

# HATCHFORD PARK AND CHURCH

BY

R. R. LANGHAM-CARTER

**S**OUTH-WEST from Cobham Plough Lane leads past fields and farms and through woodland to the hamlet of Hatchford. The nearest bus is two miles away and the nearest railway station is further. Though hardly more than twenty miles from London, Hatchford is still small and agricultural and unspoilt. The oldest maps in Guildford Museum do not show it, for there was then nothing at all to show. Even more recent maps sometimes ignore it. It is Hatch Fold in Rocque's Map of Surrey of 1765 and Hatchfold in the Ordnance Survey map of 1816. It was at first simply a country house in Cobham parish with not even a hamlet near it; though some of the neighbouring farms were on Hatchford land and when the estate was sold in 1906 it amounted to 152 acres, including its farms and the hamlet that had grown up near the big house.

In his *Roads in Great Britain* of 1799 Daniel Paterson mentions the chief houses on or near his roads and includes Hatchford, though he is out of date on the owner's name. The next owner is correctly shown in John Cary's *Great Roads* of 1806. Fifty years later the Guildford Directory was giving local landowners' names and addresses in full but could describe Lord Ellesmere as residing merely in 'Cobham,' though in a later issue it changes to the incorrect address of 'Hatchford, Cobham.' Up to the present day many Surrey books ignore Hatchford and there is no local guide. Hatchford has never formed an independent parish; it has been a chapelry, it has been in Cobham and it is now in Ockham. Early entries of parents' abodes in the register of baptisms show them as in 'Hatchford (in Cobham)' or 'Hatchford (in Ockham)' or even 'Hatchford (in Hersham).' But, though Hatchford is small and little known, both house and church are of some interest.

In *Surrey Place Names* G. S. Davis mentions it as possibly the house of one William at Hacche. But 'Hatch' merely means a gate and, as Davis goes on to say, 'as a rule the word occurs in Surrey local names in cases which suggest a gate or a roadway through a wood as the origin of the name.' We, at any rate, need not go back further than 1774 when a Mr. Wilson sold the property to one Lewis Smith, who built a new and larger house, none of which now survives. It stood on sandy heath land and had (as the present house has) fine views, especially south-westwards to the North Downs.

Of the next owners the East India nabob Andrew Ramsey Karr, who had been Chief at Surat and Governor of Bombay and died at Hatchford in 1799, deserves a mention, if only for his charming monument by Nollekens in Cobham church. And so does Miss Isabella Saltonstall who endowed the Cobham living and was noted

for other local charities, dying at Hatchford in 1829. Hatchford's best period began when it was bought by Lord Francis Egerton who later became the Earl of Ellesmere. He had rented Oatlands Park near Weybridge from 1830 to 1840 and came to Hatchford soon after. He pulled down most of Smith's construction and greatly altered the remainder which he retained as the central portion of a new house. A conservatory, 65 feet long and 22 feet broad and 25 feet high, adjoined the house, and an orangery, 65 feet by 25 by 30, was built onto the east wing. At about this time many of the big land-owners were skilful amateur architects who designed their own country houses and also cottages and farm buildings on their estates and there were at least three such in close proximity to Hatchford, the most conspicuous of them being Lord Lovelace, much of whose work is still to be seen around Ockham and East Horsley. Ellesmere was no mean artist and may have dabbled in architecture too. A very early photograph, which Miss Christian Egerton presented to the present occupants of Hatchford Park, shows it to have been a handsome square white building with a simple exterior that avoided the over-ornateness which spoilt Charles Buxton's new house at neighbouring Foxwarren and much of Lovelace's work at East Horsley. The Ellesmeres were ardent believers in education and built a village school for the children on their estate: this was destroyed only a short time ago, but a little to the west of the church their three alms-house cottages still form a picturesque mid-Victorian group. Their house has disappeared in its turn, along with its stables and all its subsidiary buildings. But its gardens were quite outstanding and they have to some extent survived. As late as 1843 the surroundings to the house were mainly a waste land covered with little but heath bushes. But soon after that the grounds were laid out by Lady Ellesmere, who was evidently a highly skilful landscape gardener: for William Keane, who visited Hatchford in 1849 and wrote of them in his book *The Beauties of Surrey*, is full of their praises. He describes the six-acre flower garden, the rosary, the rhododendron and azalea groves, the four acres of kitchen garden, the sixty-acre pinetum full of rare conifers, many of them brought from abroad. He was surprised to find that a *cryptomeria japonica* which the Ellesmeres had planted in May 1847 had grown to a height of twelve feet in less than two years. Ellesmere and Chapman his head gardener evidently obtained their good results by strict discipline, for in the tool shed Keane found 'a board hanging on the wall with the rules to be observed by the workmen, under a fine for neglect.' He ends with a handsome eulogy to Lord Ellesmere. 'What a monument will this spot rear to the memory of the best benefactor of his country, the Nobleman who made the barren waste to rise rich with the productions of foreign climes, giving Oriental grandeur to the whole landscape scene.' In the summer of 1857 Henry Greville recorded in his diary that 'this garden is a lovely sight, a perfect blaze of rhododendrons and azaleas, like a Horticultural Show.' The winter that followed was a mild one and in January he noted that his mother had been able to

pick roses and jonquils in full bloom. The Oriental grandeur may have departed but the grounds are still very pleasant.

