

As has been already stated, evidence of medieval domestic structure is limited to the more important stone-walled dwellings, including such great houses as Broughton Castle and other large manor-houses, all of which have undergone extensive rebuilding at later periods. Such larger houses do not come within the scope of this study, possessing little regional character, the manor-houses in particular having developed in virtual independence of local influences. In the 13th century, the manor-house was in the final process of settling into a type to be fairly uniformly followed throughout the country.¹ The chief and dominating element was the common hall, divided by a screens passage from service rooms, such as buttery and pantry, which might have a private solar above them: sometimes the solar was a separate chamber, detached from the hall. Beyond or near the service rooms was the kitchen, set apart from the main building as a precaution against fire, but usually linked by a covered passage. From about 1300, the solar appeared with increasing frequency at the 'upper' end of the hall, away from the service rooms, raised over a ground-floor cellar (later, parlour) in the grander manor-houses, whilst the kitchen came into definite association with the hall, reached by a passage between the buttery and pantry. The lesser medieval manor-houses often were wholly ground-floor structures, especially if in timber, but with these it was an appreciably longer time before the full sequence of solar, hall, screens passage, service room and kitchen was attained.

The scarcity of medieval houses in the region below manorial rank and the obvious influence of the manor-house on the subsequent development of the yeoman house, calls for consideration of such instances within the region which preserve sufficient evidence of the original arrangements. *Manor Farm, Cottisford*, in Oxfordshire (Fig. 4), lying beyond the north-east boundary of the Banbury Region, in the area of grey limestone south of Brackley, is of particular interest as representing the manorial plan with the hall at first-floor level. This is an established plan type of the 12th and 13th centuries, a development from 'Norman' instances, such as Boothby Pagnell in Lincolnshire, and ultimately related to the stone defensive keeps or donjon towers of the Norman castle. The building, which may have been the former manor-house,² dates from the late

¹ The manorial plan in the 13th century is considered in some detail by Margaret Wood in *Thirteenth Century Houses*, with some note of Oxfordshire examples.

² It would appear that from 1100 there was no resident lord of the manor at Cottisford, the estate being in monastic and subsequently collegiate hands, the administration of the lands being left to a bailiff or steward. An indenture of

13th or early 14th century—the evidence of architectural detail suggests the later date, although there is a window in the north gable dating from c. 1200 which has presumably been re-used—and there have been extensive alterations in the 16th century and more recently. A plan of the house was recorded by Turner and Parker in 1851,¹ and since this date there has been further addition and modernization.

The manor-house, a rectangular structure with stone walls averaging 2 feet 6 inches in thickness, was originally of two storeys, although the existing first floor and its beams are 16th-century renewals. The plan comprises two 'units',² with the principal rooms formerly on the first floor and open to the roof. These would be the hall and solar, the former measuring 27 feet by 15 feet wide. There are, in addition, two small projecting wings on the west wall, the more northerly opening from the solar and measuring 5 feet 6 inches by 9 feet internally, providing a small closet on the first floor. Within this small apartment is an original stone trough and drain on the north wall, together with two contemporary windows of rectangular form with simply splayed jambs. The fine 14th-century stack which surmounts this projecting wing, octagonal in plan, with battle-mented cresting, does not connect with a fireplace and is presumably a vent to the closet. The central projection may be of later date, and its purpose is not clear, although opening from the hall it could be a small service room or store. The principal stair is contained in this projection, but there is no trace of the original stair, that in the south-east corner being of recent date. In its original state the ground floor presumably provided storage and service accommodation. It has, however, been extensively altered in the 16th century when the floor was converted to provide the principal living apartments; these subsequent developments are considered in a later chapter. Few of the original details have survived these alterations, apart from two trefoil-headed lancet windows in the north wall of the solar.

