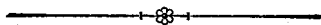


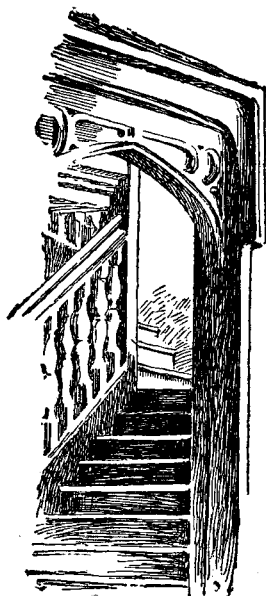


The Berks, Bucks & Oxon Archæological Journal.



Historic Houses in Berks, Bucks and Oxon.

I.—UFTON COURT.



DOORWAY AND STAIRCASE,
UFTON COURT.

UFTON COURT is one of the finest and most interesting of the historic houses in the County of Berks. We hope to describe many of the old mansions and manor houses in the three counties which are especially rich in such possessions, and to record the fortunes of the illustrious families connected with them. No other district contains so many seats of noblemen and gentry. We have the royal Castle of Windsor, the favourite residence of the sovereigns of England; Claydon House, the seat of the Verneys; Shaw House, the seat of the Eyres; Beckett House, near Shrivenham, of Viscount Barrington; Mapledurham House, of the Blounts; Aldermaston Court, of Mr. Keyser; Easthampstead, of the Marquis of Downshire; Ashdown, of Lord Craven; Woolley, of the Wroughtons; and endless other houses, concerning which little has been written, and of which the history is a



THE PORCH, UFTON COURT.

blank. We shall endeavour to describe many of these, which will not be without interest to lovers of architecture, historians, and genealogists.

Already the chronicles of some of our ancestral seats have been written, and the readers of the *Berks Archæological Journal* will remember Lady Russell's admirable history of "Swallowfield and its Owners," which is worthy of a more enduring place than in the pages of a magazine. An interesting account of Wallingford Castle by Mr. Hedges, was given in the last number of this Journal, and Miss Sharp's "HISTORY OF UFTON COURT, BERKS, AND OF THE PERKINS FAMILY" contains a very fascinating description of the fortunes of the house which the authoress knows and loves so well. By her leave, we are enabled to reproduce some of the illustrations which graced her work. Ufton Court is of three distinct periods. The oldest or mediæval portion, which was not all built at the same time, forms the nucleus of the whole, and of which



MISS ARABELLA FERMOR.

the kitchen and the buttery are the most important parts. The Elizabethan portion, built in front of the earlier work, consists of the hall, dining-room, staircase, library, and South wing; and the other buildings belong to Queen Anne period. The central porch was built in the Elizabethan period, and is handsomely carved and lighted by two side openings fitted with balustrades. Over the porch is a charming little

square room, lighted by windows on its three outer sides, and forming the very ideal of a lady's bower. Occasionally, imitations of Gothic style may be observed in the Elizabethan work. The staircase, with handsome balustrades and finials, is shown through the doorway in the drawing. The window of the South wing, with the curious gables and pipes, is very attractive and interesting. The Court, being the residence of a Roman Catholic family, contains several priests' hiding-places. The Chronicles of Ufton begin with Domesday Book, which contains an account of the two manors Ufton Richard, and Ufton Robert.



WINDOW OF SOUTH WING, UFTON COURT.

The reader is referred to Miss Sharp's book for a full record of the history of these manors. Ufton Richard, or Nervet, was sold by John Nervet to Reading Abbey; ultimately it was granted to Sir John William, afterwards Lord William of Thame, whose daughter married Sir Henry Norreys. Francis Perkins bought the manor in 1709, and thus united it with the other manor. This Francis Perkins won the hand of the reigning belle of London in 1715, Miss Arabella Fermor, of Tusmore, Oxon, who was the Belinda of Pope's "Rape of the Lock." The fame of this lady's beauty and her charms was celebrated both by poets and painters. The history of the Perkins family dates from the year 1380, when one Peter Morley *alias* Perkins was *servus* to Hugh Despencer, Lord of Ship-ton. During the times of religious persecution, they held to their convictions and were duly tabulated as recusants. The old house in its sequestered nook has witnessed many stirring scenes, and is as replete with interesting historical associations as its beauty is attractive to the artist and architect.

EARLY EFFIGY FOUND IN READING.—In digging out for foundations at No. 4, Broad Street, in the early part of the present year, a remarkable fragment of sculpture was discovered, in the shape of the head and neck of a Knight, well-posed on a cushion or block, underneath which was the upper part of a second block, which had evidently extended as a bed for the reception of the figure. This again lay on part of a heavy angular slab, which had the appearance of being the upper stone of the altar-table which had supported the effigy and its equipments. The head is colossal, and part of a figure which could hardly have been less in length than about seven feet. It is wrought in fine sandstone. The bust had been represented encased in a *hauberk* of chain-mail, with a continuous *hood*, the rings being well-marked around the neck. The Effigy conveys the impression of being of about the end of the 12th or the beginning of the 13th Century. I am not aware that, at an early period, any important building occupied the place where the fragment was discovered; and can only infer that it must, after the mutilation of the effigy, have been brought from the Abbey. Through the kindness of Mr. A. Cooper, the Surveyor, I have been enabled to place the relic in the Museum.—JOSEPH STEVENS, Reading, Sept. 14th, 1895.