

WILLIAM DE WROTHAM,

LORD WARDEN OF THE CINQUE PORTS.

THE various historians of Kent have all failed to furnish any particulars respecting the family of De Wrotham, although they mention the fact that one of its scions was Constable of Dover Castle, and Warden of the Cinque Ports, in the reign of King John. This omission is the more remarkable because Collinson, in the *History of Somersetshire*,\* has printed an interesting description of his descendants, and several facts respecting William de Wrotham himself. Further information I have gleaned from the Public Records.

Geffrey de Wrotham, father of the Lord Warden, was attached to the household of successive Archbishops of Canterbury, who possessed a residence at Wrotham. He is said to have lived during the reigns of Stephen and Henry II. One of the Archbishops, whom he served, gave him a small estate at Radenville, or Rodenhall, in Wrotham, and upon it he resided. His son William is said, likewise, to have served Archbishop Hubert Walter, but we first hear of him in connection with Devonshire and Somersetshire. The Black Book of the Exchequer records his tenure of the office of Warden of the Stannaries, in Devon and Cornwall, during the 9th year of Richard I (1197-98).† In the following year the Crown granted to him the manor of Cathanger in Fivehead, and the bailiwick of North Petherton, both in Somersetshire. When King John ascended the throne William de Wrotham became Sheriff of Devonshire and Warden of the Stannaries, during the first year of that King's reign. He was likewise elected Forester of Dorset and Somerset.

\* Vol. iii., p. 63 *et seq.*

† *Lib. Nig. Sac.*, i., 360.

Among the Kent Fines for the fourth year of King John, there is one dated 20th of April, 1203, by which Hugh, abbot of Ghent, acknowledges to William de Wrotham (for the free service of two marks per annum) three yokes of land, in Sudacholt (Knockholt), belonging to Sutton-at-Hone. The abuttals mentioned shew that this land was about eight or nine miles from Wrotham Church, and that it was bounded by Hackstaple, Swanley, and Petham Court. The exact boundary, on the west, seems to have run "from Cobbe-sole, along the path between the land of Sudacholt and the land of Orpinton, as far as Kenteleshethe, thence to Dikenhethethe, and so to Hackstaple."\* In addition to the three yokes, other parcels of land in Sutton-at-Hone are included in the Fine. These were Swonesland, Sarichescroft, Kentinges-croft, two crofts called Smalhachesland, two others called Wlfputtes, and a curtilage near Dikenhathe. The Earl of St. Paul and his heirs claimed a rent of 20s. per annum from the lands mentioned in this Fine; it was therefore stipulated that if they succeeded in establishing their claim, William de Wrotham was to pay that rent to them. Two years later, we find, upon the Close Roll for 6 John, that the King conceded to William de Wrotham "100 solidatos"† of land in Sutton, in Kent, which had lately belonged to Richard Bacon.

King John in his fourth year granted to him Newton Park, in North Petherton, Somerset, and lands in other parishes to be held in fee by the serjeantry of being the king's Forester in Dorset, Devon, Somerset, and Cornwall.‡

When William de Wrotham was appointed Lieutenant§ of Dover Castle I have not been able to discover. He ultimately became Constable of the Castle and Lord Warden, but it seems to be uncertain during what year of King John's reign he was called to these high offices. Collinson says that it was in the 9th year of John, but he likewise states that in the same year he was Sheriff of Kent, and so far as

\* *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. III., p. 235.

† *Close Roll* 6 John, membrane 9. No. 74. *Calendar Rot. Pat.*, p. 8b.

‡ Collinson, *Hist. of Somersetshire*, iii. 64.

§ Knocker's *Grand Court of Shepway*, Appendix, p. 106.

I can learn, this statement is not accurate. Possibly he may have acted as assistant to Reginald de Cornhill in that office; and this idea is rendered somewhat probable by the fact that William de Wrotham's wife was Maud de Cornhill.

