

COURTFIELD



Associated with the Vaughan family since 1563, originally called 'Greenfield', the house was the childhood home of Henry V who lived there from 1387 to 1394. The house has 18 bedrooms and there is also an imposing chapel, together with a modern accommodation block with 42 rooms. Courtfield was until recently a Catholic retreat and training college for the global Mill Hill Missionary Society.

This document describes Courtfield, its history and association with the Vaughan family, and also includes a collection of images from the Mill Hill Fathers

Nick Oldnall

Courtfield

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Ref: <http://www.parksandgardens.org/places-and-people/site/4744?preview=1>

Brief description of site

Courtfield is an early 19th-century house on an earlier site, with a scenic approach drive through a former deer park.

Brief history of site

The Vaughan family acquired the estate in the late 16th century. The park was laid out in the 18th century with several ornamental buildings, including a hermitage, a Swiss cottage and lodges. The house was remodelled in the early 19th century.

Location information:

Locality: Welsh Bicknor, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire

Key information:

Form of site: landscape park

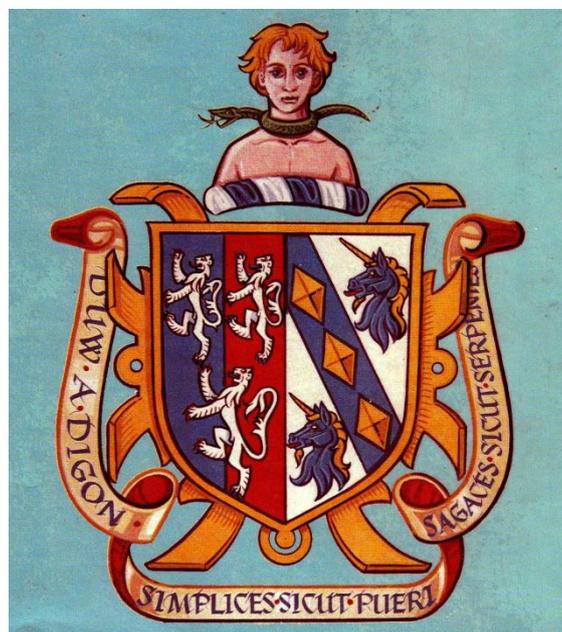
Context or principal building: house

Site first created: 1550 to 1599

Main period of development: Early 19th century

Sources of information

[A Survey of Historic Parks and Gardens in Herefordshire](#)







The Vaughan Family

<https://englishcatholichistoryassoc.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/vaughan-family-2.pdf>

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:-

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 Foyt 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.

From the web:<http://www.missionsocieties.org.uk>

FAREWELL TO COURTFIELD - Historic link is broken with - Mill Hill founder's family home Fr Christy Fox MHM

The Mill Hill Missionaries ended their presence in Courtfield last December (2007). The decision had been taken some months earlier and was not taken lightly and only after much thought and reflection. The decisive factors were the cost of updating the premises to comply with the 1995 Disabilities Act and the lack of personnel to run the Retreat Centre for the foreseeable future even if a substantial financial outlay was made.

There is widespread sadness at the closure. The annual open day on the second Sunday in June attracted hundreds of promoters. It was always a great celebration and a very joyous reunion for our many helpers. Many others attended the renewal weekends held throughout the year. One letter from a promoter sums up the feeling of many, 'Courtfield is not just a weekend away in Herefordshire; it is a vital place to recharge our spiritual batteries!!' Our Lady's Church in Courtfield, Ty Main Duw, served as a parish church for many people. Up to 50 attended on Sundays. They enjoyed the liturgy and the social meeting afterwards. The church itself contains the shrine of Our Lady of Vocations.

Over the years, Courtfield has proved a popular place for retreats. Last year alone, some 1,200 people came to the retreat centre for a weekend or longer. The whole atmosphere of the place, with its great Catholic tradition and the beautiful setting in the Wye valley is conducive to reflection and prayer.

For Mill Hill and its many friends, it had a special significance as the ancestral home of our Founder, Herbert Cardinal Vaughan, born in 1832, the eldest of 13 children. It was here that his parents, Colonel John Francis and Eliza Vaughan raised their wonderful family. The saintly Eliza is reputed to have spent an hour each day before the Blessed Sacrament praying that many of her children would devote themselves to God in the priesthood or religious life. Six of her eight sons became priests while four of her five daughters became nuns, surely a record unique in the annals of the Church.

