

OLD ENGLISH HOUSES  
THE RECORD OF A RANDOM ITINERARY

ALLAN FEA



m/s

10

d/d

OLD ENGLISH  
HOUSES

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

NOOKS AND CORNERS OF OLD  
ENGLAND

SECRET CHAMBERS AND HIDING-  
PLACES

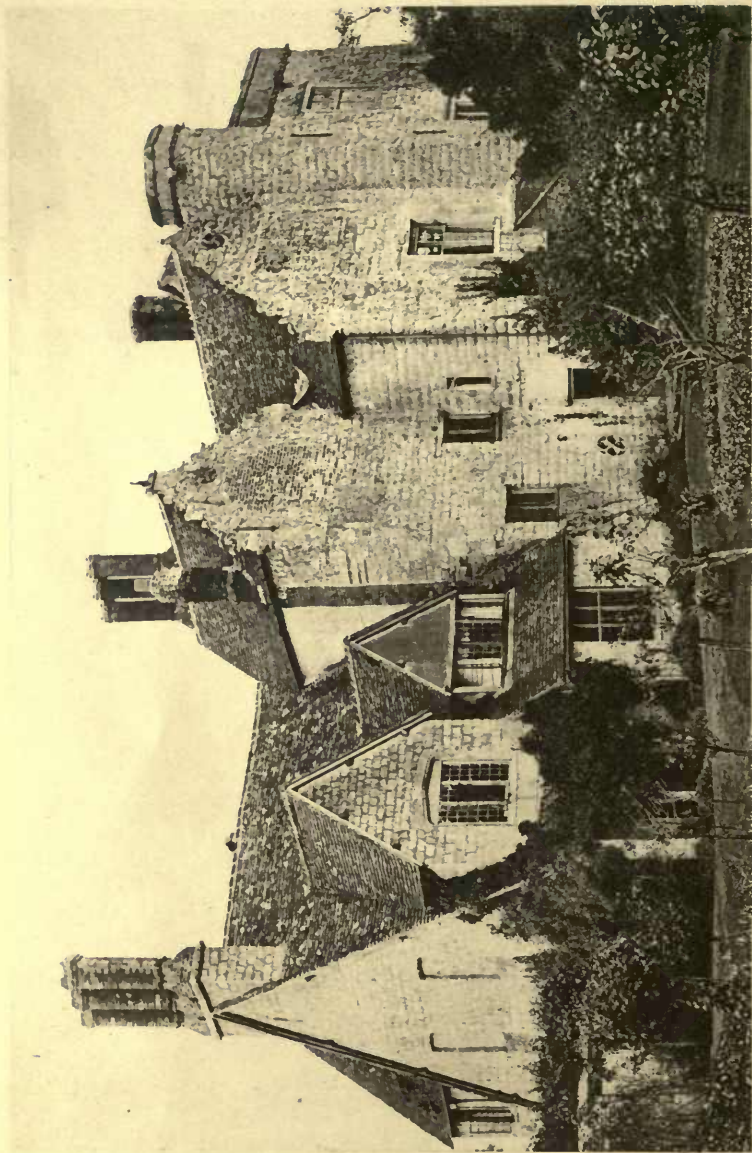
THE FLIGHT OF THE KING

AFTER WORCESTER FIGHT

KING MONMOUTH

ETC.








*Creston Manor House.*



OLD ENGLISH  
:: HOUSES ::

THE RECORD OF A RANDOM ITINERARY

*By* ALLAN FEA   

WITH A FRONTISPIECE IN PHOTOGRAVURE  
AND OVER ONE HUNDRED ILLUSTRATIONS  
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**T**HE last twenty years or so has shown a universal advance in taste, especially regarding the appreciation and preservation of old buildings in which our country fortunately is still so rich. Compare for example the restoration of a church in the 'seventies or 'eighties, with the careful and judicious restoration of to-day; or the adaptation of modern requirements to an old house thirty or forty years ago.

But the word "restoration," however modified, does not harmonise with ancient buildings, and though the busy wheels of progress travel rapidly, there are still out-of-the-way nooks and corners in old England where, like the slower movements of a clock, things proceed as tardily as they did a century or more ago.

It is for those who delight in such old-world places that I have attempted to describe a few impressions

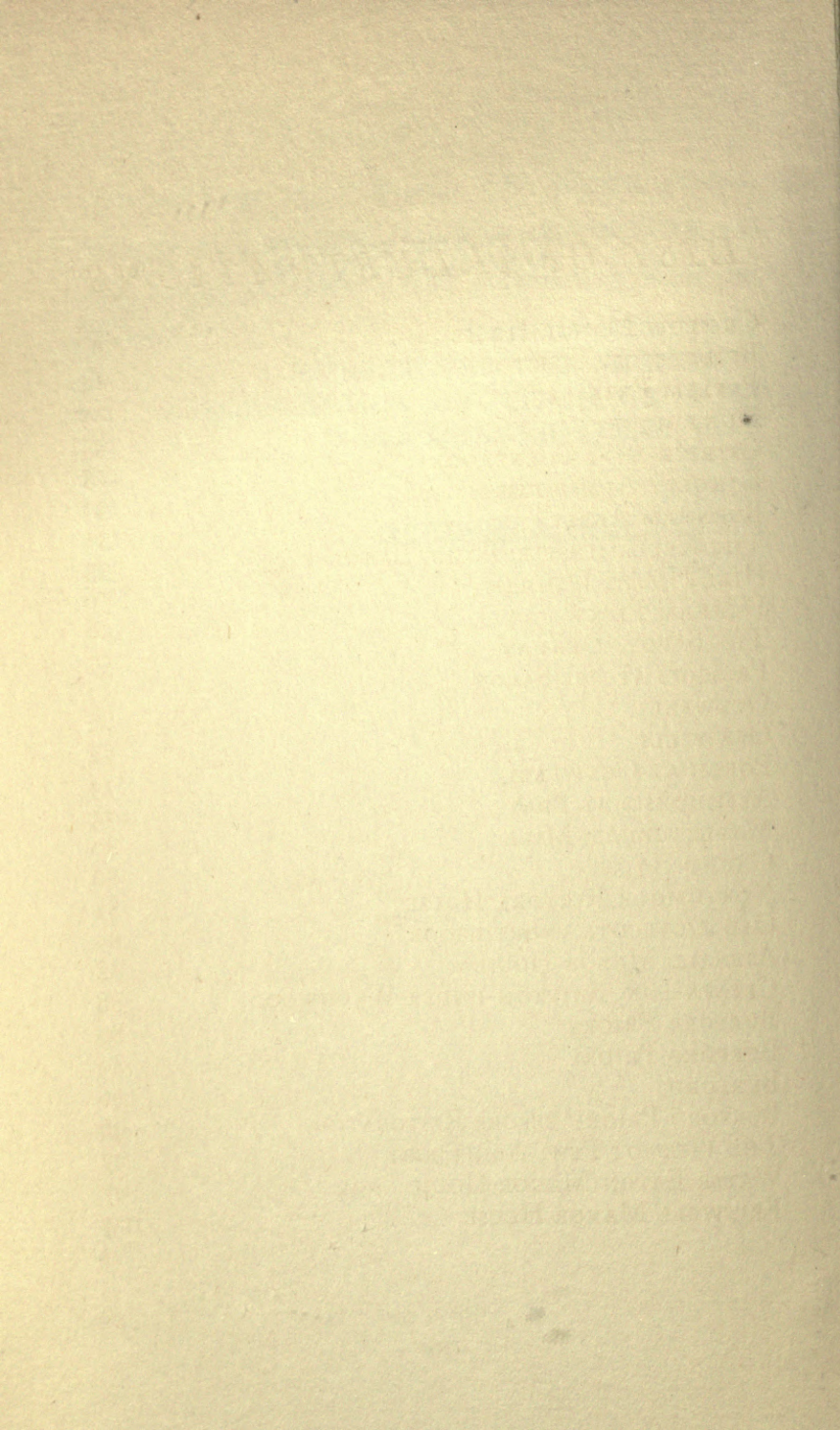
## Author's Note

collected from casual notes. The present volume, enlarged and amplified has been reconstructed out of a former one on the same subject long since out of print.

A. F.

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE	15
BERKSHIRE AND OXFORDSHIRE	69
BEDFORD, HERTFORD, AND MIDDLESEX	109
EAST HERTFORD AND ESSEX	145
KENT	163
SUSSEX	217
SURREY AND HAMPSHIRE	243
INDEX	267



# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Frontispiece</i>	<i>To face page</i>
CRESLOW MANOR HOUSE		
BRIDGEFOOT, IVER		24
PARLEM PARK		24
HUNTSMOOR		25
OSTRICH INN, COLNBROOK		25
LANGLEY ALMSHOUSES		32
BURNHAM ABBEY		32
THE KEDERMINSTER TOMB, LANGLEY		33
HILL HOUSE, DENHAM		56
DENHAM PLACE		56
THE SAVOY, DENHAM		57
FRESCOS AT THE SAVOY		57
OCKWELLS		72
OCKWELLS		72
PORCH AT OCKWELLS		73
ALMSHOUSES AT BRAY		73
MAPLEDURHAM MILL		80
GAUNT HOUSE		80
NORTHMOOR RECTORY HOUSE		81
OLD DOVECOTE, NORTHMOOR		81
ASTHALL MANOR HOUSE		88
CROWN INN, SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD		88
BURFORD PRIORY		89
BURFORD PRIORY		89
BURFORD		96
BURFORD PRIORY BEFORE RESTORATION		96
THE WILMOT PEW, ADDERBURY		97
WATER EATON MANOR HOUSE		97
FRICTWELL MANOR HOUSE		104
		9

## List of Illustrations

*To face  
page*

CANONS ASHBY	105
WROXTON ABBEY	105
WHITE HORSE INN, HOCKLIFFE	120
HELMETS AT HAREFIELD	120
HOUGHTON CONQUEST	121
ASTON BURY	121
MOOR HALL, HAREFIELD	136
ALMSHOUSES AT HAREFIELD	136
CEDAR HOUSE, HILLINGDON	137
SWAKELEYS	137
OLD HOUSE, NEWPORT	148
NELL GWYN'S HOUSE, NEWPORT	148
LITTLE HADHAM HALL	149
SPAINS HALL	149
MOYNS	152
LITTLE LEIGHS PRIORY	152
BECKINGTON	153
EASTBURY HOUSE	153
GATEWAY, DAVINGTON COURT	164
THE CALICO	164
THE CALICO	165
INTERIOR OF THE CALICO	165
CHAMPION COURT	168
OLD HOUSE, THROWLEY	168
SEED FARM	169
OLD HOUSE, EASTLING	169
OLD HOUSE NEAR LINSTED	176
OLD HOUSE NEAR LINSTED	176
OLD HOUSE, LINSTED	177
OLD HOUSE, LINSTED	177
BELL INN, HOLLINGBOURNE	180
GODFREY HOUSE, HOLLINGBOURNE	180
OLD HOUSE, HOLLINGBOURNE	181
OLD HOUSE NEAR BREDGAR	181



## List of Illustrations

	<i>To face</i> <i>page</i>
BEXON MANOR HOUSE	184
GROVE END FARM	184
OLD HOUSE NEAR ASHFORD	185
OLD HOUSE, LENHAM	188
OLD HOUSE NEAR TEYNHAM	188
CHARITY HOUSE, LENHAM	189
OLD HOUSE, HARRIETSHAM	189
OLD HOUSE, LEEDS	192
OLD HOUSE, LEEDS	192
OLD HOUSE, LANGLEY	193
OLD HOUSE, BROMFIELD	193
OLD HOUSE, CHARING	196
SPEAKING TRUMPET, CHARING	197
ACTON FARM	200
WICKENS	200
ROLLESTON FARM	201
BIDDENDEN	208
OLD HOUSE, BIDDENDEN	208
OLD HOUSE NEAR BIDDENDEN	209
THE MONKEY HOUSE	209
OLD HOUSE, SMARDEN	212
OLD HOUSE, SMARDEN	212
SMARDEN MANOR HOUSE	213
SMARDEN MANOR HOUSE	213
HOLMSHURST	220
TANNERS	221
BOLEBROOK	224
BOLEBROOK	224
OLD HOUSE, EAST GRINSTEAD	225
SACKVILLE COLLEGE	228
BRAMBLETYE HOUSE	228
OLD HOUSE, WEST HOATHLY	229
WAKEHURST	229
EAST MASCALLS	232

## List of Illustrations

	<i>To face page</i>
BROADHURST	232
EAST MASCALLS	233
PORCH HOUSE, CHIDDINGSTONE	248
HEVER CASTLE	249
CRITTENDEN	249
OSBROOK	256
BONNETS	256
OLD HOUSE, ALFORD	257
BLOCKFIELD	257

*I*

*BUCKINGHAMSHIRE*



## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

**E**VERYBODY nowadays is more or less of an antiquary. There is an innate love of the past in our composition, although perhaps we do not all care to acknowledge it. When an old landmark disappears, who does not feel a pang of regret at parting with something which linked us with the past? An old house is seldom threatened with demolition but there is some protest, more, perhaps, from the old associations than from any particular architectural merit the building may have. A great writer has likened an old house to a human heart, with a life of its own, full of sad and sweet reminiscences. Truly these reminiscences may be buried in obscurity, but even if they are it is a pleasure to speculate upon the past memories, grave and gay.

As it is only recently that the railway has "opened up" the beauties of Bucks, so close at hand for

## Old English Houses

Londoners, the rustic character of its nooks and corners has so far been but little disturbed, and let us hope that many of them will not "develop," but remain as they are for years to come. This, I know, is not the wish of many of the villagers who are brought in touch with the world. The more "improvements," the more they rejoice. It is usually the stranger in the land who laments these things.

I will name one place as an example—Gerrard's Cross. But, looking at those hideous rows of modern dwellings which have recently sprung up like mushrooms, surely also there must be many of the original inhabitants who long to get deeper into the country now that their land is raided by the Cockney. The suburban tentacles of the octopus London are for ever stretching further, and the tramway lines of provincial towns are extended like welcoming hands to meet them. But at the same time it is gratifying to observe a growing tendency towards the appreciation of ancient houses, both on account of their architecture and of their past associations.

Some years ago I remember seeing in a newspaper the outline of a triangle drawn between three places in South Bucks. The rusticity of the country lying between these points was commented upon, and unfortunately

## Buckinghamshire

also the old furniture belonging to the cottagers—the warming-pans and other things dear to the collector.

I will not specify the points of this triangle, but for my own purpose draw another, for within its limits lie the places I have to tell about. Roughly speaking, these limits will be Colnbrook to the south, Beaconsfield to the west, and Amersham to the north. Let us set out from Uxbridge and walk to Cowley, the last village in Middlesex. Beyond Cowley a long stretch of park-skirted road, refreshing to the eye after the monotonous outskirts of Uxbridge, heralds us into Buckinghamshire. This straight road from Cowley is modern. The older one leads to a ford across the stream, which in those days was much wider. Hidden behind the trees is Huntsmoor, where lived Pepys' friend, William Bowyer, who, riding home one dark night along the old serpentine road, which may still be traced within the park fences, fell into the river Colne and was drowned. Here the diarist's wife stopped during his absence abroad in 1660, where he was preparing for the triumphal return of the King. The water running round Huntsmoor gives the house a moated appearance. The older gabled part of the mansion preserves much of its original character. The addition of a taller wing

## Old English Houses

in the time of William III., or perhaps later, makes it rather puzzling at first to detect the original design.

Returning to the road, there is a sharp turn by the little bridge over the weed-grown tributary of the river, and we face, close to the waterside, a typical Queen Anne house, with formal iron gate of quaint design.

Often have I halted before this solitary old house to admire its unaltered character and solid compactness. Upon one of these occasions the drawn blinds and closed shutters of the small-paned windows facing the road prompted me, not with burglarious intent, to try whether a glimpse could be obtained of the old garden beyond. It was the month of roses, and the sweetest of all scents pervaded the air. The old house was "To let," so I learned—a golden opportunity for a peep within.

And to step within was to step back to the days of the good Queen whose demise might not yet have reached the ears of its inmates, judging by appearances, for nothing was out of character. Queen Anne was everywhere. Panelling, tables, chairs, cabinets, mirrors, clocks, all were of the period beloved by the collector.

To look out of the narrow white casements through glass panes more than two centuries old upon the orna-



## Buckinghamshire

mental ironwork in front and the meadow-skirted, winding road, was to picture at one's elbow some Kit-kat dandy, or lady in ample and rustling flowered silk, yawning with *ennui* at being so far away from the the gaiety of town.

But having visited all these old rooms was by no means to have arrived at the end of the ancient furniture, for the stables and lofts above were literally packed. If South Kensington became possessed of such a mine it would have to open a wing wherein to house it all. In astonishment I had almost forgotten the old garden, until some festoons of roses nodding over the stable wall drew me forth to admire the wealth of colour wasting its beauty when garden-party admiration should have been pouring forth on such a lovely day in June. But how many beautiful gardens are not thus abandoned when at their best! The reason is simple—the London “season.”

A former tenant of this old place—Bridgefoot—Mr. G. F. Bodley, the well-known architect, planted an avenue of trees to form a carriage approach across the stream, but as he was not permitted to build a bridge sufficiently wide to accommodate vehicular traffic the idea had to be abandoned. At this side of the house and from the further bank, the eye, satiated with every shade

## Old English Houses

of red, felt relieved by the cool green vistas between the trees. Nature seemed to have run wild at this particular spot, as if to form a contrast to the trim paths and level lawns. There was the ever-attractive sound of running water, for an old mill used to stand there many years ago.

Again on the winding uphill road, and one comes in sight of Iver village, with the church finely perched at the corner of the cross-roads. A nice old timbered inn, the Swan (the timbers spoiled somewhat with drab paint), stands opposite, and near the church are two very neat, ivy-covered Georgian houses, which have a peculiar dignity of their own. The cream-white window casements are vastly wide in comparison with those at Bridgefoot, and the panelled walls and china-cupboards of their interiors impress one at a glance with a feeling of restful comfort, so different from the ostentation of an up-to-date "desirable" villa. Both these houses have delightfully secluded gardens, with smooth lawns and beds of gay perennials, in which old-fashioned foxgloves, lilies, and Canterbury bells flourish with incomparable grace.

Iver church, like the old church of Uxbridge, has suffered restoration under Sir Gilbert Scott, but there is a fine Jacobean tomb that has survived the ordeal.

## Buckinghamshire

It represents Lady Salter, the wife of the "carver to two kings," rising from her grave. An admirable early Tudor brass gives a faithful representation of the quaint costume of the day.

Going southwards towards Colnbrook we pass Thorney Farm, where, tradition says, Cromwell slept when his army occupied the town. Richings Park is close by. It is a square, ugly building of George III.'s time. The older house belonged to the first Lord Bathurst, a great patron of genius—a proof of which could be seen some years ago in an old secluded bench near "the Abbey Walk," upon which were written verses by Congreve, Addison, Pope, Prior, Gay, and Swift.

An old moated house where it is said Queen Elizabeth was nursed while her vindictive sire held sway at Windsor Castle, some three miles away as the crow flies, stands back from the road on the outskirts of the park. It is known as Parlem Park (corrupted into "Parlaunt"), and once belonged to the Stanleys, whose coat of arms and quarterings remained in one of the old window-frames, now open to the sky. This part of the building is a sad picture of ruin. The greater portion of the huge timbers of the roof have fallen, and lie in a confused heap upon

## Old English Houses

the ground, though some of them remain suspended. The old timbered walls are still equal to a battle with the elements, and the luxurious mantle of ivy lends support as to a friend in distress ; for if no longer this is habitation for the lords of creation it is a very comfortable one for owls and the feathered tribe in general. There is a curious open corridor beneath the projecting upper storey, with oaken supports, suggestive of the "Rows" of Chester, or the entrance to Ockwells. It is the communication between the habitable and the ruinous parts of the house. One of the most interesting features, however, lies concealed beneath a tangled mass of box and yew—a dismal dungeon-chamber, with rounded roof and walls of immense thickness. Overhead dangles an ominous-looking iron ring, suggestive of unfortunate victims starved to death in "the good old days." One's fancy may ramble far away, for in a corner is a hole, blocked with rubbish, the bottom of which the good farmer told me *had never been touched*. Moreover, there are traditions of secret passages running to Windsor, Burnham Abbey, and the Parsonage Farm (mentioned later); not entirely unauthenticated either, for in ploughing the land in a level line with Windsor the hoofs of the farm-horses frequently ring forth a

## Buckinghamshire

hollow sound, and at a considerable distance from the house. The moat is broad, but within memory was double the width across. An old farm-hand who died some twenty years ago remembered when, in place of the present brick bridge, the water was spanned by a drawbridge, which was raised as regularly as those of to-day at Sherborne Castle in the adjoining county of Oxon.

Not far from Parlem is another old house associated with the masterful maiden queen. This is the Ostrich Inn, at Colnbrook, a typical Tudor hostelry, whose sturdy black timbers, some of which are said to date back seven hundred years, look good for another period just as long. The highway in which it stands is narrow, and it is as much as one can do nowadays to dodge the incessant motors, more than ever like express trains now they are provided with whistles. The mention of these raised the indignation of mine host. They were no good to *him*, he said ; nor was the gasometer which somebody had stuck up at the back of his pretty garden. And one can understand the feelings of an ancient coaching house of distinction suffering such indignities. A gable with sun-dial and carved oak twisted pillars faces this monster overtopping the trees, and makes it blush crimson at the

## Old English Houses

unseemly intrusion, for in these old corridors, once open to the yard, has walked a Tudor queen—nay, more, another celebrity, Dick Turpin. If you doubt the fact, there on the wall of the great staircase, hanging close to the twisted oak newels supporting the roof, at one time also open to the yard, hangs the pistol of the notorious gentleman of the road. Moreover, Turpin's tall four-poster may be seen, and the trapdoor in the roof of a deep cupboard, by which he made his exit in the event of unwelcome inquiries being made for him below-stairs. The old Chandos Arms at Edgware shows similar facilities in the way of a window, which looks as if the landlords of his time were rather proud of the accommodation they could provide in this way.

There is another bedroom at the Ostrich which possesses associations of a more gruesome character. Some centuries ago, when mine host found honest business too slow to fill his coffers (notwithstanding the absence of motor traffic), an ingenious device was planned by which guests putting up for the night could be relieved of their cash. Nothing could have been simpler. In the dead of night a trapdoor in the bottom of the bed opened, and the unfortunate sleeper was precipitated into boiling water! To doubt the



BRIDGEFOOT, IVER

*p. 18*



PARLEM PARK

*p. 21*



HUNTSMOOR

*p. 17*



OSTRICH INN, COLNBROOK

*p. 23*



## Buckinghamshire

story would be out of the question, for there are people living who have seen the very tank, and perchance can fill it in imagination rather with boiling oil than water.

On the opposite side of the road is another nice old inn, which also lays claim to having entertained Queen Elizabeth. Further along, just across the bridge (dated 1777), which divides Middlesex from Bucks, stands an old house, also probably an inn at one time, judging by the size of its entrance-gate. It is called King John's Palace. There is nothing older about it than the seventeenth century, but here, by repute, King John signed the Magna Charta. Runnymede is not far away, and is a formidable rival, but Colnbrook adheres firmly to its rights.

A certain amount of rivalry also exists on Magna Charta Island itself, for there are *two* tables upon which that famous document, which swept away traditional rights for written legislation, was signed. The one of oak doubtless has as much claim to the honour as the bed at Berkeley Castle to the distinction of Edward II. dying upon it. The other claimant is a stone slab on the ground, which it is easier to date back to 1215. After signing the great charter which gave Englishmen their freedom King John retired to Windsor for a day or so,

## Old English Houses

and may have visited his hunting lodge, about a mile to the north of the island, before he started on a restless progress through the country which ended in his death at Newark. The old hunting lodge, otherwise Place Farm, may possess some timbers or stones of John's time, but the general character of the house is of Tudor date. It is a picturesque old building, with projecting gable and porch beneath. There is a good deal of timber about the low-ceilinged rooms. There was some oak carving too, and heraldic glass, when I was there many years ago. But if the house is not contemporary with the great event on the island, there is every likelihood that a grand old yew-tree close by, at Ankerwyke, was then alive. And it is said to have witnessed another historical event a little over three centuries afterwards, for here, according to local tradition, Henry VIII. courted Anne Boleyn; as he is said to have done at Hever Castle, West Wickham Court, and many other places. There are some scanty ruins of the original priory, but the present house does not date further back than the beginning of the last century.

Of recent years the village of Wraysbury has developed considerably, but it is still, fortunately, very different from Datchet, where Victorian mediæval houses are conspicuous. Wraysbury, or Wyrardisbury,

## Buckinghamshire

could boast its tapering may-pole opposite the village inn. I remember a curious experience at this inn. Having tramped the country with a friend, we here partook of tea, and were upon the point of consulting time-tables when to our astonishment somebody came in to announce that our brougham was at the door! Issuing forth, true enough there was a carriage and pair, with a liveried footman, who, touching his hat as we entered, mounted the box-seat. We were too astonished to speak. Arriving at the station, we were respectfully set down, a tip was politely refused, and the brougham drove away. To this day the episode remains a mystery. The interior of Wraysbury Church has been painfully restored, as has also that of Horton, to the north, but the latter has a good Norman door, with zigzag pattern, and Tudor porch of fine proportions—a porch that the restorers of Chalfont St. Giles might have copied with advantage. Milton's parents lived at Horton, but the cottage pointed out as their residence, like King John's wooden table, is a standing contradiction to the association. A stone in the chancel records: "Beneath this stone lie the remains of Sarah the wife of John Milton." She died in 1637, and John, the poet's father, in 1646, being buried at St. Giles, Cripplegate. The poet's granddaughter, Mrs.

## Old English Houses

Foster, it is curious to note, kept a chandler's shop in Pelham Street, Spitalfields.

Leaving Datchet to the left, the road goes northwards to Ditton Park. The old house built in the reign of James I. was burnt down about a century ago, and with it perished many valuable pictures once in the possession of the Winwood family. A portion of the original chapel remains. Further north is Langley, where the interesting old church and almshouses are well worth a visit; indeed, it will reward a journey of many miles to see the remarkable Kederminster pew and library. The latter is a curious old room, with gorgeously painted panels forming a series of cupboards or bookshelves for holding leather-bound tomes of very ancient appearance,—rather heavy literature, apparently. The fireplace is also richly painted. There are two deep-set windows, and a massive-legged oak table and some old chairs complete the furnishing of the room.

Tradition says that Royalist conferences were held here at the time of the Civil War. The lady in charge, an inmate of the adjacent almshouses, was proud of its kingly associations, and assigned to one of the chairs with a crown on the back the honour of having belonged to Charles I. Then there were two Georgian chairs which “once belonged to Cromwell,” and Queen

## Buckinghamshire

Anne's prayer-book. She was a little uncertain, however, which monarch should have possessed the quaint embroidered cushions of the Kederminster pew. The bewigged portraits worked upon them might be meant either for George I. or his rival Prince James Francis Stuart. Strange to say, she forgot to point out good Queen Bess, who is represented upon one of the panels. The pew is approached from the library by some steps, and is decorated on all sides, including the ceiling, with mysterious mottoes, eyes, saintly figures, and armorial designs. It is long and narrow, the seats far too cramped to have permitted the Kederminsters of old to have slept with comfort, and, when the latticed oriental looking windows are closed, somewhat stuffy. Above the screen, in front, is elaborate early Jacobean ornamentation in woodwork painted like the rest. The immediate look-out is upon the Kederminster-Parsons-Seymour-Masham-Marlborough-Harvey aisle, with tattered banners aloft, and an empty iron bracket where, if I remember rightly, not so very many years ago used to hang a fine old helmet. What becomes of these church helmets? Thanks to his Grace of Norfolk, the one belonging to his ancestor at Framlingham was not permitted to be removed, though a very substantial sum was offered for it recently. But in many cases

## Old English Houses

the families to whom old tombs rightly belong, and by whom they should be preserved, have become extinct, and then somehow or other the old helmets disappear.

The tomb of Sir John Kederminster, his spouse and family, is in the chancel. Their kneeling figures are represented, and give a good idea of the costume of the latter part of the sixteenth or early part of the seventeenth century. The female headdress is particularly quaint.

The rest of Langley Church has quite an old-world look, if it is not architecturally pleasing to the eye, for the stone pillars are thrown out of balance by the introduction of wooden columns of the Renaissance period. The screens are Jacobean and Georgian, and the windows belong to the Decorated period.

But the gem of Langley is to be found at the back of the churchyard, for there stands the most picturesque block of seventeenth-century almshouses, in that delightfully unrestored condition that nowadays is so rarely to be found, at least within this distance from London. One almost hesitates to breathe the fact lest to-morrow may see masons on the spot destroying the perfect harmony, the poetry which nothing but time and unassisted nature can give. An artist happening

## Buckinghamshire

to come across this ancient building in the twilight of a summer's day must surely be unhappy if unprovided with materials for making a few notes in line and colour. There are no straight lines anywhere; the chimneys even expand in size towards the summit, giving them a peculiarly massive appearance. The lines of the central porch, the narrow doorways and stone-mullioned windows, are exceptionally graceful. The chief charm, however, lies in the colour—the mellowed red brick, covered here and there with warm-toned plaster, the yellow lichen of the roof, the ramblers and creepers climbing here, there, and everywhere, with brilliant dashes of scarlet in the very places where they show to best advantage. The little low-walled garden in front was a mass of bloom, with dragon-mouths sprouting from the very wall itself like a fiery fountain.

On the other side of the churchyard is another block of red-brick almshouses, but it lacks the colour so lavishly bestowed by nature on the other—the happy abandonment of climbing roses.

Langley Park lies some little distance to the north, and on the way we may notice the Parsonage Farm on the right, which, with its ancient timbered barn, makes a very pleasing picture. As the moat may still

## Old English Houses

be traced, I think the present name was not the original one, and this house must be the moated house of Rycots which was once honoured by the presence of Queen Elizabeth.

Langley Park and Black Park are near neighbours. The gloom beneath the sombre trees recalls those dark forests in the Harz Mountains where it is always twilight, and where I remember seeing wild boars assembling in one particular spot, and at a given hour, to be fed on biscuits! This tamed the romance of the thing. But as winter advances I was told the boar becomes more crotchety, like a livery Army pensioner from the East. Then is the time, not to spear him as of old, but to shoot the poor beast at a safe distance.

The Duchess Sarah at one time lived at Langley, and built a temple beneath the trees, from which she could see the distant towers of her royal mistress's castle. When the great Duke purchased Langley Manor he pulled down the old house built by Sir John Kederminster, but fortunately did not demolish the family pew and library. There are in the house, I am told, two large paintings of his famous victories.

The village of Upton lies to the west of Langley, just off the Great Bath Road, and, considering its proximity to Slough, bravely preserves its rural





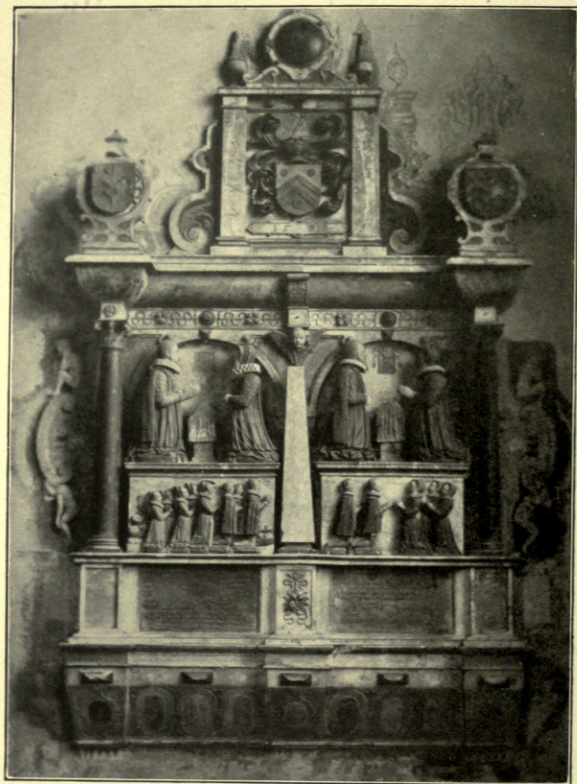
LANGLEY ALMSHOUSES

*p. 30*



BURNHAM ABBEY

*p. 34*



THE KEDERMINSTER TOMB, LANGLEY *p. 30*

## Buckinghamshire

character. The pretty little church, with ivy-clad grey Norman tower standing out against a background of trees, has a very peaceful look. A little over half a century ago it had been suffered to go too much to decay for services to be held there and must have presented as melancholy a scene as the old church of Chingford.

Upton Court, close by but buried in trees, is well in harmony with the old church. The gables, porch, and lattice windows of this once religious house have a snug and hospitable appearance. It is just the sort of manor house one sees in Christmas periodicals, with deep snow on the roof and window-sills, and cheery lights in the windows. In one of the chimneys there is a hiding-place. It has a separate shaft to give it ventilation, but as the fireplace has now a modern grate, there is no means of reaching it excepting by that rather uncomfortable approach.

To the west of Slough, a little to the south of the road, is another spot nestling in peaceful seclusion. Behind an old wall we get a glimpse of gables and then an old walled garden. This is Huntercombe, and the house looks as if it has a history.

Near, on the other side of the road, is another old wall, a very remarkable one, following the bend of

## Old English Houses

the road without an angle. The top is roofed with weathered red tiles and in its way is unique. One naturally expects that something interesting must lie within that enclosure, and there stand, incorporated in farm buildings, the remains of Burnham Abbey. The principal part is occupied as a stable, and to see cart-horses feeding within the mysterious gloom of an early English doorway looks incongruous if picturesque. Various bits of moulded stone columns, doorways, and windows may be seen here and there built up in more modern masonry. An old barn, supported by huge oaken beams, stands close by, but is an infant compared with the Benedictine abbey.

The village of Burnham to the north on the other side of the Bath road is of no great interest—the church very much restored like its neighbour Farnham. At the latter I noticed one or two strikingly original modern-antique residences, of which the less said the better.

Of Stoke Poges and the famous Beeches so much has been written that I will not attempt to cover this ground, sacred to the poet Gray. The sylvan glades of the popular-excursion resort are indeed lovely, but I must own to being disappointed at their stunted appearance after seeing the noble beeches of Knole, or

## Buckinghamshire

Up Park. But a place where wholesale teas are provided puts one out of countenance with beautiful surroundings. The distractions of wailing babies and mechanical barrel-organ melodies perhaps tend towards the drawing of comparisons; however, I feel sure the Elegy in a Churchyard could never have been inspired here under present-day conditions.

Northwards, in the direction of Beaconsfield, the modern church of Hedgerley may be mentioned as possessing a portion of Charles II.'s cloak. One day, journeying northwards, perhaps to visit the poet Waller, he found the altar here without proper covering, and promptly placed his cloak upon it; a thoughtful and graceful act of this much maligned monarch.

The first thing that strikes one upon entering Beaconsfield is its expansiveness. The space, for example, from the church to the over-restored Saracen's Head at one corner, and the less pretentious White Hart at another, is in striking contrast to the confined limits to be found in many a cathedral town. The old chimneys surmounting some of the more ancient houses may be examined without the craning of necks.

There is a clean, airy look about the wide roads, and the red brick houses on either side are mostly

## Old English Houses

Georgian. One white stuccoed building with projecting bays is a puzzling mixture of seventeenth and eighteenth-century architecture, with windows of nondescript character inserted between the heavy mullions.

One need not wander far without being convinced that the town is fortunate in the possession of a liberal benefactor. There are evidences on all sides, from the comfortable rustic seats beneath the trees, to the luxury provided in the old Rectory House for the instruction and amusement of everybody. Meetings of all sorts are held here, art classes are provided, and useful trades taught. It must be a pleasure to be instructed in such delightful old rooms.

This house is a good example of the lavish use of timber in a Gothic building. The internal as well as the external walls are an array of huge beams. A broad spiral staircase leads up to the room of state, fittingly set out with fine old furniture, carved cabinets, and some uncommon stamped-leather chairs, said at one time to have been in the possession of the Dukes of Richmond. The courtyard, with two projecting wings, faces the churchyard, but the most picturesque side faces the Rectory garden, the style of architecture recalling somewhat Eastgate House at Rochester. There is

## Buckinghamshire

another old timber house in the churchyard worth notice.

The church has been very much burnished up inside—the case with so many churches in the county—perchance because Sir Gilbert Scott was a native. There is plenty of colour in the chancel, the admixture of green and blue cooling down the more brilliant tones of the roof. A graceful side screen remains, but very little else of ancient date. A sword hanging beneath a mural tablet to Lieutenant Grenfell is a sad memento of the battle of Khartoum.

Beneath an aged walnut-tree stands the steepled sarcophagus of the seventeenth-century poet and statesman, Edmund Waller, who, Bishop Burnet says, at the age of eighty could entertain the House better than any other member. But he was manifestly a time-server, for he made himself equally agreeable to Cromwell, Charles II., and James II. His ready wit, however, helped him out of difficulties, for when Charles asked how it was that his verses upon the “Happy Restoration” could not be compared in point of merit with his eulogy on the Lord Protector, he replied, “Your Majesty must remember the pen of the poet is ever brightest when it deals with fiction.”

The mansion, Hall Barn, where he lived has been

## Old English Houses

succeeded by a later building. This dates from Queen Anne's time and contains a good staircase. The gardens are old fashioned and there is a maze; in a part called The Grove Milton as well as Waller are said to have written poetry. There is a tradition that the Entrance Lodge, or part of it, is contemporary with Waller, but this is difficult to believe, for it looks as if it had been made in Wardour Street. Lord Percival, who visited Hall Barn when Waller's grandson was in possession (1724), speaks of the improvements made by him saying: "There is a great deal more still to be done which will cost a prodigious sum"—and a great deal has been done since then. He saw a seat of the famous grandfather poet, "which is so revered that, old as it is, it is never to be removed, but constantly repaired, like Sir Francis Drake's ship." The seat, I am told, is still well cared for.

