

Wanborough

BY LADY WEST.

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IF a horseman cantering on the deliciously springy turf which stretches for ten miles by the side of the old Roman road leading from Guildford (Tennyson's Astolat) to Farnham, along the top of the "Hog's Back," should draw rein to breathe his horse about half-way between those towns, and turning from the well-known view of Hind Head and the Devil's Jumps on his left, look at the wide-stretching prospect on his right, he would see beneath him, nestling among trees, almost at the foot of the hill, a collection of picturesque roofs the little village, church, and manor house of Wanborough. Although Green, in his "Making of England" quoting probably from Kemble's "Saxons in England," says of it, that "it has in all probability been a sacred site for every form of religion which has been received into Britain, and derives its name of Wodensborough from its dedication to the grim old Saxon deity Woden," as "the famous springs of water at Wanborough are peculiarly pure, and never freeze" (Kemble), some antiquaries think the name may be derived from the word water, or Woden.

The manor was given by William the Conqueror to Sir Geoffrey de Mandeville, or Magnaville, and is mentioned in Domesday as the property of his namesake and grandson, the turbulent and ambitious Earl of Essex, of Stephen's time, who, tempted by extravagant grants, deserted the king, and joined the party of the Empress Maud.

At the head of a considerable army he laid waste the royal domains, sacked the town of Cambridge, and committed the most sacrilegious excesses at Ramsey Abbey, for which impiety he was excommunicated.

Receiving his death wound at the siege of the Royal Castle of Burnwell, he repented of his evil deeds, but sought in vain for ecclesiastical aid and benediction. At this juncture some Knights Templars took him under their protection, and after his death conveyed his body to the old Temple in London, but fearing to give him Christian burial, put the body in lead, and hung it in an apple tree.

Some years later, his absolution having been procured, they buried him in the porch of the new Temple Church, before the west door.

The effigy is believed to be the only example of a monument with the tall cylindrical flat-topped helmet over the hood of mail.

Gough describes the shield as the earliest example known of sculptured armorial bearings on a monumental effigy.

In Henry the Third's reign, the manor was sold to Gilbert, second Abbot of Waverley. Six monks were detached from the Abbey, who lived at the "cell" of Wanborough, served the parish church, and managed the farm of which the huge tithe barns, with magnificent massive timbers, are still in use.

The church, dedicated to St. Bartholomew, was built in the time of William the Conqueror, partly of stone and flint, partly of old Roman tiles. A screen of Spanish chestnut divides the chancel from the body of the church. There are records of oblations received there from Pilgrims.

After the dissolution of monasteries, the church came into lay hands, but there seems to have been no endowment, and no appointment, and divine service was only occasionally performed, and for many years it was practically used as a storehouse, till it was repaired, in 1862, by Mr. Duckworth, at that time the rector of the adjoining parish of Puttenham, and restored to its proper use as the Parish Church.

A great number of flint implements, now in the Charter House Museum, have been found, many of them in the "Fair Field," where a fair used to be held to supply the wants of the Canterbury Pilgrims; also Roman tiles and pottery; and on the north side of the present house, remains of walls or foundations abound at the depth of about three feet.

At the suppression of the monasteries, Henry VIII. bestowed the manor on the Earl of Southampton, who is supposed to have built the present house in 1527. It is of moderate size, is built of narrow bricks, with seven gables to the central main body, and has wings, consisting of one room each, projecting from each side, so as to enclose three sides of a courtyard. Under one of these wings a flight of steps takes you into a massively vaulted chamber, from which an underground passage (now closed), leads under the house to the church.

On the first floor a secret room has recently been discovered. It was about nine feet long, by four feet five, and the only ingress was by a door in the vast kitchen chimney, which was reached by a ladder, and concealed by the smoke. There used to be a tale in the village, that such a hiding-place existed, and it was talked of as the Covenanters' room, but no other tradition remained to account for the name. The Abbot's Pond, fed by the famous springs alluded to above, was formerly fourteen acres in extent, but has now been much reduced in size, the land reclaimed and cultivated, and the mill disused.

At Lord Southampton's death, the manor devolved on his half-brother, Sir Anthony Browne, and then changed hands rapidly by descent or purchase. At one time the Duchess of Hamilton settled it on her second husband, Thomas Dalmahoy, and the initials, T. D., separated by a heart, which are carved on the centre gable, are supposed to relate to this.

At another time it is recorded that James I., journeying with his queen from Loseley to Farnham, halted for refreshment at Wanborough, and knighted his host at the gate.

A row of "immemorial" yews, which would seem to date from the days of the monks' hedges, adds an interesting and unusual feature to the garden, and from the terrace they overshadow a lovely view over green fields, and purple heather stretches away towards Ascot and Windsor.