

Michell of Cannington

BY GEORGE B. MICHELL

To the *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* for 1918 Canon Mayo contributed a collection of notes of early date, based on authorities of varying value, bearing on the family of Michell of Pury in Wembdon and of Gournestreet in Cannington; a tentative but disconnected genealogy 1249–1455, and a further pedigree 1457–1616.

The present writer has made wide original research concerning this family of his name and, from a mass of material extracted from records of unassailable authority, now offers some amplification of the canon's scholarly article, including a transcript of the earlier generations as entered in Camden's *Visitation*, anno 1623, and not hitherto printed.

An early record of the arms borne by the name is found on the seal of Simon Michel, impressed 1404,¹ which exhibits 'a chevron between three geese' impaling 'per fess vair and . . .' a coat later blazoned by the heralds 'per chevron gules and sable, a chevron between three geese argent'. It may here be noted that in unofficial scrolls compiled by Carew, Holland, Risdon, and others of later date, the 'geese' invariably, but erroneously, become 'swans'.

Assuming that the heiresses named by Camden were all armigerous the achievement of Thomas Michell, 1487, would have exhibited at least quarterly of 10, '1 Michell, 2 Hamond, 3 Euercriez, 4 Testard, 5 de Chanton, 6 de la More, 7 Periman, 8 Dodisham, 9 de Gourney and 10 as 1', and have remained unaltered in the senior line to 1616.

The official pedigree at the College of Arms records an un-

broken line of thirteen generations to 1623, commencing with Michael de Ripariis (who must have lived in the thirteenth century), whose son Bartholomew took to wife Alice daughter and heir of John Hamond by Alice daughter and heir of William de Euerciez. Simon, husband of Agnes, succeeded, followed by Matthew and his wife Joan daughter and heir of Robert Testard² whose son, again a Matthew, allied himself with Maud daughter and heir of Richard de Chanton. The next in succession, Thomas, by Joan daughter and heir of Richard de la More, left William, whose son Walter married Agnes daughter and co-heir of Philip Periman by the daughter and heir of Roger Dodisham,³ and Jane daughter and heir of Hugh Gourney.

The canon having dealt with the records to the middle of the fifteenth century, and the herald having supplied the official genealogy, we may commence our further notes with the Walter Michell who, about the year 1465, took to wife Agnes daughter of Philip Periman, a man of considerable possessions and an armiger with no mean escutcheon, to which his wife further brought her paternal coat, quartering the arms of Dodisham and de Gourney.

Walter settled his property, consisting of nine manors in addition to considerable further interest, on his wife for her life with reversion to his heirs.

These manors, with their values in 1487, included Chelton (with certain lands) £16; Wembdon and West Pury £20; Cleyhull and Stert Marks 10, Est Chylton, North Bour, Chese-lade, and West Bour Marks 20. Of these all, with the exception of the two latter, appear in the last inquest taken before the rebellion, that after the death of Sir Bartholomew Michell, 1616. The numerous tenements in various situations (including Cannington) are returned as being worth £20 6s. 8d. and Marks 15, bringing the total value of the estate dealt with to £56 6s. 8d. and Marks 45.

Walter's two elder sons having died without issue the third, Thomas, carried on the name but never enjoyed the property, which remained the dower of his mother Agnes, who survived him. His will, dated and proved in 1503, directs his burial to be at Cannington, to which place the family had by now removed from Pury. He was succeeded by an only son, another Thomas.

When this Thomas, later the principal in the Gourney Street crime, succeeded his father in 1503, his grandmother Agnes Michell was still living in enjoyment of her dower, and Thomas presented a complaint against her in Chancery for the detention of charters concerning the manor of Wembdon, but no further proceedings are recorded.

Among the children of Thomas Warre of Kingeston were Joan and Eleanor, both to be later murdered by Thomas Michell whom the former had married in or before 1524.

