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## **Wyrall Lands and Deeds**

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## WYRALL LANDS AND DEEDS

by MARY C. HILL, M.A.

THIS paper may be read as a supplement to the article by Sir John Maclean F.S.A.,<sup>1</sup> on the Manor of English Bicknor, Gloucestershire, printed in volume 1 (1876), pp. 69-95, of the Society's *Transactions*. The material for the Bicknor Court estate was found almost entirely in a collection of deeds belonging to the family of Wyrall (Worrall, or Wyrhale), formerly of Whitecleeve or Whitecliff in Newland. The deeds show that the family had a very long connexion with the estate, which had continued by direct descent until the death of George Wyrall in 1726, all of whose brothers and sisters, except Barbara Wyrall (born 1694), having pre-deceased him. Barbara, on whom the estates devolved, married Richard Davies of Clyrow, Radnorshire, and had a son named George, who on his mother's death succeeded to the Bicknor estates and thereupon assumed the name of Wyrall. He must have been much interested in the family history and lands shown by the deeds which are the subject of this paper. They are acknowledged by Sir John Maclean as providing the devolution of the estate which he was able to present. George Wyrall's interest is also evident by the abstract he prepared of the deeds, to which he added a very full index of personal, place, and field names which they preserve. He left a memorandum

<sup>1</sup> Editor of *Transactions*, B.G.A.S., 1878-94.

as to the regret felt that he was unable to complete his work.<sup>2</sup>

The deeds are now in the Records Room of the Gloucestershire County Council, having been deposited there by Mr H. A. Machen. Their interest is by no means exhausted by Sir John's article, and it is the object of the present paper to give some account of them, and to add further to his remarks on the Wyrall family.

There are 400 deeds extant, not all of which are entered in Wyrall's abstract ; 287 are fully calendared, including two bundles since lost, for details of which we must rely on the abstract alone. The last entry is incomplete, and everything suggests that the work was cut short before Wyrall was able to finish it. In the present classification his original numbers have been retained (in spite of the occasional use of letters as well as numbers), and the numbering carried on for the remaining deeds and papers, disregarding those lost. One of the deeds (23) had already disappeared when Wyrall entered it, for he notes ' of this deed I have only a copy. The original deed was lent to Edward Tomkins Machen, esq. at his request and on his promise to return it safe : which he never did '. Three other deeds (235, 236, 240) seem also to have been lost by the time that Sir John Maclean saw the collection, for they are noted as missing on a slip of paper bearing his name. There are now numbers 1-30, undated and early deeds up to 1337 ; 62-200 covering the years

<sup>2</sup> The pedigree printed with Sir John Maclean's article gives the death of George Wyrall as 18 February, 1798, and the date of administration of his estate, granted to his sister Mary, as 13 May 1808. The Rev. H. G. Nicholls in *Personalities of the Forest of Dean* (1863) includes a short notice (pp. 128-9) of Wyrall and speaks of his skill in preparing the abstracts of the deeds and the index. Nicholls says he died in 1808. The Principal Probate Registry informs me that there is no mention of the date of death in the Act or the Bond. The Rector of English Bicknor has kindly examined his Church Register and finds the burial of George Wyrall is entered as 18 February 1808, which agrees with Nicholls, and fits the issue (May 1808) of the grant of administration. EDITOR.

1401-1630; and 230-254 from 1658-1695.<sup>3</sup> These were all entered in the abstract. In addition there are 12 deeds referring to the Wyralls and the Bicknor Court estate, with dates ranging from 1633 to 1808; 35 relating chiefly to the Machens and Eastbach Court; and 58 miscellaneous deeds. These are numbered 255 to 359. Finally there are two bundles of deeds and papers labelled Wyrall papers (360-380) and Compton papers (381-417).

