

## THE ESSEX SACKVILLES.<sup>1</sup>

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Just outside the borough boundary of Colchester, the boundary of its ancient liberty, there lies the village of West Bergholt, otherwise named in former times Bergholt Sackville, which is thus distinguished from East Bergholt, Constable's Bergholt, lying in the valley of the Stour. West Bergholt, with Mount Bures, which is divided from it by Fordham parish, formed, in the twelfth century, the estate of the Sackvilles, and I hold therefore that the mount, or *motte*, from which this Bures is named, and which still adjoins its Norman church, a frequent and significant conjunction, represents the castle of the Sackvilles.

These two manors, Mount Bures and Bergholt, were held at the time of the Domesday Survey (1086), by Roger of Poitou, the lord of the honour of Lancaster, and thus it came about that in 1212 Geoffry de "Sakeville" was returned as holding them as two knights' fees of the honour of Lancaster.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the majority of Norman houses, the Sackvilles were destined to a long continuance, and eventually attained the highest rank, in the peerage of this country. We would seek, therefore, to know from what part they came when they settled in the neighbourhood of Colchester. It is not always easy to trace the origin of a Norman house; even when we are sure of the right form of its name, that name may belong to more than one Norman village.

Now in Normandy we have a Sacquenville (Eure), near Evreux, a Garcelles-Secqueville, S.W. of Caen, a Secqueville-en-Bessin (Calvados), E.S.E. of Bayeux, and a Sauqueville in the Seine Inférieure. The author of that mischievous book, *The Norman People*, which deals specially with these matters, ignored all four, and derived

<sup>1</sup> Read at the Colchester meeting of the Institute, July 24th, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> *Liber Rubeus*, 590.

the family from "Sageville, Isle of France."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, he definitely identified the Essex with the Devonshire family.<sup>2</sup> In both these errors he was, as usual, followed by the Duchess of Cleveland in her work, by no means without value, on *The Battle Abbey Roll*.<sup>3</sup>

Now the first thing we have to do is to realise that the Essex and the Devon families were wholly distinct in origin. The former were Sackvilles; the latter were Seckvilles,<sup>4</sup> and this distinction, the *a* and the *e*, is clearly marked throughout the text of *The Red Book of the Exchequer*. In the official edition, however, the editor has carefully and deliberately muddled them up in the index. From the form of the name we may, I think, safely derive the Devon family from Secqueville in the Calvados.

Of the origin of the Essex house I can speak more positively. Those who have travelled to Paris by the Dieppe and Rouen line will have followed, after leaving Dieppe, the little valley of the Scie, a small flat valley bordered by low hills partly covered with the characteristic spindle-shanked trees of the district. In this valley our Essex Sackvilles had their Norman home. Sauqueville is now a dull village, in which a gaunt schoolhouse is the chief edifice; but a few houses have the Norman equivalent of our English post and pan work. Beyond it you come to Anneville-sur-Scie, which is found, with West Bergholt, among the Sackvilles' possessions; and further on, you come to Longueville-la-Giffard, the home of that mighty race, where Walter Giffard founded his priory of Sainte Foy, a house to which our Sackvilles were benefactors.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, you reach that Heugleville-sur-Scie, of which Gulbert de Heugleville was lord, Gulbert of whom Mr. Freeman wrote that he should be "in English eyes the noblest of the men who followed William," for, after the Conquest, he "turned away, refusing lands and honours in the

<sup>1</sup> 391, 410.

<sup>2</sup> See page 410. The family is also dealt with under "Sackville" at page 387.

<sup>3</sup> iii, 398.

<sup>4</sup> This name was Latinised as *Sicca Filla*. (*Cf. Feudal Aids*, i.)

<sup>5</sup> See below. A connection with the

Giffards is further indicated by writs of Henry I. to Jordan de "Saccevilla" and to Walter Giffard concerning the same land (*Abingd. Cart.*, ii, 85), and by the fact that a William de Saukeville was holding one knight's fee of Earl Walter Giffard in 1166.

conquered island, and went back to his Norman home, choosing rather to hold with a good right the modest heritage of his fathers than to stain his hands with wealth which was won only by wrong and robbery."

