

Suffolk Institute of Archæology and Natural History.

YAXLEY HALL.

ITS OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS.

PART I.

THE YAXLEYS, 1450—1737.

In the parish of Yaxley, near Eye, in Suffolk, there are still in existence two fairly extensive manors, and there was—indeed there may be now—the small remnant of a third which is held under the Honor of Eye.

First of all there is the main manor, dealt with by Dr. Copinger in his "Manors of Suffolk," III., 348, as "The Manor of Yaxley." This was at a very early date a portion of some property which had been vested in the Priory of Hoxne, and according to the Gillingwater MSS, "William Castleton, Prior of the monastery at Norwich sold to Sir Richard Gresham, Kt., the Priory or Cell at Hoxne, the Manor of Yaxley Hall, and all the revenues belonging thereto," recorded by Blomefield in his "History of Norfolk," thus, "William Castleton, Prior of Norwich, on April 1st, 1538, foreseeing the Reformation alienated from the Church the cell at Hoxne, and Manor of Yaxley to Sir Richard Gresham Kt., for which he had absolution." I do not think this could possibly be intended for the Yaxley Hall of to-day, besides which there is a site called "Yaxley Manor House," and is so printed in Gothic letters on the Ordnance map. It almost joins the

boundary line between that parish and Mellis. This is now part of the Brome Hall Estate. According to the *Ipswich Journal*, 17th July, 1813, there was to be sold at the Angel Inn, Norwich, "the Manor of Yaxley, in the county of Suffolk, comprising 1210 acres of land, etc." Whether or no it then became the property of the Kerrisons I do not know; anyhow, I do not think it ever was in the possession of the family of Yaxley, or was connected with the Yaxley Hall of to-day. Yaxley Manor House is a very ancient structure, and most interesting details are to be seen in and about it. It was in Queen Elizabeth's time, and later, the residence of a family named Felgate. There are various initials carved in the spandrels of the front doorway and elsewhere, suggestive of this theory. Yaxley Church has a memorial of them in the shape of a beautiful little coloured shield in the east window, and there is a brass with effigy to Andrew, son of John Felgate, of "Stoneham Aspoll," 1598. The name also occurs in subsidy and other lists.

The second manor is thus styled, in a great quantity of deeds in my possession, "The Manor of Bulls Hall cum Blogate Hall." The site of it is on the west side of the great Norwich and Ipswich road, which passes through the parish of Yaxley. According to Dr. Copinger—and I think he absolutely quotes the Davy MSS. in the British Museum—this manor was in the latter part of the reign of Edward II. vested in Sir William Bole or Bull, and in 1335 had passed to Richard de Blogate, and was then called, "Manerium de Yaxle," and in the year 1586 it was still thus styled, for I have in my possession an admission to it headed "Manerium de Yaxlee," and it relates to some land in Denham near the College, which same property is taken over by another family in 1647 at a court held of "The Manor of Bulls Hall cum Blogate Hall." It can therefore be

well understood how the confusion has arisen, which is so apparent in Dr. Copinger's account, as to the succession of the Lords of these two Yaxley Manors. In the Visitation of Suffolk in 1561, the Yaxleys claim descent from one John Herberd, of Yaxley, who married the daughter and heir of the Blodgetts, thus deriving the quartering in their coat of arms, which appears in all the heraldry both at the Church and Hall. Argent, three bugle horns sable garnished or. Anyhow, the family of Yaxley has been in possession of this manor for a very long period, and its name occurs frequently in the deeds connected with the property, whereas there is no mention therein of any other.

On a sheet of ancient foolscap paper, in the handwriting of the Rev. Seymour Leeke, written about the year 1774, is this, "Woodhall Manor, in Yaxley, Suffolk. This Manor of Woodhall I hold of the Earl Cornwallis' Honor of Eye by Knights service, and pay him a yearly fine of $1/11\frac{1}{2}$ d. The Manor is freehold. Joseph Martin collects the money. There is $4/2$ paid to William Tempest for a free farm rent issuing out of this manor." The fine was paid for many years after that date, but whether it is paid to-day I do not know, or whether the present Yaxley Hall is on the ancient site.

About ten years ago, Yaxley Hall, and the property belonging to it, passed into the hands of Lord Henniker, of Thornham Hall. Mrs. Patrick Welch, who was the last of the Leekes, had just died, and the sole male representative of the Welch family handed over to me all the deeds, writings and correspondence. I have never been thoroughly through them, nevertheless I have collected from them a great quantity of most useful genealogical facts, and with these as a foundation, supplemented, of course, by material gleaned from the various well-known local manuscripts and books, I

have endeavoured to compile a short history of Yaxley Hall, with its owners and occupiers, during a period of about 370 years.

The Visitation of Suffolk, made in 1561 by William Hervev Clarenceulx, gives us two distinct pedigrees of the family of Yaxley, viz., those who were "of Yaxley," and those who were "of Mellis." To these I have devoted a great deal of time and consideration, and I believe that they are fairly correct. The two properties were often owned by one person, but I have come to the conclusion that those of the family who are buried at Yaxley were more intimately connected with that place, not only by descent but occupation, whereas those who lie in Mellis Church not only owned that property, but resided either at Pountney Manor, in Mellis, or at Facons Hall in Rickinghall.

We will therefore commence our history with Richard Yaxley, the son and heir of the John Herberd before mentioned, and who died about 1459, by his wife, the heiress of the Blogates. He was certainly resident in Yaxley, but whether on the site of the present Yaxley Hall I cannot say. His first wife was Rose Goldwell, of the county of Kent—she was dead before 1468; and his second wife is stated in the Visitation pedigree to be the daughter of a man named Lyard; however, in the Norris MSS. we find "Alice daughter of Richard Purdance, of Norwich." She died in 1474, and is buried in Yaxley Church, where there is a brass inscription to her memory. Richard Yaxley was living in 1489.

