

## IRONWORK IN EPSOM AND EWELL.

BY

CLOUDESLEY S. WILLIS.

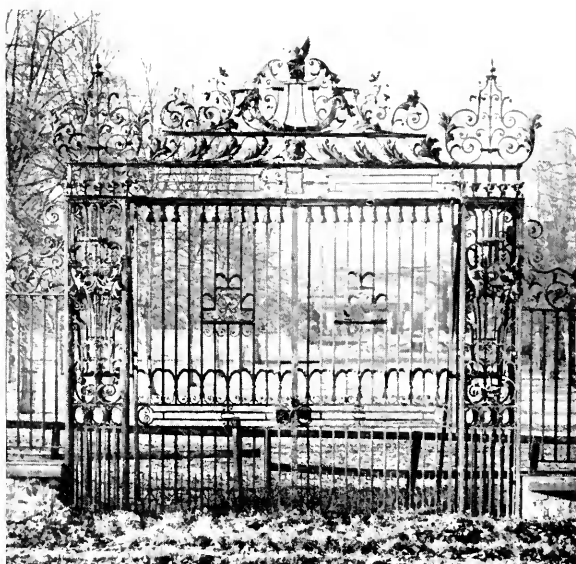
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THERE was in recent times but little ironwork of the Restoration period remaining in Epsom and Ewell, excepting the ramps on the steps of two houses—one was destroyed a few years ago and the other will be described farther on. From what is known of their work—the balcony railings of the Guildhall and No. 25 High Street, Guildford, for example—the English smiths of that time were working mainly in the mediæval tradition. As recently as about forty years ago a smith, then working in Ewell, if left to himself, would decorate a latch with chisel cuts and dots (as at Abbot's Hospital, Guildford), and finish a strap hinge with square end, chamfer and swage—Gothic fashion. But with the Revolution a new impulse was given to smithing in England. It arose from a remarkable craftsman, Jean Tijou, who appears to have been a French refugee in Holland. He came to England in the train of William III and Mary in 1689 and immediately published a book of designs of ironwork, and was employed by Queen Mary in making the wonderful screen of panels and gates for the Fountain Garden at Hampton Court, of which the panels are now in the Privy Garden by the river and the gates elsewhere in the precincts. His work is French in style, and enriched with a profusion of acanthus leaves, swags and masks embossed in sheet iron. It has inevitably suffered from exposure to our weather by which wrought iron decays, but cast iron hardly does. Tijou's English rivals and successors, who largely adopted his style, were at work for a generation afterwards supplying gates and screens for the forecourts of great houses. But when the fashion for landscape gardening came in later in the 18th century many of these works were swept away. At the same time, railings and gates of a similar but simpler character were exactly suited for the forecourts and areas of houses then being built in the streets and squares of London and other towns, and in the districts round London; and this plainer work continued to be made until the end of the 18th century, although during the latter part of that century wrought iron had a rival in cast iron, used by the brothers Adam, that finally prevailed against it.

It was in the first half of the 18th century that many houses in Epsom and Ewell were built; and received suitable railings and

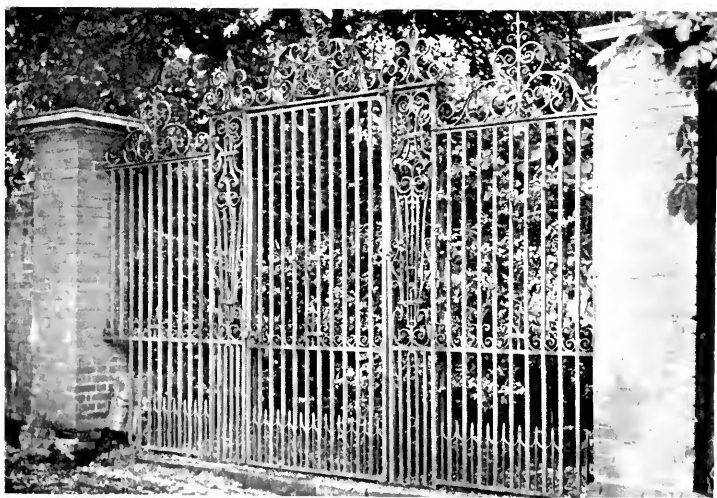


PLATE I



GATES AT DURDANS, EPSOM.