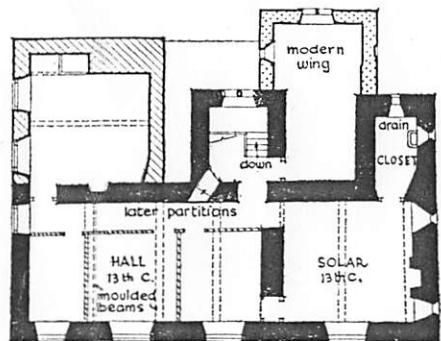
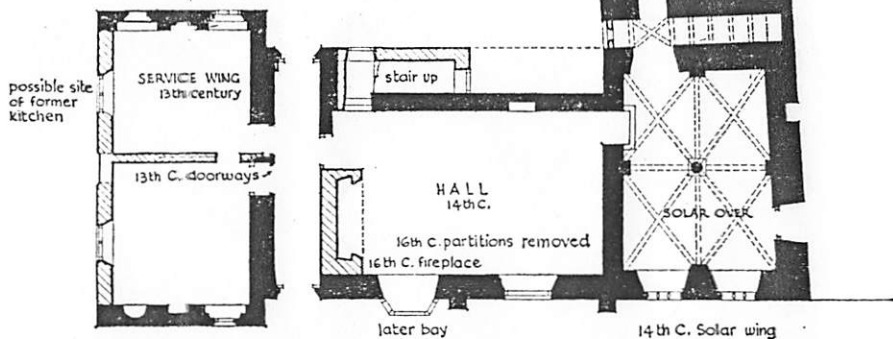
The Rectorial Manor House at Swalcliffe (Fig. 4) is of particular

1325 records details of the manor-house of that date, including a hall and chamber, with kitchen and servery, and a close and garden complete with fishery and dovecote. The present manor-house is of 18th-century date and is known to have replaced an earlier structure built in the 16th century. It is possible that the description of the 14th-century house could refer to the present manor-farm, then held by a tenant of the monastic owner (*V.C.H. of Oxfordshire*, Vol. 6, p. 104).

¹ Turner and Parker, *Some Account of Domestic Architecture in England, 1851* Vol. 1, 12th–13th centuries, pp. 161–3.

² The term 'unit' has been used throughout to denote a room or compartment occupying the full width of the dwelling, hence 'single-unit', 'two-unit', and 'three-unit' plans, comprising respectively one, two and three principal rooms.

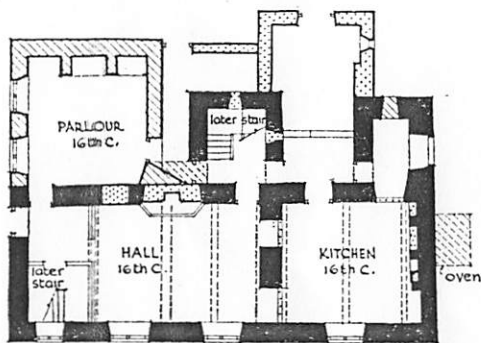
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



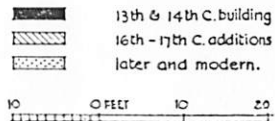
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

MANOR FARM
COTTISFORD
OXFORDSHIRE

The indication of certain features now altered or removed is derived from the plan published by T.H. Turner in 1851.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



MANORIAL PLANS OF THE THIRTEENTH & FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

FIG. 4.

interest as a smaller example of the manorial class, comparable in scale with later yeoman dwellings; although considerably altered and modernized, the original 13th-century plan can still be recognized. The service wing, of two-storey height, is the earliest part of the building, and although extensively rebuilt, the nature of the architectural details shows it to be of mid-13th-century date. The north-west wall adjoining the lower end of the hall is part of the original build, being 3 feet thick and retaining the original dual service doorways in the middle of the wall. The doorways, one foot apart and presumably opening to pantry and buttery, have two-centred arches with hood moulds with moulded stops, and rebates for doors on the screens side (Pl. 2a). The opposite wall on the south-west has been rebuilt, leaving no trace of the access to the kitchen, which it is assumed would be a detached building outside the screens passage.¹ Both front and rear walls of the wing average 2 feet in thickness, but that facing south-east is of more finely dressed stonework than the other wall. The interior arrangements of the wing are largely the result of alterations from the 16th to the 19th centuries, the ground floor being divided into two parlours and panelled, and the first floor also being rebuilt, whilst the kitchen has been removed to the north-west end of the later solar wing.

