

BRETtenham AND THE WENYEVE FAMILY.

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In some notes on Brettenham read before the Society on occasion of its excursion meeting 1889, and subsequently printed in Vol. VII. of its "Proceedings" (II. p. xxviii), mention is made of two shields remaining on the piscina, and two externally on the east wall of the church : one of each, a chevron simply, representing the Earl of Stafford, who became Duke of Buckingham, and was Patron of the living ; the other two, "one simply a bend, the other a cross with billets on it, which the writer has been unable to identify, even with the aid of that learned antiquary the late Mr. Almack, F.S.A., of Long Melford."

It seemed to the writer of great importance to identify these shields, if possible, as likely very materially to assist in settling who was the chief Landowner and Lord of Brettenham, of whom no local tradition or record remains, prior to the Wenyeves, or Weniffes, or Winnieffs, in the 16th century. Such Landowner would probably be, with the Patron, the builder of the chancel early in the 15th century.

The shield with the simple bend, and no colours, remains unknown so far ; but the very valuable and

interesting reprint by Mr. Haslewood (in our Vol. VIII., Part 2. pp. 121, et seq.) of Sir Richd. Gipps' 'Antiquitates Suffolciences,' has enabled me to recover some account of an ancient Family in Brettenham, and of our Church, by means of the other hitherto unrecognized shield, the plain cross billeted. It seems important also, beyond the individual case, to put this before the readers of our "Proceedings," as a moderate study of the reprint above may enable other enquirers about old buildings to discover the remote families of renown, whose Churches and Halls we inherit, whose 'bones are dust, whose swords are rust,' but whose lordly or knightly Arms are with us after many centuries, whether in stone or glass, in wood or brass. If any such enquirer, by study of Haslewood on Gipps, or otherwise, can furnish information as to whom our shield with a simple bend pertained, we shall be grateful. Meantime to revert to what is laid bare; viz: the owner of the Arms 'a plain Cross billeted.' Sir Richard Gipps under "Fellbridge," has "a 3rd Brother came into Suffolk, purchased Playford in Carlford Hundred, *built the Church*.* . . . His Issue *Sir John F.* left *Margery* his sole Daughter and Heir marry'd to *Tho. Sampson, Esq.*, of Brettenham, about 8 Hen: v. (1421), and dy'd 2 Hen: vi., 1423." Eagerly we leap forward twenty-five pages to "Sampson," and read "This family was very ancient, of Knts Degree, and seated first at Brettenham in Cosford Hundred, and afterwards at Playford, by marriage with *Fellbridge*: where, after 3 Descents, *Sr Tho: Sampson* left *Margery* his sole Daughter and Heir marry'd to *Robert Felton* of Shottely about 15 Hen: 7 (1500)."

"They (Sampson) bare g. a plain Cross arg. billeted sab." This is the very shield on E. end of Brettenham Church, whose owner we hunted for, and the discovery seems to fix the date of our Chancel. In the 'Notes' referred to the writer ventured to date it between 1400 and 1432, and perhaps it may now be put 1421—1423, when Sampson married the daughter of *Fellbridge*, the Church

* Sir Geo. Fellbrigge ob. 1400, has a mont. in Playford Church, in full armour.

Builder of Playford, on whose death he left Brettenham for his Wife's home.