*By courtesy of Mrs. S. J. Young.*



GATE IN MADAN'S WALK, EPSOM.

*Photographs by F. Woods.*

*Pp. 9, 10.*

*Facing p. 9.*

gates, which had by that time assumed an English character. Many of these having already disappeared, it caused some anxiety when in October 1941, a notice was issued that the Corporation of the Borough of Epsom and Ewell were preparing a schedule of iron railings, etc., for scrap. A list of those of artistic or historical interest was therefore made, and sent to the Borough Surveyor—through the Nonsuch Society that exists to protect amenities—in the hope that they might be spared. The subject of the present article is that ironwork described in more detail.

### *Epsom.*

It was said locally, many years ago, that the wrought-iron gates at *Durdans*, in Chalk Lane, were brought there from the destroyed palace of Nonsuch, near Ewell, because it was known that a former house at Durdans was built by Lord Berkeley from the materials of Nonsuch. Examination of the gates, at that time, showed them to be the work of Tijou or his school. And as Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, had possession of Nonsuch in 1669, and pulled down the house and sold the materials, twenty years before Tijou arrived in England, they could not have come from Nonsuch. On the apex of the overthrow of the gates was a crest for Heathcote (Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Bart., bought Durdans in 1819), and below was a motto : *Maintien le droit*. This was the motto of James Brydges, Duke of Chandos. His splendid palace at Canons, near Edgware, where Tijou is believed to have worked, was demolished after his death, and the materials were sold in 1747, when some of the ironwork was removed to Chesterfield House, Mayfair. This was the year when Alderman Belchier purchased Durdans ; he afterwards destroyed Lord Berkeley's house and built the present one.<sup>1</sup> It appears therefore that Belchier bought the gates at Canons for his new house. They were formerly on the west side of the house but were placed in their present position by the late Lord Rosebery. (Plate I.) The piers are four-sided with lyre-pattern ornament and acanthus-leaves front and back, they are 1 foot 11 $\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide and the corner-posts are 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches square ; over them are scrolled finials with acanthus. Each leaf of the gates is 5 feet 3 inches wide and formed of vertical square bars about  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch with tassels above and scrolls and water-leaves below ; in the centre of each is a stepped compartment with the cypher " J.B."—it is supposed for James Brydges (although his stair ramp, removed to Chesterfield House, and now stored at Harewood House, Yorkshire, bore " C " reversed). The lock-rail is formed of horizontal bars and scrolls, and the dog-bars are barbed and scrolled below. The base of the overthrow or

<sup>1</sup> *V.C.H.*, Vol. III, p. 276.

pediment is of horizontal bars and scrolls ; above this is a pattern of gadroons and acanthus-leaves with a mask—a feature that Tijou introduced in his gates at Hampton Court ; there are scrolls, eagles' heads and leaves above flanking a compartment, with the Heathcote crest at the apex, and below is a space for a shield supported by drapery now perished, and below this, on a ribbon, the motto. The two ends of the motto remain, but the middle has fallen away, and the gates are suffering from neglect. The railings are modern.

Tijou seems to have left England about the year 1711. J. Starkie Gardner<sup>1</sup> thought that the gates at Durdans were not made by him, but perhaps by William Edney, although Tijou might have designed them.

