

LEATHER CASE AT SWEFFLING.

BY REV. E. FARRER, F.S.A.

A discovery of considerable archæological interest was made last summer in the chest of the church of St. Mary, at Sweffling, by Col. J. H. Rivett-Carnac, C.I.E., A.D.C. It consists of a specimen of the ornamental leather work of the middle ages. I am not aware that any other specimen exists in the county of Suffolk, though the adjoining county of Norfolk has a fine example in the church of St. Agnes, at Cawston. On Dec. 15th, 1892, the late Sir A. Wollaston Franks, President of the Society of Antiquaries, read a paper before the society, on leather cases in general, and the Cawston case in particular, and the paper, with illustrations, is printed in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries, xiv., pp. 246—254, and it is stated by that eminent authority, "that the use of ornamental leather work, was most extensive in the middle ages, and applied to a variety of purposes."

It will be well, first of all, to give a description of this Suffolk example. The case found at Sweffling is, as the illustration will clearly show, cyclindrical in shape, with an entire height of 11 inches, the lower portion 6 inches in diameter, the top having an additional half inch. This lower portion, or case, as it may be styled, is, for the purpose of ornamentation, divided into eight panels or compartments, one of which differs considerably from the rest. It has on it two shields with coats of arms, "a lion rampant" and "a chevron between three pierced mullets"; in the space yet remaining above in this compartment is a trefoil, or ternate leaf, stalked and erased, while at the base of the shields are two similar leaves sprouting from

a tree coupéd. The remaining seven panels are worked with the representation of winged monsters, in the shape of lions and birds, together with human faces having distorted features and curious caps on their heads. One of these, as Mr. V. B. Redstone has pointed out to me, is "a winged harpy," and the cap on the head somewhat resembles that which in heraldry is styled, "a cap of maintenance." The top, or cover, has in the centre, as will again be seen in the illustration, a small hole $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches in diameter, and in this hole a groove, into which something must at some time or another have been inserted, whether a small piece of glass or plate I cannot tell. Around this top are five shields of arms, two of them repetitions of those on the panel below, with three others to be described later on. It will be noticed that the top corners of the shields touch the margin of the cover, whereas the lower points rest on the outside of the little aperture before mentioned. The rim of the cover has on it two separate designs of leaves, each design occupying half of the space. The cover is attached to the case by a leather thong or strap, which, passing through loops on both case and cover, connects them, and by a widening of the thong below the bottom loop thereby supports the case, and enables it to be conveniently carried. It may be added that the base is also similarly worked in designs of ternate leaves. With regard to the designs themselves, they may be foreign in character, as Mr. Redstone remarks in a letter he has written me on the subject. *Planchè*, "Cyclopædia of Costume," II., p. 95, represents a head-dress, similar in design to that worn by the "winged harpy," Italian circa 1380, but I do not see any reason for inferring that the workmanship is foreign also.

We must now consider the series of shields and coats of arms thereon displayed, and, first of all, a word or two with regard to the peculiar shape of the shields themselves, which are very pointed and narrow in the lower portion, thus resembling what is styled a heater shield. There can be no doubt that the shape is very early indeed, and might

point to any period not later than 1400. But there is yet one further bit of evidence testifying to a very early date. With the exception of a little ornamentation in the ordinaries of two of the shields, there is no sign here, as in the case of the Cawston series (circa 1360), of the charges being in relief, and the ground punched, to denote the difference between metal and colour. Such ornamentation as we have here is not unusual in early leather work, and does not I think affect the simplicity of the coat of arms depicted. We will take the heraldic shields in order.

No. 1. *A lion rampant.* There can be no question, I think, that the series of five shields must commence with this one, it being the uppermost of the two on the lower panel, and because of a peculiarity which a minute investigation of the cover, even in the illustration, will show, namely that it is suspended from the margin by a small loop, passing through a strap, attached to each corner of the shield. This, to my mind, demonstrates a fact, that the coat was borne by a family or person connected with the leather case, or rather that which the leather case contained, whereas the other four shields represent the coats of arms of families merely connected with the aforesaid by marriage, which in later days would be used as quarterings. The peculiar attitude of the lion must be especially noticed. It is quite usual to see in 14th century coats of arms a "lion rampant" depicted, with his head well thrown back on the shield. Indeed, there is one such example on a shield in the aforementioned Cawston series, but such an exaggerated specimen as we have here is seldom to be seen. Mr. W. H. St. John Hope, the Assistant Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, tells me there is one such lion on a very early shield in Westminster Abbey. To make any conjecture as to what family is represented, would, under existing circumstances, be absurd. A glance at Papworth's "Ordinary of Arms," reveals the fact that scores of families have borne it, though of course not so many at that very early date, but even then the list of such families would be a long one,

and until we can be certain to what part of England the case originally belonged, there is little chance of coming to a right decision about so simple a coat.