A number of the early deeds are endorsed in a late 16th century hand, and this seems to have been the work of William Wyrall, son of John and Isabella. Some of his remarks refer to his purchase of lands; on no. 135 he wrote 'Md I Wyllyam Wyrall have porssessed the fee sympelle of this landdes to me and my eyrs'; and on no. 142 'The deed of the land thatt wasse porchessed of S<sup>r</sup> Gorge baynam Knyght by me Wyllyam Wyrall in bykenor eynglyshe'. On no. 139 he describes himself as grandson of that William Wyrall who married Ann, daughter of John Asshehurst and this agrees with the evidence of no. 143 in which Christopher Wyrall releases to his elder brother William all land formerly belonging to William Wyrall their grandfather, and on which is endorsed 'The release of Crystoffer Wyrall made to me Wylliam Wyrall'. Sir John Maclean in his pedigree of the family says that William, son of John and Isabella, was buried in 1577, so that these endorsements must have been made sometime between 1549, the date of Christopher Wyrall's release, and that year. William Wyrall seems to have been interested in the deeds as material for the history of his family as well as being the title to his estates, for he notes any early references to the name of Wyrall, as in no. 48,<sup>4</sup> and even makes the

<sup>3</sup> Nos. 23, 31-61, 201-29, 235-6, and 240 are missing.

<sup>4</sup> The endorsement on no. 48 which speaks of the date of the deed, 1364, as '234 years sithence the date hereof', thus suggesting 1598 as the year of the endorsement, must be in another hand. The deed is unfortunately among those now lost.

unwarranted assertion that ' thys land have conttenod in the blod of the Weralls sens before the connquest att Redbroke lyneally ' (no. 1). More useful to a modern investigator are his notes identifying certain parcels of land to which the description given by the deed would afford no clue. For instance, on no. 13, where the deed itself speaks of a piece of land and grove, Wyrall adds ' the dede of the lande at the Synderhulle above the grove '. Again, in no. 15, he distinguished a parcel in Colpatychefeld in St. Briavels as ' accre of lande by the Walle At the Waynesharde there throu the walle '. Sometimes he even gives the name of the then tenant, as in no. 75 ' the ded of Wades howse Rent be the yere ijs vjd which David Dixton dwellyth in '. Both Wade's house and the Synderhill at Coleford figure in William Wyrall's rent roll of 1541 (358), the latter having come to the Wyralls in 1476 (121). With the help of these and other topographical notes in the abstract and index, the majority of the lands owned by the Wyralls can be identified and arranged under their respective parishes.

The Wyrall estates, at their fullest extent about the middle of the 17th century, were divided among the parishes of English Bicknor, Newland and St. Briavels. They had been acquired gradually, by careful purchases and judicious marriages, from mid-14th century—when the family is first mentioned in these deeds—to the 17th century, when they were obliged to pay considerable sums to the Crown as composition money for assarted lands which had come into their possession. The deeds referring to this transaction, nos. 188 A-G, illustrate the unpopular Stuart policy of reviving feudal dues, especially those connected with forest rights. By this date the Wyralls were settled at Bicknor Court, and the larger part of their property lay in that parish. They seem however to have lived at Whitecleeve during the 14th century, and the deeds do not suggest that John Wyrall, who with Matilda his wife purchased a meadow in Coleford (60),

and lands at Millend in Newland (61) was of himself a considerable landowner. But he was, perhaps by marriage, heir to Richard Fuedic, and as such he had acquired before 1381 various pieces of land mentioned in earlier deeds. The first of these was land at Stowe Home in Redbrook, which had been bought in 1310 by William Fuedic of Newland from William son of John le Brut (9). The second was the piece of land later known as Barnhill but then as Barendehelde or Barnhelled, also in Redbrook. It was this piece of land which William Wyrall proudly declared to have been in his family since before the conquest, but it was actually granted to Richard Fuedic by William Medic somewhere about the reign of Edward 1 (the deed, no. 1, is undated). John Wyrall, as heir to Richard Fuedic, in 1381 made a grant of all the property he had inherited in Newland to Fuedic's widow Cristina for her life, and both Stowe Home and Barnhill were presumably included in this lease (52). Two centuries afterwards, Barnhill was still in the hands of the Wyralls, for in 1633, George Wyrall esq. leased for 21 years a parcel of land called Barnheald and part of Barnhill grove, both in Redbrook, to Christopher Reeve of Redbrook, miller (258). Barnhill was known as a piece of land at Redbrook on the left hand of the road leading from the furnace to the Wye, and reached over the hill to the Frenchway. So the name had persisted for 500 years, an example of the tenacity of field-names, and had outlived the family which for so many years possessed it.