Stories abound of this remarkable family. The road out through the deer park was nicknamed by the children 'Rosary Road!' because apparently it was customary to recite the 15 decades between Courtfield, Monmouth and back. Herbert often recalled the powerful influence his parents' example of prayer had on all the family.

The second son, Roger, joined the Benedictines at Belmont and later became Archbishop of Sydney, Australia. Bernard, the seventh son, became a famous Jesuit preacher whose sermons in London and elsewhere attracted huge congregations. The then Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, was often in attendance and sometimes requested copies of the sermon.

Mill Hill has been here since 1950 when it acquired the house and about 60 acres of land from the

Vaughan family. Originally, it was a training centre for Mill Hill Brothers. Up to 40 of them trained here as builders, carpenters, electricians and technicians and over the years contributed substantially to the building of schools, hospitals and churches in many mission territories.

Courtfield ... a place where
spiritual batteries were recharged

The Brothers built the present accommodation block which, since the seventies, has been used as a retreat centre. It has seen many wonderful occasions and it holds happy memories for many of our APF promoters. It is sad that this era has now come to an end but it is part of the wider changes affecting the Society and indeed the Church as a whole.

As I often point out in my retreat talks, every phase of our pilgrim journey here on earth presents us with the threefold challenge of 'Letting Go', 'Letting Be' and 'Letting Grow'. We have to let go of Courtfield, accept the reality of change and see where we can now continue to contribute to the growth of God's Kingdom in our own lives and in the Church.

Editor:

I'm sure we would all like to acknowledge the great role that Courtfield has played in the history of formation for missions and the enormous contribution that the men and women of Mill Hill based there have made to the life of the Church in this country and worldwide. Without doubt, whatever else is to happen to the house and estate in the future, it will always have a part in the prayer and affections of the members of APF. Let's hope that the connection with the Vaughan family can be sustained.

We are grateful for the work and writing of Fr Christy who has made such a deep contribution to the spirituality of the readers of Mission Today. Even though he will be moving on to new ministry he will, nonetheless, continue to write his regular articles for us.

Thank you Christy.

You can continue to write to

Fr Christy Fox MHM at

C/o Mill Hill Missionaries Orwell Park Dublin 6 Ireland

A collection of images from Mill hill Fathers

Courtfield 1



Joseph Herbert Vaughan stands with his wife Mary Lavender (nee Holroyd-Smith), John Murphy Archbishop of Cardiff, Fr. Gerald Mahon Superior General of the Mill Hill Missionaries (to the left), Fr. John hart Rector of Courtfield (to the right). The occasion was the blessing of the half-completed new training centre for the Mill Hill Lay Brothers on September 30th 1966. [Joseph Vaughan had sold the Courtfield house to the Mill Hill Missionaries circa 1950-1].

Courtfield 2



The four sons of Joseph and Mary Lavender Vaughan with Fr. John Thoonen, archivist for the Mill Hill Missionaries on the occasion of the blessing of the Brothers' training centre September 30th 1966. From Left to Right: Thomas Francis Vaughan, Fr. Thoonen, Richard Herbert Vaughan, Patrick Charles Vaughan, Oliver Vaughan.

Courtfield 3



Archbishop Murphy, accompanied by Fr. Gerald Mahon to his right, en route to the blessing ceremony.

Courtfield 4



The Franciscan Missionaries of St Joseph (founded by Alice Ingham and Cardinal Vaughan) served every seminary and community of the Mill Hill Missionaries. Here, Sister Agatha (left) and Sister Benignus.