To the lucky chance that his son Walter, who succeeded him as a young man in 1079, went to Sauqueville for a bride, we are indebted for our earliest mention of the Sackville family. For Avice de Sackville was a pious girl who attended mass and "hours" daily, and, above all, befriended monks. This her husband, in his giddy youth, had failed to do; but Avice taught him better. She presented him with twelve children in fifteen years, and then died, whereupon her epitaph was written by no less distinguished a chronicler than Orderic Vitalis. It is he who speaks of her three brothers, Jordan, William, and Robert de Sackville as *tres praeclaros milites*.<sup>1</sup>

The first known Sackville of Bergholt and Bures is Robert, the youngest of the three, who lived about the time of Henry I. and Stephen. This Robert became a monk in St. John's Abbey, Colchester, and the price he paid for his admission was his manor of Wickham, Suffolk, which he bestowed upon the abbey in the presence and by the permission of King Stephen's son and heir, count Eustace.<sup>2</sup> From the confirmation of his son Jordan we learn that Robert's gift was made with the consent of his wife, Letitia, and of his sons and heirs (*filiorum et heredum*), Jordan and Stephen, a formula which suggests that he held Wickham in right of his wife. Robert was also a benefactor to St. Botolph's Priory, Colchester, to which he gave land at Fordham.<sup>3</sup> When King Stephen, before his accession, founded Furness abbey in 1127, as lord of the honour of Lancaster, this Robert was a witness to the foundation charter,<sup>4</sup> and the Stephen de "Saukevill" who held

<sup>1</sup> Orderic here gives the name as "Salchevilla."

<sup>2</sup> See *Colchester Cartulary*, Roxburghe Club, 51, 113, 131, etc. In the charter of donation (of which the original is now in the Bodleian), the name appears as "Salchevilla," and in the relative documents it is "Saukevilla,"

but "Saucovilla" and "Sacavilla" in Stephen's confirmation of the gift.

<sup>3</sup> De feudo Roberti de Sakevill totam terram quam habent in Fordham (*Charter of Richard I.*, 1189).

<sup>4</sup> Farrer's *Lancashire Pipe Rolls*, 392.

Mendham (Suffolk) of that honour in 1175–1181, was just possibly his son.

Robert had apparently acted at one time as *dapifer* to Stephen, for he so attests a charter of his as count of Mortain, concerning Winchester,<sup>1</sup> and he subsequently attested a charter of his as king, at Rouen in 1137, his name then appearing as Robert “de Sauquevilla,”<sup>2</sup> and others at Colchester and at Ipswich.<sup>3</sup> But the first definite mention of Robert in connection with his future king is in 1120, when, after the disaster of the “White Ship,” the garrison of Mortain, we read, were specially conspicuous in searching along the coast for the bodies of the drowned, because almost all the barons and best knights of the *comte* had been lost. Count Stephen himself with Robert de Sackville (*Salcavilla*) and another lord alone escaped.<sup>4</sup>

Jordan, Robert’s son and heir in Essex, had a dispute with Robert de Torigny, the famous abbot of Mont St. Michel,<sup>5</sup> which was solemnly settled at Caen in 1157.<sup>6</sup> About the same time he witnessed a charter of Stephen’s son William, count of Boulogne, Mortain and Warenne, at Coutances,<sup>7</sup> while a charter of Henry II. in 1155, had confirmed to Longueville priory the gift of Jordan “de Saukevilla,” and the tithe of the land which Jordan gave with his daughter in marriage.<sup>8</sup> He granted to St. John’s Abbey that the four monks who were to have been established at Wickham to pray for his father’s soul, should thenceforth serve God in the abbey itself,<sup>9</sup> reserving to himself or any of his brothers the right to be received as a monk there; and Nigel<sup>10</sup> is now mentioned as a brother as well as Stephen. It is

<sup>1</sup> *Merton Cartulary*, Cott. MS. Cleopatra, cvii, No. 138, fol. 77.

<sup>2</sup> See my *Calendar of Documents preserved in France*, 373–4.

<sup>3</sup> *Colchester Cartulary*, 33.

<sup>4</sup> Municipis Moritoli præ ceteris suos obnixè quæsierunt, quia pene omnes illius comitatus barones et electi optiones perierunt. Solus comes . . . et duo milites, Robertus de Salcavilla et Gualterius egressi sunt (*Ord. Vit.*). The French editor observes that Robert came, he thinks, from Sauqueville, not from the Mortain district, in which he is right. He adds that a charter of

William Giffard, bishop of Winchester, is witnessed by him and his two elder brothers.