Another celebrity of whom the town is proud is the statesman Burke, to whose memory two monuments may be found in the church. Stories are still told of the tall, old, spectacled man—dressed in a tightly-fitting brown coat with little bob-wig, and his coach drawn by four black horses—and his guests at Gregories, including the great Sir Joshua, who took for model of his "Infant Hercules" the baby of his host's bailiff.



## Buckinghamshire

Midway between Beaconsfield and Amersham an inviting wood-skirted lane turns off to the left, and a sign-post points to Penn. We shall do well to turn off here, for that little village is one of the most charmingly situated in the county. It is perched up on a hill, and at a distance the low towered church and little cluster of buildings round it make a very picturesque group. It is, perhaps, a good thing that William Penn cannot be directly traced back to the Penns of this village, otherwise our cousins over the water would have attempted to annex the whole village long before now. It is scarcely necessary to state the Quaker's ancestors came from Wiltshire, a county that did not appreciate him sufficiently to preserve his pew, for, if I remember rightly, this was put up for sale in London not so very long ago.

The Penns of Penn died out in George II.'s reign, and there are monuments from the time of Elizabeth to the last representative. The brasses, the chief point of interest, are worth study for the details of sixteenth and seventeenth-century costume.

Northward the lane again dips into the woods, and at length joins that fine old road high up in the hills running between Reading, St. Albans, and Ware.

Considering Amersham is only twenty-six miles

## Old English Houses

from London, it has preserved its ancient character in a remarkable manner. There is a sleepy, old-world dignity about it that one would expect to find a hundred miles or so from the metropolis. It might be likened to the Cotswold town of Chipping Camden were not the pervading colour red instead of grey, and brick being less gloomy than stone the town looks prosperous. As at Beaconsfield, one is struck by the width of the main street, principally to the north of the old town hall, which, by the way, is the only thing suggestive of a town.

As you enter from the south, the old lettering of a notice posted on an ancient house on the left strikes the eye, to the effect that the local authorities make short work of ballad singers. This was put up a century ago, but one is glad to see Amersham still wishes its repose to be undisturbed. Between the pillars that support the town hall there is a grim lock-up, where presumably refractory ballad singers are provided with a lodging. A bell, aloft in the open turret, has tolled forth the hour since Charles II.'s time; and looking at the stone-faced brick walls, the quaint windows and open piazza, one would imagine his sacred majesty was still upon the throne.

There are numerous old inns, their signs stretching

## Buckinghamshire

far into the road from elaborate ornamented iron-work. The Crown, for example, whose subdued tint of blue is as welcome a touch of colour amidst the pervading red, as the juxtaposition of primary colours in an "old master." The street is narrow just here and, looking southwards, makes a pretty picture. The church stands away to the left, behind a block of buildings, and at close quarters is marred by the proximity of a brewery. It has been far too much renovated inside, but there are some interesting fifteenth-century brasses nailed to the walls. At the foot of a modern pulpit a tombstone has been suffered to remain, and here one may see the cavity where one of them belongs.

The Drakes are the great people here, as may be seen from the elaborate Jacobean tomb in the chancel. Sir William Drake of Shardeloes built the pretty little almshouses in the north of the town (to be mentioned later). There is a tomb to his son Montagu (who died in William III.'s reign), with medallion portraits of himself and wife. A brass in memory of John Drake (1623) tells us that :

Nowe is hee past all feare of paine  
'Twere sinn to wish him heere againe.  
Vewe but the way by w<sup>ch</sup> wee come  
Thow'l say hee's best that's first at home.

## Old English Houses

Other conspicuous tombs are of Lady Isabella Curwen (about 1636) whose marble statue poses towards the altar; opposite are William Bent and his wife in Georgian costume, but, being cut off at the knees, they have lost much of their dignity.

Beyond the northern extremity of the town in a park stands Shardeloes, the seat of the Drakes, a heavy Georgian structure with classic columned front. The mansion, of Elizabeth's time (for the queen stopped there once), came to the Drakes by intermarriage with the family of Tothill, the last representative of which had thirty-three children but failed a male heir! Little Shardeloes is nearer the town's end. It is older and much more picturesque, being a gabled Jacobean red brick house with massive porch and narrow windows. The creeper-clad gables peep over a high wall at an old mill opposite, the more modern and habitable part of which has windows similar to those of the town hall.

Strolling back in this direction beyond the cosy bay-windows of the Swan, are the almshouses, with the usual knarled trunks of pollard trees in front, erected, so says a tablet on the central gable, in 1657. On the same side of the road a little further along is a very fine Tudor house, with octagonal chimneys and dormer

## Buckinghamshire

windows. It is cased in stucco, doubtless concealing a good half-timbered front, perhaps similar to another old house close by with timber beams forming narrow Gothic arches.

Many delightful peeps may be had into the great doorways of old inns. The Griffin, for example, has a typical gabled yard, and within, that comfortable yet formal air of aristocratic patronage. I lunched here many years ago, and have not forgotten the stately way in which mine host carved a huge sirloin. I vividly recall also the wide dusty road leading to the Chalfonts, the wealth of dog-roses and white splashes of elderberry in the hedges, the air laden with the scent of honeysuckle and new-mown hay.

About midway between Amersham and Chalfont St. Giles, off the main road to the right and the other side of a little stream, is a secluded farm—a good Stuart house, whose panelled rooms and doorways are as perfect as when built.

Everybody, of course, knows Milton's village and cottage, and therefore to speak of it is almost superfluous, but a few impressions may be noted. Much of the harmony is destroyed by the entrance to the grounds of some mansion in the middle of the village. It looks as out of place as the modern porch stuck on the church. A

## Old English Houses

very up-to-date mediæval tea-shop immediately opposite Milton's modest cottage now stares it out of countenance. Its heavy buttresses and dazzling plaster will, I trust, in time be relieved by a creeper of some sort. Milton's cottage looks humbled by this presence. Its lattice windows look rather new and tidy, but otherwise the house has not been restored and scraped like Shakespeare's birthplace. The poetry of the surroundings was in a measure spoiled by an array of linen upon a clothes-line in the garden. But the day was Monday, so there was no way of avoiding that, nor for that matter, the five-finger exercises which some budding musician was performing on a relaxed piano! There is another old cottage in the village far more picturesque than Milton's house. It stands at cross-roads leading to very unheard-of places specified upon the corner facing the angle of the road: Three Households, Seer Green, Bowstridge, and Outfields. We are indeed in the heart of the country. The name of no familiar town or village and only twenty-two miles from London!

There is the quaintest entrance to the churchyard beneath the first story of an old Tudor cottage. It has a swinging oaken gate worked by a pulley running on massive oaken wheels. The mechanism has recently come to a standstill by the removal of the rope and

## Buckinghamshire

weight ; the result, maybe, of the device affording a too happy hunting, or rather playing, ground for the youth of the village.

The remains of the great poet would turn in his grave were he to see the new porch of this church. The last of the poor old benches near the belfry meekly hide their fleur-de-lis heads behind an array of new pews. The arches of the roof are good, and there is an interesting mural decoration above the chancel arch. These, and an altar tomb and a few sixteenth-century brasses, are about all that is old. Upon a window-sill close by the former, two cherubs are weeping, possibly bewailing the loss of their tomb, of which, perhaps, the carved stone brackets now supporting a cistern in the vestry, formed a part. At the back of the organ, among other discarded things, is a fine oak table with modern leaf attached which, without that embellishment might figure in the vestry or elsewhere with advantage. Some brief instructions regarding the organ, in red type, caught my eye, composed seemingly in a rather sarcastic vein. "Movable brackets," it was stated, "can be placed so that the flames touch the woodwork. This done once and the whole is set on fire." There were but few words : nothing was said as to how to put it out again.

## Old English Houses

The meeting-house of Jordans and Penn's modest burial-place are only a short distance from the village, up the hill past Milton's cottage. One rarely goes there without encountering American pilgrims. The deaf old lady who does the honours fails not to show you how the ladies' gallery could be shut off, by raising stout wooden shutters, in the event of an alarm. It is a pity this excellent idea has not been adopted in the House as a preventive measure against suffragette attacks. It might be a little elaborated so that by pressing a button the Prime Minister could avoid interruption.

The plain, square, Dutch-looking house and simple burial ground of the founder of Pennsylvania is surrounded by trees, and close by are the stables where the Friends of old put up their horses.

The Misbourne stream, which we crossed before, continues along the valley, skirting the road between the two Chalfonts. After heavy rains the stretches of water and wild reed-grown foreground make a most attractive picture, viewed from the road above. In a direct line you look across to distant beech-woods and the rising ground of Penn and Wycombe.

Chalfont St. Peter can in no way be compared with



## Buckinghamshire

its twin-brother St. Giles. The church is in the main modern, and a new bridge over the Misbourne spoils the former rustic appearance of the wooden footways. There are a few old houses dotted here and there, one particularly worth notice, with steep gables and massive oak bargeboards. Just outside the village stands the successor to Judge Jeffreys' house. He is said to have lived here before he rebuilt Bulstrode, and one would have thought the peaceful beauty of Buckinghamshire would have in some measure soothed his savage and heartless nature. The house was originally built by Fleetwood, Cromwell's son-in-law (Ireton's widow became his second wife), one of the many regicides whose names crop up in this county. At the Restoration he was pardoned, mainly because his father had been cupbearer to the king's father and grandfather, and retired to Stoke Newington, where he died in William III.'s reign.

Bulstrode is about a couple of miles to the southwest, but the present building is modern. The old house was famous for its pictures, which were dispersed in 1786, the sale lasting nearly as long as that of the famous Stowe collection. Previous to this, a few of the portraits were transferred to Strawberry Hill; for Walpole records they merely served the purpose of

## Old English Houses

targets for the youthful members of the Bentincks to shoot at.

We will avoid the Oxford road, running south-eastwards towards Denham, on account of the everlasting motors and dust; the latter must invite many travellers to halt at a very homely looking inn half-way down the hill on the left.

The pretty village of Fulmer, to the south of Gerrards Cross, will well repay a little detour. It is small and compact, its houses and old church placed in a hollow amidst beautifully wooded country. The latter contains a magnificent Jacobean tomb to Sir Marmaduke and Lady Dayrell, an important Buckinghamshire family, as may be seen from other interesting tombs at Lillingstone Dayrell, near Buckingham.

The inscription at Fulmer fully sets forth the royal patronage the Knight enjoyed :—

“Heere in a vault in the South Ile of this church lye ye bodies of Sir Marmaduke Darrell Knight, sometimes Lord of this Mannor and Anne his wife, daughter of John Lennard of Knoll in ye Countie of Kent Esquire, which Sir Marmaduke was Servant to ye famous Queene Elizabeth in her warres both by Sea and Land, and after in her Household. He was Cofferer to King James of blessed memory and dyed

## Buckinghamshire

Cofferer to that excellent Prince King Charles. He was favoured by all these renowned Princes and employed in matters of great trust for ye space of fifty yeares, in all which he acquitted himselfe with Credit and Commendation. He was eminent for Devotion towards God, Charitie and Humilitie towards his Neighbour, and Mortification of himselfe. He built this church at his own charge and gave a yearly Exhibition to ye Poore of this Parishe, for ever, and did both in his lifetime. He left two Sonnes behind him, Sir Sampson Darrell Knight who married Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Christopher Hampden of Wendover in ye Countie of Bucks Esquire, and Marmaduke his second sonne to whom he gave ye Lordship of Horstow in ye Countie of Lyncolne, who married Elizabeth daughter to — Fitch, Gent. His daughter Mary was married to Sir Robert Georges of Wraxall in ye Countie of Somerset Knight, who died before Sir Marmaduke and lies in ye same vault. After ye death of his said first wife, Sir Marmaduke married Anne, daughter to Edmund Kederminster of Langley Esquire by whom he had no issue. He died ye 22th of March Ann. Dni. 1631."

Peter, another of the Dayrells, followed the misfortunes of Charles I. and lived to see the throne

## Old English Houses

restored to his son. Among charities left by Sir Marmaduke was a sum for his tomb to be kept in order.

It is a pity more monuments are not thus endowed. The rector of a parish is not always interested in their proper preservation, when no funds are forthcoming from the family who should be mainly interested. Only recently I heard an instance of this. The living representatives of an ancient family, residing many miles away from the parish where their ancestors were interred, were appealed to. Funds were lacking, or perhaps, as is sometimes the case, the whirl of modern life did not allow sufficient time to think of "mouldy tombs"; at any rate no response coming, the monument, —a cross-legged crusader or recumbent effigy of some description—being, as it happened, somewhat of an encumbrance in the scheme of restoration, was promptly carried into the churchyard *and buried!*

The village of Denham is an ideal one, full of pretty timber and red brick cottages, upon many of which cling graceful creepers, and there is a gigantic wisteria covering the front of the old inn which is quite a picture in the summer. Beyond this are the rounded gables of Hill House, a compact late Jacobean building, and farther on the grey church tower may be seen embosomed in trees. Among the old monuments in the

## Buckinghamshire

church are some to the family of Peckham, to whose house, the predecessor of Denham Place, fugitive priests used to resort in the days of religious persecution. Denham Court preserves an erroneous tradition that Charles II. was concealed there by Lady Bowyer (who was a Weld in her maiden days). Some panel pictures here are in some unaccountable way connected with the tradition ; but far from representing any episodes in the king's escape, they appear to be merely pastoral scenes and studies in still life. Besides a few old windows, there is nothing to carry us back to the seventeenth century.

Between the house and the church is a magnificent avenue ; indeed, avenues of aged elms line the roads in all directions, and on the outskirts of the village is one of those time-mellowed red-brick garden walls which suggest the proximity of a good old house within. This is Denham Place, which was built in Charles II.'s reign—a peaceful-looking house, with an air of ancestral dignity about it. The interior is quite in keeping. One old tapestried room has a remarkable frieze representing houses, castles, churches, and windmills in vivid colours and bold relief. There is also an old chapel full of richly gilt linenfold panelling. Near the house stretches a wide reach of the picturesque weed-

## Old English Houses

grown river—an ideal spot to lounge away an hour on a hot summer day, for fortunately one may enjoy this pretty spot from the high road. The village pound, not far away, has been cleverly converted into a fowl-run for an adjacent cottage. Though a new railway line has recently penetrated this country, the pervading peace and harmony of Denham, I rejoice to say, have in no way been destroyed. By and by, perchance, rows of jerry-built eyesores will spring up like toadstools to destroy the scene. But sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; let us enjoy the rural bliss while it lasts. Denham is fortunate in the possession of a learned antiquarian as a rector. He kindly showed me the manuscript of the exhaustive history of the parish which he has since published.

Close by the pretty Colne is the Savoy, a charming and secluded old farmstead surrounded by the sweetest of gardens. Little streamlets run here and there through the grounds, crossed by small rustic bridges. In the summer the banks of the river are one mass of roses, which hang in festoons in all directions, and fill the air with their sweet perfume. Inside the house are dark-panelled rooms, with ceilings of ponderous beams, a fine old staircase, and all kinds of rambling corridors. Some very curious mural paintings in one of the bed-

## Buckinghamshire

rooms represent incidents from the second chapter of Exodus. The costumes are somewhat incongruous, but give one a capital idea of the mode of dress of the early part of James I.'s reign. The colours, though rather crude, are as vivid and fresh as when they were first laid on. Moses, burying the Egyptian, is in an attitude strangely suggestive of a game of golf. The accompanying landscape is scarcely so realistic : the blue of the sky and the perspective are the artist's weak points. A vanishing point of a queer-looking structure is centred in the spectator, and if followed in the opposite direction would lead one into everlasting space. Three sides of the room are covered by similar paintings.

Middle, Steeple, and East Claydon, five miles to the south of Buckingham, must be familiar to those who have perused the pages of the delightful Verney Memoirs, drawn from the voluminous manuscripts at Claydon House. Nothing could be more realistic than the description of country life of the time of Charles I., which may be gathered from the correspondence of the good old cavalier, Sir Edmund Verney, who fell at Edgehill bearing the King's standard. The details of the simple home-life read almost as if they had been penned

## Old English Houses

in the present time. I have not been inside the house, but I believe it is full of interest.

Some curious superstitions still linger in this part of Buckinghamshire. A remarkable instance is recorded of Quainton. Many years ago there was a tree here which was reputed to bud and bloom only on Christmas Day, and the villagers had such faith in the belief that they would sooner acknowledge that the new style of the almanac was in error than that the tree could fail in performing the miracle. Quainton turned out *en masse* one Christmas Eve to witness what would happen; but as nothing did happen, they refused to acknowledge the next day as Christmas Day, and would not keep it as a holiday.

Of all the old houses in Buckinghamshire, Creslow Manor House, some six miles to the north of Aylesbury, is the most picturesque. Creslow Pastures, as it is sometimes called, stands a little way off the main road, and its old chapel, barns, and out-buildings together make a charming group. To ascribe a date to the house would be impossible, for it is a harmonious mixture of many periods.

The walls of the tower, for example, are six feet thick and date from the fourteenth century, while the



## Buckinghamshire

character of some of the rooms belongs entirely to the time of Charles I.

At the Dissolution, the manor degenerated from the possession of the Knights Templars and Hospitallers to "the Keeper of the Royal Cows!" Cornelius Holland, a poor youth about the court of the first Charles, when he grew up was promoted to this post, and a few years afterwards showed his gratitude to the King by signing his death warrant. After the Restoration the manor was granted to one of the Cabal Ministers, Lord Clifford of Chudleigh, who succeeded Arlington, the patron who had pitch-forked him into favour, as Lord High Treasurer.

The name Clifford is responsible for the story that Creslow is haunted by the ghost of Fair Rosamond who, of course, belonged to the more ancient baronetage of De Clifford, and whose proper haunting ground should be Godstow Nunnery in the adjoining county. Methinks the most likely ghost for Creslow should be the regicide Keeper of the Cows, but the rustling of silken skirts proves the restless spirit to belong to the gentler sex; moreover it is a mediæval ghost, for it invariably selects a Gothic doorway for gliding through.

It is recorded that about the year 1850 (these

## Old English Houses

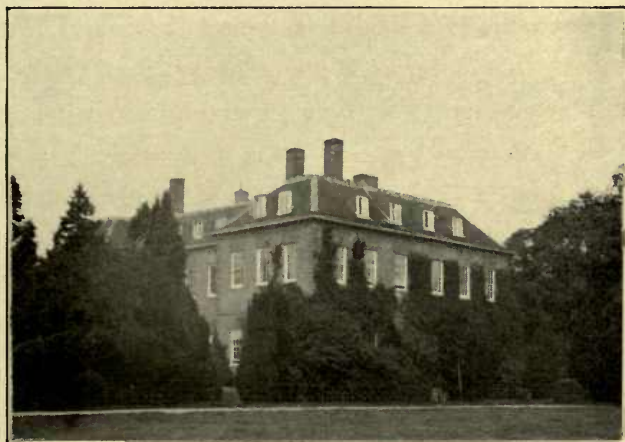
vague dates are rather exasperating), a guest, for want of better accommodation, slept in the haunted chamber, a room above the crypt and connected therewith by a newel staircase. Having locked the doors so as to be secure from practical jokes he got into bed and was soon wrapped in slumber. This, by the way, is the preliminary to most ghost stories. We will continue in Mr. A or Mr. B's own words: "Suddenly I was aroused, and on raising my head to listen, I heard a sound certainly resembling the light soft tread of a lady's footsteps accompanied by the rustling of a silk gown. I sprang out of bed and lighted a candle. There was nothing to be seen, and nothing now to be heard. I carefully examined the whole room, I looked under the bed, into the fireplace, up the chimney, and at both the doors which were fastened, as I had left them. I looked at my watch and found it was a few minutes past twelve. As all was now perfectly quiet, I extinguished the candle and entered my bed and soon fell asleep. I was again aroused. The noise was now louder than before, it appeared like the violent rustling of a stiff silk dress. I sprang out of bed, darted to the spot where the noise was, and tried to grasp the intruder in my arms. My arms met together but enclosed nothing. The

56



HILL HOUSE, DENHAM

*p. 50*



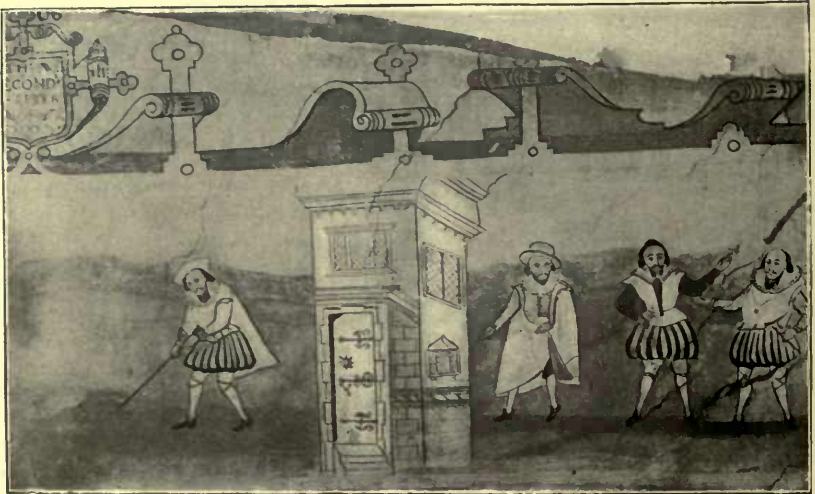
DENHAM PLACE

*p. 51*



THE SAVOY DENHAM

p. 52



FRESCO AT THE SAVOY

p. 52

## Buckinghamshire

noise passed to another part of the room and I followed it, groping near the floor to prevent anything passing under my arms. It was in vain, I could feel nothing—the noise had passed away through the Gothic door, and all was still as death!”

After this, Rosamond Clifford did not further disturb the gentleman's repose.

The tower with octagonal turret, perhaps, is the oldest portion of Creslow, and dates back to the time of Edward III., or earlier. The gentleman farmer whose family has resided there for some generations kindly took me round, from the vaults up to the roof, where a glorious view may be obtained.

The old crypt has a very graceful groined roof supported by four columns. From here a subterranean passage is said to run a couple of miles at least.

Another passage led to the dungeon which still contains the suitable accompaniment of human remains.

I casually picked up a thigh-bone, and, ruminating upon the possibilities of its past, like Hamlet over Yorick's skull, was horrified on looking round to observe that the dog who had followed us about the premises was actually begging for it.

Of the “Pastures” of Creslow I can say nothing, beyond the fact that one meadow is locally said to

## Old English Houses

be one of the largest in England. They were white with snow, as were the roofs of the picturesque old houses at the adjacent village of Whitchurch. The remainder of the impressions of this visit are the cold drive and a cosy tea at the Old King's Head at Aylesbury—an ancient hostelry containing a large dining-hall with an immense Tudor diamond-paned oak mullioned window. A cheerful wood fire was reflected in the old rafters of the roof, and, adding to the snugness of the room, only made one dread the more the hour for turning out into the biting east wind.

Aylesbury Church has some good monuments and a fine array of miserere seats; but what interested me most was the rough old oak Gothic wardrobe for the vestments. The almshouses near the church unfortunately have been restored—and spoiled. There are many places of interest to the west of Aylesbury. In a drive of about ten miles one may include Hartwell, Dinton, Winchendon, Dorton, and Boarstall.

The mansion house of Hartwell is, of course, one of the finest in the county. It has an imposing Elizabethan front with lofty mullioned bays and a fine porch, over which is a very peculiar corbel supporting an oriel window. Opposite this north front extends

## Buckinghamshire

a magnificent avenue. I intended to have asked to see the staircase here—a remarkable one, I believe, with the carved figures in oak of heroes, biblical, heathen, historial, and otherwise; but the great white front of the mansion struck me with awe, or perhaps it was a sight of the butler—at any rate, my courage failed, and I contented myself with having seen the exterior.

A little way off the main road, a mile or so farther south-west, is Dinton. Over a high wall peep the pretty red-brick gables of the hall—a stately pile erected, I believe, in the reign of James I. In the porch of the church is one of the finest Norman doorways I have ever seen (excepting Iffley). The interior is entirely spoiled by a hideous organ, painted blue, red, and gold, stuck right in front of the altar. The glaring colours kill everything else in the church, excepting, by the way, some live but sleepy bats, which an old woman was sweeping out of the door with her broom. I know nothing of natural history, but presume these little creatures are helpless in the daylight, for they didn't attempt to fly away. I, however, handled them with caution, for they seemed inclined to bite, and had remarkable muscular strength in the jaw.

## Old English Houses

The furniture of the church is particularly fine, though one splendid oak table had been painted all over a hideous buff colour. There was a grand oak chest with the graceful linen-panelling, an Elizabethan pulpit, and a Jacobean wardrobe for the choristers' garments, opposite to which hung an old helmet of the time of Charles I. Some little distance from the church and hall of Dinton are the ruins of an old castle with very strangely shaped windows, but about this I could learn nothing; nor could I ascertain where was the underground residence of the hermit who traditionally is said to have been Charles I.'s executioner. He was the secretary to the regicide Simon Mayne, who died in the Tower of London, and lies buried in the church at Dinton. The hiding-place in the hall where he hid himself prior to his capture has been destroyed.

Lower Winchendon, farther to the north-west, might belong to Warwickshire. Its timber cottages and orchards have very much the character of a village in the midlands.

The old manor house, near the church, has been spoiled by the restorer, who, by the addition of laths and cement, has done his best to make it look as new as possible. The church was locked, but in



## Buckinghamshire

the churchyard I found the old parish clerk, who, as he trimmed up the graves, remarked that in the old days people had to look after their own graves—meaning, I presume, the graves of their late lamented relatives. He evidently was very proud of the church and the position he occupied on Sundays in the “three-decker.” The top story was a good carved-oak pulpit, but painted yellow and grained. Most of the pews were those high Georgian boxes, but there were also a good many of the original benches, with massive but very narrow seats. As the church is being restored bit by bit, I said, “I suppose you will remove these old pews”—pointing to the latter. “Oh, dear, no!” said he; “Mrs. Higgins (I think that was the name) wouldn’t have them touched for the world.” I feel grateful to Mrs. Higgins, for not long since I saw a church in the midlands where the original pews, including some beautifully carved bench-ends, had been sold to a builder in New York to provide funds towards the restoration. But I know a worse case of vandalism, where an elaborately carved Jacobean pulpit was removed to make place for a brand new one, and the old carving was put up on the sides of the cabin of the private yacht of

## Old English Houses

the vicar! Under a tree outside the church wall is a stump of wood, the last vestige of the whipping-post. Close by is the village school, which fact is quite enough to account for its destruction. I noticed a novel support, or rather, post, to a wicket gate in one of the cottages—the newel of a Jacobean staircase; possibly it came out of the manor house when that building was submitted to the restorer's tender mercy. The Priory, the old seat of the Goodwyns, Tyringhams, and Whartons is also an interesting house. At the Dissolution it was leased to Sir John Daunce (the father-in-law of Sir Thomas More's daughter), whose name carved in oak may still be seen in one of the rooms.

Dorton, to the north-west, is a little more in touch with the world; indeed, when people talk of taking "the tramway," it sounds quite civilised; but this light railway is far from a modern institution, and has somewhat the appearance of a deserted line I had seen in Northamptonshire. I did not see the train or tram, but one of the stations I saw, and that had a most antiquated look.

Dorton House is a spacious mansion of Charles I.'s time, the exterior of which would be vastly improved

## Buckinghamshire

if the coating of cement with which it is entirely cased were removed. This cement is weather-worn and stained, and gives the house a dilapidated appearance. The Georgian goth who destroyed the exterior of the house is also in evidence in the interior, for all the oak carvings have been daubed over with yellow and white paint. A really careful restoration would make this house one of the most interesting in the county. There are two magnificent oak staircases, some elaborate ceilings, a beautiful Jacobean screen in the hall, carved mantelpieces, and last, but not least, Queen Elizabeth's bedroom, with the bed upon which her Majesty is said to have slept. The house, when I visited it, had not been used as a residence for years. The last of a long line of Aubreys was the owner, though he never lived there, and I hear has since died, so perhaps by now the objectionable paint and cement have been removed. A tiny little church embosomed in trees, near the hall, is quite a typical one. As a picture it is perfect, but architecturally it is not remarkable.

Boarstall Tower, some two miles to the west, was the last stronghold in the county which held out for the king, but eventually surrendered to Fairfax in June 1646. Judging from the existing remains, it

## Old English Houses

must have been an important house, such as Basing—a massive gatehouse of stone, with corner embattled turrets, and a large room over the entrance. At a farmhouse close by (originally part of the offices, I should imagine) I was told I should find a caretaker within, so I crossed the moat, which is still supplied by a stream, and entered a little courtyard, where I found an old gentleman, but, as I was addressing him, a young woman came forward, and, touching her forehead with her hand, led me aside towards the moat; but I was further mystified when the father did the same and led me in the opposite direction. I was contemplating flight when he told me that his daughter was mentally afflicted, so I followed him up a winding turret staircase to a spacious apartment with a wide Tudor fireplace and a ceiling crossed with great oak beams. In the casements of a large bay window was some good stained glass, showing the arms of the various possessors of Boarstall, from De Lazures of the fourteenth, to Aubrey of the seventeenth century. The wrought-iron fastenings to these window casements were both graceful in design and ingenious in construction; a combined spring bolt and latch in as good a state of preservation as when inserted. As the old-fashioned lattice

## Buckinghamshire

windows are now so frequently introduced into our modern dwellings, similar fastenings might be adopted with advantage.

Over the rude Gothic entrance doorway was a very indifferent painting which, though pointed out to me as King Charles, was certainly more like Cromwell—it is a sort of compromise between the two, and very suitable to the old place, for by no means did the Royalists hold the house all through the Civil Wars, though they first garrisoned it. The Parliamentary army held the stronghold for some time under Lady Dynham, who at length was forced to seek flight by means of a subterranean passage under the moat; but after Fairfax had reduced it she again took up possession. We learn from Lady Fanshawe's memoirs that her (Lady Fanshawe's) husband passed through Boarstall as a prisoner after Worcester fight upon his way from Oxford up to London, and that Lady Dynham showed her sympathy and kindness of heart by offering him all the money she had in the house; but this he refused, though he willingly accepted some of her ladyship's shifts and handkerchiefs, for all the prisoners were in a ragged and woe-begone condition.

## Old English Houses

Further acquaintance with the somewhat eccentric old caretaker at Boarstall proved him to be a man of refinement. At first I took him to be a German by his peculiar accent, but he afterwards explained he came from Caemarthen. A lonely life it must be, to be immured in that solitary tower, half-dependent upon the sightseers who came that way (principally, I was told, from Oxford). The glimpse I had had of the sad affliction in his home, and his pathetic and anxious expression, left an impression not easily to be effaced. Certainly he was a character from whom Dickens might have drawn a powerful study.

II

BERKSHIRE & OXFORDSHIRE





## BERKSHIRE & OXFORDSHIRE

**W**E will not at present go into the western counties, but will strike northwards through parts of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, keeping more or less to the course of the beautiful river Thames. The old river is fast losing its primitive character, and great fashionable hotels are rapidly taking the place of the cosy little riverside inns. Before very long I suppose the banks as far up as Oxford will present quite a suburban appearance, except where the grounds of private estates have not been cut up for building purposes.

My first impression as a boating-man—or rather, youth—was going up the river from Kingston to Maidenhead with an old and enthusiastic oarsman, an athlete with not the faintest trace of timidity or nervousness in his composition, and therefore a striking contrast to myself. They say friendships originate through the juxtaposition of the most opposite and

## Old English Houses

contrary qualities. Perhaps that is why he and I struck up companionship. He did the rowing in thoroughly professional style, and with a swing which would have been approved by the picked men of either university.

At Maidenhead my friend left me ; he was bound for Oxford, while I had to get back that night to town ; but, as the days were long, I had a couple of hours to spare, so I set out in search of Ockwells Manor House, of which I had seen some fascinating drawings in Nash's *Old English Mansions*. This fine old fifteenth-century house was then comparatively little known, and I had some difficulty in finding its situation, but after hunting about and making various inquiries, at length I espied some old roofs and chimneys in the midst of a clump of lofty poplar and chestnut trees. Closer to the road were great bushes of syringa, which filled the air with their sweet fragrance. I approached the old house with misgivings, for I could recognise in it none of the beautifully carved barge-boards of the drawing ; but wandering round by some old barns and out-buildings I came suddenly upon the front, and shall never forget the impression it made upon me. Part was in deep shadow, while the upper portion was brilliantly

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

lighted by the last rays of the setting sun, which brought out all the fantastic carvings in bold relief. Long I stood in the grass-grown courtyard, peopling the silent house with the gaily bedecked lords and ladies dead and forgotten for centuries, who once frequented the now deserted rooms and corridors. Never had I seen such a picture of sad but dignified solitude.

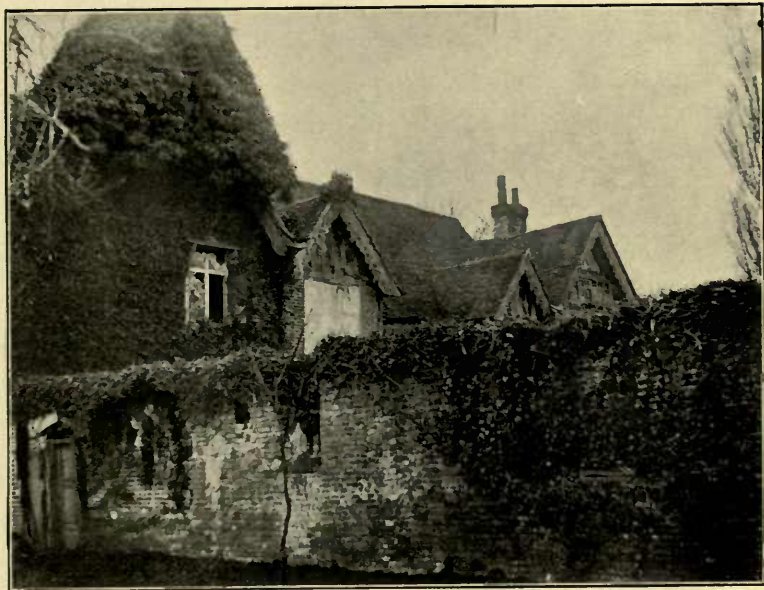
All this side of the house was unoccupied and crumbling to decay, but in a most poetic state from an artistic point of view. A delightful old carved porch, with great dragons upon the spandrils above, led by the quaintest old corridor or "entrie" to the great hall. Here dilapidation reigned supreme—dust and *débris* everywhere. The oak panelling, bleached with age, was crumbling off the walls. In the wide expanse of diamond-paned windows all along one side of the hall and in the great bay by the raised dais were apertures through which heavy festoons of ivy had found their way. Upon the walls above the panelling was a strange medley of things—a great pair of Cromwellian jack-boots, a dilapidated Elizabethan saddle of green velvet, a fragment of chain mail, a rusty sword or two, and some hoops of iron which once served as stirrups.

## Old English Houses

The boots, I was informed by a farm labourer, were once the property of no less a personage than Oliver Cromwell. He was surprised here (so went the story) by a party of Royalists, and had to get off as best he could without his boots.

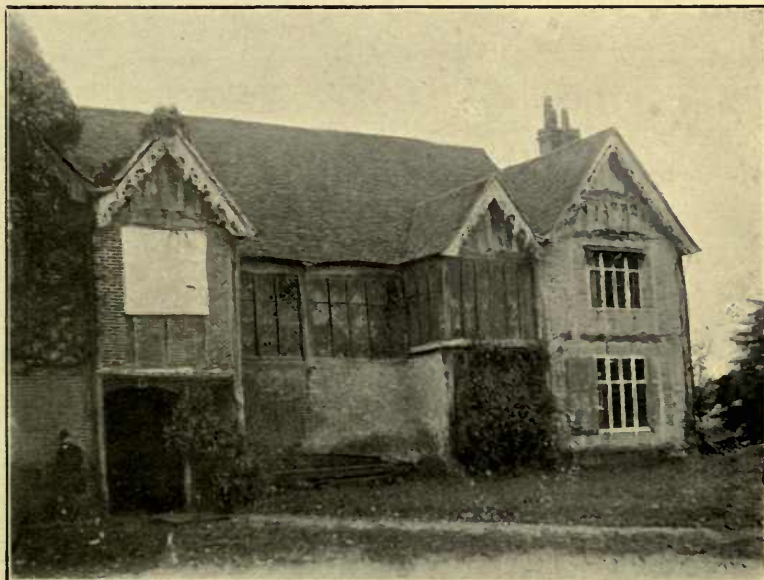
One really learns some valuable bits of history travelling about the country. A friend of mine was once shown the identical inn yard where "Henry VIII. addressed the Romans," and in the same village the residence of "Queen Dowger." He suggested "Dowager," but was immediately crushed. "Dowger was the woman's name," his informant was sure. I have been shown also the house of "Guy Fawkes, the first Quaker," or if something more sensational were required, could point out where the original block may be seen upon which Queen Elizabeth was beheaded!

