



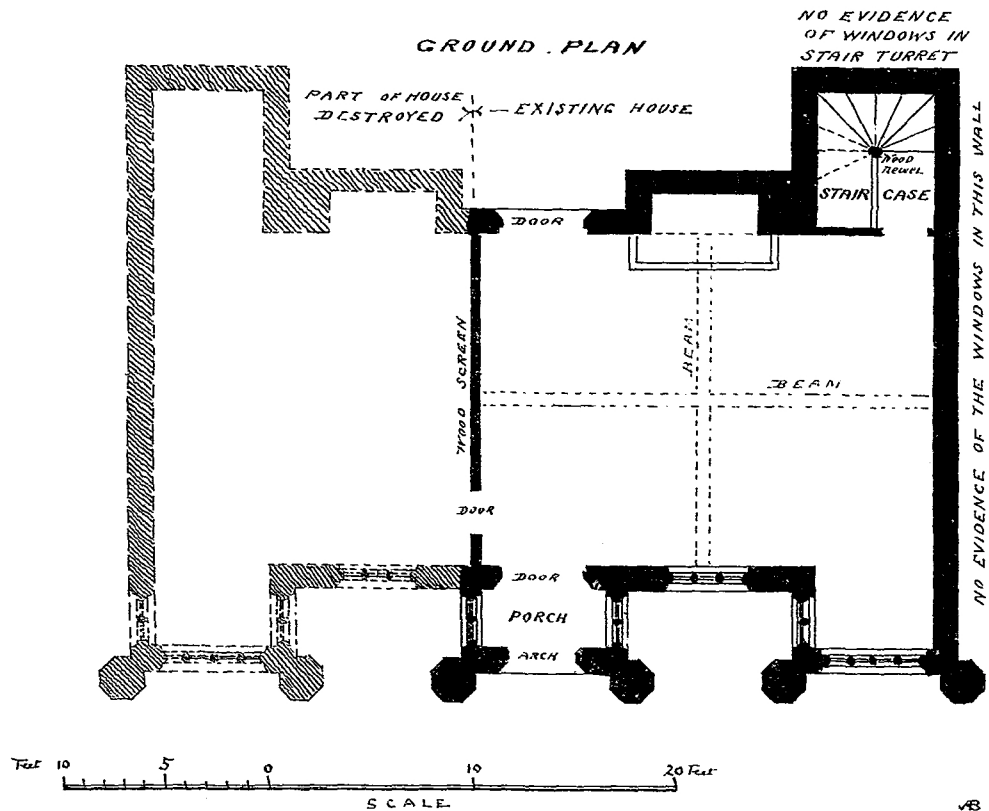
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# QUARRY HOUSE

AT FRINDSBURY NEAR ROCHESTER



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7/9/85

## QUARRY HOUSE, ON FRINDSBURY HILL.

BY CANON SCOTT ROBERTSON.

HASTED, in his description of Frindsbury, says "The parish joins to the river Medway from Strood, along the shore opposite to Chatham Dock, where, on the hill, is a house called the Quarry-house, having a beautiful view over the river, the town, dockyard, and adjoining country."\* Of this handsome red-brick house, and of the view of Rochester to be seen from it, we obtain a good idea from Mr. Arthur Baker's admirable drawing, which is reproduced on the accompanying plate.

One-third of the house was pulled down long ago, and a wooden adjunct has been run up beside the remaining portion; but the shape and arrangement of the entire building can be clearly seen from Mr. Arthur Baker's Plan, which is shewn upon another plate.

The house, in its greatest length and depth, was 40 feet square; but it did not actually cover the entire area of 40 square feet. Its front took the form of a capital E, in which the central projection (the porch) was equally as long as the upper and lower limbs or wings. Each of these (wings and porch) projects only 4 feet beyond the normal line of front, and covers an area 8 feet by 4 outside that frontage line. Two wings, of similar width (8 feet), projected 5 feet beyond the back line of the house; but there was no central projecting porch at the back; on the contrary, the back-door was recessed 2 feet. The spaces occupied by the fireplaces (5 feet wide) immediately flanked the area occupied by the recessed back-door.