The next step taken by John and Matilda was to obtain more arable land, and in 1401 and 1406 they were granted various parcels in a field in Newland called Dokenhales (62, 66) by John Lumbard of Coluorde. John Person and his son in turn made Wyrall grants of land in Bradwalleslond and Bury, also in Newland (71, 73, 74), and more land, with a meadow at Poolwey were acquired from Richard Bernard of Coluorde (69 and 70). Docknolles, Waralles bury and Polles grene were still in the possession

of the Wyralls in 1541 (358). John Wyrall must also have owned land in Stanton for in 1423 Robert Beynham, lord of Great Dene, released to John Wyrehall of Whitecleevestrete, his son, all land and tenements there late of John Wyrehall senior, who had died in 1414 (85). The second John Wyrall was also bent on increasing his estates, and purchased successively a messuage and land in Whitecleeve (8 and 81), and a piece of land with a grove at Redbrook (82).

One notable acquisition made by John Wyrall the younger was the purchase in 1430 of Cadory grove in Newland from Henry Kyrie of Redbrook and Tybota his wife (96, 97). This too was to remain in the hands of the Wyralls until the extinction of the family; it is so mentioned in William Wyrall's rent roll for 1541 (358). George Wyrall in 1621 leased to William Perkins of Pilston for 3 lives, a cottage and lands in Redbrook including Cadorys home, Cadorys grove, and the upper and lower Burgage groves (193). The latter had taken their name from a 14th century owner, Walter Borgeis or Burgeyse (7, 10, 11), and there is nothing to show when the Burgage groves had come into the ownership of the Wyralls. Seven acres of grove called Burgesse and the Nether Burgage were mentioned in surrenders made in 1623 to George Wyrall in preparation for a recovery to be suffered on his estates (194 E and G) and the name does not occur again. But Cadory grove reappears in three deeds of 1693, when Jephthah Wyrall, who had determined to cut the timber, bought his mother's share in the profits for £35 (252, 252A and B). This money the lady afterwards assigned to her married daughter Elizabeth (257). Jephthah Wyrall then agreed with George Man of Brockworth for the fallage of Cadory grove which was to be cut and cleared by Man between 28 October 1693 and 24 June following, and for which Wyrall was to receive £65 (253). What remained after this felling was sold, with a house at Redbrook and other land, to Christopher

Bond in 1730, when Martha, widow of Jephthah Wyrall, found it necessary to sell part of the family estates to pay off legacies left by her husband to his numerous children, and to meet the claims of the mortgage holders, to whom both Jephthah and she had pledged the whole property. This particular lot fetched £200, and the Great and Little Cadory groves were described then as being 20 acres and 4 acres respectively (260).

Another addition to the Wyrall property was the mill in Newland known as Kyngysmill, to which William Wyrall was admitted at the court of St. Briavels on 3 May 1490 (124). This mill was near the way from Staunton and Ayshe-rugg to the Wye, according to the description given in the copy of court roll, and it was worked by a stream running down the slade. Another stream, which turned a fulling mill, was however excluded from the grant, and this may have caused some confusion and been in part responsible for a case which another William Wyrall, the annotator, had to bring in 1557 against Christopher Hall of High-meadow, who was alleged to have diverted Wyrall's watercourse to serve a new mill recently built on his own land. The matter was referred to suitors of the court, who had no doubt that a diversion had been made, and described the true course of the stream as running from the Nine Walls in Asheridge slade in the highway there and down by Hall's hedge to Kingsmill (147). The matter seems to have been put right on this decision, and the mill was safely in the possession of the Wyralls on the death of a William Wyrall in 1616, held, as the inquisition post mortem of 1619 states, of the king in free socage as of his castle of St. Briavels (190). It was inherited by George, son of this William Wyrall, with the other Wyrall lands, and was among the property settled by him on his marriage in 1621 (192).

