

"THE COTTAGES OF ENGLAND."

A REVIEW OF THEIR TYPES AND FEATURES FROM THE 16TH TO
THE 18TH CENTURIES.

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With a Foreword by the Right Hon. Stanley Baldwin, M.P.

Published by B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 94, High Holborn, London.

This book summons up memories of Payne's pathetic song "Home sweet Home," and its haunting Sicilian melody. Memories which Mr. Oliver enriches by materializing the baseless fabric of the vision with optical evidence supplied by the camera, thus adding the appeal to the eye.

Stress is laid upon the line "Be it ever so humble there's no place like home," for the book is devoted to humble homes and contains illustrations of—literally—hundreds of cottages, some singly, some in groups, others clustered in their village setting, representing various types of cottages from the 16th to the 18th century. We are left to draw our own conclusions as to whether there are any cottages before that date left to look at or worth looking at after that date.

This is mainly true for if we wish to be hypercritical we might ask—What is a Cottage? Is there any subtle distinction between a cottage, villa or bungalow? What to the uninitiated looks like a cottage is found to be a villa or bungalow, and a much more pretentious building adjacent, proclaims itself a cottage.

This ambiguity covers the inclusion by Mr. Oliver of many a building among his cottages that did not start life as a Peasant's abode but was built and occupied by one above the Peasant class.

The peace at the conclusion of the Wars of the Roses gave opportunity for a much needed housing reform. During Civil War the option was either to live in a house too strong to be pillaged or in one not worth pillaging but when peace gave security of tenure the occupiers of what we now term cottages, emerged and built for themselves those noble Tudor mansions that are the glory of our country-side, the peasant also moved up and occupied the abandoned "cottage" and the pig made his home in the peasant's hovel.

Rapid was the rise and rapid is the decline, for now the village squire is selling his hall and lands and the peasant farmer is acquiring and occupying them. The cottager lives in the hall and the squire in the cottage.

Members of our Society who are interested in domestic architecture will find in this book invaluable material for comparing Suffolk cottage types with those of other counties, for Suffolk is well represented and contributes cottages known to us all.

Living in Suffolk and being constantly steeped in an atmosphere of Suffolk types and styles there is a tendency to become over obsessed with one prevailing type, like the Old Woman who confidently asserted to the Ugly Duckling that her cottage was the World.

"He knows not Suffolk who only Suffolk knows."

A very useful geological map is inserted, from which is shown that cottages are the product of the soil, that is, are built of local material ready at hand, and the variety of material is responsible for the diversity of types.

Suffolk soil is mainly clay, sand and chalk. Clay gives us brick and clay-lump and grows excellent timber. The requirements of the early Cotsaeta were very simple, his cot was formed of rough logs caulked with clay and roofed with lighter logs, with earth piled on the top of them. Timber frames, wattle and daub, plaster and pargetting are but an elaboration and ringing the changes on our local products.

In stone districts stone was used and lent itself to a different method of building and type of cottage.

Mr. Oliver's contention that cottage builders invariably build with local material is aptly illustrated in Suffolk. Until lately the peasant disparaged anything that "comes foreign"; if he had wanted stone he would have got it. Suffolk was full of stone, but it was imported not local. Stone churches and monastic buildings abounded on every side long prior to the earliest timber frame cottage depicted in the book. When these latter lay in ruins and hewn stone was to be had for the carting, the peasant rarely utilized it for building and left it untouched until the 19th century roads needed repairing.

All the stone a Suffolk peasant needed was a hearth stone and a convenient quoin on the church tower for sharpening his arrows and knives.

The letterpress is from the pen of an architect who has specialised in cottage architecture and is an indispensable moiety of the book and worthy of the illustrations.

Consideration is given to stone, timber, brick, flint and other building material and Mr. Oliver proves himself a most interesting exponent in the art and craft of such subsidiary matters as glazing,

thatching, pargetting, plastering, chimneys, iron work etc., as well as in those details of construction and development which belong more to archæology than architecture, thus forming the necessary corollary to the illustrations.

These illustrations are given us as types of cottages built from the 16th to 18th century, that is, as they appear to-day (not as they appeared in the period named) and the Archæologist welcomes the letter press in order that he may receive a mental picture of these cottages as they appeared when erected.

