

EPSOM (*continued*) – THE TOWN ETC.

*“Through Surrey’s verdant scenes, where Epsom spreads
Mid intermingling elms her flow’ry meads,*

*...
I journey’d blithe.”¹*

Description of the Town – The “King’s Head” and other Hotels – The Court House and other Public Buildings – The Assembly Rooms – Harlow’s Portrait of Queen Charlotte – The Parish Church – Christ Church – Chapels and Meeting-houses for Nonconformists, &c. – Almshouses – Royal Medical Benevolent College – Pit Place – Lord Lyttelton’s Ghost-Horton Place – Woodcote House – Woodcote Park – Durdans.

EPSOM is a large, quaint, irregular, and interesting town; it is unlike other places, and with its broad street or parade wears an air of past grandeur. It is built mainly on the high road, with smaller streets and rows of houses and shops branching off on either side. There are several good hotels and quaint inns (one of which has the reputation of being the largest in England). The principal of these are the *King’s Head*, the *Spread Eagle*, and the *Albion*. The *King’s Head* is a house of long standing, having been patronised by Pepys on the occasion of his visit to the town in 1667. Under date of July 14 in that year, the genial Secretary writes:– “*To Epsom; by eight o’clock to the Well, where much company; and to the towne, to the ‘King’s Head,’ and hear that my Lord Buckhurst and Nelly are lodged at the next house, and Sir Charles Sedley with them, and keep a merry house.*” In Leigh Hunt’s *Sir Ralph Esher*, it may be remembered that the introduction of Sir Ralph to the afterwards celebrated Nell Gwynne took place at Epsom. The *Spread Eagle* is much frequented by the sporting fraternity during the races here.

Harlow painted as a signboard a portrait of Queen Charlotte in settlement of a bill that he had run up at a tavern in New Inn Lane.

In the main street, which gradually broadens out towards its southern extremity, most of the shops are large and attractive; and the town can boast of its court-house, market-house, and other public buildings. In the middle of the High Street is a large building of coloured bricks utilised as the fire-engine station, while the upper part of it forms a clock-tower, showing two illuminated dials at night.



EPSOM HIGH STREET

At the southern end of the High Street is a fine large red-brick mansion, with a heavy roof, now cut up into shops. This formerly contained the Assembly Rooms, in which balls were held in the Stuart times. But, alas! these rooms never had a Beau Nash to make their name immortal. The large room, the floor of which was

¹ (From the transcriber) Unusually, Walford does not give the source of this chapter’s opening quotation. It comes from a poem by Thomas Warton (1728-90), the first line of which is “*While summer suns o’er the gay prospect play’d.*”

trodden two centuries ago by royal and noble belles and beaux, and was the scene of endless flirtations and gaiety, now serves as a dull store or magazine for goods.

The patronage of Epsom was formerly vested in the Abbey of Chertsey, and it has passed along with the manor to the Carews, D'Arcies, Parkhursts, &c. The church, dedicated to St. Martin, is at the upper end of Church Street, on the east side of the town. It is an unsightly modern brick building, dating from 1825, at which time the old church, with the exception of the tower, was taken down. It would be well if the new structure could be "taken down" also. In the time of the Domesday Survey there appear to have been two churches at Epsom, and that there were a rector and a vicar at the same time, says Brayley, is proved by the register of Bishop Pontissara in 1285, "*when he granted to Roger de Grava, rector, all oblations and obventions issuing out of the vicarage for five years, in consideration of his expenditure in building a chancel.*" On Stamford Green, in Horton, there was once a church, called Stamford Chapel, which may have been the second church above referred to; it is mentioned in the chartulary of Chertsey Abbey, by which the benefice, with the manor of Epsom, was appropriated.

