

CHAWTON HOUSE, HAMPSHIRE.

THIS fine Hampshire mansion stands towards the borders of Surrey, about midway between Farnham and Alresford, in a country much varied with wood, heath, and meadow, and within a short distance of Selborne and the famous home of Gilbert White. Here was one of the forty-five lordships which Hugh de Port, the Conqueror's comrade in arms, received in Hampshire as the guerdon of

his share in the enterprise, and Chawton remained with the family under the name of St. John for nearly 500 years, until, on the death of Sir Thomas Poyning, Lord St. John, in 1458, it fell, through default of male issue, to Joan, wife of Sir Thomas Bonville, whose granddaughter Elizabeth married Sir Thomas West, Lord De La Warr. By this family the property was sold on April 8th, 1551, to John Knight, who

belonged to a family long established in the county. The Knights appear, indeed, to have held land in Chawton from the time of Edward II., if not earlier, and in 1524 William Knight had been tenant of the lands purchased by his grandson John in 1551. The manor did not go with the property, but was left by Lord De La Warr, who died in 1554, to Leonard West, by whom it was sold to Thomas Arundell, and from that proprietor's son William it was purchased in May, 1578, by Nicholas, the son of John Knight. From that time forward the estate and manor have remained in the same family, and thus have descended to the present owner.

The existing manor house, which is a beautiful Tudor structure, was built by John Knight, the son of Nicholas, who purchased the manor. The house has gone through some subsequent changes, but the older parts, including the Great Hall and



THE SOUTH STAIRCASE.

the Tapestry Gallery, go back to that time. The date, 1593, may be seen over the door of the extremely quaint old stables, which are themselves like a house, and stand opposite to the lych-gate of the church. The earlier date, 1588, remains at the back of the fireplace in the Hall.

It seems probable that the original purpose was to erect a manor house of the E form, so common in Tudor times; but it that was the intention, it was never carried out, for only one block with the central projection was completed, and the house took its present form about the year 1650 or 1655, when two wings were added in the rear of the then existing building, thereby forming three sides of a quadrangle,



THE STUDY CHIMNEY-PIECE.

and partly enclosing a courtyard. The original plan of the house was thus entirely changed, and the effect has been to give much pleasing individuality to the structure. The Great Staircase, the Library, and the Long Gallery were a part of this addition, while the Hall and Tapestry Gallery, as has been said, are more than half a century older. The Hall is certainly most quaint and interesting in character. It has a flat ceiling, and thus does not possess the dignity of some of the greater halls, but it is of large size and excellent proportions, and is very beautiful. The paneling is of old oak, rich in character and colouring, with excellent carving along the top in many places. The fireplace



THE EAST GALLERY.

has fluted pilasters of an early type, and a mantel surmounted by arches of wood finely carved, with caryatid figures supporting the frieze. The ancient fireback, dated 1588, with admirable

includes the Royal arms of the Tudors with the garter, and the family achievements of the possessors finely displayed. Above the panelling hang old family portraits of considerable



THE HALL CHIMNEY-PIECE.

herring-bone brickwork in the rear, is extremely good. Much ancient furniture is in this fine apartment, with nothing modern to break the charm, and the old armorial glass on the south side is extremely quaint and interesting. It

interest. The excellent proportions, the large size, and the chaste adornments of this interesting place make it altogether pleasing, and little effort of the imagination is required to people it with its old inhabitants. The arrangement is that of



ANCIENT GLASS OVER THE SOUTH HALL DOOR.

early times, there having been originally a cross table at the head of the room, with a lengthwise table, and at the lower end is the oak screen, through which the servants entered with their meats from the kitchen.

The Tapestry Gallery, upstairs, which is coeval with the Hall, is also panelled with oak, and is very quaint and interesting. The later features are found in the South Entrance, the Great Staircase, and the Long Gallery. There are fluted pilasters of Ionic character, and one doorway, bearing the date 1655, is finished with an elegant pediment. Thus we discover a revelation of changing taste, the classic spirit breaking in upon the older style, but with no structural modification. The South Entrance is hung with old buff jerkins, pistol holsters, and trophies of the chase.

But the dominant impression received from the house is that of permanence of character, with scarcely any intrusion of modern things. The Oak Room is panelled to the ceiling, and has a very elegant mantel-piece, with coupled Ionic columns in its



THE TAPESTRY GALLERY,



CHAWTON HOUSE.

THE GREAT HALL.



THE SOUTH ENTRANCE HALL

upper portions, separating elegant carved and moulded panellings. Here, again, ancient furniture and family pictures complete the plenishing of the room.

One of the most interesting objects at Chawton House is an old armorial tapestry of the Lewkenors, which hangs in the Library, and is a very beautiful piece of ancient work, 16ft. long by 7ft. wide, bearing the date 1564. In the midst are the Lewkenor arms, elaborately worked, with supporters, and having a rich bordering of fruits and flowers. On either side of the central design are other family shields in admirable craftsmanship and characteristically designed, and the background is filled with a beautiful conventional pattern of roses and lilies. The whole design is surrounded by a wonderful border, worked with grapes, pomegranates, apples, and various flowers, and having round compartments in which are fourteen shields of arms. The origin of this remarkable example of tapestry appears not to be known. It came into the possession of the Knights through a marriage with the Lewkenors, and there is

preserved at Chawton House a memorandum, dated 1662, in the handwriting of Sir John Lewkenor, which shows that the tapestry was then very greatly valued. It reads as follows: "Remember to keep safe y^e carpet of arms now aged about 100 years, which in y^e failure of the elder house totalie consuming itself by daughters and heires and passing into other names, was sent hither by Constance Glenham of Trotton, who was one of those heires, for record to the younger house and whole name." The carpet was brought from West Dene to Chawton in 1737, and has been kept there safely ever since. The arms in the border include those of Tregos, Camoys, Culpepper and Audley, D'Oyley, De La Warr and Cantelupe, Pelham, Gournay and Moyne.

Chawton House has been fortunate in remaining through centuries in the hands of the same family, and in having thus been preserved with little change in form or detail. Indeed, it may be said that since the middle of the seventeenth century scarcely any structural alteration has passed over the place.