



The Wilcotes Family.

By W. F. Carter.

(Continued from page 113, Vol. 12.)

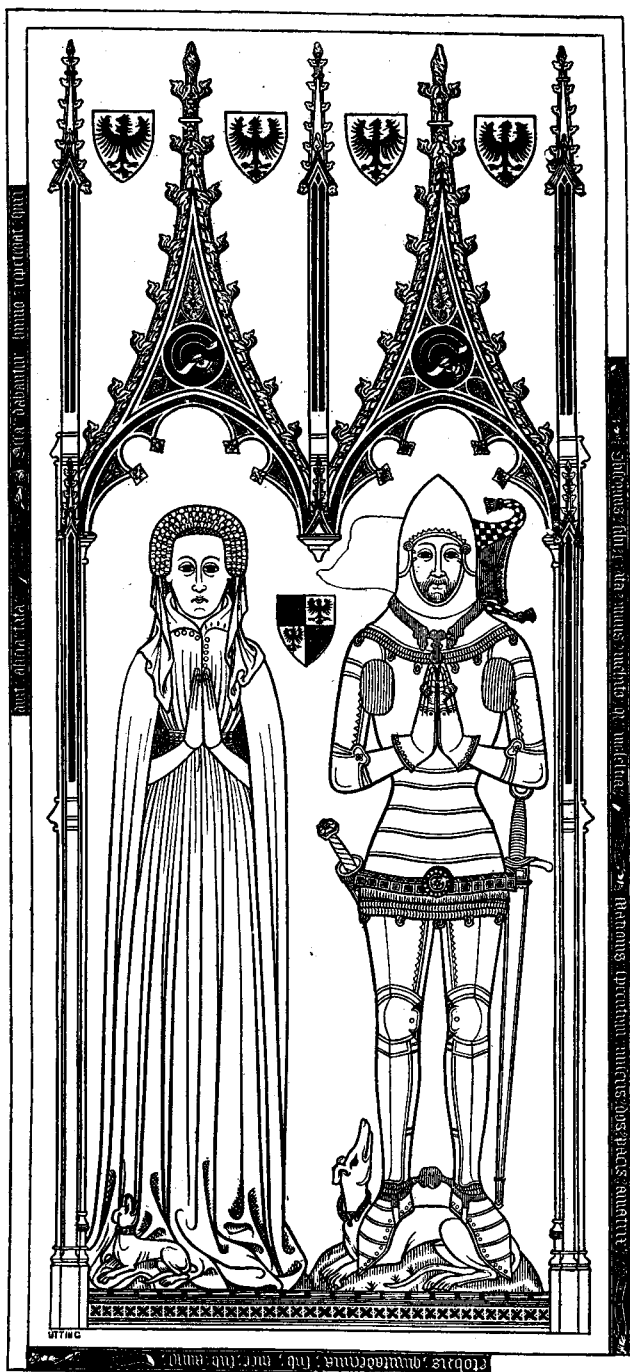
THOMAS WILCOTES (son and heir of William) was aged twenty-one at the date of his father's death. He died in November, 1415, very soon after the battle of Agincourt, which was fought on the 28th of October in that year; and I venture to assert that a little research will prove him to be the squire in the retinue of Henry the Fifth, whom Sir Harris Nicolas* disguises under the name of "Thomas Wilcokes." I do not believe that there was at that date anyone of the name of Wilcokes† likely to hold such an honourable position, or to provide, as stated, two men-at-arms and six foot-archers. The date of Thomas Wilcotes' death makes it probable that he died of his wounds, or of disease contracted during the Agincourt campaign.

Thomas Wilcotes is shown by his Inquisition P.M. to have died without issue, leaving his brother John his heir, who, as stated above, also died without issue, leaving his five sisters or their issue as his heirs.

I now come to the before-mentioned JOHN WILCOTES, of Great Tew. Like his [presumed] brother of Northleigh, he evidently married an heiress, whose christian name was Alice. She was the widow probably of some rather obscure person by whom she had had a daughter named Emma. I infer the obscurity of Alice's former husband from the apparently unfair settlement which was made on her marriage with John Wilcotes, whereby Emma's interest in Great Tew (which I consider, and hope to show, was Alice's

* History of the Battle of Agincourt, p. 386.

† Then quite a plebeian name, not occurring in the *Indices Nominum* of the four Volumes (Records Series) of Inquisitions Post Mortem, the nearest approach being that in II. Henry VI., a John ap Wilcok held one Knight's fee of Ann late wife of Edmund Earl of Kent (Vol. IV., p. 141).



BRASS OF JOHN WILCOTES AT GREAT TEW.

inheritance) was postponed in favour of the heirs of the body of Alice and her second husband.

In any case, however, Emma evidently died without issue, and Alice also dying, John Wilcotes found himself, under the settlement, absolute lord of Great Tew. He conveyed it to Trustees, and by his will settled it on his daughter Elizabeth and her heirs with remainder to Sir John Wilcotes, Knight, evidently, as I have already stated, the heir male of the family. By his will, John Wilcotes of Tew, also settled Dene and the Chalcords upon his younger daughter Margaret and her heirs, and gave his illegitimate son Thomas a chance, by placing him next in remainder for those estates. I suspect that this Thomas was handsomely endowed with money instead of lands, for he was doubtless the M.P. for Blechingley as mentioned by Dr. Macnamara (p. 105), and probably purchased Dene and the Chalcords from Margaret his sister, who, as Dr. Macnamara shows (p. 104), conveyed them to him.