This 13th-century part of Swalcliffe belongs to the same class as the previous house, but with the important qualification that it seems never to have served in isolation as the whole house, as did Cottisford, but was apparently connected with a ground-floor timber-aisled hall (the second main type of manor-house—perhaps of Saxon derivation or earlier—just as the first-floor hall belongs to the Norman castellated or defensive class) as may be judged from the position of the original service doors on the ground floor. The solar at this time would be over the service rooms, approached by a stair from the timber hall—perhaps in the same position as the 16th-century stair shown on the plan.

The existing hall and solar are of 14th-century date.² By the time the timber hall was converted into stone in the 14th century, it had become customary to place the solar at the upper end, and the old

¹ The great kitchen which survives at Stanton Harcourt in south Oxfordshire is a fine and unusual example of this feature, being quite detached and built on a scale befitting a great house of the 14th century. That this is, however, not a typical example, even in its day, is shown by a reference made by Robert Plot at the end of the 17th century, in which he speaks of this kitchen as being 'so strangely unusual'.

² As already noted, work on the manor-house was in progress between 1397 and 1423.

Balscott. The subsequent history of the two houses is also very similar. There was further rebuilding in the 17th century, as already suggested, with a final modernization in the 18th century. At that time the walls of hall and kitchen were raised in height to provide more lofty chambers with sliding-sash windows on the first floor under a slated roof, and the present stair was introduced, probably replacing a 17th-century stair in the same position. At the same time, the building was extended beyond the parlour to provide an extra service room at the lowest end of the site.

The plan, structure and architectural detail of these buildings present certain precedents which can be clearly related to subsequent regional developments. The planning of these earlier houses, from *c.* 1300 to mid-16th century, follows the basic later medieval hall-house pattern with screens passage and open hearth, lacking a separate solar unless one is provided over the lower end. The screens passage, outside the hall from Leadenporch House onwards, becomes a stone-walled unit at the end of the 15th century with the introduction of a fireplace on the gable of the lower end of the hall, before the provision of upper floors over the hall was contemplated. The pattern is that which has been established in Monmouthshire and elsewhere as the accepted domestic plan in upland regions. It is probable that the manor houses, in which the hall had special functions, would always have solars, until 1300 either completely separate or over the service wing, and later at first-floor level at the upper end of the hall. Manor Farm at Cottisford, six miles beyond the eastern boundary of the region, presents an early stage in this pattern, with its suggestion of vertical development in the tradition of the military keep, the hall and solar being at first-floor level. The possible relationship of this plan-type to a number of houses limited to single unit plan, although otherwise of some architectural quality, is considered in Chapter VIII.

It is in the structure of walls and roof that the most interesting regional characteristics are to be noted, particularly in the evolution of the raised cruck trusses, in association with stone walling. The early forms noted at Leadenporch House and Chinnners Farm, as well as those of the tithe barns described in Chapter II, find counterparts in houses built in the transitional period in the second half of the 16th century—to be considered in the following chapter—and provide a link with forms of roofing adopted in the regional building period of the 17th century.

Although little survives of domestic craftsmanship in stone or wood of the medieval period, there is evidence of considerably

greater richness than is found in the 17th century in this neighbourhood. The houses so far considered are, however, almost all of greater social significance than the yeoman dwellings of the regional period and their character and detailing is naturally more elaborate than in later dwellings of the vernacular tradition.

The remote origins of vertical living lie with the powerful donjon towers of the early castles of the 11th century, but the truly domestic version is the manor-house, a rural residence but protected defensively in sufficient degree. In this type of dwelling, as already noted, there was an important but numerically diminishing class, almost invariably in stone, in which the principal accommodation was on the first floor. Such was Boothby Pagnell, Lincolnshire, built at the end of the 12th century, a noted example of the first-floor hall over vaulted cellars, entered at the first floor. In the neighbourhood of Banbury, Cottisford Manor provides the only instance of this type, which had similar arrangements of early 14th-century date. These are instances in which the accommodation is tending towards lateral living; but there are many other manor-houses in which the tower motif remains dominant, despite the reduced or almost non-existent need, well beyond the medieval period. In these buildings the prestige motif is the dominant reason behind the retention of the tower.