There was a son by the first marriage of Richard Yaxley, who was named John Yaxley. He was a Sergeant-at-Law, chosen 10th September, 1496. According to the pedigree he married Elizabeth, daughter

of John Brome. The following is extracted from the Davy MSS., "Elizabeth, daughter of Richard Brome, Esq., who lived temp. Hen. VII., and was buried in the chapel of St. Luke in Norwich Cathedral, married John Herberd als Yaxley, Sergeant-at-Law, from whom the Yaxleys of Mellis and Yaxley in Suffolk descended." This learned lawyer seems to have accumulated a good deal of money in his profession. He inherited the property of Mellis from his father, and in 1497 the manors of Easthall and Meltons, with estates in Colney and Bowthorpe in Norfolk passed to him from John Melton and others. His widow presented to the church of Upper Rickinghall in 1507, he therefore purchased Facon's Hall in that parish. His name occurs in the Mellis pedigree, however he was buried in Yaxley Church, and according to "Weever's Funeral Monuments," taken from a collection made by the aforesaid William Hervey, there was an inscription to his memory running thus, "John Yaxley, otherwise called John Herberd of Mellis, Sergeant-at-Law, which died XIX. of July MDV., and in XX. years of Henry VII." His Inquisitio post mortem is dated the same year. His wife outlived him, but is recorded on the same brass, the date of her death only omitted. She died in 1532. John Yaxley had a sister Alice, married to Richard Pulvertoft, of Lincolnshire, who is also memorialized by a brass in Yaxley Church, which is dated 1511.

The Yaxley property seems to have passed to Richard Yaxley, the son of Richard Yaxley, and Lyard. In the pedigree he is said to have married Joan, the daughter and heir of John Stratton of Pluckley. There is a brass in Yaxley Church which I feel certain is in her memory, "Johana Yaxley, q^e obiit xxv. die mens Aprilis Ao Dni M^o V^o xvii," and the following statement is extracted from

Blomefield's Norfolk I, 120, "Thomas Mosells who married one of the Noons of Shelfanger in Norfolk, had a daughter Margaret, who married Edmund Stratton, and was his widow in 1479. She left the property to her daughter, who married Richard Yaxley; and by her marriage there were two sons, Thomas Yaxley, clerk, the eldest, who sold it to Richard Yaxley, his brother and heir. This Richard Yaxley purchased the other moiety, which had passed through Joan Mosells to Thomas Felton."

I think that the Yaxleys were not resident here during the first half of the 16th century. The following quotation is from the Davy MSS, "Richard Yaxley of Norwich, senr., Gent., released to his son Richard Yaxley, all rights in a meadow called Cocks meadow, and one tenement of old with a pigtle in Yaxley aforesaid, 27 Ap., 28 Hen. VIII." Thus the owner of the property was in 1537 a resident in Norwich, however; it is recorded that he was buried in Yaxley Church. I gather from the Norris MSS. that he was alive in 1543, and is no doubt mentioned in some early will of the Yaxley family in that same year.

If we turn to one of those most valuable Subsidy Lists, published by S.H.A.H., viz., "Suffolk in 1524," we shall find that the most important resident in the place was "Philip Bedingfeld in goodes £26 13s. 4d., paying £1 6s. 4d." He was the son and heir of Thomas Bedingfeld, of Flemings Hall, in Bedingfeld, by Joan his wife, daughter and heir of Roger Busard, of Ditchingham, by which marriage that great Norfolk property passed into the Bedingfeld family. There was a very intimate connection between Philip Bedingfeld, and the owner of Yaxley Hall, for he had married Anne, the daughter of Richard Yaxley and Joan Stratton, hence his residence there.

There was, according to the same work, another important gentleman residing in Yaxley at that time. He is thus described, "Edmund Bewper, in lands £60, paying £3," and also a dependant of his, "Robert Wroo, servant with Master Bewper, in wages £1 3s. 4d., paying 7d." This Edmund Beaupre was the son and heir of Nicholas de Beaupre, of Beaupre Hall, in Outwell, co. Norfolk, by Margaret his wife, daughter and co-heir of Thomas Fodryngey, of Brocklèy, near Bury St. Edmunds. The father died in 1513, and in his will which was proved 24th January, 1514, he states that his son Edmund was not then of age, and from his mother's will, proved in 1515, we learn that he was then 13 years old. Later on he married Margery, one of the daughters of Sir John Wiseman, of Thornham Hall, a property immediately adjoining Yaxley parish. No wonder that Edmund Beaupre quitted his fenland home that his young wife might be near her relations. When Lady Wiseman died in 1551, she mentions her son-in-law and her four daughters, then all alive, Catherine, Elizabeth, Mary and Anne. About this time the first wife of Edmund Beaupre died, but he soon consoled himself with a second in the person of Katherine Bedingfeld, the daughter of his neighbour at Yaxley, Philip Bedingfeld, by his wife who was a Yaxley. Thus this resident in the parish becomes a connection of the family. Edmund Beaupre died in 1567.

