

## CHEQUERS COURT.—A NOTE EXPLAINING THE RECENT ALTERATIONS MADE TO THE MANSION.

[BY REGINALD BLOMFIELD, M.A., A.R.A., &c.]\*

I first made the acquaintance of Chequers some 18 or 20 years ago, when I was asked by the late Mr. Bertram Astley to advise him in regard to the gardens. Mr. Astley's idea was to use the old avenue as the main approach to the house. Nothing, however, was done except the formation of a terrace on the south front of the house.

The house at this date was still covered with stucco, and the gables finished with sham gothic battlements, and I found, on poking about the outside, that, under this stucco, was fine red brickwork dating mainly from the middle of the 16th century, and I suggested to Mr. Astley that the whole of this stucco might be removed in order to show this brickwork. This suggestion was acted on, and new stone copings and finials to gables and parapet walls were provided, and a new two-storey bay added on the south side from my designs. Rather unfortunately, a Yorkshire stone was used, by Mr. Astley's desire, which does not weather like the freestones of the earlier work.

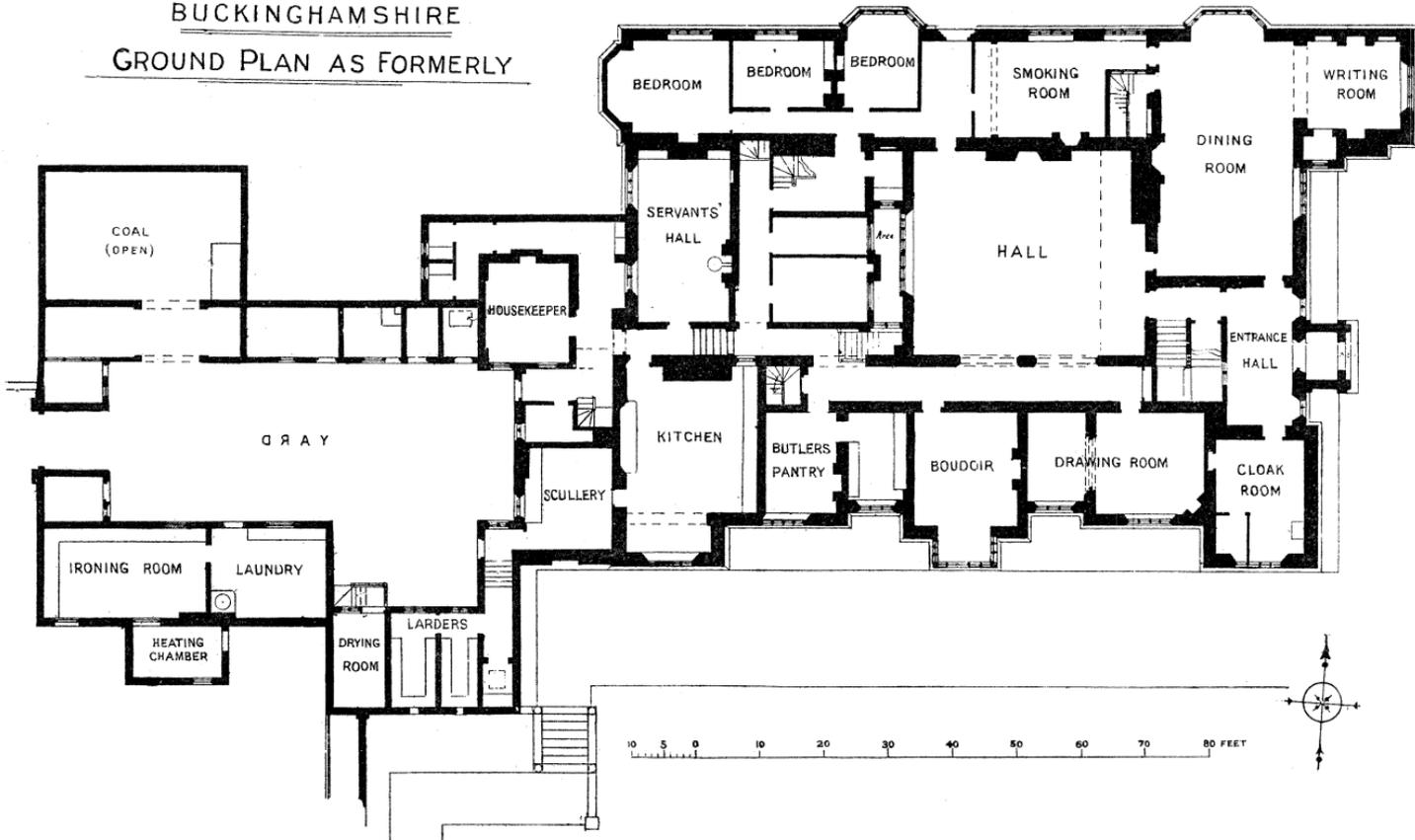
Nothing more was then done to the house, the interior being left as it was; that is decorated with sham gothic vaulting and the like, executed in stucco about 1820-'30, and an extremely elaborate and ugly oak gallery, some 40 years later, which ran across the east side of the central hall, giving access on the first floor to the library on the north side.

