

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

The Smyths of Ashton Court

by L. J. U. Way
1908, Vol. 31, 244-260

© The Society and the Author(s)

THE SMYTHS OF ASHTON COURT.¹

BY LEWIS UPTON WAY.

PRIOR to their migration to Bristol, the Smyth family were for three generations seated at Ailburton, near Lydney, in the Forest of Dean, in which district they were considerable landowners. The first Smyth on record was named John. He was living in the year 1422, and became the father of Robert, who by deed dated 1440 gave all his lands and tenements in Ailburton to his son, John Smyth, the second, who was father of Matthew Smyth. This Matthew removed to Bristol, where he became a merchant. His will is dated 1526, by which he leaves to his son, John Smyth, the third, all his lands in the Forest of Deane. The will runs: "In the name of God Amen. The 11th day of August in the year 1526, I Matthew Smythe of Bristowe Merchant hole of mind do make my testament and last will as hereafter followeth by God's Grace. First, I do bequeath my soul to God and my body to be buried in the Church of the White Friers in Bristow, and there to be said for my soul a trentall of masses. I do bequeath and give to our Lady of Walsyngham 4d. I do bequeath to our Lady of Worcester 4d. I do bequeath and give to the High Alter of St. Leonards for forgotten tithing 11s. I do give and bequeath to John Smythe my son all my land in the Forest of Dean and God's blessing and mine. I do give and bequeath to my wife Alice Smythe who I do make my sole executrix all the rest of my goodes. In the presens of W. Shipman and J. Winter marchants of Bristow and W. Saunders servant to the said W. Shipman."

John Smyth the third was, like his father, a Bristol merchant, and lived in Small Street, which at the time appears to have

¹ Read at the Bristol Evening Meeting, December 16th, 1908.

been the fashionable quarter. On the table for inspection was his account book (1539-50), containing a long list of contemporary merchants: "Such as be Merchantes and hath credit of Merchants I think not to be denied to be of the mystery": Mr. Smythe, Mr. Jaye, Mr. Brampton, Mr. Richard Pryn, Mr. Spratte, Mr. Ballard, Mr. Codrington, Mr. Gorney (?), William Car, William Tyndall, Thomas Harris, Edward Pryn, William Jones, Thomas Tyzon, William Apponall, Thomas Hicks, John Cut, Thomas Harris, John Dayes, Giles Whit, Thomas Shipman, Robert Butler, Walter Roberts, John Pill, Allen Hill, James Chester, William Harvest, George Snygg, Henry Wyett, James Baileye, William Cooke, Francis Wesley, Richard Huntley, John Pryn, William Kyrke, John Swanne, John Channellor, Lawrence Vyne, John Symonde, Robert Presey, Bartholomew Peynard, John White, Heugh Hamond, George Wynter, William Blacke, William Preston, William Baret, John Souche (?), Alexander Casy, John Barber, John Browne, Thomas Chester, Francis Prin, Martin Grenys (?), Edward, Francis Rowley, Randell Wilbury, Martyn Isted, Sampson Amersley, John Draper, Robert Alton, Mark Leyche, Frye, Barlowe, John Boidell, Thomas Aldworth, Nicholas Warre, John Sagester, George Badram, John Stone, —, Heugh Drooper, Arthure Smythe, Richard Maunsell, Walter Standfast, T. Hemyng, Ric. Moest, Pope, Domynycke Chester, Robert Smithe, Robert Tailor, William Yong, William Yong, Mr. Cary, William Pepwell, William Yonge, John Northball, Mr. Jarvis, Mr. Stone, Mr. Sapy, The Wilsones, Michael Fondley, Parwell, John Watkyns, Steven Bragdon, Robert Ashe, Thomas Seward, Mr. Coper, Smythe the boke bynder, Thomas Cut, Ric and Ric Carie, Paynnes Sonne, George Knight, Humfery —, Robert the Tailor, Henry Skinner, Edmund Woode, John Shryrt, Howlet, Edmond Jonys, John Jonys, Robert Newburn, William Pottell, Nicholas Kelley, Nicholas Sheth, —, Mr. Davis' sonne, John Sebryght, Robert Sothewell, Lewis Robyns, T. Symonde, Robert Jefferies, Watte the baker, Nicholas Strasby.

