

THE MANOR OF GREAT HORWOOD.

When Domesday Book tells us that "Walter himself holds Hereworde," we know that Great Horwood was one of the numerous manors in Buckinghamshire held by the Conqueror's friend and relative, Walter Gifford, Earl of Longueville. He bestowed it upon the priory which he founded at Newton Longville, attached to the Abbey under the Cluniac rule of the Benedictine order, which was at Longueville, near Dieppe. With other Alien foundations, Newton Longville was suppressed in 1415, and Great Horwood then passed to John, Duke of Bedford. At his death the Manor and advowson were bestowed upon New College, Oxford, in 1441, and in their hands it has remained ever since. This continuity of tenure has had the effect of continuing the Court Baron, and the very great kindness of the Warden of New College (Dr. W. A. Spooner) makes it possible to give a complete account of the proceedings of the Court.

The Manor Farm, as it at present stands, is a complete example of a house built about 1700; of the earlier house on the same site only a chimney-stack remains. Mr. W. Viccars is the third of his name to be tenant of the farm, and bailiff of the Manor, and Mrs. Viccars has been so very good as to allow photographs to be taken which explain better than words the internal decoration.

The room in which the Court is held has large panels surrounded by bolection-moulding; they are said to be of oak, but, having been painted and "grained," this is not evident. The room measures 19 feet 7 inches by 17 feet 10 inches, and was formerly decorated with a painting over the mantelpiece. This was injured by some clothes before the fire catching light, but paintings still exist in two other rooms, depicting classical figures set in a landscape; they are on canvas, and contemporary with the panelling, but of no great merit. In the room west of the Court Room three small bevelled mirrors are beneath the painting, and above the marble



Photo by]

COURT ROOM AT GREAT HORWOOD MANOR.

[Walshams Ltd.

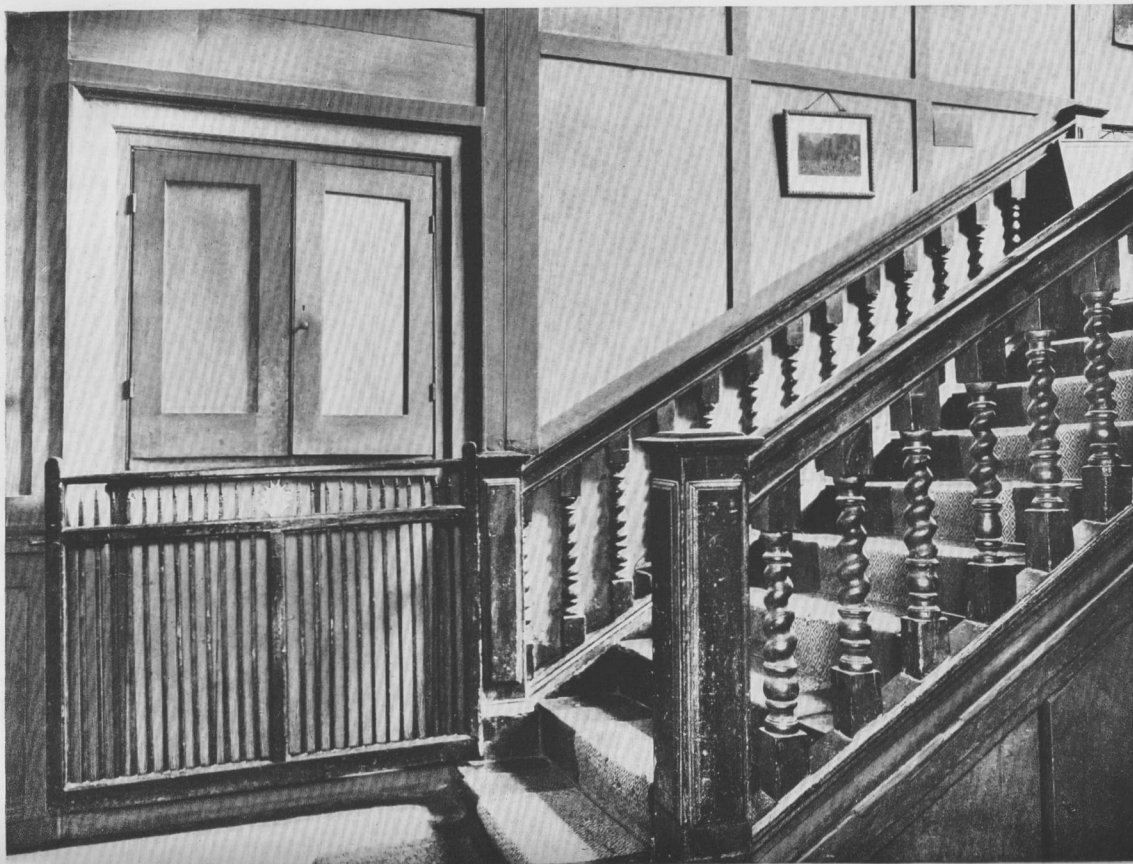


Photo by

STAIRCASE AND DOG-GATE AT GREAT HORWOOD MANOR,

(Walsham Ltd.)

architrave of the fireplace. The illustration of the Court Room shows the Bailiff's stick of office in the corner.

