



Wanderings in Buckinghamshire.

By the Rev. A. J. Foster.

THE history of the Verney family has been brought to light by the publication of four volumes, two by the wife of Sir Harry Verney, and two by the present Lady Verney, of many of the letters and papers which abound in Claydon House. Most of these relate to the days of Sir Ralph Verney the son of the standard-bearer. Sir Ralph was born 1614 and died 1696. For many years during the commonwealth he was in exile at Blois, in France. His devoted wife Mary, heiress of John Blacknell, of Abingdon, Berkshire, died at Blois, 1650, at the age of 34, just after she had herself rejoined her husband after negotiating his return to England. Her portrait (Vandyke) hangs in the house. Amongst other portraits, some of which are reproduced in these volumes, are those of Sir Edmund Verney, painted 1594; Sir Francis Verney, his son, painted in Spain; two of his more famous son Sir Edmund Verney, the standard bearer, one painted in Spain, and the other by Vandyke, presented to him by Charles I., together with one of the King himself, also by Vandyke; Henry, Prince of Wales, son of James I., attributed to Mireveldt, Dame Margaret Verney, wife of Sir Edmund Verney, the standard-bearer, and daughter of Sir Thomas Denton, of Hillesden House; Sir Ralph Verney when young (Cornelius Jansen); Captain Thomas Verney; Anne, Lady Hobart, daughter of Sir John Leeke (Cornelius Jansen); Sir Harry Lee, of Ditchley House, Oxfordshire (Cornelius Jansen); Mrs. Henslowe, daughter of Sir William Uvedale (Cornelius Jansen); Mary Blakeney, wife of Sir Edmund Verney; Sir Thomas Denton, of Hillesden, House, 1627; Sir Alexander Denton, of Hillesden House; Dr. William Denton, physician to Charles I.; Sir Edmund Verney, the younger, "killed in cold blood by the Arch-usurper Cromwell after the siege of Drogheda"; Sir George Lisle, in armour, unfinished, (probably copy of a Vandyke); Dame Margaret Herbert (Vandyke); Vere Lady Gawdy; Sir Roger Burgoyne (Remy?); Lady Anne Herbert, Countess of Carnarvon (Vandyke); Edmund, eldest son of Sir

Ralph Verney ; John, second son of Sir Ralph Verney (Soest) ; Sir Ralph Verney (Sir P. Lely) ; Queen Katherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II. ; Elizabeth Verney, wife of the Rev. Charles Adams ; John Verney, first Viscount Fermanagh ; James Butler, first Duke of Ormond (Egmont) ; Anne Lee, wife of Thomas, afterwards first Marquis of Wharton (Sir P. Lely) ; Elizabeth Palmer, first wife of John Verney (Sir P. Lely) ; Eleanor, wife of James Bertie, first Earl of Abingdon (Sir P. Lely) ; Mary Lawley, second wife of John Verney ; Elizabeth Baker, third wife of Sir John Verney.

The house was not always occupied by the Verney family, for Sir Ralph Verney, Lord Mayor of London (1465), leased it to the Giffard family. In 1620 Sir Edmund Verney bought back the lease. There had been intermarriage of the two families. Urian Verney, uncle of Sir Edmund, had married Lettice, daughter of Sir George Giffard.

Middle Claydon Church (All Saints? Register 1632), stands on a mound close to the house on the south side. It is remarkable for the number of monuments of the families of Giffard, Verney and Calvert which it contains. The chancel was built by Roger and Mary Giffard, 1509-1519 (see inscription on north door), and their brass, a fine one, is near the chancel steps. There is the brass of a priest who bequeathed a great bell to the church. Urian Verney and his wife Lettice Giffard have a monument on the chancel wall, and on the north side is a large monument, executed in Rome in 1652, and erected here by Sir Ralph Verney to the memory of his father, Sir Edmund Verney, the marshal and standard-bearer, who was "killed at the memorable batayle of Edgehill, father of six sons and six daughters." Sir Edmund was at the time of his death fifty years of age. It is said that his body was never found, but that his hand, cut off, was found grasping the banner-pole. There are four busts on the monument those of Sir Edmund Verney himself, and of his wife Margaret, the mother of the twelve children, and daughter of Sir Thomas Denton, of Hillesden House ; of Sir Ralph, who erected the monument, and of his wife Mary Blackwall. There is also a brass to Isabel Giffard, 1322, and a monument with effigy to Margaret Giffard, 1539.