These, no doubt, were men of worth and standing with whom he might fearlessly have business dealings. Some are ancestors of well-known families of to-day. Here was a special account: "Ryght worshupful Mr. Smythe, after most humble commendations and hartly thanks for yor gentylnes, ye shall pecyve that I have receyved thys present Fryday from you by Jos. Fowler a tunne of Gascon wyne the pryse £VII, XIIIs, IIIId, which money ye shall receyve by Jos. Fowler. I dyd send yo £X, XIIIs, IIIId, for 11 butts of sherry by Fowler at hys last beyng here, I marvell that you made no mencion of the receyt of hyt yn yor letter. Ye shall precyve that I have receyved from you in the hoole syns Chrystmas 1111 butts of sherry and 111 tunne and a halfe of Gascon wynes with thys at this tyme. And yr sonnes have receyvd of me at dyvers tymes the hoole sume of £XV and I have sent unto yo by Fowler afore thys tyme £XXI, VIIs, VIIId, and at this present tyme £VII, XIIIs, IIIId, for thys tunne of Gascon wyne and yet am I yn yr dett whych I trust to dyscharge at Saynt James tyde God wylling, who ever p'serve yo and yors, thys present Fryday beyng the XX day of June.¹

"By yors Francis . . .

"Unto the Ryght Worshippful Mr. Smythe of Bristowe these be given with spede."

This style of book-keeping would hardly recommend itself to our present-day men of business. He appears to have dealt mostly in wines, but whatever his trade may have been he did well in it, and having accumulated money invested it, after the manner of his day, in land. In 1545 he purchased from Sir Thomas Arundel the manor of Long Ashton and the advowson, tithe, and parsonage of the chantry there, all for £1,000. Sir Thomas Arundel, of Lanhern, was Sheriff of Dorset in 1531-2, and a Commissioner for the suppression of religious houses, 1535. He was imprisoned for implication in the Cornish rising, 1550, and executed for a share in the Somerset rising, 1552. In 1547 John Smyth bought the

¹ June 20 fell on Friday in 1539, 1544 and 1550.

manor of Durleigh. That he was a man of public spirit, and an able man, we gather from the fact that he was chosen Sheriff of Bristol in 1532, and twice served the office of Mayor—first in 1547, in which year the images in the churches were thrown down, Edward VI being king, and again in 1554, when four men were hanged for coining base money, and their quarters set up over the gates of the city. He died on September 1st, 1555, whilst Mayor, and was buried in St. Werburgh's Church, where a tomb was raised to his memory and that of his wife. The manor of Ashton passed to his son Hugh, and the lands in Gloucestershire to his younger son, Matthew. The date of the death of Joan Smyth, his widow, Mr. Way had not been able to ascertain, but she was living between 1561-2, as a document proved. This was a request for a loan of £50 by Queen Elizabeth, and was called a benevolence.

After his father's death Hugh Smyth lived at Long Ashton, and no more was heard of the house in Small Street. A document dated 1563 throws some light on the characters of Hugh and his brother Matthew. It is a warrant addressed to the Mayor of Bristol, and signed by the Lords of the Council, for the apprehension of the two for misbehaving themselves towards Mr. Gorge, the Queen's servant. The exact nature of the misbehaviour is not stated, and Mr. Way could discover no sequel: "To our loving friend the Mayor of the Citie of Bristowe. After our hearty commendations, understanding by your letters and such examinations as have been of late held by you and others, that Hugh Smyth and Matthew Smyth of Bristowe have of late in such sort misbehaved themselves towards Mr. Gorge the Queen's Majesty's servant, having been sent into these parts for the Queen's Majesty's service, as is not to be supported, we have thought good to require you to cause first the said Hugh and Matthew to be apprehended if they remain in your jurisdiction, and bound in good bonds to appear accordingly before us within ten days next after the taking of the said bonds, and if they be not

within your liberties then we require you to show these our commands to the Sheriff of the county where they remain, whereby we also command him to apprehend them and use the like order with them as we have by these appointed you and to advertise us with speed what you shall have done herein, whereof fail you not as you value her Majesty's favour. So fare you well, from Wyndsor the 20th of January 1563.—Yours loving friends, F. Bedford Pembroke, R. Dudley, E. Clynton, W. Howard, E. Rogers, F. Knolliz, W. Cecille, W. Petree, R. Sackville.”

