitating a separate roof over it, but as a general rule they are covered by the sloping offsets at the foot of the chimney outside. You will notice, by the way, that in this cottage, as in the one I mentioned at Buckshill, the diagonal struts have disappeared, and been replaced with brickwork.

In the room itself, an oven beside the fireplace demanded some width, and it was nearly always recessed. This recess, being roomy and near the fire, was converted into the "chimney-corner," by fitting up brick or stone seats in it, as is done here. There is a second smaller oven on the other side of the fireplace.

Frequently, where space permitted, a window was added to light the "chimney-corner," as was the case at an old cottage at Bulstrode, near Bovingdon.

The last chimney I shall mention is on a house at King's Langley, which has a solid chimney-stack with engaged octagonal shafts at either end. The hanging tiles on the gable are modern, but you will notice how the plastered front is divided off into panels by small sunk mouldings of plaster. This brings me to another branch of my subject—plaster decoration on the external faces of old houses.

External decorative plaster-work was introduced into England before the middle of the 16th century by Henry VIII., who brought over skilled Italian workmen to build his magnificent, but short-lived Palace of Nonsuch, near Epsom, in Surrey. The English workman took to the novelty, and worked it out in an English manner, and it became common in some parts of England, especially in Essex, where the best examples still exist. Though we have nothing in this County to compare with the fine Essex work at Earl's Colne, Prittlewell or Wivenhoe, we still felt the influence of the new art, though the best of our work consists of a few foliated borders round panels.

The only example I know of in Hertfordshire which makes any attempt at filling the panels, are some poorly designed and rudely executed scrolls, with a dragon, on a cottage at Ashwell, dated 1681.

Another type of decoration was by placing various heraldic or other devices in the centres of large panels, as is done in an old house at the west end of Braughing Church. I have previously mentioned the "White Lion," at Bishop's Stortford as an example, and there are others at Aldbury and at Three-mile-pond, near Sawbridgeworth.

Many of the smaller cottages have their fronts covered with roughly executed zig-zags scratched on the surface, and also a pattern of super-imposed segments of circles like the Japanese basket-work pattern. I believe these are still executed by country plasterers.

The best examples of modelled plaster decoration I know of in this county may be seen in your own town of St. Albans. The best is at No. 13, Fishpool Street, but the general effect is spoiled by the hideous black lozenge-shaped figures on the front.\*

The borders round the panels show the remains of well designed and executed foliage, though, unfortunately, much worn and covered with white wash.

No. 135, Fishpool Street, a much less picturesque building, has been similarly decorated, but the plaster-work has perished to a greater degree owing to the want of the overhanging gables to protect it from the weather.

There is another example at St. Albans showing a debased use of plaster-work by the imitation of rustic stone-work on an over-hanging gable. It stands opposite the Clock Tower, and is doubtless well known to you all. It bears the date 1665.

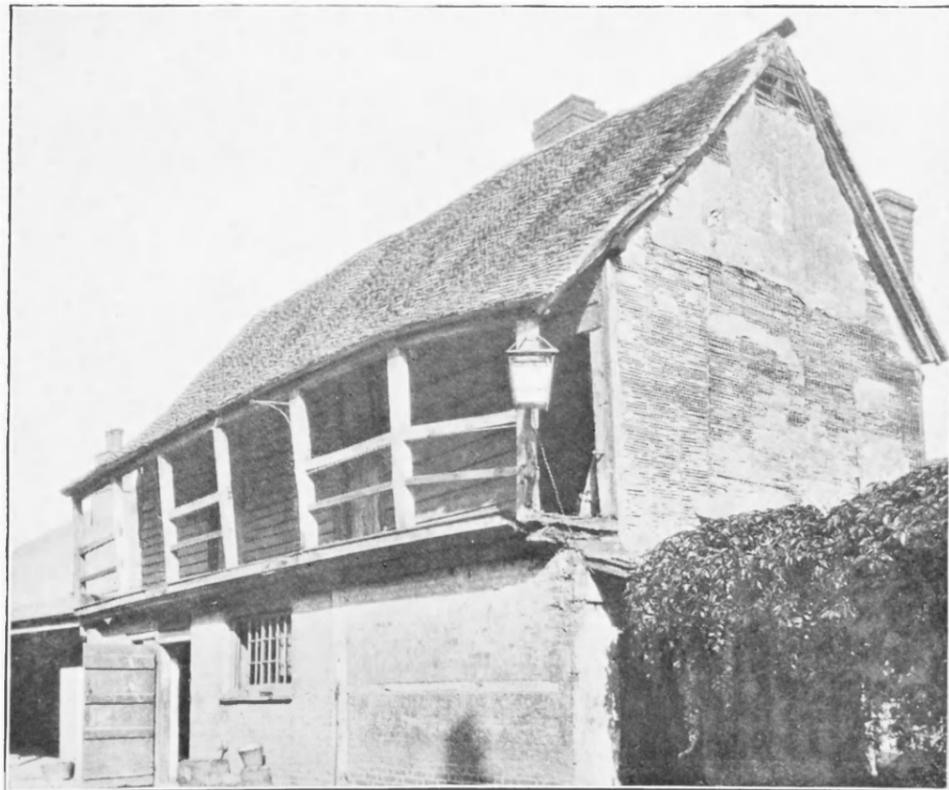
The last feature I shall draw your attention to, and that but briefly, is the old Inn-sign. It was not until the close of the Commonwealth, or about the middle of the 17th century that public coaches became general. Long before that time, however, English Inns had been famous all over Europe for their excellence. The great increase

