

THE VACHERY IRONWORKS.

BY

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TWO deeds relating to these ironworks have recently come to light. They are a conveyance of land from Sir Edward Bray and his son Reynolde to Johne Thorpe of East Grinstead, in English, and a Defeazance of a Recognizance or Statute Staple, in Latin, releasing a mortgage of the same property with precisely the same descriptions by John Griffith of Shere and Henry Pranell, dated respectively 11th and 13th November 1580.

Shere Vachery had been left to Edmund Bray in 1503 and passed to Sir Edward Bray, his grandnephew, who died in 1581.

The deeds are now in the possession of Mr. Julian Marks of Snoxhall, to whom I am indebted for much information. Mr. J. B. Waldy has also helped. So very few documents relating to this industry, then so important to the realm, are now extant that these are of great interest. The detailed descriptions enable us to identify the divisions with the present boundaries, which have changed very little. This is especially the case in regard to the Hammer Pond. Hitherto this has been supposed to have been upon the site of the present Vachery Pond, which was assumed to be an enlargement of it, but on reference to the map it will be seen that this is not the case. Whitwell's map of Surrey of 1603, and Speed's of 1610, show a couple of ponds with their longest axis east and west. These probably represent the Hammer Pond and the Stews. This latter was mentioned in the thirteenth century, and is just below the moated site of the ancient manor. Such ponds were then of great value.

The present Vachery Pond, of $42\frac{3}{4}$ acres, has its axis north-east and south-west, and forms a striking feature in the land-

scape from the hills in the north. It was made about 1813 to supply the Wey and Arun Canal, but where the stream from it reaches and flows beside the canal near Alfold Crossways it is apparently at a lower level, so that the water must have been raised by some means to fill the canal.

There is no record of when the works were started, but as early as June 1557, Owen Bray let Abinger Hammer to Thomas Elrington, who had married his sister.

This being a forge only, its pig iron was probably obtained from Vachery.

In the reign of Henry VIII much complaint was made as to the consumption of fuel by the ironworks, and in I. Elizabeth, 1558-59 an Act was passed prohibiting felling of trees one foot square at the stub for ironmaking, within 14 miles of the sea or any navigable river. In Surrey, Charlwood, Newdigate and Leigh were excepted. There was also a special exception granted to Elrington, against whom an information had been lodged.

The first date recorded as to Vachery is that of a complaint against John Gardyner als Lambert of Cranley and Richard West of Rudgewick that they on and after 15 November 1572 felled and made charcoal of 837 trees of 1 foot square at the stub, growing within 14 miles of Pulborough. The writ for West was not returned, but John Gardyner appeared and disputed the summons—apparently nothing came of it.

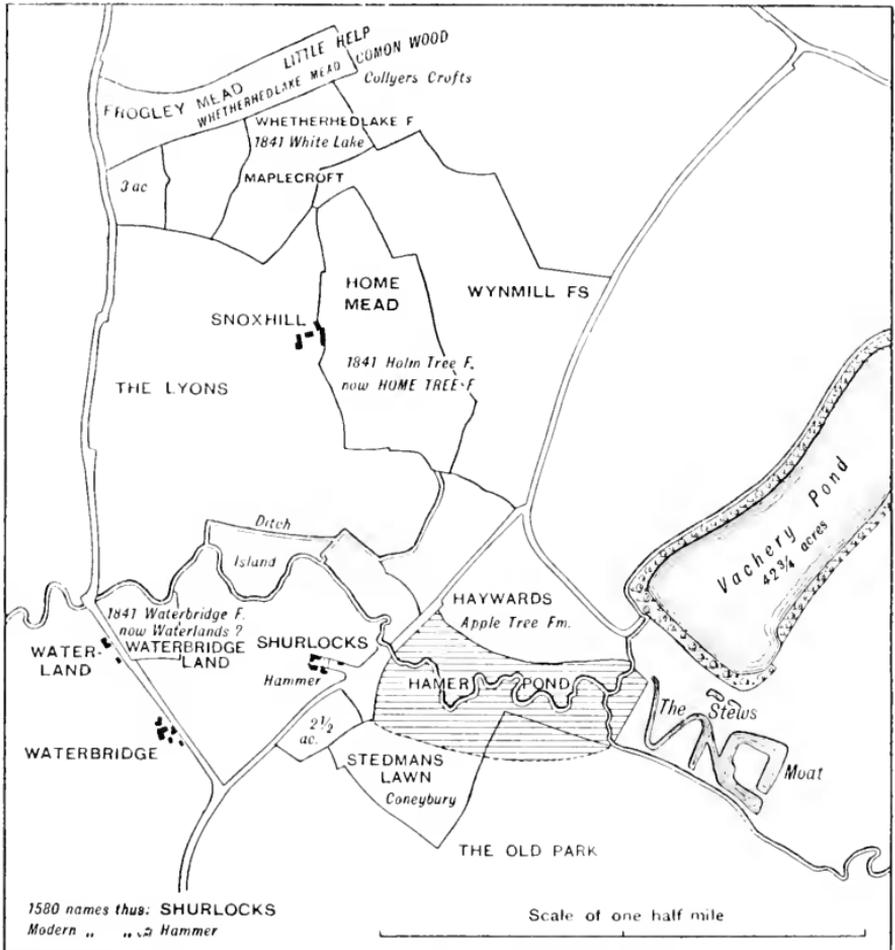
When all the Wealden ironmasters were warned to appear and give bonds not to sell cannon abroad, John Gardyner als Lambert was the first outside London to be visited, on 17th February 1574, as working a forge at Cranley for the Lady Bray. He also worked a forge for Isabel Ashburnham, probably Kitchenham.