It was at the mansion-house at Gurney Street, Cannington (and not at Perry Court in West Pury), that the tragedy of 13th December 1539 took place. The records of the crime, which are to be found among the proceedings of the Court of Star Chamber, consist of a defective Bill of Complaint, an Answer by Nich. Sarger (under Sheriff to Sir Thos. Speke) to the complaint of Nich. Heth clerk, chief almoner to the King, and lastly the Decree.

Thomas Michell, Esquire, is described as a man of great possessions to the value of £1000 who, 'seduced by the instigation of our ghostly enemy the devil', murdered his wife Joan, her sister Eleanor Sydnam, widow, and thereupon took his own life. Thomas Warre, forestalling the Sheriff, hurried to Cannington, caused the bodies to be hastily interred without inquest, and is stated to have annexed a large portion of his son-in-law's goods. William Richards, the coroner, was subsequently summoned by the under-sheriff to view the disinterred remains and to hold an inquest, at which a verdict of murder was returned in both cases against Thomas, though none was recorded in that of his own death. The Decree refers to him as 'felon of himself', names Sir Th. Speke, Nich. Carger and others as defendants, orders an inventory of goods to be made for seizure into the King's hands, and that Nich. Carger make good such chattels as had already been either taken or sold.

This ill-fated couple left two sons Richard, aged fifteen at his parents' death, and John.

Richard allied himself with Elizabeth, daughter of Alexander Popham of Huntworth and sister of the Chief Justice, and from this date most of the Michells were entered at the Middle

Temple. Elizabeth survived her first husband and, after the fourteen years' tenure of Gournestreet with its demesne lands of Pyllockenines which Richard had bequeathed her, remarried Henry Uvedale of Moreskirchell, Dorset, and eventually lived at Langford Budville, her will being proved in 1612.

Tristram, Richard's heir, having died a minor in 1572, the next son Bartholomew inherited the property, was knighted, became Vicecomes of Somerset and, dating his will as of Mere, died during his tenure of that office in 1616.

Sir Bartholomew's heirs were declared to be his daughters Jane, wife of William Hockmore, and Frances who, between the dates of her father's will and inquest, had married Alexander Popham. A son, Thomas, born to Sir Bartholomew was entered at the Middle Temple in 1605 but predeceased his father. Sir Bartholomew, after the death of this son, entailed the estates with the exception of his manors of Iveton and Northbower which he left to his daughters 'for the sake of continuing the premises in the family of Michell' on the four sons successively of his deceased brother Henry, by name Richard, Bartholomew, Thomas, and John; appointing as trustees Francis Hele, Edw. Popham, Henry Aishford and Francis Rogers, the manors concerned being those of Chelton, Wembdon, West Pury, East Chylton, Cleyhull, Stert, Chylton Trevit and Radway. These four brothers were all under the age of eighteen in 1616.

Henry, their father, married in 1598 Joan Sydenham, was of the Middle Temple 1582, and at one time of Langford Budville. Still living in 1610 he was dead in 1616.

Of Richard we hear in 1624 as being admitted to the Middle Temple and further in 1626 as overlord, in Wembdon, of George Michell. It is possible that Bartholomew may have died in 1638 as of Compton, Dorset, leaving issue Bartholomew and Agnes, minors, administration being granted to Richard and Thomas, brothers of deceased. Of Thomas nothing further is known. John, the youngest son of Henry and Joan, wedded Anne Bird and he, or his son Simon, settled in Huntingdonshire, at St. Neot's and Offord Cluny, the official Visitation for that county recording their pedigree as from Richard and Elisabeth of Cannington to the above Simon, who was aged thirty-six in

1684 and then father of two sons of tender age. This branch differenced the paternal arms with a crescent charged on the chevron.