Courtfield 5



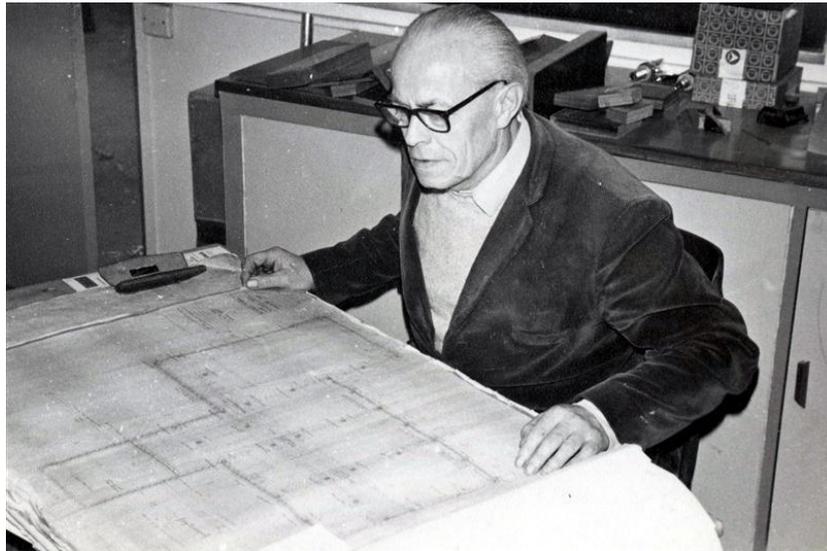
The half-finished training centre 1966.

Courtfield 6



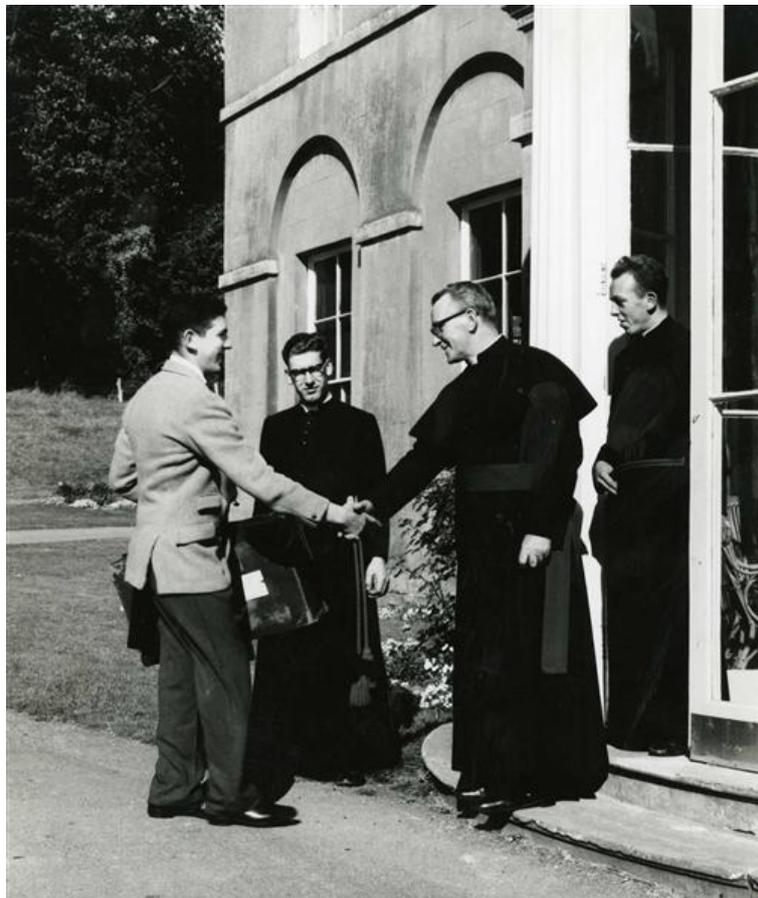
Mill Hill Lay Brothers building their new training centre.

Courtfield 7



Brother Leonard Glatzl, who was in charge of the building project, studies the plans.

Courtfield 8



The Rector of Courtfield, Fr. John Hart (formerly Prefect Apostolic in Sudan) welcomes a candidate for the Brotherhood. Looking on are Brothers Martin van Leeuwen and Theo van der Velden.