His elder son William was Archdeacon of Taunton during the reign of King John, and died in the 3rd year of Henry III. Of the second son Richard we know, only, that he left one son, Richard, and four daughters, and probably died about 1224. The son is mentioned, on the Patent Roll of 9 Henry III,\* as receiving seisin of the Forester's office for Somersetshire, and likewise of Newton Park, as his right. He died without issue in 1250 seised *inter alia* of land worth 46s. 8d. per annum in the ville of Hegheland in Kent, which he held of the Archbishop of Canterbury.† His widow Cecilia is mentioned on the Fine Roll 35 Hen. III m. 13.‡ His heirs were his two surviving sisters, and the sons of his two deceased sisters. King Henry III accordingly received the homage of John Blund, and Thomas Picot, husbands of the surviving sisters, and of William Plessiz and Geoffrey Scolond, sons of the deceased sisters. The record of this event is attested at Woodstock, 6th February 35 Hen. III.§

William Plessiz, or de Plessetis, eldest son of Muriel de Wrotham by Hugh de Plessetis, inherited his uncle's Somersetshire possessions, as Forester of the County and custodian of Newton Park.|| He was thirty years old in December 1250,¶ and he died in the 4th year of Edward I. His younger brother Richard, third son of Muriel, possessed his uncle's lands in Wrotham and Ford in Kent. Ultimately he assumed his uncle's name, and, as Richard de Wrotham he in the 10th year of Edward I had release, from Emma de Mallinges, of lands at Rodenhall in Wrotham.\*\* He was of Enfield and Edmonton in Middlesex, and married a daughter of Berenger le Romeyn. In his will, dated 1292,

\* Part 2, memb. 2, no. 2, *Cal. Rot. Pat.*, p. 13.

† *Archæologia Cantiana*, II, 302.

‡ *Ibidem*, II, 322.

§ *Fine Roll*, 35 H. III, memb. 6. *Arch. Cantiana*, II, 321.

|| *Rot. Pat.* 35 Hen. III, memb. 8.

¶ *Inq. p. mortem*, 35 H. III, No. 47.

\*\* Collinson, *Hist. of Somersetshire*, iii. 65.

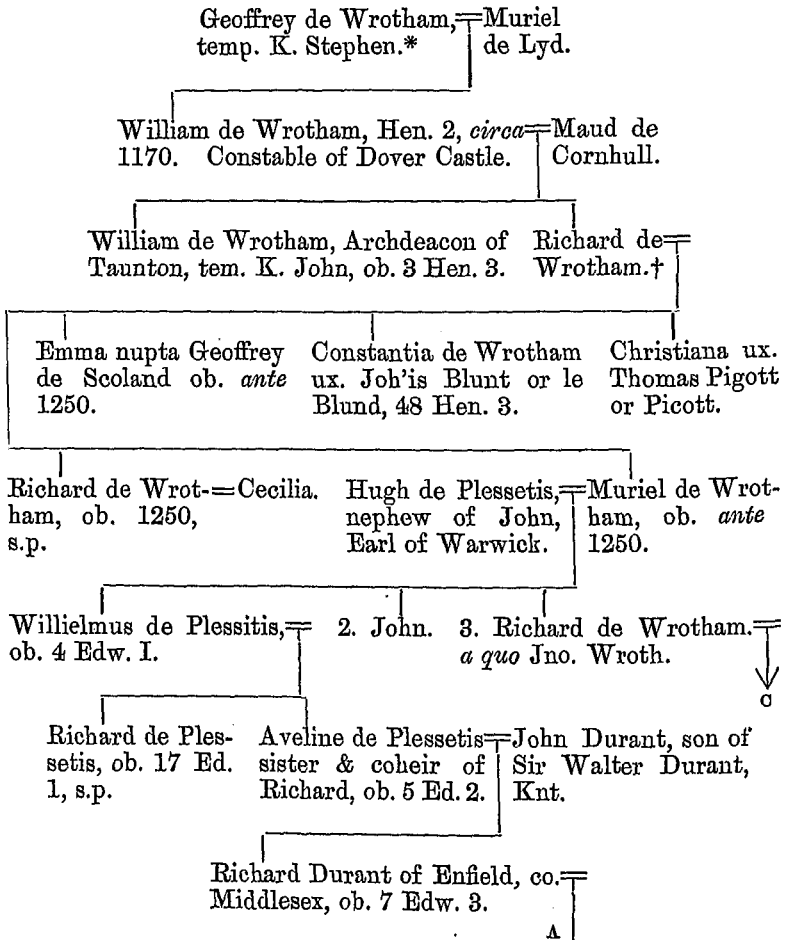
he desired to be buried as near as possible to his wife Gladyna, in the chapel built by her brother, Berenger le Romeyn, within the parish church of Edelmetone. His sons were John, Richard, and William. John was Prior of the Friars Preachers, and envoy from Edward I and II to the Court of Rome; he died at Bolonia in 1323. Richard was of Sheperton, and it seems that his grandson William Wrothe, son of Richard Wrothe of Sheperton, succeeded to his lands. As William Wrothe died without issue, his brother John, of Enfield and of North Petherton, was his heir. This John Wrothe died temp. Ed. III possessed of lands at "Yeldam" in or near Wrotham. Correcting Collinson's account by that of Lysons, we should say that his eldest son John having married twice, died in 20 Richard II. By his first wife he had one son, and a daughter named Agnes. She married Sir Pain Tibetot\*, and through her the Kentish property fell, it is said, to John, Lord Tiptot. The second wife, of John Wrothe, was Maud (*i.e.* Matilda) sole daughter and heir of Thomas Durant, widow of Sir Baldwin de Radington.