There are no instances amongst the great houses of the region of the true tower-house. *Castle House, Deddington, Oxfordshire*, the rectorial manor-house, which lies to the north of the church, largely dates from the 17th century, but incorporates within its plan an unusual tower-like structure, of medieval origin, extensively altered in the later rebuilding (Pl. 9a). The lower two storeys of the tower, having walls over 3 feet in thickness, are of 13th-century date, but their original function is obscure, although it seems probable that there was a chapel on the first floor. Rainwater heads bear the date and initials 1654 TAM, and at that time or a little earlier, the 13th-century block was largely rebuilt, being raised in height to three storeys over a semi-basement, refaced and refenestrated, whilst any adjoining buildings were replaced by a new wing on the south side containing hall and parlour with chambers over, a fine stair with turned balusters being added in a projection on the west side of the tower, to produce a complex, double-depth plan. Windows have flat-splay stone mullions, and the stone walling approximates to ashlar, the stone being well squared and coursed, making decorative use of alternate bands of the grey limestone and brown ironstone which are both obtainable in this eastern fringe of the region.

One of the two brick towers survives which terminated the wings of Hanwell Castle, a great house built around three sides of an open court, marking one of the first uses of brick in Oxfordshire at the end of the 15th century.¹ These towers, of characteristic Tudor design,

¹ Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, probably the most important brick tower-house, dates from 1440.

were however supplementary to the normal living apartments of the house.

In the lower scale of the minor domestic architecture, a number of houses have been recorded which appear particularly to represent this anomaly of fine architectural quality in a building of very small dimensions. The problem of differentiation between yeoman houses and later cottages is no light one, as the plan types persist in the cottage developments until the beginning of the 19th century. There is, moreover, the perpetuation of architectural details in dwellings of lower class, with the archaistic use of stone mullions noted in humble dwellings until the middle of the 18th century. Poorer quality of workmanship and materials, reduced ceiling heights and floor areas, are distinguishing features; yet since these may also be features of the meaner yeoman houses of the previous century it is unavoidable that the social identity of some 18th-century examples must remain in doubt. The undoubted 17th-century single-cell houses are generally of a full two-storey height, usually with attics over, contained in the roof, as compared with the one-and-a-half-storey height of the later cottages. A cellar is added in the Bakery, Lower Middleton Cheney, half below ground level, and there is also a basement in a single-unit house at Shotteswell, the only two examples recorded with this feature. Almost all houses are now adjoined by later extensions which add the further problem of determining whether the single-cell structure in fact ever existed alone as such, and in a number of cases this point will be debated. The alternate rebuilding of upper and lower ends of a house has left many wings which at first sight appear to be independent units.¹

The plans of these single-unit buildings show considerable variation, and follow a pattern of evolution which corresponds to that already outlined for larger 17th-century houses. There is a division into the same two classes as have already been noted in the previous chapters, i.e. (a) houses with gable entrances—related to the through-passage plan—and (b) those entered from the lateral wall against the side of the chimney breast. The types are illustrated in Fig. 46. Of the ten houses to be considered, six fall within the first group—to be further sub-divided according to the relative positions of door and hearth—and four follow the 'lowland' plan which, it has been suggested, developed in the region particularly in the latter half of the 17th century, as an alternative to the later developments of the

¹ Chinners Farms, Chacombe (Fig. 7), is a good illustration of this successive rebuilding of different parts of the house, which has left the two-and-a-half storeyed parlour wing with the appearance of a self-contained dwelling in contrast to the adjoining medieval hall (p. 37; Pl. 4b).

16) and Dial House, Sulgrave (Fig. 42). The character of the work also shows considerable variation in accordance with the period and the status of the building. The Enstone barn, and the later barn structure at Warmington, are basically similar in their cruck frames, but the scale and finish are quite different, the rough half-round undressed crucks at Warmington contrasting with the finely dressed and paired blades at Enstone. In the earlier structures, where the roofs were exposed to view within the halls, the principal members are generally well squared and chamfered, and even in 17th- and 18th-century barns there is some finely dressed timber, with decorative stops to the chamfered beams. In general, however, with the provision of upper floors, the character of the work becomes rougher, arch-braces are omitted, and in some roofs of the late 17th and 18th century the craftsmanship is very coarse, even in such fine houses as the Dolphin Inn at Wigginton. The shortage of suitable timber undoubtedly accounts for the poorer work at this time.