The part of Ockwells which pleased me best was a glazed corridor upon the upper landing of the staircase, which led on to the minstrels' gallery. At the time when the staircase became an important feature of a house, space was found in the little interior quadrangle, around which the glazed corridor runs, for erecting an imposing Jacobean staircase. From an old room at the back of the screen, or



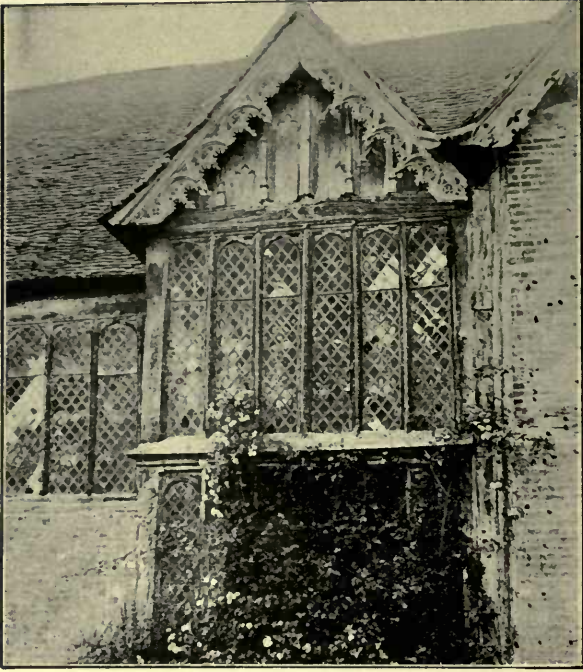
OCKWELLS

*p. 70*



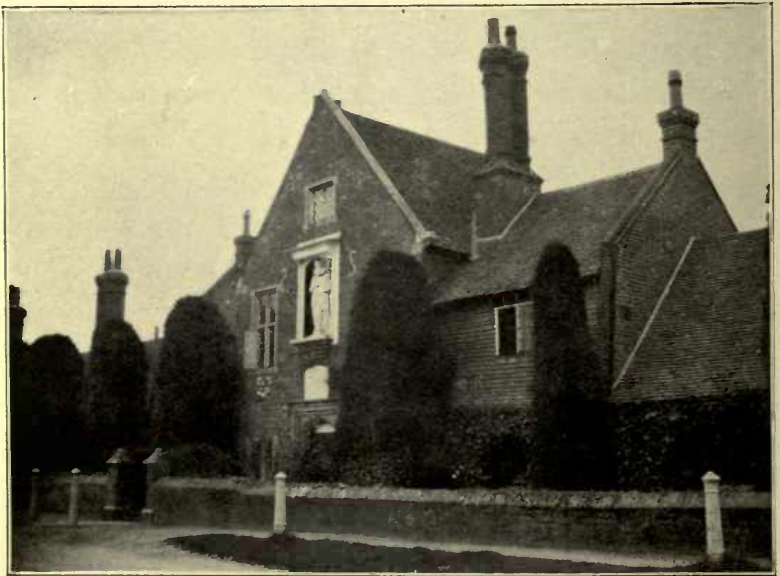
OCKWELLS

*p. 70*



PORCH AT OCKWELLS

*p. 70*



ALMSHOUSES AT BRAY

*p. 77*

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

minstrels' gallery, was a little opening through which the lord of the manor could keep watch upon his retainers, if necessary; though upon occasions when the flowing bowl was conspicuous, I expect it was equally necessary for the lady of the manor to keep an eye upon her lord and master.

In the passage leading [into the hall was the old buttery hatch, with enormous hinges and iron supports. It conjured up visions of veal pasties, roasted peacocks, soused gurnet, and the tempting viands one reads about in the romances of Harrison Ainsworth. Such visions are all very well in their way, but they are tantalising upon an empty stomach, as was the case in this instance.

Since the occasion of my first trip to Ockwells there have been many changes. The old house and some adjoining land changed hands, and rumours got about that it was going to be pulled down—indeed I have since heard that transactions had already been entered upon for selling the carved oak tracery in the gables and elsewhere, and that some of these were eventually going to America. Letters written to the newspapers as a rule do not attract much attention, or do much practical good, but the result of one which I wrote to the *Standard* was particularly

## Old English Houses

gratifying. Other papers promptly took up the cause. Pictures of the doomed manor house appeared in the illustrated journals. This gratuitous advertisement, I suppose, suggested a financial speculation, for ere long the property again changed owners—for the better. Since then, from time to time, a small fortune has been spent in the most careful and complete restoration. As a rule I tremble at the very word, for have not hundreds of houses and churches been entirely destroyed by ignorant and unsympathetic workmen? In the case of Ockwells, however, I believe their mode of procedure has been rigidly watched from first to last.

Quite recently I accepted an invitation to compare the past with the present, and indeed there was a metamorphosis. The flat ceiling had been removed and the open timber roof revealed. All the original heraldic glass (which fortunately had been taken out years before) had been replaced to its original position in the windows of the great hall, a display of colour that it would be difficult to rival. Suits of armour and ancient weapons of all descriptions stood and hung in every direction, and carved Gothic cabinets, antique chairs and tables, fitted into their several corners as if they had stood there



## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

for a couple of centuries at least. In additional contrast also to my previous visit, a table was laid for lunch, which, amidst such environment, it is needless to state, was most acceptable. I had heard rumours that the quaint old glazed corridors had been removed, but greatly rejoiced to find them untouched, and improved tenfold by the walls being lined with ancient tapestry. Linen-fold oak panelling and elaborately carved mantelpieces from other old houses have found a most suitable home here, as have many exceptionally fine Elizabethan chests and bedsteads.

The exterior restoration has been as careful and complete as the interior—indeed, it is almost impossible to detect where the old masonry ends and where the new begins. The porch has been widened to its original dimensions, and the carved portions of oak cleverly fitted into their original positions like the most ingenious of puzzles. The new buildings which have been added are quite in keeping with the rest, and the amount of oak lavished upon the ceilings and walls is as extensive as in the original part of the house.

Of the once important family of Norreys who originally lived at Ockwells, there were, not many years ago, living representatives in the neighbourhood,

## Old English Houses

but, as in the case of so many similar vicissitudes of ancient families, they had degenerated into common labourers.

From the Norreys (of whom there are monumental and genealogical records in Bray Church), Ockwells passed to the Fettiplaces and the Days. Sir Thomas Day, the keenest hunter and hardest drinker in Berkshire, was, according to local tradition, knighted by Queen Anne for his attention in opening a gate for her Majesty to pass through. The identical spot is, or was recently, pointed out; but with due respect to tradition, I cannot help thinking the queen must have had some better cause for conferring a knighthood.

The secluded villages of White Waltham and Shottesbrooke, not far from Ockwells, are well worth a visit, both on account of their natural beauty and antiquities. At the former may be seen the remains of a moated manor house, where, according to the antiquary Hearne (who, by the way, was born at White Waltham), Henry VII.'s son, Prince Arthur, lived for a time. On a bank not far from the church stand the stocks and the whipping-post, in a good state of preservation.

The interior of the cruciform church at Shottes-

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

brooke is of exceptional interest, though I have only a hazy recollection of some good brasses and a fine old chest.

Of the picturesque almshouses at Bray and an old house called Philberts I also can record but a vague impression. The latter was the residence of William Chiffinch, the keeper of the back-stairs and boon companion of Charles II., who is said to have been a frequent visitor; the proximity of the house to Windsor affording the Merry Monarch convenient relaxation when he wished to throw aside his kingly dignity. Formerly there was here a fine bust of Nell Gwyn: it would be interesting to know what has become of it.

Opposite Bray, on the Buckinghamshire side of the water, is the old seat of the Palmer family, Dorney, a secluded Jacobean house buried in a grove of elms. This was another favourite resort of Charles II.—so much so that it is painted as the background of one of his best portraits; but it was more the beauty of its inmate than of the mansion or grounds which formed the attraction, as here for a time resided the beautiful Mrs. Palmer, who later on was created Countess of Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland, and of whom one reads so much in the court annals

## Old English Houses

of the time. The royal visitor was probably not so welcome to the lady's husband, for the king became so much attached to her, and, as a natural consequence, she became so much attached to Whitehall Palace, that the result was a separation. Those who have perused Pepys's inimitable diary will have observed what an important figure this handsome and imperious woman cut in the gay court. The following extract gives one a vivid impression of the strained relationships between Mr. and Mrs. Palmer—one of those little sidelights which so add to the fascinations of semi-historical episodes. I wonder no painter has selected a subject from this paragraph in the diary. The new queen had recently arrived from Portugal, and Westminster was gaily bedecked and thronged with loyal citizens anxious to get a glimpse of her. Pepys, usually to the fore upon such occasions, was busily engaged in making mental notes which were to be placed on record at the close of the day in his famous cipher. From the top of the present existing portion of the Palace he could get a magnificent view of the pageantry on the river.

“All the show,” he says, “consisted chiefly in the number of boats and barges and two pageants—

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

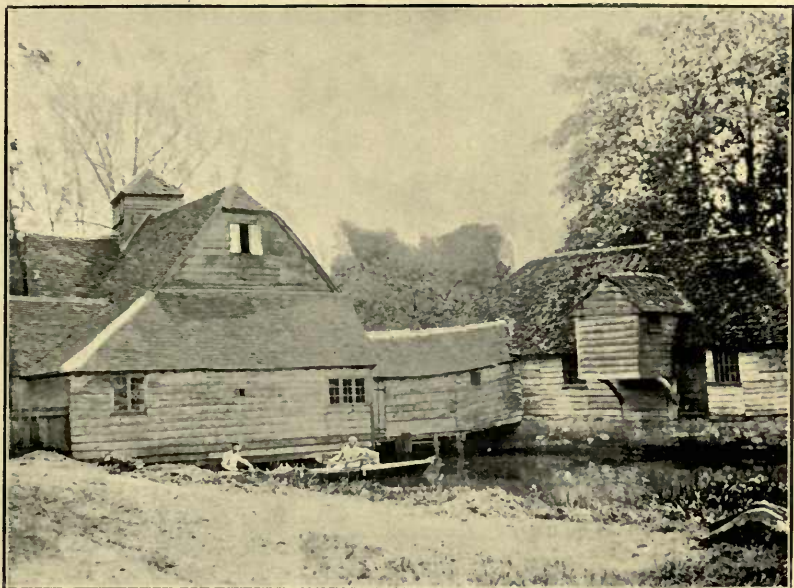
one of a king and another of a queen, with her maydes of Honour sitting at her feet very prettily; and they tell me the queen is Sir Richard Ford's daughter. Anon came the King and Queen in a barge under a canopy with ten thousand barges and boats, I think, for we could see no water for them, nor discern the King nor Queen. And so they landed at White Hall Bridge [the landing stage or stairs of the Palace], and the great guns on the other side went off. But that which pleased me best was that my lady Castlemaine stood over against us on a piece of White Hall, where I gluttred myself with looking on her. But methought it was strange to see her Lord and her upon the same place walking up and down without taking notice one of another, only at first entry he put off his hat and she made him a very civil salute, but afterwards took no notice one of another; but both of them now and then would take their child which the nurse held in her arms and dandle it. One thing more: there happened a scaffold below to fall and we feared some hurt, but there was none, but she of all the great ladies only run down among the common rabble to see what hurt was done, and did take care of a child that received some little hurt, which

## Old English Houses

methought was so noble. Anon there came one there booted and spurred that she talked long with. And by and by, she being in her hair, she put on his hat, which was but an ordinary one, to keep the wind off. But methinks it became her mightily, as everything else do.”

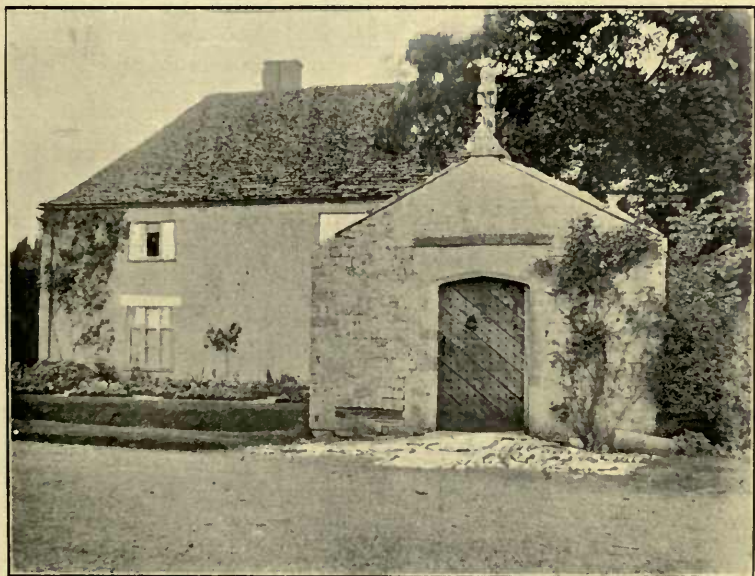
Of Medmenham and Bisham Abbeys, beyond the famous Cliveden Woods of which Lord Ronald Gower writes so poetically in his *Reminiscences*, so much has been written that perhaps the less I have to say the better about these picturesque buildings, so familiar to frequenters of the river. The ghost of Lady Hoby at the latter—that learned sister of the Ladies Bacon, Burleigh, and Killigrew, who thrashed her little boy so unmercifully that he died in consequence—is said to walk the grounds in widow’s weeds as an everlasting penalty for her cruelty. “Spirits from the vasty deep” ever were unrestful, and surely judging from local tradition those of Lord le Despenser, Sir William Stanhope, Sir John King, and other members of the notorious Hell Fire Club at Medmenham ought to haunt those ruins.

The secluded village of Hurley, like that of Medmenham, has some quaint old timber-framed cottages.



MAPLEDURHAM MILL

*p. 82*



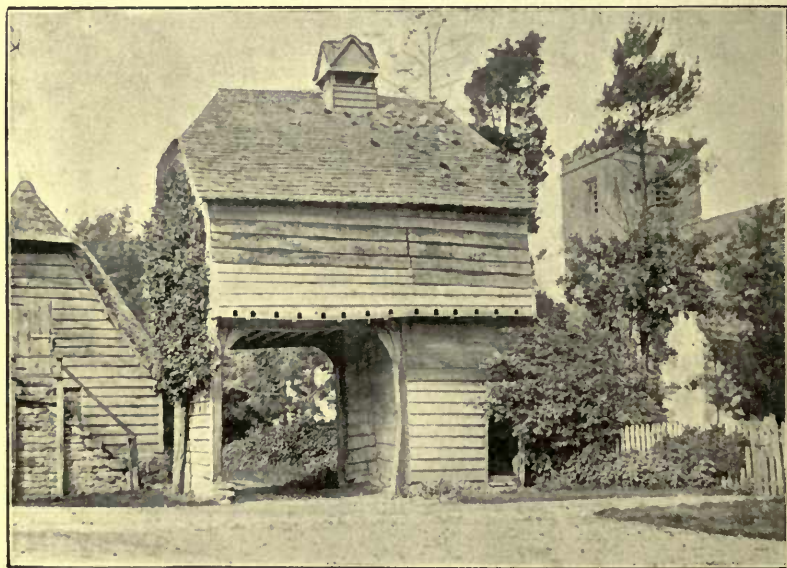
GAUNT HOUSE

*p. 88*



NORTHMOOR RECTORY HOUSE

*p. 88*



OLD DOVECOTE, NORTHMOOR

*p. 88*



## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

The Bell also is a picturesque gabled hostelry of Elizabeth's time, which somehow or other recalls the opening chapter of that delightful romance *Kenilworth*, though the actual scene, of course, was supposed to have taken place at Cumnor, some miles to the north. There are, however, other historical associations at Hurley lingering around the scanty remains of the once magnificent mansion, Lady Place. The third lord of the now extinct Lovelace family of Hurley was one of the handsome Monmouth's patrons and companions;—moreover, a scheming politician, like Shaftesbury, ever ready to embroil others and save himself. The young Duke, upon his quasi-Royal progresses, was a frequent guest at the house of this spendthrift Whig, and probably was here introduced to Lovelace's handsome cousin, the romantic young Baroness Wentworth of Toddington. She became so enamoured that when Monmouth was disgraced and had to quit the country, she must needs throw in her lot with his and follow him to Holland, and eventually to the grave, for she survived her lover but a few months.<sup>1</sup> Towards the termination of James II.'s brief reign we find Lovelace in the spacious vaults beneath his house receiving secret messages

<sup>1</sup> Vide *King Monmouth*.

## Old English Houses

from the spies of William of Orange, and when that monarch had intimidated his father-in-law to such an extent that James sought refuge in flight, he failed not to acknowledge his indebtedness to the underground chambers of Lady Place by paying them a special visit.

The superb contents of the old house were dispersed soon after the death of the third Lord Lovelace, and I believe some of the family portraits now in Dulwich Gallery originally came from there. The property changed hands once or twice, and the house, after much neglect, was at length pulled down in the early part of last century, and all that now is to be seen is an old dovecote and the piers of an entrance gate, and the underground chambers before alluded to.

Mapledurham is one more picturesque spot on the river which I cannot pass without a word of admiration. The quaint old mill here has something about it far more fascinating than any other old water-mill I have seen, and yet it has no architectural points to recommend it, neither can the situation be compared with one I remember down by the river Avon and close against the walls of the romantic castle of Warwick. As a youngster, I recollect it

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

was somewhat of a penance to be taken daily to the Warwick mill, while the elder members of the party made sketches and read novels. At that tender age, when it is practically impossible to keep quiet or sit still for a moment, I suppose the impression was an unpleasant one, but it was lasting, for I can recall vividly to my memory the dreamy blending of sounds—the churning of the wheel, the rushing of the water, and the rustling of the tall trees overhead. Though I now look back with pleasure to the daily visits to Warwick mill, undoubtedly it was a hardship at the time; in the same way, I suppose, one looks back with a certain amount of affection to the unpleasant occurrences at school, excepting the caning, however, which is never a pleasing reminiscence.

In the mass of trees beyond the mill of Mapledurham stands the old hall where the Blounts have lived for three centuries or more. There is a grim-looking side entrance with wrought-iron gates leading from the churchyard, which has a very uncanny appearance, but why, I cannot undertake to say. I had heard many rumours of the impenetrableness of this mansion, and had reason to congratulate myself on being shown round by a member of the

## Old English Houses

Blount family. The interior, however, can nowhere compare with the exterior in point of interest, for it is gloomy, to say the least of it; this impression, however, may have been left by the long stone corridors and passages in the basement, and from the general bareness of the apartments, which at one time must have contained fine panelling, ceilings, and fireplaces. It is one of those houses like Charlecote, in Warwickshire, that have been spoiled by injudicious restoration as regards its interior. The main front facing the great avenue has also lost a good deal of its original character owing to the insertion of plate-glass windows, which is of course disastrous to a Tudor house, otherwise picturesque with step gables and twisted chimneys.

There are numerous picturesque spots between Mapledurham and Abingdon where, if space permitted, I should like to linger—at the smooth lawns and terraces of old Hardwick House, where the unfortunate Charles I. used to wander and ruminate over his ill-fortunes (with the exception of Ham House this is certainly the most interesting historical mansion on the river, and I understand the interior contains some grand old rooms);—at Ewelme, also a quaint little place a few miles from the river

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

to the east, between the old-world towns of Wallingford and Watlington, where the fifteenth-century almshouses are as fine as anything of their kind in England;—at the pretty village of Long Wittenham, where stands an old stone cross, intact, and not, as is so often the case, with its summit knocked off. It is quite a popular error, by the way, to suppose that this wholesale destruction was the work of Cromwell, the Parliamentary general, for the great havoc was principally done a century before his time, by his namesake in Henry VIII.'s reign. Ecclesiastical buildings were certainly damaged considerably during the civil wars, but not to the extent, I think, that is usually supposed. It was the old fortified baronial halls which principally suffered under Oliver Cromwell.

Another fine cross may be seen at Dorchester, a decayed town which shows many evidences of its former importance. Quaint "bits" are to be found among the old houses and inns; and the monuments, the font, and brasses in the church are exceptionally fine. Here is that extraordinary Jesse window, whose mullions form the branches of a genealogical tree.

Nearer Abingdon is Sutton Courtney, where there are also many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cottages. Of all riverside towns I think Abingdon

## Old English Houses

is the most picturesque. Those who have approached it by water cannot but have been struck with the group of ancient buildings, with the old bridge and the graceful steeple of the church reflected in the river. The almshouses, Christ's Hospital, are of later date than those at Ewelme, but are also wonderfully quaint. A long wooden cloister runs all along the front, and in the centre over the entrance gable are some curious paintings, which give it a richness of colour that is very pleasing to the eye. Another portion of the building is later in date, but the contrast only improves the general effect. Abingdon Abbey must have been of great extent. There are several remains: the refectory is now used as a granary, and fortunately has not been spoiled by modern "improvements."

Those in search of the picturesque might do worse than tramp the country between Abingdon and Burford, in Oxfordshire. I have before me some reminiscences of such a journey, in the shape of photographs, sketches, and an ordnance map which was used upon the occasion. I do not know whether it is peculiar to myself, but I always find enjoyment in perusing a map which has done service on a trip like this. The place-names, and even

86

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

pencil marks upon it, will often recall little incidents long since forgotten. As an instance of how the memory is refreshed, at the moment I glance at the name of Appleton, to the west of Abingdon, I become conscious of a monotonous air, which was here drummed into my head whether I would or no, by one of those infernal machines, a musical box. While I partook of tea at the little inn, in the next room was being performed, over and over again, one of those aggravating operatic airs which are full of flourishes—charming, no doubt, in the opera house or upon an orchestra, but when each twiddle and twirl is repeated with the exactness, the hair-breadth accuracy, of the balance at the Bank of England which throws aside the light sovereigns, it palls upon one to a degree. Whether the musical box could play other tunes I do not know, but it harped for ever upon this melancholy dirge, until I had to abandon my repast and cram my fingers in my ears. I had never heard the air before, nor do I ever want to hear it again; indeed, that would be quite unnecessary, for at this moment I could repeat it with its original accuracy. I wonder, at those inns where they have automatic music nowadays, whether the proprietors ever feel inclined to disable the machinery

## Old English Houses

for ever. I fear I should, were I the unhappy possessor. But the idea of taking music to Appleton savours of taking coals to Newcastle, for nothing could be more melodious than its peal of bells. Those who have heard the chimes will, I think, be of my opinion.

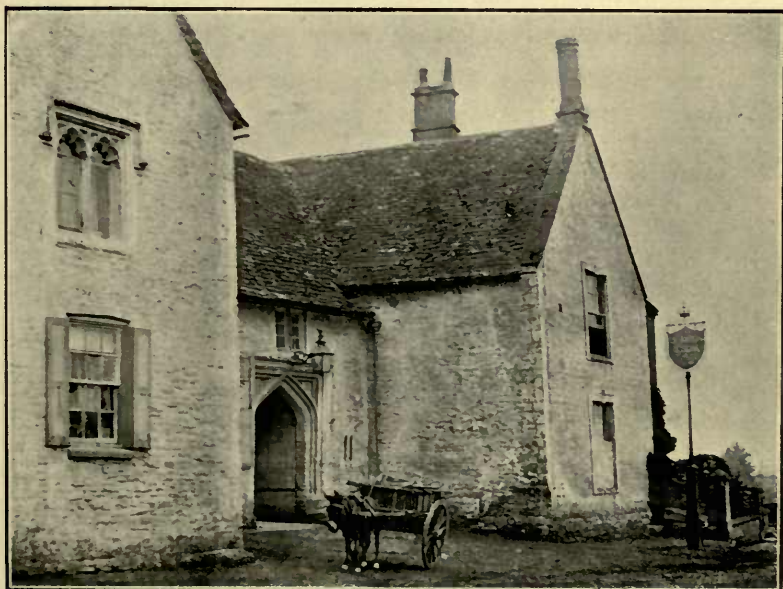
Northmoor, to the north-west of Appleton, possesses a curious sixteenth-century rectory house, with a remarkably picturesque dovecote by the side of it. These, with the church tower, make an attractive group. Further to the west, near Standlake, is a moated farmhouse, called Gaunt House, with the remains of a drawbridge. Farther north is the sequestered village of Stanton Harcourt, where descendants of the ancient family of Harcourt have lived since the reign of Stephen. The remains of the manor house date principally from the time of Henry IV. The kitchen is the most remarkable portion, being in many respects similar to that at Glastonbury—its extinguisher roof rising out of the trees looks very peculiar in the distance. There are no shafts or flues by which the smoke from fires lighted within the building can escape. The kitchen itself is nothing more than a great square chimney with a conical top, where the smoke ascends unchecked,





ASTHALL MANOR HOUSE

*p. 92*



CROWN INN, SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD

*p. 96*



BURFORD PRIORY

*p. 94*



BURFORD PRIORY

*p. 94*

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

as it does in the baronial hall at Penshurst. The inside of the extinguisher and the inside walls of this primitive apartment are black with the soot of centuries. One cannot help thinking that the cook of Henry IV.'s time did not have a very good time of it in this atmosphere of smoke—an arduous task, moreover, for in the event of the wind changing, unless he cared to be smoke-dried like a haddock, he would have to ascend to the roof by a precipitous turret staircase to adjust the ventilators, opening those at the opposite side whence the wind came.

The domestic of to-day, who invariably finds fault with our modern kitcheners, should pay a visit to Stanton Harcourt. I think it would engender a more contented frame of mind, for do not philosophers say there is nothing so soothing as to contemplate worse conditions than our own?

In a little room at the top of another portion of the building Pope found congenial seclusion for translating the fifth book of Homer. The Harcourts had deserted the old place many years before, so the poet had the ruinous house all to himself. The parish stocks must not pass unnoticed, standing by the side of the road. I am glad to see that in many places care is now taken of these instruments of an

## Old English Houses

obsolete punishment—indeed, it is very necessary to place them in some enclosure to prevent wanton destruction.

Only just in time have the local authorities placed railings around the remains of the stocks on Hadley Common, near Barnet; for, becoming dilapidated, they soon make their way to the cottager's fire-grate. At a village in Essex some years ago I thought I was very chivalrous in championing the cause of a bad case. I noticed that the stocks were on their last legs, so to speak—having nobody else's to fall back upon, I suppose—so I repaired to the local blacksmith with the request that he should repair the stocks. A small coin changed hands, but he did not take the tip in the manner that I had wished, for when I next visited the village, the portion which had been loose had disappeared—gone for ever. By now, perhaps, the lower plank has followed its mate, and the whipping-post will next be uprooted. If the stocks had been made of iron instead of wood, as is the case at Ninfield, in Sussex, they could defy the onslaughts of such vandals. The modern yokel has a strange idea as to how his ancestors were inserted in the stocks. I once had it explained to

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

me how the wrists and the feet were pinned down parallel, the hands on one side of the post and the feet on the other, and it is not uncommonly believed that the legs were placed in the manacles at the top of the pole. Upon one of these instruments (a portable one now preserved in a church) I have seen tiny hoops of iron to encircle the wrists of a child. If a parish could not run to the expense of a whipping-post and stocks combined, the difficulty was got over by making a signpost serve a double purpose. Such an example may be seen at the remote parish of Stondon Massey, in Essex.

Of Witney I remember but little beyond the old "Butter Cross" and a fine, but restored, cruciform church with a lofty spire; the former was partially destroyed a few years ago but has been carefully restored. Following the course of the willow-girt Windrush river, we reach the ruins of Minster Lovel, of historic and romantic associations. In a secret vault beneath the massive walls one of its ancient lords secreted himself so as to avert the penalty of treason; only, however, to meet a far more terrible fate, for the portion of solid masonry which gave him admittance for some reason or other could not be opened again, and not until two centuries had elapsed and

## Old English Houses

the house was demolished was the unfortunate man's premature tomb discovered.

Still following the course of the pretty Windrush, we pass through Asthall, with its Elizabethan manor house near the church, and presently enter the old town of Burford. This is one of the oldest places imaginable; anything up-to-date or even comparatively modern is quite out of place here, and since the old coaching days it has not advanced, but gone entirely to sleep, for the railway has given it a wide berth, and left the town to get on as best it can. But I forgot: there is one sign of civilisation in evidence—the Salvation Army, who, when I was there, seemed to have taken the place by storm. On the Sunday evening that I made my entry the noble army had the whole place to themselves, and were making night melodious with their song. But horror! they had taken possession of the Old Bear Inn—a fine old hostelry, with quaint oriel windows and a round tower in the yard—for barracks! I expect by now they have pulled it down and rebuilt it. With the exception of the Salvationists, everything is in keeping. There is nothing to mar the general harmony. The Burfordites have not even built a Jubilee clock tower, I rejoice to say; they

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

are content with one by the Tollsey, surmounting a kind of combination town hall and lock-up. Even the maid of the inn where I stopped was in keeping with the rest, for she cannot have been far short of an octogenarian. "It don't seem so long ago," said she, "since I saw a drunken man lying in the stocks at the Tollsey." "Are the stocks still there?" I questioned. "Yes," she said, "unless they have moved them." She went out to see if they were there; but they had been taken away—*twenty years* before! I merely give this as an instance of how slowly things move here. Twenty years, or fifty, or a hundred makes no perceptible difference at Burford. The shops—or, rather, shop, I should say, for I don't remember more than one—was lighted by a solitary "dip," and the old man who kept the shop weighed out tobacco in enormous scales which might have come out of the ark.

Looking up or down the great wide street one can see nothing but picturesque pointed gables and deep-set mullioned windows. The beautiful old church is more like a small cathedral, and is full of interest externally and internally. The old Priory, not far off, was a sad spectacle of neglect and decay; a great fissure ran from roof to basement, and masses of

## Old English Houses

stone appeared to be on the verge of falling. The carved oak of the chapel was open to the ravages of the weather, and fast crumbling into dust.

Within the last two years or so great changes have taken place at the Priory. The lease of Lenthall's curse has expired, and the old building, like Faust, become rejuvenated; it has proved that its good old walls are still worthy of habitation for centuries to come. It is an example of what can be done in the way of sympathetic restoration when such dilapidated places fall into the right hands.

That alarming fissure in the front masonry has entirely disappeared, and lights again flicker in the cosy window casements, where not so long ago were gaping chasms between the stone mullions. The stone-paved quadrangle is no longer weed grown, but trim with level grass borders and flower-beds. The sculptured arms of James I., which had obviously been removed to the north end of the chapel of Charles II.'s time, now show to better advantage in their less cramped position between the windows of the south front.

Restoration has brought to light a series of arches belonging to the original Priory, for there is little doubt that the dwelling-house was rebuilt in a great



## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

measure out of the demolished ecclesiastical building. This faced south-west, with garden and bowling-green between it and the road, proving the earlier architects to be wiser than those of the Renaissance period, for so many examples of the latter, this house included, face east.

The south wing was actually the south aisle of the Priory in Elizabeth's time, the remains of the original building dating back nearly three centuries. Alterations and additions were subsequently made by Lord Falkland (about 1625) and Speaker Lenthall. The hall now contains a fine Tudor fireplace, which was discovered in an outhouse.<sup>1</sup>

In the seventeenth century the Priory was the seat of Lenthall, the Speaker, upon whom, since he took the cause of the Commons against the King, a curse is said to have fallen. The old house looked the very embodiment of that curse. I remember seeing Lenthall's portrait—the original which formerly hung in the drawing-room at Burford—at a sale at Christie's. The face was firm, and looked as if its owner had the strength of his own convictions, and this Lenthall evidently had.

<sup>1</sup> I am much indebted to Col. B. de Sales La Terrière for some of the above information.

## Old English Houses

Though I am much tempted to cross the border into Gloucestershire, the present range of my rambles must be limited. I will therefore work my way in the direction of Banbury, and thence go eastwards, that I may recall impressions in certain parts of Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, and Essex, working my way afterwards through Kent, parts of Surrey and Sussex to Hampshire where for the present I must close my wanderings.

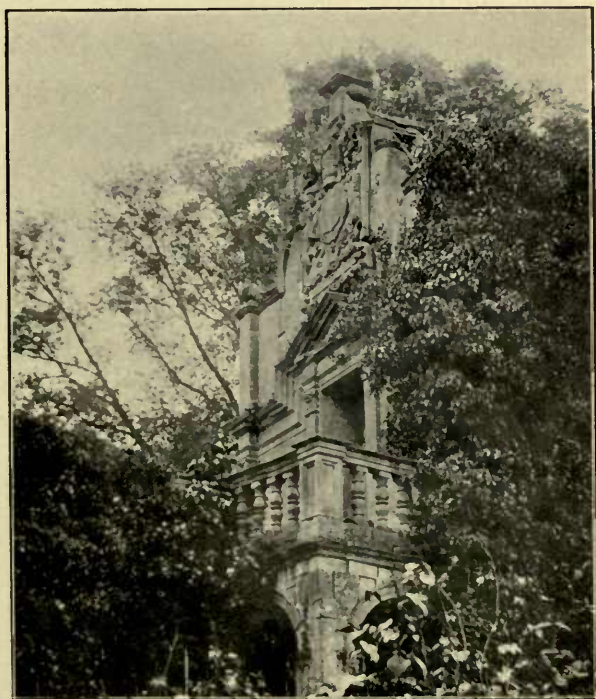
At Shipton-under-Wychwood, to the north of Burford, there is a fine old roadside inn with stone Early Tudor entrance gate and windows. This house doubtless was standing long before Shipton Court was built in Elizabeth's reign. Less pretentious than the Court is the adjacent manor house of Ascott-under-Wychwood, a long, low rambling building of stone, with a weather-worn aspect about it which must have induced many artists who have noticed it from the windows of the train to alight at the next station upon some future occasion.

In the pretty little church of Spilsbury, some four miles to the north-east, lie the remains of that well-known character of Charles II.'s court—the brilliant but notoriously profligate Earl of Rochester. No tablet, however, records his interment. He was



BURFORD

*p. 93*



BURFORD PRIORY (BEFORE RESTORATION)

*p. 94*



THE WILMOT PEW, ADDERBURY

*p. 97*



WATER EATON MANOR HOUSE

*p. 99*

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

born in the mansion, Ditchley Park, close by, but lived principally at Adderbury, a village to the south of Banbury. In the grand old church there may be seen the memorial pew of the Wilmots, though the family have been extinct for over a couple of centuries; at least it was pointed out to me as "Rochester's pew," but I should think it very doubtful whether he had ever been seen within it. Local tradition, though silent upon this point, has many stories to recount of his lordship's wild and eccentric proceedings when he came into Oxfordshire for change of air and scene, or when disgrace at Court enforced a temporary retirement.

Adderbury House, where he lived upon these occasions, retains but few vestiges of the building of that day, though the Wilmot arms may still be seen upon a water-pipe. The furniture and pictures also have been long since dispersed, but Rochester's mirror remained until recently, though that also has now disappeared. A far more interesting relic may still be seen in one of the lodges at Woodstock Park, otherwise Blenheim, of which he was ranger—the tattered and faded bed upon which the Earl died. I need scarcely refer to Burnet's well-known account of the penitent's last hours. There is pathetic

## Old English Houses

interest in this old relic. Looking at it, one can almost picture reclining upon it the emaciated form of the prematurely aged debauchee, listening intently to the grave solicitations of the bishop.

“I do verily believe,” says Dr. Burnet in his *History of My Own Time*, “he was then so entirely changed that if he had recovered he would have made good all his resolutions.”

Ditchley is mainly interesting for its splendid collection of portraits, and I had the good fortune to have these fully described to me by the owner, Viscount Dillon, who has a marvellous knowledge of all things ancient, from flint arrow-heads to Cromwellian helmets.

Some of Lely's best works may be seen in this house, the portraits of Charles II. and the beautiful Duchess of Cleveland (of whom I have previously spoken) being particularly noticeable. Their daughter Charlotte, the young Countess of Lichfield, was a great favourite of the king; after good dinners at Ditchley, she is said to have soothed him to sleep by tickling his royal nose with a feather. Here may also be seen the portrait of Sir Henry Lee and his faithful dog, from whom Scott got his idea of the typical old cavalier in his romance, *Woodstock*.

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

Though classical, the exterior of Ditchley has not the ponderous formality and depressing severity of Blenheim. The wonders of that palace I will leave to others more competent than myself to describe. I must own these lofty, comfortless, sarcophagus-like saloons leave a frigid impression upon me. They strike one with a chill even in the dog-days. Altogether these magnificent palaces appeal to me far less than the unpretentious little manor house which has degenerated into a farm; a place such, for instance, as Hampton Gay, to the east of Woodstock. I shall always regret that I did not carry away with me any mementos of my visit there, either in the shape of sketches or snapshots, for unhappily the old place was burned down shortly afterwards. I remember one very fine panelled room, with a great bay window and a splendid carved mantelpiece. Not far from Hampton Gay is the very pretty little village of Wood Eaton, where stands the shaft of an old cross upon the village green, and beyond, in an isolated position, with seemingly no direct roads leading to it, the very compact little Jacobean manor house of Water Eaton.

Even the gloomy manor house of Fritwell, some eight miles to the north of Hampton Gay, is more

## Old English Houses

cheerful than Blenheim. The house had been unoccupied for some considerable time save by a caretaker, and the timid little woman who at length appeared in answer to continual hammerings at the door looked as if her nervous system had been shattered by the loneliness of the house and the continual fear of burglars.

I was admitted after considerable unbarring and unbolting, and in the dark panelled chambers was told some of the most creepy stories of a *human* kennel up in the garrets, and how a former lord of the manor had imprisoned his brother in it for years; but why he should have selected a kennel I could not gather, for space was not limited by any means in the upper regions of the house. A discoloration on a plaster wall was said to resemble the profile of some unfortunate nun, but as I could make neither head out of this nor tail out of the kennel, both remain unfathomed mysteries, as far as my comprehension goes. I fear I was not sufficiently awe-struck. There used to be a typical showman at the Rye House, an old Scotchman who told blood-curdling stories by the light of a torch in "the dungeons and caves." The "stalactites" were impressive, but on my way to the railway station after leaving the "Castle," somebody



## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

in the secret pointed out the man who had manufactured them!

A new branch of the Great Western Railway (which shortens the route on that line to Birmingham) passing in the vicinity of Fritwell, will bring it more in touch with the world.

Adderbury, of which I have already spoken, is about eight miles to the north-west. Farther in the same direction are two of the finest old mansions in Oxfordshire—Broughton Castle and Wroxton Abbey. But it is difficult to determine which is the more picturesque of the two, or to draw a comparison; for the one has a wide clear moat, in which the gables and battlements are reflected, whereas there is no water in close proximity to the other. Wroxton is embosomed in trees, and its Jacobean architecture is more elaborate and ornamental. It has, perhaps, suffered less from restoration than Broughton, but both contain fine carvings and interesting pictures and furniture. There are also many beautiful miniatures at Wroxton, but it is one of those collections where, unfortunately, the names have not been preserved, and some well-known historical faces are merely classified as “the portrait of a gentleman” or “the portrait of a lady,” as the case may be.