The old parish church is thus described by Manning and Bray in their *History of Surrey*:—"It is built with flints, as is the tower which stands at the west end of the north aisle, and on it is a small slender spire covered with shingles; in it are six [eight, as at present] bells and a clock. There is a nave and two aisles, and beyond is a single chancel, said to have been added to the original building, and that the stone with which it was built was brought from Merton Abbey to Nonsuch when Henry VIII built the latter; but this was clearly contradicted by the above grant from the bishop, and by the finding a stone, on removing Peirce's tablet to make room for Mr. Warre's in 1801, on which was a fragment of an inscription the characters of which are of an earlier date. The font, near the west door, is an octagon basin with quatrefoils on the sides, supported by an octagon pillar."

In 1824, being small and out of repair, it was pulled down, and a new pseudo-Gothic structure of the commonest type was erected from the designs of Mr. Hatchard, architect, of Pimlico, the cost being £6,000. A painted window, by Wailes, of Newcastle, has been inserted at the east end. The new church is built of brick, faced with black flints, and relieved with courses of brick and Bath stone dressings. In the chancel are three monuments with reliefs by Flaxman; one of these is in memory of the Rev. John Parkhurst, the author of Greek and Hebrew lexicons. A tablet to one of the Warre family represents a female figure kneeling, with an infant in her arms, by Chantrey. A tablet at the east end of the nave, in memory of Eleanor Belfield, who died in 1802, comprises emblematic figures by Flaxman. In the south aisle is a costly monument, preserved from the old church, to the memory of Richard Evelyn, of Woodcote, who died in 1669, and Elizabeth, his widow, who died in the year 1691. Among the memorials in the churchyard is a stone bearing the following quaint inscription:—

"Here lies the carcase
Of honest Charles Parkhurst,
Who ne'er could dance, sing,
But always was true to His Sovereign Lord the King
Charles the First.
Ob. Dec. XX. MDCCIV. ætat. LXXXVI."

Christ Church, Clay Hill, on Epsom Common, was built in 1876, from the designs of Mr. A. Blomfield. It is in the Decorated style of Gothic architecture, and was erected to supersede a small red-brick building which had been built a few years previously, but which had become inadequate for the population of the district.

At the Independent Chapel in Church Street, known as the Old Chapel, Dr. Watts used occasionally to preach during his visits to Sir John Hartopp, whose house nearly adjoined the chapel. The Rev. John Harris, the author of the once famous *Mammon*, was for many years minister here. In South Parade there is a small Catholic chapel, and there are also meeting-houses for Wesleyans, Congregationalists, and other denominations.

The charitable institutions in the town and its immediate neighbourhood are considerable. In East Street are almshouses for twelve poor widows; they were founded by John Livingstone in 1703, but re-built in a better style in 1871.

A handsome Gothic building on the edge of the downs, standing in about 18 acres of ground, is devoted to the purposes of the Royal Medical Benevolent College. It is somewhat like the Charterhouse in its plan, as affording a refuge for the aged and a school for the young. Fifty pensioners, being medical men or the widows of such, here receive annuities of £21 each; twenty-four of them have in addition furnished rooms in the college, and an annual allowance of three and a half tons of coals each. Fifty foundation scholars, being necessitous orphans and sons of medical men, receive an education of the highest class, and are boarded, clothed, and maintained, at the expense of the college. The buildings, which were completed in 1855, comprise the school, asylum, master's house, and a chapel.

Epsom has long been regarded as occupying one of the most delightful situations in the vicinity of the metropolis. *“The beautiful plantations of Garlands, the more stately groves of Durdans, and the ancient and magnificent trees of Woodcote, combine to give a richness to the scenery of the surrounding country, and present, either from the downs or commons, the town of Epsom encircled in their foliage.”* From the summit of the downs is obtained one of the richest and most extensive views in the county.