I now come to

Part III., which is Dr. Macnamara's account of the Family known as de Preaux, de Preaus, Prewes, or in Latin *de Pratellis*.

Dr. Macnamara (p. 107) traces the history of Great Tew as held by the Prewes Family from an early date down to 1303, when John Prewes confirmed it to Ralph his son and Alice wife of Ralph, whose son and heir William (aged 16 in 1333) held it in 1345. From that date we lose sight of it until 1398, when the Inquisition P.M. of Roger Mortimer states that it was held by "the heirs of Ralph de Prewes." It is obvious therefore that dates would allow of John Wilcotes of Great Tew being the *son* of an heiress of Prewes. I think, however, it is almost certain from the evidences given, that he was the *husband* of that heiress who was of course his wife Alice. I think so, for the following reasons :—

- (1) It is clear that John Wilcotes would have liked to keep Great Tew in the male line of his family, for though he did not go so far as to deprive both his daughters of it, he did prefer the heir male by making him the remainder-man after Elizabeth and her heirs, to the detriment of the chance of Margaret the younger daughter.
- (2) Therefore he would not, I think, if Great Tew had been his own, have permitted the remainder to his

step-daughter Emma which was obviously detrimental to his Wilcotes' kinsfolk, and indeed to his own possible heirs by any subsequent wife.

- (3) Therefore I infer that he could not help himself; that Great Tew came with Alice; that she consented to postpone her daughter's claims in the interest of issue which might come to herself and John, but declined to sacrifice those interests in favour of heirs of John not descended from herself.

These arguments are merely inferential, but there is the direct evidence of the quartered shield on the brass in Great Tew Church, which shows that Alice was an heiress.

There is also direct evidence that she was the heiress of Prewes, for Lee has recorded* that in Tew Church was the following shield† set up, and over it written:—

“John Wylcotes and Alice his wyfe ob. mcccc xxxx.”

Quarterly: 1 & 4 Azure an eagle displayed argent, ducally gorged or.

2 & 3 Or, an eagle displayed gules.

The first and fourth quarters are obviously John Wilcotes' arms, the tincture of the eagle's collar being gold instead of the gules given above.

The second and third quarters, representing undoubtedly the arms of Alice, are neither more nor less than the arms of Preaus, Prewes or *de Pratellis, with the tinctures reversed!*

Although the Heralds, relying on the Rainsford farrago, ascribed another coat, namely, *Or, three chevrons interlaced sable, on a chief gules three roundels argent.* to the name of Pratell, there is good evidence that the Prewes Arms were really *Gules, an eagle displayed or.* Thus, Planché's Roll‡ (temp. Edw. I.) gives the Arms of “Piers de Preaus” as *Gules, an eagle displayed or, a label of five points azure.* Again, in an elaborate account of the Preaux Family published in “The Genealogical Magazine,”§ it is stated that “the Arms of the Family have always been *Gules, an eagle displayed or.*”

It may be that Alice was not a Preaux (or Prewse) by birth, but the daughter and heiress of a Preaux heiress whose husband

* Harl. Soc., Visitations of Oxfordshire, p. 49.

† I expect that he is referring to the monumental brass on which the heraldic tinctures would be visible in his day.

‡ The Genealogist, N.S. III. 173.

§ Vol. I., p. 543.

assumed the Preaux Arms with the difference of tinctures reversed ; it may be that the Great Tew branch of the Preaux Family preferred a slight variation in their arms ; or it may be—and this is the most probable explanation—that the herald in taking hurried notes of the church monuments, accidentally reversed the tinctures in his description of the shield. But in any case, even with the tinctures reversed, the coincidence is too remarkable to be the work of chance. We may safely affirm that Alice the wife of John Wilcotes, Alice of the monumental brass, the “*Matronis speculum miseris dos, pacis amatrix*” was heiress of the de Prewses, and inheritress of their Manor of Great Tew.

Carmundzlea at Appleton, Berks.

By John Edward Field, M.A.,

*Vicar of Benson.**

THE early records and traditions of Abingdon Abbey have come down to us in two beautiful manuscripts of the thirteenth century in the Cottonian Library in the British Museum.¹ They were edited under the title *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon* by the Rev. Joseph Stevenson under the direction of the Master of the Rolls in 1858. A large number of charters, some of them genuine and some of them doubtful or spurious, bestowing grants of land upon the Abbey, are incorporated into the work.

In the reign of Kinwin, or Centwin, King of the West Saxons, we are told, there was an under-King named Cissa ruling in Wiltshire and the chief part of Berkshire. Hean, the founder and first Abbot of Abingdon, “a man very rich and powerful and religious,” was nephew to Cissa ; and Cilla, elsewhere called Ceolwitha, was the sister of Hean.² From a document described as the Testament of

* The writer desires to acknowledge much assistance from the Rev. W. Moore, M.A., Rector of Appleton.

1. MSS. Claud. B vi. and Claud. C ix. It will be convenient to refer to them as B and C.

2. *De Abbatibus Abendoniae* (MS. Cott. Vitell, A, 13), in *Abingdon Chron.* II. App. II. 268, 269.