

lower end of the hall, to rob that apartment of one more of its original functions. The wing formerly comprised a kitchen separated by buttery and pantry from the screens passage, which was presumably defined by a wooden screen across the hall. The solar wing in general retains its original form, although the solar itself has been modernized and re-roofed. On the ground floor a series of passages with groined vaulted roofs lead from the south-east corner of the hall to a broad stone stair which communicates with the chapel on the first floor, and also to a smaller newel stair giving access to the solar. Chapel and solar are planned over an elaborate system of vaulted undercrofts, used as cellars. The roof of this wing has also been raised in the 16th century, to provide a third floor.

Fuller consideration of these socially more important dwellings is inappropriate to a study of minor domestic architecture, but in the absence of surviving examples of smaller houses of the Middle Ages, these hall plans well illustrate the pattern of domestic building within the region, if on a more elaborate scale, providing the antecedents of the later yeoman plans, as the great barns give evidence of the antecedents of structure.

Excerpt from Ward-Jones Traditional Domestic Architecture
in the Banbury Region
Report by Wykham Beck, 1986

CHAPTER III

LESSER HALL HOUSES OF THE MIDDLE AGES
1300-1550

THE particular function and character of the Manor House presents factors of plan which can not be properly related to the smaller homes, and the buildings already considered are of interest primarily as illustrating features of structure and plan which, in accordance with the scale already noted, linking time and social status, ultimately descend to the lower levels of minor domestic architecture. Five houses of particular interest have been recorded in the region, dating from before 1550, which are not manorial buildings, and although certainly of some social significance as the homes of men of substance can be more directly related to the succeeding pattern of vernacular building. Two of these dwellings illustrate the use of cruck forms in medieval hall-houses, and all retain medieval features, despite extensive alteration in later centuries. The process of modernization throughout the ages in all these earlier dwellings has been such that the elucidation of original plans must remain a matter of reasoned conjecture based on the analysis of surviving evidence.

The Leadenporch House, Deddington (Fig. 6) is probably the most interesting house recorded within the region, and although successive alterations from the 17th century onwards have obscured the original form, it is clear that the building was originally a single-storey hall-house of considerable architectural significance.

The present parlour end is a complete addition of the 17th century, and the trusses divide the original extent of the building into five bays, three of which average 8 feet wide, with a wider bay of 10 feet 3 inches over the entrance, which exists as a through passage, probably on the original lines, and a further bay of the same dimension beyond this. The principals are of the raised cruck form, with curving feet seated in the stone walls approximately 10 feet above the floor level, and five feet below the top of the wall as now existing, the blades tapering evenly to the apex which is formed by a saddle, mortised and pegged. A single collar is provided with arched braces below, and on it stands a king-post, strutted on either side to the principals, with curving braces each side to support the