PIT PLACE

In the town and its immediate neighbourhood are several seats and houses of the nobility, some of which are of public interest. A house close to the church, called Pit Place², was the scene of the apparition of a ghost to Lord Lyttelton. Thomas, Lord Lyttelton, the once idolised, but afterwards hated, heir of his great and good father, George, Lord Lyttelton, had been in early life one of the hangers-on of Mrs. Montagu, at her blue stocking gatherings in Hill Street and at Montagu House. Grace and Philip Wharton describe him, in their *Queens of Society*, as *“Vain, elegant, and profligate . . . the delight, the admiration, and the leader of society, always fearful and superstitious, yet not religious.”* They write:— *“For a while his youthful and almost handsome face, with the hair turned back over a wide forehead, his bag-wig, his exquisite ruffles, and an expression half good-humoured, half sarcastic, might be seen in the great assemblies at Montagu House, where he was long tolerated for his father’s sake; but he soon became too notorious for any society, and vanished from his own sphere into a lower orbit. . . . His death was predicted to him when in the last stage of a decline – at five-and-thirty years of age – by an apparition in the form of a young lady whom he had seduced. The hour was foretold, and though his friends had set the clock on, he expired at the minute that she had predicted. This is the only ghost story in modern times which has been carefully investigated and minutely recorded; and the short account of it is described on a brass plate in the house at Epsom in which the titled sinner died.*

“The three last years of his life were passed in penitence and in an attempt at reform; but, as one of his friends wrote, ‘the period of his emancipation from the fetters of pleasure and indolence marked also his dissolution.’ Such was the detestation of his character that his funeral took place at night, for fear that the people of Hagley would tear his remains from the coffin in fury. . . . He was a splendid speaker and a wit, a Macaroni or dandy of the first class, and a man of wonderful powers of fascination; perhaps in the days of Charles II he might have been almost respectable; and with all his wickedness he must have been a brilliant person in society.”

The following version of the story above referred to is extracted from my *Tales of Great Families*:— *“Pit Place is a plain, unpretending mansion, with pleasant lawns and gardens, and reminds one of a country rectory. Towards the close of November, 1779, Lord Lyttelton had gone down from London to Pit Place for the purpose of spending a week or two in field sports or other recreation, and he had taken with him a gay party of friends. On the 24th of that month he had retired to bed at midnight, after spending the evening at cards with his guests, when his attention was attracted by the fluttering of a bird, apparently a dove or a pigeon, tapping at the*

² It was probably named “The Pit House,” from standing in a chalk-pit; but it was natural during the last century for the owner of such a house to add to it the cheap lustre of a great name.

window of his bedchamber. He started, for he had only just put out his light, and was about to compose himself to rest, and sat up in bed to listen. He had gazed and listened for a minute or so, when he saw, or at all events fancied that he saw, a female clothed in white enter—whether by the door or by the window we are not informed—and quietly approach the foot of his bed. He was somewhat surprised, and not agreeably surprised, when the figure opened its pale lips and told him that three days from that very hour he should cease to live. “In whatever manner this intimation, real or unreal, from the other world was conveyed to him, whether by sound of the voice or by any other mode of communication, one thing is certain, that Lord Lyttelton regarded it as a reality, and a message from the world of spirits. Next morning he mentioned it as such to the guests who were in the house, and during the next two or three days it preyed upon his mind, visibly affected his spirits, and threw a damp over the entire party who were assembled.

“The third night came, and everything had gone on as usual. The guests had sat down to dinner, played their rubbers of whist, and retired; but none of them had dared to rally the young Lord Lyttelton on the depression of spirits under which he laboured. Eleven o’clock came; the party broke up and went to their several rooms, wishing each other good-night, and heartily desiring that the night were past and gone, so restless, anxious, and uncomfortable did they feel without exception. Twelve o’clock came, and Lord Lyttelton was sitting up in bed, having given his servant orders to mix him a dose of rhubarb, though apparently in the best of health. The dose was poured out, and he was just about to take it when he found that there was no teaspoon. A little out of patience with the valet for neglecting to have a spoon at hand, he ordered him to go and fetch one from the pantry at the foot of the stairs. The man was not absent from the room for more than a minute, or possibly a minute and a half, but when he returned he found his master lying back at full length upon the bed speechless and motionless. No efforts to restore animation were of any avail, and no symptom of consciousness showed itself. His lordship was dead, having died on the third day, as the spectre had foretold.