In what year the two Richard Yaxleys, father and son, ceased to have any right in the Yaxley property I do not know. However, it passed into the hands of Francis Yaxley, the son of the latter, by his wife Anne, daughter of Roger Austin, of Earl Soham, and during the life time of his father. In the year 1561, Francis Yaxley made his will, and a most interesting document it is, recording as it does so many members of his family,

and mentioning neighbours and friends as recipients of memorial rings. He orders "my bodie to be carried to Yaxley to be buried in the chancell of the chirche there, with a memorie of a sepulchre for the charges to be sustained in the well and good doing wherefor I give the sune of fortie pounds." This does not read as if he were a resident in Yaxley at the time when he made his will. He bequeaths "to my cousen Yaxlee's widow forty pounds which I owe unto her by vertue of an obligacion payable at the feast of St. John Baptist last past, and a sorrel gelding there at Mellys with her"—this lady would be Margaret, the wife of Richard Yaxley, of Mellis. In the 1568 Subsidy List, she is given as at Mellis, "Margaret Yaxley, vidua £30 in terris paying £2." Fifteen memorial rings are to be distributed "to the Mr. of the Rolls, my ladie his wief, Sir Thomas Cornwallis and my ladie his wief, Mr. Boxoll, Sir Jno. Suliard and my ladie his wief, Sir Jo. Tirrell, Mr. Shelton, Mr. Ternebull, my cousin Shermans wief"—she was Elizabeth, the daughter of Anthony Yaxley, of Mellis, and married Thomas Sherman, of Yaxley—"Mr. Burde and his wief, Mr. Kent, and my cosen Lany"—she was Catherine, the sister of Mrs. Sherman, and wife of John Lany, of Cratfield. He leaves "to my goddaughter Bowes my tablett with my pictor." One of his "seales at armes" he bequeaths to his father, and another one to his cousin Robert Yaxley—he was a son of Anthony Yaxley, of Mellis, a captain, and he died at Berwick. The interest which Francis Yaxley held in the manor of Thorndon he bequeathed to "my cousen Waller, and my cousen Sherman."—Mary Yaxley, the other sister of Mrs. Lany, and Mrs. Sherman, married George Waller, of Wortham. He mentions in the will, "Sr Xporfe Yaxlee" his uncle, and under that name he appears in the pedigree. He was no doubt a priest, to him he bequeaths "the hangings, bedding and the implements

of my chamber," and then he disposes of his estate, and here it will be expedient to give the exact words of the document, "to my father and his heirs my whole title and interest in Yaxlee Hall, and all my lands lately bought of Geffrey Warde, in Yaxlee, Eye, Thornham and Bresworth, during his life, except Bresworth closes, containing by estimacion fortie acres, which I will to be sold by my executor for the better performance of this my last testament. And after the decease of my father I will all the said lands remain to William Yaxlee, sonne of Richard Yaxlee, and to his heirs male, and for default of such issue to the heirs male of my said cosen Richard. The remainder to my right heirs with the condition that there be paid yearly by the space of xx. years, in the weke of Ester, in the porch of Yaxlee, towards the relief of the poore of that towne, £5." I have often wondered whether this owner of Yaxley could be identical with the Francis Yaxley recorded in the "Dictionary of National Biography," who died in 1565. He is styled, "conspirator." He seems to have been attached to the embassy of Peter Vannes, accredited to Venice in 1550-52. He was M.P. for Dunwich, and Clerk of the Signet, 1557, and then employed as agent by Lady Margaret Douglas, Countess of Lennox, to further project the marriage between her son Darnley, and Mary, Queen of Scots, and he is said to have been wrecked at sea while returning from another mission in 1565 from Mary to Philip II. Unfortunately the register books of Yaxley Church do not commence till 1684, but the Rev. W. H. Sewell, a former rector, discovered about the year 1866 a number of detached papers of entries in the 16th century, no doubt duplicate copies of the early registers, but could find therein no record of the burial of Francis Yaxley between 1561 and 1565.

It is quite possible that Richard Yaxley, the father

of the Francis Yaxley just recorded; may have enjoyed for a while "the whole title and interest in Yaxley Hall," but not for long, in that I gather from various records, that William Yaxley, of Mellis, the cousin of the testator, was in possession before 1570; and thus once again Yaxley and Mellis properties are in the same hands. There is an I.P.M. of Richard Yaxley in 1558, but I think this must be the eldest son of Anthony Yaxley, of Mellis. Dr. Copinger seems to suggest that this Richard Yaxley, the father of the aforesaid Francis Yaxley, died in 1566, which date fits in well with other recorded facts.

It will be advisable, I think, before we proceed further to trace the descent of the owners of Yaxley, to investigate the Mellis family, from John Yaxley, the Sergeant-at-Law in 1505, to William Yaxley, the owner of both properties in 1570. Anthony Yaxley, the son of John Yaxley, the eminent lawyer, was distinguished also in that profession. He is generally styled "of Mellis." He married twice, his first wife being Elizabeth, daughter of John Garneys, of Kenton, and his second wife, Bridget Penning. He inherited Mellis, and also the estate called Facons Hall in Upper Rickinghall from his father, on his mother's death, and he presented to the church at the latter place in 1515 and 1521, and his assigns in 1556 and 1560. There can be no doubt that at times he was a resident at Facons Hall, for when there on 27th January, 1525, he had to appear before Richard Nix, Bishop of Norwich, at his palace at Hoxne, and express his sorrow for heretical opinions pronounced by him. The curious document which he signed on that day is stored away among the wills in the Consistory Court at Norwich, and may be read in full in "East Anglian Notes and Queries," New Series, III., pp. 380. He was, I fancy, the only one of the family imbued with ideas

so antagonistic to the church. His mother, who died in 1532, was, from her will, a very devout Catholic, and from Anthony's own will, proved in 1558, by his relict, one gathers that Richard Yaxley, his son, was also true to Mother Church. The final clause runs thus: "Rychard my unkind sonne shall have none of my goods." However, the son did not outlive the father, and both of them lie buried together in Mellis Church.

William, the second son of Anthony Yaxley, was later on of Boston, in Lincolnshire. He married Rose, daughter of John Langton, co. Lincoln, widow of Nicholas Lopton, of Wainflete. They had four sons and three daughters. Sir Robert Yaxley was the son and heir, and then followed William, Hamond and John. One of the daughters, Rose Yaxley, married a Welby, another, Margaret Yaxley, married George St. Leger, and the third, Catherine Yaxley, is said to have married a man named Bowntaine.