No. 2. *A chevron between three pierced mullets.* This is the lower of the two shields on the bottom panel, and occupies a position on the dexter side of No. 1 on the cover. The representation of it on the panel has the chevron "per chevron indented," whether it was ever so depicted on the cover I cannot say, if so the ornamentation has worn off, anyhow I feel sure that at the very early date to which this case must of necessity be assigned, we need not consider the ornamentation as heraldic. I do not think that the College of Arms to-day would make use of such an ordinary. The coat is, undoubtedly, a very common one, and, in early times, was used in the county of Suffolk by the Cretinges, "Argent, a chevron between three mullets gules," as also by a family long years ago extinct, whose place of residence I have never been able to discover, by name Denys or Denneis, "Argent a chevron sable, between three pierced mullets gules." This coat is quartered by the Playters at Sotterley, with this difference, that the mullets are "six pointed," and we have, I think, another instance at Badley, where it is quartered by the Poleys, having inherited it through the Alcocks, who formerly lived in that parish. These conjectures are made with the hope that the origin of the case may be this county of Suffolk;—any further conjecture as to outside families would be, at present, useless.

No. 3. *A cross patonce.* It is clearly so depicted here, though it may be intended for "a cross flory." There is no sign of any ornamentation, on the cross or on the field. I do not know more than one family in Suffolk who is likely to have used this coat in the 14th century, viz., Latimer, "Gules a cross patonce or." Later on it was borne by Braham and Mannock. In other parts of England it was used by the families of Sutton, Swinnerton, Colville, and Cheney.

No. 4. *A bend cotised between two birds.* This

coat is roughly worked and rather indistinct, but after due consideration and consultation with other heralds, I have come to the conclusion that the above description is correct. The bend has thereon a pattern, which might be called "fretty," and the birds are somewhat in shape like Choughs. Papworth only gives one coat at all like this, "Argent a bend voided between two birds sable" for Bradshaw.

No. 5. *Quarterly per fesse indented.* There is no sign of any ornamentation on any portion of the field, but I think that we have here the only coat of the series at all likely to help us unravel the history of the case, or identify other shields thereon,—for in very ancient days it was borne almost exclusively by the family of Fitz Waryn, Fitz-Warine, or Fitz Warren; and with a great variety of tinctures. I have searched through several works containing pedigrees of the family, but have hitherto found no clue, chiefly because the pedigrees I have seen do not go back far enough. There seems to be no connection between the family and the county of Suffolk. I must add that, according to Papworth, the coat was also used by the families of Hodnet and Bromley in Shropshire, Langley in Kent and Warwickshire, and Lacon in Essex, but whether at so early a date as the middle of the 14th century I cannot as yet say.

With respect then to these five shields as a series, as Sir A. Wollaston Franks says of those on the Cawston case, "we may put aside the unpleasant solution of the question that they were merely intended as heraldic ornaments," if that had been the intention of the leather worker, we should not have that loop and strap which are so decidedly exhibited with No. 1 shield on the cover, nor should we have a repetition of two, and two only, of the shields on the panel of the case. They are decidedly coats of arms, and, I think, they tell us of a connection between the families that bore them, and that which the case was intended to hold. In the fine series on the Cawston case, it is generally supposed that the tie which

connected them was not one of kindred, but that they were friends or companions in arms. Such an heraldic display was not unusual in early monuments and stone work. I think we have an example of it on the tombs at Erwarton, and most certainly on the frieze of the south aisle at Harpley, co. Norfolk, with its row of shields. In the instance before us now, I feel sure we have a tie of kindred, and that with time the mystery will be solved.

It would be interesting to know whether the case is mentioned in any list of Church Goods at Sweffling; if it could be substantiated that it belonged to the parish prior to the Reformation, the fact would go far to help us out of the difficulty.

There is yet another point or two to be considered. For what purpose was the case made, and what did it contain? This is not abundantly clear, except that whatever it contained was carried about. The general idea, and the only one to me worthy of mention, is, that it was intended to hold a chalice, or a cup of some kind, and certainly the height and diameter suggest the probability of it, but in early days there would be no need to carry about the chalice belonging to the parish. Possibly it may have been intended to hold the standing cup belonging to a guild; if so, the hole at the top was made originally for the upstanding knob to pass through. Such a cup might well be, at times, carried about. Many other leather cases are described in the article before mentioned, which will be read with interest by any one who has seen our Suffolk example of ornamental leather work.

As to the date of the case, I have consulted those who can speak with authority, and I have compared the designs with others on like specimens of workmanship. I think it certainly may be ascribed to the reigns of Edward I. or II., that is circa 1280 to 1330. It is indeed a most interesting relic of antiquity, and I am sure the thanks of our Society are due to Col. Rivett-Carnac for having unearthed it, and for giving us the chance of indulging in such a delightful occupation as that of discovering its history.

