

HENRY, NINTH EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND AND SYON HOUSE, MIDDLESEX, 1594-1632

By G. R. Batho, M.A., Associate R.Hist.S., University of Sheffield.

SYON HOUSE, Middlesex, set on the banks of the Thames only eight miles from Charing Cross, is known today as the second seat of the Dukes of Northumberland and as an outstanding example of the interior decoration of the brothers Adam. As such, it rightly draws its fair quota of pilgrims to our great country houses each year. But Syon had already had a romantic history when the Percy family came to it. The site opposite Kew had first been occupied, from 1426 onwards, by the only house in England of the Bridgettines, a monastery which served a community of sixty nuns and of twenty-five religious men and which in its little more than a century's existence achieved a fame for sanctity of life, for learning and for wealth which would bear comparison with that of any English religious house. At the Dissolution, Sion Abbey was suppressed but the community, instead of wholly dispersing, split into groups which faithfully upheld the traditions of the Order, both in England and in the Low Countries, until the restoration under Mary. Meanwhile the buildings at Syon had served successively as a prison for Queen Katherine Howard, as a resting place for the body of Henry VIII on its last journey from Westminster to Windsor, and as a residence in turn for the Protector Somerset and that earlier Duke of Northumberland, John Dudley. It was largely at the hands of Somerset that the monastic buildings were converted into a Tudor mansion, and the reconversion for religious uses could not have been complete when the accession of Elizabeth sent the community on its travels again—travels that were to take it to the Low Countries, to Lisbon and finally in 1861 to Devon, where the Abbey had once had extensive holdings of land and where to this day the witness of the Bridgettine nuns continues in a uniquely uninterrupted tradition from pre-Reformation times. With the second suppression of the Abbey, Syon House became again a semi-royal residence, receiving the Queen upon infrequent occasions during her progresses through her lands. So it remained until in the last months of 1594 Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, brought his newly-married bride to live there, where

the Percies have lived ever since.¹ Or rather the ninth Earl's bride brought him. For the lease which the Earl now came to hold from the Crown was in the right of the Countess. She was Dorothy Devereux, sister of Elizabeth's favourite Essex, and widow of Sir Thomas Perrot, from whom she inherited the right to the lease. We have her own testimony that she had been offered some £2,000 for it, but she had preferred as a marriageable widow to keep it in her hands.²

During the period of nearly forty years when Syon was in the hands of Elizabeth, little in the way of repairs or new building seems to have taken place; there are only a few references in the Declared Accounts to works at Syon and, of those few, only two substantial sums are mentioned—in 1561-63, £365 18s. 4½d., at a time when we know that the use of Syon for the Court of Exchequer at a period of plague in London was under consideration, and in 1592-93, £484 6s. 1d., when there is mention of framing a new boiler house and of sundry general repairs. Though hardly palatial in either size or appointment and in need of a few minor attentions, the house seems generally to have been in a good state of repair.³

The survival of an inventory of March, 1593, and of a ground-plan of the house which is certainly contemporary and which may possibly date from 1604, together with a fine collection of the household accounts of the ninth Earl of Northumberland, enables us to speak with considerable confidence of the appearance and lay-out of the house at the time. As will be seen from the contemporary painting of Syon House on the frame of a Percy pedigree, which is here reproduced, the visitor to Syon when the Earl and Countess came to take up residence would have found a house which in its essentials was similar to the Syon of today. That is to say, it was a three-storeyed, quadrangular house with angle-turrets round a central, open courtyard. It was faced with stone and battlemented, as it is today, but to the north and south of the main west front of the "white house" there stood then, as there has not from some time in the late seventeenth century, two brick buildings, and the two porter's lodges with which the modern visitor is familiar were not yet there.⁴

¹ "Syon House: the First Two Hundred Years, 1431-1632", by G. R. Batho, *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 1956, and sources there quoted.

² Syon MSS. F. II. I k.

³ G. J. Aungier, *The History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery, etc.*, (1840), 112-13; P.R.O. E 351 (Works Declared Accounts, 1560-1594)—Mr. John Summerson of the Soane Museum has kindly provided the Syon references in this source.

⁴ Syon MSS. B.XIII, 2c; H.I.3. The dating of the plan is based on the fact that the brick buildings are more extensive in the plan than in the picture, which conforms with the evidence of the household accounts of the decade after 1594, and on the entry in Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.13, f. 1 *recto*,—"for making 8 maps of Sion for his Lordship", vs., 26 April 1604. References to the household accounts will be found later in this paper.