Though Richard Yaxley, the son of Anthony, did not inherit Mellis, his widow, Margaret, the daughter and co-heir of Robert Stokes, of Bickerton, in Yorkshire, most certainly did, and resided at Pountney Manor. She was married to Richard Yaxley, of Mellis, in 1544, and she became possessor on the death of her husband of the Bowthorpe and Colney estates in Norfolk, but it does not seem as if she inherited the Rickinghall property also. She was not buried with her husband at Mellis, but at Yaxley, where her son was then residing.

William Yaxley, the son of Richard Yaxley and Margaret Stokes, must have been a particularly fortunate young man. He inherited Mellis and the Norfolk estates on the death of his mother, and the Yaxley

lands from his second cousin Francis, and from either the one or the other the manor of Mavisons in Thrandeston. There is a statement of Dr. Copinger's which warrants this latter assertion, "he was compelled to try an action against Barbara, late wife of Thomas Sherman, for discovery as to lands of the plaintiff's manor of Yaxle in Yaxle, Pountney in Mellis, and Mavisons in Thrandeston." Thus endowed with worldly property, he was able to aspire to, and obtain, the hand in marriage of Eva, the daughter of the great Sir Henry Bedingfeld, of Oxburgh in Norfolk, and Redlingfield in Suffolk, and her mother was Katherine, the daughter of Sir Roger Townsend of Rainham, also in Norfolk.

I think most people will agree in the statement I am about to make, that from the style of architecture at Yaxley Hall, and from the various details connected with it, the main portion of the present building was erected in the time of William Yaxley, and what more likely than that he would require a good house, and a fairly large one, when bringing a bride from so grand a house as Oxburgh, allied as she was, too, with the Townsends of Rainham. But there is another and a further reason for thus dating the house. All the coloured glass in the windows, and more particularly the surrounds to the shields where the same exist, are purely Elizabethan in both design and workmanship, and though on that glass marriages are recorded backwards for three or four generations, I do not think there is one family shield of later date than that which records the marriage between William Yaxley and Eva Bedingfeld.

The house originally consisted of one long main block, with a projecting wing at either end, triple storied and gabled, which wings are distinctly visible

to-day with their mullioned windows as of old. There was, no doubt, a similar porch reaching up to the roof in the centre of the building, thus giving the house the shape of the letter E. When this was removed, and the centre filled in, I cannot say, but I should think in the earlier years of the 18th century, while still further alterations, which will be hereafter recorded, were made by the Rev. Seymour Leeke in 1772.

There are still in existence in the windows of Yaxley Hall eleven shields, perfect, or sufficiently perfect to identify. I have already given a full description of these shields in "The East Anglian Miscellany" for 1910. However, as such interesting memorials of the past are none too plentiful, and very easily destroyed or taken away, I will repeat the record here.

The first shield to be described is unfortunately a mutilated example of the lot. The arms thereon are Quarterly 1 and 4, Ermine; a chevron sable between three pierced mullets or, Yaxley, 2 and 3, Argent, three bugle horns sable garnished or, Blodgett. The impalement is composed of mere fragments of coloured glass, but there is on a scroll beneath, "Yaxlee and Brome." The latter coat is well known in Suffolk, Ermine, a chief indented gules. The marriage represented is of course, that of John Yaxley, the Sergeant-at-Law, and Elizabeth his wife, the daughter of Richard Brome. There is just the mere record of a marriage of about the same date, on a scroll which has "Pulvertoft and Yaxley," Alys Yaxley, the sister of the lawyer married Richard Pulvertoft of Lincolnshire.

The next shield to be described is perfect. The arms thereon are, Quarterly 1 and 4 Yaxley, 2 and 3 Blodgett; impaling, Argent, a chevron engrailed azure between three escallips sable, Garneys, and it repre-

sents the marriage between Anthony Yaxley, of Mellis, the eldest son of the lawyer, and Elizabeth, daughter of John Garneys, of Kenton.

In proper order of succession this last shield is followed by another recording the marriage of Richard Yaxley, the son and heir of Anthony Yaxley, of Mellis, and his wife Margaret, the daughter and heir of Robert Stokes. The arms are, Quarterly 1 and 4 Yaxley, 2 and 3 Blodgett, impaling. Quarterly 1 and 4 Argent, a fesse counter compony or and gules, between three escallops azure, Stokes, 2 Argent, three lozenges gules, 3, Azure, a cross flory or, Ward; and beneath the shield is this, "Yaxlee and Stokes."

And then we have the most important of the family shields which, I think, dates the glass, and which may be thus described, Quarterly of six, 1 and 6 Yaxley, 2 Blodgett, 3 Stokes, 4 Argent, three lozenges gules, 5 Ward; impaling, Quarterly of twelve, 1 Ermine, an eagle displayed gules, Bedingfeld, 2 Lozengy gules and argent, Todenham, 3 Argent, a fesse between two chevrons gules, Peche, 4 Chequy argent and gules, on a fesse azure three escallops of the first, Roucester, 5 Argent, a fesse sable between three crescents gules. Pateshall, 6 Argent, on a cross gules five escallops or, Weyland, 7 Argent, a unicorn salient sable, Herling, 8 Chequy or and gules, a chief ermine, Tateshall, 9 Argent, a chevron gules between three lions rampant sable, Bourn. 10, Per pale argent and gules, Waldegrave. 11 Per chevron crenelle gules and or, three lions rampant counterchanged; Wyford. 12 Azure, a chevron between three wolfs heads couped or, Chedworth, and beneath this shield is "Yaxlee and Bedingfeld." This represents the marriage between William Yaxley, of Yaxley Hall, and Mellis, and Eva, daughter of Sir Henry Bedingfeld, of Oxburgh.