Courtfield 9



The original house

Courtfield 10



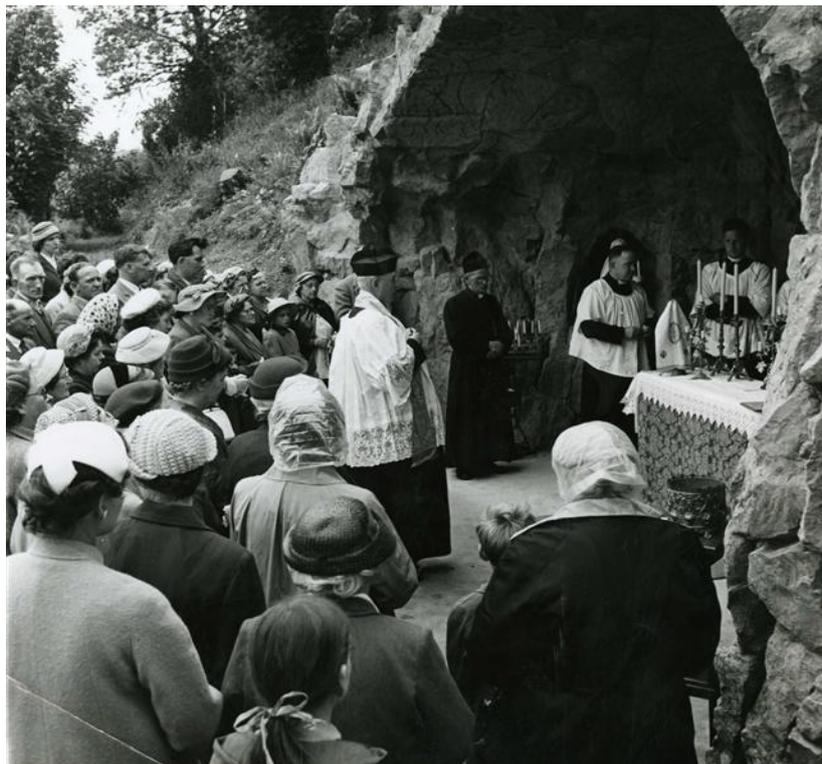
Postcard of house

Courtfield 11



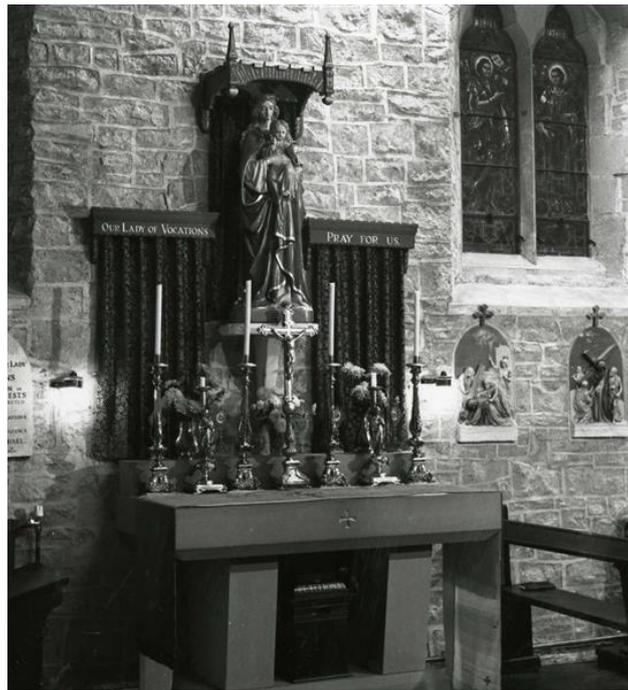
A gathering of mission supporters on 'Zelators' Day' in the 1950s