Marriages also helped to build up the Wyrall estates. Perhaps the most successful marriage from this point of view was that of William Wyrall, grandfather of the

annotator, who shortly before 1476 married Ann, daughter of John Asshehurst (121). Asshehurst was receiver of rents for Lord Beauchamp and Constable of St. Briavels for life (107, 108); his marriage with a daughter of Sir John Barre had enabled him to buy property in 1467 (116, 117) and he had also acquired lands in English Bicknor once owned by Margaret Lasseles and before that by Sir John Greyndor and his wife (64, 65, 67, 72, 106, 110). Blackthorn field, granted in 1425 by Richard Gregge of Newent to John May, rector of Bicknor, came to Asshehurst with a meadow called Basely close in 1455 by direct grant from John May and his brother (87, 111). Both names were to re-appear in Wyrall deeds. Blackthorns was originally assarted land, for George Wyrall in 1609 had to pay £85 13s 4d on behalf of his brother William as composition money for this land and two other parcels, and when the business was finally settled, a rent of 7s 3d was reserved on it (188 c and g). Bridget Wyrall and her grandson leased Blackethornes house and 100 acres of land to this George Wyrall (one of her younger children) in 1619, and gave him permission to build a lime kiln and dig enough coal on the premises to work it. The rent was then only £10 and a couple of capons on New Year's day (189). The lease was renewed in 1633 at the same rent (202) but the tenant probably died within three years, for George Wyrall his nephew, Bridget's grandson, leased the farm and lands in 1636 to Thomas Mowsall at a greatly increased rent—£21 10s and two fat hens at Shrovetide (207). £20 of this rent was assigned in 1661 by William Wyrall to indemnify Edward Ricketts of Newland and Richard Elly of Redbrook from any trouble they might receive on account of a bond entered into with the overseers of the poor of the parish of English Bicknor. This bond was intended to secure the maintenance of a bastard child whose expenses were reckoned at 8s a month up to the age of

5, and £5 thereafter<sup>5</sup> and the rent from Blackthornes was only to be paid to Ricketts and Elly if the allowance fell into arrears. Blackthornes farm and its lands were eventually sold by Martha Wyrall in 1730; the purchaser, Edward Machen of Gloucester, paid £1300 for them (259, 260) and probably thought then that he had made a good bargain, for the next time we have any record of a sale of the farm, after several mortgages (263, 264), a valuer privately stated his opinion that the property was worth £4144 (265).

Another farm acquired by the Wyralls through this marriage with Ann Asshehurst was one called Styrte, Sturte, or Sterts, in English Bicknor. John Asshehurst had obtained this from Thomas *alias* Tomelyn Monjoye in 1458 (112B) and it had been formerly in the hands of John Serjeant who in 1356 (42) released all claim to it to John Mounjoye. This too was among the lands for which composition had to be made in 1609, and 6s 8d crown rents were reserved on it (188 c and G). Bridget Wyrall, in consideration of £150, leased Sterts at a low rent of £2 13s 4d to John Gough of Bicknor in 1630, but her grandson was able to procure the surrender of this lease in 1636, very shortly after her death and his coming of age (200 A, B, C). When it was leased to John Rawnel and his wife in 1648, the rent was considerably increased (219) and the land described as about 100 acres in extent.

One other group of lands which came to the Wyralls through John Asshehurst ought to be noticed—the various parcels in Okwalfield granted to him by William Wallwayn and John Jordan (113, 119). These, with another parcel obtained by William Wyrall in 1546 (142), made up the three Ockold fields leased by William Wyrall to his brother George in 1616, along with other lands belonging to Bicknor Court and part of the house itself (187). Great and Little Ockellfield with a watering piece

<sup>5</sup> This deed is not in the collection. Its contents were abstracted and kept with other papers in the index book.

were leased by Jephthah Wyrall to John Rannels, in 1685 and 1692 (248, 250), and in 1692 Wyrall sold cinders taken from this and other fields (251). In an undated account of his rents Great Ockeld field is entered as bringing in 6s, and Little Ockeld field with New meadow the same (360). Jephthah again leased out the Ockeld fielding in 1699, this time to Edward Price, and though mortgaged by himself and his widow, the Ockell fields were not among the lands sold in 1730.