These shields are, or were, in the ground floor room of the west wing, which when I first knew the house in 1881, was a dining room. There are some more in a corridor above representing family marriages of the earlier years of the 16th century.

The one which I will first describe represents the marriage between Elizabeth Yaxley, the sister of Anthony Yaxley, of Mellis, and John Minsterchamber, of Stuston. It is rather a mutilated specimen, but may be thus blazoned, Argent, a fesse between three millrinds sable, Minsterchamber, impaling. Quarterly 1 and 4 Yaxley, 2 and 3 Blodgett. There is no inscription attached to it.

Another one represents the marriage between Catherine Yaxley, the daughter of Anthony Yaxley, and John Lany, of Cratfield. Quarterly 1 and 4 Or, on a bend between two fleur-de-lis gules, a lion passant of the field, Lany. 2 Or, a chevron gules between three cinque foils azure, on a chief of the second, a lion passant argent, Cooke of Linstead. 3 Gules, a crescent ermine within an orle of martlets or, Bohun; impaling. Quarterly 1 and 4 Yaxley, 2 and 3 Blodgett. A quartering from another shield has been inserted here by mistake in some reparation of the coloured shields. It represents Shardelowe, Argent, a chevron between three cross crozlets azure.

A third shield of this series, rather mutilated, represents the marriage between Mary Yaxley, the sister of Mrs. Lany, and George Waller, of Wortham. The dexter side had a quartered coat 1 and 4, Argent, a bend engrailed between two cotises sable, Waller, while no doubt the quartering of Shardelowe formed one of the others on this dexter side of the shield. It has the usual impalement of Yaxley quartering Blodgett.

Another shield in the corridor represents, I think, the mother of Margaret Stokes, who married Richard Yaxley. It may be described thus, Quarterly 1 and 4 Stokes. 2 Argent, three lozenges gules. 3 Ward; impaling, Argent, a chevron between three lions heads erased gules, on the chevron a mullet for difference. It is probably the coat of Rouclif or Rowcliffe, co. York.

There is just one more family shield, which I am unable to identify, but about which I may make a suggestion. It may be described thus, Quarterly 1 and 4, Argent, on a saltire gules, five cross crosslets or, 2 and 3, Sable, on a fesse argent, between six cross crosslets of the second, three birds azure. legged or; impaling, Quarterly of eight, 1 Yaxley, 2 Blodgett, 3 Stokes, 4 Argent, three lozenges gules, 5 Ward, 6 Argent a chevron between three lions' heads erased gules, the chevron charged with a mullet for difference, 7 Azure, a fesse dancettee or, 8 Sable, a bend between six escallops or, Foljambe. From the fact that we have the Stokes coat of arms and quarterings on this shield it would probably represent one of the daughters of Richard Yaxley and his wife, Margaret Stokes, and their only daughter was Bridget Yaxley. As to the quartered coat which represents her husband, Papworth, in his Ordinary gives for similar coats, Cowtherne or Crathorne of Salaby, Lincoln, and Mowgrave co. York.

One other shield there is in the windows of Yaxley Hall, and about the most interesting of the whole series, but for its presence in the house I can offer no valid reason. It may be described thus, Quarterly 1 and 4 Argent, three spear heads gules, a chief azure, Reyce of Preston, co. Suffolk, 2 and 3 Per bend argent and sable, a bend ragulee counterchanged, Strangman

Chas
Yaxlee

CHARLES YAXLEE. 1680.

Edm:
Yaxlee

EDMUND YAXLEE. 1705.



YAXLEE
SEAL.

Philippa
Yaxlee

PHILIPPA YAXLEE. 1705

Robt
Yaxlee

ROBERT YAXLEE. 1720.

Susan
Yaxlee

SUSAN YAXLEE. 1720.

YAXLEE AUTOGRAPHS.

of Hadley Castle, co. Essex; impaling Quarterly 1 Waldegrave, with a crescent for difference, 2 Gules, four fusils in fesse argent, on each an escallop sable, with a mullet for difference, Cheyney of Pinto or Pin-court, co. Devon, 3 Gules, a chevron between three garbs argent, 4 Sable, a bend or, between six fountains proper, Stourton. The family of Reyce is more often than not associated with Robert Reyce, the antiquary, whose "Breviary of Suffolk" has been so beautifully published by Lord Francis Hervey. It was written in 1618, and put into print by Lord Francis in 1902, from the MS. of it in the British Museum. In the reign of Henry VII. a certain Robert Reyce came to Preston, and his wife was the daughter and heir of Strangman, of Hadley in Essex. His son, another Robert Reyce, married Alice, the daughter of Henry Monings, of Nedging, which adjoins Preston, and it was their son, another Robert Reyce, who married Margery, the daughter of Edmund Waldegrave of the Friars, in Sudbury, by his wife Mabel, the daughter and heir of John Cheyney, of Pynto in Devonshire. (see Blomefield's "History of Norfolk," X. 165). Robert Reyce, the antiquary, was the grandson of the marriage represented on this shield.

