

Vaughan Family

The Vaughan family is an off-shoot of what became the Herbert family. At the end of 1300s Thomas ap Gwillim had four sons; the eldest formed the Herbert family and the youngest formed the Vaughan family. The Vaughan name is derived from the Welsh for younger.

On 9th August 1387 Henry V was born in Monmouth Castle and taken to Courtfield for safe keeping. Courtfield was called Greenfield at the time and changed its name to Courtfield after the infant king was moved there. The house belonged to Lady Mary Montague, daughter-in-law of the Earl of Salisbury. She was a cousin of the Royal infant, both of them being descended from Edward I. It is thought that he stayed there until he was about seven. On his death, he left an annuity of £20 to his nurse, Joanna Waring. It was said in earlier times that “you broke your neck getting to Courtfield but you broke your heart leaving it.”

You may have had the King’s bedroom pointed out to you on your tour of the house. My grandfather gave the King’s cradle to a daughter of the Duke of Beaufort of whom he was enamoured at the time and an article in the Daily Express of Feb 1908 refers to the King’s cradle from Courtfield being sold at Christies. It is now said to be in the museum at Kensington Palace.

In 1562 the Courtfield estate which at that time was about 30,000 acres was bought for £800 by John Gwilym of Killwch Vach. Then in 1563 James Vaughan of Llangattock married Sybylla his daughter and heiress. Thus Courtfield came into the Vaughan family.

In 1570 William Vaughan, a second son, married Jane Clarke, heiress of Clifford Park and William became known as “of Courtfield and Clifford Park”. William died in 1601 but Jane features in the Recusant Rolls of 1592 to 1619.

To give you some relevant dates to hang things on:-

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| 1649 | Cromwell deposed Charles I |
| 1660 | Charles II restored |
| 1665 | Great Plague |
| 1666 | Great Fire |
| 1681 | Oliver Plunkett, hung drawn and quartered |
| 1690 | The battle of the Boyne |

Courtfield was inherited by William and Jane's son, John who was born in 1575 and who is described in state papers as a Royalist and Popish recusant. As such he was liable to confiscation of two-thirds of his property and a monthly fine of £20.

For two centuries, the family was persecuted and fined for steadfast adherence to the old faith and various ruses were used to avoid confiscation of their land. The usual one was to give it to a trusted Protestant neighbour who would hopefully give it back when times got better. However some families found this did not happen. On my mother's side, the Plunkett family has two branches the Earls of Fingal who were Catholic and the Barons Dunsany who were Protestant. The Fingals gave their estate to their cousins, the Dunsanys, who said thank you very much and never gave it back. Oliver Plunkett, who was also a cousin of my mother, had been Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland and the last English martyr. He was hung, drawn and quartered at Tyburn in 1681. He was beatified in 1920 and in 1975 was canonised. My mother went to Rome for the service and was pleased to tell her children that her relation was made a saint before any of the Vaughans.

Because of the remote location of Courtfield, which in those days was an island of Monmouthshire and its close proximity to Herefordshire and Gloucestershire it was a favourite hiding ground for priests. The Bishops jealously guarded their territory and the priest hunters found it difficult to chase a priest over the diocesan boundary.

John's first wife was Anne Lingen of Sutton Court, Hereford, another Catholic family. They had been Sheriffs and MPs since Edward IV's reign. There is a story told of one of her earlier family members, Constantia, who was married to Grimbald Lingen. Grimbald was captured by the Moors in Tunis during the Crusades. The Turks sent a message that he could only be freed in exchange for a 'joint of his wife'. She had her hand amputated and preserved in salt and wine and shipped abroad to secure her husband's release. The couple were buried together on Much Cowarne church where their effigies were visited by pilgrims until about 150 years ago when the church was destroyed by fire.

John was succeeded by his son Richard who lived from 1600-97, and was known as the grand old man of Courtfield. Richard had many trials and tribulations because of his adherence to the old faith, with confiscation of lands,

goods and livestock. In 1651 the Commissioners for Sequestration leased to Philip Nicholas of Llansoy for £38.8s the Manor of Welsh Bicknor and the mansion of Courtfield, being the lands of Richard Vaughan, a Papist and Delinquent. In 1654 Rudall Gwillim of Whitchurch sold to Charles Herbert of English Newton, all goods, cattle and stock at Courtfield. All that was left to Richard was a nominal possession of the freehold.