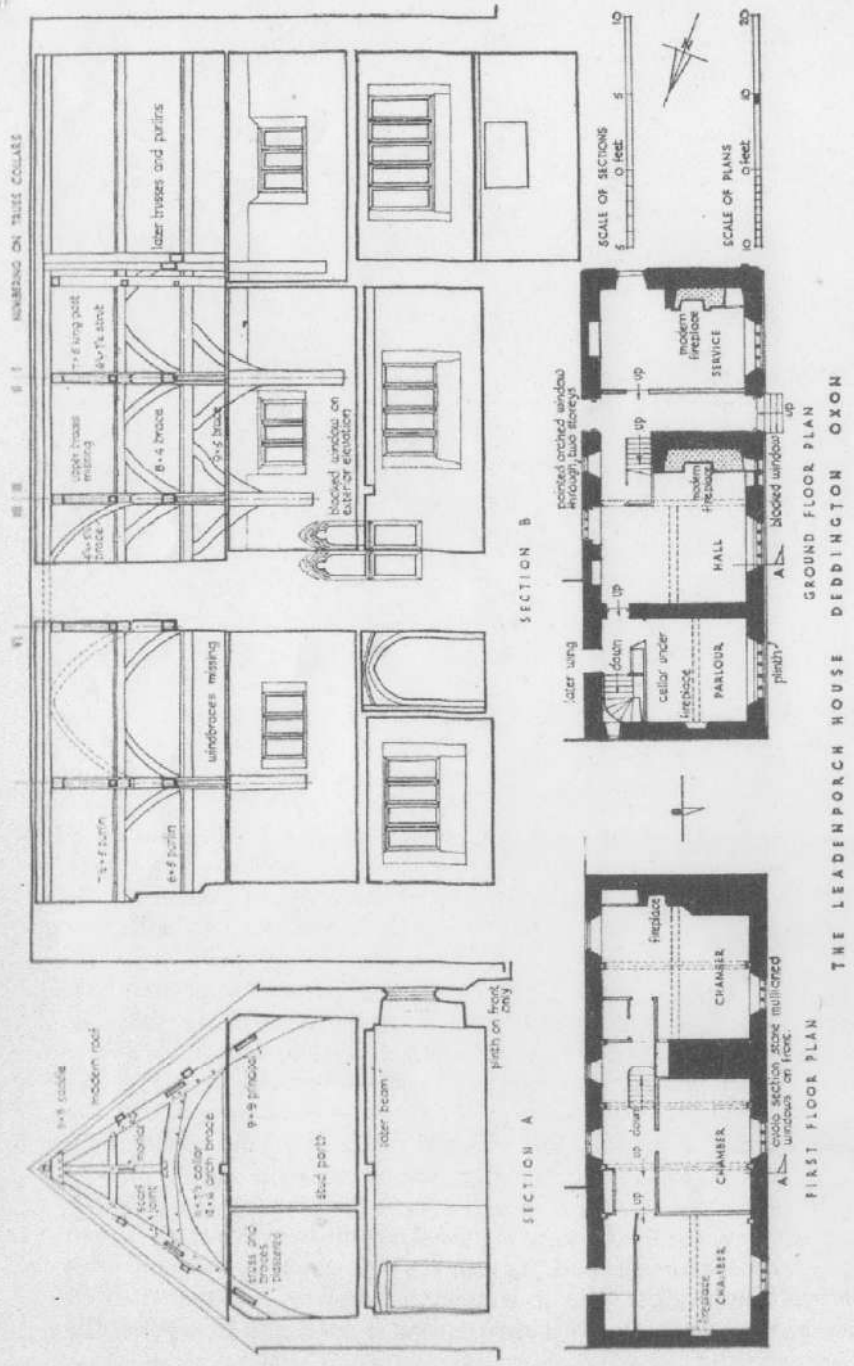


FIG. 6.

ridge-beam between trusses—a feature not elsewhere recorded within the region in domestic work.¹ Although basically similar to those already described, there is a significant variation in the form of the principal rafters, which are here of square section, approximately 9 inches square at the foot, each being in two pieces, scarfed and pegged above the collar. The trusses show a system of numbering, indicating a degree of prefabrication—the only occasion this has been noted in the area, although carpenter's work marks can be seen on the Enstone blades. Each truss is numbered consecutively on either side of the collar with a different Roman numeral, from I and II on the most northerly frame, to a VI on the exposed southern face of the truss which is embedded in the later stack. The most southerly truss was presumably numbered VII and VIII, but its surface has been so badly attacked by beetle that this cannot be verified. It would appear from all these early buildings that there were no end frames, but that the gable wall was always built up in stone to support the ends of purlins and ridge. Three tiers of wind-braces were provided, rising from the principals and housed into the backs of the purlins, the upper braces springing from the purlins themselves. The roof timbers are finely finished and chamfered, and are heavily encrusted with soot, particularly between frames numbered I, II and III, IIII, indicating an original open central hearth with smoke probably discharging through a louvre in the roof, of which there is, however, no further evidence. The two southern bays appear to be less blackened, and the decay which has attacked the end truss alone may be due to its lacking the protection afforded by the soot, and it seems probable that the roof was partitioned at frame V, VI. The original rafters and roof covering have been largely replaced by a recent roof of Stonesfield slates, and the narrower spacing of the trusses suggests that the original roofing material was stone slates.

On the south-west elevation to the road, there survives the pointed arched doorway and one of the great windows to the former hall, the window now blocked by the later fireplace. Both are fine details and there is every reason to believe that they are the undisturbed features of the original hall-house. Of the original 'leaden porch' there is no trace, if indeed this ever related to the entrance door.

¹ The nave roof of Adderbury Church is of 14th-century date and is also of king-post form, the simple squared post rising from a cambered tie-beam spanning 23 feet, with large arch-braces below to wall-posts. The king-post is similarly strutted to the principals on either side, both struts and principals being cusped, and there are also curving lateral braces on either face of the post extending to the ridge. The roof pitch is however only 31°, as compared with 57° at Leadenporch House, and was presumably designed for a lead covering.