Ellesmere was a strikingly handsome man, to judge by the portrait made by the artist George Richmond in 1852 which is now in the possession of Miss C. Egerton of Hatchford End. He was a leading man in the Tory party and he and Lady Ellesmere did much political entertaining, both in their London house and at Hatchford. The Earl also wrote a good deal of poetry, some of which has a Surrey interest, notably his account of the great Society Fête which was held at Brooke Farm, Thames Ditton, in 1827. Both he and his wife were authors, translators of French and German plays, dramatists and keen amateur actors. They were jointly responsible for a book on the Holy Land after their visit there in 1840: Lady Ellesmere did the writing while the charming illustrations are lithographs taken from his sketches. Her literary ability is understandable enough for she was the sister of the famous diarist Charles Greville and their brother Henry was also a writer.

The Grevilles were an old Whig family and many of their Whig friends came to Hatchford. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hatchford became a meeting-place for the famous people of the day. There were statesmen like Lord Grey, Harrowby, Bathurst, the Duke of Bedford, the Duke of Norfolk. There was General Sir Harry Smith and possibly there was Wellington. The Duke was a life-long friend of the Grevilles and another brother, Algernon, was Wellington's aide-de-camp at Waterloo and his Private Secretary afterwards in peace-time. Lord Ellesmere wrote a *Life* of the Duke, who frequently stayed with him at Oatlands Park, though he may have become too old to visit him later at Hatchford. The Ellesmeres were keen riders and thought nothing of riding over to the Duke's home beyond Basingstoke and sometimes arrived early enough to get part of a day's hunting with him into the bargain. Even Queen Victoria heard of Lady Ellesmere's horsemanship and talked to Charles Greville about it, as he records in his diary.

Many of the visitors had homes in Surrey. The Ellesmeres' sons lived not far away, Lord Brackley, the heir, at Burwood House and Francis Egerton (rather later) at St. George's Hill. There was a very long-standing friendship with the famous actress Fanny Kemble who had taken parts in their plays in London and at Oatlands Park and had herself lived with her family in Weybridge and Addlestone, and another frequent Hatchford guest was her sister Adelaide Sartoris the opera singer. Two more Weybridge friends, who were resident there from 1848, were John Austin the international jurist and his wife Sarah, who was an author. Yet another visitor, who would later become famous, was the young artist Frederick Leighton.

But perhaps the most interesting and entertaining of them all was Lady Ellesmere's brother Charles Greville, a man of many parts. He had been familiar with Oatlands Park from much earlier days when he had managed the racing stable of its owner the Duke of York. He was an owner of race-horses himself and had won the

St. Leger though he never won the Derby. He also found time to be Clerk of the Privy Council for nearly forty years and after his death he became celebrated as the author of the best political memoirs of the nineteenth century. These contain disappointingly few references to Hatchford, though he was often there, as we know from the much less famous diary of his brother Henry. Apart from their bachelor rooms in London Hatchford was the only home the brothers had. Their mother as well as their sister lived there, they loved Hatchford and both of them are buried there. Lady Charlotte Greville spent all her last years with her daughter and, as her monument in the church tells us, 'by her desire her remains are buried as near as possible to the door by which she entered this chapel for divine service.' In its report on Charles Greville's funeral *The Times* stated that he was buried beside his mother 'in the beautiful chapel attached to the Countess Dowager of Ellesmere's seat at Hatchford.' But this was not correct for Charles and later Henry Greville were in fact buried one on either side of their mother outside the porch where one can see their tombstones today. Their sister was buried beside her husband at Worsley in Lancashire but in Hatchford, too, the Ellesmeres have left a worthy memorial in St. Matthew's church. This was built on their land at the south-east end of their park and entirely at their cost. The original structure, which was hardly more than a family chapel and constitutes the present nave, was built of brick in 1850. It was the work of the architectural firm of Francis and Sons who designed a number of churches in the Home counties, including one not far away at Lyne in the previous year. The Ellesmeres paid the salary of the chaplain: on memorials and in registers he is called vicar or incumbent but, on the analogy of Mr. Collins and Lady Catherine de Burgh, he was definitely 'their man.' For his residence they purchased the fine old farmhouse of Hatchford End which dates from 1759 and has long been the home of the Earl's grand-daughters, the Misses Dorothy and Christian Egerton. Ellesmere died in 1857 but his son the new Earl continued to live at Burwood and his widow and her mother at Hatchford, adding a chancel in his memory in 1859. The whole building is in the Decorated style of the fourteenth century though the chancel is more ornate than the earlier parts. All the windows are single lancets with trefoil heads except for the east window which is a group of three with 'Decorated' tracery. Each chancel window has a row of ball-flowers in the moulding above it. There is much foliage ornament, on the hood-moulds of the chancel windows, on the finial over the dripstone of the south porch, at the end of the moulding of the chancel arch and on Ellesmere's cenotaph.