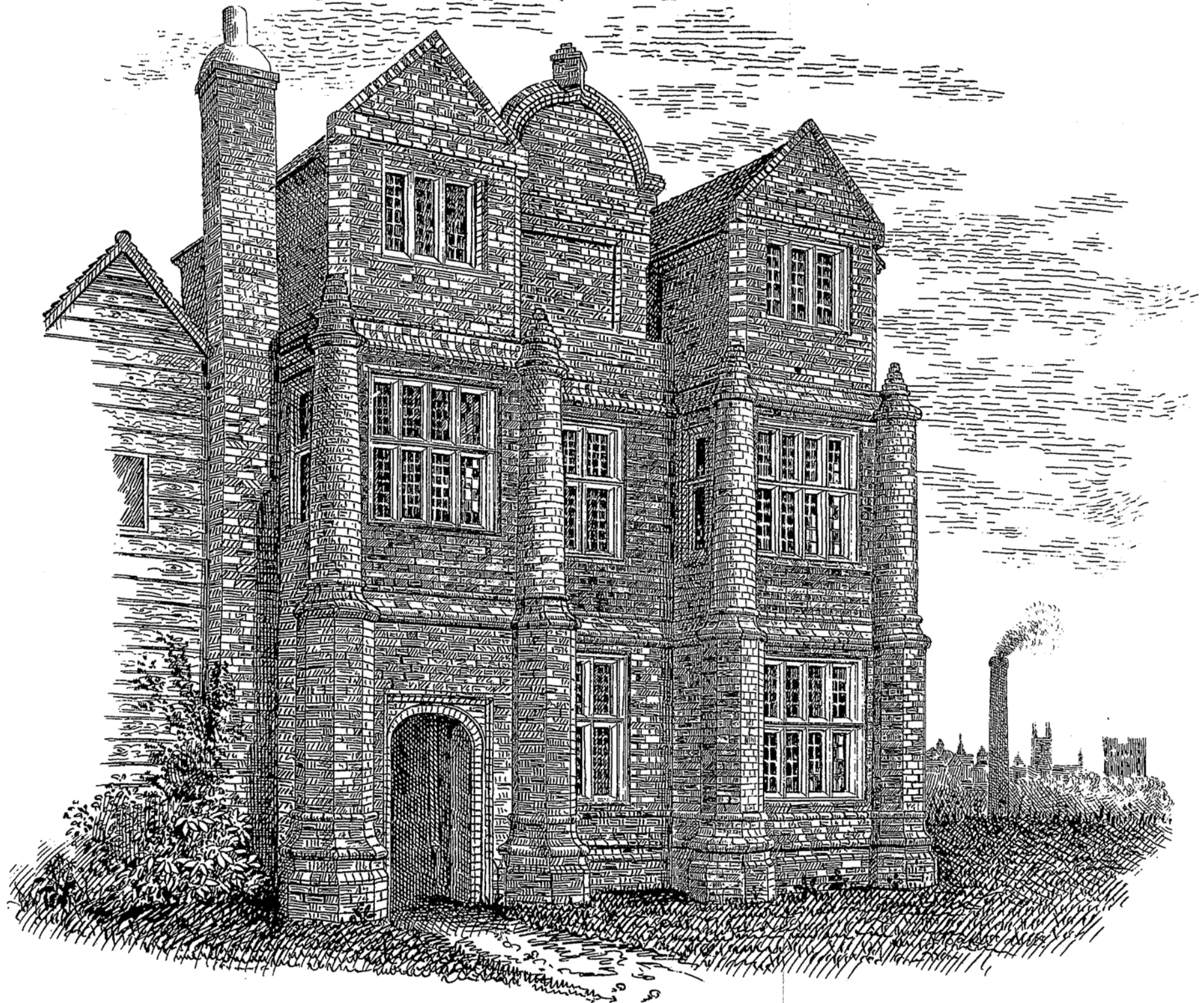
\* *History of Kent*, 8vo, vol. iii., p. 526.

In the hall the fireplace and chimney-piece still remain, on the right-hand side of the entrance passage, as we come from the front. This passage went straight through the house, and had on each side of it a wooden screen, through which were doorways, admitting to the hall on the right, and on the left leading to the buttery and kitchen. The screen on the right hand is quite gone. The hall, which measured 16 feet by 16, in its main area, was lighted by rectangular windows; one, of three lights, transomed, stood opposite the fireplace, and two others occupied the front and side of the projecting front wing, which formed a sort of *oriel* for the hall, and added to it an increased area of 4 feet by 5 feet 6 inches. These windows were transomed; and that in front was of four lights; the other, in the side facing the porch, was of two lights. Opposite this "oriel" (as we may term it), the projecting wing at the back of the house was occupied by a circular staircase, with wooden newel; this staircase covered an area 8 feet square.

