

THE NORMAN HOUSE;

Or "King John's Palace," at Southampton.

Our county contains several specimens of architecture, ecclesiastical as well as military, of an early date, but examples of a domestic character are everywhere comparatively rare. Hampshire, however, possesses at least two domestic buildings of the Norman period—the "Constable's House," at Christchurch, and the one at Southampton, which we now illustrate. This building, known as "King John's Palace," was visited by the Hampshire Field Club in 1890, and owes its present cared-for condition to the active interest of some of our members: It is situated on the West Quay, at the lower end of Blue Anchor Lane, immediately behind the three last bays of the arcade which there forms the face of the town wall. Its north wall extends up the lane, from which it is entered by a Norman doorway. Sir Henry Englefield erroneously calls it a Saxon building. He tells us that in his time access was from the shore by a great modern breach in front of the arches, in the town wall, and describes it thus:—"When within, we find that there has been a floor dividing it into two storeys to the upper part of which the chimney (A) belonged, with a fireplace, having a column on each side, from which the mantle-piece rose on a flat arch. The funnel is carried up in a conical form and the flue cylindrical. The exterior dimensions of this edifice, which is very nearly square, are as follows:—The front to, the sea, 51ft. 3in.; front to Blue Anchor Lane, 48ft. 9in."¹

Our illustration gives the exterior view of the north wall in Blue Anchor Lane, with the Norman doorway, which forms the present entrance. The two-lighted window,

¹ Englefield's "Walk through Southampton." Bullar's Edition, 1844, p. 44.

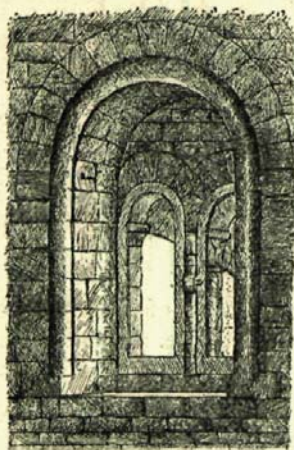


FIG. 1.

arrangement has been followed in the restoration. The window (Fig. 2) on the north side of the chamber has the jambs plain, and on the left hand a recess in the



FIG. 2.

this case, however, tradition is borne out by history, for in 1207 King John ordered the royal hall in Southampton to be re-

divided by a shaft and cap, is shewn at B., also the chimney, supported on four corbels, with the appearance of the fire-place within (A.A.) The plate is from a drawing by Mr. Herbert Oakley, and we are indebted to Miss Lydia Powell for the sketches of the Norman windows.

These windows are each divided into two lights, having a bold round bead on the inner edge (Fig. 1.) It is probable that they were closed with wooden shutters secured by a peg passed through a hole in the mullion, which ar-

range-ment has been followed in the restoration. The window (Fig. 2) on the north side of the chamber has the jambs plain, and on the left hand a recess in the wall, which served as a cupboard. The timbered roof, rudely constructed, is of chestnut, and possibly original.

The name "King John's House" appears to have originated with Mr. Duthy,¹ who gives evidence as to the probability of its having been inhabited by that monarch on the occasion of his frequent visits to Southampton. "King's houses existed at Winchester, Portsmouth and elsewhere, and did not necessarily imply a royal residence. In

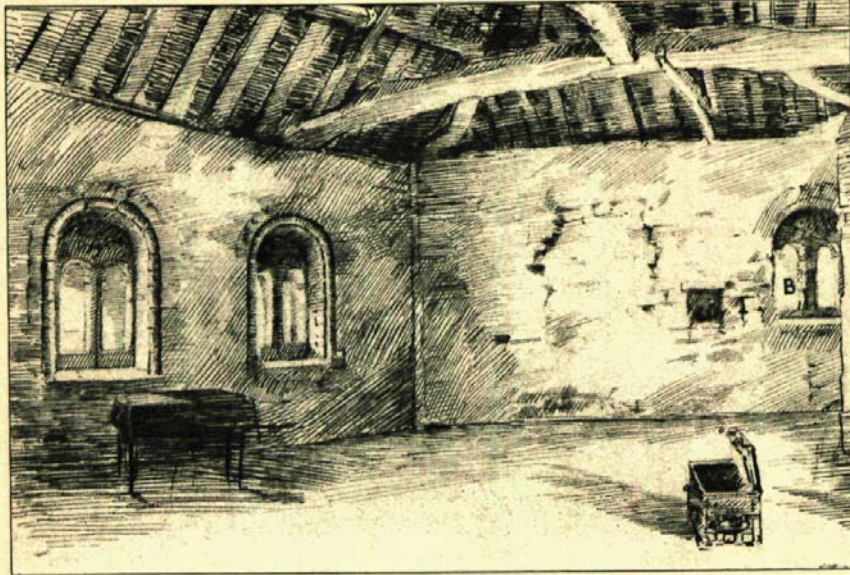
¹ Duthy's "Sketches of Hampshire," 1839, p. 444.

