

III.

ELIAS ASHMOLE, HIS HOUSE AND LANDS
AT SOUTH LAMBETH.

IN A LETTER FROM G. R. CORNER, Esq., F.S.A., TO JOSHUA
W. BUTTERWORTH, Esq., F.S.A.

READ AT THE GENERAL MEETING HELD AT LAMBETH PALACE, 31ST OCTOBER, 1856.

DEAR SIR,—I send you for inspection at the meeting of the Surrey Archæological Society, which His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury has been so good as to permit us to hold at his palace of Lambeth, three deeds executed by Elias Ashmole, the celebrated antiquary and natural philosopher, the first of which is a conveyance from Robert Siderfin, of the Middle Temple, gentleman, brother and heir of Thomas Siderfin, late of the Middle Temple, esquire (the author of Siderfin's Reports), to John Dugdale, of Coventry, esquire (son of Sir William Dugdale, and brother of Ashmole's wife), of a moiety of a house, garden, and orchard, at South Lambeth, in trust for Ashmole, and such person or persons as he should appoint by deed or will; and the others are a lease and release, being a settlement made by Ashmole of the entirety of the same house, garden, and orchard, with other lands at South Lambeth, on his third wife, Elizabeth (daughter of Sir William Dugdale).

The first deed is dated 14th July, 34th Charles II., 1682: and it appears from that deed that Ashmole had obtained a term of 500 years in a moiety of the



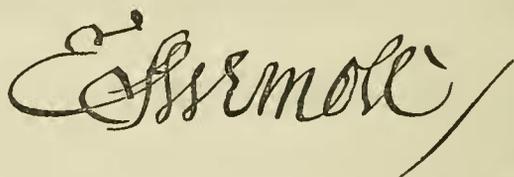
STAIRCASE IN TRADESCANT'S HOUSE.

house, garden, and orchard, by assignment from Rebecca Blackamore, of London, widow, dated the 26th of September, 1681; and that the freehold reversion which was vested in Henry Wickham, of Ipswich, Clerk, had been conveyed by him to Thomas Siderfin, a trustee nominated by Ashmole; which trust by the deed before us was transferred to John Dugdale. This deed is executed by Robert Siderfin and Elias Ashmole, and duly attested; but the seals are broken, and they consist merely of lumps of wax covered with paper and showing no impression.

The lease and release are dated 25th and 26th June, 2nd James II., A.D. 1686; and the release is made between Elias Ashmole, of South Lambeth, Esquire, of the one part, and Sir John Dugdale, of the City of Coventry, Knt., and William Thursby, of the Middle Temple, Esquire, of the other part; and thereby the said Elias Ashmole conveyed to Sir John Dugdale and Thursby, "ALL that messuage or tenement, together with a parcel of land or orchard thereto belonging, containing by estimation one acre, and a close or parcel of land with a barn or stable thereon, called 'Smith's Close,' containing by estimation two acres and a half; and a close called 'Forty-pence,' containing by estimation one acre, and another piece of land containing by estimation four acres, lying in South Lambeth field, and a close containing by estimation two acres and a half, called 'Part of the Five Acres,' and another close called 'Thorpe Close,' containing by estimation nine acres; all lying within the liberties, precincts, or territories of South Lambeth, alias 'Lambe-hithe,' in the county of Surrey; and then or late were in the tenure or occupation of Richard Nightingall, his under-tenants or assigns: To HOLD the same to Sir John Dugdale and

Thursby, their heirs and assigns, To the use of Elias Ashmole for his life; and after his decease, To the use of Elizabeth, his wife, for her life, in part of her jointure; and after her decease, To the use of the said Elias Ashmole, his heirs and assigns, for ever.”

The lease and release are both executed by Ashmole, and duly attested, and the seals are attached; but they, like those of the other deed, being mere lumps of wax covered with thin paper, show no impression.