“As the records of the Surrey coroner a century ago are no longer extant, we suppose that it is hopeless at this distance of time to attempt to find out whether a formal inquest was held upon the body, and if so, what the verdict may have been. Whether, therefore, Lord Lyttelton’s death was occasioned by any sudden shock to his nervous system, or whether it was the result of a sudden apoplectic or other seizure, must remain a matter of uncertainty and conjecture to the end of time.

“Sir Nathaniel Wraxall adds a reflection of his own, to the effect that the Lyttelton family in the last century suffered from a certain constitutional irritability of the nerves, which appears to have predisposed its members to such shocks as that which produced, or at all events hastened on, the end of the young nobleman here related. This may or may not have been the case; but it is only fair to state that Sir Nathaniel adds, in his own gossiping way, by way of confirmation of his theory, that the first lord, in spite of his great practical sense and political experience, ‘manifested great credulity on the subject of apparitions;’ and that a cousin of the deceased, some four years afterwards, died in a somewhat similar way at Stourhead, Wiltshire, about two years after her marriage to Sir Richard Hoare, Bart., of that place. The fact, however, is that Lord Lyttelton’s life had been of so licentious and abandoned a character as to subject him continually to the keenest reproaches of an accusing conscience : ‘Node dieque mum gestare tit pectore testem.’ This domestic spectre – for such it must ever be to a sensitive mind – which accompanied him everywhere, was known to have given rise while he was on his travels, and particularly at Lyons, says Sir Nathaniel, to scenes greatly resembling the scene of his last moments at Epsom.

“It is clear that the good-natured old chronicler on whom we have drawn so largely for the materials of this sketch did not speedily dismiss the subject from his memory. About five years afterwards, when dining at Pit Place, he had the curiosity to search out and visit the bed-chamber which was the scene of Lord Lyttelton’s tragic end. He was shown the bedstead on which he died, and the casement of the window at which the bird had tapped with his beak so maliciously, and against which it had fluttered with its wings. Moreover, he was a constant visitor at the house of his lordship’s stepmother, the Dowager Lady Lyttelton, in Portugal Street, Grosvenor Square, who often talked to him on the subject, inclining to the supernatural, as he did to the natural, view of the case. ‘A woman of a very lively imagination, she gave an implicit faith,’ he says, ‘to all the supernatural occurrences which were supposed to have accompanied, or rather to have immediately preceded, Lord Lyttelton’s end; and it is well known that she immortalised the event by executing a painting of it, which is still in existence, and is preserved in the family as a memorial of the past. She was gifted with the painters’ art, and she executed the painting in 1780, when the affair was fresh in the memory of her friends, and of the servant who attended him at Pit Place, from whom she drew her information. Every detail was given to her as told by the valet, who had it from his master’s lips during that three days’ interval between the warning and the fatal stroke. This picture’ adds Sir Nathaniel, ‘used to hang in a conspicuous place in her drawing-room in Portugal Street, and must be well remembered, there or elsewhere, by many friends of the family. It is not,

perhaps, of any high value as a work of art, and its intrinsic value may be small, but it is a precious heirloom in the house of Lyttelton. In it the bird at the window is represented as a dove; and the female figure, habited in white, is standing at the foot of the bed, announcing to Lord Lyttelton his speedy dissolution.' It is only right to add here that the picture thus described is not known to the present members of the Lyttelton family; and though there is somewhere or other to be seen a small print of the vision, the print is poor and intrinsically worthless."