So far it has not appeared *when* the ancient *Sampsons* first held Brettenham, nor when they ceased to hold it; nor is there any blending of the *Fellbridge Arms* (given in Gipps) here, though there may be at Playford. It may be noted that Gipps says the *Sampsons* were "very ancient, seated *first* at Brettenham"; yet in a local paper (*East Anglian Daily Times*, January 1st, 1895), there is mention of "The Peasants' Revolt of 1381," "There were *Sampsons* in the Samford Hundred in those days, and one of them Thomas *Sampson*, of Harkstead—it would seem a man of good social position—was the chief leader in this part of the county. On June 15th, Thomas put forth a manifesto to the people of Ipswich and the adjoining hundreds commanding them on pain of death to join his band on the following Sunday morning. His appeal seems to have been responded to with alacrity retribution came swiftly *Sampson* managed for a time to elude the grasp of the law at length he was captured condemned to death, but was pardoned finally by the king, and his goods, which had been forfeited, were restored to him." The name "*Sampson*" is still occasionally met with, but not apparently in these neighbourhoods. They were followed in all probability by the family Sir R. Gipps describes as *Winnieff*, which is to this day the local pronunciation of the name, in two syllables as if no *e* was in it, though it is spelt *Wenyeve* from 1650, and *Weniffe* in 1611—who probably acquired it by purchase, as the first *on record* is only styled "Gent," though a ms. given to the author by an Ipswich antiquary,* names Thomas *Wyneffe* or *Wenyefe*† as living at Brettenham 31 Hen. VI. (1452-53) and 4 and 13 Edw. IV. (1464 and 73), and his son Thomas ob. 18 Edw. IV. (1478-79) devised lands in Brettenham called *King's Croft*, a name not now known here; his son *Edmundus Weneive* affords no date,

* Mr. W. P. Barker.

† For Pedigree of *Wyneve*, of Brettenham, traced to 4 Edw. IV., see Harl. Vis. of Suffolk.

but he left three sons, all living 13 Hen. VIII. (1521-22), the eldest, John W., at Brettenham; Robert, of Aldham; Richard, of Elmsett; John W.'s son and h. was Thomas W. of Brettenham, Gent., who married Mary, daughter of Edward Grimston of Rishangles, Esq., and by her left George W., the first to appear in our Register, in 1588, 30 Eliz.:—thus “Mr George Wenif & Mary Barker were married y^e tenth of June;” she was sister of Robt. Barker, of Parham, Suffolk, Sergeant-at-Law, and a 2nd wife; the first wife Elizth. Bolton having left an only d. Elizth., who married Dr. Joseph Hall, Rector of Hawstead, and subsequently the famous Bishop of Exeter, and of Norwich. All this time the Wenyeves remain “Generosi;” but having obtained the Hall and Manor, in the 16th century probably, they made higher alliances, until they become “Armigeri.” George Wenif, and Martin Briggess, the Rector, at the end of that century about equally supply new names to the Register, until on the 12 Calends of June (1597) the “pastor fidelissimus migravit ad cœlos,” and “Mr George Weniffe gen: was buried 20 Nov. 1619, his wife M^{rs} Mary W. 23 March, 1620,” and was succeeded by his son Edward Weniffee, M.P. during part of the great Rebellion; he died in 1658, and on his mural tablet (B) we first find their coat of arms, showing that they had passed from Generosi to Armigeri, for they have no arms attributed to them in Gipps: they bear ‘Argent, between a chevron, vert, engrailed sable, three escallop shells *sable*, or possibly *proper*, for the colour is a little uncertain. Ed. W. was succeeded by his son (afterwards) Sir George Wenyeve, M.P. for Sudbury, whose first wife deceased about six months after her father-in-law, as is recorded on slab (C).

No slab or tablet remains in memory of Geo. Weniffe but in Register as above, their first monument being a small brass, mounted in a red marble slab, 4 ft. 2 in. × 3 ft. 8 in., flat against the South wall of the Chancel, its edge resting on the floor; the inscription and the encasing stone, seem to indicate that the brass was originally affixed to a plainer stone covering the grave;

it is now placed horizontally again, close to the East end of the Chancel, at Brettenham, and reads—

1611

(A) Here lieth buried the bodie of Thomas Weniffe eldest sonne of George Weniffe Gen. and Mary his wife. A gentle and modest yong man who Leavinge this life lefte also this verse touching The sanity theirot? Vita quid est labor est et Habendi vana cupid. Tristis ad extremum sollicito Diem? Short was his life yet liveth He ever Death hath his Dewe yet dieth he never.