It is well known that Ashmole became the possessor of the museum of natural history formed by the Tradescants at South Lambeth,¹ of which acquisition I find the following account in the memoir of Ashmole, in the “*Biographia Britannica*:”—“He had lodged and boarded sometimes at a house in South Lambeth, kept by Mr. John Tradescant, whose father and himself had been physic gardeners there for many years, and had collected a vast number of curiosities, which, after mature deliberation, Mr. Tradescant and his wife determined to bestow on Mr. Ashmole, and accordingly sealed and delivered a deed of gift for that purpose on the 16th of December, 1659.”

This collection of the Tradescants was the foundation of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, which was pre-

¹ Ashmole wrote and published a catalogue of this collection, under the title of “*Museum Tradescantianum*; or, a Collection of Rarities preserved at South Lambeth, near London, by John Tradescant. London: Printed by John Grismond, and are to be sold by Nathaniel Brooke, at the Angel, in Cornhill. MDCLVI.”

sented by Ashmole to the university in 1682; but it does not appear that the house and land comprised in the deeds before us had ever belonged to the Tradescants, whose name is not mentioned in any of the deeds in my possession, even as occupiers; but it does appear that by an indenture dated the 4th of May, 2nd James II., 1686, and by a fine levied in pursuance thereof, John Plumer, of Gray's Inn, Gentleman, and Mary, his wife, in consideration of £600, conveyed to Elias Ashmole the house, orchard, and land, which he afterwards settled on Mrs. Ashmole; and which are therein stated to have belonged theretofore to John Hartwell, son and heir of Abraham Hartwell, and to have been devised or conveyed by the said John Hartwell to John Plumer, Gentleman, father of the said John Plumer, of Gray's Inn.

Anthony Wood says that "after Mr. Ashmole's death, his widow, Elizabeth, who seemed to have a great love and fondness for her husband (which was sometimes before company expressed), married a lusty man, called 'Reynolds,' a stone-cutter, but had no issue by him." In a settlement, however, made after the marriage of Mrs. Ashmole with Mr. Reynolds, dated 19th April, 1695, he is described as a merchant, and that settlement comprises "ALL that messuage, or mansion-house, with the gardens, orchards, and courts, situate at South Lambeth, and late in the tenure or occupation of the said Elias Ashmole." This property, after the death of Elizabeth Dugdale (in April, 1701), became the property of her husband, Mr. Reynolds, and was by him settled on his subsequent marriage with Mildred Prowde, of Stepney, Widow, by deed dated 16th September, 1st Anne, 1702.

Ashmole's house was not the same that had been Tradescant's, but it appears from his diary, that twelve

years after the death of John Tradescant, viz. in 1674, Ashmole purchased or rented a house at South Lambeth, adjoining to that in which Mrs. Tradescant, the widow, resided; and after her death in 1678, he obtained a lease of her house in addition to his own.

Ashmole's house has been much altered and modernized, but the staircase and some of the rooms are probably much as he left them. It is now called Turret House, and is situate on the south-east side of the South Lambeth Road from Vauxhall to Stockwell, near to Stockwell Green, and is now the residence of John Mills Thorne, Esq.²

I annex some extracts from Ashmole's diary, which I have collected together as relating, more or less, to his house and property at South Lambeth, and his connection with the Tradescants, and which on that account may not be considered out of place here, although they are from a printed and published work.

I remain, dear Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

GEORGE R. CORNER.

3, PARAGON, NEW KENT ROAD,

24th September, 1856.

² When Tradescant's collection came into Ashmole's possession, he built a noble room to contain it, and adorned the chimney with his arms, impaling those of Sir William Dugdale, father of his third wife. There are no remains of this room, nor of the coat of arms; but from a woodcut of the south side of the house, there appears to have been a shield over one of the windows on that side. Dr. Ducarel resided in the adjoining house, which had been Tradescant's. See his "Letter to Dr. Watson on the Early Cultivation of Botany in England. London: 1773."

Extracts from the Diary of Elias Ashmole, relating to the Tradescants, and to his residence and property at South Lambeth.