The early years of the renovated or rebuilt Yaxley Hall was about the best period of its existence. William Yaxley was not only a wealthy man, but occupied a good position in the county. He was M.P. for Orford 1559-1565, and both he and his wife had many relations as well as friends in the neighbourhood. Her father had acquired the Nunnery at Redlingfield, and made it habitable for gentle folk, as an occasional residence for himself, and later on a home for one of his sons. Her brother Nicholas resided at Swatshall in Gislingham long ere he purchased it, as when a resident there he subscribed for the defence of the

country against the Spanish Armada. Her uncle, Humphrey Bedingfeld, lived at Hestley in Thorndon. Her aunt had married Sir John Suliard, of Wetherden, and there were other Bedingfelds, both at Flemings Hall and in Denham. The Wisemans were at Thornham, and the Cornwallis' at Brome; between which two places Yaxley Hall is situated. It is all the more sad to think how soon this happy time was over, and how very short lived it was. The Yaxleys, as did the Bedingfelds, adhered to the Roman faith in Queen Elizabeth's days. Persecution did not commence all at once. However, in 1584, "Mr. Yaxley, of Yaxley Hall," appears in the list of recusants, and doubtless paid heavily for his conscientious adherence to the old faith. In 1588 he died, and was buried in Yaxley Church. The date of his Inquis. p.m. is 1589. The wooden tablet at the east end of the south aisle, with its three coloured shields of Yaxley and Bedingfeld, was placed there in memory of both him and his wife. It has thereon a long Latin inscription recording his descent. His widow lived on well into the next century, and in all probability at Yaxley Hall, as she received from her husband a great portion of the manors and estates. She made her will on 25th July, 1627, and it was proved 12th May, 1631. The dates of the deaths of them are unknown to me.

Henry Yaxley, the son and heir of William Yaxley and Eva Bedingfeld, succeeded to the remainder of the property in the which was included Bowthorpe Hall and the Colney estate, and he seems to have made the former house his home. However, in those loose pages connected with the Yaxley registers is this, "Willm. Yaxlee, the sonne of Henry Yaxlee, Esquire, was buried the xxix. daye of July, 1598." He may have been on a visit to his grandmother, or possibly, being the eldest son, and Yaxley the chief place of

residence, it was chosen rather than Colney or Bowthorpe as a place of sepulture. Henry Yaxley married a lady connected with both Norfolk and Suffolk, Frances the daughter of Charles Waldegrave, of Stanninghall, the latter one of the lost parishes of the county of Norfolk now incorporated with Horstead, and, I believe naught but the ruins of the church remain. Henry Yaxley was, again like his father, a strong Papist, and his name occurs in more than one list of recusants of the period. Blomefield tells us that "during his time the church at Bowthorpe was neglected and laid in decay, it being esteemed as a sinecure till Matthew, Bishop of Norwich, obtained a decree in Chancery dated 23rd February, 1635, against Henry Yaxley, esquire, Lord here, by virtue of which the church was purged of all things in it, the same having been used as a sort of storehouse." The historian proceeds to tell us how the repairs were made, and the furniture was replaced at the cost of £140, and he adds "the profits of the whole living were sequestered to repair the church, and it was finished at Michaelmas, 1639, the priest or chaplain's salary to be paid by the said Yaxley, and all others after him that shall possess the tithes and glebe; all which was performed accordingly, and ever since it hath been served by a chaplain or parish priest, as it is at this day, it being a donative in the Lord of the manor." This state of things lasted for several years after the historian's death, but in 1792 the building became unroofed, and when I last saw it in 1882 it was an absolute ruin, with some memorial slabs just visible beneath the grass. In the parish church of Colney, Henry Yaxley was laid to rest, and Blomefield gives us a description of his "altar tomb of wood" on the north side of the church, with the Yaxley arms thereon. Evidently it was somewhat like that of his father at Yaxley. The inscription runs thus, "Here lyeth the

body of Henry Yaxley, Esq., who died in the Faith of God's true elect Catholick Church, not trusting in the merits of any, but in the alone Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and His death and passion." He died March 6th, 1650. In 1630 he published a tract in quarto, called, "A declaration wherein he sheweth how he was formerly a Papist, but is now converted." His brother, Francis Yaxley, lived at Mellis during this period, and Henry Yaxley, his second son, married Dorothy, the daughter and heir of Henry Chittock, of Thrandeston, and so started the Yaxleys "of Thrandeston," who recorded their pedigree in the 1664 Visitation.

Charles Yaxley was the eldest surviving son of Henry Yaxley at the time of his death in 1650. He was probably born at Bowthorpe about the year 1600. He married Elizabeth, the daughter of Charles Lovell, of East Harling, in Norfolk, and after the death of his grandmother, he seems to have inherited Yaxley Hall and estate, and to have resided there. He was in the parish as a resident, and not "outsetter" when he subscribed to the Ship Money in 1640. In 1653, as "Charles Yaxley, of Yaxley," he was petitioning about a manor in Yorkshire, and in 1664 he declares his pedigree as "of Yaxley Hall." Like the rest of his family he was a strong Papist, and his name, together with that of his father, appears in a list of recusants in 1651, and the following very interesting information is contained in "An Inquisition taken at Stowmarket, 10th March, 15 Chas. II. (1664)." It recites the will of Francis Yaxley, and his legacy for the poor of the parish to be expended on the highways, and then it states, "The premises from which the payment came had become the possession of Charles Yaxley, Esq.; that payments had been duly made by ancestors of the said Charles, till 20 years before the

said Inquisition. That the said Charles had entered the said premises; and that ever since payment had been detained from the said uses. That the said messuage and premises were about 18 years after the entry of the said Charles until the return of Charles II., sequestered from the said Charles for his recusancy, and only one-third part of the said estate was enjoyed by him. That there were dues in arrears 18 years, ending June 15th, 1660, when sequestration was taken off, and also 2 years since." In 1654, Andrew Felgate and others in Yaxley were suing for this money, which they were not able to obtain.

At this period, all the Yaxley property owned by Charles Yaxley was burdened with mortgages, and I have the record of a mortgage of £1,200 on the Colney estates, in which the money was lent by Mr. Richard Browne, of Colney, a kinsman of Charles Yaxley. Mr. Browne does not appear in the light of a friend; in that ere long he had secured the Bowthorpe and Colney estates, with property in Yorkshire also, and Blomefield tells us "that Sir Robert Yallop, Kt., for his good service in recovering Mr. Yaxley's estate in Yorkshire from his kinsman Browne, of Colney, had the manor of Bowthorpe conveyed to him."