*Woodcote End House.* At the close of the 17th century a brick house was built here ; an addition to it was made in the middle of the 18th century, and towards the end of the century the original house was partly rebuilt and extended. It was occupied by the Rev. Martin Madan, an Anglican of Methodist views, who brought obloquy on himself by advocating polygamy ; so that he retired to Epsom, where, as a magistrate, he prevented illegal games during race week, and roused such antagonism that his effigy was burnt in the High Street. He was a cousin of William Cowper the poet, and died in 1790.<sup>2</sup> The footpath bordering the property is known as Madan's Walk. The estate is being developed. In Madan's Walk is an early 18th-century wrought-iron wicket gate with pilasters and panels, measuring about 14 feet 6 inches in width and 11 feet in height, standing between brick piers with stone caps. (Plate I.) The gate is formed of  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch square vertical bars with some 1 inch, set at  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inch centres, and the hanging style and the standards of the pilasters are  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch ; a single bar forms the lock-rail which runs right through, and is ornamented with C scrolls and arrow-heads on the gate and panels, which also have arrow-headed dog-bars ; over the gate on a base made of a plain horizontal bar is an overthrow of broken scrolls and acanthus-leaves with a finial of scrolls and water-leaves ; in the centre of the overthrow is a stepped compartment with the cypher " J.P." reversed ; the pilasters are 1 foot  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide and have lyre pattern ornaments and over-sailing pyramids above ; the panels are dropped about a foot and have pyramids of water-leaves and twists. The gate has a width of 4 feet 1 inch which, although not unusual, is more than ample for a wicket ; it may have been given this width to allow a lady wearing a hoop to enter with dignity, or to admit a sedan chair.

<sup>1</sup> *English Ironwork of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, London, 1911, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> *D.N.B.* and G. Home, *Epsom. A Guide to Epsom and the Epsom District*, London, 1902, p. 66.

The forecourt of Woodcote End House, in Woodcote Road, is enclosed by iron railings on low walls with moulded stone copings. The vertical bars are 3 feet 7 inches high, passing through a 3 by  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch top rail and leaded into the stone copings at bottom; they are  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch square with some 1 inch, and some shouldered under the top rail for strength, they are set diagonally at about 6-inch centres, and have square section spike heads with hollowed sides and necks; at intervals are cast-iron baluster-shaped standards with plain Baroque vase heads; the verticals next to them are stayed to the stonework. The ends of the walls are curved inwards and the railings ramped up to meet the gates which have been removed; the railings finish against brick piers with stone caps. The whole of this work is of good design and quality, and part of the mid-18th century layout.<sup>1\*</sup> Ashley House (Plate II, below) gives a general idea of vertical spike-headed railings.

In those days the iron came to the smith in roughly rolled bars which had to be made even and "drawn down" to the required section, often showing the hammer marks; these irregularities—the touch of the craftsman's hand—and the almost imperceptible differences of size and setting-out gave to old ironwork a variety and quality that modern work made from evenly rolled bars never possesses. This quality may be seen at *Hylands House* in Dorking Road, a house of about the first quarter of the 18th century. The forecourt is enclosed by carriage-gates and railings on a dwarf wall with stone coping, finishing with scrolled iron buttresses against brick piers having stone caps. The railings are 3 feet 6 inches high and of varying sizes about 1 inch square, with square-section tapered spike heads and swages; the standards are  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches square, stayed, and with cast-iron flask-shaped vases. A pair of similar carriage gates, with arrow-head dog-bars and a scrolled lozenge-shaped finial on the shutting style, are hung on four-sided piers decorated with four similar vases and dog-bars.

*The Hylands*, an adjoining house, was built at the end of the 17th century, and reconstructed and extended about the second quarter of the 18th, when the small forecourt was enclosed by iron railings on a dwarf wall with moulded stone coping, abutting on brick piers with stone caps and Baroque vases. The verticals are 3 feet 6 inches high and of varying thicknesses about 1 inch square, and are leaded into the stone at 5-inch centres; they have concave spike heads and swages; the posts are  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches square, stayed to the coping, and are finished with cast-iron vases of Baroque pattern. The wicket gate of tall plain bars and arrow-headed dog-bars

<sup>1</sup> This and other ironwork marked with an asterisk has since been removed for scrap by the Corporation by direction of the Minister of Supply.

corresponds ; the pilasters are similar, and support an overthrow formed of scrolls, water-leaves and twists on a plain horizontal base. The top rail of the fence finishes with scrolled iron buttresses against the pilasters and the brick piers.