On 6th June 1577, he took a lease of the works, perhaps then in partnership with John Duffield, a prominent ironmaster of East Grinstead, but at the date of the deeds John Thorpe, also of East Grinstead, who worked Warren Furnace and Woodcock Hammer in 1574, was the nominal owner.

In 1581 Thorpe and Gardyner were again summoned for having felled 400 trees of illegal size in Ewhurst parish, within 14 miles of Arundel River at "Polingham Kaye." Thorpe appeared and objected, again nothing was done.

There is no later record, possibly the supply of coppice wood was insufficient to keep the furnace going.

The conveyance is in English, and the release in Latin, this follows the conveyance word for word. They are far too long to reproduce, being complicated by the fact that each



SITE OF VACHERY IRONWORKS.

division is separately defined and bounded, as shown in the annexed map, founded on the Tithe Map of 1841.

In the case of Hammer Farm the estimated acreage is given, which as will be seen agrees very well with the tithe apportionment of 1841, before it was disturbed by the railway. At Snockhill, however, the area of only one division is

given, so that reliance can only be placed on the field-names.

The land conveyed is described as follows :

Shurlocks, 30 acres, " separated from the land called Snockshill by a certen ditch leading towards the Vachery orchard." This ditch is still extant and runs north of " The Island," now part of Snockshill Farm. There are 8 fields, totalling	30·625	acres
This is the main portion of the Hammer Farm.		
2½ acres, part of the Old Park. —This is field No. 1141a on the map, south of the farm	2·581	„
Waterbridge Land, No. 1151, 3½ acres	3·254	„
Hamer Pond (say 14 acres). —On the tithe map are 5 adjacent fields, Nos. 1140, 1141, 1148, 1149 and 1150, named as " Pond." One was still called 4 acre pond a few years ago, and another is still named 2 acre pond	14·174	„
Stedmans Lawn, 10 acres, south of pond, is now called Coneybury	8·543	„
Haywards, 16 acres. Is Nos. 1138, 1139, 1142 and 1143	16·522	„
Total as deeds, 77 acres	<u>75·699</u>	„

Snockshill Farm, a corruption of St. Enock's Hill, has retained its name. As there are no acres given in deeds, this cannot be checked like Hammer Farm. It was bounded on the north by Frogley Mead, still so called. There were also to the north, cited as bounds, but not as part of the farm, Whethered Lake Mead, Little Help *als.* Poor Help, the Common Wood, [*sic*] Collyers Croft and a field sometime part of Wynmill fields.

In the north-west we find " 3 acres towards the comon wood and to the lane." This is Furze Field, No. 1003. Next to the east is Knole Hill field, or Neat Hill field, No. 1002 on the tithe map. This may be one of the Maplecrofts, which appear in plural in the deeds. In the next row is Maplecroft, still so called, and Whetheredlake field, which in 1841 was called White Lake, now Kiln field. To the east of the house is Home Mead, now Holm Tree field, and further east Snockshill fields *als.* Wynmill fields.

The Lyon is west of the house, the present Lyonfields are on the other side of the lane, in a different property, but it is quite likely that the name occurred on the east side also. The farm did not extend to the west of the lane.