



Historic Houses.

KING JOHN'S PALACE AT LITTLE LANGLEY, OXFORDSHIRE.

By F. N. Macnamara, M.D.

(Continued from page 21.)

Thomas de Langelee died in 1361 or 1362, but previous to his death he had in the year 1355, conveyed* his manor of Langley with the custodionship of the forest of Whichwood to Trustees to hold in trust for himself and his wife Alice during their lives with reversion to their sons, John, Peter and Simon, in succession. John was alive at the time of his father's death, but as well as his brothers died shortly after, victims in all probability to the Black Death. That neither of the sons long survived their father we learn from a very full account of the affairs of Thomas de Langelee, dated† September, 1362, in which no mention is made of them while their mother and her second husband, John Giffard, held the manor of Langley, the Bailiwick and all the lands and tenements in Oxfordshire lately those of Thomas de Langelee. Further in the year 1367‡ died Simon de Verney, consanguineus and heir of Thos. de Langelee, seised at his death of the manor of Langley and the custody of Whichwood Forest.

The inquisition of September, 1362, is an unusually interesting one, illustrating as it does the circumstances of the country life of the period, and especially does it exemplify the fact that, owing to the ravages committed amongst the agricultural labourers by the plague of 1348, the landowners were no longer themselves able to cultivate their manors profitably by the services of their villeins and cottars. Instead of attempting to do this any longer, they divided up their lands into farms, and had moreover to build houses and

* Inquis. 29 Ed. 3, 2 Nos., No. 41.

† Inquis. taken Sept. of 36 Ed. III., Chapter House Forest Rolls, Box 3, Oxon, No. 5.

‡ Inquis. P.M. of 42 Ed. III., No. 57, dated 7 June.

cottages for their tenants as an inducement to them to remain upon their land. The inquisition tells us that Thomas de Langelee built houses on his manor where before there was no house. Of these houses two were timber granges, which he built in the year 1352, one called Whytehevesdeplace, and the other Smyth's tenement, and he built also several cottages. Further he built a mill called Langeleyesmill which, however, was not in the manor, but in the lordship of Shipton. Also he built a grange and sheepfold on his manor of Middleton, and another such on his manor of Shorthampton. He made also a pit to take manure, and he dug a well in the forest upon Churchehull. The inquisition also tells us that he made, or completed, this well with slates which he brought from the grange at Ewelme, which is the grange of the King adjoining the chapel of Ewelme, which was taken into the hands of the King about the 20th year of his reign because the Abbot of Bruerne did not make the Chantry of the King in the Chapel. For his own use, de Langelee appropriated from the forest a piece of land called Bancroft, thirty perches in length by two in breadth, and he cut down trees from the forest to make a paling about his garden at Langelee, where formerly it was enclosed by a hedge.

Sir Thomas de Langelee was the last male representative of his house, though with three sons at his side he might well have hoped that his name and honours would be continued. Yet within four or five years of his death his sons were all dead, his widow had twice re-married, and his manor of Langley with the Bailiwick had been acquired by Roger de Elmerugge by the purchase of the rights of the widow, now Alice de Honyngton, and of those of the Verney family, the heirs of Thomas de Langelee. Collins in his *Peerage** of England, states that Alice (Elena?) sister of Sir Thomas, married William Verney son of Simon and father of Simon and William Verney. Such a relationship must have existed or the Verney family would not have become the heirs of de Langelee.† It is said that besides these sons, Thomas de Langelee had two daughters, one, Katherine married to Nicholas St. John, and another Alice married to John Percevall. Petronilla Simeon was one of those who renounced her rights to the de Langelee property, but her relationship to the family, if she had any, is unknown.

* Brydges' Edition, vol. vi., p. 693.

† Lansdowne MS., No. 863, fol. 65 b., a vol. of Collections of Sir Robert St. George, Clarencieux King of Arms.