In the work from which we have quoted the above one or two other versions of the story are given, from original papers which had been placed at the disposal of the author by Lord Lyttelton himself. One of them will be sufficient for our purpose here. It is a memorandum in the handwriting of William Henry, the first Lord Lyttelton of the new creation, and is indorsed in his lordship's handwriting: "*Remarkable Dream and Circumstances attending the Death of Thomas Lord Lyttelton.*" It runs as follows:—

"On Thursday, the 25th of November, 1779, Thomas Lord Lyttelton, when he came to breakfast, declared to Mrs. Flood, wife of Frederick Flood, Esq., of the kingdom of Ireland, and to the three Misses Amphlett, who were lodged in his house in Hill Street, London (where he then also was), that he had had an extraordinary dream the night before. He said he thought he was in a room into which flew a bird, which appearance was suddenly changed into that of a woman dressed in white, who bade him prepare to die, to which he answered: '*I hope not soon; not in two months.*' She replied: '*Yes, in three days.*' He said he did not much regard it, because he could in some measure account for it, for that a few days before he had been with Mrs. Dawson, when a robin-redbreast flew into her room. When he had dressed himself that day to go to the House of Lords, he said he thought he did not look as if he was likely to die. In the evening of the following day, being Friday, he told the eldest Miss Amphlett that she looked melancholy; '*but,*' said he, '*you are foolish and fearful. I have lived two days, and, God willing, I will live out the third.*' On the morning of Saturday he told the same ladies that he was very well, and believed that he '*should bilk the ghost.*' Some hours afterwards he went with them, Mr. Fortescue, and Captain Wolseley, to Pit Place, at Epsom, withdrew to his bed-chamber soon after eleven o'clock at night, talked cheerfully to his servant, and particularly inquired of him what care had been taken to provide good roles [sic] for his breakfast next morning. He stepped into bed with his waistcoat on, and as his servant was pulling it off he put his hand to his side, sunk back, and expired immediately without a groan. He ate a good dinner after his arrival at Pit Place that day, and took an egg for his supper. It [he?] did not seem to be at all out of order, except that while eating his soup at dinner he had a rising in his throat, a thing which had often happened to him before, and which obliged him to spit some of it out. His physician, Dr. Fothergill, told me that Lord Lyttelton in the summer preceding had a bad pain in his side, and he judged that some great vessel in the part where he felt the pain gave way, and to that, he conjectured, his death was owing. His declaration of his dream and his expressions above-mentioned consequent thereunto, were upon a close inquiry asserted to me to have been so by Mrs. Flood, the eldest Miss Amphlett, Captain Wolseley, and the valet de chambre Faulkner, who dressed him on the Thursday; and the manner of his death was related to me by William Stuckey, in the presence of Mr. Fortescue and Captain Wolseley, Stuckey being the servant who attended him in his bed-chamber, and in whose arms he died." This narrative is signed "Westcote" — an Irish title which the writer bore before being raised to the English barony of Lyttelton in February, 1780.

Horton Place, the seat of Mr. William Trotter, lies about a mile to the west of Epsom, in the midst of an extensive park. The old manor-house was a large building, surrounded by a moat, and was for many years the abode of the Mynns and their predecessors. Horton was anciently included in the Manor of Epsom, and as such was held by the Abbot of Chertsey, who, in the reign of Henry VI, granted "*the vill of Horton*" to John Merston and Rose his wife. From this family the property passed, by the marriage of an heiress early in the sixteenth century, to Nicholas Mynn, with whose descendants it continued till 1626, when it was sold to George Mynn, of Lincoln's Inn. That gentleman married Ann, daughter of Sir Robert Parkhurst, on whose death the estate devolved upon their daughter Elizabeth, the wife of Richard Evelyn, the younger brother of the author of *Sylva*. Mrs. Evelyn survived her husband, and her children having died before her, she bequeathed her property, which included the estate of Woodcote, to Charles Calvert, fourth Lord Baltimore, an Irish peer, who was maternally descended from one of the Mynns. Horton continued in the hands of the Lords Baltimore for two or three generations, when it was sold to a Mr. Monk. After one or two other changes of ownership, it passed, again by sale, to Mr. John Trotter, an army contractor, of Soho Square, who died possessed of it in 1790. His son and successor, Mr. James Trotter, who was Sheriff of Surrey in 1798, erected the present mansion, called Horton Place, and enclosed a quantity of land around it for a park. At the death of this gentleman the estate devolved upon his son, Mr. John Trotter, who was for many years Storekeeper-General, and for some time M.P. for the Western Division of Surrey. The Manor of Horton is now owned by Mr. William Trotter, son of the late Mr. George Brown, merchant, of London, who assumed that name in lieu of his patronymic on succeeding to the property in 1868.

