

It is interesting to note that Lieutenant-General Meredith Read lately visited St. Mary's Church, Reading, and immediately recognized the escutcheon on the Font bearing a chevron between three garbes, to which reference was made in the first notice, as the arms of his own family with which Thomas Vachell allied himself in 1546. The three incised escutcheons therefore bear the arms respectively of Reade, Vachell, and Knollys; the fourth is plain.

*(To be continued.)*

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## Swallowfield and its Owners.

*By Lady Russell.*

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*(Continued from page 74, Vol. III.)*

In October, 1715, Thomas Pitt writes to tell his son that a ship from St. George has brought him the news that "poor Benyon and Mr. Fleetwood\* are dead," and adds, "In the former I have had a great loss, which delays my leaving town till Monday."

In 1714, Thomas Pitt and his son Robert were returned for Old Sarum, and again in 1715. In this year Pitt was named one of the Commissioners for building fifty new Churches. Amongst those he built was St. Mary's at Abbott's Ann,† near Andover, where he had just bought an estate. It is a sad specimen of the debased taste of the day. In it there is a window to his memory.

In 1716 he was appointed Governor of Jamaica, and wrote to his son Robert, "with what you have wasted of my estate that I consigned to you, what settled, and what I permitt you to possess, what bestowed on your brothers and sisters amounts to upwards of 90,000*l*. I have been at great expenses at home, the great diamond unsold, so in my 64th yeare of my age, I am travelling to retrieve this, and

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\* Mr. Fleetwood, Governor of Fort St. George about 1686. His daughter Elizabeth married in 1726 Richard Shelley, son of Sir John Shelley, and was great-great-grandmother of the present owner of Swallowfield.

† The present Rector of Abbott's Ann, the Rev. T. Burrows Fenwick, is descended from a cousin of Governor Pitt's.

seek my quiett, and endeavour to forgett it if I can." Governor Pitt, however, never took up this appointment.

Probably the sale of his great diamond made him alter his mind. After having had it in his possession fifteen years, he sold it early in 1717 to the Regent Phillipe, Duc d'Orleans, for the French crown, during the minority of Louis XV. A model of the diamond had been sent to Paris to the celebrated John Law, who took it to the Regent, and to the Duc de St. Simon. Both Law and St. Simon agreed that France should become the possessor of the diamond which was up to that time decidedly the finest gem ever seen in Europe, it being described as "of the size of a plum, perfectly white, without spot and of an admirable water." The Duc d'Orleans accordingly agreed to buy it. The price to be given was £130,000 out of which £5,000 was to go to Law, which no doubt accounted for the advice given by the astute Scotch financier. Some accounts say that the sum was £135,000, but we have Governor Pitt's own account of the transaction written to his son Robert, on June 29th, 1717. He says, "The stone was sold for 2,000,000 lires, sixteen to one pound sterling—£125,000. I received the third of the money, and the remainder is in four payments, every six months, with five per cent. interest, for security of which I have crown jewels, four parcels, one to be delivered at each payment."\* The remainder was never paid, and when it was claimed from the French government by the children of Governor Pitt, the debt was fully admitted, but it was pronounced impossible to enter into the past transactions of the Regent. This being the case the price really received by Pitt must have depended, as Col. Yule says, "on the value of the three boxes of jewels pledged as security, respecting which there seems to be no evidence forthcoming." Lord Stanhope, (Governor Pitt's grandson) tells us that the diamond was carried over to Calais by Thomas Pitt himself, accompanied by his two sons, Lord Londonderry and Mr. John Pitt, and by his son-in-law Mr. Cholmondeley. Pitt probably concealed it on this occasion as he had done previously, by inserting it in the heel of his boot, for which purpose the heels were made extra high and very square, as may be seen in his portrait by Sir Godfrey Kneller, at Chevening.†

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\* In the inventory of the French Crown Jewels, drawn up in 1791, it is valued at £480,000.

† The further history of this diamond, henceforth called the Regent, is so eventful that it is deserving a special notice. In 1722, it was in the circlet of

Immediately after the sale of the diamond, Governor Pitt began to invest the money in land, and that same year he bought Boconnoc, in Cornwall, from Lady Mohun, and Swallowfield from Lord Clarendon.