Having thus traced the descent of De Wrotham's Kentish possessions, through the younger son of Muriel de Wrotham to the heirs of John Wroth by his first wife, we return to notice a remarkable fact respecting the second wife of the said John Wroth. She was a descendant of Muriel's elder son William de Plessetis, so that the issue of this second marriage, united the blood of two sons of Muriel de Wrotham (William de Plessetis, and Richard de Wrotham).

By a singular coincidence, a descendant of John Wroth by his second marriage became, thirty-three years ago, Rector of the parish of Wrotham. To that circumstance we are indebted for the following elucidation of the descendants of John Wroth and Maud Durant, whose union mingled the blood of Muriel de Wrotham's two sons. Canon Lane, who is Rector of Wrotham, found among his papers a record of certain legal proceedings, from which he has transcribed the following particulars. The pedigree has been verified, and amended, by his son, Mr. Henry Murray Lane, who holds the position of *Chester Herald* in the College of Arms.

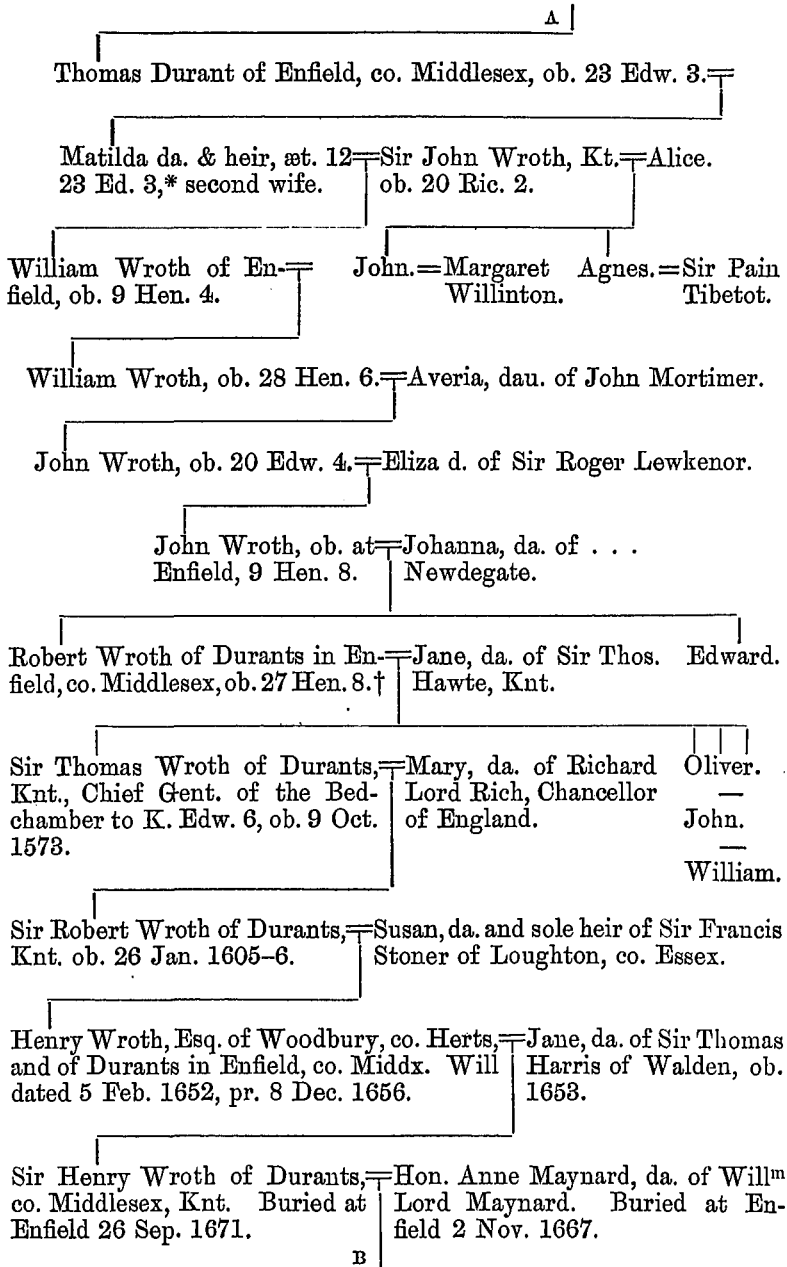
\* Dugdale's *Baronage of England*, ii. 40.

