

RAKE HOUSE.

NOTES ON THE ARCHITECTURE OF RAKE HOUSE.

BY

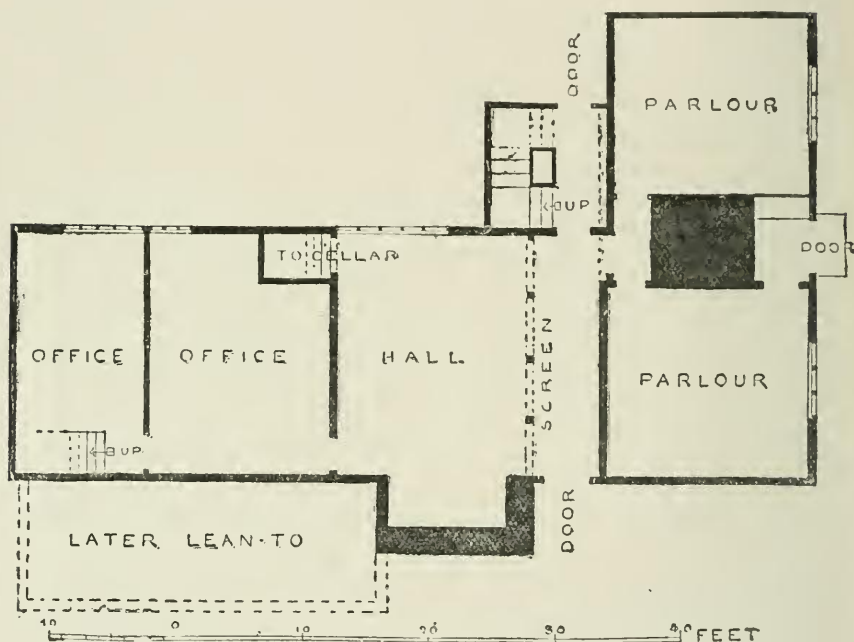
RALPH NEVILL, F.S.A.

RAKE HOUSE is an extremely interesting specimen of the sort of house that was built by the old servants of the Court, who in the time of Elizabeth and James I acquired so many small properties in Surrey. It is particularly interesting, because from the time it was acquired by the Durrant family in 1836 till 1882, when I was called in to restore it for the Busbridge estate, it had been left untouched, and was probably in much the same condition as 100 years previously, or indeed as when the builders left it. The windows to the parlours, as well as the timber work on that side, which is the south, had decayed and been replaced, but the armorial glass had been preserved.

A flourishing colony of owls had their home in the dove-house, and more strange still, the fine stone walls enclosing the garden were covered with the *Ceterach* fern. This is noticed in the *Letters of Rusticus* as having once existed in a few places in the neighbourhood, but had since become extinct. The pond contained a number of immense carp, which may very well have been placed there by Anthony Smith himself.

The plan of the house given on the following page presented several features of interest. All plans of such houses previous to the end of the 16th century seem to have been on the lines so well described by Mr. Bayley in Vol. IV of our *Collections*. In these, three doors open out of one side of a central hall to the pantry, buttery, and cellar or stairs; on the other side of the hall was the Solar or, as it was called later, the parlour.

In this example the hall seems to have been already deposited from its place. What was left of the screen seemed to be the remains of a post partition that had perhaps once been filled with plaster, but the posts were so rough it was impossible to tell if they were original or no. It is probable that this, which I have called the hall, was always intended for the kitchen. I think this



RAKE HOUSE—GROUND PLAN.

must have been the case, as there is no sign of any further doors to outbuildings; the door to the lean-to was cut through the original framing.

The two offices probably answered to the old buttery and pantry, although the access is different. Stairs led down to a cellar in which was a shallow well of clear spring water.

The parlour wing is of a plan which seems to have become typical; there was an immense chimney block

old open central hearth. At a later date a floor had been put in and a block of chimneys similar to that at Hawlands built. Another kitchen and offices was also added in the position of that at Rake. Stairs went up at the side of ingle as at Hawlands, but it seems doubtful if these were ancient.