7 inches.

24 inches.

He was twenty-one years old by the Register; and his death made Edward Weniffe his brother, the subject of next tablet, to be the heir. The inscription was probably written by (Bishop) Hall the husband of his elder half-sister.

The next mural Tablet, surmounted by the coat of Arms above described, is that of Edward Wenyewe (now the eldest) son of Mr. Geo. Weniffe, whose character is thus glowingly set forth.

(B) Aspice hoc saxum Viator et ipse marmor fias
 Lachrymis indurescens
 Et dum Talia defles, Nihil fleas.
 Hic jacet sæculi hujus
 Dum vixit decus, quod vixit desiderium
 Quem tamen vixisse laborabit Posterorum fides
 Edvardus Wenyewe, Armiger
 Honestis ortus natalibus sed ipse suis
 Præmissa retro nobilitas
 In quo morum gravitas et Vitæ probitas
 Conspiraverunt feliciter
 Etiamnum felicius
 Nisi forta conspiraverant
 Ingenii acie acutus, Eloquii suadâ perpolitus
 Candore mentis simplex animi prudentiâ multiplex.
 Orphanis pater, Viduis maritus
 Qui bono amicorum vixit, damnum patriæ decessit
 Priusquam bisseua lustra compleverat
 Festina Viator, atque ut ditiescas sis Illi hæres

Dum cœlum animum capit

Terra corpus

Tu capias memoriam

Obiit Septemb^r VIII. Ann^o. M.D.C.L.I.I.X.* (1658).

Immediately beneath remains the blue grave stone, 6 ft. 5 in. × 2 ft. 4 in., having a deeply cut shield of his arms with name Edward Wenyewe, and underneath the words "Quod tibi non vis alteri ne fieris."

Just north of this slab is the similar grave-stone of his son Sir George Wenyewe, next to which is the grave stone of the latter's first wife which is inscribed as follows :—

(C) *On a blue stone near the centre of the Chancel floor.*

Here resteth y^e Body of
Francis y^e Wife of George
Wenyewe Esq (and one of y^e
daughters and coheires of
Edward Dudley of Clapton
in y^e County of Northampton
Esq) who Departed this
life y^e 23th of March An^o.
DNI. 1658.

(D) *On a marble tablet on S. wall of Chancel.*

Near this place
lies interred the Body of
Sir George Wenyewe K^{nt}
who departed this life upon the 26th
day of May in the year of our Lord
1706, in the 80th year of his Age.
He first married Frances one of
the daughters & coheires of Edward
Dudley of Clapton in the county of
Northampton, Esq who also lies
interred near this place, † after whose
decease He took to wife Christian
youngest daughter of Dudley, Lord
North, who departed this life on
the 13th day of April in the year of
our Lord 1708, in the 60th year
of her Age, & lies interred in
the Parish Church of St. Ann's
Westminster, near the Altar.

Bonum mihi quia humiliasti me.

* N.B. two I's preceding x for VIII.

† See (C) above.

On a blue slab near the above, a brief Latin inscription marks the resting place of John and Elizth. Wenyewe "Qui vitæ et animorum socii, In tumulo sejungi haud poterant," of whom if you desire to know more "respice marmor," *i.e.* as follows :—

