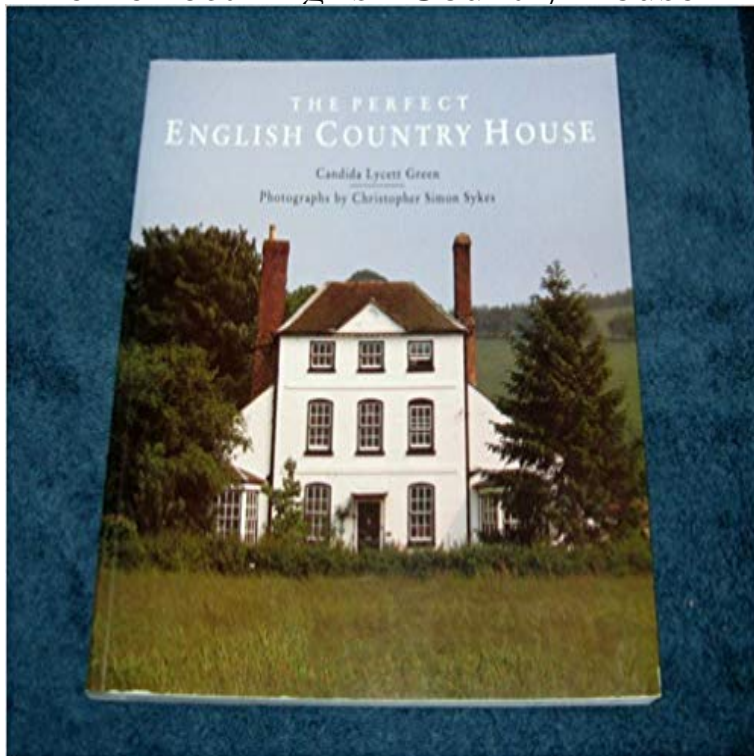


The Perfect English Country House



For those interested in the history of domestic architecture and in the past generally there could be no more enjoyable project than to travel through England in search of the supreme examples of that very English speciality, the smaller country house. That is what Candida Lycett Green has done, and the result is an idiosyncratic and occasionally provocative collection of over 80 pen portraits. These have been photographed by Christopher Simon Sykes and include gems from five architectural periods; Tudor to early Renaissance, Renaissance to Baroque, Georgian, Regency and Edwardian to the Thirties. Houses such as oak-timbered Elizabethan at The Ley in Herefordshire, measured Carolean symmetry at South Luffenham Hall in Rutland, rural baroque at Biddensden House in Wiltshire, miniature Palladian at Ebberston Hall in Yorkshire, Romantic Gothic at Midford Castle in Somerset, masculine Regency at Letheringsett in Norfolk, Arts and Crafts Movement romance and practicality at Broadleys on Lake Windermere and International Modern at Cherry Hill in Berkshire are each considered as perfect gems in the rich panoply of such vernacular architecture. Candida Lycett Green describes the setting and appearances of each house, dwelling on details and eccentricities, and observing that demotion from main residence or to farmhouse status has often been a blessing in disguise, preserving for the house its architectural integrity against the whims of fashion and modernization. The profile is completed by the lives each house has touched, and she sketches in some of the gentlemanly occupants - cavaliers and clergymen, gamblers and gardeners - as well as the odd dowager. The more recent names include Rothschild, Jekyll, Beaton and Betjeman. Several of these houses have personal associations for the author, notably the Old Rectory at Farnborough

where she spent her childhood. The Perfect English Country House is an informal laypersons guide to the evolution of the smaller English house - and much more besides. Houses such as these are not just examples of architectural perfection but bear eloquent testimony to the phases of English history. While Christopher Simon Sykes photographs capture the places as they are today, the lively and informative text also illuminates the past.

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