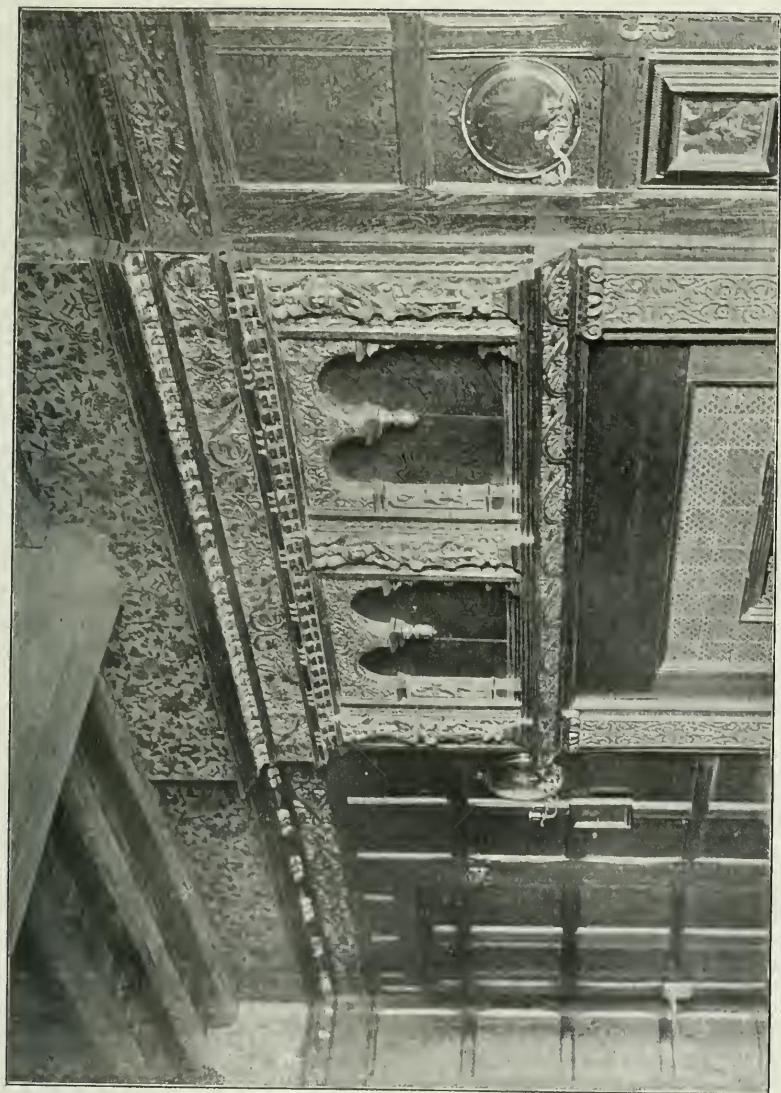
The roof is very steep, and framed with king-posts on large cambered beams supported by fine arched struts. The doorway was of very early form, cut into an arch out of two spreading barks, and the hall would not be later than 14th century, and was possibly earlier.

A feature of much interest at Rake is the staircase; so great an authority as Mr. Gotch says that the genesis of the balustraded staircase is obscure; here we have at least one step clearly defined. As Mr. Bayley pointed out, the earliest stairs wound round a newel or were built between solid walls; in this case the stairs ascend in short flights round a frame composed of four oak corner posts, the space between which was filled with stud and plaster flush with the posts. The framing runs up to about 3 feet above the top landing, and is finished with an oak table top. At Borde Hill, a fine old house near Cuckfield in Sussex, is a similar staircase on rather larger scale, but in that case the framing runs up to a second floor.

This form is evidently the transition from the old stairs enclosed with solid walls to the square planned stairs with newels and balustrades; all that is required is to leave out the plaster between the corner posts and substitute a rail and turned balusters or carved planks, and to cut asunder the posts and work them as newels, as was done later. The important practical reason for this latter development was the advantage of being able to pass large furniture over the tops of the newels.

On the first floor over the parlour adjoining the stairs was the state room, panelled with a carved frieze and mantelpiece; the carving of this and the other mantelpiece below are unusually delicate, very different from the rough work often found at this time.