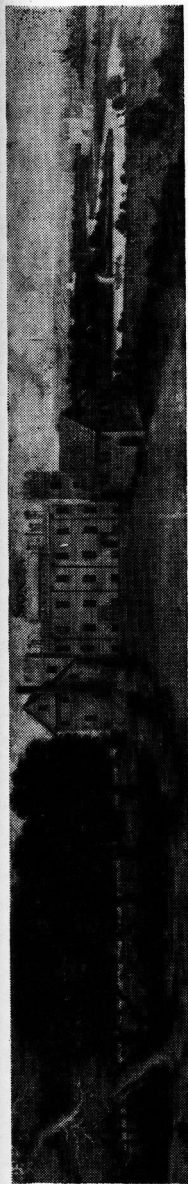


FIG. 1

The earliest known painting of Syon House (*circa* 1600), from the frame of a pedigree at Syon, by courtesy of H.G. the Duke of Northumberland and of the Editors of *History Today*. Photo : Messrs. R. B. Fleming of Kingsway.

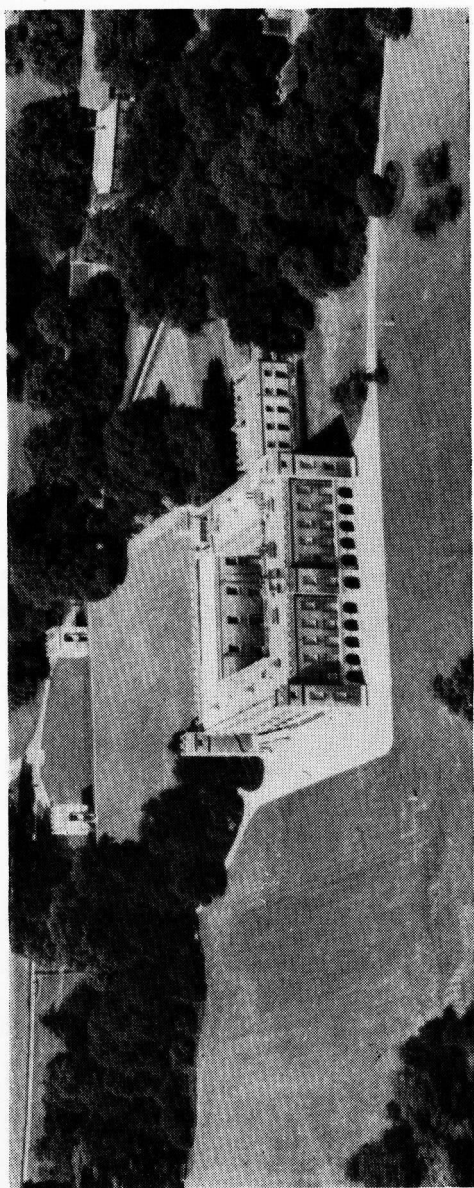


Photo : Photoflight Ltd., Elstree.

FIG. 2

SYON HOUSE, MIDDLESEX.

There were two entrances to the west front, as the picture and the ground-plan show. If our visitor had walked up the few steps to the left in the painting—the low colonnade with central steps indicated in the plan seems to have been a later addition—he would have found himself in the Hall of the house. Immediately to the north of this door, the buttery and pantry stood on either side of a lobby leading to the angle-turret, the buttery with two half-doors, the pantry with one large door. The fireplace was at the opposite end of the Hall. From the windows, one could have seen into the central courtyard of the House, the “green court” as it was called at this time; it is believed that this court was once surrounded by the nuns’ cloisters. Had he wished, the visitor could have stepped out into the court by the door immediately opposite the one by which he had entered the house. Alternatively, he could have left the Hall by the door at the south-east corner, where he would have found another door into the courtyard out of the narrow lobby there which opened on to the stairs to the main floor of State rooms. It was upon this lobby that the half-open door in the picture gave.

At the top of the well-lighted stairs—there were some 20 panes of glass—was the Great Chamber, furnished in 1593 with three deal tables, six long oaken forms and five tressles with square feet. The rooms of the south range, of which this was the first, all looked out on to the court as well as to the grounds, where today they have windows only on the south side. The next room was the fine Presence Chamber; like the Great Chamber, its windows had wooden casements with ironwork to strengthen them, but here there were also spring shutters. The Presence Chamber, too, had tressles with square feet and deal tables but, in place of the long forms, were four joined forms and a joined cupboard. The Privy Chamber came next, a smaller room but exceptionally well-appointed. Its windows had wainscot shuttings fixed as well as casements and spring shuttings with rings upon them and iron handles and the frieze, cornice and panels over the windows, with which the room was decorated, were all in good condition. A lobby on the courtyard side of the wing divided the Privy Chamber from the Withdrawing Chamber. At this corner of the house, it seems likely that there were a few alterations made between the date of the inventory and the time of the plan. The Withdrawing Chamber was furnished as well as the Privy Chamber and had the distinction of a chimney piece and of wainscotting on the chimney side of it; this seems to place it approximately where the Red Drawing Room is today, with its chimney against the partition wall as the plan indicates. But it was probably a smaller room than the one shown on the plan, for between it and the Coffer Chamber to the south of the central stairs of the east range there was a bedchamber of goodly pro-

portions, with a portal with two doors. A wainscotted closet led off from the Withdrawing Chamber, and this may well be the small room facing south shown on the plan.