The circular stair led to the upper storeys of the house, two in number. All their rooms are lighted by handsome rectangular windows, of three or four lights in front, transomed on the middle floor, but not transomed in the uppermost storey.

A peculiar feature of the house is the method by which each storey is made to recede behind the front level of that beneath it. The house thus continually tapers towards the top, where its front ended in five pretty gables. This effect was enhanced by six buttresses, 21 feet high; octagonal at base, circular above the ground floor, and tapering to a point at the level of the uppermost floor. Two of these buttresses flank each of the wings, and the porch, at their exterior angles.

These turret-like buttresses, which are uncommon features, appear on a smaller scale in the handsome gateway of the entrance courtyard. They may be compared with those of the similar gateway at Brook Farm in Reculver. The idea of using them, thus, seems to me to have been derived from the tall angle turrets of such late Elizabethan houses as Cobham Hall. These at Quarry House are beautifully



designed, with tall plinths, and have good projecting and hollow round mouldings, all made of red brick. Few parallels to them can now be found.

Two of the gables have been rebuilt; but one remains in its original state at the top, although its window is built up.

The details of the windows in Quarry House are almost identical with those of Restoration House, and Eastgate House in Rochester, which were built about A.D. 1590. I believe, however, that Quarry House may be ten or twenty years later in its erection. It is probably more Jacobean than Elizabethan.

Mr. C. J. Richardson, who wrote a description of this house for the *Builder* of October 17, 1846, suggested that it may have been built by Thomas, Lord Cromwell, who in the reign of Henry VIII. obtained a grant of the adjacent manor of Æslingham, and (says Mr. Richardson) of the ground on which Quarry House stands. Careful observers will, I think, agree with me in saying that the house was not built until Lord Cromwell had been dead for at least fifty years. Mr. Richardson tells us that, in 1846, there were traces of the "compo" with which all the string-courses, parapets, window-sides, and circular buttresses had been covered.

Of the history of this house very little is known. Mr. W. Brenchley Rye, from his extensive *Collections* respecting Rochester, has favoured me with the following facts.

Quarry House is seen in Almond's *View of Chatham*, published in 1685, and in another view issued in 1698; both of these are in the British Museum. Artists evidently considered this house to be one of the most picturesque objects in the neighbourhood, and fixed their point of view in such a way as to include it. In Buck's capital View of Chatham Dockyard (A.D. 1738) not only does Quarry House form a prominent object, but a crowd of fashionable promenaders may be seen in its vicinity. It had become as favourite a place of resort for the people of Rochester and Chatham, as Vauxhall Gardens were for Londoners. An officer, named Heath, who was stationed at Upnor Castle (not far from Quarry House), in his book respecting the *Scilly Islands* (A.D. 1750), speaks of this house as the "Kentish Vauxhall."

It is alluded to under the same nickname by Bosworth in his *Antiquities*, A.D. 1786.

Some verses were "written in the Publick House commonly called the Quarry, opposite Chatham Dock, on the 25th of September 1752," and were printed for circulation. The Rev. Thomas Austen copied them into his MS. *Collectanea Cantiana*, now among the Additional MSS. (No. 24269-70) in the British Museum. These verses may be found printed in Miss De Vaynes's *Kentish Garland*.

In the *London Magazine* for 1755, a view of Chatham was engraved, in which Quarry House is again made a prominent object. Nearly a century later it attracted the attention of Mr. Henry Wright, who made of it an etching which was published by the *Antiquarian Etching Club* in 1850.

Mr. Rye himself remembers it as a farm-house, in which he, when a boy, used to get a glass of milk during his rambles over the pleasant hill on which Quarry House stood.

I am informed that the house was purchased by the Wardens of Rochester Bridge, in November 1833, from Mrs. Mary Sutthery, who obtained it from Messrs. Joseph and Thomas Brindley (local shipbuilders), to whom it had been conveyed, in 1814, by a Mr. and Mrs. Kay. The occupants of the house from 1813 to 1833 seem to have been (1) John Marrow Blackler, (2) Messrs. Brindley, and (3) Samuel Stronghill. It is said that the house will be pulled down, at the end of the summer of 1886.

When it is gone, those who knew it not, when examining the Views of Chatham mentioned above, will wonder what house they see represented on this site, and would think it extraordinary if no record existed of such a picturesque house. Readers of this paper will be enabled to explain what the house was.