The west end is occupied by a gallery containing pews and the organ, the font is in fourteenth-century style, and there is a wooden rood screen with six painted panels and a rather unusual pulpit of open ironwork. The finest feature of the church is the glass which fills eight of the windows in the chancel and shows the full-length figures of eight saints. It is Flemish and is thought to have come from a convent church. Miss Egerton tells me it was acquired in

Ghent by her father Admiral Francis Egerton. Formerly there was some more, placed in the two west windows soon after 1862 by Lady Ellesmere in memory of her mother, as is recorded on the latter's monument, but it has since been removed. Lady Charlotte's is in a group of Greville monuments under the west gallery. That of her daughter shows a handsome kneeling figure of Lady Ellesmere in low relief. Charles Greville's tablet recites his political offices and displays his coat of arms and the motto 'Vix ea nostra voco.' A brass plate near-by commemorates his brother Henry.

Lord Ellesmere's cenotaph lives in solitary state at the other end of the church. A marble panel at the back of the tomb shows a kneeling angel praying on either side of the Cross. The canopy above is in Decorated style, has crockets above and cusps below, all richly carved with foliage, while between them runs a moulding ornamented with ball-flowers. It would be of interest to know the sculptor who designed this work. Ellesmere had a good deal to do with the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott and the sculptor Matthew Noble. Scott built Worsley church for him and among the numerous churches he built in Surrey were several quite close to Hatchford; St. John's, Woking (1842), Westcott (1852), with others built shortly after Ellesmere's death like Ranmore (1859) and Ottershaw (1864). Ellesmere's elaborate tomb at Worsley was designed by Scott and executed by Noble, who also carved a bust of him which is now in the National Portrait Gallery. So either or both of them might have been involved here. These problems, and no doubt others connected with the Hatchford story, are possibly solved in the family's muniment room, which is unfortunately not in Surrey.

The register of burials dates from 1862 and shows clearly how small Hatchford was and how much the church was the chapel of the big families, nine out of the first eleven entries being:

Lady Charlotte Greville.  
 Charles Greville.  
 Arthur Holland (a relative of the Buxtons).  
 Charles Buxton of Foxwarren.  
 Henry Greville.  
 Two Chinnerys.  
 Two more Buxtons.

The baptisms register, opened in 1865, is better filled but for over fifty years St. Matthew's was not licensed for marriages. The Ellesmeres' elder daughter was married at Cobham, the first wedding to be held at Hatchford being that of their other girl to Lord Sandwich in 1865. This and Hatchford's next three marriages, which took place as far apart as 1875, 1879, and 1903, were all by special licence.

Other windows and tablets in the church commemorate later owners of Hatchford Park. Chief of these was Walter Chinnery who came here from Twickenham in the eighteen-eighties. It was he who pulled down the Ellesmere house and had a new one designed by Rowland Plumbe, an architect who was very active in and around

London and was also responsible for Woodlands Park at Stoke d'Abernon. The house is of red brick with stone dressings and a tiled roof and it has eighteen bedrooms on its three floors. Most of its outbuildings also remain, including the stabling for twelve horses. The Chinnerys have left a much more attractive reminder of their sojourn in the lovely marble angel in the churchyard which the Esher sculptor F. J. Williamson carved for Hermione, their young daughter. They were friends of Matthew Arnold who lived in Cobham and we may be sure entertained him here. By way of contrast Hatchford became a resort of famous cricketers, for Walter's son Brodrick Chinnery captained the Surrey eleven and at a cricket dinner here the great W. G. Grace made a humorous speech, which is fully reported in an unexpected place, the Cobham parish magazine. The twentieth century, too, has had some interesting features in Hatchford but the term 'Archæology' has been strained far enough already and we can close with the arrival of the Samuelsons in 1906 and say nothing of the fine buildings which they too have left.

Within a few miles of Hatchford are several historic houses that are open to the public and a number of Surrey's best churches. In passing from one of them to another a short time spent in enjoying Hatchford's humbler charms would certainly not be wasted.