On August 16th, 1718, Governor Pitt writes, "I went on Thursday to Swallowfield: Col. Otway\* and Mr. James were with me. We ordered many alterations which will, I fear, put me to vast expense. I wish I had a better head than Abbiss† there. The house has been made much more cheerfuller by the cutting down of trees."

On August 10th, 1721, he writes to his eldest son Robert, "Tomorrow morning I sett out for Swallowfield, and shall call at Eton to take your two boys with me, and some of their comroques; and will sett them down there again on Monday." The younger of these two boys was the future Lord Chatham. He had been sent to Eton at an early age and placed upon the foundation. We do not know which of his "comroques" went to Swallowfield, but amongst his chief friends at Eton were George, Lord Lyttleton, Henry Fox, 1st Lord Holland, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, Henry Feilding, and Charles Pratt, Lord Camden.

In November, 1722, Governor Pitt wrote from his lodgings in Pall Mall to his son Robert Pitt: "I hear that the villains at

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the crown worn by Louis XV. at his Coronation. In 1792, the National Assembly deposited it with the other jewels of the Crown at the Garde Meuble, from whence it was stolen and was not found till twelve months later. One account says in a ditch, and another in the timber-work of a garret in a Cabaret. In 1796, it was pledged to German bankers as security of horse-furniture. Redeemed in 1797, it was again pawned in 1798 for horse-furniture needed for the army, this time to Vandenberg, a banker of Amsterdam, who attracted crowds to see it in a glass case. When remonstrated upon the danger incurred by so doing, Vandenberg replied, "The Regent that is in the glass case is a sham, the real Regent is in my wife's stays." At the Coronation of Napoleon in 1804, he wore the Regent in the handle of his sword, where it was placed between the teeth of a crocodile, "unaware," as someone writes, "how much this gem had contributed towards raising up the most formidable opponent to his ambition." In 1815, the jewels were carried away by Louis XVIII. in his flight, but he brought them back at the second Restoration. On the Accession of Charles X., all the stones were re-set for his Coronation. They were then unused till 1854, when the Regent was placed in the Diadem of the 3rd Napoleon. In 1870, it was sent with the rest of the Regalia to the Governor of the Bank of France. In 1886 most of the French Crown jewels were sold, but the Regent was amongst the few retained, and was a short time ago in the cellars of the Treasury awaiting a special receptacle which was to be made for it in the Louvre.

\* Col. Otway, Governor of Jamaica.

† In his will, Governor Pitt left a legacy to his "servant James Abbiss."

Swallowfield are making more small arches to the Bridge towards the house. Let it be who it would that order it, they shall pay for it by the living God!" This is the bridge over the Blackwater in Swallowfield Park. It has five arches. On the top of the parapet on the Church side is a sundial, and underneath it and above the centre arch are the initials, "T.P., 1722."

Governor Pitt's grandson William (the future Lord Chatham), was frequently at Swallowfield in the year 1724. On March 31st, the Governor writes to his son Robert from London, "I set out for Swallowfield Friday, your son William goes with me." On May 12th he says, "I observe you have sent for your son William from Eton. He is a hopefull lad, and doubt not but he will answer yours and all his friends' expectations." On June 23rd he writes, "I shall be glad to see Will here as he goes to Eton, and I wonder you keep him so long after the time appointed;" and on July 5th he says: "Monday last I left Will at Eton."\*

1725. In the year 1725 Governor Pitt's health caused anxiety to his friends and family, and seems to have increased his natural testiness. Robert Pitt, his eldest son, whilst residing at Bath for his own health, which was very bad, had frequent letters concerning him from Sir Thomas Hardy. In one he says: "I dined with the old gentlemen (Gov. Pitt) last Saturday; the Col.† is at home again, so that we are very happy, if the keys were not carried to the old gentleman's bedside at 10 o'clock every night, so that there is no going to the Mascarado next Thursday without leave. There must be a grant obtained from the King for the park at Swallowfield, else anybody may rob the park of all the deer, and cannot be prosecuted." Two months later, the same correspondent writes: "I went to dine with Governor Pitt, and do not apprehend that there is anything amiss. The old gentleman was out of order last week, but is now pretty well again; but breaks still, and complains much of want of stomach, and eats more than I can do."

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\* William Pitt was entered at Trinity College, Oxford, in 1726.

† John Pitt, the Governor's third son, Col. of the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards.

*(To be continued.)*