<sup>5</sup> It is remarkable that Jordan is a Breton name.

<sup>6</sup> *Chronicles of Stephen*, etc., Rolls Series, iv, 339.

<sup>7</sup> See my *Calendar of Documents*, 343.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>9</sup> *Colchester Cartulary*, 132.

<sup>10</sup> A Nigel de Sackville was excommunicated by Becket in 1171 for having seized Harrow church.

noteworthy that not only his mother Letitia, but Bartholomew de Glanville, joined in this grant,<sup>1</sup> for which Jordan received consideration both in money and in land.

Conversely, too, when Bartholomew de Glanville confirmed his father William's gifts at Bactun to Bromholme priory, Norfolk, the first lay witness to his charter is Jordan de Sackville, who takes precedence even of all the Glanvilles who are witnesses.<sup>2</sup> We note also that the name of Bartholomew's daughter, as of Jordan's mother, was Letitia.<sup>3</sup>

In the next generation Geoffrey de Sackville further increased the Wickham endowment, and it is significant that to his two grants<sup>4</sup> (1189-1193) the first three witnesses are Hubert (Walter), bishop of Salisbury, Bartholomew his brother, and William de Glanville, for this points to a very interesting East Anglian family connection, Hubert Walter's father, and Ranulf de Glanville, the great justiciar, being the husbands of two sisters.

We now come to the important marriage which connected the Sackvilles with Sussex. Jordan, known to the monks of Colchester as Jordan de Sackville the second, married Ela, daughter of Ralph de Dene, founder of Otham abbey adjoining Hailsham in Sussex about 1180.<sup>5</sup> Ela inherited not only the patronage of Otham abbey, but several Sussex manors, among which was Buckhurst from which the Sackvilles eventually took their title when they were raised to the peerage. In Sussex Ela is chiefly memorable for having granted to the canons of her father's abbey permission to remove to Bayham abbey as being pleasanter quarters. In Essex her dower is the subject of a most interesting agreement entered on a Pipe Roll of John's reign. After the death of Jordan de Sackville, by whom she had a son and heir, Geoffrey, she took for a husband William de Marci of

<sup>1</sup> Illam elemosinam Jordanus cum matre sua Letitia et Bartholomeo de Glanvilla super altare sancti Johannis obtulit. *Ibid.* 132.

<sup>2</sup> The best text of this charter is in Napier and Stevenson's *Crawford Charters* (in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*), 33. But it is also given in the *Monasticon*, v. 63.

<sup>3</sup> A Bartholomew de Sackville, and

a Jordan de Glanville, are found in charters.

<sup>4</sup> *Colchester Cartulary*, 133. They are also witnessed by Otho, sheriff of Essex.

<sup>5</sup> If it was this Jordan who married Clementia, daughter and co-heiress of William de Chesney of Norfolk, that must have been a previous marriage.

Faulkbourne, son of Ralf de Marci. Him again she survived, and held the vill of Faulkbourne, which he had granted her in dower, and his gift in which she confirmed to St. John's Abbey by her charter granted, as befitted a great lady, in her maiden name of Ela de Dene.<sup>1</sup>

But the agreement of which I speak refers to her previous dower. By that agreement she granted to Geoffrey de Sackville her son the dower given her by Jordan his father, her former husband, in Bergholt and elsewhere in England, and in "Aneville" and elsewhere in Normandy. Here you will observe we have that Anneville which, as I showed, adjoins Sauqueville. Now come the curious details. She reserves to herself four mercates of rent in Bergholt, of which thirty shillings were due from Newbridge mill,<sup>2</sup> and the rest from other holdings including that of Ælfgar "de la Milende," evidently that same Milend which still adjoins Colchester on the north. In the further arrangements Geoffrey grants her his mills at Mount Bures; but the point I wish to make is that Newbridge mill, like Newbridge itself, was known by that name seven centuries ago.

The Lady Ela had sons by both husbands, and accordingly we find her sons witnessing as Geoffrey de Sackville and Ralf de Marci his brother.<sup>3</sup> The position of Ela's first husband, Jordan, in the Sackville pedigree, seems not to be demonstrated, but I gather that he was the Jordan son of Jordan of the *Colchester Cartulary*,<sup>4</sup> and that he must therefore have succeeded his brother Geoffrey. But the matter is complicated by an interesting charter in the British Museum<sup>5</sup> by which Jordan de Saunqwill confirms, by permission of his wife Clemence<sup>6</sup> and his heir Jordan, a gift of land in England made by G. dean of the church of "Saunqwill" and its whole chapter.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Colchester Cartulary*, 213-4.