To the south and south-west of the town, and stretching away for upwards of a mile towards the race-course, is the district of Woodcote, which includes within its bounds Woodcote Grove, with Woodcote Green and the estates of Woodcote House and Woodcote Park.

Woodcote House, though it almost adjoins Woodcote Park, must be carefully distinguished from it. It is a much smaller house, and stands much nearer to the town of Epsom, and in small but beautiful grounds of its own. From the entrance-lodge a short drive leads up to the mansion, which is of the modern classical style, consisting of a square centre building and two wings, and is covered with white stucco. From the entrance hall branch off on each side the principal rooms. Here is a small but very fine collection of pictures by the old masters, of which those principally to be noticed are:— *A Boar Hunt*, by Poussin; *Scene at a Village Fair*, by Watteau; *Seapiece*, by Van der Velde; *Madonna*, by Albrecht Dürer; *Battle Scene*, by Huchtenburgh; *Landscape with Cattle*, by Vandermeer; and various unsigned pictures of the Dutch and English schools. In the dining-room are portraits of Sir Edward Northey, knighted by Queen Anne for services as Attorney General, of his son Mr. Northey, and his wife, dressed in white satin, the painter being unknown. In the hall is a collection of family miniatures, and in a case in the drawing-room are various Waterloo relics, old coins, swords, &c., collected by the grandfather of the present owner, who was at that famous victory. The chairs are covered with tapestry more than three generations old, and much of the available remaining space is filled with old china of great value.

At Woodcote lived and died, in 1652, the Lady Browne so frequently mentioned in the early part of John Evelyn's *Diary* for the asylum which she gave whilst she lived in Paris to the exiled Royalists during the tyranny of the Parliamentary Roundheads.

Woodcote is very frequently mentioned by Evelyn in his *Diary* as a half-way house which he often visited in his journeys between Wotton and Sayes Courts. Under date of September, 1662, for instance, he tells us:— "*I went to visit my brother of Woodcott, my sister having been delivered of a son a little before.*" At his "*noble seate near Epsom*" died John Evelyn's brother Richard in 1670; and from its doors his body was carried on the 21st of March to be decently interred in the "*chapell in Epsom Church belonging to Woodcote House,*" followed by a funeral train of "*twenty carriages of six horses and innumerable people.*" The house devolved on his only daughter and heiress, who married a titled personage and died quite young. Elizabeth Evelyn, widow of Richard, died in 1691, and was also buried in the parish church. She left Woodcote, together with the manor of Horton, to Lord Baltimore.

The house had previously been the seat of the Lords Berkeley, a family at that time noted for the piety and great personal worth of its members, and one from which Robert Nelson, the author of *Fasts and Festivals*, selected his wife.

It is now the seat of the Northeys. The present mansion was built by Sir Edward Northey, who was Attorney General in the reigns of William III, Anne, and George I, and who made it his residence. He lies buried under a fine altar-tomb in the churchyard at Epsom. It is on record that the first brood of rooks – from which the colony of rooks that so long frequented the Temple Gardens, in London, had origin – was taken thither by Sir William Northey from the Woodcote estate.

