

Sopley Park.

THE RESIDENCE OF MR. JAMES KEMP-WELCH.

Bournemouth Graphic July 10, 1902



Sopley is situated between Christchurch and Ringwood, in the valley of the Avon, which is a never-failing source of delight to all who have an eye for the beautiful in nature. The village is noted chiefly for its quaint old church, around which cling many associations of great historical interest. Near here, too, is the place called Tyrell's Ford, where Sir Walter Tyrell crossed the river in his flight from the New Forest to Poole, after the death of King Rufus.

Sopley Park is the residence of Mr. James Kemp-Welch, one of the best known men in the district. He is a Justice of the Peace for the Ringwood division, Chairman of the Christchurch Board of Guardians, and, I doubt not, much more besides.

Mr. Kemp-Welch was kind enough to give me a free run with my camera, and my chief regret is that space forbids my reproducing this week many of the delightful pictures I secured during my ramble through his charming grounds.

Entering the park by an ivy-covered lodge, I came almost immediately upon a picturesque pool, on whose surface a number of swans were disporting themselves in their usual graceful fashion. The drive, lined on either side by banks of brilliant flowers and fragrant shrubs, with trees dotted here and there—firs, monkey-puzzlers, and hollies—sweeps boldly round to the front of the house, before which a stately cedar spreads its dark branches over the bright green turf. The turf is a speciality of the grounds. The house looks out upon an exquisitely-kept lawn, and in one direction, for quite a considerable distance, emerald green sward, smooth and soft as velvet pile, in sloping terraces or broad level expanses, spreads itself beneath one's feet.



The gardens are beautifully arranged and carefully kept. Roses largely prevail here, as in other parts of the park, with large groups of hollyhocks and similar old-fashioned flowers affording pleasant variety.

The house is a handsome brick structure, with elaborate stone facings. A new wing has been recently added, in which the principal features of the original building are carefully reproduced.

Sopley Park is not, as many people imagine, the home of Miss Lucy Kemp-Welch, the eminent artist; but it is only reasonable to suppose that during her visits to the New Forest for the purpose of making studies for her famous pictures, she is frequently the guest of her genial and popular kinsman at his delightful seat.