<sup>2</sup> "De Molendino de novo ponte xxx solidos per manus Vavasuri."

<sup>3</sup> "Gaufrido de Saukevilla; Radulfo de Marci fratre suo." *Colchester Cartulary*, 355, 356.

These half-brothers occur several times in records of John's reign as owing a large sum for offences against the forest.

<sup>4</sup> 129.

<sup>5</sup> Add. MS. 9810. I owe my knowledge of this charter to Mr. H. J. Ellis.

<sup>6</sup> This was clearly Clemence, second daughter and co-heiress of William de Chesney. *Essex Arch. Trans.* N.S. viii, 194.

<sup>7</sup> "Decani Ecclesie B. Marie de Saunqwill totiusque capituli." This chapter is spoken of in 1201 by Walter, archbishop of Rouen, who mentions that Jordan de Sauqueville had founded two prebends there. Toussaints Duplessis, *Description de la Haute Normandie*, i, 167.

To this charter John de "Hosbermesnil" is a witness. He clearly took his name from Aubermesnil, which is near Sauqueville and Anneville.

I now turn to another branch of these Sackvilles who settled in this neighbourhood and were similarly benefactors to the Colchester abbey of St. John. A water-mill begins their story. We read in Domesday, under Rivenhall, "*medietatem molini abstulit Ricardus de Sackevilla*," that is to say, literally translated, "Richard de Sackville has taken away a moiety of the mill." This has always been supposed to be the only mention of him in Domesday; but I pursued that moiety of a mill. I looked on the other side of the Blackwater which divides Rivenhall from Great Braxted (one passes it coming by train from London) and there I found the mystic words, *mo. dim. mol.* In other words, "there is now half a mill," which means that it was not there before. When we find that the lord of the manor was named Richard, we at once put the facts together; here we have that Richard de Sackville who had grabbed the half of Rivenhall mill, that is, the half of its profits.<sup>1</sup> And if further proof were needed (which it is not) it is found in the fact that William de Sackville gave at a later period to St. John's Abbey, Colchester, a rent charge of five shillings described as due from Rivenhall mill to the manor of Braxted. We thus identify the Domesday lord of Braxted as Richard de Sackville, and are enabled to trace the descent of the manor, as we shall find, to his heirs.

Before I pass to these heirs and to the great fight for his inheritance, I must glance at the form of the name used by these lords of Braxted. In Domesday it is "Sachevilla"; in the *Colchester Cartulary* it is "Sakevilla," "Sakavilla," "Saccavilla"; and in John of Salisbury's report on the dispute, "Saccavilla." The same cartulary contains, for the Bergholt and Bures house, the forms "Sacavilla," "Sakavilla," "Sakovilla," as well as "Saukevilla," so that I see no reason to doubt that both were branches of the house of Sauqueville, although their exact relationship is not shewn. I mention this because M. Léopold Delisle, the great Norman authority,

<sup>1</sup> I explained this when writing on Domesday in *The Victoria History of Essex*, i.

has inserted the Richard of Domesday in his well-known Dives Roll as "Richard de Sacquenville."

The fight for William de Sackville's heirship is the *cause célèbre* of the twelfth century; not because of its intrinsic importance, but because his nephew has left to us his personal narrative of the whole struggle. This is a document unique in character and of great historical value, for it shows us a private individual brought by his troubles into contact with great men and great events and viewing them only as they bore on his own personal concerns. It is a glimpse of history behind the scenes; the knight of the nameless effigy leaps, as it were, into life.

Sir Francis Palgrave printed and discussed this narrative in his *English Commonwealth* (1832),<sup>1</sup> and it was subsequently dealt with by Mr. Bigelow,<sup>2</sup> Mr. Hubert Hall,<sup>3</sup> and the late Professor Maitland.<sup>4</sup> But everyone has been admittedly at sea, both as to the Sackville pedigree and as to the lands in dispute; and Mr. Hall's *excursus* on the subject has only increased the confusion.