Higher up the hill, and almost adjoining the grand stand and race-course, are the trees of Woodcote Park, the residence of Mrs. Brooks. This is a very fine and extensive stone building, of which part was formerly a monastery, the arcades of which form the wings of the present house. The mansion stands in its own grounds, which are about 350 acres in extent, and contain a small lake stocked with swans and other water fowl. A double flight of steps with balustrades leads to the entrance. The apartments are decorated in the style of the era of the first French Revolution. In the morning-room, which is the first on the right of the entrance-hall, is a very fine chimney-piece of Carrara marble, carved to represent the fable of the Dog and his Shadow. From this apartment we pass to the drawing-room, where chiefly to be noticed are the beautifully-worked Spitalfields damask curtains. The gilded mouldings and decorations of the walls, though of great age, appear as if freshly executed. The ceiling is by Verrio, with the exception of the centre-piece, which is by a later hand and of inferior execution. The ceiling of the Painted Room represents Apollo and the Muses; on it was formerly a series of panels illustrative of the story of the old Greek romance of Daphne and Chloe, beginning with the birth of the child and ending with the wedding breakfast. These were designed, in 1718, by Philip, Duke of Orleans, Regent of France during the minority of Louis XV., and were brought from Versailles. They have now been removed to a hall on the first floor. Entering the library, we notice an exceedingly fine painting on the ceiling, by Rubens, which represents a child borne by an eagle. This has been erroneously stated to be a picture of the *Bringing of Ganymede*. It is really founded on an old family legend. In this room is an alcove, now lined with books, which formerly was a separate room, and was used as a bed-chamber by the unfortunate Frederick,

Prince of Wales, son of George II. The dividing wall has been removed so as to make it now a part of the library.

Leaving the library, we next come to a room, now unused, which was formerly a Roman Catholic chapel. The ceiling is painted by Verrio with a representation of the Ascension. In Brayley's *Surrey* it is stated that after the marriage of Elizabeth, the co-heiress of the Mynns of Horton and Woodcote, with Richard Evelyn, "*that gentleman, being struck with the far preferable situation of Woodcote Park, determined to erect a mansion there for the owners of the estate; and such a house he built, together with a chapel and a library. The two latter were ornamented by Grinling Gibbons and Verrio, who had been recommended to Mr. Evelyn by his brother John.*" Between the chapel and the library is a small ante-chamber, formerly used as a dressing-room for the ball-room, which is unoccupied, being left in the same unfinished state as it was seventy years ago. In the bed-rooms are some old mahogany doors and presses, the former curiously carved, the latter made from timber grown on the estate. The door-locks in this house are very remarkable. They are of Italian workmanship, and bear upon them, in the midst of rich ornamental borders, the coronet of Lord Baltimore, whose family once possessed the estate. This nobleman brought from Italy the paintings which surmount several of the doors; he also superintended the building of the present front of the house. In his time was brought from the Vatican the painted ceiling of one of the dressing-rooms; and the Blue and White room contains a gilded bed placed there by the earl.

Just beyond our area, south-west of Woodcote, is Ashted, till lately the seat of the Hon. Mrs. Howard, and now that of Mr. Thomas Lucas. The place is of some historic, or at all events literary, interest, inasmuch as it is mentioned by John Evelyn in his *Diary*. In 1665 he writes:— "*I supp'd at my Lady Mordaunt's at Ashted, where was a roome hung with Pintado, full of figures greate and small, prettily representing sundry trades and occupations of the Indians, with their habits; here supp'd also Dr. Duke, a learned and facetious gentleman.*" Again, under date of May 10, 1684, he writes:— "*I went to visite my brother in Surrey. Call'd by the way at Ashted, where Sir Robert Howard (Auditor to the Exchequer) entertain'd me very civilly at his new-built house, which stands in a Park on the Downe, the avenue South; tho' downe hill to the house, which is not greate, but with the outhouses very convenient. The stairecase is painted by Verrio with the storie of Astrea; amongst other figures is the Picture of the Painter himselfe, and not unlike him; the rest is well done, onely the columns did not at all please me; there is also Sir Robert's own picture in an oval: the whole in 'fresca'. The place has this greate defect, that there is no water but what is drawn up by horses from a very deepe well.*"



DURDANS

Close by Woodcote House and Park, and almost adjoining the town of Epsom, is Durdans, the seat of Lord Rosebery. It is said that the original house was built by Lord Berkeley out of the materials of Nonsuch Palace. George, thirteenth Lord Berkeley, was a favourite at Court after the Restoration, and had the management of the Duke of York's household. He and his family are constantly mentioned in connection with Durdans and Woodcote by both Pepys and Evelyn.