(E) Juxta hoc marmor quod mortale habuit, deposuit
 Vir diu post obitum desideratissimus
 Johannes Wenyewe, Armiger.
 filius natu secundus
 Dom Georgii Wenyewe, Equitis Aurati
 et Dom Christianæ,* *Caroli* Domini North
 de Catlidge in Com. Cantabr. filiæ natu minimæ :
 Qui A 1671. Aug. 5 vitales auras trahere cæpit
 vir suavissimis formatus moribus
 Juris civilis et legum patriarum peritissimus.
 Qui prudentiam et modestiam naturali permiscens temperamento
 paternâ laude claruit et suâ
 Matrimonio sibi junxit
 Virginem sexus sui dotibus ornatissimam
 Elizabetham filiam natu maximam
 Dom Christophori Musgrave Baronetti
 De Eadenhall in Com Cumbriæ
 Cum quâ dulcissimo conjunctus connubio genuit
 Georgium nat. 1696 Dec 26 denat. April 22 sequenti
 Elizabetham nat 1697. Dec 7 denat 1702 Octob. 28
 Quorum exuvias Cumbria servat
 Mariam nat 1700 quæ nuptum data
 Rogero North, Armig. de Rougham in Com Norfolk
 Diem obiit supremum. A. 1736 Jul. 9.
 Edwardum nat. 1703 April 14. denat 1714 Jun 28
 Elizabetham nat 1709 Jun 16 denat 1730 Oct 18
 Christophorum nat. 1713. denat 1714 July 22
 Ex tribus quæ hodie supersunt filiabus
 Christiana, Anna, Henrietta,
 Prima nupta Reverendo viro
 Edwardo Wenyewe
 Ut Dei bonitatem, parentum et uxoris amorem
 Ac liberorum pietatem gratâ recoleret mente
 Monumentum hoc moriens erigi jussit
 Defunctus A. 1736 Dec 10. Ætatis 65.

The Register gives the sequel of this long inscription :
 'Elizabeth, the widow of John Wenyewe, Esq^r, was buried
 April 29th, 1751, Affid^t received' (of burial in Woollen).

* N.B. called *Dudley*, Lord North, on tablet (D), which agrees with the Peerage.

This daughter of Christopher Musgrave, Bart., being 80 years old, had probably survived all her 9 children except Christian, the wife of the Rev^d Edward Wenyeve, for Henrietta died April 24th, 1748, at 31 years; Ann is not recorded.

We must return from this long memorial to other members of the family of Sir Geo. Wenyeve, in whom the Estate vested ultimately, though it is not clear who succeeded after Sir George's death in 1706; for though John (E) is called second son, he was only the second son of the second wife, and there was a son George (and a daughter) by the first wife Frances Dudley, of whom it was with difficulty any trace could be found, and this George was all important being the Father of Rev^d Edward W. (1698-1754), who was the Father of John W. (1736-1801), commonly called "the old Squire," a generation ago, to whom the Estate reverted in 1775, on this event chronicled in the "Bury Post" of that time:

"1775, Saturday, May 6th."—"A few days since died Edward Wenyeve, Esq., of Brettenham Hall, aged 91 years, by whose death a very considerable estate devolves to John Wenyeve, Esq., of Bury."

Kirby, in 1764, says of it, "which is now vested in Edw^d W., Esq., son of Sir George W., by Christian, daughter of Sir Dudley (afterwards Lord) North. Temp. Car: II." This Edward is described as "youngest son," on his gravestone; by his side lies "North Wenyeve, Esq^r *one of the sons &c.*," died January 17⁴⁷/₄₈, aged 70; there were (of this second marriage of Sir George) an earlier Edward, -Dudley, -John (E.), -North, -Edward (nat. 1684 ob. 1775), and Charles died young; and 9 daughters, one of whom is Frances, implying that the Frances of the first wife was dead; fifteen in all, many of whom died in infancy. What had become of the real eldest son George, the son of Frances, whom we could not discover at all for some time, though the following inscription will show his importance, was he at Bury, where his grandson John was in 1775?

On a large blue slab, West of the Altar.

(F)

Here lieth the body of
Edward Wenyewe, Clerk,
only son of

George Wenyewe, Esquire
who died July the 24th
1754

Aged 56 years.

Also of

Christian his wife

Daug^r of J^{no} Wenyewe Esq

Died March 27 . 1783

Aged 83.

of Stetchworth. & Cant.
mar^d (Wenyewe) 16 Feb. 1731
at Brettenham.