## Old English Houses

At a little village equi-distant from both Wroxton and Broughton I once found comfortable quarters for a summer—or, rather, autumn—holiday. I had cycled over a stretch of country with which I had been anxious to become re-acquainted—the corner of Northamptonshire which borders the northern extremity of Oxfordshire—and by the time I arrived within a mile or so of my destination it was getting dark. Having dismounted owing to the steepness of the road, I was ascending a hill when I passed an old man with a long white beard who looked very hard at me. There was nothing very remarkable in this, nor in the fact that as he passed I noticed he was carrying behind him a very ugly-looking stick; but I did think it somewhat remarkable that after walking twenty yards or so he should turn round and follow me. I certainly began to feel doubtful as to his intentions. In the deepening shade, on we walked, always with the same space of road between us. If I quickened my pace, so did my mysterious companion; if I slackened it, he did likewise. Presently, however, he began to gain ground; the road was still uphill and I couldn't ride, so I thought it best to bring the matter to a climax. I stopped dead. On he came

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

stealthily. I put myself upon the defensive. He was now close at hand. He looked fixedly at me. I felt inclined to strike first, but did not. He raised his arm and then—his hat. "Excuse me," he said "might you be the gent who has taken apartments?" Then it dawned upon me this was my future host. Fearing I might miss the turning which led to his house, he had walked on a couple of miles in the direction whence I had said I was coming, and, passing me, was doubtful as to whether I was his man. So he kept an eye upon my movements, that I might not lose my way. But why didn't he speak? A word would have explained everything.

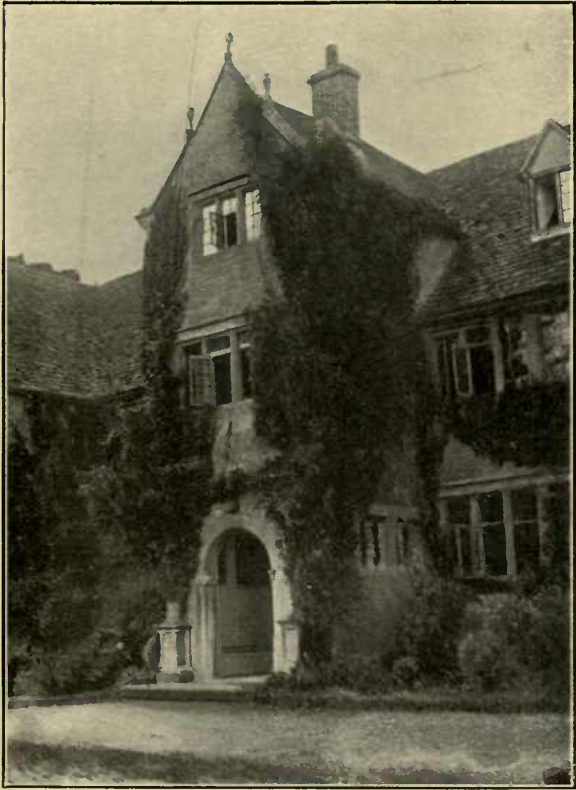
The proximity of Compton Wynyates made this country retreat most delightful. To see that wonderful old house under every aspect of light and shade, and to study it from every conceivable point of view, was to me, at any rate, an enormous treat. But the mansion belongs to Warwickshire, and if once I step across the border there are too many attractions to resist. Therefore, I will keep to my plan of going eastwards.

The railway which now runs between Blisworth and Stratford-on-Avon some years ago presented a very desolate appearance. One occasionally comes

## Old English Houses

across these disused railroads. What a woe-begone, forlorn aspect they have! Excepting the barren, blighted country adjacent to a worked-out coal-mine nothing looks so unprosperous.

I was stopping at the tiny village of Slapton, and was anxious to visit the old house of Canons Ashby, and having heard that there was a sort of apology for a train which traversed the grass-grown line *once a week*, I lay in wait for it at the then disused station of Blakesley. Within an hour or so of the allotted time the train arrived, and the engine-driver got down to ask where I should like to alight. There was no hurry. I took out my map and pointed out the spot. But he had had no dealings with maps and didn't understand their bearings; so he said he would pull up in the course of a few miles to receive fresh instructions. The medley of luggage trucks and one obsolete passenger carriage crawled off, bumping its way over stones and sunken sleepers in a manner which should have proved efficacious to any one with a disordered liver. We travelled so slowly at times that I felt inclined to get out and push, but presently down got the engine-driver again, and pointed out the church of Moreton Pinkney. I referred to the map and found that would do,

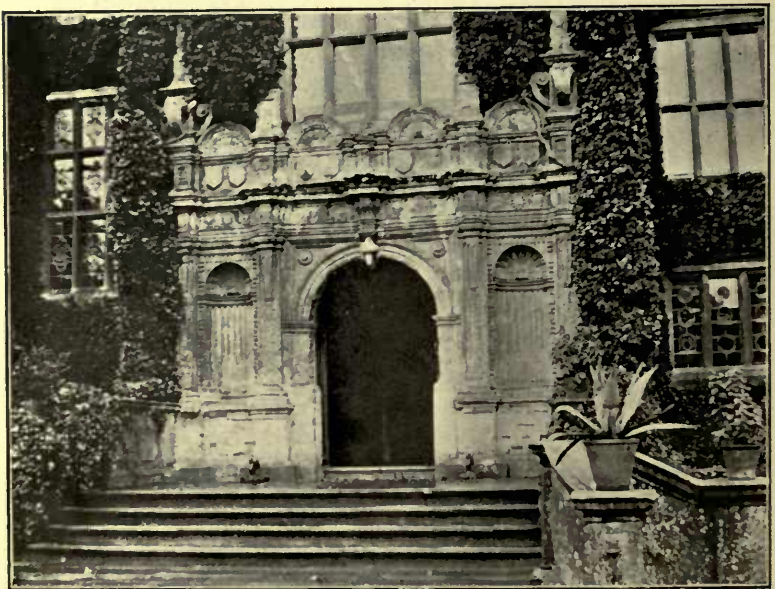


FRICTWELL MANOR HOUSE



CANONS ASHBY

*p. 104*



WROXTON ABBEY

*p. 101*

## Berkshire and Oxfordshire

so jumped down, tipped the man, and thanking him for his kind offer to bring me back next week, said that I intended to walk back that day along the line. Then I climbed over a hedge, and made a bee-line for the landmark, while the pre-historic conveyance jolted on its weary way to Shakespeare-land.

Presently my progress was impeded by a remarkable wall with tall pointed Elizabethan ornaments at every corner. Out came my sketch-book, and I set to work. But I did not know that I was observed. On the other side of the wall stood an old gentleman in the costume of the early 'fifties, with a high white stock up to his ears. "What are you drawing, my lad?" said he, coming forward. I trembled in my shoes, and held out the book. "Good!" said he. "Where d'ye come from?" I said I was stopping at Slapton Rectory. This, I suppose, confirmed my respectability, for he gave me a sounding slap on the back, and told me to come in and have some bread and cheese. I followed him into one of the quaintest old courtyards imaginable, not unlike one of the old moss-grown quadrangles at Haddon, and from there into old panelled rooms of black oak with coved

## Old English Houses

ceilings and enormous pendants, beautifully carved mantelpieces, Jacobean tables and chairs, old portraits, armour—everything, in fact, in keeping—“nothing new!” Lunch was evidently over, but the table was groaning with good things. I was told to “tuck in,” which I did forthwith. “This is Lady Dryden,” said mine host, as his wife came into the room. “We’re going to drive to Fawsley. It’s a better old place than this—will you come with us, or stop here and do your sketching?” I preferred the latter, and was supremely happy in having so glorious an old house all to myself. Towards the evening I wandered back to the ruinous railway line, and had no difficulty in finding my way back to Slapton, with a vivid and lasting impression of a typical old English squire.



*III*

*BEDFORD, HERTFORD &  
MIDDLESEX*



*BEDFORD, HERTFORD &  
MIDDLESEX*

**O**N the eastern border of Bucks a narrow strip of Hertfordshire projects to within about four miles of Aylesbury. Close to the border, and to the north-east of Tring, is the little village of Aldbury, situated in the midst of most picturesque scenery. Old-fashioned brick and timber cottages are scattered round an extensive green, in the midst of which is a large pond, and near the brink of the pond still stand the time-worn stocks and whipping-post. It is a more formidable looking instrument of torture than most I have seen, and from its conspicuous position the unfortunate victims who did penance therein were open to assaults on all sides. On the high ground above the village is the extensive park of Ashridge, some five miles round, famous for its magnificent oak, ash, and beech-trees ;

## Old English Houses

famous, moreover, for its palatial mansion, a successor to an older one which was erected out of the ruins of a monastery. It is a pity that this combination of Gothic and Elizabethan architecture should have passed away.

Queen Elizabeth, when she was princess, frequently stopped here, and there is very substantial evidence to prove this is not one of those mythical places of her Majesty's sojourn, for there is still preserved an extraordinary collection of relics, including not only her bed, but her shoes and stockings and a complete toilet set, with two enormous hair-brushes which, if put upon poles, might well serve as brooms. How the queen came to leave behind all her goods and chattels is accounted for by the fact that during her sojourn it was suspected she was implicated in Wyatt's rebellion, so with more speed than ceremony she was taken from a sick-bed and carried up to London. There is another relic which gives a pathetic sidelight to a chapter in Froude. To quote the great historian, in April 1555, Queen Mary "withdrew to Hampton Court for entire quiet. The rockers and the nurses were in readiness, and a cradle stood open to receive the royal infant; priests and bishops sang

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

litanies through the London streets; a procession of ecclesiastics in cloths of gold and tissue marched round Hampton Court Palace headed by Philip in person; Gardner walked at his side, while Mary gazed from a window. Not only was the child assuredly coming, but its sex was decided on, and circulars were drawn and signed both by the king and queen, with blanks also for the month and the day, announcing to ministers of State, to ambassadors, and to foreign sovereigns the birth of a prince. . . . The bells were set ringing in all the churches; *Te Deum* was sung in St. Paul's; priests wrote sermons; bonfires were piled ready for lighting, and tables were laid out in the streets. The news crossed the channel to Antwerp, and had grown in the transit. The great bell of the cathedral was rung for the actual birth."

The relic to which I refer is the baby-linen which was made by Princess Elizabeth for her rival sister upon this much-looked-forward-to occasion, which was fated to end in disappointment. More mementos of Elizabeth may be seen in the old manor house of Little Gaddesden, close at hand. Here is a curious mural painting representing her and her suite. The principal figure (of the queen),

## Old English Houses

having been painted upon a cupboard door, afforded every excuse for its removal into the mansion; doubtless it will be better preserved there, but one cannot help regretting that it was taken from its original position.

Going northwards by Eddlesborough, in whose church there is a wonderfully fine fifteenth-century screen and canopy to the pulpit, a journey of about nine miles will bring us to Hockliffe in Bedfordshire, on the great main road to Coventry, and three miles to the north-east is Toddington. At the old manor house of the latter place—or, rather, the remains of it, for at one time it was one of the largest mansions in Bedfordshire—linger sad memories of the young heiress of the noble house of Wentworth. The fine old church is full of interest. There are recumbent effigies of knights in armour, and the roof is one of the finest in the county, with gracefully carved bosses, figures of angels, etc. A handsome but dilapidated monument to Lady Wentworth naturally enough is silent about the pathetic history of her liaison with the handsome Duke of Monmouth, who, at the time there was a warrant out for his arrest on the charge of high treason, remained for some months secreted at Toddington. But

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

here, as elsewhere, he courted disaster, as well as his hostess. Lord Bruce, who lived in the neighbourhood, and fortunately was friendly disposed towards the fugitive, recognised him at a local hunt in the garb of a gipsy, but kept a silent tongue in his head.

Two years after this, when the brief reign of Monmouth as King of Taunton was over and the headsman's axe had terminated his luckless career, the fatal news, being carried to Lady Wentworth, proved also her death-blow. One of the bishops who attended the duke in his last moments had the heart-wrenching task of taking to her a memento in the shape of a ring which had been handed to him on the scaffold. At the sight of it the poor girl swooned, and upon regaining consciousness sobbed, "Good God, had that poor man nothing to think of but me?" A month or so after this, and the bell of Toddington church was tolling. The villagers had congregated to pay their last tribute of love and respect. But the past was not to be buried with the last earthly remains. Some evil-disposed person ascended the tower and cut the bell-ropes—in the hopes, perhaps, that by so doing the soul of the departed would not reach heaven. I fancy there is such a superstition.

## Old English Houses

The figure of a cupid on the monument stands headless, as if symbolical of the unhappy love story, and the bust of the heroine of it has fallen and lies in pieces upon another tomb.

What remains of the mansion is interesting, but it is only a fragment. From some old documents, maps, and sketches preserved there, one may get a good idea of the original dimensions. On the back of an old fire-screen also there is a ground plan showing the part of the house which was set aside for Monmouth's use. This (retaining the original furniture) was kept locked up for years, while the remainder of the house was dismantled and tumbling to pieces, but it was eventually pulled down. Some of the oak carvings from Toddington Place were removed to Hockliffe, where they may still be seen incorporated in the White Horse Inn—an old hostelry where in years gone by there was a notice stuck up to the effect that its customers had the privilege of seeing the newspaper there *every day in the week!*

At the now ruinous Inigo Jones mansion of Houghton Conquest, a few miles to the north of Toddington, lived Lord Bruce, afterwards Earl of Ailesbury, who once upon a time was the suitor



## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

for the hand of the heiress of Toddington. It is a picturesque pile of red brick of James I.'s time, with stone facings and classic arches and arcades, like the ruin of Slaugham Place in Sussex. A fine house it must have been, with formal terraces and gardens, of which nothing is now visible in the surrounding meadow-land. Before the Earl of Ailesbury came into possession it was the property of Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, but the story that Sir Philip wrote his *Arcadia* there is erroneous. The arms and quarterings of the Sidneys formerly surmounted the main entrance, and their various monograms may still be seen upon a frieze. "It's been an old ancient place in its time," observed a farm labourer, who, hidden from view, had been watching my cautious manœuvres round some very shaky looking walls. I agreed with him, though I thought by appearances it was *still* "an old ancient place." "Folks sometimes come and paint it," continued he, and he might have added, "carve it as well," for there were deep-cut mementoes of the visits of the 'Arrys and 'Arriets of present and past generations. The gentleman was evidently thirsty—for there was nothing more accommodating than a disused pump, securely railed in, as if water

## Old English Houses

were scarce in those parts—so I handed over two-pence.

The allusion to Houghton ruins forming a good subject for the brush suggests to my mind the experiences of an artist friend who, revisiting one of his old haunts, told a cottager that he had painted his house some five years previously. "Sure, that ye didn't," said the yokel with some spirit; "nothing ain't been done to it this twenty year or more, and then it warn't painted, but whitewashed, 'cos the squire said that was good enough for a house o' the likes o' mine."

Not far from Houghton ruins stood the old castle of Ampthill, where Queen Catherine of Arragon lived in retirement previous to her trial.

Clophill and Silsoe are as poetic in appearance as their names sound. These pretty villages, which lie to the east of Ampthill, have a more prosperous look than the majority hereabouts, for the generality have a poverty-stricken air. This is perhaps owing to the proximity of the large estate, Wrest Park, in the same way that the village of Woburn, some miles to the west, owes its flourishing condition to the ducal house of Bedford. By the way, when I went through that extensive park some years ago, I was

116

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

not aware that there is a kind of private Zoological Gardens kept on the premises. I met now and again some most alarming-looking animals, who filled me with awe, but I presume they were tame, or they would not be allowed to prowl about in that casual sort of way.

At Over and Lower Gravenhurst, to the west of Wrest Park, one may get an object-lesson respecting church restoration. The first thing that greets one upon entering the holy edifice of the latter village is a contribution box for funds, and, unkind as it may appear, I trust they will not be forthcoming, if one may judge of the impending havoc from the over-scraped and varnished church. Here, lying in a corner, I noticed the wreck of the old oak pulpit and one of the original pews—the latter the remnant of others which have been chopped up to be fitted here and there in the new seats. They have the appearance of being neither one thing nor the other. Whether funds would not admit of the roof being attacked, I do not know; but that, fortunately, has not been touched—a splendid roof, with great figures representing angels with extended wings, and beautifully moulded bosses at the intersections of the beams.

## Old English Houses

Far less pretentious is the other little unrestored church, with its original pews almost intact, a simple decorated rood-screen, retaining in part its original colouring, and the old pulpit. A monument to one Benjamin Pigott represents him, his three wives, and fourteen children—in various instalments. First comes a brass of Benjamin, then a wife, a child, another wife, four children, the third wife, and, finally, nine more children—a goodly array in all. Here also may be seen an hour-glass stand, which carries us back to the days when sermons were measured out to the parishioners according to the running sand. There are some churches that I know of where I believe this custom would be welcome if the glass was one of those modern ones—for boiling eggs.

Meppershall, a mile or so to the east, has also a good cruciform church, in close proximity to which is the manor house, coated with yellow wash over possibly ornamental pargetting. Conspicuous on the gable over the porch is a large bas relief of a crown and thistle. I asked the inmate for information, which was not forthcoming. It was *supposed* to be the manor house, and the badge was *supposed* to be a crown and a thistle (which was evident on the face

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

of it). Shillington was the next place on my programme. Here I was enforced to take things leisurely, for on my way my machine (I was cycling on this journey) was incapacitated by a great plug of wood running completely through the tyre. A deliberate case of suicide, such as this, should properly have been buried at the next cross-roads, but I dragged the mangled remains onwards in the hope of finding a doctor. I have always noticed that the worst punctures usually happen in the most outlandish places, miles from the nearest railway, miles from help or sympathy. But I might have fared worse and been "hung up" entirely, for my outfit was far from equal to the occasion. At Shillington I discovered a bootmaker, who was accustomed not only to set people on their legs, but on their wheels. When I say "discovered," I mean I heard that such a person existed, but to find him was another matter, for his shop was locked up and he was—heaven knows where! In a rural district I usually find the people are callous, but here the whole population voluntarily went to scour the country.

Meanwhile, I sauntered round the old church. From the distance as I approached the village, the church standing above the old thatched roofs looked

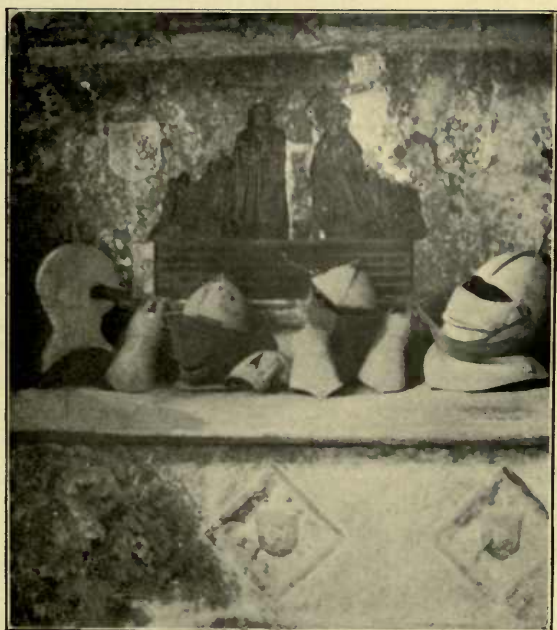
## Old English Houses

more like some massive mediæval castle, and, silhouetted against the evening sky, it had a strange, romantic appearance. The key of the church, as is usually the case, was kept some considerable distance away, but when at length I ran the lady in charge to earth, it was a satisfaction to learn that she could "always be found" in the same spot, which certainly was not the case with the bootmaker. The key and the custodian could not be parted—an admirable plan where there are possibilities of tips—so the lady honoured me with her company. No sooner was the door open than some mysterious person, who I had not noticed before, slipped in. Like myself, he was a stranger in the land, and, judging from appearances, wanted to see all that was to be seen—possibly gratis, for which I do not blame him. "A good brass," I ejaculated, half to myself and half to the lady in charge. The gentleman brought his eyes and nose to bear on the monument and exclaimed, "A treat!" I admired the old oak benches and the most graceful tracery of the screen. They were also "A treat!" I expect the view from the church tower was likewise, for he mounted the ladder to explore the heights while I remained below, and, preparing to depart, was reminded



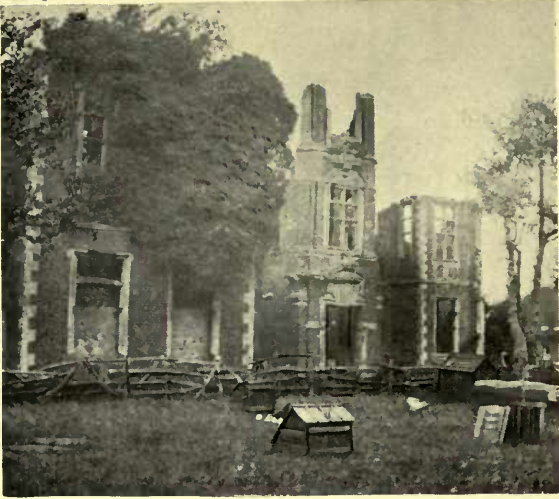
WHITE HORSE INN, HOCKLIFFE

*p. 112*



HELMETS AT HAREFIELD

*p. 135*



HOUGHTON CONQUEST

*p. 114*



ASTON BURY

*p. 122*



## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

that *my friend* would not be long. This hastened my exit.

Upon my return to the shoemaker's shop I found that the inhabitants of the village had returned, and that the object of their search was looming in the distance covered in dust and perspiration. Another quarter of an hour and I was speeding towards Hitchin, where I arrived just three minutes too late for the up express. It is the fashion to abuse that wonderful publication *Bradshaw*, but I think a cyclist on tour might do worse than carry one with him; occasionally it would save both time and anxiety. Much as *Bradshaw* is maligned, it is not nearly so exasperating as the official time-table books published by the various companies. You are in a hurry to get to a place and refer to the index, and find this sort of thing: *Muddleton*, pages 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 14, 18, 23, 27, 35, 49, 51, 62, 63, 77, 81, 87, 90, 97, 105, 116, 123, 132, 143. It is years since I read that excellent parody, *A Guide to Bradshaw*, by Sir F. C. Burnand, and do not remember whether this system of indexing is commented upon, and if so, whether there is any suggestion how to alight upon the page that you want.

If a straight line were ruled from Shillington

## Old English Houses

through Hitchin and continued to about the same distance on the other side of that bright little town, it would terminate at Aston Bury.

I visited this ghostly old manor house on a dreary winter's day some years ago; one of those mild, muggy days when the moisture is dripping from the skeleton trees, and everything is half hidden in a shroud of white penetrating mist—a day of which the most pleasant part is the recollection of the various discomforts when one is seated by a bright fire in a cosy inn parlour at the termination of one's journey. To traverse ploughed fields on such a day means, of course, carrying the weight of half the field on your feet or leaving your boots behind in the mud; but it is wonderful what one will undergo for the sake of a short cut. I have a recollection of arriving at Aston enveloped in clay from head to foot. There is a village some miles to the north-west in the adjoining county called Barton-in-the-Clay, so why not call this place Aston-in-the-Clay—in the winter months, that is to say? Fortunately the manor house was empty, otherwise I never could have been admitted. The building stands bare and bleak (a portion only of the original Elizabethan house), and has some very good twisted chimneys. Inside are

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

panelled rooms, Tudor doorways and fireplaces, and two remarkable carved staircases with giant tapering newels. The latter occupy the chief portion of the house, excepting a gallery over a hundred feet in length on the top story, stretching from one end of the building to the other. The weather, doubtless, had a good deal to do with it, but it looked far from a cheerful abode—one, moreover, calculated to arouse suspicion of uncanny forms lurking in the dark corners of the deserted chambers.

Knebworth, with its strange medley of turrets, pinnacles, chimneys, and griffins, and other Strawberry Hill Gothic embellishments, is not far off. It is difficult to imagine that the wing of the original quadrangular Tudor structure is encased in this curious but certainly picturesque exterior. The great hall, with its fine screen and open timber roof, arms and banners, is intact, as is also the portrait gallery. Here the Stuart period is well represented. Over the carved oak mantelpiece is a fine painting of the hard-featured Prince Rupert, with his natural son Dudley Bard, who, like his father, was distinguished for his valour. He was shot in storming a breach at the siege of Buda in 1686. Among the beauties is pretty Nell Gwyn, who here has dark

## Old English Houses

brown hair, as we see her in the National Portrait Gallery. I presume she dyed her naturally fair tresses to suit the fashion, as the gentlemen of the court occasionally changed the colour of their wigs.

More fascinating is handsome Lucy Walter, whose large expressive eyes follow you wherever you go. This portrait is one of the finest I have seen from Lely's brush. One day I hope this great artist's work may be valued at its proper worth. No portrait painter had so many bad imitators, for he could not possibly have turned out a tenth part of the pictures attributed to him. Rubbish which would make Lely turn in his coffin is constantly being passed off as his work, and his name suffers in consequence. Though the popular painter had innumerable imitators and copyists, the fact is never recognised at an auction room. Is it likely? A beauty of Charles II.'s court, if not signed by Mary Beale, *must* be by Lely, no matter how indifferent the artistic merit of the picture. Why do not the organisers of one-man exhibitions, such as we have had of Vandyck, Romney and Reynolds, give us a representative collection of this old master? The everlasting interest in the Stuart period alone should make such an exhibition popular.

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

Not far from the retired little village of Tewin Green, to the south-east of Knebworth, stands Queen Hoo Hall (locally pronounced Queenie-'ooo), a curious red-brick Tudor house with ornamental pinnacles surmounting its two principal gables, lofty mullioned windows, and massive chimney-stacks. At the back is a little walled-in courtyard, and from this you enter the house over a doorstep of red bricks encased in a bordering of oak, like the hearths one occasionally sees in old houses. By this primitive entrance Queen Elizabeth is traditionally said to have come upon the occasion of her visit, for she certainly honoured the house with her presence during one of her progresses. Most of the rooms have been stripped of the oak wainscoting with which they were covered not many years ago, but the old stone Tudor fireplaces remain, and there is also the original well staircase intact.

On my first visit, it was occupied as a farm, and house and garden appeared to be in a most neglected condition, but restorations have taken place of recent years, and there are now level tennis-courts and luxurious flower-beds. Over a fireplace in one of the upper rooms is a strange mural painting, the subject of which was a mystery. The costumes

## Old English Houses

represented show it to be coeval with the house, but presumably the fresco was never finished, and a great portion of it is only in outline; or perhaps it was nearly obliterated in removing the coats of whitewash they were so lavish with about a hundred years ago. The principal figures in robes and ruffs are kneeling, but most conspicuous of all is the standing figure of a negro, with a sort of club in his hand, bearing a strong resemblance to a Mother Gamp umbrella. The rooms were unusually dark and gloomy, as there was an impending thunderstorm when I was there. In a better light I might have arrived at a more satisfactory conclusion as to what the picture was about. The angry appearance of the sky hastened my departure. For three hours before there had been brilliant sunshine, though when I had particularly wanted it earlier in the day for a snapshot, I had waited and waited in vain for a convenient gap in the clouds.

On arriving at Queen Hoo the black mantle had again obscured the sun, but this time it meant business. I put on speed for the nearest station, but down came the deluge before I was half-way there. With "buckets" coming down, trees afford not the least protection. Oh! for the Mother Gamp on the fresco.

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

I can feel the rain coming through my hat, passing down my neck and filling my shoes even now. The prevailing impression of "Queenie-'ooo" is, as Mr. Mantalini would say, "a demmed damp moist unpleasant one."

Years before this expedition I had come out somewhere in these Hertfordshire wilds with my camera. Nowadays one may wander into the innermost corners of the earth with a detective camera and not be detected, or, in other words, not excite the least curiosity; but at the time I speak of the instrument was regarded with suspicion. As I was carrying the formidable apparatus of those days on my shoulder, I passed a farm labourer and his son. "Be 'e burd-catching, faather?" I overheard the boy address his sire. The father evidently knew better, for he approached and asked me to "take a draft" of his "dawg." Unwillingly I had to refuse, as I had exposed all my plates. This I tried to explain, but he only thought it was an evasion, for said he, "I don't mind giving yer sixpence, mister, if ye'll potograph 'im." I shook my head. "A shillin', then," he persisted, putting his hand in his pocket. I remained firm. "Well, ye ain't 'ard up for money, anyhow," he grumbled, as he trudged off, and even

## Old English Houses

then father, son, and dog looked back occasionally in the hopes that I should change my mind.

Some of the most rustic country folk have a clever way of turning things to account. The inmate of an old cottage I once photographed near Dorking was a thorough business man. Yes, I might take "a likeness" of his house if I paid a shilling. I did so, and the worthy gentleman threw himself in for the money—posed in the porch—and remarked if I had half a dozen or so of the result to spare, I might give them to him!

In Tewin Church there are tombs to the Botelers, who once upon a time possessed both Aston Bury and Queen Hoo Hall. In the churchyard may be seen one of those tombs which have been lifted bodily from its position by the growth of a tree, or rather in this instance by several. Great branches of ash and sycamore have embraced the iron railings in such a way that they are wrenched out of their positions. The usual story is told—that it is the grave of an unbeliever, which, I think, does not go for much, as these discoveries are never made until a century or so after the person's interment.

In a ramble of some fifteen miles from Tewin



## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

one may include the historic mansions of Hatfield, Tittenhanger, The Grove, Cassiobury, and Gorhambury (at the last of which resided the occupant of the Tewin tomb, Lady Anne Grimston). Hatfield, of course, is one of the most perfect Elizabethan mansions extant, and its art treasures are world famed. Vastly interesting as are these, as at Chatsworth one comes away with the predominant impression of the beauty of the delightful old gardens, groves, and avenues. Even over two and a half centuries ago Evelyn came away with the same impression, as did Pepys (in 1661), who admired, above all, the gardens, "such," says he, "as I never saw in all my life." But in his rounds there was also a pretty little dog which he admired, and, with extraordinary candour, he says, "I would fain have stolen—but I could not, which troubled me." The approach to the old vineyard by the quaintest of yew avenues, with branches interlaced into a thousand arches, and with terraces sloping down to the river, is quite unique. The Elizabethan garden, the Jacobean garden, and the Privy garden also have each of them their distinct beauties and characteristics.

Like Hatfield, Tittenhanger contains some superb

## Old English Houses

art treasures. It is a queer-looking red-brick Jacobean house with tall French château-like roof. Among the miniatures here is a very beautiful one of Lady Castlemaine, by Cooper, in which that lady's usual self-conscious and imperious expression is entirely absent. I may note for those who are interested in such matters that there was a replica of this miniature in the Propert collection, but misnamed La Vallière. Their features were not unlike—the eyes in particular, which had that dreamy expression half the ladies of the court tried to imitate.

At Gorhambury, Cassiobury, and The Grove (Watford) one may study the faces of nearly all the celebrities and notorieties of the seventeenth century, as well as characters who only figure in the sidelights of history. Among the latter is Mrs. Hyde, the old widow lady who concealed Charles II. upon his hazardous flight from Worcester. This stern old lady, as she peers out of her circular frame at The Grove, looks as if she could keep a secret. Those who were ignorant of the rank of her guest surely must have been scandalised by this good widow's assiduous attentions to the pseudo serving-man, whose health she could not refrain from drinking in a special bumper. Of more romantic interest is a full-

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

length in armour of the handsome, weak, and superstitious son of the possessor of those life-like eyes which follow us up and down the picture gallery at Knebworth. At his side stands another figure, with a rather sinister expression, who points with his finger to a spot on the globe, perhaps to the south coast of England, towards which the duke was shortly to set sail from Amsterdam. Monmouth looks gloomy; perhaps he is weighing in his mind a visionary crown against the peaceful bliss of his secluded retreat at picturesque Gouda. But gloomier still is his face at Cassiobury; this was painted just a couple of years before the final scene on Tower Hill. It is difficult to realise that it is the melancholy maturity of the "vaulting, leaping, clambering" youth who was the liveliest figure in the liveliest of courts.<sup>1</sup> In the same year that this portrait was painted, a detachment of soldiers under Colonel Oglethorp arrived at the house where it hangs to arrest the owner for his share in the Rye House Plot. He had sought refuge in flight, and was occupied at his favourite hobby, devising and planting the present picturesque walks and avenues. Essex received the colonel courteously, took him round

<sup>1</sup> Vide *King Monmouth*.

## Old English Houses

the grounds, and refreshed him with the fruit for which Cassiobury was, and is still, famous. How the earl evaded the headsman by committing suicide in the Tower (which act was one of the many misdeeds afterwards put down to James's account) need not be detailed here.

Gorhambury, like Cassiobury, is architecturally not attractive to the antiquarian, but the pictures are exceptionally fine. Here is the best portrait I have ever seen of George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, by Mytens. Hilliard's portrait of the Virgin Queen was given by her august Majesty to her host, Lord Chancellor Bacon, upon the occasion of one of her visits. The collection at The Grove is rich in Vandycks, and there are many good Lelys and Knellers.

But enough of pictures. Let us follow the boundary line between Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Middlesex. Considering the proximity to London, the country is still wonderfully primitive hereabouts. Around Sarratt and Chipperfield, to the north of Rickmansworth, there are some queer old cottages, and the scenery, particularly near the latter village and common, is exceedingly beautiful.

The village of Sarratt may have been pretty

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

some years ago, but ugly modern buildings round the green have sprung up and spoiled its primitive character; in the centre of the green, moreover, there is a hideous iron well or pump, which looks more like a gigantic knife-cleaning machine than anything else. I think even a Jubilee clock tower would not be such an eyesore. Near the village there is a famous haunted house, which is mentioned in Mrs. Crowe's *Night Side of Nature*. The ghostly visitor is said to be a headless man in a blue coat, with brass buttons. Whether he wears other garments I do not know, but they are not specified. A guest who was stopping at the house, to whom the spectre appeared, knew nothing of the visitations before he gained his own experience. He had retired to rest and dropped off to sleep in the ordinary way, when he was awakened by an extraordinary pressure on his feet. Probably "blue-coat" had been sitting on them, for on opening his eyes he observed a stooping figure supporting himself by the bedclothes at the foot of the bed, in the act of picking up something—his head, presumably, for that was missing from his shoulders. Under the circumstances, it is hardly to be wondered that the guest at the

## Old English Houses

house did not accept a pressing invitation to continue his visit.

Some years ago, in exploring this part of Hertfordshire, I was severely handicapped, for all the names of the signposts for miles around had been painted out. Presumably the man who was renovating them went his rounds until his white paint was exhausted, and then made a fresh start with his black paint; but as this was a matter of time, the unfortunate traveller meanwhile was left to his own resources. At one place where there were three roads a local wit had stepped in with some red paint and filled in the names—"To Heaven," "To Purgatory," and "To——" the other place. But that was better than the work of some malicious person who upon one of my wanderings had turned a loose signpost round. Arriving at a village about five miles from this signpost, I discovered to my dismay that I was exactly ten miles in the opposite direction from where I should have been.

To the east of Sarratt is the delightful village of Chenies (Bucks). Here let us hope the railway will never get nearer than it is at present, to spoil the surrounding beauty. One would imagine this an ideal place for honeymoon couples—the shady beech

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

walks, the avenues of elms, and the old mill bridge commanding a beautiful view up the Chess valley. There are but few houses, but what timber cottages there are look pretty, and their trim gardens are well cared for. Chenies church is famous as the burial-place of the house of Russell, and their splendid tombs recall a corner of Westminster Abbey. The remains of the manor house near the church is a many-gabled Tudor building, with high-pitched roof and twisted chimneys, built by John, first Duke of Bedford on the site of an old castle of the Plantagenets.

Following the course of the river to the west past Flaunden church (in Hertfordshire) stands Latimers (in Buckinghamshire) high up on a wooded slope overlooking the river. It is a much-restored Elizabethan house, particularly famous for affording Charles I. a night's lodging on two occasions in July, 1647. At that time it belonged to Lord Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire, who acted as the king's host.

Let us now turn to the south-east, and keep close to the county border until we reach West Hyde, in Hertfordshire, thence turn eastwards across the Colne river to Harefield, just in Middlesex, in parts of which one might imagine oneself to be a couple of hundred miles from the metropolis instead of only

## Old English Houses

some seventeen. In and about the village green ugly rows of labourers' cottages have sprung up within the last few years, which give the place a squalid appearance, but on the Uxbridge side the country is wonderfully primitive and untouched. The picturesque gabled almshouses, with their tall chimneys, stand high above the church and site of Harefield Place. Until the year of the Restoration, when this historical mansion was burned to the ground (owing, it is said, to the carelessness of that disreputable poet and courtier, Sir Charles Sedley, reading in bed), Harefield Place was one of the finest houses in Middlesex. The Virgin Queen was entertained here for three days when, by some accounts, *Othello* was performed before her Majesty, for which the company received £64 18s. 10d., which, even taking into account the value of money at that time, was not lavish pay. I fear the London stars of to-day would think twice before they journeyed down to Harefield at the same rate of remuneration. Upon this occasion it has been surmised that Shakespeare was present, but of this there is no proof. Neither is there any documentary evidence to support the statement that the entertainment selected was nothing more cheerful than the dismal tragedy; in fact, the

136





MOOR HALL, HAREFIELD

*p. 138*



ALMSHOUSES AT HAREFIELD

*p. 138*



CEDAR HOUSE, HILLINGDON

*p. 140*



SWAKELEYS

*p. 139*

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

above-mentioned expenses include the "vaulters and dancers," and I doubt whether Othello, Iago, or Desdemona, or any other of the characters of the play, did much in that way. That Milton used to visit Harefield there is no doubt, nor that his *Arcades* was performed there before the fifth Countess of Derby, whose gorgeous dome-canopied monument, surmounted by the Stanley arms, stands in the chancel of the church.

