

THE HART'S HORN INN AT ASH, SURREY.

BY

THE REV. H. R. HUBAND.

OWING to a change in ownership and during some alterations by the builder for the incoming tenant, I had the opportunity of being able to wander freely over a cottage that stands practically in the Churchyard of Ash, close to the Church, and on the road that leads from the village of Ash to Ash Junction. The house has a tablet on the East Gable that records:

Formerly the Hart's Horn Inn.
Restored 1904. H. M. Chester.

while below it is a shield bearing the Chesters', of Poyle Park, Arms, quartering those of Woodruffe.

The building measures some 41 feet in length and 18 feet in breadth—discarding for the moment the “outshot”—and was originally of the “open roof hall” type, of which there are not a few examples in the adjoining neighbourhood. One can discover very little of its past history. According to Manning and Bray: “There are buildings adjoining the Churchyard of Ash in which are said to have been stables in which the inhabitants of Frimley are said to have put their horses when they came to Church at Frimley.” But this could only have been in the outbuildings as no horses could have been put up in the house itself. Curiously enough, in the cellar at the west end I found horses' teeth set upright in squares like tiling—a poor makeshift for the missing tiles.

I heard a story from several of the inhabitants that some years ago when the house was being repaired a bell was found

in the roof, and that the wiseacres of the village assumed at once that it was used as a Church. Possibly it was once used as a Church *House* in the days when "Ales" were an acknowledged means of raising Church funds to repair the fabric. I could not trace the bell or find anyone who had actually seen it.

Entering by the door nearest Ash Village one finds oneself in a passage running direct from a modern front door to a back door with a wooden Tudor-arched door frame—now opening into a large "outshot" used as a scullery and wash-house. On the wall on the right is a row of very small deers' antlers, serving as a coat rack, while on the left is a small room with what was once a screen and afterwards a bar with a hatch opening of rather antique appearance.

I am inclined to think that these antlers were placed there by Dr. Chester from deer in his own park, because they seemed appropriate to a building called the "Hart's Horn Inn" and were not an ancient feature; but the hatchlike opening suggests an ancient screen forming three small chambers, out of one of which a stair descended to the cellar. I have little doubt that in past days there was a kitchen here, and possibly a solar over it. It bears a very close resemblance to the old Vicarage at Farnham, where the old kitchen features still exist.

On the right of this passage are two other rooms, each the full width of the house, in the first of which is an old fireplace, and the little window by its side, out of which I have heard it said the refuse of the hearth used to be shovelled. Leading out of this is the second chamber with a fireplace also, both these fireplaces having Elizabethan chimneys outside the original house area. In the first room there was at one time a bacon cupboard where, within memory, the village bacon was cured.

A newel staircase rises from the first room, typical of its period, inserted in Elizabethan times when the open-roofed hall was divided by an upper floor. This conversion is clearly seen in one of the central chambers of the three existing rooms to which the staircase leads. There the original moulded tie-beam has been roughly pared away to give headroom for the door that admits to the room which

opens to rooms on either side—no passage existing. The daub and wattle partitions which divide the rooms I found to be composed of hazel sticks and plaster made with chopped straw. Behind the skirting of the downstairs room was found a perfectly preserved red leather clog with the mud still on its sole. The toe is pointed like a fourteenth-century shoe, but the Victoria and Albert Museum authorities tell me it dates from the early part of the eighteenth century and that a similar clog is illustrated by a small woodcut in J. R. Planche's *Cyclopædia of Costume*, London, 1876.¹

In a small recess, now partly filled in but possibly originally a smoke outlet, I found a piece of parchment, which proved to be part of an old sixteenth-century map, but too faded to decipher clearly. The old wooden latches pulled by a piece of string, the strap hinges, the "cocks" of the casement windows, and the casements themselves were in fair preservation, but only a very few fragments of the glass seemed to be original glazing.

There is a large outshot on the north side of the house used, as I have already mentioned, as a scullery, and from this rises a ladder and hand-rail giving access to one of the chambers above. In one of the baulks, on what was formerly the outside wall of the building, is one of those sloping slot-like cavities said to have held props when the wooden framework of the house was being reared.

The stone walls at the gable ends may have been original, but the side walls, now mostly of brick, look as if they were of timber and of the "cill" type of framed house.

There are carpenters' marks on the tie-beams and wall plate—such as one sees in sixteenth-century buildings—some initials, the letter *N* being repeated several times with *V* and *C* and *M*, and a baulk mark of a sloping line intersected by four cross lines.

The house is said to have been a resort of Dick Turpin. It certainly was on the high road near an old green road running towards the Foxhills. The property was once in the hands of the Woodruffes of Poyle, and when recently I was looking over some papers belonging to the family I found "*A Kalendar of the Prisoners Surrey Summer Assizes*

¹ Vol. I, par. 3, Fig. 6.

at Guildford on Wednesday the 8th of August 1792. William Woodruffe Esq—Sheriff."

Case 53 (Removed to Essex).

Jeremiah Abershaw.

Comitted 7th Aug. 1792 by G. Fournier, B. Robertson and J. Stonard Esq. charged on oaths of John Phillip James Barbrook, John Player and others with felonously assaulting him the said William Phillip on the Kings Highway in the County of Essex and felonously stealing from his person a gold watch and other things his property.

This, no doubt, refers to Jerry Abershaw of highway fame. He is described as Jeremiah Abershaw, twenty-two years of age, shoe-maker.

A few years ago I was offered a cutlass (of the date of above) described as belonging to Jerry Abershaw who frequented the roads of this neighbourhood, and possibly it was he, not Dick Turpin, who sheltered in the Hart's Horn Inn. His real name was said to be Avershaw. His favourite resort was Coombe Wood, and "The Baldfaced Stag" near Beverly knew him well. He was arrested at the Three Brewers, tried at Croydon July 30, 1795, and hung on Kennington Common.

The Hart's Horn Inn must have stood originally in the Forest of Windsor, and was built probably of wood from that Forest. We get a series of Horns inns round what was Crondall Chase—The Horns, the Old Horns, the North Horns. The sign of the Old Horns was an actual pair of antlers on the signpost.