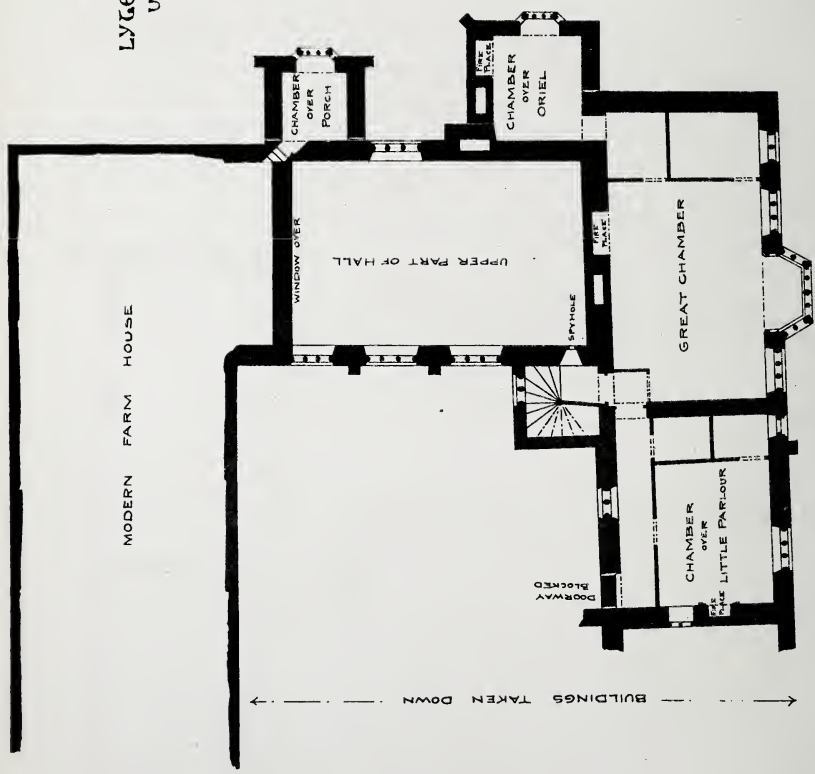
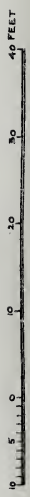