The kitchen was in the south-west corner, occupying, with the pantries, the space now taken up by the

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\* I am very glad to be able, by the courtesy of Mr. Blomfield, to print this account, especially so as it was only those members who proceeded from Wendover by private motors or carriages who arrived in time to hear him deliver it, or the substance of it, owing to the unexpected delay in the starting of the brakes, and to Mr. Blomfield's time being limited.—EDITOR.

CHEQUERS COURT,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.  
GROUND PLAN AS FORMERLY



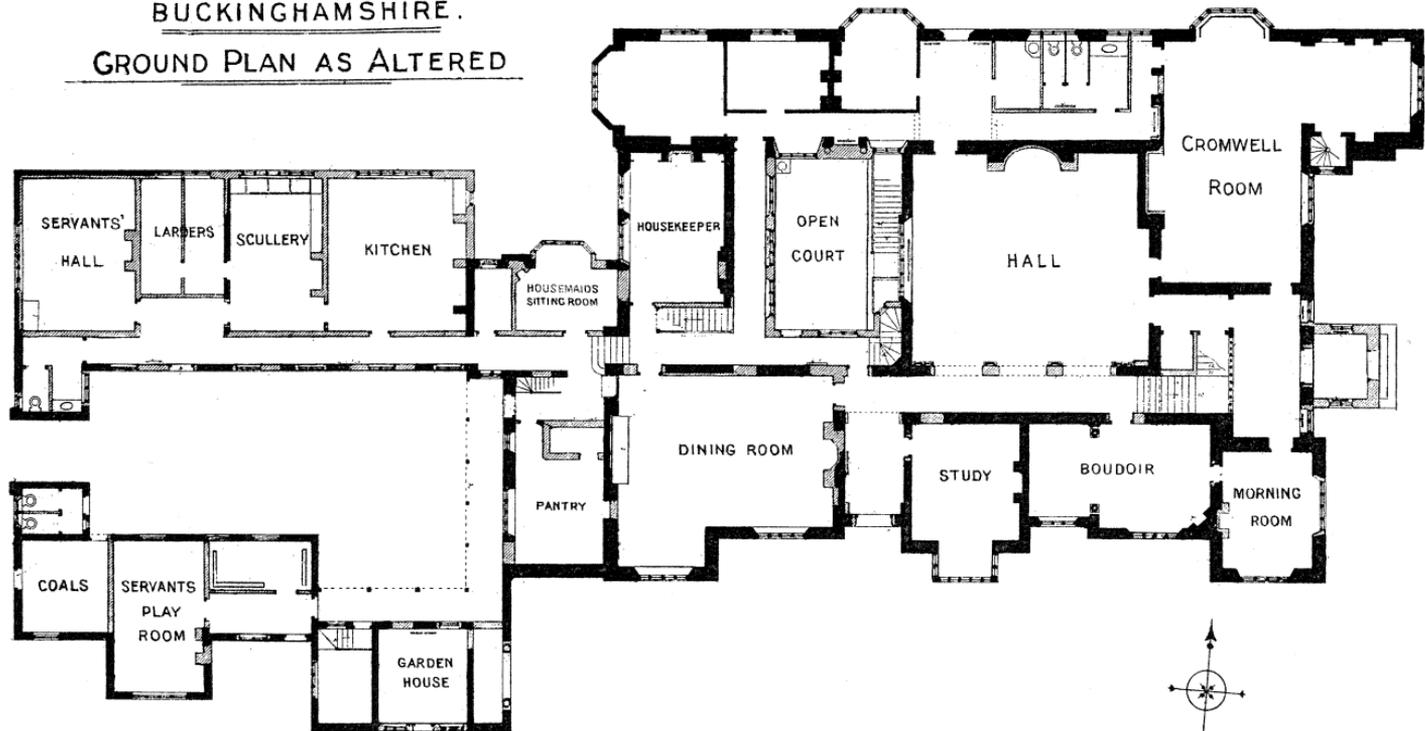
10/2/125  
PLATE I.