After much search an entry was discovered of the baptism of this George, the heir male, and also of his sister Frances, the two children of Sir George Wenyewe, and of his first wife, Frances Dudley. They are written in a very small hand of the period on the margin of the parchment, which has subsequently been bound, so that they are almost concealed in the middle of the book ("Geo. bap^d March 3, 1567, & Frances, 23rd March, 1658, when the mother died the same day,") as if they had been privately baptized by some *Royalist Priest, and could not be entered till the Restoration, when entries of following years had left no proper space for them; it is evident of course that Frances must have been baptized almost "in lecto."

The Rev. Edward W., only son of this George, graduated in 1720, at S. John's College, Cambridge, of which he was a Fellow, and when he married his cousin Christian, d. of John W. (E), Feb. 17, 17³¹ he is described as Vicar of Stetchworth in Cambridgeshire; he was Rector of Brettenham, 1733-39, in the latter year moving to the Rectory of Chelsworth. It appears unlikely that he held the estate though he was the Head of the Family, or, at his death in 1754, it would surely have passed to his son John, who was kept out of it till 1775, when Edward, the youngest son of Sir George W., died, having outlived

* In the Register of the bordering parish of Kettlebaston, 1644 and following, occurs this entry, "During these 5 years the times were very troublesome, & there was no settled minister, so this book was not regarded."

his nephew the Rev. Edward, who was 14 years his junior, by 21 years. As Rector, Squire or not, there are signs that the Rev. Edward had a sense of his duties and responsibilities, and he probably revived decency and order after the havoc or indifference of the usurpation, and the Orange succession.

His son's gravestone bears this inscription.

(G)

Here lyeth the Body of

John Wenyeve Esq^r

only Son of

The Rev^d Edward Wenyeve

and Christian his Wife

who died the 22nd of May 1801

* Aged 64 years.

Also of

Mary his Wife

who died the 19th of July 1802

Aged 44 years.

* Baptized 24th Dec. 1736.

Revered & tender Parents, still are you gratefully remembered by your children who humbly hope thro' Christ to join you.

Also of

George Wenyeve Esq^r

who died Oct^r 7th 1814

Aged 30 years.

Almighty God grant him a Crown of Everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This distinct Prayer for the departed is notable, and, with the whole Inscription, probably emanated from the Rev. S. Cole, Rector 1798-1858, a warm friend of the Wenyeves in the years when the shadows were lengthening, for John and George were the very last male representatives of the once numerous and important family.

John Wenyeve Esq., was High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1784; he died suddenly at a meeting of the Book Club, or Gentleman's Society, at Bildeston, and was brought home a corpse in his carriage. His only son George never married, and was last seen in public, an invalid at 30, at the great rejoicings kept in Brettenham Park (as universally) for the Peace in the summer of 1814, which within twelve months was followed by Waterloo.

In the S. aisle of S. James's, Bury S. Edmunds, this memorial remains—

(H)

The Wenyeve arms on a lozenge.

In Memory of

Mary Wenyeve

who departed this life, Jan. 25th

1757

In ye 23rd Year of her Age.

This was the daughter of Rev. Edward W. and sister therefore of the last John; when Edward died in 1754, probably his widow (died 1783) with her children retired to Bury until John came into the estate by the death of his great-uncle Edward in 1775.

The last record of them is on a marble tablet on the Chancel wall, Brettenham, where also were formerly three canvas hatchments with their escutcheon, and is as follows—

(J)

Sacred

to the Memory of

Henrietta

The Beloved Wife of Lt-Colonel John Camac

of the 1st Regiment of Life Guards

who was the daug^r. of John Wenyeve Esq., & Mary his wife
and sole heiress of her brother

George Wenyeve Esq^r. of Brettenham Park

she was born the 1st of Dec. 1786

and departed this life 2nd Sep^r. 1831

leaving two children

Georgeana Wenyeve Camac

and John George Wenyeve Camac

and her afflicted & grateful husband

to deplore the loss of

a most amiable and affectionate Wife

and Mother.

