

THE LORDS OF GREAT HAMPDEN MANOR.*

BY JOHN PARKER, F.S.A.

ONE of the most striking facts connected with the history of our country seats is that the Manor of Hampden has been in the possession of the same family from the earliest period of authentic records. Its owners passed through the stern ordeal of William the Norman's confiscations, and the vicissitudes of our history, and the domains are their successor's to this day.

Hampden is written in Domesday H^aden^a. A roll of 1579 gives in its introduction an interesting account of the Hampden family. Baldwin de Hampden, in the time of the Confessor, circ. 1043, held this Manor.

The following is an extract from this roll. After the division by the Conqueror it tells us that "Amongst others the Maunō of Hampden fell to the lott of William Fitz-Ausculf, whereof at that tyme Osbert of Hampden was Lorde, who whether it were by monny or some other meane of friendship, so purchased the good will of the said William that he suffered the s^d Osbert to contynewe in quiet possession of his s^d Lordeshipp of Hampden."

I proceed to make some references to different owners of the Manor.

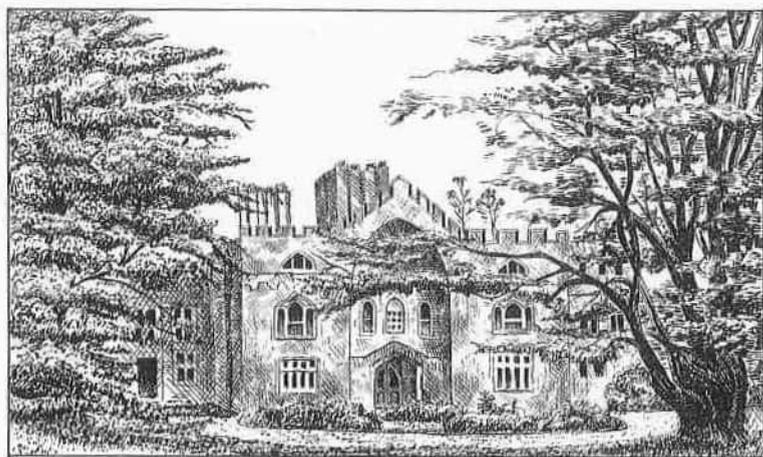
Osbert de Hampden held the Manor as subfeudatory tenant to William Fitz-Ausculf, circ. 1084.

Robert de Hampden, Knt., was the grandson of Osbert: his name was inscribed on a window in the house at Hampden, with his arms and mutilated coats of his ancestors, as also the names of Baldwyne and Osbert, and . . . Hampden, a Commissioner for putting out the Danes.

In following out the pedigree, Edmund Hampden, who died in 1420, by his will directed his body to be buried in Great Hampden Church, and a white stone to be laid on him "with this scripture"—

"Ye yat thys see pray ye for charitie
For Edmund's soule, and Jones a Paternoster and an Ave."

* This paper was read before the Society on the occasion of its visit to Great Hampden, on the 10th Aug., 1886.



HAMPDEN HOUSE.



HAMPDEN CHURCH.

This Edmund Hampden was Knight of this Shire in 1st, 3rd and 4th of Hen. IV., and Sheriff in the 2nd and 7th of that reign, and 3rd Henry V.

Thomas Hampden, who was Sheriff of Bucks and Beds in 1466 (7 Edw. IV.), by his will, made in 1482, directed his "body to be buried before the Image of St. Mary Magdalen* in the chancel of Hampden Church."

The directions which occur in the memorials of the Hampdens as to their burial show that very many of the family must lie in the precincts of Hampden Church.

A remark or two might here be interposed in reference to the church. The tower is the earliest part of the building, and is Early English in style. In it are three bells, with the date 1625, probably presented to the church by John Hampden, the patriot; the font is a beautiful specimen of decorated work; the west window is of the same style. The remainder of the church, nave, aisles, and chancel, is Perpendicular, well preserved, and an interesting specimen of this period of architecture. The oak benches on which the patriot must have sat are amongst the few to be seen in our parish churches, remaining as survivals of the destructive age which introduced the pew and its attendant evils.

Griffith Hampden, who was Sheriff for Bucks in 1575, entertained Queen Elizabeth at his seat with great magnificence, reminiscences of which still linger in the house and domains. The "Queen's Gap," cut for Elizabeth's approach, in the midst of these woodlands, recalls that royal visit. He was succeeded in the estates by his eldest son and heir.