The east range of the house was divided, then as now, into two by the Long Gallery which occupied its whole length, given on the plan as 130 feet between the angle-turrets. Some 86 windows ran along its entire river side and the west wall of the Gallery was divided by three doorways and two fireplaces in exactly similar positions to those in the present Adam Gallery.

Beyond this it is hard to follow the lay-out of the rooms at Syon at this time. Although the ground-plan shows the disposition of the rooms on the main floor well enough, the draughtsman contented himself with writing a few figures on the plan giving the dimensions of the wings and the courtyards, and with the laconic description "A plott of Sion howse" on the dorse. It is clear, however, that the Kitchen was housed in the brick building to the north-west of the main front and the inventory refers to the other brick building as the "gatehouse". From the inventory, too, we learn of the existence at Syon in 1593 of rooms occupied by the Lord Chamberlain, the Lord Keeper, the Lord Treasurer, Lady Howard, Lady Vere, Lady Skiemore, the Marchioness of Winchester, the Lord Admiral, Mr. Vice-Chamberlain, Sir Robert Cecil, and a number of lesser persons about the Court, as well as privy lodgings for the Queen and the maids of honour. There would appear to have been no shortage of rooms.

Certainly, only minor reparations were carried out at Syon by the Earl of Northumberland in the first eight years that he had it. The most expensive single repair was the rebuilding of the stable in 1599-1800 for £12 5s. 10d.; for this, the Earl fetched the carpenter, John Dee, and the bricklayer, Peter Lewes, from his principal residence at Petworth, Sussex, though he called in a local smith, Austen of Brentford. Where the stables were at this time is not precisely known; these were clearly not the great stables to the north-west of the modern house and there is no indication in the painting of any building there. One might suggest that they were to be found to the north-east of the house—there is a large building indicated on the ground-plan in this position which might have been them.¹

Then, in 1602, the Earl was granted a lease of Syon Park and given £256 13s. 10d. for the repair of Syon House. His expenditure on the house, which had averaged less than £20 a year from 1595 to 1602, now rose considerably. There began a period of intensive activity which clearly saw great changes at Syon; in 1602-03, he spent on the house £66 15s. 4d., in 1603-04, £81 4s. 5d., in 1604-05, £1,686 12s. 7d. on house and grounds,

¹ Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.2.

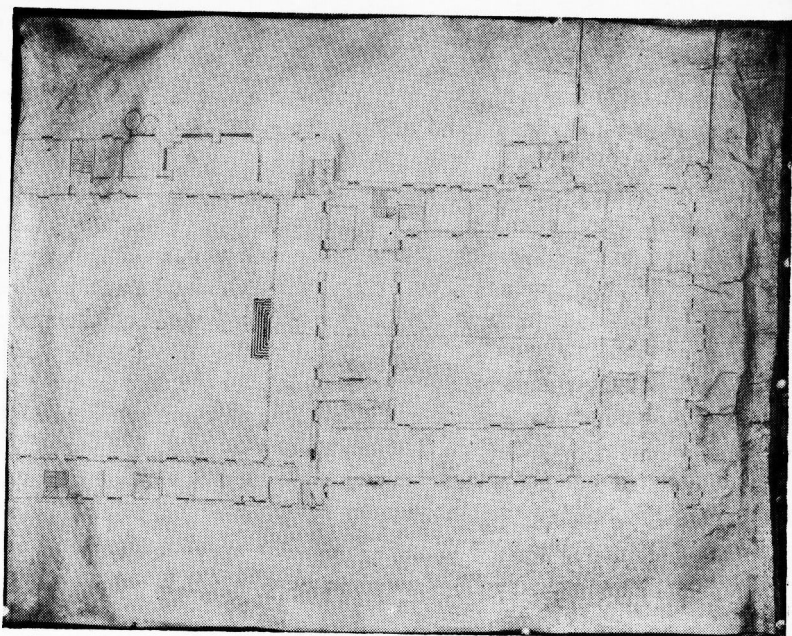


FIG. 3
An undated plan of the principal floor of Syon House (c. 1604), Syon MSS. B.XIII. 2c, by courtesy of H.G. the Duke of Northumberland.

Photo : Messrs. R. H. Fleming.