All these lands were brought together by John Asshehurst, and on his death came to his eldest son Thomas. The means by which they passed from him to William Wyrall and his wife have been discussed by Sir John Maclean in detail, and it seems clear that William Wyrall was guilty of some sharp practice at the least, and perhaps of deliberate forgery. Thomas Asshehurst conveyed all his entailed estates to Wyrall and his son John in 1504, so that a recovery might be suffered on them in the following October (127, 128). Trusting to the integrity of his brother-in-law, as it was alleged, he did not declare beforehand to what uses the recovery was to be had, with the result that William Wyrall was able to contrive the recovery so as to get possession of the estates for himself and his son. Thomas Asshehurst died very shortly after, and but for this action the land would have gone, not to Wyrall, but to John Asshehurst's younger son Philip. Wyrall seems to have asserted that Thomas Asshehurst intended the recovery to cut his brother off from the succession. Philip Asshehurst, and John Copynger, to whom he sold his claim, declared that he had been unscrupulously imposed upon. The court were inclined to believe the latter assertion, because William Wyrall could produce no indenture to prove that he had bought the land from Thomas Asshehurst, though he did produce quitclaims from Thomas and Philip and from several other men who might have had a claim (129-132). If Copynger's story was true, these quitclaims, or at least

the one from Philip Asshehurst, are forgeries, but if so, Wyrall might as easily have forged an indenture of bargain and sale to strengthen the weak spot in his case. The quitclaims have neither signature nor witnesses, which is suspicious, but is not proof that they are spurious: deed 130 has lost its seal, but one with an indeterminate impression remains on 131. All are in the same hand. The court seems to have been puzzled how to decide the case, for the recovery, however instituted, had put Wyrall into undoubted legal possession of the lands. In the end a compromise was reached: Wyrall to have the estates for life and Copynger the reversion after his death; and on this decision Wyrall was able to buy out Copynger's claim and obtain a release of all his right to the lands late of Thomas Asshehurst in English Bicknor (139).

The last block of Wyrall lands that need be mentioned in detail are the Bicknor Court lands. There is nothing to show us when these came into the family, nor when the Wyralls moved from Whitecleeve to Bicknor Court. They were established there before 1574, when William Wyrall settled the land and a greater part of the house to the use of his son George on his marriage with Bridget, daughter of George Wynter. Only the hall and the south part of the house, the stable, the Gatehouse Chamber, and summering and wintering for 2 gelding and 2 kine, with all corn then planted on the premises, were reserved for the parents in this settlement (153), an example not followed by George and Bridget when they in turn came to make a settlement on the marriage of their son William to Catherine, daughter of Michael Chadwell of Chipping Norton, in 1597 (174 A). This time the major part of the estates were retained to the parents' use for life, and an agreement made that if the young couple chose to live with them, they should be maintained with a man, a maid, and 2 geldings, and have £50 a year instead of a share of the lands, but that if they preferred to live by themselves, they should receive £100 a year and have as

their share lands in St. Briavels. George Wyrall the father died between 1600 and 1603, but his widow outlived her son (who died in 1616) and seems to have acted as guardian to her grandson George until her death in 1635 (196 A). George Wyrall married in 1624, and through his wife Mary, only daughter of Dennis Compton of Alvington, the bundle of deeds called the Compton papers came into the hands of the Wyralls. No proper settlement could be made at the time of this marriage since Bridget Wyrall held Bicknor Court and almost the whole of the estates for life, but her grandson conveyed to trustees the watermill and lands in Newland which he had already, and agreed to settle the main estate as soon as it came to him. Meanwhile his father-in-law was willing to allow George and Mary to live with him at Alvington, and promised to allow them house room and stable room with summer and winter meat for 1 gelding or mare. If they preferred to live alone he was willing to pay over £300 of his daughter's portion at once and the last £100 as soon as the final settlement was signed. George and his wife seem to have preferred the first alternative and settled at Alvington, where they were living in 1625 when George was busy with the necessary agreements on his sister's Phelippe's marriage to John Dautesey of Bath, agreements which again had to be conditioned by the death of Bridget Wyrall (197 A, B, C). In none of these settlements are the lands described by name.