There is also a pointed arched window through two storeys on the east front, but this is modern work, presumably replacing an original opening.

The dating of this house is of considerable importance in relationship to subsequent developments in the region. There is no known record of the house or its ownership before the 15th century when the building was acquired by the Dean and Canon of Windsor. It was then noted by its present name as the capipe messuage of a freehold estate consisting of four yardlands in the common fields of Deddington, and had obviously been erected by a person of substance. It is further recorded that in the 16th century, the house was leased by its owners to the Pope family, and the house is traditionally declared to have been the birthplace of Sir Thomas Pope. Sir Thomas, who was born about the year 1508 and died in 1559, was certainly a native of Deddington, educated at Banbury Grammar School, and is noted as the founder of Trinity College, Oxford.

The architectural evidence would support a date considerably earlier than any recorded, from consideration of the nature of the surviving architectural details, the structure and plan. The hall window is of two lights with pointed heads cut out of the same stone, with heavy flat-splay mullion and transom, and cusps set in the chamfers of the heads. There is no enclosing hood-mould and the tympanum above the lights is not pierced but sunk to follow the line of the arch. The 17th-century fireplace obscures the interior form of the window—but accounts for its sole survival—but there is a window seat in the cupboard occupying part of the embrasure. The details here described invite comparison with windows at Stokesay and other houses dating from the end of the 13th century.

The entrance doorway (Fig. 77, Pl. 2*b*) has a two-centred arch with a roll-section hood-mould terminating in carved stops. The mouldings are simple and without enrichment, whilst the inner archway is segmental and chamfered, the whole agreeing with a date at the beginning of the 14th century. The only other worked stone is the plinth on the road front, which is simply weathered.

The raised cruck roof structure is obviously related to the barns previously considered, but is more finely executed and more sophisticated in form, with the addition of the braced king-post and wind-braces. A form of king-post (crown-post) is recorded in many 13th century houses in the south-eastern part of the country in association with the support of collar purlins in the characteristic eastern counties type of roof. The solar at Charney Bassett Manor, Berkshire, dating from *c.* 1280, is a noted example of this type, which is seen in

Oxfordshire in the hall of the Warden's Lodging at Merton College, Oxford, dating from 1200 to 1300 (Fig. 66-2). The king-post does not appear to be a structural necessity at Deddington, and its inclusion may result from this neighbouring lowland tradition, the method of strutting of the post being typical of these southern roofs. In the tithe barns, the king-post is not included, and as these structures would occur lower in the time scale than a house of this importance, it seems probable that they are of later build, putting the date of the house at latest in the early 14th century.

The evidence of date given by the nature of the detail and structure can be supported by consideration of the hall-plan. Although all existing partitions are later, and the rear wall largely rebuilt, the variation of bay sizes clearly indicates the existence of an original screens passage on the present lines, dividing the building into a three-bay hall with central hearth, and a service room below the entrance, the building being partitioned throughout its height on the line of truss V, VI. The building of this frame into the later stack unfortunately prevents verification of this point, but there is no evidence of partitioning at any other point. The screens passage would therefore be outside the hall, in the manner associated with the spere-truss, a form that may have originated in the lowlands, but which has developed in upland areas in the north and west of the country. Sir Cyril Fox, also writing of an upland zone in Monmouthshire,¹ suggests that 'the service ends of our little halls, each with a framed truss . . . on the line of the former screens reflect, in our rural tradition, the spere-truss framework . . .' The size of the service end, encompassed by the two wider bays—20 feet in length as compared with the 25 feet length of the hall—is unusual and can not be explained. The kitchen would presumably be a detached building near the lower end, perhaps linked by a covered way. There is no evidence of an original solar beyond the upper end of the hall, however, and the possibility of the private apartments being situated over the service end must also be considered here—as at Swalcliffe in the 13th century—although there is nothing to support this in the form of the trusses at this end. A solar above the lower end is not unusual in the 13th century, there being a good example in Northamptonshire in the Prebendal House at Nassington, where the screens end of the single-storey hall is flanked by a two-storey wing which combines the private and service rooms, the solar being on the first floor. The absence of a solar would however again endorse a date around 1325 for Leadenporch House.

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 88.