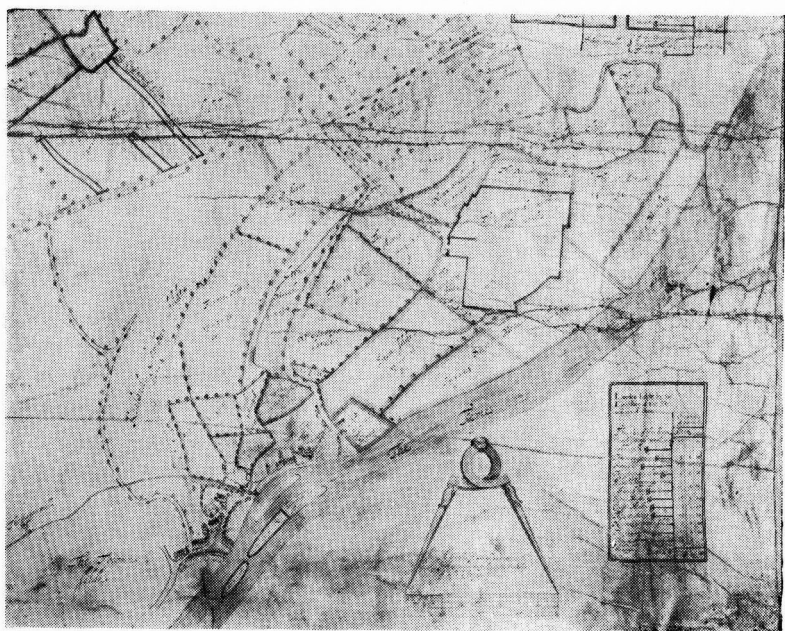


FIG. 4
Part of a plan of the manor of Isleworth-Syon, 1606, Syon MSS. B.XIII. 1d, by courtesy of H.G. the Duke of Northumberland.

Photo : Messrs. R. H. Fleming.

9. 46. — Alt. canis mrisobis.
 19. 56.
 not yet a right line but almost.
 10. 5. not yet a right.
 10. 20. very nice, but yet not perfect.
 10. 45. yet doubtful to be perfect.
 10. 52. ^{as I judge} more sensibly a right line
 an accidental sag of eye
 lower corner being otherwise
 but others think not yet perfect.
 11. 15. yet a right line & not contrary
 but if not right with a wandering
 by the lower corner.
 11. 30. yet continuing others
 sink, wandering.
 11. 47. — all. II australis. 20. 0.
 as before.
 12. 0. } all indge — a right line
 12. 15. }
 12. 30. sensibly different
 to be

FIG. 5

Notes in Thomas Hariot's own hand of his observations of the moon with a telescope magnifying 32 times on the night of 9-10 April, 1611, taken at Syon in the garret of his house. By courtesy of John Wyndham, Esq. (f. 5 of Hariot's notes on the Moon, Petworth MSS.).

Photo: Messrs. C. Howard of Chichester.

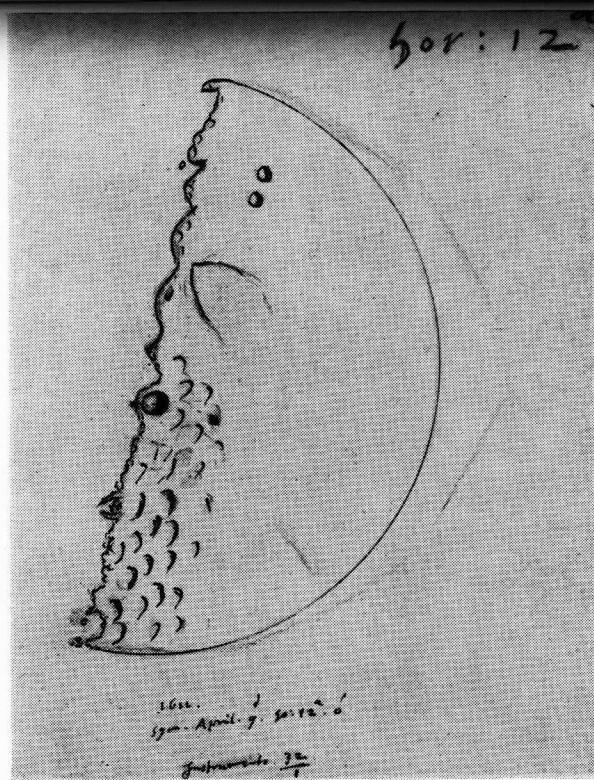


FIG. 6

Hariot's drawing of the moon as he saw it at midnight, 9 April, 1611, from Syon. By courtesy of John Wyndham, Esq. (f. 6 of Hariot's notes on the Moon, Petworth MSS.).