The year 1578 saw Hugh Smyth in trouble again, as this document showed :—

“Right honourable and very good neighbours, of long time past her Majesty's service hath been hindered and disquieted through the great disorders of Hugh Smyth a Justice of the Peace within the County of Somerset as by these articles here enclosed unto your worships it may more plainly appear. For the which hitherunto we have been silent though grieved hoping that he would reform himself according to his duty. But now perceiving that he will not desist from his wonted conditions and that by the countenance of his office he works his will in such sort that the same is grown to be intolerable, we are therefore enforced to inform your worships of the same, assuring your worships of our credit that as long as he may continue one of the commission whether will he mend his service towards her Majesty or his condition toward his neighbours. We are in the greater haste of his dismissal for that your worships did in the last commission put him out of the quorum. And so trusting to the proberly of your honours in all your doings. Given the VIII of May 1578.

“Your honourable order to dispose of. George Norton, John Poyning, H. Merton, Christopher Kenn, Samuel Norton.

“One Hugh Smyth a Justice of the peace within the county of Somerset lately complained upon to the Counsel for many his quarrels disorders and uncomely speeches was by them commanded to reform himself and to use such

demeanours no more since which Time in that respect he hath been worse than before.

“ Item.—Contrary to the law he conveyed wheat over the sea, at the return of him who sold the same he sent for him demanding that he sold it for, who offered no less which he would not take but by countenance of his Justiceship set him in the stocks until the wretch yielded to pay double that he sold it for as he did extort by confession.

“ Item.—That upon her Majesty’s commission sent unto the Justices of peace for training of soldiers they took order that such men within the allotment as were within the subsidies book should be rated to a certain portion for bearing the charge thereof as well themselves as others. And so he being rated, obstinately refused to pay though all others doth to the encouragement of inferior obstinate persons to do the like. Approved.

“ Item.—That he licensed an alehouse in a place near to a woodside void of neighbours where the same is more fitter to retain thieves and keep filthy rule than for any other good consideration for the furtherance whereof he will put the name into the license of some Justice to sign within twenty miles from him giving six or seven within a mile two miles and six miles the furthest, whereof in very deed not one of them will consent to any such disorder. The license to show.

“ Item.—To reform the same a couple of Justices sat thereupon viz. Sir George Norton and Sir John Young Knights and immediately he sent for some of them that appeared whereof the constable being one railing at the justice saying that one of them was a tosspot beast a drunken knave and so charged the parties to go tell that unto him who so did.

“ Item.—To approve the disorderly use of some of his ruffians one of them this last winter in the night watched a gent. a good servant of her Majesty in her wars to have murdered him who seeing a sudden blow offered held up his hand and thereby saved his life but cut off clean and maimed three of his fingers, with these words, ‘Thou lovest not my

master Mr. Hugh Smyth,' and to terrify his poor neighbours withall if there be any old ruffian about London or murderer in Wales such doth he entertain as now he doth and disquieteth the city of Bristol.

"Somerset.—The complaint of William Davis of St. George in the county aforesaid, Mariner, made before Sir George Norton knight, and Samuel Norton Esq., two of the Queen's Majesty's Justices of the Peace in the county aforesaid, the 25th day of September in the 16th year of the Queen's Majesty's reign, that now is in the possession of Edward Lukener, Oliver Bottrell, Edward Davis alias Smyer.

"Who saith that in March last was delivered him in an evening two butts of wheat out of Mr. Smyth's limehouse, this complainant being in a ship's boat by two of Mr. Smyth's servants whereof this complainant sold at Lisborne one butt, which came to the sum of 14 ducats and 4 riales, and the other butt this complainant sold at St. Lucas for the sum of 6 ducats lacking 2 riales.

"And immediately after this complainant came home he was sent for by two of Mr. Smyth's servants, and about six of the clock at night he was called before Mr. Smyth, who called him villain and asked him where is my goods. This complainant confessed that he knew not that he had any goods of his, then said Mr. Smyth unto him thou last received of thy brother Robert two butts of wheat of mine and upon that Mr. Smyth strake him a great blow in the mouth, so that his mouth bled withal, and commanded four of his men forthwith to carry him away to the stocks. And about seven of the clock the next day in the forenoon he sent for him again and demanded for how much money he sold his wheat. This complainant made account as before is said, which account Mr. Smyth utterly misliked and said he was wont to have more for his wheat and thereupon sent for one Thomas Jenning mariner who had a butt of wheat for him in a ship called the Swallow before that time and presently made a mittimus for this complainant to send him away to the jail except he would

give eight pounds in ready money which he did for fear and that was more than he sold it for by three pounds and rod, and then Mr. Smyth charged him he should not disclose the dealing which had passed between them to any other Justice. 1578. George Norton. Samuel Norton."