In medieval work, rafters are of heavy squared section, laid flat, but from c. 1600 rough poles invariably are used even in large houses, particularly when thatch is the covering. The absence of the wall-plate has already been noted, verified from observation in houses in course of demolition, where the rafters were seen to have been built into the stonework of the wall. In later 17th-century tie-beam roofs, wall-plates are found, near the inner face of the wall, with the rafters birdsmouthed to them. Wind-braces are only occasionally found, in the roofs of larger buildings, generally under stone slates, but also provided at Chinners Farm and at Castle End barn, Deddington, both of which are thatched.

An analysis of bay spacing reveals some differences between buildings roofed with stone slates and the great majority which have thatch. Spans vary between an average of 8 feet at Leadenporch House; 8 feet 6 inches at Castle End, Deddington; 9 feet 6 inches at King's Sutton Court House, all of which are stone-slatted, to 14 feet at Chinners Farm and Blue Gates, both thatched.¹ The average span is however 12 feet, and in the 17th century this figure appears to be almost always adopted for both roofing materials. The characteristic 17th-century roof, shown at (17), Fig. 67, is found with bay spacing of 12 feet at Hornton Manor (1607), and Poplars Farm, Chacombe (1654), both thatched houses, and at the same spacing at Wark-

¹ The average bay spacing in Monmouthshire, where roofs are of heavy stone slates, is 11 feet 9 inches. In Leicestershire examples, with thatched roofing, the bay spacing is increased to 17 feet. (Information derived from Fox and Raglan, *Monmouthshire Houses*, Vol. 1, and V. R. Webster, *Cruck-Framed Buildings of Leicestershire*.)

worth Farm (1639-58), which it is understood was originally roofed with stone slates. At the Dolphin Inn, Wigginton, in 1727, the roof is, however, again sub-divided by cross-walls and trusses into 8-foot bays, to support stone slates.

Consideration of upper-floor structures throws further light on timber construction in the region. At Cottisford, which probably represents the earliest two-storey building in north Oxfordshire, the first floor is supported on transverse beams, renewed in the 16th century, the absence of cross-partitions on the ground floor probably making this arrangement necessary.¹ Later buildings of the 16th century generally show the central spine-beam, with joists spanning on to lateral wall beams, which in certain cases indicates an inserted floor.² This method would, however, simplify the new practical problem of building-in the ends of small joists into the masonry, by perpetuating the timber framing of the whole floor. The wall-beams soon disappear, but the spine-beam becomes general practice from c. 1600 at first- and second-floor levels, usually being of approximately square section, averaging 11 inches each way, supported on gable, fireplace and cross-walls, or on stud partitions. These members frequently attain lengths of over 20 feet when continuous over a partition. Second floors are similarly constructed, with spine-beams usually independent of the trusses, but occasionally, as at the Poplars Farm, Chacombe, gaining support from the tie-beam to which the floor-beam is tenoned.

From the end of the 17th century, a change is noted in the arrangement of the floor-beams, the spine-beam being abandoned in favour of principal members spanning across the building. This is primarily the result of developments in planning, i.e. the practice of placing fireplaces on gable walls, and eliminating all masonry cross-walls, thus reducing the support for spine-beams at a time when the longer timbers required were in increasingly short supply. Joists are tenoned or housed into the tops of the beams and at first are laid flat, as at Kings Sutton, but from the beginning of the 17th century they become lighter in section and are invariably laid on their narrower edges.

There is very little enrichment of woodwork, beams and joists being usually chamfered with squared ends, but only occasionally is there a simple ornamental stop to the chamfer. The deeply moulded

¹ In the hall at Warmington Manor, dating from the 17th century, transverse beams are employed for a similar reason, the clear length being too great for a spine-beam (Fig. 16).

² This factor is considered in relation to particular buildings in Chapter IV.

correspond in detail. The only late-medieval fireplaces occur in large houses, including Cottisford, Swalcliffe Manor House (Pl. 17*a*), and Hanwell Castle, all of late 16th-century date. Seventeenth-century fireplaces generally are similar in form, apart from the profiles of mouldings. It is usually the smaller hearths, in parlours and bedrooms, which have stone dressings, but at Cromwell Cottage, Hornton, there is a fine opening of early-17th-century date in the kitchen, with cambered stone arch spanning 7 feet, corresponding in the details of mouldings and label with the principal doorway. At the end of the century flat-headed openings with bolection moulds occur at Manor Farm, Great Bourton, 1685, and there is a comparable example in oak to a bedroom fireplace at the Garden House, Mollington (Fig. 37).