paired by the bailiffs of the town, and from the Itinerary of that King we learn that he visited Southampton on many different occasions between 1204 and 1215, staying for several days, sometimes making two or more visits in the same year. From the Close Rolls of Henry III., it appears that in 1222 the King required the bailiffs of the town "to repair our quay at Southampton, and to take care that our quay *in front of our house* suffers no harm." This certainly identifies the royal palace with this house, which probably remained as such till the French burnt Southampton, in 1338, after which date it was converted into a defensive place by the arcaded wall outside, which forms a screen to the Norman windows on the west side of the upper chamber.

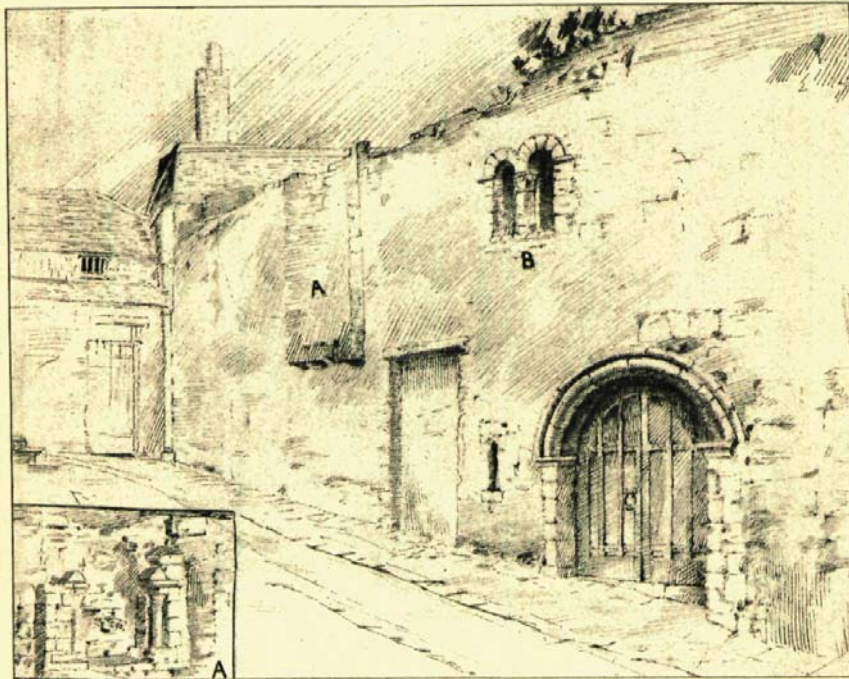
It is mainly owing to the public spirit of Mr. W. F. G. Spranger, who acquired the property, and to the late Mr. T. K. Dymond, both members of the H.F.C., that this almost unique specimen¹ of early domestic architecture has been preserved. Mr. Dymond, an enthusiastic antiquary, who will be remembered by many, gave unremitting attention to the restoration, in which he was assisted by Mr. E. Cooper Poole, architect. The premises, which had been occupied as a coal store and stable, were cleaned, the round-headed doorway in Blue Anchor Lane, was opened, windows, which had been long blocked, once more admitted the light, and this ancient building has been rendered accessible to inspection. It is now placed under the care of an intelligent custodian, who will gladly show it to any who may be interested in objects of antiquity.

¹ Mr. Hudson Turner, in his *Domestic Architecture in England*, considers King John's palace as the *oldest* house in England, dating its erection "in the earlier part" of the twelfth century.

HANTS FIELD CLUB, 1893.



UPPER CHAMBER OF NORMAN HOUSE.



NORMAN HOUSE, WEST QUAY, SOUTHAMPTON.