If half the charges were true, Hugh must indeed have been a desperate character, and more fitted to have played the part of a freebooting baron of the Middle Ages than that of an Elizabethan squire. After this relations were strained between Ashton and Leigh, for in 1579 we have a highly graphic account by Sir George Norton of a raiding expedition by the men of Ashton on the warren of Leigh whereby one John Blanche lost his life.

"To the Right Worshipfull Sir Maurice Barkly, Sir John Horner Knight, Mr. Rolle Sherif and Mr. Sidnam Esq, be these given.

"After my hearty commendations, hearing tell of your being at Ashton I thought good to write unto you.

"First for that I know Hugh Smyth will, imitating his accustomed manner strive to invest you with a number of deceits and inventions to farther thereby his malice against me or else to shake his choler off from such matters as he feareth to be touched withal.

"Secondly for that I would have you understand the truth of the cause as also to signify unto you what order I have taken with my man touching his first coming as I will answer and stand unto by law, so likewise that you should not anyway deal upon his request, persuasion or privilege in such sort that I should have cause to complain of you or accuse you unto your betters and superiors, trusting therefore that you will lay aside all affection, binding yourselves to indifference and to the punishing of all such persons as shall to the parlous example of others and to the disturbing and contravening of her Majesty's quietness and peace destroy and assemble themselves to the destroying and spoiling both of theirs and other mens lawful commodities.

“ You shall understand therefore that on Friday at night last, being the 18th of September there entered into my warren a company of hunters, the whole number of certain I know not, being armed and weaponed with jacks and long staves, and there did pitch their net and take coneys, with which company my warrener and my shepherd walking my ground did meet withal and meeting with them willed them to stand and keep the peace, which they refusing to do came more violently upon them as should plainly appear (fully minded both to kill and slay them and to spoil my game) striking and laying on at them to that end. In which conflict my men defending themselves with their bowes my shepherd was in the fight parted from his fellow being continually assailed by three of them at last was felled and stricken down past his remembrance having been slain had he not been the better skulled, who after he was down and wounded they bound him with his own bow string and with his own garters and beat him in such sort that none would judge that even he should escape with life, and truly if he had not been the better looked unto for the avoiding of his bruised blood, he had died. My warrener in the mean season being still assaulted and fought withal by two others of the same company chanced to wound the one with an arrow who falling down cried to his fellow that he was slain and desired him as he was a man to carry him away, his other fellow seeing him down came his way and meeting his company that came from beating the shepherd they four carried away the wounded man until they came to the place where the shepherd lay bound and there they holloed and whooped to the rest of their company who bringing and having a horse with them as hereafter may be conjectured carried away the man upon him. My warrener thinking within himself as indeed it fell out that he had given him his death wound came immediately to the next neighbours house telling him what had happened and desired him to go to the place with him where he had hurt the man, as also to know what was become of the shepherd who they met coming

towards the lodge having now released himself and in the dark as they went towards the place where the man was wounded one Thomas Porch (the neighbour that was called up) stumbled at the hurt man's skull and took him up it being then as they guessed between two and three of the clock after midnight. And immediately thereupon the shepherd and the warrener leaving the said Porch in the lodge came straight home to my house when they were let in. And one of my men knocked at my chamber door and waked me whom I caused to be let in and there he told me what had happened in my warren that night whereupon I willed him to call the warrener unto me and so I commanded him to go with the warrener unto the keeper for his hounds and early in the morning to draw after the hunters who did as I bade them and drew after them till they came almost about a flight shot of Hugh Smyth's lodge, where the hounds finding of a hare in the highway would draw no farther and so they returned homewards having all the way outward drawn upon the furrow of an horse with a man of each side the ground being very dewy. And after that they returning home coming by the place where the hunters set upon them the warrener with others which were then in his company seeking for the arrow which he had shot they found a stave, a coney newly taken and a little beyond that a hare newly taken and the hare staves in the place where he fell with the part of the arrow supposed to be broken off with his falling down, the hare being all coloured red with the stain of Ashton soil, which caused me to suspect that Hugh Smyth's men and the warrener were the hunters. Whereupon I sent straight for the high constable (my shepherd being so ill that he was like to die) I willed him presently to make search in Ashton and in Smyth's lodge the other place suspected by me, and if he could find his warrener or any other that was hurt to bring them before me to be examined and to answer the law if the shepherd should die who accordingly went unto Ashton and declared unto Hugh Smyth himself the manner of the hunting and how one