new dining-room, the dining room being to the north-east, now the Cromwell room. The consequence was that everything had to be carried, either across the central hall, which was also the chief living-room of the house, or servants had to dive down a steep flight of steps into the cellar, cross the cellar, and come up a service staircase to the dining-room at its north-west corner. It was hard to say which line of service was worse, and disasters to servants and trays on the cellar stairs made some re-arrangement imperative—apart from the fact that the kitchen faced south. In this and in many other regards the house required complete re-arrangement, and there was the less need for hesitation as all the old work in the interior had been overlaid by the early Victorian and other objectionable features in the last century. There was not a single old fireplace in the house, or any old details showing, except some of the balusters on the stairs. I may mention that, in the process of carrying out the works undertaken for Mr. Arthur Lee, some interesting remains of the original house were discovered, notably the stone doorway from the hall, with the Hawtrey initials, buried inches deep under stucco mouldings.

Mr. Lee's object throughout was to preserve religiously every particle of the genuine old work, and, in all other regards, to bring the house as far as possible into harmony with the work of Hawtrey's time as shown more particularly on the very interesting, and somewhat unusual, treatment of the north front.

The old kitchen was done away with and the pantry converted into a dining-room, which has been panelled with some excellent early 17th century panelling which came from Plymouth. An entirely new office wing was built along the north side to the west. The plans of the house, here reproduced on a small scale, as it was prior to Mr. Lee's alterations, and as it is now, will explain the alterations in detail. The most important of these have been the new porch in two storeys, and the conversion of the hall into its present form by the removal of the 19th century gallery or balcony on the east side, and the addition of a new ceiling, reproduced from that of Sir Paul Pindar's house, now in the S.K. Museum, a new lantern, new galleries and arcade, oak

CHEQUERS COURT,  
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.  
GROUND PLAN AS ALTERED



*Ronald Mansfield F.R.A.*  
*New Court*  
*Temp. - C. C.*  
*May 1929*

10/2/26  
PLATE II.

panelling, chimney-piece in alabaster and touch, and the arcade in oak inlaid with coromandel and snake-wood. The three-light window opening on to main stairs is also new. In order to improve the light in the hall I formed the brick-paved court on the west side, demolishing some perfectly useless rooms to the west, which came within five feet of the hall window. The fine early 16th century bay window on the first floor of this court came from Ipswich, whence also came the extremely fine panelling in the drawing-room, with its inlaid panels, a rare and beautiful example of English woodwork of the latter part of the 16th or early 17th century. The ceiling of the drawing-room is a reproduction of the well-known example at Broughton Castle, and that of the ante-room from one at Burton Agnes, Yorkshire. I should add that the arms painted on shields in the spandrels of the bedroom chimney-pieces are the arms of the various families who have succeeded each other as owners of Chequers.

In these few notes I have limited myself to an account of the alterations actually made in the building during the recent works. Mr. Lee himself, in his very interesting address, told the history of the ownership of Chequers—of poor Lady Mary Grey, the state prisoner of William Hawtrey, of the Russells and the Rivetts, of the Colonel who was killed at Mal-Plaquet, and other memories that linger round the fine old house. The house has now been restored, as we hope, to something of its former beauty and dignity, and, in conclusion, I would point out that in this work there has been genuine co-operation between architect and client, and that the house, as you now see it finished and complete, owes not a little of its effect to the fine taste and discernment of Mr. and Mrs. Lee.

Aug., 1911.

REGINALD BLOMFIELD.