THE ANNUAL EXCURSION.

Thursday, the 9th of August, 1900, will ever be remembered by those members who were compelled to brave the elements on that day. The Woodland of Suffolk, lying between Framlingham and Yoxford, is at all times of the year a delightful one to visit, but never is it so attractive and interesting to the antiquary as when the trees have impenetrable bowers of leaves, and the fields of yellow corn are all but ripe for harvest. The charms of nature which surround the traveller, as the journey is made from one venerable pile to another, instil more deeply into the mind those associations of the Present which form a link with the Past.

The posting arrangements at Framlingham are not capable of meeting the requirements of any large number of excursionists, so it was decided to enter the carriages at Wickham Market station, and not to visit Framlingham with its noble church and castle, but to drive to places of interest in its immediate neighbourhood. Parham Hall, a view of which illustrates the pages of "Excursions through Suffolk," and similar works, is now a moated farm-house, bearing all the characteristics of the Elizabethan mansions to be seen in Suffolk. It is stated to have been erected within the precincts of an old castle, in fact its walls are said to have been partly attached to the castle itself. At a distance of 200 yards from the present moat may be seen the ancient outer moat, so that the house lay *without* a bow-shot from besiegers. It is probable that the early castle was a fortified mansion, similar to that erected by Richard de Clare, at Southwold, in 1260. In some instances Suffolk castles were only moated camps of refuge, as was the hill near Lydgate church.

Theobald de Valoines obtained the Church and Manor of Parham from Gilbert de Colville in 1208, the property afterwards fell into the hands of the Uffords, and of their descendants the Willoughbys. Sir John Willoughby held the estate in 1550, and was succeeded by his son, Charles, either of whom may have been the founder of the present hall. The outside wall of the stable has a stone bearing the Willoughby motto, "*Verité sans Peur*" engraved as "*Verité sans Peer.*" Near to this stone may be seen many curiously hollowed-out bricks, which appear, like the old mortars in the tower of Frostenden Church, to have been at one time household utensils. The picturesque gateways invite the genealogist and antiquary to prolong his visit; their origin at present is one of conjecture. The larger has the appearance of

having once formed part of the canopy of an altar tomb; the detached shields upon the north wall of Parham Church are of similar make to those on the gateway. The shields surmounted by a crest, and those within the spandrils have the same bearings, viz.: Ufford and Beke quarterly, impaling two bendlets. Sir John Willoughby, who died 1303, married Alice, daughter of Sir John de Beke. John, third Lord Willoughby, married Cicely de Ufford. The five large shields are—

1. Willoughby—Ufford and Beke quarterly.
2. No. 1, impaling Hastings.
3. No. 1, impaling Fitzalan.
4. No. 1, impaling Stanhope.
5. No. 1, impaling Strange of Knockin.

Robert, sixth Lord Willoughby, who died in 1452, married Maude, daughter of Sir Richard Stanhope. William, fifth Lord Willoughby, who died 1409, married Lucy, daughter of Roger, Lord Strange of Knockyn. The inner part of the gateway is canopied and bears other shields, notably that of De Roos. The smaller gateway is stated to have been the entrance to the banquet hall, which has now entirely disappeared. The waters of the moat lap the walls of the hall, the rooms of which are more picturesque, and far more inviting from without than within. The poet Crabbe visited Sarah Elmy, his future wife, at Old Parham Hall, where her uncle, John Tovell, resided. This hall stood on the left hand side of the road leading from Hacheston to Parham. Time and weather did not permit the visitors to seek for the off-shoot of the Glastonbury Thorn, which, as stated by a correspondent of the *Ipswich Journal* for Jan. 6th, 1752, "budded eleven days sooner according to the alteration of the Style, than it was wont to do in previous years." A hearty vote of thanks was given to F. Corrance, Esq., the owner, and Mr. E. Gray, the occupier, for the kind permission to examine one of the most charming of Elizabethan halls.

The little church of Easton stands near the confines of Easton park. It has within the altar rails two carved oaken pews, erected about 1620, bearing the arms of the Wingfields. John Wingfield, a descendant of Sir John Wingfield of Letheringham, resided at Easton, and was buried within the church, 1584. His descendant, Sir Anthony Wingfield, built the White House, Easton, in 1627. Easton Church was formerly a chapel of the "Mother Church of Hoo."* There were two altars within the church, and lights of the B.V.M., of Corpus Christi, and of the Sepulchre stood upon them.

From Easton to Letheringham is a short journey. The neat little church within the well-kept churchyard of the former parish, bears a striking contrast to the sacred building which once held the monuments to the Wingfield family, now no longer standing. Early in the last century Letheringham church was in a most ruinous condition, the porch was used as a pigstye, and little remains to mark the existence of the

* Will of John Wode, of Easton, 1445.