of the hunters was hurt and that his men were suspected to be the hunters wherefore he was sent to search his lodge and bring his warrener before the Justice, the which Smyth denied him to do, saying that he should not search any house or lodge of his for suspicion of felony except he should force him violently, which the constable was not commanded to do. I also sent another man of mine to the tything-man or constable of Ashton to bring the blacksmith of Ashton before me whom I guessed to have made the pike of the staff that was found, which smith upon examination confessed before John Moore, High Constable, and others that it was the staff of John Belanche, and that the said smith made the pike that Belanche is the man who was wounded and is now dead slain by my man in my warren in his own defence, whose death he doth confess withal and will justify. And inasmuch as Hugh Smyth hath charged him with suspicion of felony I have and my son taking good law bailed him and put him under sureties to answer the law and to be forthcoming at all times and at the seasons fitting he shall therefore make his appearance to justify what he hath done. Thus have I new shewed you the whole matter as it is, as also my dealing herein as I will answer exhorting and requiring you also that you will no farther intermeddle herein than the equity of the cause of Justice shall compell you. And so I commit you to God, the thirtieth of September, 1579.

“ Your Loving Friend.

“ George Norton.”

Matters were now getting serious, as the affair had been reported to the Queen, who was minded to punish with a firm hand. Hugh Smyth, though in bad health, deemed it advisable to be on the spot, and so moved to London, where he died on March 2nd, 1580, thus bringing to an end the case against him. He was buried in the Church of St. Sepulchre, London, whence his body was removed by wagon to Ashton and interred in the chancel of the church.

The manor of Ashton, for want of heirs, passed to Hugh's only brother, Matthew, a barrister of the Middle Temple, who seems to have been very different in character from Hugh, although included in the warrant of 1563. He married Jane, daughter of Thomas Tewther, of Ludlow, who brought the quarterings of Tewther, Grafton, and Otely into the Smyth family. Matthew Smyth died on June 10th, 1583. His widow died on March 24th, 1594. Their only son, Hugh, was but eight years old when his father died. The honour of knighthood was bestowed upon him by James I at Worksop in 1603. In 1605 he purchased the manor of Bedminster, and about the same time bought the Great House on St. Augustine's Back from Sir Robert Young and his relations, the Strangeways, for £660. He was selected in the year 1605 to accompany Edward, Earl of Hertford, on an embassy to Prince Albert, Archduke of Austria, for signing articles of peace between the Archduke and James I. His heir was Thomas Smyth, who succeeded on the father's death in April, 1627. Sir Hugh's widow in 1629 married her cousin, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, founder of the State of Maine, and they resided chiefly at an ancient manor house in Long Ashton, called The Lower Court, the remaining wing of which is to-day a farmhouse; and occasionally at the Great House in Bristol, where in 1645 they entertained Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria. Sir Ferdinando died in May, 1647, and his widow in 1658, both being buried in the Smyth vault at Long Ashton.

Thomas Smyth became M.P. for Bridgwater at the early age of eighteen. He married, just before his father's death, Florence, eldest daughter of John, first Lord Poulett, of Hinton St. George. In 1641 he was returned for Bridgwater a second time, and in that year the freedom of the city of Bristol was conferred upon him. This is a copy of the certificate: "Know all men by these presents That wee The Mayor, Aldermen and common Councill of the cittie of Bristoll, as well for the mutuall love and amitie which for many yeares past hath been by and between the Burgesses and Inhabitants of the said cittie

and the right worshipful Gent. Thomas Smith of Long Ashton in the countie of Somerset Esquire and other his Ancestors and Allies as also for the better contynuacion of their antient friendship for the time to come and more especially for the love and good respect which the said Thomas Smith hath and beareth towards the said cittie and the Burgesses and Inhabitants thereof have and by these patents they the said Mayor, Aldermen and common Councill doe admit and receive him the said Thomas Smith Esq. into the Liberties and Franchises of the said cittie, to holde receive and enjoy the same with all the immunities, free customes, privliages and advantages thereof in as large, ample and beneficiale manner to all intents constructions and purposes as any other freeman and burgess whatsoever of the said cittie have or ought to have or enjoy the same. In witness whereof wee have caused our common seale of the said cittie to be hereunto set and affixed this eight and twentieth day of September in the seaventeenth yeare of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord Charles by the Grace of God of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, King Defender of the faith etc 1641." The Mayor was John Lock.