Books published by Messrs. Batsford need no bush. They are always attractive and worth acquiring. This book is no exception and has a value over and above that supplied by author, publisher and illustrations because it contains records of a fast vanishing type of dwelling. A few may be preserved by wealthy landlords, but the majority are doomed, as the modern generation does not know how to repair them.

The rural expert in thatching, casement glazing, pargetting, clay lump, plaster work and timber framing is well nigh extinct and none take his place. A poor landlord cannot afford to keep his old cottages in repair as he must send to a distance for specialist and experts at great expense, whereas the local builder with modern methods and material will do the work at a fraction of the cost.

H.A.H.



BRAMFIELD. Colour decoration of tracery.



BRAMFIELD. Detail of decoration.



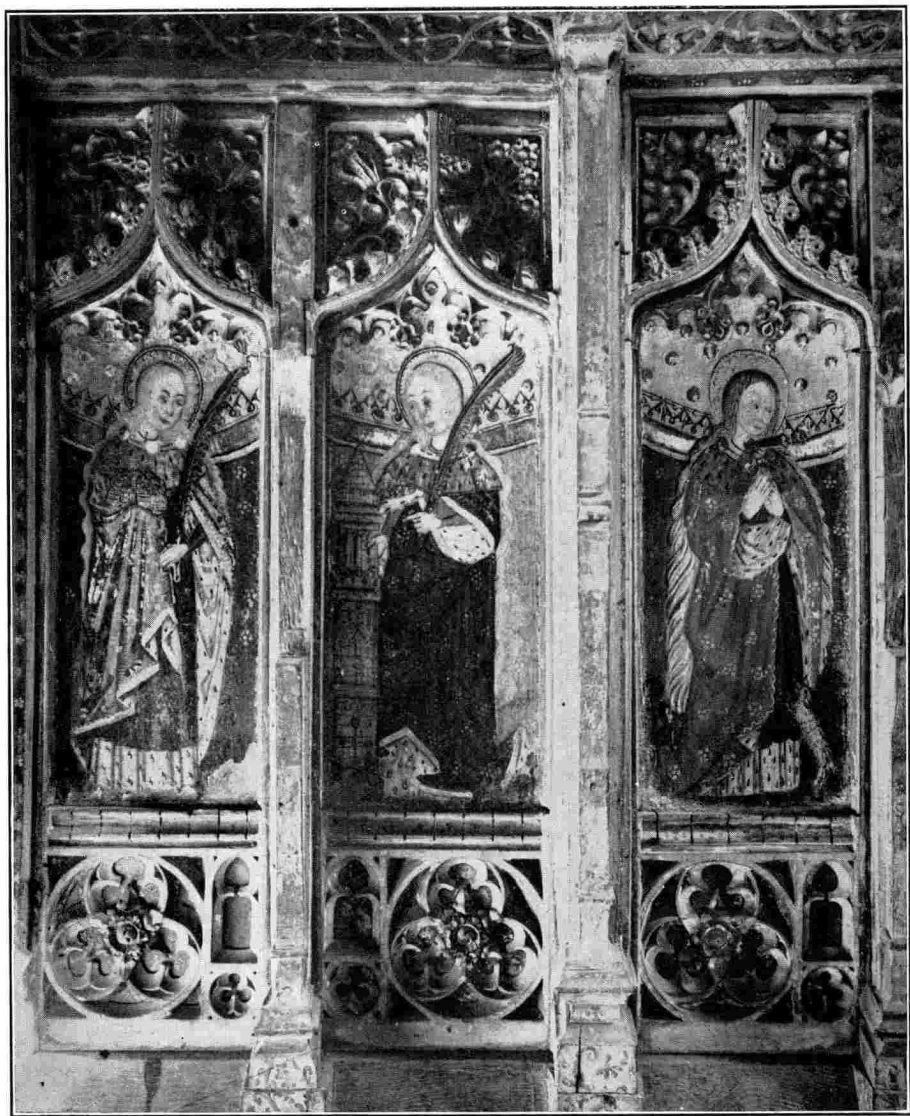
BRAMFIELD. S. Luke, S. John Evangelist and
S. Mary Magdalene.



SOUTHWOLD. Tracery head above S. Paul.



SOUTHWOLD, Archangels and Cherubim.



EYE. S. Dorothy, S. Barbara and S. Agnes.



EYE. S. William of Norwich and S. Lucy.



EYE. S. Edward K and C.



KERSEY. A Royal saint. ? Edward C.