I have now reached a period in the history of Yaxley Hall when the family deeds render me a great service, and with their help, added to Charles Yaxley's pedigree declared in the Visitation of 1664, I shall be enabled to clear away many difficulties which have beset the pedigree makers, and give a thoroughly reliable descent for the family to the very end.

Charles Yaxley, senr., declares three sons and five daughters; Charles Yaxley, junr., his eldest son had then (1664) been twice married, the first wife being

Anne, daughter of Robert Reeve, and the second, Anné, daughter of Robert Bacon, of Redgrave. This lady was born about 1634. Of the daughters three were already married, Elizabeth to Thomas Pegge, Mary to George Bendy, and Dorothy to Thomas Wright. Anne and Grace were at that time still spinsters. There are two other sons mentioned, Anthony and Francis. Both the Charles Yaxleys were residing on the property between 1660 and 1676, probably the one at the hall, and the other at the old house by the entrance to the park, called the Home Farm, and was employed on farming the land; anyhow, both were often busily occupied in borrowing money. In 1663, there is a mortgage created on the property to Nathaniel Flowerdew, of Eye, "on all those pieces or furcloses of land or pasture, then divided into four parts or closes of arable called Southfields, then in the occupation of Charles Yaxley the younger." This mortgage is handed on to Samuel Colby, of Brockford, in 1665, and on 12th August, 1676, merged in a larger one to Sir Robert Reve, of Thwait. In the meantime another mortgage had been started by Charles Yaxley, junr., on 29th September, 1669, with Sir George Reve, the father of the aforesaid Sir Robert, and finally gets merged in the other in 1676. In this latter year, Charles Yaxley the younger is dead. Of his children I know very little; one daughter, Margaret, is recorded in a pedigree as having married Stephen, son and heir of Jeremy Stafford, of Bury St. Edmunds, and another daughter, Elizabeth Yaxley, a spinster, is mentioned in Robert Yaxley's will of 1707. The father outlived the son for a few years, but is dead in 1684. Mr. Frederick Johnson, of Norwich, who has very kindly forwarded me several notes on the family history, from the Norris MSS. and his own collections, tells me "there is a London marriage licence for Charles Yaxlee of Yaxlee, Suffolk, Esquire, widower, aged

40, and Mary Sedgwick, spinster, aged 23, daughter of Tobias Sedgwick, of St. Mary's, Savoy, Middlesex, barber-surgeon, dated 27th November, 1671, to be married there." This must be Charles Yaxley the younger, who would have been born about 1631; but the information rather astonished me, as I think he must have been dead in 1676, and I have been unable to find any record of the deaths and burials of the two other wives. There is no mention of this Mary Yaxley in any of the family deeds.

Edmund Yaxley, the son of Charles Yaxley and Anne Bacon, succeeds to the property. In an early deed connected with him he is syled "merchant in Yarmouth." However, he relinquishes the business and comes into residence at Yaxley Hall, and the following year takes to himself a wife in the person of Philippa, the daughter of Sir George Reve, of Thwaite, Kt. and Bart.; by Philippa his wife, another daughter of Robert Bacon, of Redgrave, and sister to Sir Edmund Bacon, Kt. and Bart. The marriage settlement was not drawn up till a year or so later, 1687, when Philippa Reve brings a dowry in of £3,000. The trustees are Sir Robert Reve, her brother, Thomas Havers, of Thelveton Hall, in Norfolk, and Charles Bedingfeild, of Swatshall, in Gislingham, then 27 years of age.

It does not seem that Edmund Yaxley made a fortune as a merchant, anyhow, he was very slow in the payment of his dues. The old trouble with parish authorities cropped up again, and a second inquisition was held, and it is stated "that on the death of Charles Yaxley, one Edmund Yaxley, his son and heir, entered into the said premises, and ever since the death of his father for 12 years he has not paid the same, and the said Edmund Yaxlee still refuses to pay, whereupon it is decided on 3rd April, 1704, that arrears

should be paid off and the annual payment carried on."

Edmund Yaxley and Philippa Reve had four children—Robert, baptised 8th April, 1686; Philippa, baptised 11th May, 1689; Anne, baptised 15th Aug. 1688, buried 10th April, 1689; and George, baptised 27th April, 1690, buried 30th December, 1690. On the 6th July, 1706, Philippa Yaxley dies, and is buried in Yaxley Church.

On September 6th, 1706, Robert Yaxley, the eldest son of Edmund and Philippa, is about to get married, and the lady of his choice is Susan Edgar, daughter of the late Henry Edgar, of Cranley Hall in Eye, and one of her father's co-heirs, in that she had inherited from him the manor and estate of Capell Hall in Trimley, and on the day above mentioned the marriage settlement is drawn up. Robert Britiffe, who had married one of her sisters, and had inherited Cranley Hall and other properties, was the trustee. As there were no children of the marriage the terms of it are immaterial to a history of Yaxley Hall.

On 25th April, 1707, Edmund Yaxley, the father of Robert Yaxley, makes a settlement on account of the marriage, doubtless to meet the circumstances of a bride with a large dower, and therefore more able to meet the upkeep of Yaxley Hall than he was. He agrees "that the said Edmund Yaxlee shall and will on or before the 3rd May next ensuing leave and quitt the possession of such parte of the rooms as belong to the capitall messuage called Yaxlee Hall, as are now in his use and possession, will all the houses, tenements, and premises belonging to the same, together with all the goods, householde stuffe, plate and other personall estate of him the said Edmund Yaxlee, in Yaxlee Hall aforesaid. Except the books, trunks, and wear-