Courtfield 12



Benediction at the grotto on Zelators' Day

Courtfield 13



Altar of Our Lady of Vocations in the Courtfield chapel

Courtfield 14



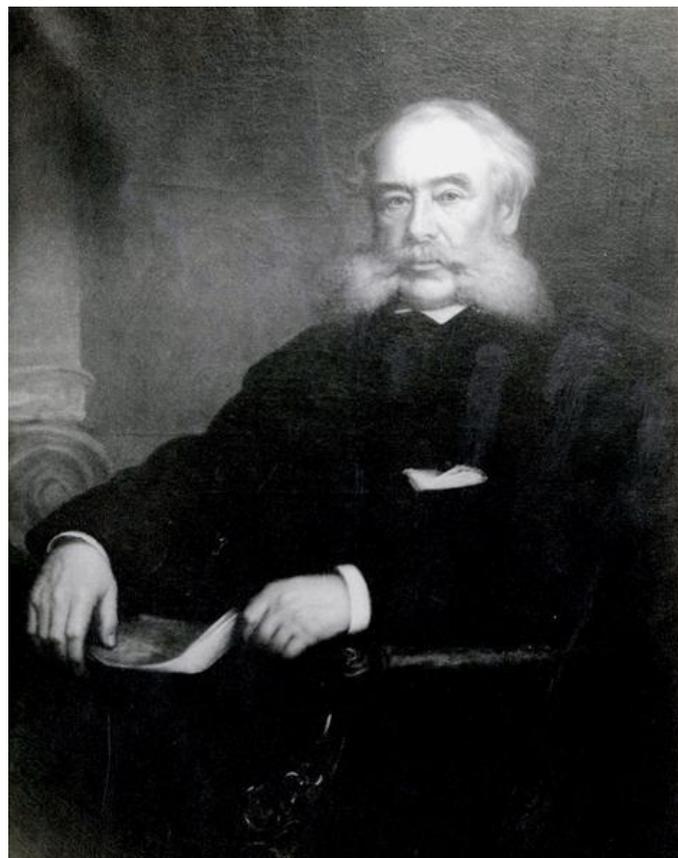
The Courtfield Chapel

Courtfield 15



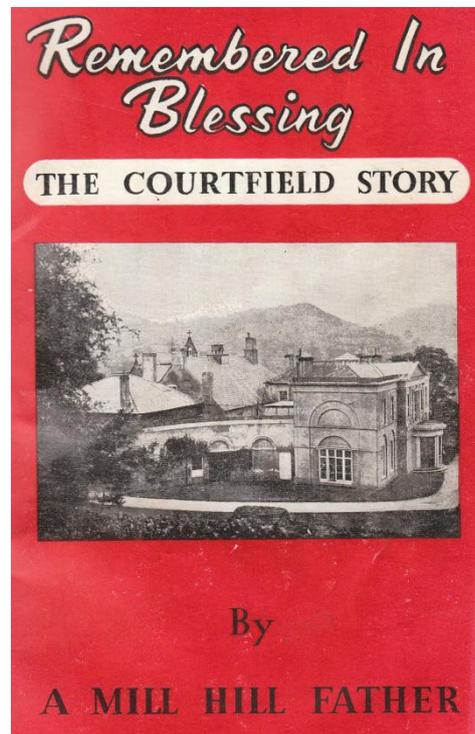
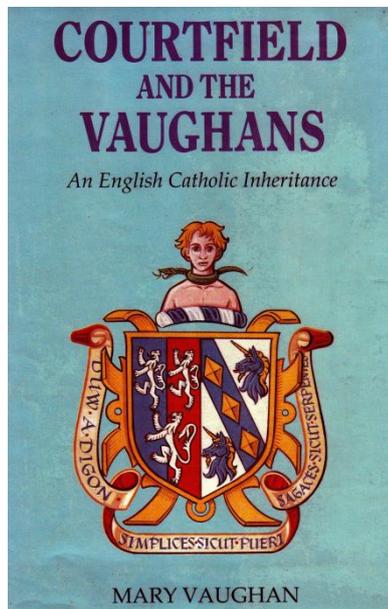
Eliza Vaughan, mother of Cardinal Vaughan.

Courtfield 16



John Francis Vaughan, father of Cardinal Vaughan

In May 2011 the **English Catholic History** Society organised as part of its summer programme a visit to Courtfield, and afternoon tea with a short talk by Mr Richard Vaughan





The Chapel



The Crypt

With thanks to Mr P Vaughan for letting me visit the crypt to photograph the monuments which were relocated there during the building of the new church of St Margaret at Welsh Bicknor in 1858.



Catherine wife of John Aged 50 20 June 1778

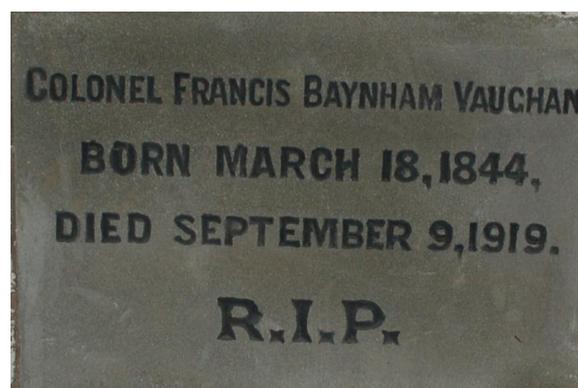
John Vaughan junr 21st January 1778

John Vaughan Aged 88 27 March 1721

Richard Vaughan Aged 97 7th May 1697

Carole Clarke Aged 27 1704

John Vaughan aged 73 21 Januay 1780



CAROLINE VAUGHAN.
WIFE OF
COL.F.B.VAUGHAN
DIED NOV. 6.1922
AGED 75.
R.I.P.