George and Mary had a large family. Their eldest son William married Anne, daughter of James Kyrle (241), and like most of the Wyralls he was short-lived, dying in 1661. His widow married again, was again widowed and finally died in 1718. Their son Jephthah, only 2 years old on his father's death, eventually succeeded to the property, and married his cousin Martha Pury. No settlement on this marriage is included with the deeds, but the Bicknor Court estates are described in detail in

several leases made by Jephthah to different tenants. He seems to have taken a dislike of the place, and went to live at Ross for a change of air on account of ill-health ; but there may also have been motives of economy, for the house in Ross cost only £5 a year in rent, while the Court brought in £52 a year, and by letting it he was saved the exertion and trouble of farming the lands himself, a consideration to a sick man. As leased to John Rannels in 1685, Bicknor Court estates consisted of the Ockellfeild, Janes orchard, Rauen Cliff, the parcel behind the connyare, Lymekillpatch, Long leavens, the Gorsty craft, the land under the Rocks, Potters orchard, Lords meadow, Poole meadow, the orchard below the Cinderhill, Great and Little Ockellfeild with the watering piece, Stonypece, New meadow, the Two Longhills, the Hop-garden (a part of New meadow converted into a hop yard by William Wyrall in 1655 (224), and Plum tree patch, all familiar names. In renewing the lease (250) in 1692, Yawens walls was added to these lands. In addition the tenant was to have the house, the room over the gate house, two lower rooms, and all outbuildings. Jephthah Wyrall himself took a house in Brookend, in Ross, the worst part of the town for a man in ill health (249). He again leased out part of the Court lands (256), in 1699, adding 2 parcels called the Reddingborne instead of the Synderhill and Lymekill patch which were to be in common to both parties.

While elder sons of the family inherited these gradually increasing estates, younger sons had to be provided for in other ways. George Wyrall solved this problem in 1648, by leaving each of his younger children an annuity of £10 for life, payable out of the Bicknor estates, in addition to their legacies from their grandfather Dennis Compton. Dennis Wyrall mortgaged his annuity in 1674 and it was bought up by his nephew Jephthah when he inherited the estate ; Thomas Wyrall, another brother, surrendered his, direct to Jephthah for a lump sum of

£40 (242 A, B, C; 243 A, B). Other parents put their younger sons into some trade, preferring to see them make their own way in the world. The deeds mention Edward Wyrall, citizen and ironmonger of London, who died about 1574 (154), and George Wirall of London, draper, son of George and Bridget, who seems to have done well in his business, retired to Gloucestershire in 1603, and purchased or leased from his brother lands in St. Briavels and Bicknor (180, 187). In 1609 he was able to assist his elder brother over the composition made with the king's receiver for assarted lands, and the transactions he began were completed by his son George as his executor. The latter had property of his own at Barnwood (Gloucester), presumably purchased with the profits from his father's business (188 A-G). Another George Wyrall became an ironmaster and on his retirement about 1693 came to live at Barbon house. He seems to have been a shrewd man, and we have among the Wyrall papers a letter of his dated 14 October 1693 in which, after speaking of the annuity left him by his father, he warns his nephew Jephthah against the sharp practices of other ironmasters. Jephthah Wyrall had a large family and was constantly short of money; he had moved from Bicknor Court to a smaller and cheaper house in Ross in 1690 and he was now intending to sell 10,000 dozen of cinders from the Coneyger, the limekill patch, the long Leavens, and the Ockwal fields—all very near to the Bicknor Court house—to Richard Avenant and John Wheeler at the rate of 10d the dozen bushels. The contract, which was signed on 24 October 1692, stipulated that the ground from which the cinders were taken should be left 'as level and plain as usually is where cinders are gotten', which as Wyrall remarks, 'was promising nothing at all' (251). There was however, some hitch in the arrangements, and a year later George Wyrall, who had been in the trade himself, and was certain that his nephew could have got a better price by waiting, urged 'you may doe well to consider

before you dispose of A quantetie for Doubtles twill be a Rich commodietie—I thought good to give you this causeion, haue your borgen drawe In wrighting other wise they will be to harde for you ' (361). No notice seems to have been taken of the first part of this warning, and so far as we can tell the agreement already signed was not cancelled.