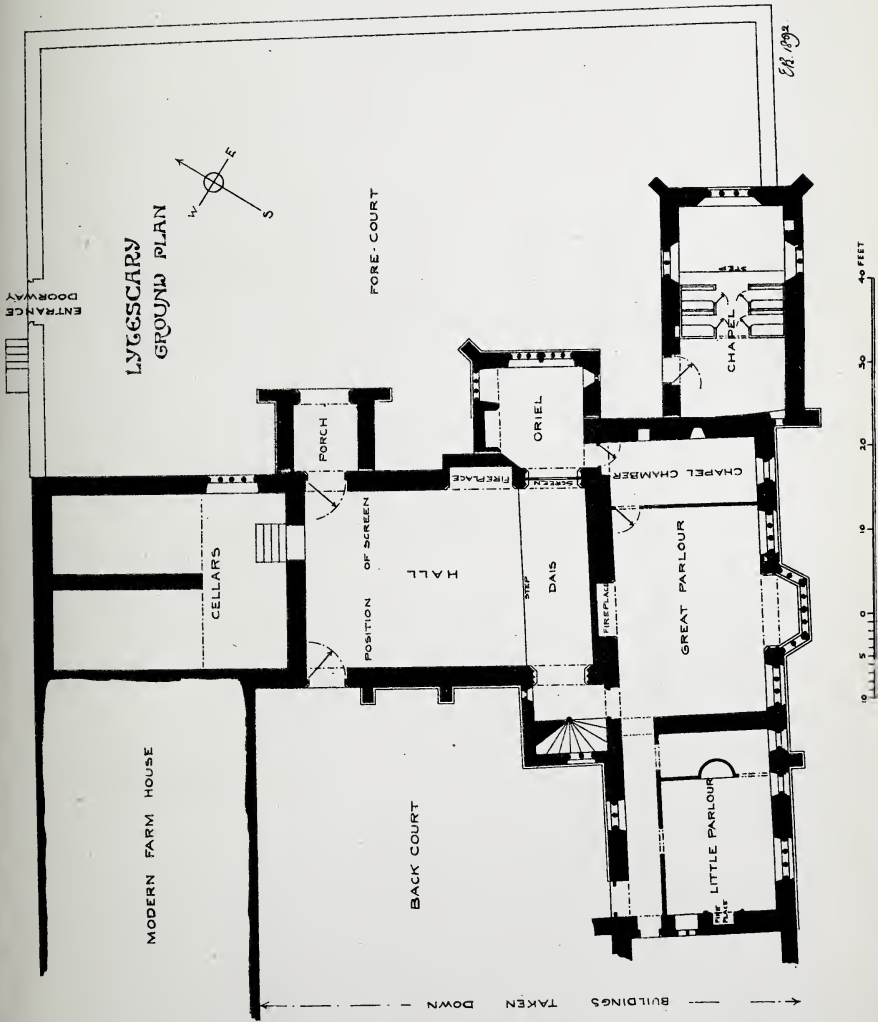
LYGESCARY
UPPER PLAN

MODERN FARM HOUSE



ES 1932





↑ BUILDINGS TAKEN DOWN ↓

Lytescary.

BY EDMUND BUCKLE, M.A.

THE buildings of Lytescary now extend round three sides of a small courtyard, but once they enclosed it completely. In the centre of the east front is the hall; the south wing is occupied by chambers, with the chapel at its eastern extremity; the north wing has been rebuilt as a farmhouse; and the buildings on the west side have perished. The chapel, the oriel of the hall, and the porch form three gabled projections towards the east and produce a highly picturesque effect, in strong contrast to the long low roof of the south front which is broken only by one bay window and its enriched parapet over.

On the east side is a small fore-court enclosed by a stone wall, now low, but once considerably higher. The entrance to this is by a gateway in the north wall of which the jambs remain. Doubtless this originally formed an arch in the wall as at Sandford Orcas and was closed by an oak door. By its side is a stone mounting block; and beyond are the farm buildings standing where they must always have stood. One of these outbuildings contains a window with massive oak mullions in imitation of masonry.

The house is built of the local lias stone with Ham Hill dressings.

THE CHAPEL.

The oldest of the existing buildings is the chapel, and the style of its architecture (which is late decorated) agrees well with the date assigned to it from the documentary evidence, viz. 1340. It is entered by an external doorway on the north side

which has moulded jambs with stops buried in the ground (showing that the floor level was originally lower than now, and that the ground outside has been raised); and a label with a fine carved finial, and heads for terminations. There is a square-headed two-light window on each side with reticulated tracery which is in each case got out of a single stone; the south window has a single chamfered order and no label, the opposite window a double chamfer and a label over terminated with carved heads. The east window has an ogee moulding on the inside of the mullions, a chamfer outside, and an external splay; the head is pointed and filled with reticulated tracery (cut out of two stones) which shews a tendency to vertical lines, and there is no label over. It is very curious that these three windows which are so much alike should yet each have slightly different mouldings. Similarly the three buttresses all differ. In this case the mouldings of the slopes are alike, but of the two diagonal buttresses one is six inches wider than the other, and the third buttress at the south west angle is placed square with the building. This last buttress is also the only part of the chapel which has a plinth and that only round two sides; though on its west side there is indeed a sort of plinth formed by a rough square set-off. The buttresses and quoins of the chapel are built streaky with alternate courses of lias and Ham Hill stone.

The chapel seems to have been originally a detached building with a west window; but in the fifteenth century the house was enlarged and joined on to the chapel, the west wall of which was then taken down and rebuilt with a small window in the corner intended to compensate as far as possible for the loss of the great west window. In this wall was also built apparently a squint to enable persons in the adjoining room to assist at the mass, but there seems never to have been a doorway direct from the house into the chapel.