The staircase has oak treads 3 feet 10½ inches wide, there are turned and twisted balusters, with half balusters against the walls, which have large, un moulded panels. There is a wide moulded hand-rail, and at the foot of the stair is a dog-gate in good working order.

Our third photograph is taken from half-way up the stairs, and shows the first floor landing on which five doorways open, one with a moulded frieze and pediment.

The proceedings of the Court Baron, as set out by Mr. E. C. Ouvry, Steward of the Manor, are as follows:—

The Court Baron, or Customary Court of the Warden and Scholars of New College held of and for the Manor of Upper Horwood, in the County of Buckingham, and all Courts in the other Manors, is summoned by Notice attached to the door or fixed in the porch of the Parish Church about a week before it is held. The holding of the Courts Baron is part of the business of the Annual Progress of the College carried out by the Warden with his Outrider (one of the Fellows) and the Manor Steward, and on the arrival of the Progress in the village (still often welcomed by the ringing of the church bells) the Court is opened by the Steward at the Manor House or such other place as may have been fixed for the purpose.

The Court is attended by certain of the copyhold tenants known as "the Homage," and the first business, the Jury being assembled, the Bailiff says or repeats after the Steward: Oyez! Oyez! Oyez (generally pronounced O yes, O yes, O yes). "All manner of persons that were summoned to attend at this time and place draw near and answer to your name as you shall be called." The Steward, having called the names of the Jury from a list supplied by the Bailiff, directs the election of the Foreman by the Homage, who on his election makes oath that he will "true presentment make of all such matters and things as shall be given him in charge and present the truth,

the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!" The Jury are then sworn, each declaring that "the same oath that our Foreman hath taken to observe and keep on his part I will observe and keep on my part." The Steward then delivers the charge to the Jury in the following form:—

"GENTLEMEN,

"The design of our Meeting at this time and Place is to hold a Court Baron and Customary Court for the Lords of the Manor; it is therefore incumbent on me as Steward to give you in Charge such things as are proper and necessary for your Enquiry and Consideration and then it will become your Duty as Jurymen in Justice to yourselves and Neighbours and in discharge of the Oath you have just now taken to make due presentment thereof.

"FIRST you are to enquire who those are that owe Suit and Service to this Court and whether they are here to do and perform the same.

"As a Homage of the Customary Court you are to enquire what Advantages have happened to the Lords since the last Court either by Death, Alienation or Forfeiture. If you find the death of any Tenant it is your duty to enquire what Lands he held of this Manor and who is the next Taker that he may come in and be admitted.

"Also, if there have been any Alienation of the Estate held of this Manor, who the Purchasers are that the Lords may know of whom to expect their Rents and Services. Forfeitures happen divers Ways the most material of which are: If any Tenant neglects or refuses to pay and perform his Rents and Services, of which his Attendance at this Court is a Material Part, or if he suffers his Copyhold Tenement to go to decay or fall down or takes away the Buildings from one Estate to repair another or leases it for more than one year without a Licence.

"Also, you are to enquire if any Rents, Customs, or Services have been withheld or withdrawn from the Lords of this Manor, what they are, out of what lands they issue, and how long and by whom they have been so withheld.

"All these things are inquirable and presentable



Photo by]

STAIRCASE AND LANDING AT GREAT HORWOOD MANOR. [Walshams Ltd.

by you; and if I have omitted anything which has fallen within your Knowledge and which at all concerns the interest of the Lords or Tenants of this Manor you are bound by your oaths to present it."

The Jury then, through the Foreman, "present" the death of any of the Copyhold Tenants who have died since the last Court, any Changes in Tenancy of the copies, and any other matters that may be of importance or interest to the Lords of the Manor. In this would be included any matter of rights-of-way or footpaths affecting the property of the Lords. Formerly new Tenants of the copies used to attend and be admitted to their holdings, but Admittances are now almost invariably done "out of court" by the Steward, or his Deputy appointed for the purpose in each case. No criminal business is dealt with at the Courts Baron, this being the duty of the Courts Leet, which are rarely, if ever, held in connection with the College Manors. At the conclusion of the business the Steward declares the Court closed and discharges the Jury in the following words:—

"All manner of persons who were summoned to attend at this time and place may for the present depart and attend again upon a new summons. God save the King." The Steward then thanks the Jury for their attendance, and the proceedings are finished.