The elaboration of the fireplace is in marked contrast to the lack of pretension in the stair throughout the 17th century in these smaller buildings. Usually concealed behind doors, even in large yeoman houses, until 1700 and later in the smaller homes and cottages of the 18th century, the stair is of timber, winding irregularly around a newel with treads supported on bearers built into the masonry and mortised to the newel. There is some improvement in size and convenience as the 17th century progresses, although little in design, the stair at first being contained within the building, then taken shallowly into the thickness of the wall, and by mid-17th century projecting beyond the outer wall face in a semi-circular or, later, a square projection (Pl. 18*c, d*). No less than eight of these stair turrets were found in Hook Norton alone. Good stairs, with well-shaped newels, contained in projecting bays are seen in Council Lane, Deddington (Fig. 33), and at Manor Farm, Great Bourton (1685) (Fig. 63), ascending from the cellar to the attics. When projections rise to the level of the roof they are covered in the same way as the rest of the building, rounded projections being generally associated with thatched dwellings, probably because of the problems associated with roofing such forms in slate. Stone newel stairs are very rare, apart from those to basement cellars, the only example noted being at Cromwell Cottage, Hornton, where the lower nine steps are in stone. The elaboration of this stair and of other masonry details of this house, and of other dwellings in the same village, is no doubt due to the proximity to the important quarries here. In larger dwellings, stair projections of considerable height and dimension have been noted, as at Castle House, Deddington, and Shutford Manor, the latter rising through four floors around a built-up central newel, with solid baulk steps in oak, 5 feet wide.

These more elaborate forms of stair which occur in larger 17th-century manor-houses are rarely found in contemporary yeoman dwellings. The broad stair of *c.* 1690 in the Old Bakery, Lower Middleton Cheney, framed in straight flights around an open well, with shaped newels and flat balusters, is an exception for a house of its class, but is still of vernacular character. A more finely executed stair, of early-17th-century character, exists in the Old House, Avon Dassett (1679), with flat-shaped and pierced balusters, re-sited at the time of the 19th-century alterations; this is so much out of character with vernacular work that it almost certainly represents an introduction from a larger building. On the first-floor landing, above the well-shaped and broad newel-stair at Springfield House, Middleton Cheney (Pl. 19*b*), is a balustrade of similar character with flat balusters. The newel has a simple decorative capping, and the nosings are moulded, presenting an unusual degree of elaboration in such a building. The fine stairs of Warmington Manor and the Court House, Kings Sutton, are of similar character but larger in scale. A number of larger stairs with turned balusters occur at the end of the 17th century, but these are limited to the most important yeoman dwellings, as at The Mount, Hornton (Pl. 19*d*), and Williamscoth Home Farm, with dog-gate at its foot. In the 18th century, more significance is given to the stair in the larger, sophisticated class of dwellings, and a fine open-well stair with elaborately turned balusters and decorative newel posts survives at Grove Farm, Warmington. Such stairs are all, however, exceptions to the simple, unpretentious newel-stairs which characterize the regional period of building.

Few exceptions have been recorded in the region to the usual plastered wall finish. Wall panelling is confined to the manor-houses and a few larger yeoman dwellings, including the parlour at Warkworth Farm, where there is a good overmantel dated 1658 (Fig. 79). Some similar work exists at the Garden House, Mollington. The detail does not, however, compare with the craftsmanship of such panelled rooms as in the ground floor of Prestcote Manor House, Cropredy, dated 1718. Fragments of wall painting, probably of 16th-century date, have been discovered in the attic of a much-altered small house at Clifton, just beyond the south-eastern boundary of the region, but this is a solitary instance.

The seeming similarity noted between the vernacular architecture of the Banbury Region and of the neighbouring Cotswolds, despite the obvious difference in the colour and character of the building stone, has led popular opinion to merge their identities, and since the 19th century the modifications which have been made to certain of