

Holt

GREAT CHALFIELD MANOR HOUSE



Of this very beautiful house but little remains beyond the north front, of which we give an illustration. It was built at the latter end of the reign of Henry the Sixth, by Thos. Tropenell, and formed then one of the most perfect and interesting examples of domestic Gothic architecture. Mr. T. L. Walker, in Pugin's Examples of Gothic Architecture, says that "since then nothing has been added to its beauties. The long range of offices to the right, and the barn, seem to have been built in Queen Elizabeth's time, and in the Guest Chamber a very elaborate fireplace was inserted, by which the hand of destruction first went to work, in cutting up into the oak-ribbed roof, to admit of the singular design of meretricious taste." The Banqueting Hall was a room 40 feet by 20 feet, and 20 feet high, entered from the richly groined Porch. The Screen was similar to that at Haddon Hall. Unfortunately, this Hall has been cut up into rooms, and the screens and gallery destroyed. As will be seen by the illustration, the Guest Chamber behind the eastern oriel window has been pulled down, and the whole interior of what is left has been modernised to suit the requirements of a farmhouse. The house is surrounded by a moat. The two oriels are very beautiful, and give a dignified appearance to what is generally a reposeful design. Great or East Chalfield is in the Hundred of Bradford, between the towns of Bradford and Melksham, about four miles from each. The name is also written Chaldefeld, Chaufield, Chaudefeld, and Chaoile. The site is supposed to have been occupied by the Romans, but no remains exist of any original fortifications. The parish is mentioned in Domesday. In temp. Edward I, the manor was held as a whole knight's fee, by Sir William Rous, of the Earl of Salisbury, as part of the Honour of Trowbridge ; and, by virtue of the manor, Rous and succeeding Lords of Chalfield were Constables of Trowbridge Castle.

Temp. Edward III, the manors of Chalfield and Trowbridge were held by Phillip Fitzwaryn, who granted a part to the Court of Edyngton. The next known patron of the living was " William Rous, armiger", Chamberlain to Henry VI in virtue of the manor of Imber; but it seems to be doubtful if he ever was the lawful possessor of the manor of Great Chalfield. The manor was for a number of years in the possession of the Percy family, and from them Thomas Tropenell recovered the larger portion, and afterwards the whole, sometime probably between 1419 and 1425.

This Tropenell was also Lord of Imber. The Tropenells were of very ancient origin, and are said to have lived within the shire before the advent of William the Conqueror. The Thos. Tropenell who obtained possession of the manor was no doubt the builder of the Manor House, or at any rate commenced its erection. He died in 1490, and lies buried, with his wife Agnes, under a very fine altar-tomb in Corsham Church. At the latter end of the sixteenth century a daughter of Egidius Trapnell, " de Chawfield in com. Wilts", married John Young of Harnam, Wilts (Visitation, 1623); and, according to the same Visitation, the manor shortly afterwards passed into the family of Eyre, by the marriage of the eldest daughter and co-heiress of " Tho. Trapnell de Chaldfeld" with " John Eyre of Wedhampton in com. Wilts." A large number of beautiful engravings of the House, with architectural details, are given in Pugin's Examples of Gothic Architecture, from which work most of the particulars above given are derived.

(Description of house circa 1896)



Great Chalfield Manor Grounds *(Photos by Stuart Logan)*