1650. June 15th. Myself, my wife, and Dr. Wharton went to visit Mr. John Tradescant, at South Lambeth.

1652. I and my wife tabled this summer at Mr. Tradescant's.

Augt. 2nd. I went to Maidstone Assizes to hear the witches tried, and took Mr. Tradescant with me.

Sept. 11th. Young John Tradescant died.

15th. He was buried in Lambeth churchyard by his grandfather.

October 20th. My wife went again to Mr. Tradescant's to stay some time there.

1653. January 17. My wife left Mr. Tradescant's, and came to Mr. Flint's.

1659. December 12. Mr. Tradescant and his wife told me they had been long considering upon whom to bestow their closet of curiosities when they died, and at last had resolved to give it unto me.

14th. This afternoon they gave their scrivener instructions to draw a deed of gift of the said closet to me.

16th. 5 hor. 30 min. post merid. Mr. Tradescant and his wife sealed and delivered to me a deed of gift of all his rarities.

1662. April 22. Mr. John Tradescant died.

This Easter Term I preferred a Bill in Chancery against Mrs. Tradescant for the rarities her husband had settled on me.

1664. May 18. My cause came to hearing in Chancery against Mrs. Tradescant.³

³ It would seem that Ashmole was rather hasty in filing a bill in Chancery against Mrs. Tradescant within a month after her husband's death; but there was a reason for it. It appears from the bill that Ashmole had written and printed, at his own expense, a descriptive catalogue of the contents of the Museum, called "Musæum Tradescantianum." The Deed of Gift is dated December 16, 1659, and is expressed to be in consideration of the entire affection and singular good esteem in which Mr. Tradescant held Mr. Ashmole, who, he had no doubt, would preserve and augment the said rarities for posterity; and it assigned the collection, consisting of books, coins, medals, stones, pictures, mechanics, and other things, to Ashmole; with a proviso that Mr. Tradescant and his wife should have the use and enjoyment of them during their respective lives. Mr. Ashmole agreed to pay £100

1666. October 11th. 1 hor. 30 min. post merid. My first boatful of books, which were carried to Mrs. Tradescant's the 3rd September (the second day of the great fire of London), were brought back to the Temple.⁴

18th. 4 post merid. All the rest of my things were brought thence to the Temple.

1669. April 15th. Mr. Rose, the King's gardener, and myself went to Mrs. Tradescant's, and thence to Captain Forster's, at South Lambeth, where I first was acquainted with him.

to Mary Edmonds, or to her children if she should not be living, when he should come into possession ; and possession was given to him by the delivery to him of a milled Queen Elizabeth's shilling, which Mrs. Tradescant herself went upstairs to fetch, and she witnessed the deed by her own signature ; but she requested to be allowed to retain it, in order to consult some friends whether she had thereby prejudiced her own right to possess the articles, after her husband's death, during her own life ; and she never returned the deed to Ashmole : and after her husband's death she disputed the validity of it, and alleged that it was obtained by unfair means, that it was a voluntary deed, made without adequate consideration, and therefore that it was void or revocable by her husband, and that he had in fact revoked it by his will, whereby he had bequeathed the collection of curiosities to her, on condition that, at her death, she would leave them to one of the Universities of Oxford or Cambridge ; that she had determined to leave them to Oxford ; and she said that the Universities ought to be defendants in the suit. By the decree, dated May 18, 1664, the Lord Chancellor declared that the deed had been fairly obtained by Ashmole, and without any undue practices ; that it had been made for a sufficient consideration, and that it should be established : and he directed a commission to issue to Sir Edward Byshe, Clarenceux, and William Dugdale, Esq., Norroy, to take an inventory of the collection, that the defendant should carefully preserve the articles during her life, and give security for the delivery of them to the plaintiff at her death.