William Hampden, the father of the patriot, was in 1592 M.P. for East Looe, and married Elizabeth, second daughter of Sir Henry Cromwell, Knight, of Huntingdonshire, aunt of Oliver Cromwell; hence the Protector's relationship with the Hampdens. Lipscomb calls attention to William Hampden's will, as indicating the manners of the country gentlemen of the period, "whose horses engrossed so much attention that even their names found a place in his testament." He died, according to the inscription on a brass plate in the chancel of Hampden Church, 2nd April, 1597. His widow, Elizabeth, lived

* The church is dedicated to this saint.

to an extreme old age, under the government of six sovereigns; she died in 1664, and was buried at Hampden.

John Hampden was born in 1594. He was educated at Thame Grammar School. The school, an Elizabethan building, near the church, still stands. He afterwards entered as a commoner at Magdalen College, Oxford. His first wife was Elizabeth, the daughter of Edmund Symeon, Esq., of Pyrton, Oxfordshire, by whom he had a numerous family. The only points in his life which I shall particularly notice are incidents in it connected with the county of Buckingham. He took his seat for Wendover in 1625, in Charles's first parliament, and subsequently represented that constituency. He was early an active member. Lord Nugent gives him the credit of taking an important part in restoring the custom to the boroughs of Marlow, Amersham, and Wendover of returning members. A MS. volume of Parliamentary cases is preserved at Chequers Court, which affords evidence of the pains Hampden took "to fortify himself in the science of precedent and privilege."* The unfortunate practice of Charles the First in devising means of obtaining money from the nation without the intervention of Parliament early aroused the opposition of Hampden. He refused the general loan to the King, saying, "That he could be content to lend as well as others, but feared to draw upon himself that curse in Magna Charta, which should be read twice a year against those who infringed it." For this refusal he was committed to the Gatehouse. We then find him retiring to his estate in Buckinghamshire. Then his wife dies, and we are told that his life was embittered by that sorrow. The epitaph he placed in the church to her memory one cannot fail to read with great interest.

It was the opposition of Hampden to the levying the ship money without the aid of Parliament that distinguished him as a foremost man of his times. The money raised at a period of great popular enthusiasm to repel the Spanish Armada formed the precedent for the ill-advised levy. At first the requisition was, as is well known, limited to the City of London and the maritime towns,

* See Lord Nugent's "Memoria's of Hampden," Third Ed., pp. 53, 54.

requiring of the inhabitants a supply of ships duly manned and otherwise equipped for the guarding of the kingdom. The tax was next extended to inland places; by Order in Council charge was laid on all counties, cities, and corporate towns, and all sheriffs were required, in case of refusal or delay in payment, to proceed by distress. In 1635 a writ was issued to Sir Peter Temple, of Stowe, then High Sheriff of Bucks, requiring that county to supply a ship of war of 450 tons burden and 150 men before the first of the then next ensuing March, and to provide mariners' wages for 26 weeks, or in lieu thereof a sum of £4,500 to be levied upon the inhabitants.* The return received by the Sheriff of Bucks showed payment delayed by the parishioners of Great Kimble. John Hampden heads the list of those who had tendered their refusal to the constables and assessors. A writ is issued against Hampden requiring him to show cause why a small sum of twenty shillings, charged on him in respect of his lands in the parish of Stoke Mandeville, the payment of which he on principle resisted, should not be satisfied. A great difference of opinion arose amongst the judges at the various stages of the trial, but the sentence of the majority was for the King. An assessment of ship money appears, however, never to have been made on the county of Buckingham after the trial in Hampden's case. After twelve years had elapsed without a Parliament, new writs were issued, and Hampden was returned as one of the members for Buckinghamshire. Lord Nugent tells us that abundant traces were found by him in the MS. Collection at Stowe that Hampden bore a diligent share in the affairs of his county; but from the time of this Parliament till his death, except at some few hasty intervals, he never returned to his house, to which he was greatly attached by the reminiscences of a life spent in study, and the pursuits suitable to his position as a country gentleman. The mansion which was his home, for the most part, we see to-day.† At this period Hampden marries his second wife, the Lady

* Lord Nugent's "Memorials of Hampden," Third Ed., p. 96.