Photo: Messrs. C. Howard of Chichester.

and in 1605-06, a further similar sum. Dee and Lewes came over from Petworth many times—in one year alone, 1603-04, we hear of John Dee's coming on four occasions to make models for stairs, for a round roof for the Great Chamber and to set out the garden plot. The white house and the brick lodgings were pointed, chimneys were raised, repairs were carried out to the slaughterhouse, the larder house, the storehouse, the armory, the buttery, and alterations were made to the Cofferer's chamber in the years 1602-1604. In 1604, the Earl was granted the house in fee simple by the King, James I, in gratitude for the part which he had played in securing James' quiet accession to the English throne; the Earl was in high favour at the time—he had been admitted to the Privy Council and made Captain of the Gentlemen Pensioners—and there had been two royal visits to Syon in 1603 alone. In the next two years, as the accounts show plainly enough, a start was made on a complete rebuilding of the house. Stone fireplaces were placed in all the main rooms, windows were renewed in many, the principal chambers were fretted and wainscotted, part of the brick buildings was pulled down and rebuilt, a new brick-wall to the west of the brickhouse was erected, the inner gatehouse came down and new towers and porter's lodges where we know them today went up, brickwalls were built on the rampires and the whole house, one suspects, must at one time or another have been encased by scaffolding.¹

What is, perhaps, more remarkable is that, after the imprisonment of the Earl in November, 1605, on charges of technical treason over the Gunpowder Plot, this great rebuilding did not entirely cease. The building accounts for 1607-13 survive and on the house alone in these years he spent some £1,903 15s. 8d., though masons were employed only in the first two of these years. A new suite of rooms for the Countess, including a bathhouse which was fully equipped, was the most notable work carried out at this time, but in addition the Hall was given a new set of stairs, a number of outbuildings was constructed, including a coachhouse, a brewhouse, and a laundry and the brickwalls in the gardens were repaired and greatly extended.²

In all this work, we know that the Earl took an active part both before and after his imprisonment. In 1603, he wrote to Sir Robert Cecil that he was preparing "to go and see Cophthall, for now that I am a builder I must borrow of my knowledge somewhat out of Tibballs (Theobalds), somewhat out of every place of mark where curiosities are used". A visit of his to Cophthall on 28th July, 1604, is actually recorded, and he had

¹ Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.3, (2) and (3), U.I.8, U.I.13; Pat. Roll, 2 Jac. I, pt. xviii.

² Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.3 and 4.

sent John Dee, the carpenter from Petworth who emerges as the nearest approach to an architect used by the Earl, to Theobalds in 1603. Such visits were backed by a careful study of the works on architecture of both classical and Renaissance times. The Earl was a scholar of repute and read Italian as well as Latin fluently. Soon after his imprisonment, he wrote to Sir John Holles to tell him that he was sending him all his books on architecture save Palladio's work which he knew him to have already. It is a list which includes, besides the established favourites Vitruvius, Alberti, and Serlio, works which were less well-known, ranging from Du Cerceau to the rarity, Jacques Perret's *Des Fortifications & Artifices*, through the works of Vignola, Sirigatti, Wendel Dietterlin and Philibert de l'Orme. The Earl was not only aware of the best works on architecture but he also took notice of what they contained. Looking at his papers, one realises that he took to heart, for example, such injunctions as these of Leone Battista Alberti: "that no man ought to begin a building hastily, but should first take a good deal of time to consider, and revolve in his mind all the qualities and requisites of such a work; and that he should carefully review and examine, with the advice of proper judges, the whole structure in itself, and the proportions and measures of every distinct part, not only in draughts or paintings, but in actual models of wood or some other substance, that when he has finished his building, he may not repent of his labour; . . . also long beforehand to provide all the materials for completing such an undertaking". Thus, one finds a list of "Necessaries for Building" in what Alberti would clearly have thought quite the best manner. Moreover, the Earl himself corresponded with his officers up and down the country before he decided to use some of the materials which he did in building Syon. In 1609, when the work there was well in hand, the time had come to consider battlementing the house. Accordingly, the Earl began to search for the best stone for the purpose. William Penne of Haughton, Northumberland, was asked to try the stone of the quarry at Brotherwick and reported it "not good". Instead he sent down for the Earl's personal examination a piece of Coquet Island stone which he held a "very sound and good weatherstone", likely to be obtainable at the favourable rate of 4½d. a foot, for the getting and shipping of it. At the same time, there went to the Tower of London for Northumberland's inspection a piece of Wallbottle stone for paving. Penne attached to his letter, too, a drawing to show the lengths which he held best in battlementing. This reference to the Earl was no formality—next month, he was writing to Penne to ask him to search out evidence of how the Wallbottle stone wore, for he had heard from some masons in London that "it will rent with the frost and weather, it rising in flaws". This time, his gentleman officer Thomas Fotherley, who carried out

much of the surveying of his lands for him, replied, telling how he had been taken by a Newcastle mason to see a courtyard in the house of a Sir Henry Anderson in Newcastle which was paved partly with Wallbottle stone and partly with stone from other quarries. "Those gotten in Wallbottle abide weather very well and much better than the other laid with them and show fairer, for the mason distinguished them of Wallbottle quarry by their colour and hardness. Besides he told me that the great court at Lumley Castle is paved all with stone gotten in that quarry which I am informed by divers abides weather very well". But the Earl worked on, collecting information on prices and qualities, and, though Wallbottle was in his own hands, he seems in the end to have accepted the summing up of a computation that the stone would be dearer than Purbeck only 8s. 2d. "but worse in comparison of the beauty of the stone and goodness thereof xxli".¹