Her son died in boyhood; her daughter married Edward Fenton, Esq., and has a son John Edward, baptized at Brettenham, August 3, 1849.

Though Mrs. Camac is described as sole heiress of her brother they had at least another sister, for this entry is in the Register, "James Marrie of the Parish of Chatham in the County of Kent, Bachelor, and Frances Wenyeve of this parish, spinster, were married in this church by licence 29th June, 1802, etc.," and it is witnessed by her mother

“Mary Wenyewe,” who died 19th July following. Then the old family estate rapidly declined (though it continued in hand for half a century more) for the heir was only 17, his sister (Camac, later) but 15, and the Marries were in possession, having charges on it, which with antecedent burdens swallowed it up; family litigation followed, and the estate was finally sold by order of the Court of Chancery about 1853, and the twelve generations of Wenyeves who had lived at Brettenham, seven of them as lords, came to an end. Sic transit.

Yet there is one member of the family who ought to be recorded, though his exact place in it is not known. Browne Willis Esquire (in 1729) in his “Survey of the Cathedrals of Lincoln, Ely, Oxford, and Peterborough,” in his list of the Bishops of Lincoln, after Archbishop Williams, says his successor was—

“Thomas Winniffe, s.r.p. born at Sherborne, Dorset, Rector of Lamborne & Willingale Doe Co. of Essex, Dean of Gloucester & London, consecrated Feb. 6. anno. 1641; though he had little enjoyment of his honour, living to see his Episcopal Palace at Lincoln demolished, & his other at Buckden, with all the Revenues of his See taken from Him & the Temporalties sequestred, plundered, & sold away by the prevailing Powers: after which retiring to Lamborne, where he had bought an Estate & the Advowson of that Rectory, he died, & was buried there with this long Inscription on his Monument of Black Marble, adorned with flat Columns, on which are his Arms impaling those of his See, being, *A Chevron between three Escallops, with a Crescent* for difference affixed to the N. wall of the Chancel which may serve for a Character of this excellent Prelate”*

On a Grave-stone is this, “Here lyeth the Body of John Wynniffe, of Sherborne, in the County Dorset,† Gentleman, Father of Thomas Wynniffe, Dean of St Paul’s in London, and Rector of this Church, He dyed the 27th of September A.D. 1630. Ætatis suæ ;

Continet hic Tumulus Patrem Natumque ; Parentis
Ossibus abscondit Filius Ossa suis.
Buccina cum Sonitum dederit Suprema, Parenti
Carne revestitum reddet utrumque Deo.”

* The Inscription is in Latin, 21 lines of a quarto page, and gives a glowing picture—*Cælebs Hunc in tantâ penuriâ lugeo*

† Yet the arms and the return to Essex seem to show they belonged to East Anglia.

In the parish Register which begins Anno 1582, is this entry : Mr. Thomas Wynniffe, Dean of S. Paul's, and Parson of this parish of Lamborn, buried September 26th, 1654. His office of Bishop entirely ignored. His successor at Lincoln after six years had passed, was the eminent Dr. Sanderson, eminent not only as a Divine, but as it is fitting to mention in this Journal, "he was greatly skilled in Antiquities and Heraldry:" he left a most valuable ms. record of the state of Lincoln Minster, its Monuments, etc., etc. (as did Dugdale) about 1641, before the 'Cromwelli flagitiosus grex' made havoc and 'brake down the carved work with axes and hammers.' In that sad time Bishop Wynniffe went to his Rest in meekness and poverty, of whom it may be said as of his kinsman Edward W. (tablet E.) who died four years after him 'In quo morum gravitas et vitæ probitas conspiraverunt feliciter, etiamnum felicius, nisi fata conspiraverant.' There seems to be an appointed time for Families as for individuals—when that time is past their successors can at least say 'Mercy and Peace be theirs.'



CREETING S. MARY.