† It is true that it was partly demolished and modernized in 1754; this mansion, however, standing as it does, according to tradition, on the site of the original building visited by King John, is well worth the special attention of the archaeologist.

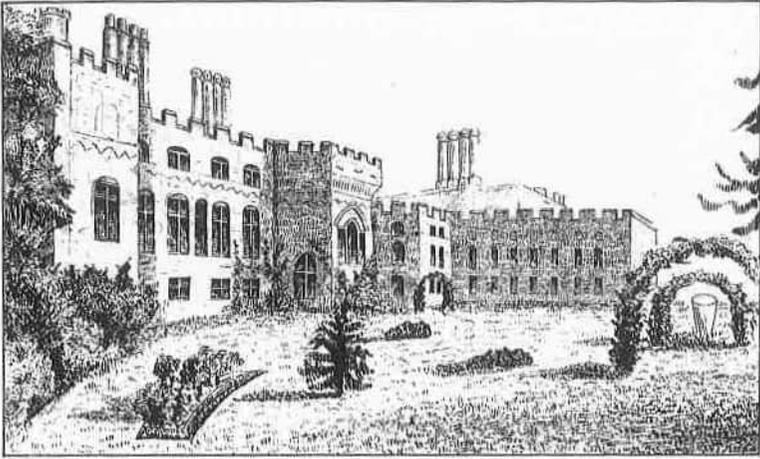
Letitia Vachell, by whom he had no issue. In 1640 Hampden is again returned for his county, as a member of the Long Parliament. The arrest of Hampden with the other five members of the House of Commons by the King on the charge of high treason aroused the sympathy of the freeholders of Buckinghamshire, and the famous petition by about four thousand of their body, who had ridden to Westminster from their county, was presented to the House, and from thence a select number of the petitioners repaired to Windsor, and prayed the King that Hampden and his fellow-prisoners might "enjoy the just privileges of Parliament." The King's answer, as we read, was conceived in a mild and prudent tone; but it would only be repeating history to pursue this incident farther. Suffice it to have recalled attention to the action of the county at this period.

Of all the Parliamentary leaders, it has been said that Hampden's conduct had been the most conciliatory, and the least influenced by animosity or passion—in fact, that "his professions and views may be shown to have been uniformly bound to the establishment of a freedom guarded by limited monarchy,"* but when the unfortunate time for taking up arms arrived, then in the Council of War and Committee of Public Safety he was in favour of bold and rapid enterprises. "Without question," Lord Clarendon says of him, "when he first drew his sword he threw away the scabbard." Yet at another time, Lord Clarendon remarks, "He was indeed a very wise man, and of great parts, and possessed with the most absolute spirit of popularity, and the most absolute faculties to govern the people of any man I ever knew."

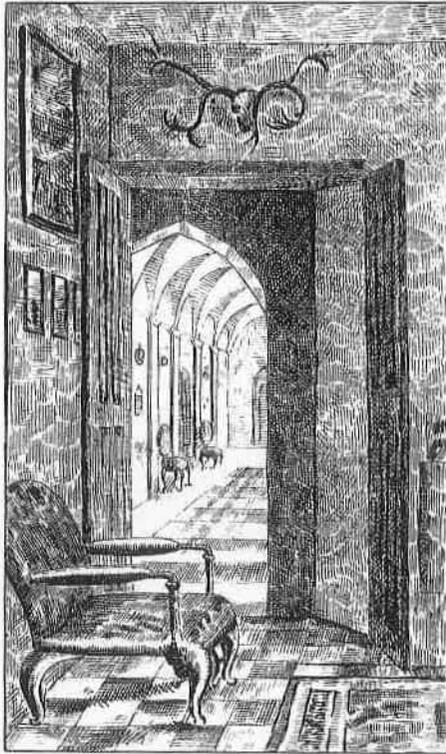
It was from his ancestral home that Hampden published the ordinance to marshal the militia of his county, and Buckinghamshire was forward to advance the cause he had espoused, for we find that £30,000 were contributed for the public service, for which the county received the thanks of Parliament through its representatives—Hampden and Goodwyn.

As the struggle between the King and the Parliament advanced, we find that Hampden took an earnest and conspicuous part. "He spared," it is said, "neither

* Lord Nugent's Memoirs, Third Ed., p. 180.



HAMPDEN HOUSE, FROM KING JOHN'S GARDEN.