The works of Syon were supervised by a gentleman officer appointed Clerk of Works there, Christopher Ingram, and much of the repairing and new building was done by workmen who were paid for their labour only and who drew their materials from the Clerk. The wages paid them are well set out in Christopher Ingram's account for 1609-10. Bricklayers were paid 18d., 16d., 15d., 14d., and 12d. the day; carpenters 18d., 16d., and 14d. the day; plumbers, 18d. and 10d. the day; joiners 18d. and 16d. the day; sawyers 2s. 8d. the couple the day; and labourers 12d., 10d., 9d., 8d., and 6d. the day. There are no references to feeding workmen on the job, other than those who were brought in specially from other places. Masons, and often bricklayers and carpenters, too, were commonly paid "by great" for particular tasks done. Many of the materials used in the work came from local sources—we hear, for example, of felling trees in Syon Park in 1604-05 and the sand was usually brought up river from Richmond Ferry to Syon Crane—but when occasion demanded the materials would be brought in from far afield. Great quantities of Purbeck and Beer stone were brought to Syon in these years, as well as some stone from Reigate, and casements for windows and wainscotting were frequently bought in London. Nothing, in fact, seems to have been spared to make Syon a great house. Or to set the house in fine gardens. The foundations of the reputation of the gardens at Syon were laid by Dr. Turner, Somerset's personal physician, who founded the first botanical garden in England there. Northumberland generally spent £20 to £30 a year on the gardens at Syon, though towards the end of his life he was

¹ *Cal. Hatfield MSS*, pt. xv, (1930), 383; Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.50 (2) and U.I.3; *Cal. Portland MSS*, vol. ix, (1923), 152; Leone Battista Alberti: *Ten Books on Architecture*, ed. J. Rykwert, (1955), Book II, 21, 23; Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.18, Q.II.60, and O.V.1b. I am indebted to Mr. Summerson for comments on the list of architectural works.

going to be spending a great deal more. At this time, he kept a head gardener, for many years one Anthony Menvell, and two or more labourers under him, as well as employing weeders, who were often women. Among the works which he carried out, we may mention the cherry garden of over three acres to the north of the house which was laid out with 1,423 cherry-stocks, bought for £4 19s. 3d. in 1599-1600; the new orchard of four acres and more to the north of the cherry garden which was made in 1603-04, and the nightingale garden which was "new-made" in 1607-08. Most of the money was spent on the "great garden" of 18 acres which led from the east front of the house towards the river, and there were other gardens laid out to the south of the house. Rose-trees and fruit-trees, especially apricots, were bought for these gardens in great numbers, as well as elms and sycamores to set in the walks. The fruit was noted; it would be sent away upon occasion as a special gift, as when in 1604 two dozen baskets were bought to send fruit to the King and Queen, and it was often taken to the Earl when he was in the Tower. The Earl was very proud of his vines, though they are mentioned only occasionally on the accounts, and years later he reminded an old servant how he had once said that he was drunk with eating of grapes when walking under the vine-wall. There were mulberries, too, at Syon, as indeed there are still—it is said that Somerset planted the first there—and the Earl, perhaps following the lead of the King, bought ten mulberry trees in 1604 for £1 5s. to add to them. Already by then, contemporaries were commenting on his patience with the gardens. The Earl of Shrewsbury wrote to Lord Cranbourne in November, 1604, that Northumberland's work in the new gardens at Syon "will busy and cost him more till he can gather a 'poesie' in it, than it will do in 20 years after: and yet I know he must never leave plotting, digging, weeding, etc., continually as occasion serves".¹

While the Earl directed all these operations still even after his imprisonment, the Countess and his children made Syon their chief home, leaving Petworth in the hands of a trusted gentleman officer and a few servants and paying it only occasional visits. It was here, too, that the Earl placed his pensioner Thomas Hariot, the famous mathematician and astronomer, in a house of his own. Precisely where this house was is not known, though references on the accounts tell us that it was 222 feet from the old stable and fairly near the tower of the Countess's lodgings. A glance at the plan of Syon so beautifully executed by Ralph Treswell the younger in 1607 suggests that it was the larger of the two

¹ Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.2, 3, 4, 8, 13; *Cal. S.P. Dom. Car. I*, 1629-31, CXLIX. 53, September 16th, 1629; *Cal. Hatfield MSS*, pt. xvi (1933), 360. The gardens are clearly set out on the Treswell plan of 1607, Syon MSS B.XIII, 1a, part of which is reproduced.