Inside there is a small recess close to the door, probably intended for a holy water stoup; it has been much altered, a

corbel projecting from the sill has been hacked off and the cover stone is not original. There is another recess on the south side of the altar as though for a piscina, but this also has been altered and there is now no sign of a basin. Built into this recess is a fragment of delicate thirteenth century tracery, the oldest stone in the house, and (if it belongs to the house) an evidence of a previous chapel. This stone to some extent corroborates the statement on the mural tablet that the chapel was founded in the time of Edward I. On each side of this niche there is a square mortice 4 inches by 4 inches intended probably to support a canopy.

The chapel was repaired by Thomas Lyte, in 1631. He painted up the coats of arms round the cornice and inserted the two stone tablets described in the previous paper. Under the coats of arms on the west, north, and south sides of the chapel are the inscriptions SOLI DEO GLORIA ; DEO LAUS ; and DEO HONOR. He also put on the window-jambs two curious symbolic paintings which are at present unexplained ; on the north window-jamb a cloud and an astronomical globe clasping hands with the words FAREWELL ADIEW ; on the south window-jamb, a negro's head and a skull clasping hands, over the negro a gaudy-coloured bird's head, and over the skull and over the centre two objects no longer distinguishable, with this legend ORIOR ORIOR MORIENS.* The present floor and the step to sanctuary are probably of this date and also the pews of which sufficient remains to restore the arrangement. On each side of a central gangway there were two pews, and at the back of the pews a slight screen, behind which forms were probably placed for the servants ; the walls adjoining the ends of the pews were wainscoted to a height of 5 feet 6 inches.

THE HALL.

Though the hall is only of the fifteenth century, it doubtless

* Both these legends have now vanished, but they appear in a sketch made about sixty years ago, and now in the hands of Mr. Maxwell Lyte.

takes the place of an older building. It is about 33 feet long by 21 wide, and is covered with a fine open timber roof of the type usual in this county—a high pitched roof with collars to the principal trusses and curved wind braces between the purlins. In the present case the wind braces are cusped, and the cornice is highly elaborated. The principal feature of the cornice is a band of pierced tracery (mainly quatrefoils), which is stopped at the foot of each principal rafter by a delicate little pinnacle; and affixed to each of these principal rafters is a demi-angel with a shield bearing the Lyte arms. The roof was covered with stone tiles, and some of these still remain on the east side below the later roofs over the porch and oriel projections. A wooden window high up in the north gable shews that the attached buildings on this side were originally of a less height than now. The hall has the usual two doors facing each other near its lower end, and in the end wall a door leading down to the cellar, with perhaps another (where there is now a modern door), leading up into the room over the cellar. A modern wall occupies the position of the ancient screen. It does not seem probable that there was ever a gallery over the screens, for the room over the porch was entered obliquely from the building to the north of the hall. The large and well designed fire-place on the east side belongs to the original work, and so apparently do the windows, though these are similar to the windows found in the south wing—square-headed windows with depressed arches to each light and a casement moulding outside. But the two panelled arches at the ends of the dais which give access to the oriel and the staircase are subsequent insertions, belonging to the great rebuilding which took place in the time of John Lyte, who married Edith Horsey in 1521, succeeded in 1523, and died in 1566. This John Lyte altered the whole of the south wing and built on the oriel and porch of the hall. It is possible that he may have also inserted the present hall windows, and added the buttresses on its west side, for the details of both windows and buttresses resemble

his work, and one at least of the two buttresses is an addition to the wall against which it is built.

The porch and the oriel form two projecting gables on the east front, which roughly balance each other. Each has a small bay window corbelled out on the upper floor, and a heraldic device for a finial ; but the buttresses are differently arranged in the two cases, and the porch is not nearly so large as the projection formed by the oriel. Both are divided from the main building by straight joints, and the fact that they are additions is further proved by the stone tiles which remain upon the hall roof underneath the roofs which cover these projections.

The small room over the porch was entered by a narrow doorway in the north-west corner. The topstone of the gable over consists of a swan bearing a shield with the Lyte arms.

The oriel was separated from the hall by a wooden screen inserted under the panelled arch so that it really formed a separate room—perhaps the family dining room. The existence of this screen is proved by a chace in the base, and by four boltholes in each jamb of the archway. The room so formed contains a fireplace, a door with a solid oak frame leading into the chapel-chamber in the south wing, and three windows ; on the north side a three-light window with a square head, on the east a similar window of six lights with a large central mullion,* and on the south side a curious little loop exactly opposite the door into the chapel. This loop is only $2\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide by $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches high, and has never been glazed, but has probably been closed by a shutter inside. It seems to have been a spyhole for observing who went in or out of the chapel.