Richard's first son John married a Mary Vaughan of Ruardean and Over Ross in 1659. She was from a different Vaughan family, being descended from a twelfth-century chieftain, Moreiddig Warwin, whose arms were three Saxon boys' heads with snakes around the neck which is now our family crest. They bought Huntsham at about that time. We think the house was built around 1630. I guess that by the restoration in 1660 things were easier for Catholics and buying more land had become a possibility.

John, the younger half brother, inherited from his older brother and produced two sons, Richard and William. They were ardent supporters of the Stuarts and tried to get Bonny Prince Charlie to make his stand on the Welsh borders. They fought in the Duke of Perthshire's division at Culloden 1745 and were given the Prince's pistols after the battle. They left these with their sister, who was married to a Weld of Lulworth, for safe keeping. Then they had to leg it from the country and went to Spain.

One brother became a General and the other a Field Marshall in the Spanish army. They were outlawed and then in 1747, along with seven others, were expressly excluded from the general pardon and could never come back to England.

Richard married Dona Francisca Fourt y Magueire (Fords of Munster) who were one of the 'Wild Geese' families from Ireland. Their son, William, was eventually pardoned and able to return to England. By twin brother, Tommy, has the pardon.

William succeeded from his Uncle John who had not taken part in the Jacobite rebellion and had stayed at Courtfield. John had married Catherine, daughter of James Cornwall of Buckland, Hereford. In 1764-5 John had secured a contract to supply 6000 tons of stone to build Bristol Bridge. This was quarried at Courtfield and shipped down the Wye across the Severn and up the Avon to Bristol. The bridge was completed in 1768 at a cost of £5,000 and was, I think,

rather fine. I have a very nice print of it in my office. However in about 1790 the city fathers decided to put a toll on the bridge and the good citizens of Bristol rioted and trashed the bridge and threw all the fine balustrades into the river. So now it is a rather non-descript bridge in the middle of Bristol with iron railings on the side.

William married Frances Turner and had his estates restored. He lived quite a lot of the time in Cornwall House in Monmouth, presumably inherited from his aunt. In those days the local families had town houses in Monmouth. The Dukes of Beauforts come when the water ran out in the summer at Badminton to Troy House. The Rolls family also had a nice house. So no doubt a jolly summer season was had, with the army in the Castle and the local gentry in the town.

In his book "Catholic Families" Mark Bence-Jones makes the point that a remarkable number of English Catholic families still inhabit their ancestral homes. This is because they got on well with their neighbours but could not go to court. So they were prevented from getting into the cool set and gambling their estates away and forced to live quiet lives. The money gradually accumulated and many of them ended up as the richest families in the county.

William and Frances's only son, William Michael, set about rebuilding Courtfield. He added a Georgian front to the house and made a new road up Coppet Hill to get to it. William married Theresa Weld of Lulworth, another Catholic family. My father always said the Vaughans and the Welds have married each other no less than five times, in our histories, hence the lunacy in the Weld family. Others say that the Catholic families of England have been "Welded together". One of Theresa's brothers, Thomas, entered the church after his wife death and ended up as a Cardinal. The Welds were friends with George III who gave them permission to build the first Catholic Church since the Reformation at Lulworth provided it looked like a mausoleum.

A curious connection is that Cardinal Weld performed the first of the four marriages of my mother's great-great-aunt, a Penelope Smyth, to Charles Prince of Capua who was the second son of King Francis I of the Two Sicilies. They had not obtained the King's permission for the marriage and it was therefore considered morganatic. To try to get their marriage recognised by other European countries, they were next married in Madrid, then again in Gretna Green and for a fourth time in the Anglican Church in Hanover Square. Charles's elder brother, King Ferdinand II, upheld their father's judgement but

in 1862, after the collapse of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies, King Ferdinand's son and successor finally gave the Royal seal of approval to the marriage and recognised the couple as Prince and Princess of Capua.

Back to William Michael Vaughan who had five sons. One died very young and three went into the church with the second son, another William, becoming the Bishop of Plymouth and the first of the five Vaughan Bishops. His two daughters both became nuns.