Although he alleges that "Richard de Anesti's narrative of his great lawsuit is taken literally from the existing manuscript, as printed and translated by Mr. Francis Palgrave" (250), collation proves that the whole of the opening portion of the narrative (98-99), though undistinguished from the rest, is an addition of his own. And its opening words, "It is now thirty years ago that William de Sackville, my uncle, died" (98), which are supposed to be spoken in 1177, are at direct variance with Mr. Hall's own conclusion (210), that this William de Sackville "died *circa* 1158." Moreover, although Mr. Hall is very severe on his predecessors for repeating and even inventing blunders,<sup>5</sup> he introduces a definite statement affecting the pedigree, which has

<sup>1</sup> ii, pp. v-xxvii, lxxv-lxxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> *Placita*, 311.

<sup>3</sup> *Court Life under the Plantagenets* (1890), 99 et seq. 209-212, 214-5.

<sup>4</sup> *History of English Law* (1895), i, 137-8; ii, 365.

<sup>5</sup> "Of course, every writer since Morant has copied his blunder and Palgrave's, and the date 1199 has actually been assigned for the death of Richard

de Anesti, on the strength of the interpolated "relief," hazarded by Palgrave . . . but those who copy blindly, without troubling to check references, have only themselves to blame. But this is not the worst, for . . . the above writers have actually invented (as it seems to me)," etc., etc. (215).



given me much trouble, but which appears to be based on some confusion of his own.<sup>1</sup>

The combination of my Domesday discovery with the evidence in the *Colchester Cartulary* clears up the difficulty. For we now know that Great Braxted was William de Sackville's inheritance in dispute; and we find further that the Braxted Sackvilles were a distinct line from those at Bergholt, though doubtless of the same stock. Summarising the tale of the dispute, it appears that William de Sackville married Adeliza described as daughter of Aubrey the Sheriff, that is, of course, of Aubrey de Vere, the builder probably of the noble keep at Castle Hedingham. William, however, was claimed as husband by another Essex lady, Aubrée (*Albreda*), daughter of Geoffrey Tregoz of Tolleshunt Tregoz,<sup>2</sup> on the then familiar ground of pre-contract. A papal rescript followed, and the case was heard in the ecclesiastical Council of London, in 1141 or 1143, when a divorce was pronounced between William and Adeliza, the lady, I think, subsequently marrying two Essex men.<sup>3</sup> Aubrée Tregoz thus became William de Sackville's lawful wife. But, before the divorce, William had by Adeliza de Vere, a daughter Mabel, who married Richard de Franqueville. Thus at William's death, there were two claimants to his estate; one was Mabel de Franqueville, the issue of the dissolved marriage; the other was William's sister's son, Richard de "Anesty," a tenant of the honour of Boulogne,<sup>4</sup> whose seat was at Anstey in Herts, and who claimed that his uncle had died without lawful issue. This explains why it was that the *Colchester Cartulary* contained confirmations by both the claimants, Mabel de Franqueville with her husband, and Richard de "Anesty," of William's death-bed gift from Braxted to the monks,<sup>5</sup> Mabel

<sup>1</sup> "We also learn from the litigation between his nephew and his cousin Mabel de Francheville, that William de Sackville's father was alive in 1143 . . . . After all, some emendation is perhaps to be allowed in the face of the reputed descent of Richard de Anesti's uncle (William de Sackville) from a father who flourished in 1079, but who can be proved to have been alive in 1143" (210-211).

<sup>2</sup> See my paper on Tregoz of Tolleshunt Tregoz (now Tolleshunt Darcy) in *Essex Arch. Soc.* N.S. viii, 330.

<sup>3</sup> (1) Robert de Essex, and (2) Roger Fitz Richard of Clavering (and Warkworth).

<sup>4</sup> As were also the Tregoz family.

<sup>5</sup> 164.

not asserting her relationship to the deceased, but Richard styling him his uncle (*avunculus*). A third party was William's lawful widow, Aubrée, who testified to the fact of her husband's death-bed gift in her presence.<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy that John of Salisbury distinctly states that monks from St. John's Abbey were with William at his death, and that Richard de Anesty in his confirmation speaks of his uncle then assuming their monk's cowl.

Eventually, as we learn from Richard's narrative, he made good, at ruinous cost, his right to his uncle's lands, and they passed with the rest of his estates from the Anestys, through the Munchensis, to a branch of the great Essex house of De Vere.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.