Woodcote, a district of Epsom with its own green and away from the main road, was undisturbed, excepting at race week when Chalk Lane was the traditional way to and from the race-course. *Woodcote Place*—now the Woodcote Hotel—in Chalk Lane, is dated 1681. But in the middle of the 18th century Palladian wings were added ; and at the same time the carriage sweep was enclosed with two pairs of gates connected by a stretch of wrought-iron railing. The verticals of this fence are 3 feet 11 inches high by 1 inch square with square section spike heads and necks ; Baroque cast-iron vases on 1¼-inch standards and stays carried to the ground. The railings are fixed on a low wall with a stone coping, and the gates have brick piers with moulded stone caps and bases, and have two rows of spiked dog-bars and scroll finials.\*

The *Amato Inn* in Chalk Lane has a wrought-iron sign-bracket with an overthrow of scrolls and leaves, and an extension intended to carry a carved wood bunch of grapes which has disappeared. The scrolled wrought-iron bracket and the sign-board that was latterly nailed to the wall at the *Spread Eagle Hotel* have both been cleared away of late years.

At *Woodcote Hall*, a Georgian house in Woodcote Road, is a short stretch of iron railing on a wall with a stone coping, flanked by brick piers carrying stone caps and artificial stone vases. The verticals measure 3 feet by ¾ inch and have concave spike heads ; the posts, which are 1 inch square and stayed to the coping, have Baroque-pattern cast-iron vases ; the top rail finishes against the piers with buttresses of scrolled iron.

*Ashley House*, in Ashley Road, now owned by the Surrey County Council, is a large house decorated inside with beautiful plaster-work and joinery. The date 1769 appears on a lead rain-water head. The carriage-drive in front is enclosed by railings and gates of simple form and good proportions. (Plate II.) The vertical bars, that show hammer marks, measure 4 feet 9 inches by 1 inch square, and are leaded into a chamfered stone curb at about 4¾-inch centres ; the square section spike heads are hollowed ; the 1¼-inch standards are stayed, and finished with flask-shaped vases. A wicket gate has dog-bars, and pilasters formed of three vertical bars and dog-bars with flask vases on top, standing between brick piers. The carriage-gates are similar, and have a lozenge-shaped fretwork finial on the shutting style—a late feature ; they are hung on pilasters formed of three bars and dog-bars between brick piers, but have lost their top



VANE ON TOWER OF OLD CHURCH, EWELL.



RAILINGS AND GATE AT ASHLEY HOUSE, EPSOM.

*Pp. 15, 11, 12.*

*Photographs by F. Woods.*

*Facing p. 12*





ornaments, which probably consisted of vases and an arched overthrow, perhaps carrying a lantern, and the fixings for these remain.\* The railings that continue beyond on a radius and enclose the return end are modern copies.

There is interesting ironwork at *No. 1 Woodcote End*. The standards have cast-iron round and tapered spear-heads resembling those used by the brothers Adam about the last quarter of the 18th century; they thus serve to date the railings, which are otherwise in the tradition of the early part of that century, and of excellent workmanship in wrought iron. They are fixed on a wall with a moulded stone coping; the upright bars measure 3 feet 9 inches by  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch square and have spike heads with a swage and necking; the standards are  $1\frac{1}{8}$  inches square and are stayed to the stone; there is a wicket gate of plain bars to match.\*

The house in South Street known as *The Shrubbery* has been much altered, but is substantially of late Stuart date; and to this period may be attributed the iron ramps and railings on the stone steps and landing of the front door. The vertical railings and the ramps, which are splayed out at the lower step, are of wrought iron and have a hand-rail composed of a flat bar with a half-round member riveted on it; the newels are twisted with knobs on top and made of cast-iron.