inge apparell belonging to him the said Edmund Yaxlee and Philippa his daughter. And also except the bedd, and bedstead as it is now stande in the lodgeing roome of him the said Edmund Yaxlee. All which said excepted goods and chattels he the said Edmund Yaxlee is at liberty to take and carry away at his will and pleasure—and on the 3rd May the said Robert Yaxlee his only son and heire apparent is to take quiett and peaceable hold and possession of Yaxlee Hall, and the Hall farme, now in the possession of Thomas Berry at the rent of £120 per annum, he paying all debts due upon mortgages, and all arrears for charitable uses, and all costs and charges and other incumbrances whatsoever, and handing over to him the said Edmund Yaxlee £371 15s. 4½d., being the balance due, on a stated account, made and signed by both on 17th April; and furthermore, the said Robert Yaxlee is to give good security to his father, to pay to him during the term of his natural life only one annuity or yearly rent charge of £15, without any deduction or defalcation, for or by reason of any parliamentary or other taxes, at Yaxley Church porch, by ½-yearly payments, at the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, and at the feast of the Annunciation of the blessed lady St. Mary the Virgin, the first payment to begin at Michaelmas next."

The family arrangement made in the settlement seems to have been satisfactory in every way, at any rate if there were any disputes the law was not called upon to settle them, and in the same year both father and son quitted this life. Robert Yaxley was buried at Yaxley Church on 28th August, 1727, and Edmund Yaxley, the father, on December 2nd of that same year.

The family property of Yaxley Hall then remained

with Susan Yaxley, the widow of Robert Yaxley, and his will made on 20th March, 1707, and proved 7th October, 1727, leaves "all my manors, messuages, lands and tenements within the county of Suffolk or elsewhere, to Susan Yaxley my wife, upon the express condition nevertheless that if the said Susan my wife shall at any time after my decease intermarry with any person not being a gent of a visible estate of four hundred pounds per annum, that then and in such case I doe give and devise all and every my manors, messuages, etc., to Elizabeth Yaxlee of St. Clements Danes, London, spinster, my aunt." He appoints Robert Britiffe, his wife's trustee, and also his brother-in-law, his executor, and gives him "for his care" £100.

In all the deeds connected with mortgages on the Yaxley Hall estate during the life of Robert Yaxley and Susan his wife, and there are many of them, commenced with William Camell (otherwise Campbell), of Diss, and handed over to a man named Pitts, of Norwich, arrangements are made for the payment of £800 out of the property to Philippa, the daughter of Edmund Yaxlee, who was apparently during that period a spinster. The name and seal and signature of Susan Yaxlee appears on all these deeds, not because she was in need of money, but because of the interest she had in the estate. When she died in 1734, and was buried in Eye Church, she left a considerable property to be distributed, and her will proved on 24th February of that same year is of much local interest. She nominates as her sole executor, Samuel Newstead, the elder, of Brome, and she authorises him to sell and dispose of "all that the manor of Bulls Hall with Blogate, in Yaxlee aforesaid, and also my mansion house situate in Yaxlee aforesaid, or near there, with the lands and appur-

tenances to the same, now in the occupation of Daniel Lanham or his assigns, and also all that my messuage, tenement or farm called Capell Hall, situate in Trimley, etc., etc." and she orders all her goods and chattels to be sold except wearing apparel, which, says she, "I shall hereafter bequeath." She leaves a sum of £500 to Robert Britiffe, to her niece Audrey Wace, to her niece Mary, the wife of Robert Stebbing, of Eye, gent., to her niece Judith, the wife of Robert Hayward, of Occold, gent., and smaller sums to many others, and she adds, "whereas there is a suit now depending in the Court of Chancery between me and some person or persons, claiming under Philippa Warren (before Philippa Yaxlee) sister to my late husband, Robert Yaxlee, about £800 pretended or represented to be due and payable out of all or some of my estates, in case it be declared due, then those to whom legacies are devised shall equally share the payment thereof."

On 28th March, 1737, Samuel Newstead, of Brome, finds a purchaser for Yaxley Hall, and at least some of the land connected with it. The indenture is of that date, and the purchaser. "Margaret Seymour, of the parish of St. Giles in the ffeilds in the county of Middlesex, single woman." She was in reality the the favorite lady of Nicholas Leeke, 4th Earl of Scarsdale, by whom she had three children. The property is described thus, "All that capital messuage or mansion house, late of the said Susan Yaxlee, called or known by the name of Yaxley Hall, with stables, outhouses, etc., then or late in the use and possession of William Minter at a rent of £30 per annum; and also all that messuage, etc., commonly called or known by the name of Storehouse Farm with a cottage or tenement called the Kiln House, then in the tenure of Daniel Lanham at a rent of £80." The price of the lot was £4,400

Madame Margaret Seymour (as she is usually styled) made her will on coming into possession of Yaxley, which would not have been mentioned here had it not been connected with Philippa Yaxley. She says "that £1,350 of the purchase money has been left in my hands to indemnify me against a decree of the Court of Chancery for the payment of £800, and interest claimed to be due and charged on the estates, and to be paid to Thomas Green, executor of the last will and testament of Thomas Green, his late father deceased, who was the executor of the last will and testament of John Warreyn deceased, the late husband of Philippa Warreyn deceased," and she ordains that this sum shall be kept in the hands of her executor "with well and sufficient interest, and with further money to meet all costs of any suit relating to the same." I am uncertain as to whether or no this claim was ever settled. It will be noticed that the "Manor of Bulls Hall cum Blogate Hall" is not included in the purchase of Margaret Seymour. It soon after passed into the family of Thruston Mott, and later on to the Kerrisons. The description of Yaxley Hall in the deed must include the Home Farm, or the rent would not be so much.

With the death of Susan Yaxley in 1734, and the retention of the property in the hands of her executor till 1737, the connection between the family of Yaxley and Yaxley Hall is brought to a close. There seems to have been no real break in the chain since the commencement, and it lasted nigh upon 300 years.

EDMUND FARRER, F.S.A.

YAXLEY

OF

YAXLEY AND MELLIS.