On the first floor a passage ran along on the stairs



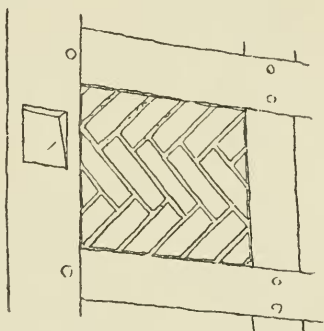
CARVED MANTELPIECE AT RAKE.

side over the hall and gave access to the two bedrooms. The room over the further office was cut off from the rest of the first floor, and reached by a narrow stair cut out from a solid trunk of oak. A stair led from this room into the garrets; along the centre of the roof, where one could just stand upright, a few boards were laid; these led to boarded spaces in each gable, lit by small windows. The roof over these gable spaces was ceiled with rough plaster, and no doubt the servants slept here on rough mattresses.

In the entrance parlour and room over, the fireplaces were arched in brick in Tudor form and plastered, and scrolls in black distemper drawn on the plaster in a manner usual at that period; the patterns were however too indistinct to be preserved.

The timber work on the south and west side (facing the pond) had as usual, in these aspects, decayed seriously and been patched and rebuilt in brick, but the timber on the east side overlooking the walled garden was as good as when built, and as well as the herring-bone brickwork and the upper windows remains unaltered; the lower windows were not original. The sketch shows the arrangement of the bricks and a sinking on main timber: this was made to receive the end of the raking strut that was fixed to keep the main post upright while the house was being erected: they are generally found on the main posts. There had originally been a gable on the garden side corresponding to that on the pond side, but this had at some time been destroyed; the lean-to on the pond side was an addition.

On the garden side a large space is enclosed by a fine stone wall, in the centre of which is what was probably the original entrance to the house; this had long been disused. The mill-pond on the other side came up



close to the house, but has been considerably curtailed on this side.

The square dove-house, with four gables, that stands in the grounds, is an uncommon survival of what was once a frequent feature.

With the exception of the oak already mentioned, the other oak mantelpieces and fittings have been imported.

Attached to the top rail of the panelling were small roundels of oak $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch diameter by $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick; these were originally fastened to the rail with four oak pegs, but in some cases, as in that now in the Museum at Guildford, a screw had later been put through the middle; these are rare fittings to find surviving, and were fixed so that moveable hangings might be hung to them with loops.

It will be well to add to what Mr. Giuseppi has said of the glass, an exact description.

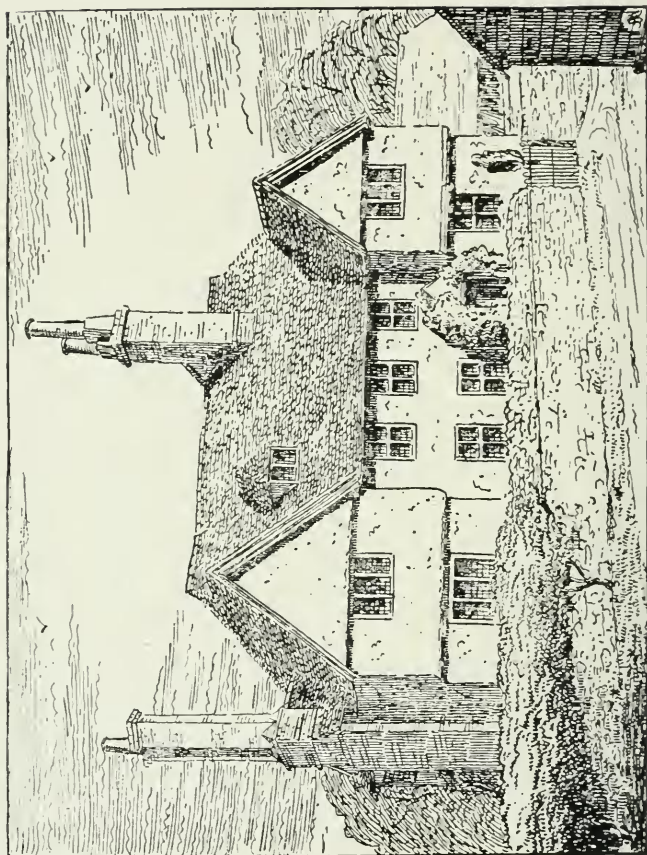
On large ovals, with helmets and rich mantlings: No. 1, the coat of