And now in conclusion we return to the village of Shipton that we may notice very briefly the two ancient monuments which still exist in the north wall of the parish church. The monuments in question are two arched recesses beneath two of the windows of the north aisle. In one of the recesses the figure of a lady carved in stone has been placed, but manifestly the figure if entire could not be placed in the recess, it must have been taken from another tomb now destroyed. Traditionally the figure is said to be that of Isabel, daughter of an Earl of Warwick—more probably it is that of an Isabel de Clare who was lady of Shipton, and appears to have lived there, in the year 1316. The discussion, however, of this question would occupy more space than could now be spared for it. To return to the recesses, they and the windows above them are of the late Decorated which overlapped the early part of the Perpendicular Period and may be assigned to the years 1350—1380, which it will be noticed embraced the year of the death of Sir Thomas de Langelee. The earliest mention we have of these monuments is in the gatherings of Oxfordshire which Richard Lee, the Herald, made during his visitation of the County, A.D. 1574. From* these notes and from Anthony Wood's Mss. we learn that in a window with an old tomb under it were three blazened shields side by side the centre one gu. two bars on a chief az two bucks heads cabossed or, on one side Bendy of ten or and az (Montfort) on the other, or two bends gu. an escallop sa in the chief point (Tracey).† Now considering the place, de Langelee's parish Church, the period of the architecture, and the three shields side by side in the way usual with those of a man who had two wives, and that one of the wives' shields is that of Tracey, we have here very strong evidence that the shields were those of Sir Thomas de Langelee and his two wives, Margaret Tracey and Alice, whose shield declared her a de Montfort. As regards the second window, Lee notes:—In a wyndow with a parsonag in stone Lynge under yt very ancient two bars in chief two bucks heads cabossed (untinctured) and a lion rampant (untinctured). These may have been the arms of an ancestor of Thomas de Langelee and of his wife, or they may have been a repetition of the arms of Thomas in conjunction with, as his wife's

* Bodleian Mss., Wood D 14, and Wood Ed. I. and Ed. IV.

† Tracey of Toddington Glouc., descended John de Studeley, Lord of Studeley and Toddington, A.D. 1140. He married Grace dau. and heir of Henry de Tracey, Lord of Barnstaple, and by her had two sons, Ralph and William. The latter assumed the name and arms of his maternal ancestors.

arms the shield the lion rampant, which was also borne by the de Montforts.

But there is other and curious evidence that the bars and bucks' heads formed the armorial device of the de Langelees of Wychwood. Ancient* documents show that the Langelee manor and the Bailiwick, after the death of Sir Thomas, passed to Simon Verney his relative and heir, and that Simon died in 1367 leaving as his heir his brother William, then 22 years of age. In the year 1399, William's† daughter and heiress Alice was the first wife of John Danvers of Colthorpe, Banbury, and they had three sons Robert, Richard and John. Now the children and their descendants of John and Alice Danvers quartered, and do so now, the bucks' heads and bars with the Danvers arms, while the children and descendants of John's second wife, Joan Bruley, quartered Danvers and Bruley. The bucks' heads and bars were upon the escutcheon of Richard Danvers son of Alice (Verney), which till comparatively recent years hung upon the wall of Bicester church, and they may still be seen displayed upon the tomb of Richard's son, Sir John Danvers, in Dauntsey Church, and upon the tombs of other members of the family. The bars and bucks' heads were not the proper arms of Verney, but were doubtless assumed by the Verneys of Byfield when they inherited the property and honours of the de Langelees. The bars and bucks' heads are still borne on the shield of the Danvers family, who are the descendants and representatives of that Thomas de Langelee whom King John made Forester of Whychwood A.D. 1213.

* Oxon Fines Nos. 66, 67, 68 of 43 Ed. 3. Inquis. P.M. No. 41 of 29 Ed. 3. Inquis. P.M. No. 9 of 42 Ed. 3, 2 Nos. (20 Octr.) Inquis. P.M. No. 57 of 42 Ed. 3 (7 June), and others already named.

† Space will not allow of a more full account of this alliance, but reference may be made to Chapter 7 of "Memorials of the Danvers family" by the present writer (Hardy & Page, London, 1895); the history of the de Langelee family there given is amplified, and to some extent corrected, by the present sketch.