FIG. 7

Part of the plan of the manor of Isleworth-Syon, 1635, by Moses Glover, Syon MSS. B.XIII. 1b. Note the brick lodgings and the porters' lodges in front of the house. By courtesy of H.G. the Duke of Northumberland. Photo: Messrs. R. B. Fleming.

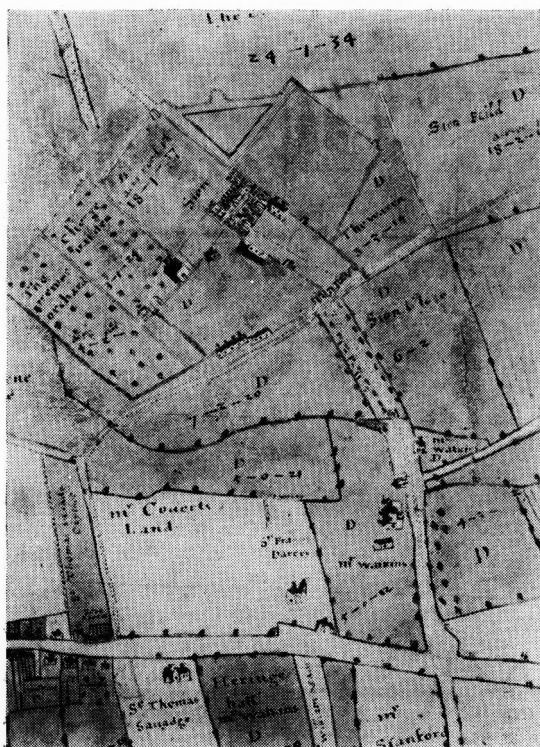


FIG. 8

Part of a plan of the manor of Isleworth-Syon, 1607, by Ralph Treswell the younger, Syon MSS. B.XIII. 1a. Note the brick lodgings in front of the house. By courtesy of the Duke of Northumberland.

Photo: Messrs. R. B. Fleming.

houses shown to the north-west of the main house, though this is purely a deduction from the fragmentary evidence which we have. Hariot carried out many of his observations here, as his papers preserved at Petworth and in the British Museum show, and there must have been many such evenings as the one which he records for us of 9/10 April, 1611. That night at 6.58 he set his watch by the setting sun and by the clock of Syon (there are occasional references on the accounts to repairs on the clock). From 9.46 p.m. until 12.30 a.m. he sat in his garret with Sir Nicholas Sanders and Christopher, his assistant, observing the moon through his telescopes—we know that a new dormer window was set in his house in 1609—until at last, and his weariness comes over the centuries to us as his pencil notes become cruder and larger, “we departed to bed”, only to find the next morning at half-past eight that his watch was more than a quarter of an hour fast by the sun. Such were the vexations of a pioneer using defective instruments.¹

The special royal commission appointed in 1604 to consider, *inter alia*, “what the charge and reparations of the house of Syon have (been) and were likely to be yearly” had reported the house to be “in decasu”, needing a hundred marks a year for repairs and maintenance. By 14th April, 1613, when the Earl astutely offered Syon to the King towards the payment of his fine of £30,000 in Star Chamber, knowing that the fact that it had been his especial gift of gratitude for services rendered would embarrass James, he could write that he had spent £9,000 on the estate and that “the house itself, if it were to be pulled down and sold by view of workmen, would come to £8,000. If any man, the best husband in building, should raise such another in the same place, £20,000 would not do it”.²

Yet this was not all that the Earl was to do at Syon. After the King refused his offer, as he must have expected him to do, he continued to glorify the house and grounds. The progress of the building becomes more difficult to follow, for the Percy household accounts are not complete for the rest of the ninth Earl's life. But we can have no doubt that it continued to be quite extensive. It was probably in the next few years after 1613 that the decisions taken on battlementing were implemented; certainly, when he was planning the rebuilding of Petworth in 1615, the Earl directed that the battlementing be like that at Syon. An agreement between Christopher Ingram and John Hawkes, a brick-maker of Hounslow, has survived which is dated November 17th, 1614; Hawkes was to be paid £5 towards digging the earth, £3 every week “when it comes to working”, £5 15s. at the end of the working of half

¹ Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.3, 4; Syon MSS B.XIII, 1a; Leconfield MSS at Petworth, Hariot's papers on the moon, ff. 2, 5, 6. Traces of the house suggested as possibly Hariot's and of other early buildings nearby have recently been uncovered.