---

\* Since writing the above, the front of this house has been carefully and judiciously restored and distempered in more suitable colours. A description of the renovations was laid before the Society on Oct. 31st, 1902, by Mr. F. G. Kitton.



The Old Vicarage, Watford.  
*(Photo 1894).*



Old Building in Yard of the "George" Inn, Watford (demolished).  
*(Photo. 1894).*



in the number of travellers compelled Innkeepers to enlarge their Inns and stabling. Numbers of these old Inns are now used as ordinary dwelling-houses, and most of the rest are best described in the words of Longfellow—

“As ancient is this hostelry  
As any in the land may be.  
Now somewhat fallen to decay  
With weather stains upon the wall,  
And staircase worn, and crazy doors,  
And creaking and uneven floors,  
And chimneys huge and tiled and tall.”

The remaining Inn-signs are probably not older than the 18th century. Various laws had been enacted for their suppression, in the towns at least, as, owing to their huge size and projection, they had become a serious danger to the community. The last law was in 1762. Though signs are now almost entirely confined to licensed premises, in those days shopkeepers of every description used them.

It is curious that at a period when all the other arts were at their lowest ebb, the smiths of our towns and villages were everywhere turning out simple and excellent examples of wrought-iron work.

There are numberless old iron sign-brackets in Hertfordshire, but the most elaborate one is at the “Bull” Hotel, at Redbourne. It bears at the extremity the usual hook, on which was hung a lantern to guide the traveller to the Inn. \*

There is another good example at Buntingford, over the “George and the Dragon,” of almost equal size to that at Redbourne.

There is a particularly graceful bracket over a little Inn at Graveley.

The last sign I shall mention is of wood, of a type which has nearly disappeared altogether. It is at the village of Barley, and consists of a beam stretching across the road to the house opposite, and bearing figures of hunters and hounds in full cry after a fox. I believe the “Four Swans,” at Waltham Cross, is the only other example in this county.

---

\* This sign-bracket, having become unsafe, has now been taken down. It is hoped, however, that it may be restored to its original position. *Ed. January, 1903.*

The "Fox and Hounds," at Barley, was, according to the Rev. J. Frome Wilkinson,\* formerly known as the "Black Swan," the sign being on a shield suspended from the existing beam. It used to be a favourite place of resort of King James I., who would often ride over from his Palace at Royston, a few miles away. There are also traditions that Dick Turpin used it as a house of call.

I have endeavoured in this paper to give you an idea of the leading characteristics of the smaller dwellings of old Hertfordshire, but the number of examples is yearly diminishing, partly owing to natural decay, partly to modern sanitary and other requirements, and partly to fire. It is no uncommon thing to find old records of extensive fires among these wooden houses, as at Barkway, for instance, where a fire in the year 1748 destroyed 19. It behoves us all, therefore, to take what records we can of those remaining to us.

---