An account in his own handwriting shows that Thomas Smyth kept nine female and twenty male servants at Ashton, among whom was a jester, an interesting fact, since the custom of keeping a fool had almost died out in England in 1641. The annual cost of the household, numbering 37 persons, was £500. In 1641 Thomas Smyth was appointed by Charles I one of the Commissioners of array for Somerset, and at the breaking out of the Civil War in 1642 he was shut up with the Marquess of Hertford in Sherborne Castle, which with a small force they kept for several weeks without being incommoded by the Roundheads, who, with a much greater force, stood by watching them. At last, compelled to evacuate Sherborne, they marched to Minehead, and thence with several other gentlemen transported themselves to Wales, where Thomas Smyth contracted small-pox, and died at Cardiff, October 2nd, 1642. He was buried in the family vault at

Ashton. His widow, Dame Florence, married in 1644 Colonel Thomas Pigott of Ireland, who had recently purchased the estate of Brockley. She had five children by him, and her arms may be seen impaled with those of Pigott on the entrance gates of Brockley Hall.

Hugh Smyth the third, eldest son of Thomas, married in 1654 Ann, second daughter of the Hon. John Ashburnham, of Ashburnham, in Sussex, a constant companion of Charles I during the Civil War. Bearing date March 4th, 1660, was a delightful account of the festivities at Hinton St. George to celebrate the Restoration, written by a member of the Poulet family. On April 21st of the same year Hugh Smyth was created a Knight of the Bath, and shortly afterwards elected to Parliament as Knight of the Shire for Somerset, with George Horner. In the next year, May 16th, 1661, he was granted a patent of Baronetcy by Charles II. He died on July 28th, 1680, and was buried at Ashton.

John Smyth the fourth, eldest son of Sir Hugh, was elected Knight of the Shire for Somerset in 1685. On August 11th, 1692, he was married at Henbury to Elizabeth Astry, eldest daughter of Sir Samuel Astry, of Henbury Court, Coroner of the King's Bench and Clerk of the Crown. By this marriage a third part of the manors of Westerleigh, Henbury, Westbury, Redland, Stoke Bishop, and the lordship of Durdham Down, with an alternate presentation to the living of Henbury and the quarterings of Astry and Morse, came into the Smyth family. Diana Orlebar, sister to Lady Smyth, left this note of a dinner party at Ashton on March 19th, 1706: "At Ashton at diner Captain Knight, Mr. and Mrs. Sparrow (of Gatcombe), my sister Arabella (Mrs. Gore, of Barrow Court), and myself. We had a couple of calves heads haish, a piece of boyled beef, a pigeon pye, a side of lam. Ye second corse a dish of rabetts, a turkey rost, a piece of Sturjohn, a dish of cheesecakes." Lady Smyth died in 1715, and Sir John in 1726, both being buried at Ashton.

Of John Smyth the fifth, eldest son of Sir John, very little

is known. He took no part in public affairs, appears to have spent money lavishly, and at his death was heavily in debt to his brother-in-law, Mr. Jarrit Smith, who had married his sister Florence, widow of John Pigott, of Brockley. The book-plate, by Skinner, of Bath, was engraved for this Sir John. Leaving no children, he died, aged 42, in 1741, and with him died the title and the male line of the Smyths of Ailburton, Bristol, and Long Ashton. He left to the son of Samuel Coopey, one of his executors, all his books at Ashton, except the family Bible.

Sir John made his three surviving sisters his co-heiresses after the satisfaction of all his debts. By far the largest claimant against the estate was Sir John's lawyer and brother-in-law, Jarrit Smith, who was apportioned in payment of his claim of between £20,000 and £30,000 Ashton Court, with all it contained, and the park surrounding it. In addition, he came into a third of the residue in right of his wife. Ann Smyth, the eldest sister, who never married, received her third and land and a house at Henbury, which stood almost on the same site as Blaize Castle stands to-day. At her death, in 1760, she left the greater part of her share to her nephew, Edward Gore the younger, ancestor of the present Earl Temple, who from this inheritance still owns land in the valley of Ashton and Bedminster. Arabella Smyth (Mrs. Gore, of Barrow Court) received her share in all the manors and the estate of Christon, which she left to her eldest son, John Gore, who sold it (except Christon) to his uncle, Jarrit Smith, who thus became possessed of Ashton Court and park and two-thirds of the original estate. He was a lawyer in Bristol, with a very lucrative business, and lived in the Great House, College Green, which stood on the site now occupied by the Royal Hotel. It was with him in this house that Sir John Dinely Goodyer had dined on the day he was kidnapped and murdered on board ship by his brother. In 1756 Jarrit Smith was elected M.P. for Bristol, and represented his native city for twelve consecutive years. In 1763 he received a patent of