William was succeeded by his eldest son, John Francis, who in 1830 married Eliza Rolls from the Hendry just outside Monmouth. Her nephew was Charlie Rolls of Rolls Royce fame. Her family were Evangelical and she took to life at Courtfield like a duck to water, converting to Catholicism and spending an hour a day in prayer that all her thirteen children would all go into the church. In this she nearly succeeded as eleven did.

As a child I used to buy bubble gum and that had the Ripley's 'Believe it or not' series printed on the packet. Occasionally I would come across one about Eliza Vaughan who they considered was one of the wonders of the world. No other family has ever produced so many priests and nuns for the church in one generation.

When Eliza died, her husband, John Francis, was heart-broken. When the Crimea War broke out he tried to persuade the Government to send the Royal Monmouthshire Militia out there. When they refused he took them at his own expense and proceeded to write snotty letters to the Times about the incompetence of the generals. Some years ago I came across a Times leader which said "gone are the days when people like Colonel Vaughan could write critical letters to newspapers about the generals." Very stupidly I did not cut it out. After the war, he came home and married his cousin, Mary Weld, in Lulworth chapel. He was fifty one and she was thirty nine. They had two children, both of whom died in infancy.

I am going to be brief about John and Eliza's children because anyone interested in the family can easily look up their details. Of the six sons who became priests, all distinguished themselves in different ways.

Herbert, the eldest son, founded the Mill Hill Fathers, was Bishop of Salford and became Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and built Westminster cathedral.

Roger, the second son, became Archbishop of Sydney and was on his way to Rome when he died at Ince Blundell. He was then airbrushed by his successor who was Irish. The Irish Catholics in Australia were very against the English Catholics and they refused to pay for his burial even though he had left all his money (£61,828) to his successor. Most of this money had been a gift from the people of Sydney who had had a whip round when he left to go to Rome to give him some spending money for the journey!

Kenelm joined the Cistercians but had to leave because of ill health. However he was ordained in 1865 and recovered his health sufficiently to spend a lot of his life travelling in America, raising funds for his brother, Herbert's, cathedral, particularly the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament.

Joseph founded a Benedictine abbey at Fort Augustus in Scotland and became its Prior.

Bernard became a Jesuit and was considered an outstanding preacher. I have a Spy Cartoon of him where he is called a "Modern Savonarola" and it is said that he preached to all the crowned heads of Europe during his lifetime. However most of his work was with the poor in the East End of London.

John the youngest, who Eliza died giving birth to, became a domestic Prelate to Leo XIII and was eventually made Bishop of Sebastopolis.

Gwladys, Helen, Clare and Mary all became nuns. The youngest daughter Margaret seems to have been a few sandwiches short of a picnic and spent quite some time in a convent nursing home.

Francis Baynham was the sixth son and he married an American, Caroline Ruth O'Fallon Pope. Her father was one of America's most distinguished surgeons and very rich. Her money did a lot to improve the family fortunes. He built the bridge you came across to get to Huntsham at a cost of £3,000. He was Papal Chamberlain to Pope Leo XIII and Pius X.

They had six children and the eldest Charles Jerome inherited. Both his two brothers became priests, one of whom, Francis John became Bishop of Menevia. Two of the daughters married and one became a nun.

Charles married Christine Lister-Kaye, a grand-daughter of the Duke of Newcastle. He was papal Chamberlain to Popes Pius X, Benedict XV and Pius XI and Gold Stick in waiting at three Coronations, those of Edward VII, George

V and George VI. He was mentioned in dispatches three times and awarded an OBE. He was given the Order of St Maurice and St Lazarus for his work in the 1914-18 war by the King of Italy, of which he was particularly proud. In 1938 he was made Lt-Colonel of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers, as his father and grandfather had been. He was High Sheriff for Herefordshire in 1933 and a Deputy Lieutenant for Monmouthshire and a JP for Monmouthshire and Herefordshire. He died just before I was born but I only ever heard nice stories about him.

Charles and Christine had two children; Henrietta (Rita) who died aged ten of the flu epidemic and Joseph Herbert, my father.

I am one of four boys. The eldest, Patrick, inherited the estate and had three sons and two daughters. Oliver has two sons and one daughter. I have two daughters and one son and my twin Tommy has the same.