² P.R.O. E 178/4157, ms. 1 and 3; Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, O.I.2c, f. 65.

a million bricks, and 6s. 8d. for every 10,000 bricks "well and sufficiently burnt and delivered out of the kiln," numbers that suggest activity of some order. There must have been major work in hand in 1616-17, when £520 1s. 6d. was spent on reparations at Syon, and possibly this included work on the new stables at the north-west of the house, which were to be 276 feet long by 102 feet wide and 20 feet high and were computed to cost £77 18s. 8d. for brickwork alone; we have only an undated estimate for these. In the one account of Christopher Ingram's which survives for the period, that for 1618-19, there is mention of the paving and whitewashing of the Evidence House, of making two doors and the wainscot presses for it, and of filling up between the wainscot and the wall there and making the chimney higher. This work reads like the finishing touches of a new building, and it may be that the Evidence House, too, was built in 1616-17, though the Historical Monuments Commission gave the sixteenth century as the date of the exterior of the old muniment room at Syon (within it has been much altered); it does not seem to be marked on contemporary plans of Syon. Another outburst of activity in building comes to light in 1630-31, when £256 13s. 1d. was spent at Syon. After his release from the Tower in 1621, the Earl retired to Petworth and spent relatively little time at Syon, but by then it must have been second nature to keep the house in good repair.¹

The inventory taken at the death of the ninth Earl in November, 1632, shows us that, though he regarded Syon as a secondary residence, he maintained it in considerable style. It was certainly well supplied with linen—the fine damask linen in a trunk and the table linen, sheets and pillow-cases stored in a little room next to the hall alone were valued at £200. This does not include the bedclothes on the fifty or so beds in the house. There was £500 worth of silver at Syon at the Earl's death, £300 worth of it in the pantry and the rest in the keeping of the Clerk of the Kitchen, though this quantity must be seen in proportion to his purchase of over £2,000 while he was in the Tower.

The inventory gives few clues as to the disposition of the main rooms but we may note some details of furnishings. The hall was typically bare of furniture—we hear only of tables, forms, the iron in the chimney to make coal fire in, fire-forks, tongs and a shovel; the lot together worth only £5. The dining room was on the south side of the house; like all the main rooms, it was hung with tapestry. Its hangings, side-table, court cupboard and fire-grate pieces were valued at £50. Next it was the Withdrawing Chamber, the same room one imagines as that used as a withdrawing chamber in 1593 and with a fireplace as that had; here

¹ Leconfield MSS. Plan of the new house at Petworth, 1615, and building estimates; Syon House MSS at Alnwick Castle, U.I.4, 18, U.III.1.

there was a carpet on the floor as well as on the table and chairs as well as stools. Three bedrooms follow, two for guests, one for a servant. The second bedroom was especially well-furnished in green, a favourite colour with the ninth Earl; it had a large bed with clothes to match and a traverse of green damask and a green velvet carpet, besides the expected table, chairs, stools, hangings, and brass andirons; the whole worth £100. Another special bedroom was on the other side of the gallery from this and was even more luxuriously furnished, this time in crimson. The bed and clothes were of damask, the tapestry hangings, carpets and upholstery for the chairs and stools of velvet. The colour of a window carpet and curtain and of a foot carpet also in this room is not given, but was presumably red too. As a rule the family was content with much less grandeur than this; for example, the new countess' bedroom at Syon had a couch bedstead in it of gilded wood and the whole furnishing of the room was valued at a mere £10, against the £120 of the best bedroom just described. The long gallery itself seems to have been kept clear of furnishing normally. At any rate, we are told only of gilded leather hangings—the sort of background which would do equally well for the salon or the dormitory aspects of the gallery's use. There was an upper gallery, too; its solitary item of furnishing was a billiard table worth ten shillings. Mention is made of a chapel, an upper room over the south side of the house, and of another room "where prayers were said", more simply furnished than the chapel. There were also two rooms called nurseries; of the other rooms in the house and the lodgings attached, the majority were bedrooms sparsely furnished.¹

So Syon was when the ninth Earl left it. He left it to be handed down in his family, to be cherished and restored by generation upon generation of Percies, to receive Royal guests from the children of the King in the time of the Civil War to our present Queen, and to be the scene of many historic occasions after his time as before. "Here", as Adrian Bury has put it for us, "on the silent pleasancess of Syon the centuries are gathered up as one, as if Time had not been to darken and divide."²

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¹ Syon MSS. H.II.1b. Alnwick MS 103 sets out the Earl's lavish purchases of silver, 1617-22.

² Adrian Bury, *Leaves of Syon*, q. *Syon House, the Story of a Great House* (Syon House Estate, 1950), 37.