GOTHIC CORRIDOR, HAMPDEN HOUSE.

his person nor his fortune in the cause. He subscribed two thousand pounds to the public service. He took a colonel's commission in the army, and went into Buckinghamshire to raise a regiment of infantry. His neighbours eagerly enlisted under his command. His men were known by their green uniforms, and by their standard, which bore on one side the watchword of the Parliament, 'God with us,' and on the other the device of Hampden, 'Vestigia nulla retrorsum.'" Now we find him dispatched to take the command at Aylesbury, where the magazines of the county lay, and where, supported by Hobbs, he was successful in a severe skirmish with the Cavaliers, the prisoners being sent to Buckingham and Wycombe gaols. Then he is seen with his own green coats and five guns opening his fire upon Rupert, during the closing events of the battle of Edge Hill. He is, too, one of the active generals under the Earl of Essex during the defence of London. He arranges the plan of the union of the six associated counties of which Buckinghamshire was one. Towards the close of the year 1642, his historian says of him :—"Hampden was almost daily on the road between the advanced posts of the army and London. With prodigious activity did he appear fulfilling, at almost the same time, the double duties of command in the field, and counsel in the close Committee, reporting to the House on the state of the army from the head-quarters, and of the nation from the Committee, and then, without stay of time or purpose, posting down to take command of his brigade in action, or to strengthen the garrison of some menaced town."*

With this rapid sketch of incidents in Hampden's career, we approach the concluding scene of his life. Prince Rupert, with his cavalry, issue out of Oxford, and we hear of his skirmishes at the foot of the Chilterns, at Postcombe and Chinnor, with detachments from Lord Essex's army, who was then quartered at Thame. Hampden, it appears, had rested the night at Wallingford, and on the alarm of Rupert's irruption, had sent off a trooper to the Lord-General at Thame, to advise the sending a force to intercept, at Chiselhampton Bridge, Rupert's return. With a troop of horse, who volunteered to fol-

* Lord Nugent's Memoirs, Third Ed., p. 320.

low him, and joined by some dragoons, he endeavoured to impede the retreat of the Cavaliers, till Lord Essex should make his disposition at this point of the river. It was in this direction, through Tetsworth, that Prince Rupert was skirmishing, when he sees the enemy's troops, and resolves to make a stand on the memorable Chalgrove Field. I have no intention to repeat the different accounts of that important struggle. It is told both by friends and foes that the Parliamentary troops charged very bravely and gallantly, that some of their best and chief officers fell. Hampden himself, we are told, put himself at the head of the attack, but in the first charge he received his death-wound. The Parliamentarians were outnumbered, and, dispirited by the supreme loss of Hampden, as disabled he retired from the field, could no longer keep their ground. The Lord-General was too late with his army, and Rupert gained the bridge and returned to Oxford with great booty. But as in life we have a very imperfect account of Hampden, so the cause of his death is still the subject of dispute. It was generally reported that he was shot in the shoulder with a brace of bullets; the other account is given by Echard. He says:—"A great man assured him that Hampden's death-wound proceeded from the breaking of one of his own pistols, which happened to be overcharged . . . presented to him by his son-in-law, Sir Robert Pye, to whom, at the first sight of him in his illness, he exclaimed, 'Ah! Robin, your unhappy present has been my ruin.'"*

Hampden withdrew to Thame, and there sank of his wounds.† His remains were conveyed, with all military

* The exhumation of the body of Hampden by Lord Nugent is believed to have proved the correctness of Echard's account. Lord Nugent makes no mention in his "Memoirs" of the disinterring of the body. His silence may have been from two causes. The one, that his anxiety had been to prove that his hero died by the wound of an enemy, and that he was disappointed to find his supposition could not be sustained; the other, that the circumstances attending the disinterring were not altogether satisfactory, the memory of which it was not desirable to perpetuate. The body of Hampden now lies at the north side of the chancel.

† Dr. F. G. Lee, in his "History and Antiquities of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Thame" (1883), page 539, says:—"He rode straight for the Greyhound Inn, an old hostel in the middle of the town, on the north side of the street, which he had no doubt known well from boyhood. There his wounds were dressed by a local surgeon, Mr. Ezekiel Brown, and there

honours, to the church where so many of his ancestors lay, and to the spot endeared to him by the most cherished associations; and thus is described the scene of that funeral procession as it wended from the little Oxfordshire town to the beautiful resting-place amid the Chiltern Hills. "The whole armie at his buriall followed, singing the 90th Psalm; and at their return the 43rd, with ensignes furled and muffled drums, their heads uncovered."*

Thus passed away one who was an irreparable loss to the Parliamentary party, and who, whatever differences may still exist as to the conflict between Charles and his Parliament, has always been recognized as a high-minded gentleman and a true lover of his country.