The present mansion is built of red brick, with stone dressings, in that style which John Evelyn constantly calls in his *Diary* “à la moderne”, or possibly he would have called, as he calls Audley End, “a mixt fabric, ‘twixt antique and modern.”

Durdans, then the seat of “my Lord Berkeley,” is mentioned by Pepys in his *Diary* as a place “where I have been very merry when I was a little boy.”

Evelyn, in his *Diary*, under date of August 14, 1658, tells us how “We went to Durdans to a challenge’d match at bowls for £10, which we won.” And again, September 1, 1662:— “Being invited by Lo. Berkeley, I went to Durdans, Epsom, where dined his majestie [Charles II], the Queene, Duke, Dutchesse, Prince Rupert, Prince Edward, and abundance of noblemen.” Three years later, the philosopher Evelyn writes to one of his learned friends:— “As to our Philosophical concernes, Dr. Wilkins, Sir William Petty, Mr. Hooke, with our operator, live alltogether at my Lord Geo. Barclay’s at Durdans neere my Brother, where they are excogitating new riggings for Ships, new Charriots, and new Ploughs, &c., so as I know not of such another happy conversation of Virtuosi in England.”

Again, under date of August 4, 1665, he writes:— “I called at Durdans, where I found Dr. Wilkins, Sir William Petty, and Mr. Hooke, contriving chariots, new rigging for ships, a wheele for one to run races in, and other mechanical inventions: perhaps three such persons were not to be found elsewhere in Europe for parts and ingenuity.” On another occasion he writes:— “My Lord George Berkeley of Durdans came to visit me.” This “wheele for one to run races in” may have given, and indeed very probably gave, the first crude idea of the velocipede, which in our own day has developed into the bicycle and tricycle.

The grove at Durdans is stated by Aubrey to have been the scene of the intrigue between Ford, Lord Grey of Werke, and his wife’s sister, Lady Henrietta, daughter of the Earl of Berkeley, in consequence of which Lord Grey was prosecuted for seduction; he was found guilty, but the matter was eventually compromised. Manning, in his *History of Surrey*, on the authority of the Rev. John Parkhurst, contradicts the above mentioned statement of Aubrey, and says that the scandalous circumstances occurred, “not at Durdans, but at a house of the Berkeleys at the west end of the town, on the road to Leatherhead,” which afterwards became the parish workhouse. Brayley, however, in his *Surrey*, says that “from the evidence given on the trial, it plainly appears that Lord Berkeley’s family resided at Durdans, near Epsom, at the time of this ill accident,” and that thence the elopement must have taken place.

Durdans was at one time the residence of the Earl of Guildford and was afterwards occupied by Frederick, Prince of Wales, who frequently enjoyed the amusement of hawking on Epsom Downs, where there is a spot still known by the name of “Hawbery.” Soon afterwards the palace, as it has been styled, was taken down; and in 1764, when another mansion was in process of building, it was destroyed by fire. The house now called Durdans was next built, and having been successively held by the Dallowes, Blackmans, and Heathcotes, and for a short time by the Marquis of Lorne, was at length purchased by the Earl of Rosebery, who now owns it.

The new mansion has been largely altered by Lord Rosebery, who has blocked up the front entrance, which faced the south, and has made a fresh one near the stables under a tower on the west. He has also made new dining-room and kitchen and domestic apartments, thrown out to the west. The stables are very fine, and his stud of horses is well known to sportsmen. Lord Rosebery’s winnings on the turf in 1883 were upwards of £10,000.

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