The subsequent history of the Leadenporch House may be noted here to further explain the plan shown in Fig. 6.¹ In the second half of the 17th century—on the evidence of the window mullions, cellar, etc.—the building was ‘modernized’ and converted into a typical ‘three-unit’ regional house of two storeys, retaining the through passage entrance, and adding a parlour at the north-west end with a cellar under. This gable was presumably taken down to facilitate the construction of the basement, as it would otherwise have required under-pinning; the ends of the purlins were then supported on a truss which subsequently has been reinforced to leave no less than three frames now existing at this point. Fireplaces were introduced in hall and kitchen, and new windows inserted, those on the road front at least having stone mullions of ovolo section and flat label moulds, with dressings of light grey limestone—an admixture found in other yeoman houses in Deddington. A wing of stables and barns of later date adjoins the north-west corner of the house. The original stair position cannot be positively determined, but it was probably placed on the rear wall adjacent to the stack, where the modern stair is situated.

After the enclosure of Deddington early in the 19th century, the house was abandoned by the tenant for a new farmhouse, and Leadenporch became a ‘Beer-shop.’ By the 1830’s it was described as being in a ‘complete state of delapidation’, the north wall being ‘actually falling down’. Yet the terriers note that by 1843 the house had been ‘neatly repaired’, to which date certain Gothic Revival details at the lower end can be attributed; the house has been subsequently maintained in good repair as a private residence. The fundamental weakness of the roof trusses, lacking a suitable tie to restrain the heavy principals, has here, as at Enstone, resulted in some spreading of the feet and deformation of the truss frames, and would account for the earlier collapse of the north wall.

Deddington retains other evidence of medieval domestic building, including the 13th-century nucleus of Deddington Castle House, noted in Chapter VII, and a groin-vaulted cellar under the former Plough-Inn in New Street. Medieval work of more significance in the history of vernacular building also survives in the house now called *Castle End* (Fig. 65). Although extensive alteration and rebuilding in the 17th and 18th centuries has largely obscured the original plan form, the building provides further evidence of domestic construction of the medieval period. Externally, the house suggests two principal building periods, a 17th-century wing containing hall and

¹ The hatching of this plan does not discriminate between work carried out in different periods before 1800, only modern work being differentiated.

parlour with a porch dated 1646, and to the west of this an extended service wing of 18th-century character. Closer examination, particularly of the roof structure, reveals that the latter portion is of considerably earlier date and represents an earlier house built not later than c. 1525, retaining its original entrance doorway with four-centred arch and two surviving bays of the fine medieval roof.

The wing has walls of small rubble, 2 feet 7 inches thick, and now measures internally 48 feet by 17 feet 9 inches. Two trusses survive unaltered, that over the east side of the screens passage being originally a closed truss, with a fine arch-braced truss with straight principals at a bay spacing of approximately 8 feet 6 inches, curved wind-braces being provided. The original roof continues westwards for a further bay, but the third truss has been lost in the building of the 18th-century chimney-breast; and beyond this point the roof has been completely renewed during the modernization of the wing to provide service accommodation up to 18th-century requirements. As the west wall has been considerably rebuilt, it is possible that the wing is not of its original length, the present extent allowing for six bays in all, of which the eastern bay forms the through passage with possibly three bays for the hall and two for a western parlour. It is not clear whether the structure represents a single-storey hall of unusual height—29 feet to the ridge—or whether there was originally a first floor, possibly containing the hall itself. Indications of blocked windows on the north front at two levels are inconclusive, as these may well represent 17th-century insertions, themselves replaced by the later sash windows. The original service end would presumably be to the east of the entrance, the position of which has not altered through successive rebuildings, this end having been swept away in the rebuilding of 1646 when the former upper end was relegated to the position of service wing to a new and finer hall and parlour—a not uncommon inversion of status.

The third house which appears to have particular significance in relation to subsequent planning and structural evolution is *Chinners Farm, Chacombe* (Fig. 7), lying near the north-eastern limit of the region in Northamptonshire. Here again there survives what is believed to have been a late medieval hall-house, enlarged and modernized in the 17th century, exhibiting the only use of the orthodox cruck form recorded in the region. It is particularly unfortunate that, even more than at Deddington, the architectural history of this most important structure remains obscure and a matter for conjecture as a result of later rebuilding.

The earliest part of the house comprises a three-bay thatched