3 in the east light, and 2 in the west light, it is evident reference is made to the marriage between Henry VIII. and Katherine of Spain, "*What God hath joined let no man put asunder.*" We may therefore fix the date of the glass at 1510. A John of Bury was Vicar of Brandeston, 1501—1511. This fact explains, not only the presence of the emblem of St. Edmund, but also the figure of the monk, a former vicar, and the other figure of his superior, William of Coddendam, who was Abbot of Bury, 1497—1509, and to whom the quarrels may have been affixed "*in memoriam,*" by his old brother-monk.

The story of the trial of John Lowes or Lewes, vicar of Brandeston, 1596—1646, for witchcraft, at Bury St. Edmund's, is well known. He was probably related to his predecessor, George Lowes or Lewes. Prior to holding the incumbency of Brandeston he was "*preacher*" in Bury St. Edmund's, 1594, during which year he was summoned to appear before the synod held at Ipswich, for not conforming to the rites of the established Church. In 1626 the deputy-lieutenant of Suffolk complained of his obstinacy and refusal to exhibit his musket.

By kind permission of Mrs. C. Austin, the Hon. Sec. read a short paper on the history of Brandeston Hall, in the spacious library of the mansion. Edmund the priest, in the days of Edward the Confessor, granted to the church of Brandeston sixty acres of land to form a manor, which he further enlarged by an addition of eighty acres. Brandeston Manor and the Rectory Manor were combined when held by William de Arcis in 1086. Two hundred years later the manors passed from Richard Goroyl into the hands of John de Weyland, after whose death the rectory was bestowed by his brother, Thomas de Weyland, upon the Prior and Convent of Woodbridge, 1277. Brandeston manor formed part of the Weyland possessions until 1382, when it was held by Sir John de Tuddenham, Sheriff of Suffolk. Andrew Revett in 1543 purchased the estate from Henry and Catherine Bedingfield; it was owned by the Revetts for three centuries.

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mrs. C. Austin for the kindly welcome she extended towards her visitors, and for the privilege which was afforded the members to inspect the fine oak panelling brought from old Campsey High House, the beautifully carved mantelpiece which once stood in the White Horse inn, Ipswich, and the many curios and articles of vertue which adorn the walls of the mansion.

Upon arriving at "The Falcon," Earl Soham, lunch was found awaiting the excursionists. At that time the rain, which never ceased for the rest of the day, began to fall. After lunch the Hon. Sec. placed before the meeting the names of the Lord Huntingfield, the Rev. A. J. Bidell of Stowmarket, and Mrs. Wade, Elmsley, for election as members of the Institute. Mr. C. Casley introduced Mr. V. D. Colchester, Ipswich, and Mr. C. Ganz, Aldeburgh, also as members. A vote of thanks, proposed by Mr. Casley and seconded by Mr. F. Woolnough, was accorded to Mr. V. B. Redstone for the trouble he had taken to arrange and carry out the excursion.

A paper was read by the Rev. R. Abbey on the history of his parish, before a short visit was paid to Earl Soham church, then the brakes started for Worlingworth. The rector, the Rev. F. French, received the visitors at the church, and briefly described a few of the more interesting features of the fabric, notably the font-cover, which is said to have been brought from Bury St. Edmund's. The double hammer-beamed roof, the carved pews, 1630, the quaint alms-box, the ancient altar stone, the old stone coffin-lid, and the fresco on the east wall of the south aisle, all claimed attention. The fresco probably marks the site of the altar to the Trinity, which stood within the church. "*I bequeath my body to be buried in the church of our Lady of Worlingworth, before the perclos of the Trinity, and I bequeath my best beast for a mortuary.*" *Will of Robert Doket 1503.* There was a Guild of the Holy Trinity in this church, to which belonged four acres of land, called Blakeland, lying by Shordansmere. Sir Thomas Greene, parish priest, bequeathed this land to the Guild so that "the ringers might have meat and drink yearly after the custom of the town on his mind's day." The Rector pointed out a stone standing in his grounds, credited to have been, in Roman days, an altar erected near the sea at Aldeburgh. There is no distinct feature or characteristic by which this claim can be supported.

After an hour's drive through the pelting rain, Badingham Church was reached. From its tower a flag was flying in honour of the visit. The Rev. F. S. Barry offered a most cordial welcome, and expressed his sympathy with his visitors for the inconvenience they had suffered through the inclemency of the weather. Everything that could be done, was done by the genial Rector to dispel the depression of spirits which a dull and gloomy atmosphere generates. The visitors, after a short inspection of the church, sat down to a most inviting tea, which was followed by a discussion, started by Major A. Meller, upon the right flags to be hoisted on public and private buildings.

A hearty vote of thanks was given to the host and his daughters, and the cheers of speeding guests closed a day of pleasure, which a continuous shower could neither mar nor damp.