baronetcy from George III, the patent, in its beautiful case, being exhibited. Lady Smith died at the Great House on September 10th, 1767, and was buried at Henbury. Sir Jarrit lived to be 91, and died in 1783, being buried with his parents at St. Mary Redcliff.

By his will Sir Jarrit left Ashton Court and all the Somerset land to his eldest son, John Hugh, and the Bristol and Gloucestershire estates to his younger son, Thomas. John Hugh married in 1757 Elizabeth Woolnough, sole heiress of the Bristol and West India families of Woolnough, Elbridge, and Aldworth, by whom he had no children. He added to the Ashton estates by purchasing the manors of Foxcote, near Radstock, and Elborough and Hutton, near Weston-super-Mare. He was a great friend and helper of the Rev. J. Collinson, Vicar of Long Ashton, when engaged in writing his history of Somerset. His health did not permit him to lead a very active life, and he died in April, 1802, being buried at Ashton. His wife survived as the Dowager Lady Smyth until 1825, when she died at the Dower House, or Clift House, as it is now called, at Ashton Gate.

Hugh Smyth, eldest son of Thomas Smyth (younger brother of the friend of Collinson), by Jane, his wife, only daughter and heiress of Joseph Whitchurch, Esq., of Heath House, Stapleton, Gloucestershire, succeeded in 1802, on the death of his uncle, to the title and Ashton estates, becoming the third baronet of the second creation. He married in 1797 Margaret, daughter of Dr. Christopher Wilson, Bishop of Bristol, and there were no children. In 1816 he added Rownham House and adjoining land to the Ashton estates, and built the two first lodges in the park wall—that which opens into Clerken Lane on the west, and that which faces the Ashton Vale coal mines on the south. His first wife died in 1819, and he married Miss Elizabeth Howell, who survived him. He died on January 24th, 1824, leaving no issue, and the title and estates passed to his brother John, an intensely shy and nervous man, who passed his life in seclusion, hunting his own harriers, farming, and breeding

strangely-marked deer. He worked the coal mines of Bedminster and Ashton as Sir John Smyth and Co. He never married, and died suddenly on May 19th, 1849, at Heath House, Stapleton. The title thus became extinct for the second time. He and his brother are buried at Ashton.

THE UPTONS.

Sir John Smyth's eldest sister, Florence, born in 1769, married John Upton, Esq., of Ingmire Hall, Westmoreland, in 1799, by whom she had a son, Thomas. At the advanced age of 80, in 1849, she inherited the Ashton Court estates, and resumed her maiden name, being known as Mrs. Smyth. She died in 1852, and was buried at Ashton.

Mary Smyth, the younger sister, and the only one who did not succeed to the Ashton property, married in 1798 Benjamin Way, Esq., of Denham Place, Bucks, by whom she had five sons and five daughters.

Thomas Upton, only child of John Upton and Florence Smyth, succeeded to the Ingmire Hall estate, and in 1829 married his first cousin, Elizabeth Way, second daughter of Benjamin Way, and Mary Smyth. There were four children, of whom John Henry Greville Upton, the second and only surviving son, born January 2nd, 1836, succeeded to the Ashton Court and Heath House estates on the death of his grandmother in 1852. In the same year he assumed by Royal licence the name and arms of Smyth. In 1853 an impostor, named Provis, put in a claim to the estates. There was a long trial, which resulted in Provis getting a sentence of twenty years' transportation. He died in the first year.

In 1859 Mr. Smyth was created a baronet, and was known as Sir Greville Smyth. He served the office of High Sheriff of Somerset in 1865. In 1884 he married his first cousin, Emily Frances Way, eldest daughter of the Rev. Henry Hugh Way, second son of Benjamin Way, of Denham, and Mary Smyth. At Sir Greville's death, on September 27th, 1901, the Heath House estates passed to his sister, the late Mrs. Upton-Cottrell-Dormer, and Ashton Court, with all its ancient manors and lordships, became the property of his widow, Lady Smyth.