The room over the oriel has also a fireplace, and a window corbelled out to match that in the porch room ; it is entered from the south wing by a modern doorway, but the old one

* See Buckler's drawing in the Pigott collection in the Society's Museum.

These windows are now walled up.

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must have been in the same position. This projection has a diagonal buttress at the north-east corner, but none at the opposite angle where a buttress would, to some extent, interfere with the access to the chapel. The topstone of the gable is carved with a dragon bearing the Horsey shield. Part of this shield is broken away but enough remains to shew clearly the original design. The lower part of the shield is bulged out, and the three horse's heads are arranged in chevron, as are similar coats on some of the bench ends at North Cadbury of corresponding date.

THE SOUTH WING.

Like the hall the south wing was rebuilt in the fifteenth century, but it was greatly altered by John Lyte a hundred years later.

At the west end of the hall dais is an archway leading to the staircase attached to the south wing, which corresponds to the archway opening into the oriel. At a first glance the two archways appear to be alike, but the detail of that leading into the staircase is more refined. This is one of several small points which go to shew that the additions to the east front and the alterations to the south wing were undertaken at different times. As John Lyte lived for 43 years, and his wife 33 years, after his father's death, there is plenty of time for this. Passing by the foot of the staircase, we enter the "great parlour" (so called in an inventory of the year 1685). This is a handsome room with windows along the whole of one side, including a central bay window under a panelled stone arch; and opposite this window a large stone fireplace. The fireplace is similar to that in the oriel, and the windows like those of the hall. But the chief feature of the room is the Jacobean panelling, which remains in very good condition. This is relieved at intervals by fluted pilasters with Ionic capitals, and on each side of the fireplace by two elaborately carved swollen pilasters, the only remnants of

what has been a very handsome chimney piece. The stud partition on the east side of this room has the plaster laid upon straw instead of laths—a common practice in old time; the doorway in this partition has a chamfered oak frame, as have several other of the internal doorways in this house; stone and oak doorways are here used indiscriminately.

The room on the east side of this partition is probably the “chapel parlour,” the family pew attached to the chapel. The east wall of this room contains two shapeless niches, one of which seems to have been a squint into the chapel. Its only window has a plain square opening, two feet wide, which has been covered with an iron grill, and fitted with an iron case-ment. In shape and in detail (which consists of two large chamfers) it differs altogether from the other windows now existing on this front, though it is probable that three small windows now blocked may have been similar. They appear to be some of the original windows of the fifteenth century building.

To the west of the great parlour is a small room (perhaps the “little parlour” of 1685), a closet, and a passage. Whether this was the original disposition of this space is uncertain, for none of the partitions seem to be original. There is on the north side a two-light window, and on the south a three-light window of John Lyte’s period, and there are also on the south side two small blocked windows which seem to have been similar to the square opening in the room to the east of the great parlour. One at least of these was open so lately as 1833.* These windows do not fit in well with the existing partitions, so that it seems probable that the partitions are not older than John Lyte’s time. The west wall appears to have been taken down and rebuilt about 1700. It contains two stone fireplaces of this period, on the ground and first floor, two modern windows, and a chamfered stone doorway which may

* See Buckler’s Drawing. The other window was hidden by the buttress from Buckler’s point of view.

be of almost any date. The "little parlour" has been panelled with oak, probably in the seventeenth century, and contains a curious semi-circular recess. The doorway in the north wall has one of the oak frames previously mentioned. These were in use in this district for a long period, and though some are coeval with the walls, it does not follow that all are.

The stair building has some curious features. On the ground floor there is a tiny window of the fifteenth century, with a cusped head, the only window in the whole house (excluding the chapel) which has cusps. The two other stair windows have detail varying slightly from that in general use in the south wing. The stair itself is a stone vice, with the upper part of the newel (above the top step) of oak, as at Sandford Orcas. On the landing is a small quatrefoil opening looking down into the hall.

