

The Armorial Fonts of the Diocese of Oxford.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

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BERKSHIRE.

READING.

IN the account of the heraldic fonts of the Oxford Diocese in the last issue of this Journal, p. 106, it was stated that East Hagbourne possessed the only example of an armorial font in the County of Berks. There is, however, another example in St. Mary's Church, Reading, the omission of which is the more regrettable because the arms it bears are those of families long connected with the County, conspicuous in its history, and, happily, still represented by living descendants.

The *V.C.H.* account of it, *Berks.* III. 369, says that it "is of early 17th century date, is octagonal, and rests on a plain stem, the sides of the bowl being panelled with quatrefoils. In the panels on the north, south and eastern sides are roses, but the western panels have carved shields; the shield in the north-west panel is charged with a chevron between three wheat sheafs, the shield in the west panel crusilly a cross paty, while the south-west shield is charged with three sinister bends." In fact, in the northern quatrefoil a lion's face is substituted for a rose; in the southern is a blank shield; and the western shield bears, not a cross paty but a mill-cross voided, *i.e.* the arms of the well-known Berkshire family of Knollys.¹ The other Knollys coat usually quartered with it, a chevron with three roses, is here omitted.

The genealogical and parochial history shows that the shield with three bends sinister is intended for Vachell of Coley who bore *bendy azure and ermine*.² It must have been cut by a mason without heraldic knowledge. This seems also to be the only explanation of the chevron and sheaves on the remaining shield: the genealogy of the Vachell family makes it almost certain that the arms intended were those of Reade, *gules a saltire between four sheaves gold*. Burke's *General Armory* ascribes a coat of a chevron between three sheaves, with wheat-ears upon it, to a family of Reade, but these were certainly not the arms of the Barton Reades. They do, however, justify the speculation that the charges may be intended to suggest an anagram on the name—eared, a word which formerly referred not only to the corn itself but to the tilled land that produced it. It is significant that the medieval arms, to be seen

¹ *D.N.B.*; Visitations of Berks (*Harl. Soc.* LVI).

² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

on a brass at Checkendon, of another local family of the name were three cock pheasants, which highly unusual and puzzling charges become explicable when it is considered that they, too, have "ears." They may be compared with the alerions of Loraine and the battering-rams of Bertie.

The font is discussed in an account of the Vachell family, contributed to Vol. III of the *Journal of the Berks Arch. Soc.* in 1893 by the Rev. G. P. Crawford, curate of St. Mary's, from which it appears that the probable donor was Sir Thomas Vachell of Coley who derived his Christian name and the Coley property from his uncle Thomas Vachell, M.P. for Reading 1556-7, who married Catherine, daughter of Thomas Reade of Barton Court, Abingdon, at St. Mary's, 5 Sept. 1546, and was buried in the church 8 May 1610.³ His nephew and heir, Sir Thomas, born c. 1560, buried in St. Mary's 20 July 1638, married as his third wife, in St. Laurence's Church 23 Sept. 1616, Lettice, daughter of Sir Francis Knollys of Reading Abbey, lord of the manor of Battle, afterwards second wife of John Hampden. The font is therefore of a date subsequent to this marriage, and, if dated 1616 as Mr. Brabant asserts in the *Little Guide to Berkshire*, 4th ed., 1934, must have been given in commemoration of it. The maiden name of Lettice Knollys's mother has not been discovered: it is of course possible that the chevron and sheaves refer to her family, though, as the Vachell shield is certainly cut erroneously it is more probable that this, too, is a mistake.

The font is a remarkable illustration of the survival of the Gothic tradition in the seventeenth century: but for its heraldry it might well be mistaken for authentic work of the fifteenth. It is therefore the more unfortunate that the heraldry itself, though skilfully executed, should have been done with insufficient regard to the accuracy of the charges.

All three families commemorated by the shields are still represented in the Diocese and in the books of reference, e.g. *Who's Who* and the *Peerage and Baronetage*. The Viscount Knollys is Baron Caversham; Sir John Reade is still "Baronet of Shipton Court;" Mr. Horace Annesley Vachell, the well-known author and critic, is the present head of that family, another member of which, Mr. Arthur Cadogan Vachell, has lately supplemented Crawford's account of it, by an article in the *Berkshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. 40, p. 83. Moreover by kindly calling attention to the oversight in the last issue he has enabled the omission to be made good in the present paper.

EAST HAGBOURNE.

To the account⁴ of the Hagbourne font it may be added that W. D. Bayley's pedigree of the D'Oyly family in the *Topographer*

³ Wotton's *Baronetage*, Read of Barton.

⁴ *Berks. Arch. Journ.*, XLV, 107-8.

and *Genealogist*, I, 373, shows that Edward D'Oyly of Raunton, Staffs, living 1408-68, married Ann, daughter and sole heir of Helming Legat of Pond Hall in Hadleigh, Suffolk. Burke's *General Armory*, "Thany," states that their descendants, baronets of Shottisham, quarter the coat of gold six eagles sable which the Legats derived through the Drokensfords from Thany. The pedigree [Visitⁿ Essex (*Harl. Soc.* XIV, 591)] shows that the Helming Legat of Hagbourne left living male issue, so that Ann Legat's father must have been a son of his own name who died *vita patris* and may have married Clarice Drokensford as her second husband.

Pedigrees in the Visitation of Hereford (F. W. Weaver, 1886, 81) and Burke's *History of the Commoners*, IV, 83, show that Thomas Bodenham of Rotherwas, ob 30. Hy VIII, married Jane, daughter and coheir of John York of Ramsbury, Wilts, and that their descendants quarter the arms of York and Drokensford. Jane was therefore a descendant of Clarice by her third husband, John York.