The first thing that strikes one upon entering the holy edifice is its wealth of seventeenth-century monuments, and their rich colouring. These give the church a highly decorative and very picturesque appearance, and though some of the fittings are late and not architecturally beautiful, the effect of the whole, and the blending of Jacobean and Georgian woodwork, has a quaint and fanciful charm about it. It is just the sort of church one associates with the early days of David Copperfield. By all appearances the generation of restorers who were last called in are extinct. The "three-decker" and the great high-backed pews of one or two distinguished families recall the days when our grandfathers used to go to church, though perhaps they may, like

## Old English Houses

these isolated boxes, have been few and far between. The largest pew still retains three enormous cushions upon which formerly rested three equally enormous prayer books of ancient date; they are meaningless now, but there is still a manorial dignity about them. The elaborately carved semi-circular altar-rail savours of the handiwork of "Sir Grundling Gubbings," as I once heard the artist named. There is also a range of stalls, a rusty array of helmets, and there are some very good brasses to the Newdigate and Ashby families.

Harefield Place stood at the back of the church, where may be seen a remnant of the stables of the mansion which succeeded it, and also some of the old garden walls. Of Moor Hall and its adjacent Early English chapel there are considerable remains. The house externally is nothing more than a picturesque cottage (or cottages, for it is divided into two), but the original Gothic roof is intact, though it is risky to one's life, not to mention one's clothes, to obtain a view of it. I was personally conducted on a tour—or, rather, crawl—round these upper regions by an enthusiast in such matters—one of those hazardous journeys such as Dante made, in the opposite direction, where a wrong step taken would

138

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

prove disastrous. There being but a small candle as an illuminant, I once or twice nearly "put my foot in it"—not the candle, but the plaster between the joists—and had I done so I should have descended into the lower regions with more speed than ceremony. There is also a good fireplace, not painted white, as is usual, but black.

There are some good old houses on the Middlesex side of Uxbridge—at Swakeleys, near Ickenham, for instance, which is much the same as it was when Pepys was there in 1665, though the mummified black boy which the owner of the house of those days prepared in his own oven (!) is now missing. The king sent the diarist to Swakeleys to probe the extent and accessibility of the Lord Mayor's privy purse, who pleaded poverty, which is scarcely to be wondered at. The screen in the great hall was erected by Sir James Harrington, one of the judges who passed sentence upon Charles I. "Pretty to see over the screene of the hall," says Pepys, "the King's head and my Lord of Essex on one side, and Fairfax on the other, and upon the other side of the screene the parson of the parish and the lord of the manor and his sisters."

At Ickenham, close to the new railway, stands

## Old English Houses

an old farmhouse whose moat can be distinctly traced. It contains a large room lined with linen-fold panelling.

One of the most picturesque old houses anywhere hereabouts is the Cedar House at Hillingdon—a peep of it that you get from the road, with the giant arms of the ancient tree which gives the name sweeping the lawn, makes a delightful picture. The interior contains much that is interesting in the way of panelled rooms and heraldic glass.

Here again we are on historical ground, for at Hillingdon Charles I., subsequent to his escape from Oxford in 1646, determined after much indecision to turn his steps northwards, instead of boldly showing himself among the citizens of London, which at that critical time certainly would have been the wiser plan. But the man who hesitates is lost, and so it was with the unfortunate king. The inn where he halted to consider the weighty possibilities of life and death is still *in situ*, but it has been much restored from time to time, so that one can get but a very hazy impression of what the building was like as it stood in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Notwithstanding the recent introduction of electric tramways into Uxbridge, the old town still looks

## Bedford, Hertford and Middlesex

quite half a century behind the times. Some of the old inns have gone, but there are others, the Chequers, for example, and the Treaty House, to carry us back to the days when the Commissioners were sitting in the latter house drawing up terms with the king, then at Oxford—the Parliamentary party lodging at the George,—the Royalists making merry at the Crown. Both these last have now disappeared, but the huge sign of the latter may now be seen in the famous room of the house that has adopted the name as a prefix—the Crown and Treaty House. In the seventeenth century it was a private residence with grounds, and the high road further distant than at present. The quaint panelled rooms are fine examples of seventeenth-century woodwork. At the back of the house one gets by far the best idea of the mansion as it was.

The inn where Rochester waited until the wealthy heiress, Mistress Mallet, was within easy reach for him to pounce upon her and carry her off, may have been one of the before-mentioned hostelries, but, so far as I am aware, tradition has not recorded which.

Just off the High Street, in Belmont Road, there is a compact little Tudor timber house, which has lived to

## · Old English Houses

see more than most of the buildings in Uxbridge. It is edged in by other houses and seems to do its best to evade observation. This and another little house with large overhanging diamond-paned windows, a little to the south of the Treaty House, are the gems of the town.



*IV*

*EAST HERTFORD & ESSEX*



## *EAST HERTFORD & ESSEX*

**S**UPPOSE we now journey into the north-east corner of Hertfordshire, and work our way thence into parts of Essex.

I have a remarkably vivid impression of the road between the village of Barkway and Newsells House, to the south-east of Royston. Vivid, however, is hardly the name—a lightning impression in this case would perhaps better convey my meaning; for when I was a youngster, in an ill-advised moment I was persuaded to take a mount upon a very spirited mare named “Flash o’ Light”; and a most appropriate name it proved to be, for no sooner was I seated than off the animal dashed as if bound for the winning-post on the Epsom course. My riding experiences hitherto had been confined to the donkeys on Hampstead Heath, so it is needless to state my experience was a novel one. Reins and stirrups vanished in a moment, and holding on, I might say,

## Old English Houses

by *main* force, my body was making prodigious bounds in the air. Each contact with the saddle was like an earthquake. Presently a five-barred gate loomed at the end of a beech avenue, and I gave myself up for lost, but my steed did not take it in the same light that I anticipated—quite the reverse. She pulled up dead, and off I went spinning in a double somersault that would have brought down the house at a country circus. But oh! the relief to be off the back of that fiery mare even in such an unceremonious fashion.

In those days the occupant of Newsells was the military commander who sits astride another of his "Flashes o' Light" at the corner of Knightsbridge and Sloane Street. A soldier to the backbone, his lordship lived a kind of rigid camp life, and, though an octogenarian, would work from sunrise—not till sunset—but midnight. I have sat writing out speeches about the Long and Short Service until my head reeled and I became convinced that the latter term was most assuredly the best for a private secretary under a military commander.

I could recount many strange impressions of my experiences at Newsells. The mansion is old, but not architecturally beautiful, and though many of the

## East Hertford and Essex

rooms point to the reign of good Queen Anne, some of them date back to an earlier period. The family of Scales was seated at Newsells for centuries since the year 1250. By a strange coincidence, when I was there the name of the housekeeper was Scales—possibly the wife of a descendant of the original stock. The best part about the estate is the park, which has lovely beech avenues right round its boundary. Many a solitary walk have I taken in the late autumn beneath those stately trees, enjoying the gorgeous colours overhead and the fascinating crackling beneath one's feet of the dead leaves of other autumns—disturbing the colony of rooks aloft and the *al fresco* assemblies of rabbits below. But one is apt to grow prosy in recounting these things.

About nine miles (as the crow flies) due east of Newsells stands the ancestral mansion of Audley End, which, though but a portion of the original house, proved even too big for a regal palace. In some respects the house is like Hatfield, externally and internally—the great hall in particular. Some of the finest ornamental ceilings in England may be seen here, and one of the most striking features of the mansion is a beautifully carved Early Jacobean staircase with a succession of lofty pillars forming a continuous

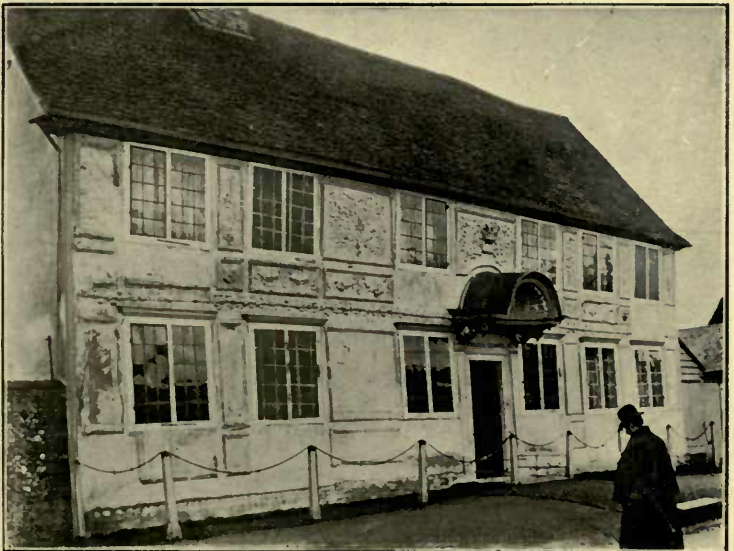
## Old English Houses

arcade. When Pepys was there, he was impressed with these things more or less, but the cellars were more to his taste, the contents of which he sampled with entire satisfaction. As the Merry Monarch kept court here, it is quite in keeping to find many fine portraits of the period. Upon one occasion during the sojourn of royalty, the queen and the Duchesses of Richmond and Buckingham went in disguise to the fair at Newport (some three miles away), disguised as country damsels, and riding pillion behind three gentlemen. "They had all so overdone it in their disguise," says a contemporary account, "and looked so much more like antiques than country folk, that as soon as they came to the fair the people began to go after them; but the Queen, going to a booth, to buy a pair of yellow stockings for her sweetheart, and Sir Bernard [one of the gentlemen] asking for a pair of gloves stitched with blue for his sweetheart, they were soon, by their gibberish, found to be strangers, which drew a bigger flock about them. One amongst them had seen the Queen at dinner, knew her, and was proud of her knowledge. This soon brought all the fair into a crowd to stare at the Queen. Being thus discovered, they, as soon as they could, got to their horses; but as many



OLD HOUSE, NEWPORT

*p. 149*



NEIL GWYN'S HOUSE, NEWPORT

*p. 149*



LITTLE HADHAM HALL

*p. 150*



SPAINS HALL

*p. 151*



## East Hertford and Essex

of the fair as had horses got up, with their wives, children, sweethearts, or neighbours behind them, to get as much gape as they could till they brought them to the court gate. Thus by ill conduct was a merry frolic turned into a penance.”<sup>1</sup>

One of Nell Gwyn's reputed residences is at Newport—a long house with a hooded doorway. It is covered with ornamental pargeting, upon which is a bas-relief of a crown. In the High Street is a more interesting brick and timber house with a fine Tudor oriel window, bearing upon it some grotesque wooden carvings. The church has a fine rood-screen and some good stalls and brasses.

Of the old house of Braddocks, near Wimbish, and its resources for hiding priests in the days of religious persecution, I have spoken at length elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

Thaxted, about seven miles from Newport, is the queerest old town imaginable. In the centre of the market place stands the Moot Hall with overhanging stories and pillar supports. This contains “The Cage,” or lock-up, like the Tollsey at Burford. Here a couple of primitive-looking implements or elongated pitch-forks are still

<sup>1</sup> Ives' *Select Papers*, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> See *Secret Chambers and Hiding-Places*.

## Old English Houses

kept handy for pulling off the thatched roofs of houses in the case of a fire. The cathedral-like cruciform church is the finest in the county. The exterior is very ornamental, with canopied niches and graceful pinnacles, and a noble assembly of gargoyles pulling all kinds of extraordinary grimaces. In the interior is much carved oak, especially about the ceiling, which is one of the best in Essex. In place of the old seats are rows of chairs which, though they add to the cathedral effect, give the whole a modern appearance.

A mile or so away is Horeham Hall, a good but rather too much restored mansion, with step gables and twisted chimneys. I prefer the smaller house of Little Hadham, a fine old house with hexagonal towers to the west of Bishop's Stortford, which altogether has been less tampered with. Here lived that gallant Royalist, Lord Capel, who, after the surrender of Colchester in 1641, although his safety was guaranteed by Fairfax, soon followed his companions, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, to the grave. Some fifty years after his execution, when his descendants removed from their old seat to Cassiobury, a silver casket was discovered containing the heart of the cavalier, with instructions

## East Hertford and Essex

that it should be presented to Charles II. if he should ever come to the throne, as a testimony of his attachment to the royal cause.

Spains Hall and Moyns, away to the north-east of Thaxted, are both fine Elizabethan mansions. The former is a little too much mantled in ivy to show the beauty of its architectural details. The tomb of one of the Kemps, who once lived at Spains, states that he was voluntarily silent for seven years. It is an out-of-the-way place—even nowadays some eight or nine miles from the railway—so possibly there was nobody to speak to two or three centuries back. But I forgot: Mr. Kemp had a wife. How then? Perhaps they were competitors for the flitch at neighbouring Dunmow, and that was the only way to secure it. Now, had the tomb specified that Mrs. Kemp was silent for seven years, that, indeed, would have been one of the seven wonders of the world!

At High and Good Easter, to the south of Dunmow, we are again miles from anywhere. The inhabitants of the latter village cannot have all been immaculate, for the local authorities had to erect a whipping-post. Though comparatively modern, it is not unlike one I remember to have seen at

## Old English Houses

Waltham Cross—a carved one of the time of Elizabeth, which, to my grief, I hear has been stolen. Fortunately I had photographed it. This and the pillory (one of the very few examples remaining) formerly stood in the market square, but they had been removed and fenced in by iron rails. I believe the pillory still remains.

Little Leighs Priory, to the north-east of the Easters, includes a beautiful red-brick quadrangular Tudor gateway, with stone mullioned windows and ornamented chimneys. One would like to see this old place restored with care to its pristine glory; it is well worth it, and the interior contains a lot of good linen panelling.

The historic mansion, New Hall, near Chelmsford, for many years past has been a nunnery. It is to be hoped the interior has not been altered, as I hear has been the fate of that of Rawdon House, at Hoddesdon (also now a nunnery)—where I remember to have seen some magnificent oak carvings—or Littleberries, at Mill Hill, Hendon—another of the reputed residences of Nell Gwyn, where, before it became a religious establishment, I have seen very fantastical mural decorations, panel paintings and oak carvings. The Villiers, first and second Dukes



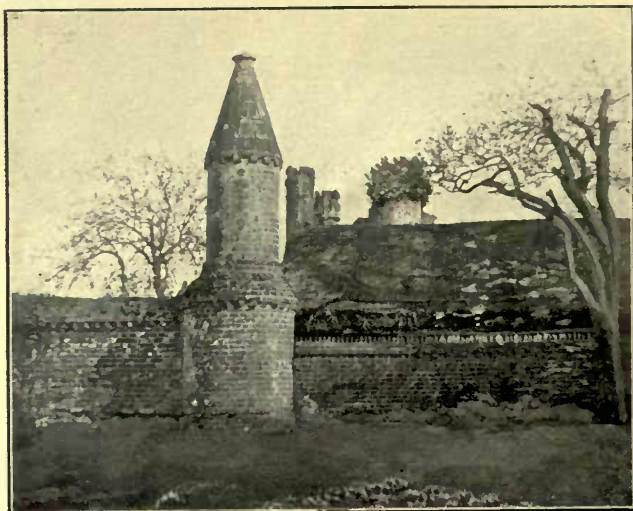
MOYNS

*p. 151*



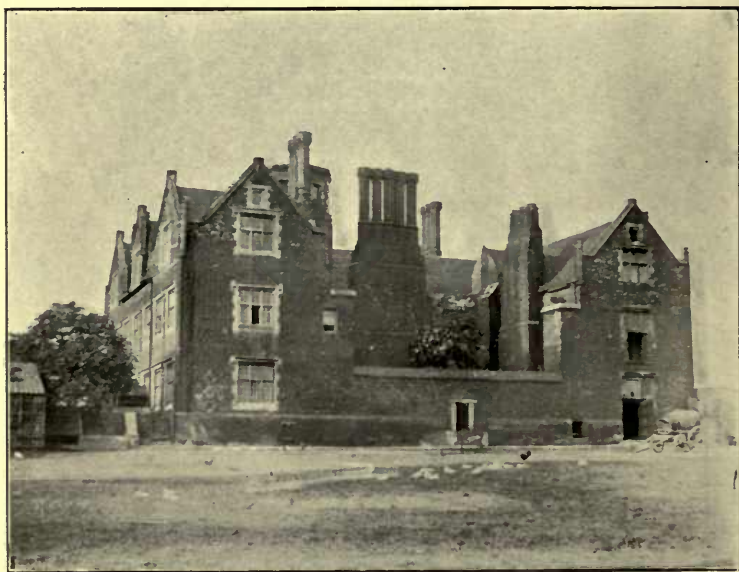
LITTLE LEIGHS PRIORY

*p. 152*



BECKINGTON

*p. 155*



EASTBURY HOUSE

*p. 156*

## East Hertford and Essex

of Buckingham, and the Monks, first and second Dukes of Albemarle, lived at New Hall in great splendour, and before them it was an occasional royal residence of Henry VIII. (who became possessed of it through his father-in-law, Sir Thomas Boleyn, of Hever Castle and Rochford Hall in Essex), Mary, and Elizabeth. We get a good peep of the mansion as it appeared in the year 1656 from Evelyn. "I return'd homeward," says that diarist, "passing againe thro' Colchester; and by the way, neere the antient towne of Chelmsford, saw New Hall, built in a parke by Henry 7 and 8, and given by Queen Elizabeth to the Earle of Sussex, who sold it to the late greate Duke of Buckingham, and since seiz'd on by O. Cromwell (pretended protector). It is a faire old house built with brick, low, being only of 2 stories, as the manner then was; the gatehouse better; the court large and pretty; the staire-case of extraordinary widnesse, with a piece representing Sir F. Drake's action in the year 1580, an excellent sea-piece; the galleries are trifling; the hall is noble; the gardens a faire plot, and the whole seate well accommodated with water; but above all I admir'd the faire avenue planted with stately lime-trees in 4 rowes for neere a mile in length. It has three

## Old English Houses

descents, which is the only fault, and may be reform'd. There is another faire walk of the same at the mall and wilderness, with a tennis court and pleasant terrace towards the park, which was well stor'd with deere and ponds."<sup>1</sup>

There is an old house at Blackmore, some miles to the south-west of New Hall in the direction of Ongar, called Jericho House, where, according to tradition, the much-married monarch (or "professional widower" as a schoolboy called him), when at his Essex palace, used to keep a supplementary reserve of would-be wives; and when the king's whereabouts were not known, the expression that he had "gone to Jericho" had scarcely the vague meaning that it has nowadays. Another house with a reputation about as good, or bad, as Jericho, was Killigrews, at Margaretting, on the other side of Ingatestone, but this has been pulled down long since.

Another Essex mansion, once of almost equal importance to New Hall, was Layer Marney, of which the graceful tower remains—a remarkable example of Early Tudor brickwork, with terra-cotta moulding. The church close by contains some grand old monuments to the Lords Marney, a screen,

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn's *Diary*, July 10, 1656.



## East Hertford and Essex

curious frescoes, and good carvings in the pulpit and pews. The village inn of Feering, to the north-west, could formerly boast of one of the finest panelled rooms in Essex, but now all the oak carvings are gone, I know not whither. An equally beautiful room may still be seen at the moated manor house of Tolleshunt D'Arcy, to the south of Layer Marney. The other two Tolleshunts—Major and Knights—are queer, out-of-the-world places. At the former stand the walls and tower of Beckington Hall, a grim fragment of mediæval architecture with singular extinguisher turrets. In the village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy is a maypole, but I do not know whether the good folk there turn out in overcoats and shawls to foot it on the first of May, for my experience of the early part of "the merry month" is not inviting, though to dance round the maypole would be a good excuse for getting up one's circulation when biting east winds are rampant. I believe until the last—to the bitter end, we might call it—the custom was kept up at Aldermaston, near Reading. I say to the last, for the tapering gilt-ball-surmounted maypole that I saw there a few years back has now fallen a victim to one of the many gales it had weathered. The pretty village of Ickwell, in Bedfordshire, still

## Old English Houses

retains its lofty maypole, as well as the custom of dancing around it in due form, and I trust it may still survive in the present century.

Before bringing these Essex wanderings to a close, a word must be said about Eastbury and Belhus. The first of these can scarcely be said to be off the beaten track, for it stands close to the railway line, near the busy and densely populated suburb of Barking. This extensive Elizabethan mansion has three sides of a quadrangle and one of its towers intact—that is to say, as far as the outside is concerned, for the interior has been stripped of all its fittings, and the greater part of the rooms are untenanted. Here, according to tradition, Lord Monteagle received the anonymous letter, as is supposed, from his sister-in-law, Mrs. Abingdon, of Hindlip Hall, in Worcestershire.<sup>1</sup> Other accounts say that Eastbury was a meeting-place of the plotters, which is also possible, for there is no actual proof that this house was Monteagle's residence at Barking. The unpicturesque surroundings, I fear, will prevent this fine old building from ever being occupied other than as a farmhouse.

Belhus (about the same distance from the

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Secret Chambers*.

## East Hertford and Essex

Thames, but lower down in the direction of Purfleet) stands in the midst of an extensive park. This also is a fine old Tudor structure. It is earlier in date than Eastbury, but has been somewhat spoiled by Strawberry Hill Gothic embellishments; many of the rooms are, however, little altered, and the walls are lined with the original tapestry and silken hangings, and numerous interesting portraits. The name of Lennard, Lord Dacre, is an important one, as may be judged from a prodigious pedigree on vellum, which only brings us as far as the sixteenth century. It was owing to the extravagance of Thomas, Lord Dacre, Earl of Sussex, that the fine old mansion, Hurstmonceaux, was sold, and afterwards allowed to fall into ruin. Doubtless the beautiful countess had her share in bringing about these monetary difficulties, for she inherited a taste for luxurious living both from her mother, the Duchess of Cleveland, and her (reputed) royal father.

On the wall of the great staircase at Belhus hang side by side the portraits of this ill-assorted pair, who in their lifetime were seldom seen together. Married at the ages of thirteen and fourteen, they soon drifted apart. The husband naturally enough objected to the company into which his wife was

## Old English Houses

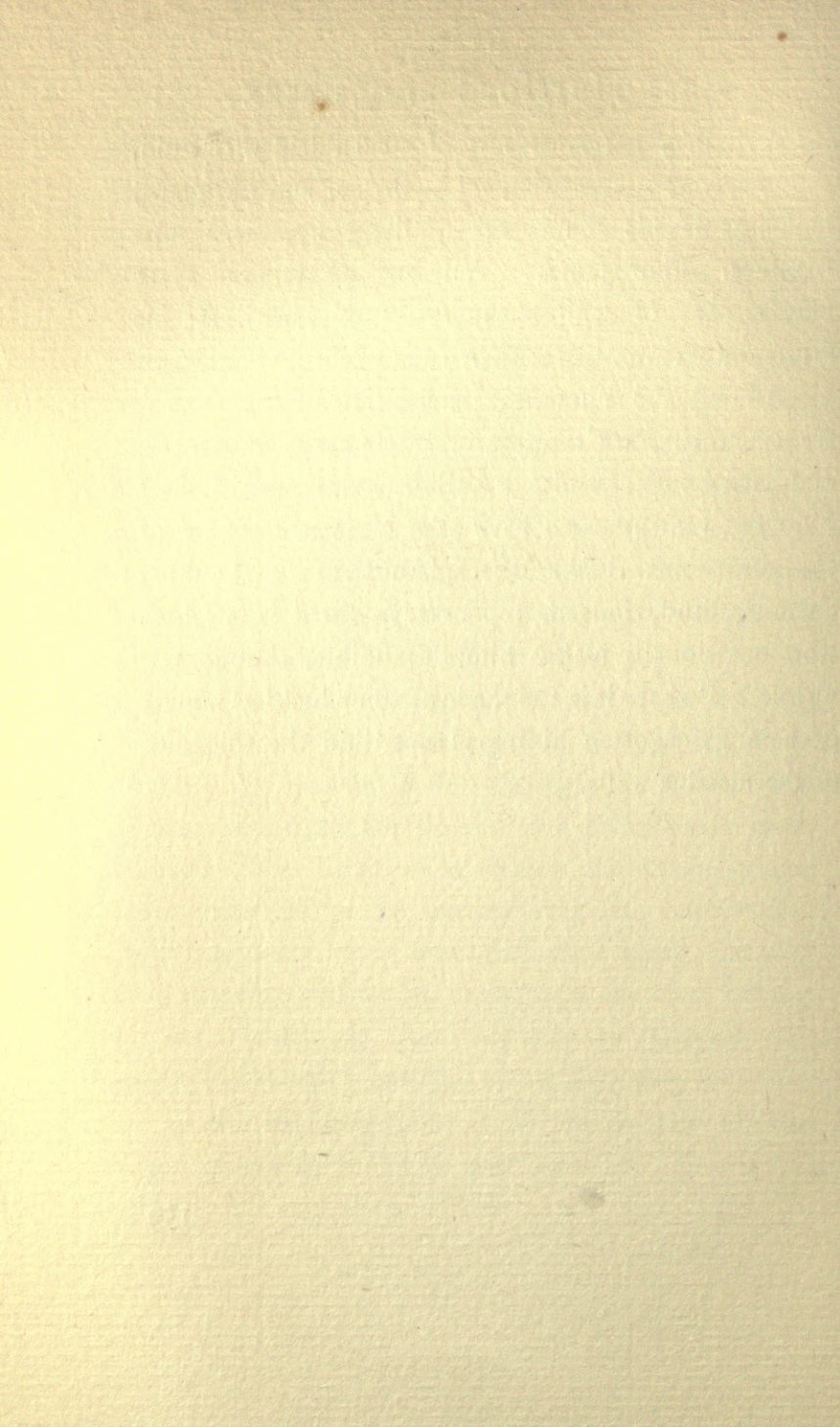
thrown in the society of that lovely Italian beauty, the notorious Duchess of Mazarin, who, to win the good graces (not that her good looks went against her, for that matter) of the countess's august father, took the young lady under her wing. A scribe interested in the chit-chat of the day records, among the other mad-cap freaks of these two ladies, that "they went downe into St. James Parke the other day with drawne swords under their night gownes, which they drew out and made severall fine passes with to the admiration of severall men that was lookers on in the Parke." At length the Earl's flighty spouse was placed under strict supervision in a nunnery at Paris, where she may have amused herself, as did her boon companion when similarly situated, by pouring water through the floor-boards of her room upon the beds of the unfortunate nuns beneath. The Countess of Sussex on obtaining her liberty returned to her husband, but the reunion was only temporary; they lived and died apart, the earl at Chevening (which in those days did not belong to the Stanhopes), the countess at Linsted, the quaint old village I mention in the following section.

In the drawing-room at Belhus is one of the finest portraits I have ever seen of James II.

## East Hertford and Essex

Arrayed in a gorgeous suit of steel inlaid with gold, the abdicated monarch, old, worn, and haggard, looks as if his mind was dwelling upon his misfortunes. Poor James! Will any writer ever spare him a coat of whitewash, for surely, with all his faults, he was not worse than Judge Jeffreys?

Among the numerous curiosities of the seventeenth century are casques, breastplates, guns, swords, and jack-boots, besides a pillion saddle, which last I do not remember to have seen elsewhere. One of the bedrooms looks the picture of a haunted chamber, and, indeed, report says there is a ghost who occasionally makes himself audible, though not visible. Perhaps it is the shade of some luckless inmate of a long-forgotten hiding-place within the thickness of the massive walls.



V  
KENT





## KENT

**F**EW counties are so generally popular as Kent. So accessible from town, one would naturally suppose every nook and corner was familiar ground and had been done to death by the tourist; but it is not so, by any means. To find a genuine bit of old England, one cannot do better than explore certain portions of north-east Kent.

Comparatively few of the countless thousands who yearly flock to the popular holiday resorts on the coast of this county have broken the journey at the quaint old town of Faversham. I propose to alight here and wend my way in the direction of Hollingbourne, where at present no railway supervenes to destroy the impression of a thoroughly old-world country.

The irregular outline of the overhanging gables of the main street and market square of Faversham gives one a typical picture of an ancient town.

## Old English Houses

Many of the houses are, indeed, much older than a first glance would lead one to suppose. Not a few of them are re-cased Gothic buildings. In a rather squalid part of the town there is an old shop front, with a low roof supported by an open arcade of massive oak pillars, grimy and generally dilapidated, still a very good example of a shop of the Middle Ages. One broad street, paved with cobbles, leading nowhere in particular, except towards the river, has many interesting "bits" to delight the artist, and I could state an instance where one of the fraternity became so enamoured of some old Dutch-looking roofs by the waterside that he totally forgot the fact that he had left his wife in another remote part of the town, seeking for him in vain for upwards of an hour. I shall presently give an instance of a similar separation, by which a happy pair were brought to the most desperate straits, for the drama happened at Lenham upon the occasion of my visit.

Faversham Church has been much spoiled by restorations, but there are some interesting brasses, monuments, mural paintings, and two very early Gothic chests.

About a mile outside the town of Faversham



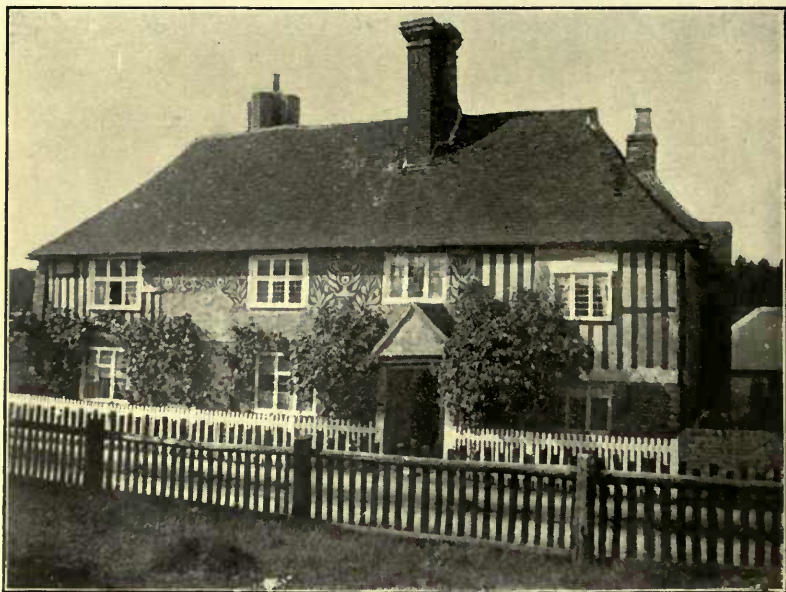
GATEWAY, DAVINGTON COURT

p. 165



THE CALICO

p. 167



THE CALICO

*p. 167*



INTERIOR OF THE CALICO

*p. 167*

## Kent

stands the much-restored Davington Priory, a famous old building, once ruinous, but now ruined by having had too much money expended upon it. The remains of the old Court House, to my mind, are far more interesting—or, rather, I should say the remains of the outbuildings of Davington Court, for the house itself was demolished in the days of Charles II. In the old wall of the kitchen garden is a very imposing Jacobean entrance, with the original folding oak-panelled gates, having the motto above, *Deus nobis hæc otia fecit*, and the date 1624. A long, narrow enclosure at the base of a steep sloping bank is by tradition said to have been the tilting-ground in the good old days of chivalry. It still goes by the name of "The Knights' Field." During the repairs to the priory about fifty years ago, a curious helmet was discovered built into the wall, which, judging from the date of the masonry, must have been placed there in Queen Elizabeth's time.

To the north of Davington is the little village of Oare, near the mouth of the river Swale, where are some quaint old houses worth notice. At a creek, called the "Stool" in old records, the last of the crowned Stuarts was brought ashore after his capture

## Old English Houses

by the Kentish fishermen.<sup>1</sup> I merely mention this to keep alive the spot as a historical landmark. In hunting up some of the places thus associated some time ago, I found local tradition had with time expanded certain facts. The ferryman at Elmley insisted that King James landed at that spot "with all his fleet"! Argument was useless. I departed worsted.

But I have diverged somewhat out of my proposed course. The road to Hollingbourne runs in a south-westerly direction, branching out of the old London and Canterbury highway at historical Ospringe. The general appearance of this place, immortalised by Froissart and other chroniclers, leaves an impression of ugliness and squalor. But there are some picturesque houses for all that; a corner house, in particular, by the now dry "waterway" (a half-timber house, having inside an elaborate moulded ceiling). A little beyond Ospringe, walking westwards, we turn to the left, following the boundary of the pretty grounds which surround the residence of the Rural Dean of Faversham. We now enter a somewhat desolate and monotonous country, for the most part void of hedges, with occasional woods, hop-gardens, gravel-pits, and turnip-fields.

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Secret Chambers and Hiding-Places*.

## Kent

At a distance of about three and a half miles from our starting-point we find a signpost bearing the cheerful intelligence, "To Faversham Workhouse." The weary traveller making his way to the north-east must be considerably comforted by this promise of a haven of rest, and pilgrims to Canterbury who come from the Weald of Kent ought inwardly to offer up thanks to the local authorities, whoever they may be, for resuscitating their flagging spirits.

Onwards for another mile and a half, past an incongruous collection of traction-engines and trucks, we enter the village of Newnham, with its church of cold grey flint and a Swiss-looking spire, a row of uninteresting tenements, the village smithy, a sleepy-looking inn, and last, but not least, an old house which goes by the name of The Calico. The name probably originated from a sign which it may have borne at the time when calico printing was first introduced into this country, in the early part of the eighteenth century; or perhaps it may have been derived from the ornamental design worked upon the pargeting with which a portion of the house was cased in the year 1710, if we may judge by the date upon it. The pattern is certainly suggestive of printed calico, and is both pleasing in colour and

## Old English Houses

line—indeed, an architect of the present day might do worse than reproduce the design in facsimile upon the façade of some of our modern houses.

I have seen other cottages with somewhat similar decoration, but in black and white—never in this pleasing warm red-brick colour. Where the plaster work has crumbled away may be seen the oak beams of the original structure. The combination of wood and plaster, with the cosy casement windows and a massy porch projecting into the street, shading a mighty nail-studded oak door, presents altogether a most charming result. At the back of the house we find a delightful grouping of gables and chimneys, the timber beams between the plaster here being painted black, like some of the old Cheshire houses. Fine panelled rooms may be seen within; ceilings with black oak rafters, and elaborate stone Jacobean fireplaces, carved upon which are heads encircled by those uncomfortable ruffs still in vogue in James I.'s time, griffins, the fleur-de-lis, and all kinds of strange embellishments. One of the fireplaces has a good fireback bearing the Commonwealth date of 1650, surmounted by a regal crown—a curious combination which looks as if the occupant of those days had the strength of his own convictions, and was not afraid





CHAMPION COURT

*p. 169*



OLD HOUSE, THROWLEY

*p. 172*



SEED FARM

*p. 172*



OLD HOUSE, EASTLING

*p. 172*

## Kent

to acknowledge his royalist sympathies. Not many years since an interesting discovery was made in the attics : a helmet and double-handled broadsword were brought to light. These, I understand, have been removed to Sharsted Court, the seat of the Delaunes. It is not unlikely other things are yet to be discovered in this curious old building, for there are many stories of smuggled goods having been brought here a couple of generations ago. Little is known of The Calico beyond the fact that a family of some importance named Hulse lived there some three centuries back. They have long since migrated to other counties, and the name would be forgotten were it not for a mural tablet in the church of Newnham.

There is but little to interest us in the church. It has slight pretensions to Norman and Early Decorated architecture and a good "king-post," but that is about all. Upon the higher ground above the village is Champion Court, the old home of the De Champions, and Sharsted Court. Both are worth inspection—the former for its fourteenth-century piscina in "the chapel"—or cellar—and the latter for its pleasing medley of gables, chimneys, and dormer windows, and a quaint garden with formal clipped yew

## Old English Houses

hedges. One who has been there in the early summer would never forget the scent of the roses clustering over the garden walls, and that of the lime-trees beyond, or the solemnity of the great beech avenue known as Sharsted Walk.

Keeping upon the high ground, we have cherry orchards on all sides. Tourists going through this part of Kent in the cherry-picking season will find the villages absolutely uninhabited. Children, mothers, fathers, grandparents, are all, so to speak, "up a tree." If you want the pew opener or the village clerk to open a church door for you, you must seek for that personage in a cherry-tree—at least, that is my experience. This depopulation of villages is not remarkable, however, when we consider the amount of labour required to pick a good crop. On the Sharsted estate alone it is by no means out of the way to send up to London twenty tons of cherries in a week, and this continues on the average for about six weeks.

Those light sleepers who have the misfortune to pass their nights in a village of north-east Kent at this season of the year—that is to say, to retire and to rise at the ordinary and sensible hours of town residents—will not readily forget their experiences.

## Kent

At the first dawn of day there are gun reports on all sides, as if the whole country was in a state of siege. But this is not the only noise, for it is supplemented with a kind of tin-tray arrangement, by which those of too tender an age to use firearms may earn both their living and the everlasting hatred of those who are not inflicted (blessed, perhaps, in this instance) with stone deafness.

There are other memories, however, of the cherry orchards—the result of having permission to eat of the luscious and indigestible fruit *ad lib.* I will not draw a comparison between the experiences of a bad sailor on a sea voyage, for one grows out of that as time goes on; whereas if one perseveres in the cherry orchards he will never overcome the ill-effects—that is to say, if he survives. The cherry-pickers, as a rule, may consume as much fruit as they like at the outset, for the very good reason that they gain their experience, and abstain for ever after. But enough of cherry orchards. Enough is said to be as good as a feast, and a feast of cherries, as I have explained, is scarcely good enough to be ventured upon a second time.

Ere we continue our journey towards Hollingbourne, we must explore a little to the various points

## Old English Houses

of the compass, for we are in a centre teeming with the most charming old houses and churches. At Eastling, for instance, which lies about a mile to the south of Newnham, is one of the quaintest old farmhouses imaginable. The porch, with its characteristic Early Jacobean windows, is entirely different from The Calico, but is equally interesting, and the side of the building faced with red Sussex tiling would tempt the most exacting artist to halt and make a sketch—indeed, I would recommend him to hurry there ere the restorer sets to work and destroys it.