Roger Brooke, the herald, informs us that Raynold, son of Walter and Agnes of 'Gurnstreet' and brother of Thomas, was of Bruton and founded a branch which continued for several generations at Talaton, Devon. The College of Arms contains no official record of this pedigree and Brooke's statement would be insufficient evidence were it not supported by Sir William Pole who, *circa* 1600, purchased 'Southcote' in Talaton and records the history of these lands as passing from English to Creedy, to Brimmore, and to Raynold Michell 'whose great-grandson William sold them unto mee'. Raynold was named residuary legatee and executor in the will of Alys Brymore, 1517, his children being then minors. The family remained on at Talaton after the sale of their property and Thomas, a son of the above William, went to Oxford in 1624 at the age of twenty-two years.

NOTES

- ¹ This seal is affixed to an Indenture, dated Thursday, 3rd April 1404, between Robert Hulle, lord of Edyngton, and Isobel his wife, and Simon Michel and John Hugyn, lords of Chelton, for the settlement of the boundaries of these manors, for long a question of variance between the parties and their ancestors, lords of the same.

The chapel of 'St. Stephen of Byrkle', the lordship of 'Merk', 'Chelton Moor', and 'Edyngton moor' are named. P.R.O., Ancient Deeds, B.S. 310.

This Simon does not appear in Camden's pedigree, perhaps an eldest son who died without issue. In 1428 Thomas Michell held in 'Chelton', 'Wembdon', 'Cleyhull' and 'Bour'. *F. Aids.*

- ² TESTARD.

William Testard held in Wembdon and Cleyhull in 1284-5, Robert in 1303, and in Wembdon with Pury in 1316. His heirs held in Wembdon and Cleyhull in 1346, while in 1428 the same lands were in the tenure of Thomas Michell. Joan Michell, widow, and William Michell, gent., are both described in 1431 as of Pury. *F. Aids.*

³ DODESHAM.

Inquest P.M. on William Dodesham, 1480. He died 11th August 1480; Alexander Pym, son of Joan daughter of Eleanor sister of W. Dodesham, and John Puryman son of Alexander son of Joan another sister of W. Dodesham are his next of kin and heirs. A. Pym is aged over twenty-two, and J. Puryman over ten.

ETYMOLOGY.

Dating from the year 1155 this surname has been variously written 'Myghel, Michael, Mychel and Michell' but never 'Mitchell', the 't' having crept into modern transcripts. The correct pronunciation is 'My-shell'.

ARMORIAL.

The coat 'a chevron between three swans' (with varying fields, metals, and tinctures) was 'adopted' by several settlements of the Michells, both in Somerset and Devon, dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the College of Arms contains no official record of further descents from the Cannington stock, and those families who have entered their genealogies have hitherto failed to connect in the male line with any of the descendants of Michael de Ripariis.

The present scribe would be grateful to any reader of the foregoing notes who could furnish him with information which would enable him to further extend the genealogy under review, or as to the passing from the Michell family of the various manors entailed on and inherited by Richard in 1616.

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CORRECTIONS TO *Proc. Som. Arch. Soc.* lxiv, ii, 46.

- Page 55, line 1, *delete* 'Perry Court in West Pury', and *read* 'Cannington'.
 „ 57, line 25, *delete* 'perhaps a younger brother', and *read* 'an elder brother'.
 „ 61, line 4, *delete* 'the third son', and *read* 'Walter's grandson'.
 „ 61, lines 28-33, *delete*, and *read*—'John Michell, of Bridgwater, gent., died 21st March 1616-17. The inquest recapitulates his will (Taunton, missing, 1617). He held lands in Wembdon as of Richard Michell, and left a wife, Dorothy (Will, Taunton, 1623), sons Conan, aged over twenty-seven in 1617, George, and Thomas. An inquest on this George Michell, gent., 1626, shows that he held the same property and left a daughter Joan, then aged three years. John Michell, of Old Cleeve, merchant, was a different man, whose will (68 Cope, 1616) names a wife Isott, a deceased son John, and the latter's son John, who was dead in 1633 when Isott took out a second administration to her husband's will'.