⁴ It is remarkable that Ashmole's library, which was brought from the Temple to South Lambeth, for its preservation from the great fire of London in September, 1666, should have been destroyed by a fire in the Temple on the 26th January, 1678, which consumed not only his books, but also a collection of 9,000 ancient and modern coins, and his collection of seals, charters, and other antiquities ; but his manuscripts escaped, being at his house at Lambeth.

1674. October 2d. Eleven hor. 30 min. ante merid. I and my wife first entered my house at South Lambeth.

5th. This night Mrs. Tradescant was in danger of being robbed, but most strangely prevented.

Nov. 26. Mrs. Tradescant being willing to deliver up her rarities to me, I carried several of them to my house.

Dec. 1. I began to remove the rest of the rarities to my house at South Lambeth.

1675. April 17. The same morning I agreed with my carpenter for building the additional rooms I made to my house at South Lambeth.

May 1. 10 hor. 30 min. ante merid. I and my wife came to my house at South Lambeth to lie there.

5th. Ten hor. 20 min. ante merid. I laid the first stone of my new building there.

July 15th. This morning a jury of sewers set out my brick wall made towards the highway at my house at South Lambeth.

Aug. 28. One hour 40 min. post merid. I and my wife came to dwell at my house in South Lambeth.

Nov. 16. Eleven hor. ante merid. I began to plant my garden walls with fruit-trees.

1677. Mar. 28. 7 hor. ante merid. I laid the foundation of my back buildings to my house at South Lambeth.

July 10. I made a feast at my house in South Lambeth in honour of my benefactors to my work of the Garter.

17th. Count Wallenstein, envoy extraordinary from the Emperor; Marquis de Este, Borgainianiers, envoy extraordinary from the King of Spain; Mons. Swerene, envoy extraordinary from the Prince Elector of Brandenburg, and the Count of Flamburgh, bestowed a visit on me at my house at South Lambeth.

1678. April 4. 11 hor. 30 min. ante merid. My wife told me that Mrs. Tradescant was found drowned in her pond. She was drowned the day before, about noon, as appeared by some circumstances.

6th. 8th hor. post merid. She was buried in a vault in Lambeth churchyard, where her husband and his son John had been formerly laid.

22d. I removed the pictures from Mrs. Tradescant's house to mine.

May 11th. My Lord Bishop of Oxford (Dr. John Fell), and Dr. Nicholas, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford, gave me a visit at my house. 7 hor. 30 min. ante merid.

June 18. Mr. Lea and his wife's release to me of the one hundred pounds I was to pay after Mrs. Tradescant's death bears date.

1679. Mar. 25. I entered upon the house adjoining to my house at South Lambeth, which Mr. Bartholmew let me a lease of.

31. 9 hor. 45 min. ante merid. Mr. Bartholmew sealed my lease.

Aug. 15. My Lord Grace of Canterbury (Dr. Saucroft) came to visit me at my house, and spent a great part of the day with me in my study.

1680. Nov. 4. Mr. Bartholomew sealed me a new lease of my house, &c., in South Lambeth.

1685. Nov. 10. This morning I had some discourse with Mr. Gerard about purchasing Mr. Plummer's farm.

1686. May 26. Mr. Plummer sealed his part of the conveyance of the farm to me, and his wife acknowledged a fine before the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.

July 13. I began to repair my barn at South Lambeth for Goodman Ingram.

23. 5 hor. 30 min. post merid. I agreed upon conditions with Goodman Ingram to make him a lease of the farm I bought of Mr. Plummer, except the oat-field.

25. 6 hor. post merid. I sealed the lease of John Ingram.

At the same meeting, the Rev. T. A. Wills, of Laleham, exhibited another deed, being a lease for a year, dated 28th January, 2nd James II., A.D. 1686, from Matthew Ashmole, of Beverley, in the county of York, Gentleman (a brother of Elias Ashmole), to Michael Warton, of the same town, Esquire, of a close of pasture ground containing two acres, near Beverley, without the North Gate, commonly called "Saint Ebbitt's."