We might yet go farther afield in this direction to see other fine old timber houses at Throwley and Leaveland, or to Badlesmere, away from everywhere, and where, as a sort of practical joke, sightseers at Faversham are sent to do penance.

Seed Farm, near Eastling, and more in our direct way, is another quaint old house, all out of the perpendicular and horizontal, leaning in such a way that it would be no easy matter to speculate upon the direction in which it would fall if its basement gave way. Doddington village, the farthest point from the railway, north and south, will probably soon be brought in touch with the world by a light railway, but to-day

## Kent

it is scarcely kept alive by the intermittent visits of a local carrier crawling between Faversham and Maidstone. The Chequers Inn recalls one of Prout's drawings—recalls also, I believe, certain smuggling memories.

To the north is the pretty little village of Kingsdown, endeared to me, I may add, by some of my earliest memories. The old Court Farm, long since pulled down, still remains an impression on my memory, though I can have been no more than three years old when I slept within its walls; but the place is more endeared to me from the fact that my father used to relate his juvenile recollections of happy days spent there—recollections of the generation which was then passing away—a fairly long link if one considers the date when those old people were born.

It is strange how some trivial landmarks assume an importance when they are associated with the doings of one's father when *he* was a boy! A farm where perhaps a child was hospitably entertained by Farmer Smith or Jones, leaves so great an impression that the tradition is handed down from father to son, inso-much that for ever after such a landmark is looked upon as a place of vast importance. Perhaps this is merely the result of the reverence one used to have

## Old English Houses

for one's parents. Some people say that the sentiment is as extinct as the dodo ; though I will not go so far as to accept that. But it is certain that "the gov'nor" or "the old man" of to-day has to take a back seat, and is not looked upon with the same reverence that used to be considered natural and proper.

To the north of Kingsdown is Linsted, the most antiquated village under the sun, or, as an old villager once said to me, "It be'ant only ancient, sir, but it's a bit of antiquity." The houses, the church, the people all seem to belong to centuries ago (still, let it be said in bated breath, there is a School Board not very far away). But I must pause awhile to renew the plates of my camera, collect my views, and perhaps the reader will say—judging from the above digression—my thoughts also.

The nearest and the prettiest way from Newnham to Linsted is through Sharsted Park. Just at the back of old Calico House there is a steep lane, with the hedges on either side meeting overhead, and forming a veritable cloister walk—a fairy glade in the daytime, a pitchy black tunnel at night.

Skirting the mansion and some colossal beech-trees, and taking a path beneath some sombre firs,



## Kent

we presently emerge upon a road by one of those snug and enviable little wooden lodges peculiar to this part of Kent. A field-path, reached by a stile on the opposite side of the road, dips down into a hollow, and again ascends in the direction of a little church tower, which peeps out among the trees on the brow of the hill. This is Linsted; and as we get nearer, the general impression is that of its antiquity. It looks like a village left behind in "the steady march of progress," and long since forgotten. The church is flanked on one side by an old inn, and on the other by a remarkably picturesque Gothic house, which at one time was also a roadside hostelry.

It is astonishing the amount of timber the old architects and builders lavished upon the less important houses of the Middle Ages. Little wonder that these structures stand so well the wear and tear of time. Some fifty yards away is a tiny timber cottage, so small that it would be certainly easier for a reasonably sized man to enter by one of the first-story windows in preference to the doll's-house entrance porch, which leans over the road as if it were contemplating a dive upon some hapless pedestrian.

Over the porch of the inn and also of the door of a cottage near the village may be seen plaster

## Old English Houses

medallions representing the profiles of Roman warriors. They were removed years ago from the ancient seat of the Lords Teynham. The church is in a sad state of repair. Here are still those old cumbersome high-backed Georgian pews—unsightly, it is true, but not uncomfortable, and certainly convenient during a dreary sermon. The tombs of the Teynham and Roper families are particularly fine. Upon one of them are bas-reliefs in alabaster of the sons and daughters of a worthy knight and his dame—a really fine work of art, and most interesting from the grotesque costumes. The recumbent effigies of the stately parents are above, surmounted by a canopy worthy of their dignity. There is much to be seen in the church besides the monuments, not forgetting an elaborate brass candelabrum of Charles II.'s time, and one of those early helmets with peaked vizors which connoisseurs are wont to rave about.

Northwards from Linsted, in the direction of Teynham (of which I shall speak presently), there is a group of old houses—one with a deep thatch roof, all angles and corners; another, a typical Jacobean house, with the date 1643 over the entrance porch of “herring-bone” brickwork and oak beams. To make the picture complete, there is a great



OLD HOUSE NEAR LINSTED

*p. 174*



OLD HOUSE NEAR LINSTED

*p. 174*



OLD HOUSE, LINSTED

*p. 174*



OLD HOUSE, LINSTED

*p. 174*

## Kent

tithe barn close by, and a ball-surmounted entrance-gate with the usual "upping-stock" or mounting-block accompaniment.

A few hundred yards farther (in the direction of Teynham) stands another most charming old farmstead, with some of those curved black beams which harmonise so well with the perpendicular and horizontal lines of a timber building. But the old houses hereabouts are too numerous to particularise without becoming tedious. Suffice it to say Ludgate Farm to the south, and a half-timber house a little to the north of the Sittingbourne road, should not pass unnoticed.

Returning to Doddington, we now continue our journey towards Hollingbourne through a densely wooded and sparsely inhabited country. Save here and there an isolated habitation, there are no signs of life beyond the continual warble of birds and the scamper of rabbits. To see this country at its best is to see it in the spring, when the ground is literally carpeted with violets and primroses. What a feast for the youngsters from the slums of London to be brought here for a week or so at this season of the year! Later, however, except in the nutting and blackberry time, there are not so many attrac-

## Old English Houses

tions for children as other parts of the county could provide. Water, for instance, is conspicuous by its absence—that most essential of elements to complete the joys of a rural existence, from a juvenile point of view as well as that of an adult, whether sportsman or not.

I have seen youngsters, sent down from London to this part of the country for a summer holiday, wandering about aimlessly along the dusty roads, instead of occupying their time, as one would imagine they would, in the woods and meadows. Perhaps the monotony of the country palls upon them, as it did upon that town-bred little girl who, returning to the great metropolis after such an uneventful holiday, and exhilarated by being a witness to a fight, a fire, and a cab accident, was heard to soliloquise, “Gimme London!” For the moment I forget who tells the story, but it is true, however morally sad it may be.

Wending our way upwards, we presently pass the ruinous lodge of Torry Hill (once the seat of the dormant peerage of Kingsdown), which looks forlorn in its dishevelled environment of nettles and broken fencing. Here the road dips again, then rises steadily as it winds between the high hedgerows.

## Kent

At length we come into a wide cross-road, and, bearing to the left, approach the summit of Hollingbourne Hill, where a gorgeous panorama of the Weald of Kent opens out before us.

The first part of the descent into the village is precipitous, with hanging woods on either side. A notice-board warns cyclists of impending danger; still, there have been numerous accidents, owing, doubtless, to the fact that when the steep part of the descent is over, a rider thinks that the danger is past, whereas it really still looms in the distance in the form of a sudden twist in the road, with which a reckless rider running at a good pace would be unable to cope, the result being that he would run like a battering ram into the side wall of the village forge. I wonder whether it has ever occurred to the Cyclists' Touring Club that certain hills ought to have a *second* danger signal-post placed in positions such as the above, where the road has become comparatively level after a steep dip, showing that there are still "breakers ahead."

The entrance into Hollingbourne is picturesque in the extreme. The forge I have just mentioned is an old building with a carved barge-board in its little dormer gable. The inn opposite is also of

## Old English Houses

very respectable antiquity, and next to it is a fine old Tudor timber house, with a good corner-post and the original dull green glass in its window casements.

Farther down the hill, the Manor House, with its ponderous deep-red stone-faced gables, comes in view, towering above the smaller tenements as if self-conscious of its own importance. It has been restored of recent years, and to a certain extent spoiled by the insertion of plate-glass windows. I remember it many years ago when it was practically untouched, and had a particularly ghostly air about its tapestried chambers.

Still descending, we come to another quaint group of old cottages. One of them has just undergone a process of cleaning, scraping, and varnishing, but altogether it has come out very well, and, weather-beaten for a few years, it may again prove a tempting morsel for the artist's brush. Doubtless the cottage to its left will follow suit, if not found too dilapidated. The old sign of the Bell still creaks on its rusty hinges to delude the thirsty traveller, for should he succeed after sundry knocks in obtaining admittance, he will discover that it has long since ceased to be an inn.





BELL INN, HOLLINGBOURNE

*p. 180*



GODFREY HOUSE, HOLLINGBOURNE

*p. 181*



OLD HOUSE, HOLLINGBOURNE

*p. 180*



OLD HOUSE NEAR BREDGAR

*p. 183*

## Kent

Close by is the church of All Saints (of the Perpendicular period in particular), containing some fine monuments of the Culpeppers, who built the Manor House, the lady representatives of which family worked the embroidered velvet coverlets of the pulpit and communion table in honour of the Restoration. One of the tombs has a beautifully sculptured effigy of a lady. Those who examine the graceful modelling of the hands will observe the old custom of having the wedding-ring attached to the wrist by a silken cord.

How delightful it is to saunter leisurely in an old village church, reading the queer inscriptions and dreaming of the flesh and blood realities of those silent stone impersonations lying in state! But the enjoyment is greatly enhanced when the harmonies of the organ—a good organ, moreover, played by a good organist—come to aid the imagination. Such was my good fortune here. The performer, all unconscious of the pleasure he was giving, was certainly a musician of no ordinary merit; well, at least that was my impression.

The next house of importance to the Manor House is Godfrey House, a remarkable pile of oak beams and yellow plaster, with overhanging stories

## Old English Houses

and countless diamond window-panes. The porch bears the date 1587. Those who have leisure to roam about will find many other things of interest, not forgetting the old pilgrims' way to Canterbury, which passes through here and Lenham.

A few words may be said of Hucking and Bearsted, both equi-distant from Hollingbourne—about two miles as the crow flies (what a misleading bird, by the way, when one comes to measure out his feats by the pedometer!). Between the latter village and the main road there are some extraordinary old cottages, leaning in all sorts and conditions of angles. Bearsted Green is as cheerful a little place as one could wish to see, evidently much given to local cricket matches. To reach Hucking we must again ascend to the high ground to the north-east, but a climb amid such pretty country as here surrounds us on all sides can never be wearying. Once more on the “backbone of Kent,” should the inner man demand attention, we could not do better than partake of bread and cheese in the cosy little parlour of the Hook and Hatchet, a tiny isolated inn, where one would imagine business could scarcely ever be brisk. The old-fashioned little apartment reminds one of the

182

## Kent

Maypole of Dickens on a miniature scale—a huge chimney, with corner seats and a high-backed settle, where one could plant one's back on a winter's night and defy the most penetrating of north-easterly gales. Given but some blazing faggots in the ample grate, and who could differ with Dr. Johnson as to the comforts that are to be found away from one's own fireside ?

Before exploring the country to the south of Hollingbourne, I propose to introduce the reader to some of the old-world places to the north-west, and to reach these it will be the best plan to strike into the main road to Sittingbourne, and go thence back to Faversham, thus completing a triangle.

Beyond one or two good Tudor-built cottages, there is nothing particularly interesting to arrest our attention till we approach Bredgar—a sleepy-looking place, with a fine grey old church, standing as if placidly contemplating the surrounding tombstones. Within may be seen one of those obsolete pre-Victorian barrel organs, out of which they used to grind the hymns with a handle, and in the tower there are instructions (put up at the Commonwealth) that the bellringers must not perform their duties with their hats on, and if they should swear, the fine will be a penny.

## Old English Houses

There are some old houses worth notice, but one of particular interest and charm calls us about a mile away in a secluded nook, where it hides itself as if it were not desirous of courting observation.

Bexon Manor House is a perfect picture of a compact little Elizabethan farmhouse. There are no incongruous additions to mar the complete harmony of this peaceful old homestead. To see it in the twilight with the warm glow of the western sky reflected in its myriad diamond-paned windows, with the tits darting in and out from beneath the deep projections of its eaves, is to see it at its best.

I visited Bexon on one of those glorious summer evenings when the whole of nature seems to rejoice in the warm bath of golden light. At such a time as this it seems impossible to conceive aught but universal harmony, or to associate humanity with any of its harsher traits. In the same way, it would be difficult to imagine that the reminiscences of which this old house could speak could be other than happy ones. Possibly if one came across Bexon on a dreary November day, it might be otherwise, and one might associate it with its recollections of sadder days. Perhaps it was the mellow light causing this general impression of cheerfulness or hospitality



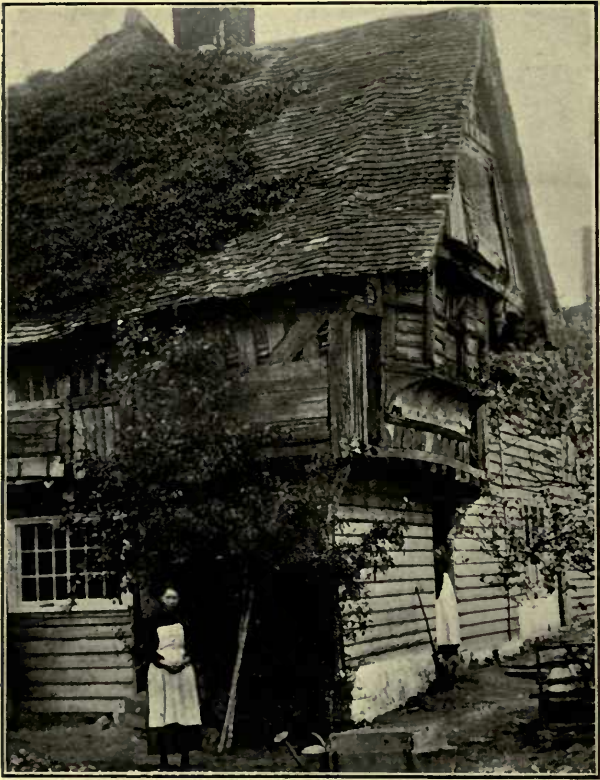
BEXON MANOR HOUSE

p. 184



GROVE END FARM

p. 186



OLD HOUSE NEAR ASHFORD



## Kent

which prompted me with courage. I cannot say ; but I advanced towards the curious oak-carved porch to ask admittance.

It must be one of the penalties of living in a dwelling which has attractions for the antiquary to be thus intruded upon. One is quite aware—indeed, guiltily conscious—of the violation of that privacy which every Englishman is entitled to. Yet one does not scruple to ignore the promptings of etiquette. After repeated knocks it became pretty evident the house was empty, but, thinking that it would be as well to make a final onslaught at the back of the premises before abandoning all hope of viewing the interior, I wandered round by some old barns, where I succeeded in finding a caretaker, who willingly escorted me through the rambling corridors and dark panelled rooms. In the hall stood a splendid inlaid oak “shovel-board” table, coeval with the house. It was rescued not long ago from one of the farm buildings, where the labourers used to congregate for their mid-day meal.

Far from being one of those dismal crones whom one so often finds haunting an old house like an owl in a ruin, the caretaker of Bexon carried out my original impression as far as the house was

## Old English Houses

concerned, and was the embodiment of cheerfulness and hospitality, and a bit of a wit into the bargain ; so altogether I had no cause to regret my intrusion.

From Bexon let us now steer our way to Tunstall, a couple of miles or so away to the north. It is a very pretty village, with some good old houses. One charming red-brick Jacobean house stands back from the road, the gables and clock-tower peeping over a high wall and imposing entrance gate. Grove End Farm, not far off, probably dates from the reign of Henry VII., or perhaps earlier. Inside may be seen an old kitchen, with hooded chimney and open roof to the rafters, black with age and soot—a primitive apartment, very much in the same condition (save its blackness) as when it was built. In this building formerly lived the Hales, an old royalist Kentish family, the last representative of which—an aged maiden lady—died a few years ago. There are some good monuments to the Hales in the church ; one, particularly fine, was rescued by the present vicar, who discovered it lying in fragments in a stonemason's yard.

To the north-west of Tunstall is Borden, where the famous antiquary and naturalist, Dr. Plot, lies

## Kent

buried. In the church are preserved a curious pair of seventeenth-century collection trays with handles. The inscriptions upon them read very much after the style of that upon the stone which was discovered by Mr. Pickwick. They run: "Give—willin—gly—give—chirev—llie." Sutton Barn and Heart's Delight, in this vicinity, are both picturesque old farmhouses. The peculiarity of the latter name led me to inquire of a yokel its significance. "Sure I don't know," said he; "but it's a very old place, and ought to be pulled down!"

The immediate surroundings of Sittingbourne are not attractive. Brickmaking and other industries prevent the country from looking inviting. We will avoid the town, notwithstanding the fact that that great king, Henry V., was once entertained at the Rose Inn. Keeping to the lanes and bearing to the left, a very ancient cottage near Rodmersham is worth seeing for its Early Gothic entrance porch. Near Green Street also are some good old farms. One in particular, down by the railway, is quite a unique example of early sixteenth-century lath-and-plaster work, not unlike some of the old "magpie" houses of Lancashire and Cheshire.

The churches of Tonge and Teynham, to the

## Old English Houses

north-east and north-west of Green Street, are both interesting. At the latter place the first cherry orchards are said to have been planted by one Richard Harris, fruiterer to King Henry VIII. Following the main road back to Faversham, there is not much to detain us. Round about Norton and Rushett, however, are some old inns and farms, which will repay one the trouble of going in search of them.

I now propose to explore the road which runs between Maidstone and Ashford, and to pick out the plums (as far as picturesque "bits" are concerned) which are to be found lying between that road and the level piece of railway which extends to the south of it—the "bee-line" that is said to have been passed by Parliament as it lay wet on the map fresh from the pen and ruler. Taking Lenham as a centre, we will follow the main road first in the direction of Maidstone, and then towards Ashford; after which we will work our way to the south, south-east, south-west, and west.

Lenham is certainly an old-world place, every inch of it. If one approaches it from the north, by Doddington (where the road branches off from that to Hollingbourne), there is a steady climb for



OLD HOUSE, LENHAM

*p. 188*



OLD HOUSE NEAR TEYNHAM

*p. 188*



CHARITY HOUSE, LENHAM

*p. 190*



OLD HOUSE, HARRIETSHAM

*p. 192*

## Kent

some miles, until the welcome dip comes. The first thing that greets one at the foot of the chalk hills is a grim stone lock-up, which, judging by appearances, would afford far from comfortable accommodation, I should imagine. We now emerge upon a queer old square, which opens out to view by a curious old timber house at the corner. At another part of the square the churchyard is entered through a ponderous lych-gate. The Early English church of St. Mary has a good interior, including a fine roof, some interesting tombs, and a very uncommon stone sedille, or confessional chair, with projecting elbows. There is also a range of wooden stalls and a richly carved Jacobean pulpit bearing the date 1622.

An inscription on a tomb at Lenham records that a proud mother died with the satisfaction of knowing she left behind 367 children "lawfully descended" from her! Startling, certainly; but we read afterwards these included four generations. This may have been a great comfort in days when the census report had not reached its present gigantic proportions, but nowadays surely the knowledge of such a fact would be enough to make the poor woman turn in her grave.

## Old English Houses

If we continue our way through the square westwards for a couple of hundred yards or so, we shall find a wonderfully perfect little timber house with carved brackets and a massive, though squat, chimney-stack in the centre. It is called The Charity House, and well deserves all the admiration that is lavished upon it by passers-by.

My first introduction to Lenham, by the way, was marked by an incident quite unique as far as my experience goes. I had just crossed the little river Len (which rises in this parish and flows into the Medway) when a very prosperous-looking individual (whom at first I took to be an American millionaire who resides at Pluckley, a few miles away), driving a particularly smart turn-out, pulled up his high stepper and with breathless anxiety inquired if I had seen—his wife! For the moment I was staggered, but, regaining my composure, I learnt that the lady in question had been instructed to follow the road I had been traversing, while her husband went elsewhere upon some mission which would occupy about an hour; and that when the gentleman returned, he discovered to his alarm that his spouse had vanished. She evidently had taken the wrong turning, and was then—heaven knows where. Moreover, she was

190



## Kent

purseless and a stranger in the land. The couple hailed from miles away, and had to catch a return train from somewhere, with scarcely a minute to spare to catch that train.

What could one do in such a situation but offer one's poor services? It was hastily decided that each should beat up the country in different directions, and return to a particular signpost at the cross-roads.

I hunted for half an hour in vain, but at length I espied the distinguishing "blue blouse" for which I had been straining my eyes. It was centred in a small group of school-children, who were undergoing a cross-examination as to whether they had seen a certain trap that way. I rushed to the rescue. "Pardon me, madam," said I; "have you lost your husband?" "Yes," she cried with tears in her eyes; "where is he?" "If you will confide yourself to my care for a moment," I replied, "I will restore him to you." Further details are superfluous. Suffice it to say that the dilemma wound up like the conclusion to an old-fashioned novel.

Never did one receive such an ovation of gratitude! I had it impressed upon me that if ever I visited such and such a town I should be greeted with a

## Old English Houses

right royal reception. I doubt not that I should, but I have never been.

Keeping to the main road from Lenham towards Maidstone, the next village is Harrietsham, whose fine church stands isolated at the foot of a steep hill leading to the old seat of the Stede family (a lonely looking Georgian mansion, with barns and stables of a much earlier period). The Perpendicular tower of Harrietsham Church is lofty and peculiarly graceful. The interior, with the exception of a beautiful screen, has been much restored, and, to my mind, spoiled. Part of the village—that lying just off the high road—is as typical an old village street as one could wish to see, and one old timber house in particular is in a remarkable state of preservation. Still bearing to the west, we presently get a glimpse, among the dense foliage to the left, of the historical castle of Leeds, which, though modernised, dates from the reign of Edward I., with additions of Henry VIII.'s time, suggestive, in parts, of Haddon. The stately looking mass of towers and turrets is reflected in a wide moat as clear as crystal, across which stretches an Edwardian bridge leading to the most picturesque of old red-roofed gatehouses. Not a few tragic events have happened within the walls of



OLD HOUSE, LEEDS

*p. 193*



OLD HOUSE, LEEDS

*p. 193*



OLD HOUSE, LANGLEY

*p. 194*



OLD HOUSE, BROMFIELD

*p. 195*

## Kent

this peaceful-looking feudal castle, for here it was that the queen of King Henry IV. was imprisoned for a supposed conspiracy against the life of her stepson; and the wife of Humphrey Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, tried for practising witchcraft.

At a part of the main road that skirts the park the scenery is most beautiful, especially by a clump of graceful firs with a forest of feathery bracken beneath.

A little to the left of the road, nearer to Hollingbourne, is the village of Leeds, one of the prettiest villages in Kent, and exceptionally rich in old houses. By a turn of the lane and beyond a little brook is a large cottage of five gables, a good specimen of a Jacobean brick and timber house, but one of those tantalising subjects which so often defy the efforts of the amateur photographer. It stands in the shade of overhanging trees, and when the sun shines, with patches of light all over it, is beautiful to the eye, but confusing when reproduced by the camera. And how often does not one find, that a particularly pleasing "bit" that one would give anything to secure, is rendered impossible by a strong light being immediately behind it? Certainly, in many instances, one may get between the object and the

## Old English Houses

eastern or western sky, whichever may be the case, without trespassing; but invariably it has been my experience that, having gained that vantage-ground, the "bit" has lost all its attractiveness from a picturesque or architectural point of view.

Passing an older house with stone Gothic windows, we next come to the church of St. Nicholas, with its very broad, squat, extinguisher-surmounted tower that can boast of the finest peal of bells (so I was informed) in the county. Farther on in the village street, down in the hollow, is another old cottage of timber with gracefully carved oak tracery in the windows; and at the back of it stands an ancient mill, even more picturesque, with two great overhanging gables looking into a stream-girt orchard on the opposite side of the road. The most remarkable old house, however, anywhere in this district, is one at Langley, about two miles from Leeds. I took a photograph of this some years ago, but upon a recent visit I searched for it in vain, and at length came to the conclusion that fire or house-breakers had wiped it off the face of the earth. There were on all sides new roads, new walls, and new lodge gates. The land adjoining the old house certainly had been bought up and enclosed. Depart-

## Kent

ing in sorrow and ruminating at the fate of my old house, what was my delight when I caught a glimpse of one of its quaint timber gables. Yes, there it stood intact, but with additions expanding it into quite double its original size, as far as I could make out from my side of the new boundary wall. As is now the case with so many of our smaller houses with any pretensions to ancient architecture, it had been converted into a mansion—raised, like many a beautiful village maiden, to a high social position.

Before going eastwards along the main road from Lenham and Charing, we may give a passing glance at Bromfield, rambling up the side of a hill and having one of those primitive pathways of slabs of stone, such as are seen in the old Somersetshire villages.

At Charing there is plenty to see in the shape of antiquities, from the ruins of the Episcopal Palace to the enormous trumpet through which the parish clerk used to announce the hymns. There is a good Elizabethan roof in the church (which is cruciform), some carved bench-ends, and interesting monuments. The vicar happened to be in the church when I was strolling round, and courteously

## Old English Houses

pointed out some of its distinguishing features, and I can well understand the evident pride he takes in it. The ivy-grown remains of the palace are close to the church. Part of it is occupied as a farmhouse and is strikingly picturesque. In the irregular line of the old gables and chimneys of the village street, many subjects may be found for a "snapshot"—the Swan Inn, for example, or an old timber butcher's shop, or another gabled house with wide Tudor entrance gate and carved oak spandrels.

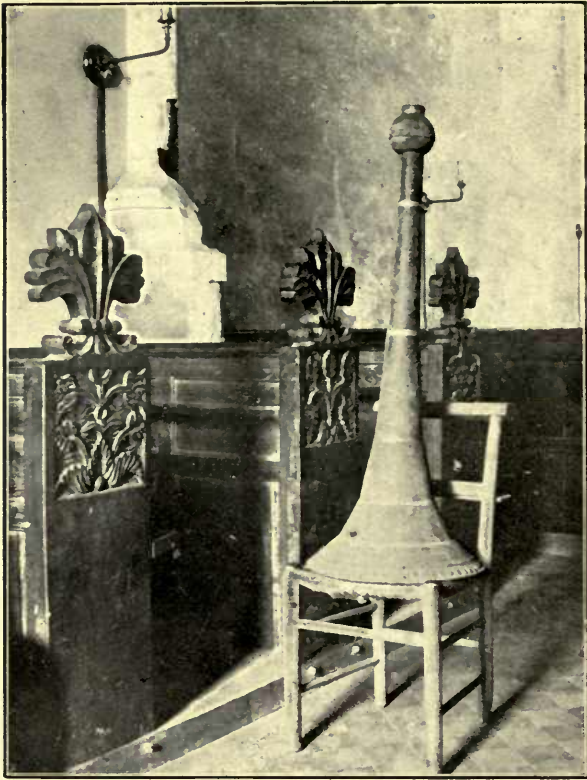
The remainder of the high road between Charing and Ashford is not particularly attractive, but there are one or two good old farmhouses—Acton, of brick, and Wickens, of half-timber, being especially worth notice. In a park off to the right is Godington, the old seat of the Jokes, a fine old mansion with quaint oak carvings, including some extraordinary monsters guarding the several landings of a wide oak staircase.

Turning now to the west and keeping to the lanes, we may visit Pluckley and the ancient seat of the Derings, a very important Kentish family. The stately red-brick gabled house, with its velvety lawns and terraces, conjures up visionary forms of gaily-clad cavaliers and damsels in full-sleeved silken gowns, and gives one a general impression of ancestral grandeur.





OLD HOUSE, CHARING



SPEAKING TRUMPET, CHARING

## Kent

Even the gorgeously plumed peacocks strut about as if self-conscious of long lineage. To be further impressed with the importance of the owners of the house one has but to look at the ancestral pew in the church. Never have I seen in a holy edifice such luxurious accommodation.

Pluckley stands high and commands a lovely view over the surrounding country. I have recollections left of a comfortable inn, with an attractive old-fashioned garden ; moreover, of a very excellent tea.

Not far away is the church of Little Chart, where one is struck by the peculiarity that, though the rest of the interior is in a good state of repair, an old chapel of the Darells in the side aisle is in a most grievous state of damp and mildew, and this is the more to be deplored because the monuments here are particularly interesting.

To the north-west we pass through Egerton, a sleepy place with a good church perched up on a little knoll, but there are few old buildings, save one with a pretty gable end and a rather good late seventeenth-century house. Continuing in the same direction through a stretch of genuinely beautiful rural country, a couple of miles or so will bring us to Boughton Malherbe, a secluded manor house, church,

## Old English Houses

and vicarage, and a few scattered cottages, which can scarcely be classified as a village.

Coming by the road from Harrietsham with the object of finding Boughton, a tourist would imagine that the signpost pointing to Boughton Church was a kind of mild practical joke, for he most certainly would miss his mark and find himself at a place called Grafton Green (where the parish stocks may be seen), a mile beyond. He would have passed a turning, to be sure, but the signpost at that spot is silent as far as Boughton is concerned.

The roof, the bench-ends, the fifteenth-century pulpit in the church, are all good—the brasses, too, depicting ladies in their pointed head-dresses and brave knights in their elaborate Gothic armour. A mural tablet to Dr. Lionel Sharpe explains that he was chaplain to the Earl of Essex, and afterwards to Queen Elizabeth and King James. The font-cover and the poor-box are also worth notice. There is one thing, however, about Boughton church which I do not admire—its highly coloured porch, decorated by the late vicar with blue, white, red, and yellow in the Italian style. Whether this ecclesiastical artist belonged to the “impressionist school,” I cannot say. He was certainly not a

198

## Kent

realist. To those who would know the distinction between these schools, I may quote a very good rule to bear in mind, which I read somewhere. An artist who paints the sky blue and the grass green is a "realist," whereas an artist who paints the sky green and the grass blue is an "impressionist"; moreover, an artist who paints the sky black and the grass red is a "decorative artist." But I doubt whether the porch of Boughton church can be classified under any of these. It certainly is neither a "harmony" nor a "symphony" in blue, white, red, and yellow.

The Manor House, near the church, is a curious old building, with great Elizabethan bay windows. Formerly there was a grand old panelled drawing-room, with a coved ornamental ceiling—alas! now divided up into several apartments, though it may still be seen in sections. Queen Elizabeth's bedroom, with carvings and tapestry, is also here; not one of those mythical so-called halting-places of her Majesty one so often comes across, for I believe the queen really did come here on one of her progresses. The park which once belonged to the house is now incorporated in the vicarage demesne. Here are some gigantic trees,—ash, chestnut, and Turkish oak,—trees of

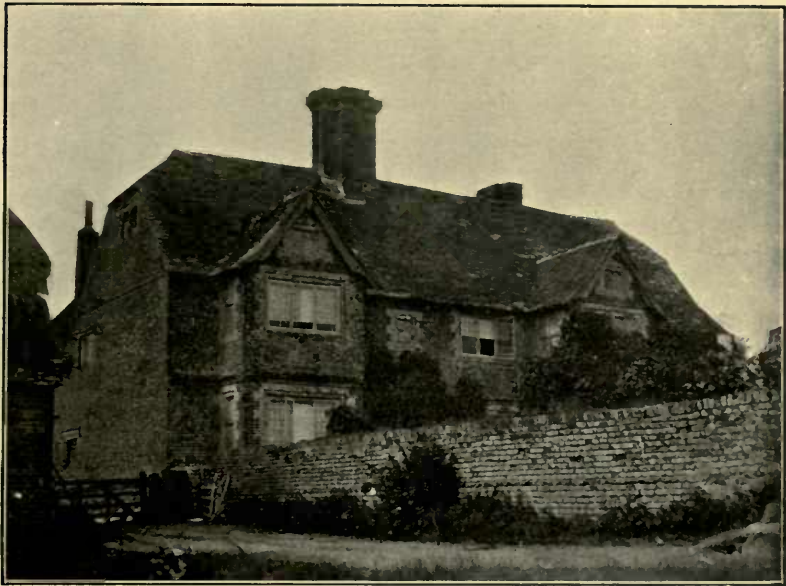
## Old English Houses

great age and immense girth. The vicarage is a quaint old house, cased in early weather-tiling, with a circular and a square tower, and gables and corners everywhere.

The rector, who kindly showed me the various points of interest in the house and park, evidently has a thorough knowledge and keen appreciation of all matters relating to the study of natural history and botany, and for one with such tastes to live in such a beautiful spot as this must give a particular charm to existence.

From Boughton Malherbe it is an easy walk to Ulcomb, whose church, prominently situated on very high ground, should be visited for its splendid early brasses, a good screen, and some curious fourteenth-century frescoes. Sir Ralph Sentleger and his wife Anne are represented in two very fine brasses, giving one a good idea of the costume and armour of the middle of the fifteenth century. An earlier brass, with elaborate canopy, is that of Sir William Maydeston, and is one of the finest examples extant.

Headcorn, a few miles away to the south, is situated in the wide expanse of level country to the south of the second range of hills that one crosses



ACTON FARM

*p. 196*



WICKENS

*p. 196*



ROLLESTON FARM



## Kent

coming from Sittingbourne. It is a pretty little place, surrounded by orchards and hop-gardens, and is rich in examples of early domestic architecture. To the north of the village, on the road to Maidstone, is an old farmstead called Moat-in-den (corrupted to Mutton-den), once upon a time a monastery. I stopped here when I was a youngster, and have a vivid recollection of the mystery which the weed-grown moat inspired, and of the ghostly effect of owls screeching in the dead of night.

Everything ends with *den* in this part of Kent. There are Devil's-dens and Chickendens, Hungerden, Bletchenden, Frittenden, and many other *dens* which I shall visit ere I say good-bye to the county.

Continuing on the road to Maidstone, about three and a half miles from Headcorn is the most beautiful village of Sutton Valence. Fortunately the railway has not yet reached this most attractive and healthy district, otherwise I doubt not Sutton Valence would be one of those popular resorts which grow with rapid strides. Ulcomb, which we have just visited, now lies to the east of us, about two miles, and between is East Sutton, which has a picturesque

## Old English Houses

grey old church of the fourteenth century, enclosed by a ruinous ivy-grown stone wall forming a charming foreground. There are some good tombs here to the Filmer and Argall families. Upon one of these are represented the brass effigies of the eighteen children of Sir Edmund Filmer—a noble array of sons and daughters in the costume of Charles I.'s time. A family likeness, or rather want of expression, is well sustained through the whole group.

East Sutton is one of those churches where you have to go a considerable journey for the key if you wish to get inside. It is not to be procured at the vicarage, or, as is sometimes the case, at the school-rooms, but at the windmill situated about a mile away. Any one, however, will be well repaid for the trouble of going there, for it is a model mill placed in a charming garden—or, rather, grounds I should say—of the miller's residence, the prettiest of cottages. Who would not be a miller under such circumstances? The prevailing cheerfulness of the house and garden found a harmonious accompaniment in its occupant, for a more jolly, light-hearted young miller it would be difficult to conceive. A mill, whether water or wind be the locomotive power (I won't include steam), has always had a great attraction

## Kent

for me. There is such a clean smell about its bins of grain and its atmosphere of flour.

“Won’t you come up and have a look round,” said the custodian of the church key, from a lofty eminence in his wooden castle. I clambered up a precipitous staircase and had the ingenious and intricate machinery explained to me. The sieves for the finest flour were bags of silk, through which one would think it impossible for any substance to pass. This may be nothing new to my readers, but as it was something of a mystery to me, I record the fact.

Ascending to an external platform, we stood to admire the lovely view, and at the same time to speculate upon the prospect of the wind, it having some time before dropped to a dead calm. Returning to the inside of the cone, my host picked up a novel, and observed that occasionally he had time for recreation. “Though,” said he, “when a good wind is blowing, we’re pretty busy.” Presently came a complication of rumbling, straining, creaking noises, and everything was in motion, but only for a moment. The puff of wind died away, and I left my companion wrapped in the plot of his story.

East Sutton Place is a well-restored Elizabethan mansion in a large park; its red, pointed gables

## Old English Houses

peep over the wall of the churchyard and light up the prevailing grey. Charlton Court, about a mile to the east, is another old house—Jacobean—with very uncommon projecting angular windows, standing in the trimmest of trim gardens. The good lady of the house, who showed me an elaborately carved oak staircase, was not a little indignant that some archæological society had recently visited the locality without honouring her with a visit. The members of the society were the losers, surely, to miss so interesting an item from their programme. But I have known places where those of antiquarian tastes would have met with a different reception. A nervous but enthusiastic friend of mine once knocked at a cottage door in South Devon, and, hat in hand, meekly observed to the strong-minded-looking lady who answered the summons, “Madam, I understand you have some ancient carving in your bedroom?” “No, I ain’t,” she indignantly responded, and banged the door in his face in a manner as much as to imply that even the thought of such a possession cast reflections upon her moral character. My friend, never so successful as myself in missions of this nature, satirically suggests that I should issue a handbook called *Trespassing made Easy*.

## Kent

Bordering the road near Charlton is the loftiest thorn hedge I have ever seen. It is quite twenty feet high and looks so narrow and slender that one would think that a good stiff breeze would blow it down. But it must have mastered a good many storms in its day.

We have been to Langley, to the north of Sutton Valence, so we will now strike westwards, cross-country, to another Boughton—Boughton Monchelsea. Though the name is a good mouthful, like the other Boughton, there is scarcely any village to speak of save a great ancient barn, with tall dormer windows, near the church. A fine old lych-gate leads into the churchyard. The entrance even in summer is almost perpetually in the shade, and in the twilight there is something ghoulish about the crumbling array of moss-grown tombstones. But there is a wonderful contrast when we get to the back of the churchyard. All is sunshine here, and a great profusion of flowers, one blaze of colour; and beyond, over the tree-tops of some park adjacent, such a glorious view.