In *Epsom Churchyard* the armorial table tomb of Mrs. Anne Cocke, who died in 1734, had a tall grille with arrow pointed heads; but this ironwork was swept away when the western approach to the church was altered a few years ago. On the south side of the church are two table tombs of the early 19th century with cast-iron spear-headed bars and moulded baluster-shaped corner-posts, one with classical vases and the other with pineapples.\*

Perhaps the most pleasing thing here is the photograph in the church of a drawing by John Constable, R.A., of the monument under a tree of his uncle, James Gibbins, who died in 1814. The railings have the usual spike heads and classical vases.

Some cast-iron columns from Nash's Regent Street colonnade have been used in a portico at *Pitt Place*, close by the church.

### *Ewell.*

At the end of the 17th century *Ewell House* was built by Mr. Fendall. Aubrey heard (1673-92) that a quantity of human bones had been dug up in the grounds; but it was not until recent years that it was found that the house had been built on the site of a Saxon cemetery.<sup>1</sup> There were a pair of wrought-iron gates opening from the Epsom Road at Ewell House; these were removed

<sup>1</sup> Aubrey, Vol. II, p. 219; *S.A.C.*, Vol. XLIII (1935), pp. 17-28.

about the middle of the 19th century. And entering from the avenue of lime-trees called The Grove was an iron wicket, between gauged brick piers, opposite the front door; this also was taken away and the opening bricked up. The front door is approached by stone steps and a landing protected by wrought-iron ramps and railings. The vertical bars carry scrolls under the hand-rail and twisted water-leaves alternately, there are knobs on the standards, and the return ends of the landing railing are decorated with lyres.

At the house opposite, *Persfield*, is a wicket of plain upright bars on a rectangular frame, with spikes and arrow-head dog-bars.

The *Well House* in Church Street, said to date from the end of the 17th century, consists of two houses thrown into one, with the two front doors under a central portico. The fronts of the two houses are enclosed by wrought-iron railings that return to the houses, those to the west are on a dwarf wall and coping and those to the east, where the ground rises, on a stone curb. The railings are of plain bars 4 feet by 1 inch square with square section spike heads of concave form. The vases on the standards are classical, which is unusual at an early date; the top-rails finish against the houses with scroll buttresses.

*Ewell Grove* in Cheam Road was a house in the Adam style, now pulled down. The carriage-sweep in front was fenced by tall vertical railings with spike heads and arrow-pointed dog-bars, fixed on a stone curb, at the corners were buttresses or bastions of railings semicircular on plan. In the two return ends were pairs of carriage-gates splayed outwards, carrying lozenge-shaped fretwork finials similar to those noticed at Ashley House, Epsom. The house was built for John Pollard and afterwards owned by the Reids. Lady Reid, who died in 1869, was the last person in Ewell to use a sedan chair.

*Spring House*, in Spring Street, an early Georgian building, has its garden fronted by a low wall and coping on which are cast-iron railings. They stand 2 feet 10½ inches high and are made of 1 inch square bars finished with square section spike heads and collars; the standards carry flask-shaped vases; the railings are probably later than the building.\* The adjoining house has railings of a similar pattern carried out in cast iron.\*

At *Chessington House*, next door, is a cast-iron guard-post resembling a small cannon and on the roadside waste on the Kingston Road are two more. On the pavement fronting *Ewell Castle*, a Gothic Revival building of 1814, are thirteen larger guard-posts with cannon-balls in their mouths, about 3 feet 6 inches high. On one of them is a lamp-post formed of a tapered reeded shaft

rising from a husk. They were doubtless placed there to protect the path when Church Street was the highway to London.