Among the authorities that should be consulted in studying the life of Hampden are Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion"; Evelyn's "Memoirs"; Anthony Wood; Whitelock; Rushworth's "Historical Collections"; Ludlow's "Memoirs"; Heath's "Chronicle of the late War"; Warwick's "Memoirs of King Charles I."; Newspapers—"Mercurius Aulicus," published at Oxford, and "Beligicus," published at the Hague; "Mercurius Rusticus"; Echard's, Rapine's, and Hume's Histories of England; The Stowe MSS.; MSS. in the possession of Sir Harry Verney; various articles in the Gentleman's Magazine; Isaac D'Israeli's "Commentaries on the Life of Charles I."; and Lord Nugent's "Memoirs."

John Hampden had issue by his first wife, Elizabeth, three sons and six daughters. He had no children by his second wife. Both wives are buried at Hampden.

Of the children of the patriot, Richard Hampden, his second son, represented Wendover, and also the county of Bucks. He died in 1695, and was buried at Hampden. A tablet to his memory is in the north aisle of the church. He was succeeded in the manor and estates by his son, John Hampden. He wanted the judgment of his grandfather. In 1683 he was engaged in the Rye House Plot.

he died." Some doubt has lately been raised with reference to Hampden's death at Thame; without entering into a discussion on the point, local tradition strongly confirms Dr. Lee's statement; the occurrence, as he gives it, has been previously related as an accepted fact.

* "A true and faithfull narrative of the death of Mr. Hampden," by Edward Clough, 1643. See Gen. Mag., v. 85, p. 50, pp. 395—6.

Echard says of him, "He was an unfortunate gentleman, who retained the hereditary temper of a family, which showed that the violent defence of the best things are often attended with the most pernicious consequences."

He had not long regained his liberty after the Rye House conspiracy when he joined the Duke of Monmouth in his rash endeavour to obtain possession of the throne. His plea of guilty, at his trial for this conspiracy, gained for him mercy. Bishop Burnet speaks of him as "a young man of great parts, one of the most learned gentlemen he had ever known, a critic in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, a man of great vivacity but unequal in temper."

He was succeeded in the possession of his estates by his son, Richard Hampden, Esq. He, too, represented Wendover and also the county of Buckingham. He died in 1728, and was buried at Hampden. Dying without issue, he was succeeded in this manor, and the estates, diminished in consequence of the deficiency in his accounts as Treasurer of His Majesty's Navy, by his half-brother, John Hampden, who was the last of the direct male line of the Hampdens. He also represented Wendover, and died unmarried on the 4th of February, 1754, and was buried at Hampden, having bequeathed his estates and name to the Hon. Robert Trevor (afterwards Baron Trevor and Viscount Hampden), descended from Ruth, eldest of the surviving daughters and co-heiresses of John Hampden, the patriot, *great-grandfather* of the testator, with remainder, in default of issue male, to the Hobarts, Earls of Buckinghamshire, descended from Mary, the youngest daughter of the patriot.

A reference to the will of this last of the Hampdens is worth making. He desires to be laid in Hampden Church by his dear mother; that his funeral may be private, if he happen not to die at Hampden, directing that he be put into the ground at sunrising, and not to be carried into Hampden House when he is dead.

It was the Robert Trevor who succeeded to the estates who erected the memorial in the church to commemorate John Hampden's mortal wound on Chalgrove Field.

The manor and estates continued in the Trevor family till the death of John Trevor, third Viscount Hampden, who died without issue on the 9th of September, 1824.

On his death his titles became extinct, and the manor descended to George Robert Hobart, Earl of Buckinghamshire. He was descended from Mary, the sixth and, as before mentioned, the youngest daughter of John Hampden, through the issue of her marriage with her second husband, Sir John Hobart, Bart., who was descended from the Hobarts of Mitcham in Norfolk, established there in the reign of Henry III.

The following pedigree will explain the descent of this manor from Mary Hampden to the present Earl of Buckinghamshire:

PEDIGREE.