I am not at all given to ruminating in churchyards. To me, the majority have a depressing effect; but this one was an exception, and I can

## Old English Houses

hardly imagine a more cheerful spot than the back of this garden-like burial-ground. On the low boundary wall (which twines here and there like the body of a huge snake) I sat for half an hour enjoying the scene and the delicious scent of the old-fashioned red roses with which the air was filled.

How strange it is that a scent like this, coming upon one unawares, can bring back to one's memory an impression of some incident with which it is connected in some mysterious way!—a long-forgotten recollection vivid as lightning, but gone as instantaneously—gone before the brain has had time to model the impression into shape. It is some strange association which, during its hundredth part of a second's existence, was replete with the minutest detail, yet which has vanished as instantaneously beyond recall. One tries as hopelessly to get some clue to it as a freshly awakened sleeper endeavours to recount the vivid incidents of a dream. In passing along the country lanes in summer time, I have often noticed that a sudden scent of honeysuckle, or perhaps of a lime-tree, has had this strange effect; but I have also observed that the snapshot, revival, or impression, whatever we may call it, invariably comes *unawares*, and that, like an over-exposed

206

## Kent

negative, the more we try to develop it by coaxing, the denser it becomes.

I do not propose to journey much farther in a westerly direction, much as I should like to revisit such places as Ightham and Knole; but these are far-famed, and the country round has been well trodden by the tourist.

The villages of Aylesford, Allington, Malling, and Offham have also each their several attractions in point of picturesqueness and antiquarian interest.

The quintain on Offham Green is unique, though it is only a copy of the original which some years ago was to be seen embedded much deeper into the ground than in the present instance. Perhaps it is unnecessary to state that the game was introduced into these islands by the Romans, and became a recognised sport about the reign of Henry III. I need scarcely add that the horseman's object, running full tilt at it, was to break the broad cross-piece of the swinging top without receiving a stunning blow on the back by the sand-bag hung at its other end. The most skilful at this obsolete pastime received a peacock as his prize. Formerly there was another quintain at Deddington, in Oxfordshire, but this has been done away with many years.

## Old English Houses

To the south of Malling and Offham are the remains of St. Leonard's Castle, beyond which stretch the beautiful Mereworth woods, and, still farther south, East and West Peckham. I recently visited these last two villages, with the object of localising a spot mentioned in the well-known *Memoirs* of the Count de Gramont. The neighbourhood is there described as the most solitary and dreary, and the lapse of nearly two centuries and a half has not made any perceptible difference to it in this respect; indeed, one can hardly wonder that the beautiful Mrs. Wetenhall found life almost unbearable in such a lonely place.

The churches of East and West Peckham look close enough together on the map, but to get from one to the other is no easy matter, for the roads turn and twist here, there, and everywhere but where one wants them to turn; and if one would travel cross-country, the way is equally difficult. A sort of wild, primæval bridle-path certainly leads from the main road in the direction of West Peckham, but it appears to be the exclusive property of gipsies, who resent intrusion.

The little church of the latter village contains a good example of a memorial Jacobean pew, from





BIDDENDEN

*p. 212*



OLD HOUSE, BIDDENDEN

*p. 212*



OLD HOUSE NEAR BIDDENDEN

*p. 213*



THE MONKEY HOUSE

*p. 213*

## Kent

which the squire and his family could look down upon the rest of the congregation with superior complacency. The East Peckham folk have to climb to a considerable elevation to reach their place of worship, so there is some excuse if the attendance is not very great.

To return for a short space to the *dens* of which I have spoken, we shall have to strike in a south-easterly direction from the Peckhams, through Yalding. I had heard much of the beauty of this place, and expected great things, but must confess I was sadly disappointed—doubtless mainly owing to the fact that, after a long drought, the river, its most attractive feature, was nearly dry, and the fine old bridge, for which Yalding is famous, did not look at its best by any means. Another thing which did not improve the peacefulness of the scene was that the village was full of noisy hoppers, so I got out of it as speedily as possible, after having a look at the old Court Lodge—a red Jacobean house, with windows shaded by the gigantic limbs of a cedar-tree. There were evidences of a recent sale, and, an open gate inviting inspection, I took the opportunity of doing a little harmless trespassing in the old garden and orchard.

## Old English Houses

Marden is about five miles from Yalding, and Horsmonden, another four. There are many ancient buildings in and about these villages, the adjacent farmsteads of Pattenden, Spelmonden, and Twissenden being particularly worth notice.

Goudhurst, to the south-east, is one of the most attractively situated villages I have ever seen. Like Sutton Valence, it should have a great future, but I should be very sorry to hear of the speculative builder finding his way there.

The impression left on my memory of Goudhurst is a mountainous climb up to the church and adjacent houses on a very brilliant Sunday morning in summer. It was long before service, and the place appeared to be entirely deserted. Fortunately the church was open; I could inspect the monuments with comfort alone, and not under the usual supervision of the pew-opener or parish clerk. Upon an ancient altar-tomb was spread a snow-white tablecloth, upon which stood a goodly array of loaves ready for some impending dole. I could not help thinking what an opportunity this would have been for some hungry tramp—not the ordinary thirsty tramp one so often meets upon the roads, but a man, say, upon his last legs for want of food. Supposing now, in such a

210

## Kent

case, if a starving man did thus help himself, I wonder if the law would call it stealing. I draw my own conclusions from a case I saw some time ago in the papers of a hungry man rushing into a baker's shop and seizing a halfpenny roll, for which crime he received a sentence of (I forget the actual number of days or weeks) hard labour. Now, if the magistrate had refunded the baker with his halfpenny and let the wretched thief go free, I suppose that would not be justice.

Goudhurst is more like a Sussex village, most of the houses being built, in part, of the characteristic red and black tiling one sees so much in that county.

To get to Benenden, Rolvenden, or Newenden, the tourist would go (from Goudhurst) through Cranbrook, one of the cleanest and most prosperous-looking little towns imaginable, with a long hill running down into it and a long hill leading out of it, a cathedral-like Perpendicular church (in which are helmets and banners) and several pretty old houses, many of them once upon a time factories of the clothing trade, which flourished here for centuries.

Suppose now we draw a triangle on the map of Kent—from Staplehurst to Newenden (as the most southerly point), and to Ashford as the farthest

## Old English Houses

point eastwards. This area would include a rich hunting-ground for the artist and the antiquary, and the old farms about here are particularly picturesque. Near Benenden, for instance, is a curious fifteenth-century thatched cottage, containing a screen and open timber roof. It is called The Old House at Home. Pump Farm also is a good Elizabethan timber house. More picturesque are Rolleston Farm, near Rolvenden, and Finchden, near the old town of Tenterden.

Of all the village *dens*, Biddenden and Smarden are the most attractive from an antiquarian point of view.<sup>1</sup> The former is a typical old-world village, containing many curious examples of cottage architecture. In the church are some good brasses and a fine Perpendicular screen. Some centuries ago there lived here a certain Eliza and Mary Chalkhurst, twins who had the misfortune to be joined together by the hips and shoulders; and, doubtless, had they lived in these times, they would have been exhibited.

The poor of Biddenden have cause to remember these ladies, for they receive from their charity every

<sup>1</sup> The recent introduction of the railway between Headcorn and Tenterden and Robertsbridge I trust will not modernise these places.



OLD HOUSE, SMARDEN

*p. 213*



OLD HOUSE, SMARDEN

*p. 213*



SMARDEN MANOR HOUSE

*p. 213*



SMARDEN MANOR HOUSE

*p. 213*



## Kent

Easter a plentiful supply of bread and cheese and some flat cakes made of flour and water (certainly not rich pastry), stamped with the grotesque figures of their unfortunate benefactresses. But everybody has heard of these famous Biddenden maids and cakes.

The Old Red Lion inn has a bar-parlour with oak rafters and some nice old gables at the back. I remember spending a very wet Whitsuntide here many years ago with a boon companion, and how, mackintoshed and legginged, we set forth to find The Monkey House, Vane House, Ash House, Park House, the Manor House of Smarden, and many others. The various entrances to Smarden by the church at the extreme end of the street, I remember, gave us an impression of the stage of a theatre. The inhabitants made their several "exits and their entrances" in the way that the supers appear and disappear in the scenes of a melodrama.

One little incident I recollect, which occurred somewhere hereabouts. During the inspection of an old cottage, the good lady who resided in it observed, with self-conscious importance, "You *might* not believe it, sir, but this house is over eighteen hundred years old!" I said I did *not* believe it. "But," said she, "the date is on the outside." I went to look.

## Old English Houses

Yes, there were some figures and some letters, which read, as far as I could make out, either "A. D." or "B. C. 34." But what spoiled the whole effect was the badge of some insurance company above it ! That these old timber houses do not more frequently get burned to the ground is astonishing, when we consider the risks they run. I have seen in the very heart of one of them a chimney formed merely of a wooden framework filled in with plaster, and the old house is still alive to boast its recklessness.

*VI*

*SUSSEX*



## SUSSEX

I PROPOSE now to cross the border into the adjoining county of Sussex, in search of some of the more important houses, or rather mansions, that have degenerated into farmhouses. To go systematically through the county describing these in detail would require a volume to themselves, so I will only here make a few selections.

In a walk, say, from Hawkhurst, close upon the border of the two counties, to Lewes, one can find many good examples of Elizabethan domestic architecture which are rendered doubly attractive from the beautifully wooded country in which they are situated. Not a few are to be found in and about the pretty village of Burwash (locally pronounced Burrish), beyond Etchingham. Two fine old mansions (they were farms when I saw them) are Batemans and Holmshurst. The interiors of both are interesting, particularly the latter, there being some good

## Old English Houses

stone fireplaces, ceilings, panelled rooms, and a gallery seventy feet in length.

Around Waldron there are also many good Elizabethan houses, having great chimney clusters and deep-set mullioned windows, such as Tanners and Possingworth, and, farther south, Shoemiths, Friths, and Horeham.

One of the most picturesque of all the Sussex farmhouses, in my opinion, is Bolebrook, between Cowden (on the northern boundary of the county) and Hartfield. The approach to the turreted Tudor gatehouse and adjoining group of old barns and sheds, by a narrow winding lane from the main road, is exceedingly fascinating. It is the colour of these out-buildings that is so pleasing to the eye. Nothing but age can impart to the red bricks that purple-grey tone which harmonises so well with the moss and lichen; and apart from the colour, of course it is the long narrow bricks and the wide intersections of mortar of old masonry that so add to the pleasing effect of the whole. Beyond the gatehouse is the lofty gabled mansion, which, when silhouetted against the evening light, looks like some enchanted palace from a fairy tale. Wandering about its many disused rooms at nightfall, a

218

## Sussex

more ghostly place it would be difficult to imagine. As you grope your way up the wide oak staircase, you are conscious of silent white spectres floating about. They are, however, nothing more uncanny than owls, who find congenial seclusion upon the upper landings for their day-dreams after a heavy night's debauch; and for their food they need not go far, as in the adjacent deserted chambers there are very audible scamperings of mice and rats, not to mention a small colony of bats which find their way in through the cracks and crevices and broken diamond panes of the old casements. No; Bolebrook is, I should say, not a pleasant place to spend a happy night. I almost think I should prefer Newnham during the cherry season.

In one of the lower rooms there is a monster fireplace—I shouldn't like to say how many feet or yards across. One might certainly roast within it half a dozen whole oxen if necessary.

The good farmer who lives, or lived, here let me go about the house much as I pleased, and it has always been a great regret to me that a photograph I took, or rather attempted to take, of his little boy turned out an utter failure, so I could not even make a slight return for his hospitality. Nothing is

## Old English Houses

more exasperating than a disaster of this sort. You make a great flourish and give a lot of trouble all for nothing, and I should imagine feel the same unpleasant sensations that the artist feels who has held a private view and finds his works rejected by the Academy.

The country between the three towns of East Grinstead, Cuckfield, and Uckfield is also a rich hunting-ground for those in search of the picturesque, and includes some of the finest examples of Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture in the county, and that most lovely stretch of primæval forest, Ashdown, into the bargain.

East Grinstead is full of old houses, with moss-grown stone tiles and oak mullioned windows. One lofty old timber house has at the back a most charming little stone Jacobean porch, with steps leading down into the garden. Opposite on high ground stands the almshouse, Sackville College, also of early Jacobean date, whose interior quadrangle, with its smooth grass plots and picturesque gables, looks the most inviting of dwellings. The door of the chapel has a most elaborate and complicated lock, which, if it got out of order, I fancy would puzzle the locksmiths of to-day to repair.





HOLMSHURST



TANNERS

## Sussex

The hall is full of oak carvings and old furniture, and has a fine screen, roof, and fireplace, and in the old kitchen is quite a collection of ancient fire-dogs, which I understand came from the neighbouring mansion of Buckhurst. The curfew is still rung here regularly at eight in the summer and seven in the winter, after which the residents of the almshouse are locked in for the night, but I question if the aged inmates would get into any mischief if the doors were left open.

Not far from the town, on the extreme outskirts of Ashdown Forest, are the substantial ivy-clad ruins of Brambletye House, one of the Royalist mansions which were destroyed by the powder of the Lord Protector. Horace Smith's old-fashioned romance, bearing the name of this mansion, is little known in the present day.

The impression left by West Hoathly, situated upon high ground a few miles to the south-west, is a vivid one to me, for here I had the misfortune to lose a five-pound note. As a proof that I am by no means accustomed to travel about with such useful accompaniments, I may state that my mind was sadly disturbed when I discovered the crisp piece of paper was missing, and in no way

## Old English Houses

could I account for it until a few days afterwards an inquiry at The Cat, at West Hoathly, resulted in the missing article being found still lying upon the floor of a dark passage, in which I afterwards remembered I opened a pocket-book to get out a map.

Opposite the church of West Hoathly stands a fine old stone mansion, which once upon a time was the seat of a family named Feldwicke. In a lumber-room here I saw a beautifully carved over-mantel, which, alas! was going to be removed to some other mansion in better circumstances. Now, if it was to find a home in another *old* mansion in the neighbourhood, one could not grumble much, but to despoil a house like this (a house that is not going to be demolished), that its interior decorations may be removed into some jerry-built villa in suburban London, in my humble opinion is a positive sin. But one hears of so many cases of this kind that to be sentimental over such vandalism would soon become chronic.

The Elizabethan mansion, Wakehurst, is about three miles from West Hoathly, a perfect house of its period, and what is more uncommon, an interior to correspond, including a magnificent oak staircase of excellent design. Another good house of about

## Sussex

the same date is Gravetye, romantically situated on high ground, surrounded by woods, and literally enveloped in roses. On the upper terrace the garden is one mass of this queen of flowers, of all conceivable tints and shades, with a sundial in the midst, and narrow paved walks between the beds. One fault I have to find with Gravetye: plate-glass windows have been inserted throughout, and these, of course, are quite out of character with everything else. Down in a hollow, about half a mile distant from the mansion, is The Moat, a pretty little timber house, with stone mullioned windows and a compact little hall with wide, open fireplace and ingle nook; but its situation is too desolate for any other than a hermit. The village of West Hoathly is not very far away, but I pity the traveller who takes the short cut by the meadows and gets benighted, for the guiding spire of the church, which may be seen for miles around in the opposite direction, is entirely obliterated by the woods. In such a predicament, one can see the utility of the evening bell, which was, perhaps which is still, rung at Cowden Church, not many miles off, for the guidance of lost pedestrians.

Cuckfield Place—the Rookwood Hall of Ains-

## Old English Houses

worth's gruesome romance—like Wakehurst, has a most interesting interior. It is full of oak-panelled rooms, with elaborately carved mantelpieces and ornamental moulded ceilings, and a ghostly looking wide oak staircase. In the rook-haunted avenue stands the famous tree, which drops one of its branches across the gravel walk beneath whenever a member of the family is going to die.

In the grounds of an old hall in Cheshire I remember seeing a sombre-looking lake, which has the weird faculty of presaging death by sending to its surface a certain ghastly substance from its weedy bed, resembling the body of a drowned man.

I think if I possessed such a cheerful accompaniment to an ancestral hall I should not feel much compunction in pocketing the family pride in such things, and having this spectral lake filled up. By so doing I know I should put myself upon an equal footing with the Yankee goth, who went down on his hands and knees, so Scott tells, to eliminate the stain of Rizzio's blood at Holyrood Palace. But who *could* live happily near such a lake as that? Nowadays all such things have their market value when an estate is put up for sale. A really well-



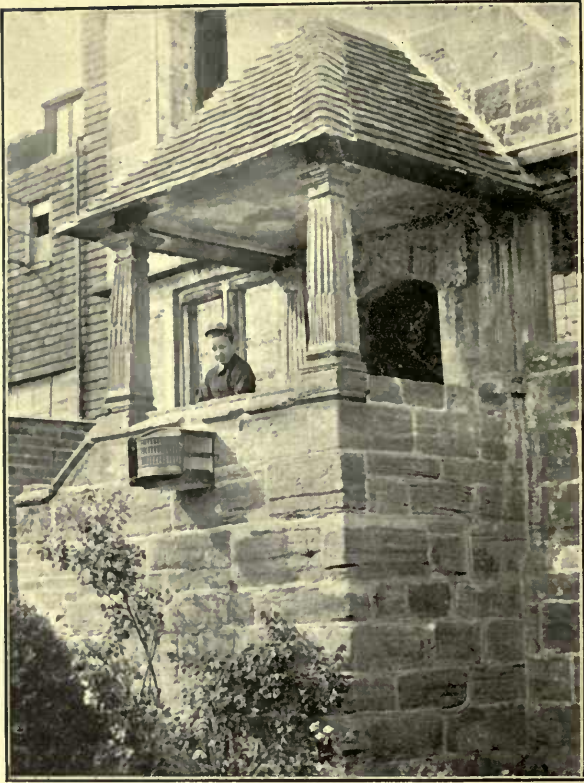
BOLEBROOK

*p. 218*



BOLEBROOK

*p. 218*



OLD HOUSE, EAST GRINSTEAD



## Sussex

authenticated ghost fetches a big price. A few years ago, was not the unhappy wraith of Amy Robsart a great feature at the sale of the site of Cumnor Hall? The purchaser, never having been to the spot, was under the impression that he was buying Anthony Foster's dreary mansion just as it is described in *Kenilworth*—moreover, with the ghost of "Madam Dudley" (as she is locally termed) thrown in for the money. A lawsuit was the result when the plaintiff discovered that the restless shade of Queen Elizabeth's beautiful rival had been unsuccessfully "laid" in a pond, and this pond and some adjoining land had been knocked down to him for some two thousand pounds.

In the vicinity of Lindfield, to the east of Cuckfield, are the houses of Broadhurst and East Mascalls. The former is a timber-crossed structure with good chimneys, and has a queer contrivance on the first landing of the staircase—a kind of portcullis or drawbridge, which secures the upper stories of the house from burglarious intrusion. I have only met with a similar arrangement once before, at an old house at Green Street Green, near Dartford; but I expect the idea was not an uncommon one in the good old days, when a country gentleman was liable

## Old English Houses

to have his throat cut by his neighbours upon the slightest provocation.

The Elizabethan house, East Mascalls (once the seat of the Norton family), is in the same neighbourhood. It has recently entered upon a new lease of life, for, anybody seeing it a few years ago must have thought its ruinous condition past repair. The last time I was there the poor old timber house looked a mere skeleton. It was roofless, and bits of stone, Tudor doors and fireplaces lay about helter-skelter in the long rank grass that had taken possession of what was at one time a garden. Now, wonder of wonders, it has been turned again into a comfortable residence ; although, judging from a recent photograph before me, the original character has not been entirely adhered to in the restorations. In place of the addition of red Sussex tiling one would have preferred to see a continuation of the ornamented timber frame-work, which characterises the front of the house. It must, however, have been a difficult task to restore it at all, so one must not be hypercritical but thankful the old place is saved. Now that East Mascalls and Burford have been taken in hand perhaps one may have hopes for Kirby. That most beautiful ruinous house, in Northamptonshire, I believe even now could be made habitable. I know

## Sussex

there are many representatives of ancient families who do not take the slightest interest or pride either in their ancestral homes, or in the history of their long lineage. But on the other hand, how sad it must be to those who love the study of the past, and cherish the smallest memento of their ancestors, to see the old seat, where generation after generation lived and died, go to rack and ruin without the means to hold out a helping hand.

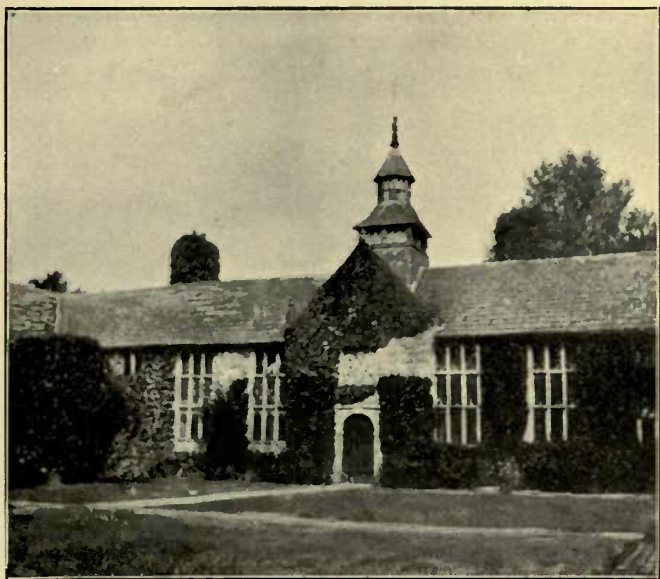
For a good example of admirable restoration one has not to go far, for at Lindfield, Old Place has been treated with such taste and skill that it is impossible to detect where the old part ends and the new part begins. It has been greatly enlarged, and, as in the instance of the old building at Langley of which I have spoken, the road has been enclosed and diverted in such a way that any one who visited the place a few years ago would become bewildered. On the other hand, Oat Hall at Wivelsfield, farther to the south, a most picturesque timber house, has been entirely destroyed by injudicious restoration, and to all intents and purposes is no better than a modern antique.

Once bound for Hurstpierpoint, of college fame, and being directed to get out of the train at Hassocks

## Old English Houses

station and take the omnibus, I carried out these instructions to the letter; but presently, after a long drive, found myself, instead of at Hurst, at Ditchling, some miles away to the east of it. It appears there were two "busses," two entrances to the station, and two trains due at the same time. I had, however, no reason to complain, for had not this accident happened, the probability is I should never have seen Ditchling and its curious old houses. There is one in particular, near the church, a charming medley of Tudor stone, brick, and timber construction, quite unique, I should say. On Ditchling Common, now surmounted by a vane, stands a remnant of the gibbet, upon which the bones of many a highwayman have rattled in the breeze. Hurstpierpoint, of course, being a fashionable resort, has been shorn of most of its original buildings to make place for handsome modern residences, but the lover of things ancient has still Danny to fall back upon as a type of a stately old English mansion.

Beyond Hurst we come to pretty little Albourn, where are two of those timber-crossed cottages with herring-bone brickwork and the great stone slab lichen-grown roofing that one meets with in this part of



SACKVILLE COLLEGE

*p. 220*



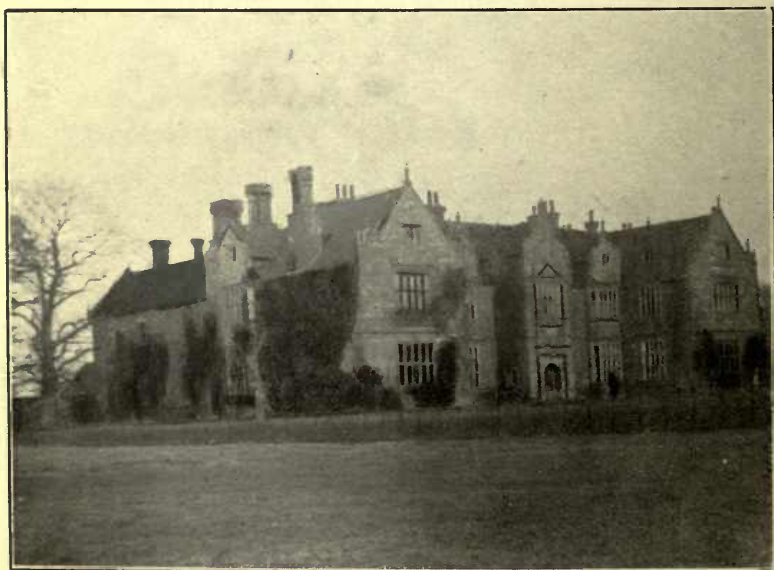
BRAMBLETYE HOUSE

*p. 221*



OLD HOUSE, WEST HOATHLY

*p. 221*



WAKEHURST

*p. 222*

## Sussex

Sussex. At Albourn Place, a much-restored house, one of the royalist Juxon family was sought for in vain by the Cromwellian soldiers. Whether they discovered the unoccupied "priest's hole" that was found here some few years ago, I cannot say, but tradition asserts they did not recognise the object of their search, who, disguised as a labourer, was at work in the adjacent church.

Bearing to the south-east from Albourn, we pass through Edburton to Beeding and Bramber, which villages are separated by a narrow strip of river and joined by an equally narrow bridge, close by which some tumble-down red roofs form a pleasing background. The principal inn at Beeding looks as cosy and inviting as its neighbour at Bramber looks the reverse; but I simply go by external appearances, for I entered neither. I can only say, if I had my choice, the modest antiquity of the one would have far greater attractions than the obtrusive modern additions of the other. Such incongruous erections, planted in the heart of a little hamlet of rustic cottages, always seem to throw everything into discord; in the same way that, when one of the prim and sombre dwellings of an old-fashioned London square is pulled down, the gap is occasionally filled

## Old English Houses

up with a glaring monstrosity in red brick and terracotta, which would look all very well isolated, but there is entirely out of place.

At the little seaside resort, Charmouth, in the midst of the predominating white-washed cottages in the lower part of the street, of late there has sprung up a mushroom growth of colossal height in staring red—the sort of erection that would look all very well at Brighton, or in the Finchley Road, or anywhere but here. Whether Charmouth will try to live up to it, and in time pull down its white-washed cottages and erect some red giants, remains to be seen. In that case, of course, the little inn where the fugitive Charles II. slept<sup>1</sup>—or, rather, I should say, was very wakeful, waiting for the boat that had been engaged to carry him over to France—would be wiped off the face of the earth. So let us hope the good Charmouthites will think twice before they clear space for “desirable villas.”

Talking of Charles at Charmouth, reminds me that it was near Bramber Bridge that he had to ride through a body of Parliamentary soldiers who had been stationed in the town the day before. This little episode certainly gives a historical interest to

<sup>1</sup> Vide *The Flight of the King*.



## Sussex

the place, and I should be glad to see a tablet put up commemorating the event.

The quaint old village—it can hardly be called a town—of Steyning, to the west of Bramber, contains many old buildings, the rectory and Brotherhood Hall being the most interesting. Still farther west, and we come to the tiny secluded village of Wiston. I once found very snug quarters for a week's holiday at the Abbot's Farm, a queer, rambling old place, where one can take things lazily after the worries of London life. It is astonishing the amount of work some of these farmers' wives get through in the day—a long day, indeed, from 4 A.M. to 12 P.M. Besides the laborious routine of the ordinary farm and dairy labour, the good lady here occasionally had to cater for a family of twelve, who came down for the summer holidays, besides doing occasional outside needlework.

Wiston makes a very good centre for exploring. The great feature of the place itself is, of course, Wiston House, an Elizabethan mansion much spoiled by the insertion of plate-glass windows and other "improvements," mainly in the interior of the building. Its great hall is a noble apartment, which has lost much of its original character by injudicious restoration.

## Old English Houses

One of the most elaborately carved stone fireplaces I have ever seen is now placed on the outside of the house, against a gable facing the garden.

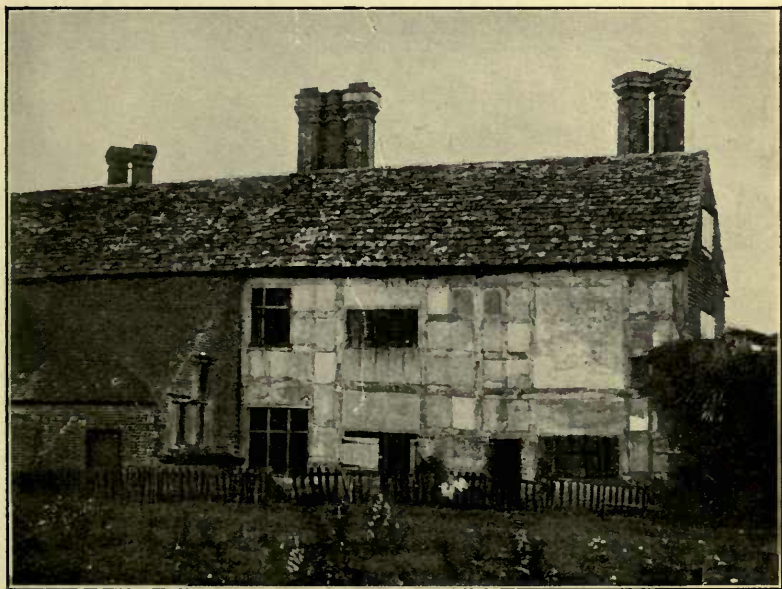
In some respects, the exterior of Parham Hall (a few miles to the west) is similar to Wiston, but the entrance porch to the latter is far more picturesque. The interior of Parham, however, surpasses Wiston in regard to its oak carvings, furniture, portraits, and armour—the last-named collection, indeed, is world-famed. The great hall, with a very fine screen, immortalises a visit from Queen Elizabeth by her royal arms and quarterings in stucco upon the roof, and a mural escutcheon bearing her favourite motto, *Semper eadem*. Not the least remarkable feature of this mansion is its long gallery, close upon 160 feet in length. Here beneath the flooring of one of the bays of a window is a dismal hiding-hole, constructed in the days of religious persecution. In many respects the long gallery resembles that at Bramshill, a more magnificent pile built about the same time by an ancestor of the present Lord Zouche of Parham; but I shall speak of this house when I go into the adjoining county of Hampshire.

The genial steward, a splendidly built fellow,



EAST MASCALLS

*p. 226*



BROADHURST

*p. 225*



EAST MASCALLS

## Sussex

evidently took great pride in the old hall and park, especially the latter, where the great primæval oaks are unrivalled. There is another Parham Hall in Suffolk, a moated house, which is often confused with the Sussex mansion.

The still more magnificent treasure-house of Petworth, standing in its great park of at least fourteen miles round, is some distance away to the north-west. In contrast to the superb pictures and oak carvings here, is the Georgian classic exterior, of which perhaps the less said the better. Petworth is one of those show-houses where you try to keep pace with the housekeeper and absorb all the miscellaneous genealogical information she unwinds, like the famous handle pedigree at Hatfield.

There are two species of housekeeper, those who really understand the complications of the family tree, having made a hobby of it since they became part and parcel of their surroundings ; and, secondly, those who know nothing beyond a few set phrases learned off parrot style. Should you get courage and the time to interrogate, you will be singled out from the flock of sightseers either as a personal friend or as a deadly enemy ; but in either case, you will be worsted : for if you seek for extra information

## Old English Houses

from the former class of housekeeper, she will involve you in such a complication of the marriages of past generations—of the intricate relationships between the fifth earl and the dowager countess, and of the rightful and wrongful claims to the estate of the step-children of the third wife of the sixth earl, and so forth, that you will be glad to escape into the fresh air to collect the tangled thread of your thoughts. Whereas, on the other hand, if you venture to cross-question the second class of housekeeper, she will respond in such a way that the rest of the party will look upon you as one who wants too much for his money.

Who has not noticed in these show-house parties that there is always somebody who entirely ignores what the housekeeper has to say, and persistently lags behind, and who has to be waited for as one enters each separate apartment, ere that lady can commence her oration ; noticed also the minute details that some of the ladies of the party are anxious to extract relative to the social functions of the living representatives of the house ; noticed the bated breath with which “his lordship” or “her grace” or “the Lady Susan” is spoken about, and finally noticed how, among the jingling of florins at parting, some of the party

234

## Sussex

slide off and softly replace their coins in their pockets ?

To see all the pictures at Petworth properly would take at least half a dozen visits. What a boon it would be were it possible (which of course it cannot be) to take one's leisure here, as one may at the unrivalled Wallace Collection.

Of the numerous Vandycks, an impression is left on my memory of one particularly fine full-length of Queen Henrietta Maria, in a blue dress and a great black hat ; certainly one of the most pleasing portraits I have ever seen of this rather vindictive queen. The elaborate oak carvings by Gibbons, which surround all the portraits in this particular room, are as fine as, if not finer than, those of Chatsworth. The light colour of the unvarnished oak also adds materially to the colouring of the paintings, quite as much as the dark setting of cedar-wood sets off the Vandycks at Warwick Castle.

Petworth town is very rich in curious bits of architecture. The almshouse, of Queen Anne date, is a curious, lofty brick building, containing a pretty little staircase.

As is well known, the country between Haslemere,

## Old English Houses

Midhurst, and Petworth presents some of the most beautiful scenery in the south of England. Between the latter two are many old houses, including the famous ruins and walks of Cowdray. The road also between Midhurst and Petersfield runs through some delightful scenery, and that to the south of the railway, running parallel with it, is even more attractive. Of the villages here I have the most pleasant recollection of Harting, and of the old seat of the Tankervilles, Up Park, the house that was built by Ford, Lord Grey, that reckless companion of the weak, handsome, ill-fated Duke of Monmouth.

A certain sad and romantic interest clings to Up Park, for here the profligate Grey abducted his sister-in-law from her father's house of the Durdans, near Epsom, carrying her afterwards into Holland, where he joined his luckless friend in the ill-advised insurrection which cost the latter his head.<sup>1</sup> What became of Lady Henrietta Berkeley nobody knows. There is no record of her interment at Cranford, the burial-place of the Berkeley family, or here.

I was trying to get a peep at the old house when a clergyman, suddenly emerging from an entrance

<sup>1</sup> Vide *King Monmouth*.



## Sussex

into the park, kindly offered his services. I had corresponded with this gentleman, and, seeing my interest in the place, he asked whether we had not exchanged letters, with the result that I was invited to put up that night at the vicarage.

This courtesy I gladly accepted, and was taken by my kind host first to see the mansion, and afterwards, by a gradual descent down to the village, through the most romantic winding road in the heart of a forest of beech-trees. I shall never forget the beautiful effect of the golden sunset between the tracery of the fairy canopy of green. My hospitable friend had a kind word for every one, and I should imagine had a very practical way of doing good.

Being a bachelor, his house was kept as a sort of open establishment for his parishioners. In the pretty grounds they came to amuse themselves or to be instructed ; a contingent of school youngsters came to tea once a week, and the specially favoured to breakfast with their generous pastor. He gave up his own pretty bedroom, as a matter of course, to a stranger—a bedroom with a sunny outlook over the meadows, so bright and so cheerful that to awake in it in the morning was to rejoice and feel as light-

## Old English Houses

hearted as the lark outside carrying his song up to the sky. Everything seemed to heighten the universal harmony of the scene, from the sleepy "caw" of the passing rook to the distant tinkle of the sheep bell.

It was Sunday morning, and I had to journey on to Chichester. My host left me making preparations for departure; but no sooner had he gone in the direction of his church than I noticed a strange commotion up in one of the apple-trees in the orchard, a novel sight to me, namely a swarm of bees. I have heard somewhere that it is an old custom in Sussex before taking possession of a swarm to play them a kind of impromptu tattoo on the warming-pan. Why, I cannot say; at any rate, as far as I am aware, this was not the mode of procedure here. I did not, however, wait to witness the capture.

The main attraction towards Chichester lay in the direction of Racton, to the west, and close upon the border of Hampshire. Here in the church are some good tombs to the Gounter family, but their old house has long since disappeared.

Nine years before Charles II. was restored to his throne, Colonel Gounter, of Racton, was one of the

## Sussex

chief agents in getting the king safely out of the country, after he had been wandering about for weeks disguised, enduring terrible hardships. The loyal colonel has left behind him a record of the important part he played in the drama—how Lord Wilmot (the father of the witty and debauched poet) came to his house one night; how the colonel's wife was mystified, and how, like most women, she succeeded in worming out the secret; how also, after a hundred strange incidents, he stood on the beach near Shoreham watching Captain Tattersall's little craft, with its precious cargo, growing smaller and smaller as it sailed merrily towards the coast of France.<sup>1</sup>

Lordington House at Racton has not shared the fate of its neighbour, the home of the Gounters. It is a plain-looking Stuart house, but its interior contains some good panelled rooms and a wonderfully fine oak staircase, with great monsters supporting shields upon the various landings. The house was occupied by cottagers, and the rooms were most of them disused and in a terrible state of dust and decay. At the bottom of a weed-grown garden were the imposing piers of an entrance gate—picturesque,

<sup>1</sup> Vide *The Flight of the King*.

## Old English Houses

but like the rest, fast crumbling into ruin. A house like this, of course, must have its ghost. The old elm avenue is said to be haunted by the spectral form of a woman, with a band of red around her throat, supposed to be the aged Countess of Salisbury.

*VII*

*SURREY & HAMPSHIRE*



## *SURREY & HAMPSHIRE*

**B**EFORE going into Hampshire, let us return to East Grinstead and strike northwards into the south-east corner of beautiful Surrey. At this junction of the three counties—Sussex, Surrey, and Kent—each may be seen at its best, more especially as regards picturesque old houses. It would be difficult to find a stretch of country of more general interest to the antiquary than that between Bidborough and Westerham in Kent, and Horley in Surrey. This will include some of the most perfect specimens of half-timber in the south of England, such as the houses near Bidborough and Penshurst churches, Chiddingstone, and a remarkable specimen at Pound's Bridge, which is now a roadside inn, but once upon a time was a parsonage. Upon the front are the initials of its original owner and the date 1593. The village street of Chiddingstone stands unrivalled as a picture. Such a complete row of ancient houses it

## Old English Houses

would be difficult to find anywhere else in England. Of recent years it has been a favourite resort of artists, whose easels in the summer time are posed in all directions. At the back of the combination village inn and butcher's shop is the "chiding stone," but I cannot recall its history.

