

The Vachells of Coley.

By ARTHUR C. VACHELL.

The Vachells of Coley, whose story was told in this Journal in 1893¹, appear to have resided in or about Reading for three generations prior to the first of the family mentioned by the Rev. G. P. Crawford, or in the other recorded pedigrees. According to the Berkshire Assize Rolls, the first was one Roger Vachell whose widow Agnes, and son Walter, were subsequently engaged in litigation about property in Reading. Their son, Walter, was a buyer of property in Burghfield in 1239. There are frequent mentions of him in connection with property in Reading, and its neighbourhood, and he married Susanna (*Fine Rolls*).

The next to be mentioned is John Vachell who made considerable purchases of land in Burghfield, Tilehurst and the neighbourhood of Reading. He probably was a merchant, as there is a record of his being appointed one of the merchants for the purchase of wool in the county of Berks. Query: was he Sheriff in 1297? He met with a violent death, as there is a pardon in 1303 to "Walter, son of Roger de Dubbere of Redingg for the death of John Fachel of Redingg" and of his abjuration of the realm. There is no definite evidence on the point, but it seems very likely that this John Vachell was the member of the family who disputed the Abbot's right of way through his property, and in fury killed a monk, in consequence of which he was compelled to fly, and the family took their motto of "*Better suffer than revenge.*"

This seems to be supported by the fact that the next Vachell mentioned, and the first in Mr. Crawford's pedigree, who was a counsellor at law, and Bailiff of the manor of Cookham, very shortly afterwards transferred a house in Reading to the Abbey, which the Almoner says "he obtained" from John Vachell, and on his death in 1342, his widow Alice, and his son Sir John Vachell,

¹ *Quart. Journ. Berks. Archaeological and Architectural Society*, III, 2.

handed over further property to found two wax lights to burn daily before the altar of St. Mary in the Conventual Church of Reading for the souls of the said John and his ancestors.

The family are obviously of French origin, and from the alternative Arms, to their 15th century Arms of a *Bendy Ermine and Azure*, namely *gules, three lions rampant argent, crowned or*, as attributed to them in Papworth, Berry, Robson and other works, are doubtless members of the Vache family represented in Oxfordshire by La Vache, and in Buckinghamshire by De La Vache, who bore the same Arms. These Arms are also given in France as those of an English family named Vache of French origin.

The first of the De La Vache family to be mentioned is Warner De Vacca who was holding in 1166 in Buckinghamshire, Chalfont St. Giles, a fee of Hamon son of Meinfelin who according to *V.C.H. Bucks.* was obviously the ancestor of Sir Richard De La Vache. The Vache Manor, Bucks, takes its name from this family.

The name Vachell in its original form, spelt with one L as in Vachel Road, Reading, which was its original form, still exists in Northern France. The Arms of Vache, quartered with Vachell, were hanging in the Vachell Aisle in St. Mary's Reading in 1644.

TANFIELD VACHELL.

Tanfield Vachell was the only surviving son of John Vachell (third son of Walter Vachell of Sulhamstead Bannister) and Marie Vincent, daughter of Clement Vincent, co. Leicester. He was baptised at Gayton co. Northampton, 27th December 1602. His father's next brother, Francis, married Anne, daughter of Robert Tanfield of that place, and he had an only son (surviving) Thomas, baptised there July 10th 1605. Both Tanfield and Thomas went to Oxford; Tanfield taking his B.A. from Exeter College in 1622 and Thomas from Brasenose on the 27th June, 1605.

In 1633 Sir Thomas Vachell, the eldest of Walter's three sons having married three times, but having no issue, and in whom the whole of the Vachell estates had concentrated, despairing of anyone of his name and blood to inherit his manors, approached Thomas

his nephew to prevail upon him to marry, which he refused to do. He thereupon applied himself to Tanfield, who agreed to do so and married Anne, daughter of Mary Coxe, widow of an alderman of London, when he settled a large part of the estates upon him. She died in 1651, and was buried in the chancel of St. Mary Woolnoth.

In the following year Tanfield Vachell married Rebecca, daughter of Sir William Leman, baronet, Treasurer of War to the Parliament. She survived him, but he had no issue by either wife, and the estates passed on his death to Thomas, the infant son of his cousin Thomas Vachell.

Influenced no doubt by the second marriage of Sir Thomas Vachell's widow, Lady Letitia Vachell, to John Hampden, he espoused the cause of Parliament. There is an entry on 1st November 1642 in England's memorable accidents: "Oneale the Sergeant to Count Robert, sent a letter to Mr. Vachell the High Sheriff of Berkshire, commanding him in the King's name to raise the power of that county to conduct the King through it, but he stayed the messenger and refused to obey it, doubting lest by that will the Train Bands might be disarmed as in other counties they have bin. Reding in Berkshire is well fortified but they want Ordinance which long before this time they might have obtained had not the love of their money hindered it, which neglect they may chance wofully to lament should they happen to be plundered." There is a short further note: "It is reported that the Malignants in Reding have plundered the well affected amongst them and that the great ones in the town fetched the King with his army in thither with much pomp and ringing of bells."

Tanfield Vachell became member for Reading in 1645. His disputed election is dealt with at great length in Man's History of that town. Beyond sitting on various committees for the Parliament, he does not seem to have taken any active part in the affairs of those times, but to have devoted himself to the collection of rare pictures, books and curios.¹ In this he was

¹ A valuation of his pictures about 1670 I was told at the National Gallery was of some interest. The famous Vandyck of the Duke of Buckingham and Lord Francis Villiers afterwards returned to Charles II £100! Venus naked by Lely £40, and pictures by Teniers and Wouwerman £10 and £15 and so on. He held 17 of the Royal pictures.

probably assisted by Sir Peter Lely, by whom he was painted ("The Vachell family," exhibited in 1862). He lived at Reading Abbey, which he rented, and on his death the rarities were found there.

By his will he gave the use of all his "several paintings and books of print, his collection of medals in gold, silver and brass; all his ware, turnings of ivory and guyacombe with his presse of bookes and his chest of drawers with the perspective in it, to his wife for life, and failing issue to the son of his kinsman Thomas. That by God's blessing they may remain as an heirloom to such person and persons as should inherit his manors and lands in the said county of Berks whom he desired might prove lovers of learning, Ingenuity of Arts." A codicil executed in his last sickness, led to about fifteen years' litigation between his widow and his heir, and eventually after calling in the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chief Baron and various civilians, the case was decided in favour of his heir. It is still a leading case—*Vachell v. Leman*.

Tanfield Vachell was buried at St. Mary's, Reading on 1st June, 1658. The funeral conducted by the heralds (I imagine) does not appear to be reported, but from its cost, £403, in the money of those days, it must have been one of some importance.