Jephthah Wyrall also intended to put his sons into trade. George, Pury and William were all educated at Monmouth school and we have among the Wyrall papers the bills for their board during 1696, and for half a year's diet for William, the youngest, during 1699 (366, 373). That half-year cost Jephthah £4 19s. George and Pury were already apprenticed in 1697, George, aged 17 to Richard Franklyn of Bristol, merchant, and Pury, aged 14 to Paul Weston of Bristol, grocer, and Hanna his wife (368, 369, 371). The second son Pury, called after his mother's family, appears to have found apprenticeship very uncongenial. When sent on business to London early in 1702, he took the opportunity to escape, and without completing his 7 years' contract, volunteered as a soldier in the service of the East India Company. The step was taken without the knowledge of his parents or his brother, and before he himself had learnt of his father's death early in February. There are two letters written by Pury on board the 'Colchester' at the time of his departure (378, 379). The first, dated 21 February 1701/2, from Gravesend, is to his cousin Samuell Whittington of Tainton, who had sent him the news of Jephthah's death:—

' Dear Cozen, I rec<sup>d</sup> your letter with a great deal of trouble & sorrow to hear of my fathers death and to think what my poor mother can doe w<sup>h</sup> all my brothers & sisters for (she) must consequently undergoe a great deal of trouble & a great deal of grief for y<sup>e</sup> losse of dear Father. dear Cozen I am very much oblided to you for yours & to my Aunts for all their former

favours and if ever I return to England will doe my endeavour to make you part of amends. I would willingly come home could I do my mother any kindness so that I shall be clear from my master '.

The second letter, dated 19 March, 1702, is to his brother George at Bristol, also in reply to a letter. George seems to have heard indirectly of his brother's adventure and to have asked for more information, and from Pury's second letter written while the ' Colchester ' was anchored off the Downs we hear more of his prospects :—

' Loving Brother, Yrs I rec<sup>d</sup> wherin you desires me to send an account in what post I goes. I have entered my self a Soldier in ye Old East India Company & am to stay 5 years in the country, they say yt as soon as we come into the country yt we shall be overhalld and those yt can write and cast accounts shall be taken from souldiers to be writers, but if not we have 21 shillings a month and 13 months to ye year & may be dieted for 9 or 10s per month (victuals are so very cheap) when we come into ye country we shall see & will send you word how we fare. we have got letters of recommendations from a merchant in London to one of his daughters yt is married rich in ye Country & a letter to Governour. this marchant endeavoured to send us as writers but we could not be sure unless we could get some one to be bound under a bond of £500— We are bound to Fort St. George if you have any opportunity send me some money '.

The remainder of the letter is concerned with his debts for clothes, a pair of shoes, a waistcoat, frock and great-coat, and various small borrowings including 18 pence from the toy man over against Master's (' pay it to Sarah Baxter because her uncle knows not of it '), all of which he asks his brother to meet out of £6 which their father owed him. At the end of the letter is a postscript, ' I am your loving brother Pury Wyrall. We are now way in

anchor to sail Send my Duty to Mother & I beg her blessing time will not permit otherwise I would write ', which is all written with evident haste. One wonders whether he regretted his impulsive step with this last sight of England—for he was to die abroad before he had completed his five years' service.

There is one more document in the collection relating to the sudden death of Jephthah Wyrall—the tailor's bill for clothes and materials supplied for his funeral (377). This seems to have been on the lavish scale common in the 18th century. The tailor's bill alone came to nearly £23, of which the widow was only able to find 16s. It was rendered for 'fine black cloth, broadcloth, fine shalloone, fustian, black raskatt, Allomode, Belledye silk, mourning bands, love ribbons, coat and breast buttons (4 dozen and 11 dozen of each)'. Three pairs of 'black roleing stockings', and 8 large shamy skins were bought for the occasion. The tailor also supplied the pall, for use of which he charged £1. Most of the materials were supplied on 12 February, but the pall and some other oddments are entered under 18 February, which was presumably the date of the funeral.

Jephthah Wyrall had nine children, two of whom died in childhood; of the rest three sons, George, Pury and Jephthah, died unmarried, and the fourth, William, though he married twice, had no children. Three daughters married, one, Barbara, already mentioned. The family died out with the death in 1826 of Mary, a spinster daughter of George Wyrall. Jephthah Wyrall's daughter Martha had married John Machen, and through this fortunate connexion the Wyrall deeds and papers came into the hands of the Machens.

On a slip of paper in his index to the deeds, George Wyrall wrote 'If I could expect ever to have it in my power it would be my wish to make this out more perfectly'. Such a wish must be echoed by any investigator who attempts in a short space to deal with the intricacies of family estates and family history.