At the historic houses of Penshurst and Hever, close by, I think I got my earliest impressions of an ancient mansion. Upon a recent visit to the former I was struck by the comparatively small size of its state apartments with what I had imagined them to be. The youthful eye is certainly prone to magnify. The old gallery—where stands that queer old red and gold spinnet, and where hangs that eccentric picture of Elizabeth and her favourite, Leicester, cutting very high capers—looked strangely stunted. I had imagined it to be full three times its length. These fine old rooms are rich in portraits of the sad-faced Sidneys, and if we would add to their realism, we may find in the private apartments innumerable locks of hair—of Sir Philip, of the beautiful *Sacharissa*, of Algernon and his brother, the "handsome Sidney," who, according to De Gramont's *Memoirs*, played havoc with the hearts of the fair and frail at the court of the



## Surrey and Hampshire

restored Charles. By no means the least attraction at Penshurst are the old gardens, with their trim yew hedges, fishponds, fountains, and sundials, and the terrace steps leading to Sacharissa's Walk, an avenue of venerable limes. Here the handsome Dorothy Sidney was wont to walk, as was the custom of Dorothy Vernon on the romantic terrace of Haddon, though Waller, the poet-admirer of the former, got but little encouragement, whereas the other love story terminated happily.

Great changes have taken place at Hever of recent years. When I visited this perfect specimen of a fortified manor house it was in the picturesque unrestored condition of Haddon, time-worn and lichen-coloured. So little disturbed was the ancient character of the interior quadrangle that one could almost imagine the stalwart figure of square-shouldered Henry advancing beneath the portcullis, and the beautiful Anne Boleyn crossing the courtyard to welcome her royal lover. The romance of its early association is a little destroyed when one remembers that poor Anne Boleyn had not only to make way for Anne of Cleves, but that the second Anne was granted the castle of her predecessor.

If the shade (a very substantial one) of the royal

## Old English Houses

Tudor still lingers here when not engaged in revisiting the abodes of his other loves, it must surely approve the return of the original mode of approach, across a thoroughly mediæval looking drawbridge, approve also the magnificent old furniture, more regal now than ever it was before. But a sixteenth-century ghost would probably stare more fixedly than usual at the luxuriance of modern requirements to be found within these solid stone walls, as well as in the picturesque timber buildings on the further side of the moat. Though the latter are, of course, additions, one cannot but be struck by their beauty of design and construction as compared with the majority of modern mediæval cottage architecture; and when one recalls the styles to be seen at Datchet and countless other up-to-date villages, the contrast is still more marked.

Another thing one has to be grateful for in the restoration of Hever is that a really interesting room of one period has not been sacrificed so as to carry up the roof of the hall to its original height, as is so often done nowadays. The old ball-room at Hever is one of its most characteristic features, and this remains intact, I am glad to say; not as I remember it, quite bare with rough oak flooring, but sumptuous

246

## Surrey and Hampshire

to a degree and adorned with most costly and beautiful works of art.

Nearer to Edenbridge and Lingfield are the manor houses of Crittenden, Puttenden, and Crowhurst. The first of these contains a very compact little panelled hall, with a fixed settle running round the room, and a good carved oak chimney-piece. At the moated house of Crowhurst, Henry VIII. is traditionally said to have planted a yew hedge upon one of his occasional visits *en route* for Hever. Some of the rooms here are lined round with horizontal beams of oak, and there are fine oak ceilings with fluted girders and joists. The hall has been divided, but the original timber roof is intact. To make a short cut from Lingfield to Puttenden, I was sent across the fields and told to go straight ahead. I did so, but soon found further progress impeded by a high thorn hedge, though, after minute scrutiny, I discovered a stile in the corner of the meadow. Once more I went straight ahead, and this time was stopped by a river. When I had wandered along its banks for about a mile looking for a crossing, and in desperation was making preparations for wading, I noticed the little foot-bridge in the distance, and, crossing this, I soon found myself at Puttenden.

## Old English Houses

It may be very easy to go "straight ahead" when you know the way. But some country folk are as lavish with their minute directions as others are brief. You are told to go by Mr. Giles's farm, and round by Mr. Snooks's paddock, and keep the spinney to the left, and you will find a gate, and so on. You follow these instructions, as far as you are able, to the letter, and you discover *three* gates. Then, if a large tree, or a gap in the trees, has been pointed out as a landmark, can one ever keep that landmark in sight in the windings and turnings you have to take to get to it? Perhaps those who have the bump of locality well defined are more successful than myself in such matters.

The old manor house of Puttenden had recently fallen into good hands. Its possessor was restoring it in admirable taste; not only was he superintending the work, but he was himself busily engaged in the carpentering department. I wish every old house had the good fortune to fall into such sympathetic hands. The hall is a noble apartment, with a roof of prodigious oak beams, and one of the largest and finest Tudor chimney-pieces to be found for miles around, bearing the arms of the former possessors.

Another fine old timber manor house is Block-



PORCH HOUSE, CHIDDINGSTONE p. 243



HEVER CASTLE

*p. 245*



CRITTENDEN

*p. 247*

## Surrey and Hampshire

field, a few miles to the south of Puttenden, which externally is more picturesque than any of the foregoing. It is moated, and the architecture points to the latter part of the fifteenth century. The plaster beneath the eaves of the roof is coved, like that of the old house at Harrietsham, and there remains on one side of the entrance door a curious oak buttress, which was evidently balanced by a companion on the opposite side. There is herring-bone brickwork between the timber beams, and on one side of the house is the original (but now blocked up) fifteenth-century bay window. The doorways, back and front, are large in comparison to the house, and presumably were added in the seventeenth century. The farmer in occupation was on the eve of leaving, both on account of the bad times generally and the isolated position of the house, for it stands a long way off the high road; but in comparison to The Moat at Gravetye I think I should prefer premature burial here of the two.

There is another old house close to Lingfield, which, as I remember it some years ago, before the railway got there, was as perfect a little Jacobean stone-gabled manor house as one could wish to see. But now in place of the diamond-paned case-

## Old English Houses

ments are those terrible plate-glass windows, and a charming entrance gate has been taken out of the garden wall and now forms the entrance door to the house. This gateway may be seen in its original position in the pathetic picture by Seymour Lucas, "For the King and the Cause," a wounded cavalier brought upon a litter for succour to some mansion in the vicinity of Edgehill.

The old Guest Hall near Lingfield church has recently been carefully restored, and the original doorways and windows opened out. There are many other old houses here, but since the railway has arrived the village is assuming quite a suburban appearance. The old stone lock-up and an older obelisk adjoining it, however, have been suffered to remain.

Among the monuments in the church is the recumbent effigy of the knight Sir Reginald of Sterburgh, which gives one a good idea of the costumes and armour of the fourteenth century. The brasses are also fine, and there are stalls with carved miserere seats, a chained Bible, and an old helmet surmounted by a crest of a bird.

Another fine old stone Tudor house with a good interior is Smallfield Place, near the village of Horne, to the west of Lingfield.



## Surrey and Hampshire

Farther south-west, below Ockley and near the Sussex border, are Osbrook, Bonnets, and King's Farms—three remarkably picturesque old farmsteads, with gable ends, clustered chimney-stacks, oriel windows, overhanging stories, cosy porches—in fact, everything that is in keeping.

The description of Baynard's Hall in one of Hone's books—the *Year Book*, I think—surely must have sent many lovers of picturesque old houses in quest of it. I for one went down to Rudgwick, and as far as beautiful country went, I was quite content, but was greatly disappointed in Baynards. It had been restored and "improved" at a time when restoration and "improvement" meant ruin.

The neighbourhood of Godalming and Guildford abounds in ornamental timber houses such as one sees in Cheshire and Shropshire. In the manor houses of Bramley and Great Tangle is that circular timber pattern of ornamentation which has so pleasing an effect. In the by-lanes hereabouts are several such. The stately mansions of Loseley and Sutton Place are, of course, two of the most interesting buildings in the county. The exterior of Loseley fell as short of my expectations as that of Sutton exceeded them. The rich colour

## Old English Houses

and ornamentation of the terra-cotta front of Sutton is superb. In my opinion it is the slate roof of Losely which spoils it. With those large slabs of stone so common in the county the effect would be quite different. The drawing-room, with its elaborately carved Elizabethan fireplace, pendant ceiling, and stained glass, is a gorgeous apartment. There is a drawing of it in Nash's *Mansions*. Among the portraits of the More and Molineux families are some of historical interest, that of Anne Boleyn, for instance, which may originally have come from her former home at Hever. In the gardens is a long raised terrace, with an old-fashioned flower-bed running its entire length, and one of those little pavilions or music-houses at the end, where perchance many soft nothings have been pleaded by faithful and faithless swains.

Alfold, Dunsfold, and Chiddingfold to the south of Godalming, and near the border of Sussex, are, or were ten years ago, quite old-world villages, and they abound in half-timber and Sussex-tiled cottages. The Crown Inn at the last may be specified as a good example. But Chiddingfold has within the last few years developed rapidly, and "desirable residences" I hear are springing up like mushrooms. The stocks

## Surrey and Hampshire

and whipping-post at Alfold are similar to those at White Waltham, in Berkshire, of which I have already made mention. We are here in a country of *folds*, as we were among the *dens* in Kent. There is Paddingfold, Polingfold, Frithfold, Upfold, and all other kinds of *folds*. Burningfold, like Bramley and Tangle, has the pretty circular timber ornamentation in its gable ends.

As regards Hampshire, my impressions are very limited. Of its principal beauty, the New Forest, I have but a vague recollection of lovely sylvan glades and noble avenues, for a friend carried me through it in a racing-car at a speed I must hesitate to name. There appeared to be some very attractive old villages, places where one would like a little breathing space for exploration. But when cars were a novelty the distance to be covered in a given time was the main thing, consequently the head of one village appeared to be tacked on to the tail of the next. My remarks must, therefore, be confined to a few places between Eversley in the north-east of the county, Winchester, and Emsworth in the south-east.

The first mentioned of these boundary points, so famous for its Charles Kingsley associations, is the most beautifully situated old village, but the raptures

## Old English Houses

of my first impression were sadly damped as, after a long cycle run from the north of London, I was unable to get a bed there as I had wished. As I was equally unfortunate at the village of Bramdean on the night following, I naturally came to the conclusion that if one wants to get a night's lodging in Hampshire, elsewhere than in the village lock-up, it would be as well not to fix beforehand upon any definite spot, and in any case previously to write and charter a bed. Where I did eventually succeed in finding a resting-place, at the nearest point to Eversley, was at a fashionable hotel near the Wellington College at Sandhurst, situated in a lovely spot and literally buried in rhododendrons.

My introduction to Emsworth was on the evening of a hot July day, one of those glorious evenings about half an hour before the sun sinks behind the horizon, when everything is tinged with the soft red light. The most commonplace bit of road is a picture at such a time, and I recollect I often halted to enjoy the colour of things which under ordinary circumstances would have no attraction whatever. An ordinary tarred five-barred gate leading into a hayfield with a high thorn hedge by it, and a prodigious growth of nettles, does not sound as

## Surrey and Hampshire

if it could be beautiful under any aspect, still, I remember being struck by the wonderful harmony of colours of this combination. The black gates under the influence of the setting sun had the rich colouring of the bloom on a damson, the dusty sandy road had the delicate pink of a sea-shell, the young shoots of the thorn hedge were so many spikes of gold relieved by the nettles, which were now purple. Above all, a huge poppy shone a flame of scarlet against a distant hill of deep blue. Possibly this attempt at description may read ridiculously, but I remember trying to analyse the colours upon the spot, so as to account for the harmonious results. What are the pleasures of the whole day in a long summer's ride compared with the last half-hour before the sun dips down!

Had I been more sensible and practical, I should not thus have wasted my time, but sought a resting-place for the night; for, after all, it is unreasonable to suppose that any good housewife would feel inclined to prepare an extra bed when the majority of country folk are thinking of turning in. One most inviting-looking old hostelry, all gable ends and cosy corners, had, alas! abandoned itself to a local feast of some sort, and was up to the ears—or chimneys, rather—with

## Old English Houses

noisy revellers, who oozed out of every window from roof to cellar. The brass band, of course, was there in full force, and on the village green were cocoanut shies, shooting galleries, roundabouts which played feverish waltzes by steam, and many another village fair amusement. I did not wait long enough to notice whether they ran to "a fat woman" or "a living skeleton," nor did I seek for lodgings, but, hastening to another inn at an adjoining hamlet, asked if I could be accommodated there. The landlord seemed willing enough, but his buxom spouse scoffed at the idea. "You'll get a bed at the Wellington Hotel," said she, "and you'll have *to pay* for it." Well, that was only natural. "People who expect to get a bed this time o' night," she continued, "can't get one *for nothing*." That was also true enough, but I question if they could even if they applied for one in the middle of the day.

Many pilgrims, of course, go to Eversley for its Kingsley associations, and much has been written about that great writer's home and country pursuits. My object in coming here was less to worship at that shrine than to see the wonders of grand old Bramshill House; so next morning I returned to Eversley Common, and, taking a road through a

256



OSBROOK

*p. 251*



BONNETS

*p. 251*



OLD HOUSE, ALFORD

*p. 242*



BLOCKFIELD

*p. 248*



## Surrey and Hampshire

forest of magnificent Scotch firs—the finest in England, or Scotland either for that matter—I soon came to the moss-grown garden wall, with a little recess for seats, and Jacobean ornaments aloft, the most delightful of resting-places.

There is something about the exterior of Bramshill which surpasses almost any other old mansion I have ever seen, but whether the greater charm lies in its colour or picturesque architecture, I cannot say. Along the eastern side, facing the smoothest of bowling greens, is a raised terrace with stone balustrade and alcoves at either end, something in the style of that at Ham House, near Petersham. Each wing, courtyard, or quadrangle has some peculiarity about a gable, bay window, or porch, and of these the west front is the most remarkable—a curious combination of Jacobean, Grecian, and Gothic ornamentation.

The interior of the mansion is quite in keeping with its exterior. The old rooms have, many of them, huge black marble chimney-pieces running up to the ceilings, carved oak wainscoting, tapestry, and portraits of the Copes for generations past. There is also an old chapel, and a long gallery running the entire length of the building. The present owner,

## Old English Houses

Sir Anthony Cope, like his forefathers, delights in his ancestral home, and will allow no restorations but such as are absolutely necessary, and these are executed with the tenderest care, so it is impossible to detect where the old work has been renovated. The general appearance of the interior of Bramshill reminds one of that most perfect of old halls, Hardwick, in Derbyshire. The exterior of the latter may, perhaps, be more imposing, but in regard to colour there is no comparison, for a house of mellowed red brick will always compare favourably against one of stone.

Odiham, to the south, and Old Basing, to the south-east of Eversley, are both picturesque. By way of extensive heaths of purple heather and velvety turf, you strike into the road which runs between Bagshot and Basingstoke, and take another road running at right angles to the south. The rectory house of Odiham is a pretty old house, and, I am informed by the son of a late rector, contains a ghost, which his mother has frequently seen. Unfortunately, I was somewhat tied for time here, and had to content myself with a passing glance at the old houses, and at the parish stocks, which stand intact. I believe as recently as 1872 a man was

## Surrey and Hampshire

placed in the stocks at Newbury, in Berkshire, for drunkenness, although the punishment had fallen into disuse some forty years before.

Anybody travelling down the South-Western line must have noticed how pretty Old Basing looks from the railway, and I have known many people who, from this appetising glimpse, have got out at Basingstoke to explore the village. The interest, of course, is centred in the scanty remains of the old castle, or "house," so gallantly defended by the royalist Marquis of Winchester against the Parliamentary forces in 1643 and 1644. The starving garrison received temporary relief from Colonel Gage, who made a desperate and successful sally to take in provisions. With the zeal of a true Cavalier, the old Marquis swore he would hold out even if his house was the last to stand for the king; but Cromwell at length arrived in person, and his invincible Ironsides were not long before they carried the day, with booty, it is said, to the value of £200,000, leaving behind only a smouldering mass of ruins. Among the later Paulets interred at Basing was the beautiful Countess of Bolton, the illegitimate daughter of the handsome Duke of Monmouth, to whom she bore a striking resemblance.

## Old English Houses

From Old Basing I went to Winchester, of all the cathedral cities one of the most picturesque ; but I was somewhat disappointed in the old buildings around the close, after those of Salisbury. Apart from the cathedral and the famous hospital of St. Cross, I think I was best pleased with a quaint line of ancient houses along the side of the river. When I revisited Winchester a few months later, I was sadly disappointed to find that one of these, with delicate carved oak tracery of the fifteenth century, had been demolished.

Winchester was a favourite resort of the court of Charles II., where, had that monarch lived longer, he would have completed a royal palace. His favourites, Gwyn and Portsmouth, judging by contemporary gossip, very properly were housed outside the precincts. When at Winchester the king was a frequent visitor to Avington, an old mansion some miles to the north-east of the city—a classic-looking structure, the oldest part of which is now centred in and around the stables. The old banqueting-hall, that used to resound with the revelries of the Merry Monarch and the select few whom he chose for his companions, was afterwards converted into a greenhouse or conservatory, but now has entirely

260

## Surrey and Hampshire

disappeared. The king's hostess was the abandoned Countess of Shrewsbury, the notorious woman who, according to Horace Walpole, disguised as a page, is said to have held Buckingham's horse while that nobleman had a duel with her husband, in which the latter was slain.<sup>1</sup> I remember having seen among the Peel heirlooms, dispersed some years ago, a very curious portrait of this lady as Minerva. The picture originally came from Avington, whence it was removed to princely Stowe, and thence to Drayton. Now, I fear, it has gone for ever, probably to America. It is a great pity it could not have been purchased back for its original home. Away from its associations, surely it has lost all its romantic interest, and is merely now an example of Lely's art.

Jack Talbot, the son of the victim of Buckingham's sword, was also fated to meet his death in the same way, falling in the duel with the son of his mother's royal guest, the first Duke of Grafton, who was Charles II.'s son by the Duchess of Portsmouth. Charles Talbot, the heir to Avington, dying without issue, the estate devolved upon his mother's son by a second marriage. The fate of this son was especially tragic, and, though perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Vide *The Memoirs of the Count de Gramont*.

## Old English Houses

less savouring of romance, had more heroism about it. In his vain attempts to save a favourite dog from drowning in Avington lake, the old gentleman got beyond his depth and was drowned.

I may mention that Pope's well-known allusion to the association of the Duke of Buckingham's riverside seat, Cliveden, with the Countess of Shrewsbury, must not be accepted as fact; for that house was only in course of erection at the time she married her second husband in 1680. So much for the old memories of Avington.

On my way from here to Bramdean (which lies about midway between Petersfield and Winchester), I passed through Tichborne, a village whose name will always be familiar in this country. A quiet, cheerful little place it seemed to be. The unpretentious inn — the Tichborne Arms, I think was its name—had a particularly homely aspect, and was kept by an equally homely hostess, who had many stories to recount in connection with the famous trial.

As I have said before, I wanted to put up at Bramdean, but arriving there late was not successful, and had to go on to West Meon. Returning next morning, I visited the manor house of Wood-

## Surrey and Hampshire

cote, and had the fortune to be conducted round the old house by its then owner, the famous physician and etcher, the late Sir Seymour Haden. Among other things of interest he showed me a room full of his etchings, which he said would at his decease find a home in the British Museum. Woodcote is a compact little red-brick gabled house, but does not boast any particular architectural beauty. Various alterations have, I grieve to say, swept away all signs of some curious hiding-places which were once to be seen.

Warnford and Hambledon are both very pretty villages, situated far away from any railway in a stretch of thoroughly rural England. Titchfield, some ten miles nearer the coast, is worth a visit to see the ruinous house to which Charles I. fled after his escape from Hampton Court, and prior to his captivity at Carisbrooke. The gate-house is practically all that now remains of this once extensive mansion of the Earls of Southampton. Ringwood and Fording-bridge belong to the extreme west of this county. These favourite resorts of the angler impressed me mainly with the beauty of the winding river Avon. The former place I visited on account of its proximity to Moyles Court, which is associated with sad

## Old English Houses

memories of the good Lady Lisle, who, for her compassion in housing two wretched fugitives from the field of Sedgemoor, was condemned by the inhuman Jeffreys to be burned at the stake. The trial of the lady is a remarkable record of the licence of brutality of the bench at the latter part of the seventeenth century. The old house was saved some years ago from falling into ruin and oblivion : as it appears now, however, it bids fair for a long and prosperous future, notwithstanding the fact that the portrait of Jeffreys reigns supreme at the old house of his unfortunate victim.

At Ringwood a halt was made when Monmouth was brought a captive up to London after Sedgemoor. The room in the inn where he slept may still be seen.

We cannot quit the county without a word about Carisbrooke. I have visited the famous castle upon two occasions, once when I was five and again comparatively lately. It is strange how one's impressions at an early age are recalled ; particularly by the well and the donkey (the latter a successor, but only by a few years) and the huge flight of steps up to the keep.

Walking on the broad ramparts or the soft turf of the bowling-green, one can picture the unfortunate



## Surrey and Hampshire

Stuart weary of solitude, and glad to converse with the little old man who used to come and light his fire. Picture also the poor king's little daughter on her death-bed, looking forward to the reunion with her father, who so recently had occupied the adjoining room. It was, indeed, the refinement of cruelty to have kept her in this castle.



## INDEX

**A** BINGDON, 84, 86  
Abingdon, Mrs, 156  
Acton (Kent), 196  
Adderbury House, 97, 101  
Albourn, 228  
Aldbury, 109  
Aldermaston, 155  
Alfold, 252  
Allington, 207  
Amersham, 39-43  
Ampthill, 116  
Anne of Cleves, 245  
Appleton, 87  
Argall family, 202  
Ascott-under-Wychwood, 96  
Ashby family, 138  
Ashridge Park, 109-111  
Asthall, 92  
Aston Bury, 122, 128  
Aubrey, 64  
Audley End, 147  
Avington, 260  
Aylesbury, 58  
Aylesford, 207

**B**ACON, Francis, Lord, 132  
Badlesmere, 172  
Bard, Dudley, 123  
Batemans, Burwash, 217  
Bathurst, first Earl, 21  
Beaconsfield, 35-38

Beale, Mary, 124  
Bearsted, 182  
Beckington Hall, 155  
Bedford, John first Duke of, 135  
Beeding, 229  
Belhus, 156-159  
Benenden, 212  
Bent, William, 42  
Berkeley, Lady Henrietta, 236  
Bexon, 184  
Biddenden, 212  
Blackmore, 154  
Blenheim, 97, 99  
Blockfield, 248  
Blount family, 83  
Boarstall Tower, 63-66  
Bodley, G. F., 19  
Bolebrook, 218  
Boleyn, Anne, 26, 245, 252  
Boleyn, Sir Thomas, 153  
Bolton, Countess of, 259  
Bonnets, 251  
Borden, 186  
Boughton Malherbe, 197-200  
Boughton Monchelsea, 205  
Bowyer, William, 17  
Braddocks, 149  
Bramber, 229  
Brambletye House, 221  
Bramley, Guildford, 251  
Bramshill House, 256

# Index

Bray, 77  
Bredgar, 183  
Bridgefoot, Iver, 18  
Broadhurst, 225  
Bromfield, 195  
Broughton Castle, 101  
Bruce, Lord, Earl of Ailesbury,  
114, 115  
Bulstrode Park, 47  
Burford, 92-95  
Burke, Edmund, 38  
Burnet, Bishop, 37, 97, 98  
Burnham Abbey, 22, 34  
Burningfold, 253  
Burwash, 217

**C**ALICO, The, 167-169, 172,  
174  
Canons Ashby, 104  
Capel, Lord, 150  
Cassiobury, 129, 130, 131, 132,  
150  
Castlemaine, Lady. See Cleveland,  
Duchess of  
Carisbrooke Castle, 264  
Catharine of Aragon, 116  
Cavendish Lord, Earl of Devon-  
shire, 135  
Cedar House, Hillingdon, 140  
Chalfont St. Giles, 27, 43-45  
Chalfont St. Peter, 46, 47  
Champion Court, Newnham, 169  
Charing, 195  
Charity House, The, Lenham, 190  
Charles I., 49, 60, 135, 140,  
263  
Charles II., 98, 130, 148, 230,  
238  
Charmouth, 230  
Chelmsford, 152  
Chenies, 134, 135  
Chequers, The, Doddington, 173  
268

Chequers, The, Uxbridge, 141  
Chevening, 158  
Chiddingfold, 252  
Chiddingstone, 243  
Chiffinch, William, 77  
Chipperfield, 132  
Christ's Hospital, Abingdon, 86  
Claydon, 53  
Cleveland, Duchess of, 77, 78, 98,  
130, 157  
Clifford, Lord, of Chudleigh, 55  
Clophill, 116  
Colnbrook, 23  
Compton Wynyates, 103  
Cooper, Samuel, 130  
Cope family, 257  
Court Farm, Kingsdown, 173  
Court Lodge, Yalding, 209  
Cowdray, 236  
Cranbrook, 211  
Creslow, 54-57  
Crittenden, 247  
Cromwell, Oliver, 21, 85, 221  
Cromwell, Thomas, 85  
Crowhurst, 247  
Crown Inn, Amersham, 41  
Crown Inn, Chiddingfold, 252  
Crown Inn, Uxbridge, 141  
Cuckfield Place, 223  
Culpepper family, 181  
Curwen, Lady Isabella, 42

**D**ACRE, Lennard, Lord, 157  
Dacre, Thomas, Lord. See  
Sussex, Earl of  
Danny, Hurstpierpoint, 228  
Darell family, 197  
Daunce, Sir John, 62  
Davington, 165  
Day, Sir Thomas, 76  
Dayrell, Sir Marmaduke, 48  
De Champion family, 169

# Index

Deddington, 207  
 Delaune family, 169  
 De Lazure family, 64  
 Denham, 50-52  
 Derby, fifth Countess of, 137  
 Dering family, 196  
 Dillon, Viscount, 98  
 Dinton, 59  
 Ditchley Park, 97-99  
 Ditchling, 228  
 Ditton Park, 28  
 Doddington, 172  
 Dorchester, 85  
 Dorney, 77  
 Dorton, 62  
 Dunsfold, 252  
 Dynham, Lady, 65  
  
**E**ASTBURY, 156, 157  
     Eastgate House, Rochester,  
     36  
 East Grinstead, 220  
 Eastling, 172  
 East Mascalls, 225, 226  
 East Peckham, 208  
 East Sutton, 201-203  
 Eddlesborough, 112  
 Egerton, 197  
 Elizabeth, Queen, 110, 111, 125,  
     132, 136, 153, 199, 232  
 Elmley, 166  
 Emsworth, 254  
 Essex, Earl of, 131, 132  
 Evelyn, John, 129, 153  
 Eversley, 253  
 Ewelme, 84, 86  
  
**F**AIRFAX, Lord, 63, 65, 150  
     Falkland, Lord, 95  
     Fanshawe, Lady, 65  
 Farnham Royal, 34  
 Faversham, 163, 164

Fawsley, 106  
 Feering, 155  
 Feldwicke family, 222  
 Fettiplace family, 76  
 Filmer family, 202  
 Finchden, Tenterden, 212  
 Flaunden, 135  
 Fleetwood, Colonel, 47  
 Foster, Mrs, 27  
 Framlingham, 29  
 Froissart, 166  
 Fritwell, 99  
 Fulmer, 48

**G**AGE, Colonel, 259  
     Gaunt House, Standlake,  
     88  
 George Inn, Uxbridge, 141  
 Gerrards Cross, 16  
 Godfrey House, Hollingbourne,  
     181  
 Godington, 196  
 Good Easter, 151  
 Gorhambury, 129, 130, 132  
 Goudhurst, 210  
 Gounter family, 238  
 Grafton, Duke of, 261  
 Grafton Green, 198  
 Gravetye, 223  
 Great Tangle, 251  
 Green Street, 187, 225  
 Gregories, Beaconsfield, 38  
 Grenfell, Lieutenant, 37  
 Grey, Ford, Lord, 236  
 Griffin Inn, Amersham, 43  
 Grimston, Lady Anne, 129  
 Grove, The, Watford, 129, 130  
 Grove End Farm, Tunstall, 186  
 Guest Hall, Lingfield, 250  
 Gwyn, Nell, 77, 123, 149, 152,  
     260

# Index

**H**ADEN, Sir Seymour,  
263  
Hadley Common, 90  
Hales family, 186  
Hall Barn, 37  
Hampton Gay, 99  
Harefield, 135-138  
Hardwick House, 84  
Harrietsham, 192  
Harrington, Sir James, 139  
Harris, Richard, 188  
Harting, 236  
Hartwell, 58  
Hatfield, 129, 147  
Headcorn, 200  
Hearne, Thomas, 76  
Hedgerley, 35  
Henry VIII., 26, 153, 245,  
247  
Hever Castle, 26, 152, 244-  
247  
High Easter, 151  
Hill House, Denham, 50  
Hilliard, Nicholas, 132  
Hillingdon, 140  
Hindlip Hall, 156  
Hockliffe, 112, 114  
Hoddesdon, 152  
Holland, Cornelius, 55  
Hollingbourne, 163, 179-182  
Holmshurst, Burwash, 217  
Horeham Hall, Thaxted, 150  
Horne, 250  
Horsmonden, 210  
Horton, 27  
Houghton Conquest, 114  
Hucking, 182  
Hulse family, 169  
Huntercombe, 33  
Huntsmoor, 17  
Hurley, 80  
Hurstpierpoint, 227  
270

**I**CKENHAM, 139  
Ickwell, 155  
Iver, 20  
**J**AMES II., 37, 132  
Jeffreys, Judge, 47  
Jericho House, Blackmore, 154  
Jordans, 46  
**K**EDERMINSTER family,  
28, 29, 30  
Kemp family, 151  
Killigrews, 154  
Kingsdown, 173  
Kingsdown peerage, 178  
Kirby, Northants, 226  
Knebworth, 123, 131  
Kneller, Godfrey, 132  
**L**ADY Place, 81  
Langley, Bucks, 28, 30-32  
Langley, Kent, 194  
Latimers, 135  
Layer Marney, 154  
Leaveland, 172  
Lee, Sir Henry, 98  
Leeds Castle, 192  
Lely, Sir Peter, 98, 124, 261  
Lenham, 164, 188-192  
Lenthall, Speaker, 94, 95  
Lichfield, Countess of, 98  
Lindfield, 227  
Lingfield, 249  
Linsted, 158, 175  
Lisle, Sir George, 150  
Lisle, Lady, 264  
Littleberries, 152  
Little Chart, 197  
Little Gaddesden, 111  
Little Hadham, 150  
Little Leighs Priory, 152  
Little Shardeloes, 42

# Index

Long Wittenham, 85  
 Lordington House, Racton, 239  
 Loseley, 251  
 Lovelace, third Lord, 81  
 Lower Gravenhurst, 117  
 Lower Winchendon, 60-62  
 Lucas, Sir Charles, 150  
 Ludgate Farm, 177  
  
**M**ALLETT, Mistress, 141  
     Malling, 207  
     Mapledurham, 82  
 Marden, 210  
 Margaretting, 154  
 Mary, Queen, 111, 153  
 Maydeston, Sir William, 200  
 Mayne, Simon, 60  
 Mazarin, Duchess of, 158  
 Mereworth, 208  
 Milton, John, senior, 27  
 Milton, John, 27, 38, 43, 137  
 Milton, Sarah, 27  
 Minster Lovel, 91  
 Moat, The, Gravetye, 223  
 Moat-in-den, 201  
 Monk, Dukes of Albemarle, 153  
 Monmouth, Duke of, 81, 112, 113,  
     114, 130, 236, 259, 264  
 Monteagle, Lord, 156  
 Moor Hall, 138  
 Moot Hall, The, Thaxted, 149  
 Moyles Court, Ringwood, 263  
 Moyns, 151  
 Mytens, Daniel, 132  
  
**N**EWDIGATE family, 138  
     Newenden, 211  
     New Hall, Chelmsford,  
     152, 153  
 Newnham, 167, 169, 174  
 Newport, Essex, 149  
 Newsells House, Herts, 145-147

Ninfield, 90  
 Norreys family, 75  
 Northmoor, 88  
 Norton, 188  
 Norton family, 226  
  
**O**ARE, 165  
     Oat Hall, Wivelsfield, 227  
     Ockwells, 22, 70-76  
 Odiham, 258  
 Offham Green, 207  
 Oglethorp, Colonel, 131  
 Old Basing, 258  
 Old House at Home, Benenden, 212  
 Old King's Head, Aylesbury, 58  
 Old Place, Lindfield, 227  
 Osbrook, 251  
 Ospringe, 166  
 Ostrich Inn, Colnbrook, 23, 24  
 Over Gravenhurst, 117  
  
**P**ALMER, Mrs. Barbara. See  
     Cleveland, Duchess of  
     Parham Hall, 232  
 Parlem Park (Parlaunt), 21  
 Parsonage Farm, Langley, 22, 31  
 Pattenden, 210  
 Paulet family, 259  
 Pembroke, Countess of, 115  
 Penn, 39  
 Penn, William, 39, 46  
 Penshurst, 244  
 Pepys, Samuel, 17, 78, 129, 139  
 Percival, Lord, 38  
 Petworth, 233  
 Philberts, 77  
 Pigott, Benjamin, 118  
 Place Farm, 26  
 Pluckley, 196  
 Portsmouth, Duchess of, 260, 261  
 Pump Farm, Benenden, 212  
 Puttenden, 248

# Index

**Q**UAINTON, 54  
Queen Hoo Hall, 125, 128

**R**ACTON, 238  
Rawdon House, Hoddes-  
don, 152

Reynolds, Sir Joshua, 38  
Richings Park, Iver, 21  
Ringwood, 264  
Rochester, Earl of, 96, 97, 141  
Rochford Hall, Essex, 153  
Rodmersham, 187  
Rolleston Farm, Rolvenden, 212  
Roper family, 176  
Rupert, Prince, 123  
Rushett, 188  
Russell family, 135

**S**ACKVILLE College, East  
Grinstead, 220  
St. Leonard's Castle, 208

Salter, Lady, 21  
Saracen's Head, Beaconsfield, 35  
Sarratt, 132  
Savoy, The, Denham, 52  
Scales family, 147  
Scott, Sir Gilbert, 20, 37  
Sedley, Sir Charles, 136  
Seed Farm, Eastling, 172  
Sentleger, Sir Ralph and Lady, 200  
Shakespeare, William, 136  
Shardeloes, 41, 42  
Sharsted Court, 169  
Shillington, 119  
Shipton-under-Wychwood, 96  
Shottesbrooke, 76  
Shrewsbury, Countess of, 261  
Sidney, Algernon, 244  
Sidney, Lady Dorothy (Sacharissa),  
245  
Sidney, Sir Philip, 115, 244  
272

Silsoe, 116  
Sittingbourne, 187  
Slapton, 104-106  
Slaugham Place, Sussex, 115  
Smallfield Place, Horne, 250  
Smarden, 212  
Spains Hall, 151  
Spelmonden, 210  
Spilsbury, 96  
Standlake, 88  
Stanley, 21, 137  
Stanton Harcourt, 88, 89  
Stede family, 192  
Sterburgh, Sir Reginald, 250  
Steyning, 231  
Stondon Massey, 91  
Strawberry Hill, 47  
Sutton Courtney, 85  
Sutton Place, Guildford, 251  
Sutton Valence, 201  
Sussex, Earl of, 157, 158  
Sussex, Countess of, 157, 158  
Swakeleys, 139  
Swan Inn, Amersham, 42  
Swan Inn, Charing, 196

**T**ALBOT family, 261  
Tankerville family, 236  
Tanners, 218  
Tenterden, 212  
Tewin, 125, 128  
Teynham family, 187  
Teynham, 187  
Thaxted, 149  
Thorney Farm, 21  
Throwley, 172  
Tichborne, 262  
Titchfield, 263  
Tittenhanger, 129  
Toddington Place, 112, 114  
Tolleshunt d'Arcy, 155  
Tolleshunt Knights, 155



# Index

Tolleshunt Major, 155  
Tollsey, The, Burford, 93, 149  
Tonge, 187  
Torry Hill, 178  
Treaty House, Uxbridge, 140, 141  
Tunstall, 186  
Twissenden, 210

**U**LCOMB, 200  
Up Park, 236  
Upton Court, 33

**V**ANDYKE, Anthony, 132,  
235  
Verney family, 53  
Villiers, George, Duke of Bucking-  
ham, 132, 152

**W**AKEHURST, 222  
Waldron, 218  
Waller, Edmund, 35, 37,  
38, 245

Walter, Lucy, 124  
Walpole, Horace, 47  
Waltham Cross, 152  
Water Eaton, 99  
Watford, 129  
Wentworth, Baroness, of Todding-  
ton, 81, 112, 113, 115

West Hoathley, 221  
West Hyde, 135  
White Hart Inn, Beaconsfield, 35  
White Horse Inn, Hockliffe, 114  
White Waltham, 76  
Wickens, 196  
Wilmot family, 97  
Wimbish, 149  
Winchester, 260  
Winchester, Marquis of, 259  
Windrush, 91  
Winwood family, 28  
Wiston, 231  
Witney, 91  
Wivelsfield, 227  
Woburn, 116  
Woodcote, West Meon, 262  
Wood Eaton, 99  
Woodstock Park. See Blenheim  
Wraysbury, 26, 27  
Wrest Park, 116  
Wroxton Abbey, 101

**Y**ALDING, 209

**Z**OUCHE, Lord, 232

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