IN  PACE
ELIZA VAUGHAN
REMEMBERED IN BLESSING
JAN. 24 1853

JOHN FRANCIS
VAUGHAN
BORN 2 - 7 - 1808
DIED 20 - 12 - 1880

LOUISA ELIZA
VAUGHAN (ROLLS)
BORN 8 - 10 - 1810
DIED 24 - 1 - 1853

MARY CHARLOTTE
VAUGHAN (WELD)
DIED DECEMBER 1880
AGED 60 YEARS

The Hermitage

<http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/Details/Default.aspx?id=153961&mode=quick>

SO 51 NE WELSH BICKNOR CP COURTFIELD 6/167 The Hermitage GV II Folly. Mid-C19. Sandstone rubble, hipped stone tiled roof. Consists of a tall section of a "ruined" wall with square plan chapel to rear. Gothic ruin, two rows of three Early English style pointed arched lights with roll moulded edges. Semi-circular headed Norman style window with lattice leaded glazing to sides of chapel at rear. Built as an eye-catcher from Courtfield (qv), presumably also once visible from the river and main road and hence contributing to the picturesque setting of the house. Mound, The Hermitage, N of Courtfield Farm

WELSH BICKNOR, HEREFORDSHIRE

(http://htt.herefordshire.gov.uk/smrSearch/Monuments/Monument_Item.aspx?ID=10671)

Extremely large mound to the NW of the farm. From geology maps likely to be natural. Does Cwrt name mean it has been used after. (1) A feature called The Hermitage which lies within the gardens of Courtfield. The Rev. Shaw in 1788 describes it as an artificial ruin. There was some debate by the Woolhope Club in 1922 on visiting the site as to whether the mound beneath the ruin was a possible motte. (2) A natural spur has probably been altered to provide a mound. There is no evidence for it being a castle, though one might be expected here. In the late 18th century the top of the mound was used to erect a faux ruin, a small chapel and graveyard. The chapel was built of re-used stone from Welsh Bicknor church and the pre 1805 Courtfield Mansion and includes medieval sculptures. (3)







Graves at the Hermitage / Folly

Mary Lavender Vaughan 1989

Joseph Herbert Vaughan 1972



Charles J Vaughan 1948

Rita Vaughan 1918

Joseph Class 1974

Brother Odulphus MHM 1952

Paul Crowley 2000

Philip Jackson 1966 MHM

Catherine Cain 1965

Aine Torode 1975



In memoriam Rita Vaughan
24-12-1908 - 23-10- 1918

Gone from a world of clouds and pain
To a land where sunbeams ever reign,
Gone in a flush of her childhood's prime
With a spirit unseared by the touch of time.

At rest though the day was yet so young
But alas, our hearts with grief were wrung,
At rest, for her portioned tasks were o'er,
And the Master had knocked at His servant's door.

He found her watching in innocence sweet
Awaiting the summons her Lord to greet,
She passed from this earth of griefs and sighs
To enter the garden of Paradise.

Thus has she left us; oh would we fain,
Bring her glorious spirit to earth again,
But no, though 'twas cruel to breathe farewell,
Hope was the note of her funeral knell.

For we know she is safe through the narrow way
That leads to the realms of endless day
And again we shall see her and clasp her hand
As we stand at the gates of the Promised Land

There's a new-made grave in Courtfield Shrine,
Where dwelleth the shadow of Peace Divine,
And here what is mortal of her doth rest,
With lillies growing above her breast.

But the humble Cross that marks her head
Points the way her spirit fled,
As she soared aloft and severed apart
The links that bound us heart to heart.

Hid from mortals but safe with Thee,
Are garnered fruits we cannot see,
We have no doubt but our little one
Was welcomed home with the words 'Well done'

Written by the gardener at Courtfield, 1918

The Grotto