Amongst modern monuments are those of Sir Harry Verney (Calvert) and his wife Parthenope (Nightingale) ; his father General Sir Harry Calvert ; Emily Caroline (Calvert), widow of Dean Fremantle, d. 1877 ; and of Frederic Calvert d. 1891. Outside the chancel, south side, is a curious wooden porch.

EAST CLAYDON is one mile east. Here is the White House, the seat of the Abel family. In 1662, Edmund, the eldest son of the long lived Sir Ralph Verney, married the only child of Mr. Abel, Sheriff for Bucks. The unfortunate lady soon went out of her mind, and often wandered about the churchyard, hence the tradition of a ghost.

The Church (St. Margt., registers 1583) has an early English south chapel. It contains monuments of the Abel family and of Dean Fremantle who was vicar here.

BOTTLE CLAYDON, or Botolph Claydon, has no church, but there is a fine Georgian mansion, Botolph House, built for Lord Verney's steward.

At Finmere in the parish was a hermitage given by Henry II. to the Augustinians.

STEEPLE CLAYDON is north of the station on a hill. The church (St. Michael, register 1573) was restored 1875. The spire is a memorial to General Sir Henry Calvert who went through the campaigns in Flanders and Holland 1793-4. He was Aide-de-Camp to the Duke of York, and died at Claydon House, 1820.

The manor of Steeple Claydon, which was once a much more important place than it is now, belonged to several Royal ladies. Judith, wife of Waltheof, Earl of Northampton, and niece of the Conqueror; the wife of Edward I.; Philippa, grand-daughter of Edward III., and wife of Edmund Mortimer Earl of March; Cecily, Duchess of York; her grand-daughter Elizabeth of York, wife of Henry VII., and Katharine of Aragon. In the time of the civil wars it was held by the Chaloner family, of whom Thomas Chaloner was one of the King's judges. A school was founded here by the Chaloners, now the public library, with a beautiful hall.

An old stone barn, close to the church on a ridge commanding an extensive view, bears the name of "The Camp Barn." "Around this spot," says an inscription "the army of the Parliament under the command of Cromwell, was encamped March 1644, and on the 3rd of that month advanced from hence to the attack on Hillesden House."

HILLESDEN or HILLEDSON is two miles north of Steeple Claydon. Here was the mansion of the Denton family who came here in the time of Edward VI. In the civil wars Sir Alexander Denton garrisoned his house on behalf of the King, but it was taken March 3rd, 1644, by the expedition from Camp Barn, and plundered. It was afterwards destroyed, and only a portion of a wall remains.

The Church (All Saints or St. Michaels, register 1594) is one of the most remarkable in the county. It was restored in 1875 under the direction of Sir Gilbert Scott, who was born in this neighbourhood at Gawcott, and is said to have taken his first ideas of Gothic architecture from this building. He presented the ceiling of the porch and its pinnacles.

The church was built in 1493, and is an excellent example of late Perp. architecture. The tower is the earliest portion. There is a chapel on the N. side of the chancel, at the N.E. angle of which is a turret finished with pinnacles, ogee ribs and a finial. The clerestory is formed by rows of lights in panels.

Within, on the wall-plate of the chancel walls, are rows of angels, some bearing instruments and others music. The E. window has ancient glass representing scenes from the life of St. Nicholas. There is a fine rood-screen. There is a fine alabaster tomb with full length effigies of Thomas Denton and his wife, 1560; and among the monuments are those of Dr. William Denton, physician to Charles I. and Charles II., 1691; Sir Alexander Denton, Justice of the King's Bench, 1739, and Katharine, his wife, 1733; Alexander Denton, 1574, and Mary, his wife, 1576; Alexander Denton and others, 1701-14; Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Isham, 1667; Thomas Isham, 1676; George Woodard, Ambassador to Poland, who died at Warsaw, 1731, and is buried here; Godfrey Boate, Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland, 1722, and Mary, his daughter, 1772, wife of Godfrey Clayton, 1745; Francis Drake, 1701; and Mary, Viscountess Hillsborough, 1742.

There are marks on the church door of bullets fired during the siege of the house.

In the church-yard is a cross, much mutilated, of the XIV. century, seven feet in height. There is a portion of the group of niches. Close by is the grave of Royalists who fell at the siege.

THE PROPOSED MEMORIAL TO KING HENRY THE FIRST, FOUNDER OF READING ABBEY.

At a recent meeting of the Reading Town Council a letter was read from Dr. Jamieson B. Hurry generously offering to erect in the Forbury Gardens a memorial to King Henry the First, the Founder