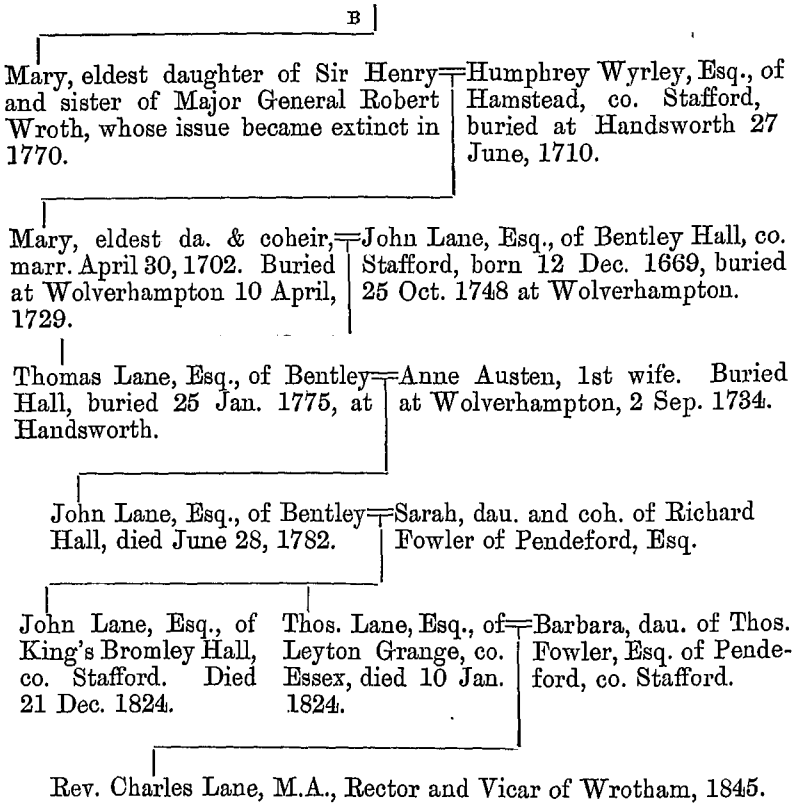
In the year 1786 a suit in Chancery was commenced by William Henry Earl of Rochford, and John Lane, Esq., *Plaintiffs*, against Sir John Dashwood King, Bart., the Baroness Le Despencer, Sir Richard Sutton, Bart., and others, *Defendants*, to dispossess them of estates at Enfield, in Middlesex, which the Plaintiffs claimed as heirs of the sisters Mary and Jane Wroth. The subjoined pedigree was submitted to the Court, and judgment was given in favour of the *Plaintiffs*.



\* Collinson's *Hist. Somersetsh.*, vol. iii., 63.

† Philp's, 32, p. 86; MSS. in Coll. Arms.

\* Vincent's *Visit. Rutland*, Coll. Arms, p. 100.† Vincent's *Visit. Herts*, Coll. Arms, p. 168.



From Collinson's *Hist. of Somerset*, iii. 66, corrected by Lysons' *Environs of London*, ii. 292:—

