

## JOHN OF GAUNT'S CONNECTION WITH THORNDON.

By REV. H. A. HARRIS.

About twenty years ago I acquired some oddments of old stained glass, mostly continental, and containing a shield which the late Rev. E. Farrer told me bore the Arms of Castile and left it at that.

Lately Mr. Horace Wilkinson saw it, took it to London, discovered its significance and returned me a rendering which revealed a most interesting coincidence, as it links the shield not only with Suffolk but also with Thorndon.

The Arms are those of John of Gaunt (1340-1399) and the glass is of 15th century date, coloured in white and stain, as enamel colouration was not used in glass until a century later.

John of Gaunt was the fourth son of Edw. III and was born at Ghent, hence his name. In 1339 he married Blanch, heiress to the Duchy of Lancaster. She died 1369 and three years later he married Constance daughter of Pedro the Cruel, king of Castile. Constance died in 1394, and in 1396 he married his mistress, Catherine Swynford.

Catherine was a daughter of Sir Payne Roelt and her first husband was Sir Hugh Swynford, a knight in the retinue of John of Gaunt; she died in 1372.

It is through the Swynford connection that John of Gaunt comes into Thorndon history.

The shield is additionally interesting as it depicts the royal achievements—visionary and real—of John of Gaunt. His son Henry, by his first wife Blanch, became Henry IV, and through his second wife, Constance, daughter of King Pedro, he claimed the Crown of Castile.

His mistress, who later became his third wife, bore children who were legitimised in 1397, but in 1407 a clause was inserted—"excepta dignitate regali"—which precluded her descendants from the throne.

The shield may be emblazoned thus:—

Castile and Leon quarterly.

Castile—Gules, a castle triple towered, or.

Leon—Argent, a lion rampant gules, crowned or.

Impaling Ancient France and England quarterly.

Ancient France—Azure, semeè of fleur de lys or.

England—Gules, three lions passant guardant or, a label of three points ermine.

In the Tanner MSS, housed at the Bodleian Library, there is a reference to these Arms as being displayed in Thorndon Church.

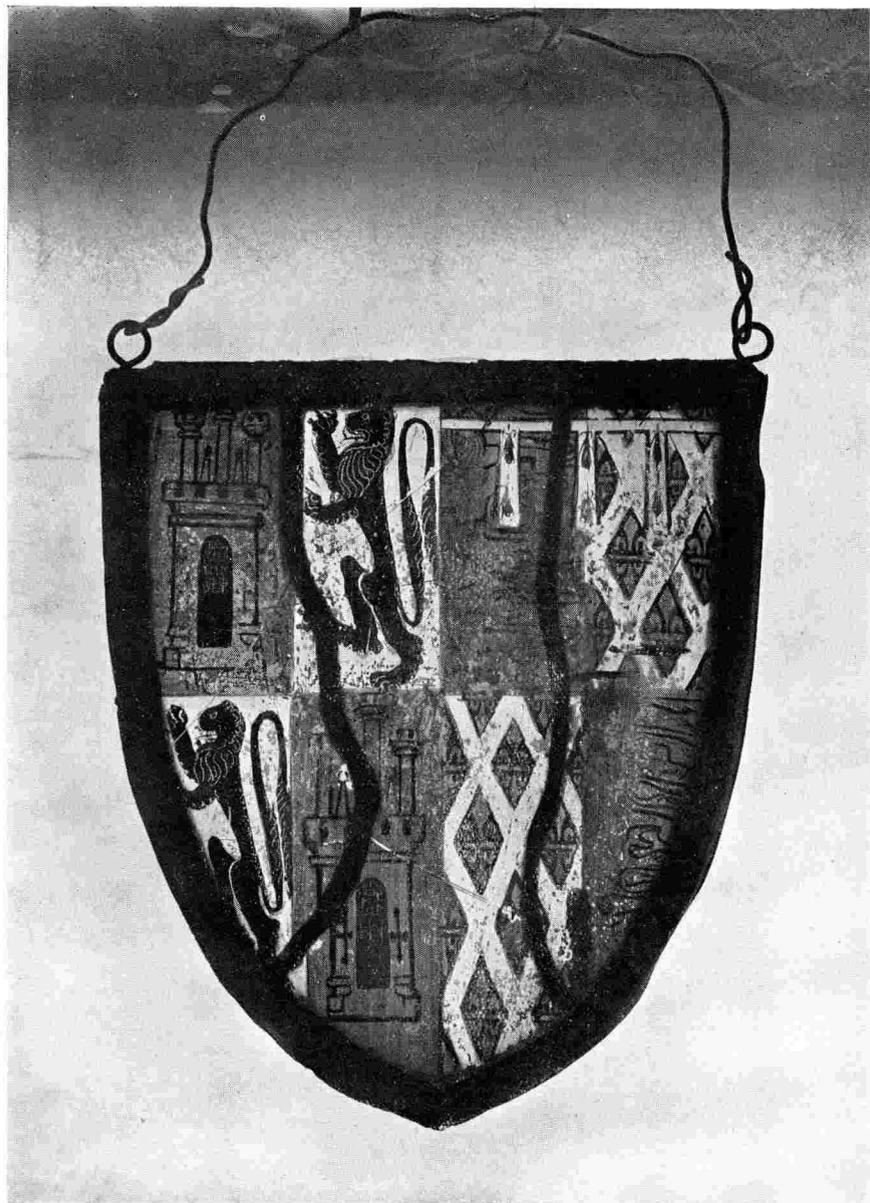
“ Extract from MS. number CCCX, 185—In Thorndon Church ”  
 “ . . . there be the Arms of Dame Katherine Swynford sometime ”  
 “ Duchess of Lancaster that by Sir Thomas Swynford had a son ”  
 “ and heir—Sir Thomas Swynford, knight, father to Dame ”  
 “ Katherine wife to Sir Wm. Drury Kt., the tenth Sir Wm. Drury.”  
 “ Dame Katherine among others had Mary the wife of Edward ”  
 “ Grimston whom God had endowed with great virtue and beauty ”  
 “ and is here interred the 6th day of March 1469.”

“ Beneath this epitaph lieth in brass the form of a human body ”  
 “ . . . Upon the very highest part of all was a great Escutcheon ”  
 “ quarterly of John of Gaunt as France and England, upon the 4th ”  
 “ corner beneath Drury as before empaling Swynford as before ”  
 “ underneath this was written—Orate pro anima Mariae Grimston ”  
 “ and over all a Lambeaux of three points ermine impaling Swyn- ”  
 “ ford argent upon a chevron sable 3 boars heads or.”

At above date the Grimstons owned and occupied the house and property known as Rishangles Lodge, standing on the east border line between the parishes of Rishangles and Thorndon. In the 17th century this house was burned down and rebuilt some 200 yards westwards thus bringing it within the bounds of the parish of Thorndon.

It is certain that the Swynfords visited this house and may have had a residence in the immediate neighbourhood as there are several important moats in the vicinity (including a small circular Dove-house moat), which have no known history.

The Swynfords had interests in Mellis and Burgate and a Wm. Swynford was Vicar of Eye, four miles away, in 1349.



*Photo by C. H. Gale.*