Anthony, son of Henry Smith; arg., a bend az. between two unicorns' heads erased az., for Smith, quarterly with arg., a chevron gu. with three bars gemelle between three hawks' bells, for Bell; crest, a unicorn's head out of a coronet. No. 2, Smith, as before, but the bend is charged with three lozenges bendwise or (omitted on the previous coat only); the crest is a demi-bull out of a ducal coronet, being that of the Yorkshire family. No. 3, the coat of Anthony, father of Henry Smith; Smith impaling az., a lion ramp. arg. over all on a fess or, three roses gu. for Harward (of Merrow); crest double, a demi-bull for

Tracing of Armorial Glass at Rake.

Smith, and a demi-stag ducally gorged and attired for Harward. No. 4, a large shield, Smith impaling Harward. On small quarries,



HURST FARM, MILFORD.

No. 5, the arms of Henry Smith; Smith (with a mullet sable as third son of Anthony) impaling Bell (the chevron not coloured), labelled Smith, Bell. No. 6, the arms of Anthony, grandson of Henry Smith; Smith impaling, sable-bordered or, three cinquefoils arg. pierced gules, labelled Hoare (of Farnham, but the coat will be found recorded under Hore, co. Warwick). No. 7, the coat of Anthony, son of Henry Smith (with the mullet), impaling or, three bars gu. for Muschamp (of Peckham), first wife. No. 8, Smith, as before, impaling sa., a cross potent or, for Allen, for the second wife of Anthony, labelled Smith, Allen.

The bearing of Allen, in the church at Witley, is given by Manning as a cross patonce, probably by mistake.

It may be noted here, that although Rake was devised by Anthony Smith to his great nephew named Meale, the main property went to his brother Thomas. It is not clear where his family lived at this time, as there is no evidence that the Courthouse at Witley, which must have been of very ancient date, had ever been adapted to the needs of the 18th century. About the end of the reign of George II, Thomas Smith, great nephew of Anthony, built for himself Milford House, an interesting specimen of Georgian work. His daughter and heiress conveyed the property to Philip Carteret Webb, son of the distinguished antiquary of the same name, who owned Busbridge at Godalming; his direct descendant Robert William Webb now owns the house and a large property adjoining. Pepys tells us that in his time, it was said that "the old rule was, that a family might remain fifty miles from London, one hundred years; one hundred miles from London, two hundred years, and so farther or nearer London more or less years."

Strangers to Surrey, imagining the county to be a suburb of London, often suggest that there are, of course, no old families in it. This is only one instance out of many in which, in most parts of the county, families still hold the estates that their ancestors acquired in the days of Elizabeth and James I.

In connection with the Smith family, it may be as well to take the opportunity to notice a house at Milford, Hurst Farm, now part of the Webb estate and in the

tenancy of Mr. Wm. Rothwell; this is shown opposite the preceding page. The outside has been cemented, which conceals the timber-work; there is a small porch which leads into what was probably the hall, but the further part has been partitioned off and forms the kitchen. There are parlours on each side, and the only staircase to the house is one winding round a central newel. This is in a back wing, and is perhaps part of an earlier house; apparently the staircase that was so generally put in, in later days, has never been put here. In a blocked light over a door at the side is a coat of arms on a quarry, viz.—Quarterly, (1) and (4) gules two crescents in chief or (Payne), (2) azure five fusils argent, (3) azure a fess nebuly between three crescents or.

The Paynes, as shown in Mr. Giuseppi's paper, had intermarried with the Smiths.

The illustrations are from my book on *Old Cottage and Domestic Architecture in S.W. Surrey*, with the exception of the tracing from the glass.