At the top of the stairs is the principal chamber (probably the "great chamber" of the 1581 will), a room very similar to the great parlour below it. Unfortunately little remains of the oak panelling in this room, but the rich plaster ceiling is happily in fair preservation, though it has suffered from the want of a watertight roof over. This ceiling is coved and covered with ribs in a geometrical pattern, with a coat of arms, alternately Lyte and Horsey, in the centre of each repeat. On the east wall is the Tudor coat flanked by roses and lilies; the only fragment of the ornamental work on the west wall is one horse's head. The original entrance to this room was through one of the oak doorways already described, and it was at first necessary to pass through this room to get to the rooms further west; but this inconvenience was remedied in the Tudor period by the insertion of a sort of porch cutting off a corner of the room, and forming a striking feature in the decoration of the room. This screen is of oak with linen pattern panelling and was finished with a cresting of Tudor flowers and Gothic pinnacles at the corners. The partition on the east side of this room, like that immediately under it, has the plaster coat laid upon straw.

To the east of this chamber are two small rooms, and then comes the chamber over the oriel. There is little to notice here except the projecting window with its tiny openings, only $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide in the clear, and a fireplace of the same date as the rest of the work. On the west of the great chamber the plan repeats the arrangements of the lower floor; but on this floor there is evidence of only one small square window instead of the two mentioned below. This is now blocked, but it was open when Buckler made his drawings. The fireplace in the west wall is similar to the one below it.

On the external face of the south wing there is nothing which calls for remark except the bay window. This is surmounted by a rich parapet which rises high above the eaves of the general roof, and which contains in the centres of the quatrefoils of which it is composed a series of heraldic emblems as below :

on the west side,	on a billet <i>S and a tun</i> for Stourton, on a shield <i>a sledge</i> , the Stourton badge,
on the south front,	on a shield <i>a swan</i> for Lyte, on a billet <i>I L</i> for John Lyte, on a shield <i>a horse's head</i> for Horsey, on a billet <i>E L</i> for Edith Lyte (<i>né</i> Horsey),
on the east side,	on a shield <i>a rose between two branches</i> , the Wadham crest, on a billet <i>a human head in profile</i> , for Fauntleroy.

Lower down there is a large shield of Lyte impaling Horsey with the initials *I E* and the date 1533.

THE NORTH WING.

Adjoining the hall on the north side is an ancient cellar with barrel vaults, which is certainly later than the hall, and seems to be of the Tudor period. It has a four-light window of that date on the east side, which however differs in detail from all the other windows in the house. Over this and extending

further to the west is a substantially built farm-house of the eighteenth century. This had originally stone mullions to all windows, but many of these have been taken out to make room for wooden casements, much to the detriment of the external effect. This is the house which was leased by Thomas Lockyer in 1770, and which is described as being on the west side of the Great Hall.* It may probably have been built by him between 1755 and 1770.

The buildings on the west side of the court have entirely perished, but the ragged finish of the walls and an upper doorway near the end of the south wing are clear evidence that there was once a range of buildings on this side. Probably these were taken down when the existing farm-house was built.

These two blocks lying to the north and west of the courtyard must always have contained the kitchen offices. Here must have been situate the kitchen and the dairy house with chamber over, built by John Lyte; and the brewhouse, larder, and two kitchen chambers mentioned in 1685.

Where was situate the "gallery chamber" of 1581 it is impossible to say, for there is now no vestige of an Elizabethan gallery. The only position where such a gallery seems possible is in the upper storey of the western building, now totally destroyed. The "two great porches" ascribed to John Lyte form another puzzle. Perhaps what is meant is the hall porch and the corresponding projection from the other end of the hall, though this has been mentioned just before as the "hall oriel." But it is possible that John Lyte's second great porch was among the buildings taken down in the eighteenth century. What these comprised it is now impossible to say with any certainty.

* In this paper the chapel is throughout assumed to be orientated correctly, but as appears from the compass on the plan the east end of the chapel points almost to the north east; so that the lease of 1770 is correct in describing the farmhouse as lying to the west and the courtyard to the south-west of the hall.