Opposite is the old churchyard where are several 18th-century railings round table tombs.\* That of John Clements, Citizen and Pewterer of London, who died 1788, has cast-iron moulded posts and classical vases and 1 inch wrought-iron verticals with hollowed spike heads. Those of William Broadbent, and Elizabeth Greatrex who died in 1831, are similar. The Glyn vault by the tower is also enclosed by railings having spike heads and classical vases. Philip Rowden's marble tomb is much fretted away, but the date appears to be 1792; the bars are of  $\frac{7}{8}$  inch square wrought iron with spikes and the cast-iron moulded posts carry squat classical vases. William Kippax, Gentleman, died 1792, has cast-iron grooved spear-headed bars, moulded posts and classical vases. Barbara Rogers, died 1839, has a similar grille with pineapple finials.

The use of these grilles outdoors, which persisted far into the 19th century, seems to have been not so much to guard against body-snatchers—the entrance to the vault usually being outside the railings—as a fashion following the practice, seen in many churches, where the grille was intended to protect the monument and its appurtenances. A drawing by Yates, dated 1825, of the interior of *old Ewell Church* shows that the monument of Sir William Lewen, Knight and Lord Mayor of London, who died in 1721, was a late example of a tomb with wrought-iron railings; these disappeared when the monument was removed to the present church.

On the early 15th-century tower—all that remains of the old church—is a good wrought-iron vane, made by Richard Bliss, who came to Ewell from Reigate in 1786. (Plate II.) The rods that carry the cardinal letters are opened to a lozenge and have scrolls above and below; the vane is slit and flamed at the end and pierced with a star, the pointer is scrolled and ended in an arrow-head; the finial is a four-way scroll. The vane was completed by 1789, when a print shows it in position, proving that the tradition of excellent work persisted at that date.

At *Long Down Farm* the doors of the building on the road are carried on hinges of good workmanship, also by Richard Bliss.

In the wall enclosing the *Horse Pond* are five iron panels of intersecting fret pattern formed of two lozenges, one within the other, with a circular centre, and two double half-lozenges and half-circles returning from the ends; they measure 6 feet by 2 feet  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches and are formed of  $\frac{7}{8}$  by  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch bars in a rectangular frame of  $1\frac{1}{4}$  by  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch. An old sketch shows that similar panels at intervals ran round the pond; and it is probable that they formed part of the lay-out when Philip Rowden, already mentioned, built a house here

about 1770. The house is nearly the same age as Ashley House, Epsom, which it resembles in plan. When Thomas G. Barritt acquired the house and named it *Garbrand Hall* (it has since been renamed *Bourne Hall*) he enclosed the gardens with a brick wall, and no doubt removed some of the panels, leaving these five as a frontispiece to his Gothic-style dairy and brewhouse, which have since been adapted for a dwelling and called *The Turrets*.

On a cottage door at *Fitznell Farm* is part of a knocker, probably of the 16th century, of which the movable bar is lost. It consists of the knocking stud and a round rose  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches in diameter of pierced work cut from sheet iron.

Although interior ironwork is outside the scope of this article, it may be mentioned that there are several 18th- and early 19th-century fire-grates in the district, besides smaller things such as hinges. For instance: at No. 9 High Street, Ewell, among a number of hinges of various dates are a pair of Jacobean cocks'-comb hinges.

The *Dipping Place* or cistern at the head of the *Ewell springs* was formed and railed off to commemorate the battle of Waterloo. At that time it stood in the middle of the road, but when the present road to London was made the structure was removed to the roadside. The railings are fixed on a stone coping and are curved to enclose a stone seat; the verticals, which are 3 feet 6 inches high and of cast iron, have leaf-shape lance heads, with classical vases on the standards. The wicket is modern. W. Holman Hunt illustrated *Pre-Raphaelitism*<sup>1</sup> with a charming drawing, by A. Hughes, of a girl at the Dipping Place giving a wayfaring sailor a pitcher of water. But an artistic liberty has been taken with the railings which are represented by wooden posts and rails.

<sup>1</sup> *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood*, London, 1905, ill. facing p. 69.