

West Monkton Charter.

BY F. H. DICKINSON.

EARLY in last year I saw at Longleat a paper register relating to West Monkton. There was a good deal in it about Bathpool, and a reference at fol. 91-2 to the Leper's House, the little Hospital just beyond where the turnpike used to be east of Taunton on the left, "quæ sita est super feodum prædictorum Abbatis et Conventus extra Capellam Beatæ Margaretæ Tauntoniæ." The MS. seemed dreary enough, but just at the end at fol. 129, I found the Charter which purports to be the first grant of West Monkton to Glastonbury. No charters relating to West Monkton occur in any of the chartularies that I have seen. This book supplies the deficiency. I had formerly thought that the silence of the Glastonbury records concerning this and other manors held by homage under the Abbey, which is general but not universal, was evidence of the spurious character of the charters, because it might be supposed that the monks had made the charters which concerned the possessions they knew to belong to them and from which they received income, and neglected the rest which belonged to the tenants; but this would be a hasty judgment. The charters we have come principally from Lord Bath's Chartulary, of which the MS. at Oxford is a copy, with possibly some alterations, and in the Bodleian catalogue is marked Wood 1, having belonged to the antiquary Wood. They related of course to the lands held by the Abbey, principally to those in their own power, their domain in each lordship and the land from which they had rents, and the still more valuable renewal fines of the leases.

These books are no evidence that charters which are not copied out in them did not exist, they merely show that what

was not copied out was not supposed to be of primary importance. There is no chapter in Lord Bath's chartulary referring to West Monkton in that part of it which gives the charters in detail. Why it is not in that MS. I do not know. West Monkton is not noticed in the book of H. de Soliaco of 1189, lately printed by Lord Bath, to whom it belongs, but as that book is not perfect it may have been contained in the missing parts. According to Exon Domesday, as given by Mr. Eyton, the whole seems to have been held in homage. The Exchequer Domesday states that twelve hides and a half out of the fifteen were in homage. I cannot account for the difference, which Mr. Eyton does not notice, apparently assuming the figures to be the same, and I suspect some blunder, for Domesday puts no value on the two hides and a half which it represents the Abbot to have in hand. At the time of the Reformation the receipts for this manor were £62 8s. 0¼d., which is I fancy below the average, but still large enough to be not easily made to agree with what has just been stated, because land in homage was unproductive to the lord, or produced very small quit rents. The following is a copy of the charter from the MS.:—

Folio 129.

Carta Centwyny Regis de Cantucundu nunc West Monkton juxta Tantoniam.

✠¹ Omnia que videntur temporalia sunt. que non videntur eterna sunt. Ideo parvis et vilibus rebus eterna et mansura jugiter mercanda sunt. Qua propter ego Centwini Saxonum Rex pro remedio anime meo aliquam porcionem Hamegilso (Haëgilso) Abbati ad supplementum vite regularis in monasterio Glastingabirg sub divini timoris instinctu humiliter largitus sum. hoc est viginti tres mansiones in loco juxta silvam famosam que dicitur cantucundu habentes ad Austrum fluvium qui dicitur Tan ad aquilonem vero silve prefate partem non modicam ad se trahens usque ad vallem helsdena deinde per rivulum unum usque ad vadum quod dicitur weala ford et sic

(1). The initial O has a cross drawn in it.

in directione illius rivuli usque ad Tanis alveum. Habent vero ad occasum fontem qui dicitur ealduuylle deinde alterum fontem qui dicitur acuylle; ab illo fonte ad locum qui dicitur haeg stal descumb et per viam que dicitur hrycuueg (Ridgeway). Ab hac via ad riuum qui appellatur Segbroc ab hoc rivulo vergit territorium ad zephyrum ad alveum prefati fluminis Tan. In locum qui dicitur horspol. Et tres cassatos in Australi parte amnis Tan ad insulam juxta collem qui dicitur brettannic a lingua cructan apud nos cryc beorh. Et hec pars telluris evidentissimus (is) cingitur limitibus, habet enim ab Austro blacan broc ab aquilone Tan Anno ab incarnatione domini nostri Jesu Christi dclxxxii Indictione x hoc prefatum donum. Sic prefigimus, ut Immobile quam diu cristianitas vigeat in servicio glæstingensis æellesie permaneat. Si quis hanc donationis carticulam violenter invadere temptaverit noverit proculdubio culpam sacrilegii se incurrisse. hujusque ligamine se constructum () donec divini examinis conspectui conp'sentetur (conpresentetur) ni prius hoc inorme scelus detergendo emaculet; et augeat omnipotens deus hoc donum augenti vitam æternam per omnia secula seculorum. Amen + ego hæddi episcopus consenciens signum sancte crucis impressi + signum manus centuuni regis hanc munificentiam signo crucis perstringentis + ego Aldhelm hanc scedulam scripsi et subscripsi.

If this were the charter really granted by Centwin the boundaries must have been—if there were any—in the British language: they are altogether in English, except that Bathpool hill has its British name as well as the new name in the language of the conquerors. It would seem therefore that the document was put into its present shape before the British and their language were altogether forgotten. The indiction is right, and there seems nothing amiss about the signatures. Hæddi seems to have been bishop from 676 to after 705, first at Dorchester in Oxfordshire and after 678 at Winchester.

Aldhelm was made Bishop of Sherborne in 705. He is not

here named as bishop, but is stated to have been the writer of this deed.² He died at Doultling in 709, aged about 70.

It may be well to remark that when a charter was copied into a chartulary and no boundaries were specified in the deed, or when the boundaries were archaic, it is no evidence of forgery that boundaries were supplied from a contemporaneous perambulation. We may therefore say that there is no plain internal evidence that this charter is false, unless it be in the reference to the *Vita Regularis* the use of the word cassates, and the large number of these; so we must look to the history.³

Adam of Domerham, 1, p. 97, says that Kenwin gave Monkton to Glastonbury, and also that in 678 he gave a liberty to Glastonbury, which we may suppose to be intended to mean that of the twelve hides. However that may be, we have a transaction between him and the Abbey in the nature of a grant or treaty four years before the grant we are now concerned with. According to *Bede*, B. 4, C. 12, Coinvalch died in 674, and his widow Sexburgh succeeded him, who was Queen for one year, and then the subreguli took the kingdom for about 10 years until Caedwalla became King for 2 years, in 686. The interval is left in a state of obscurity, and it seems probable that Kentwin was one of the under kings, and not incredible that he should have transactions with Glastonbury in 678 and 682.

It cannot be supposed that the liberty of the twelve hides

(2). The King's adviser, no doubt, what in later times became the Lord Chancellor. He seems to have been a very good man, an ecclesiastic of eminence, and for those times very learned, and a member of the Royal Family, just the person to exercise enormous influence for good over these rough conquerors.

(3). The Charter of Ine in 706 (probably rather than 705), in our Museum which is a copy, if genuine, of an older one, gives but 20 cassates to West Monkton, which I suppose to be meant by the place near the river called Tan, the other places are 20 cassates on Polden Hill, 20 cassates on each side of Doultling stream, which answers to Pilton and Shepton, and 5 cassates at Croscombe, in all 65 cassates. The Pilton part does not seem to me to correspond with the charters given in Dugdale and the Codex. *William of Malmesbury*, p. 308, seems to agree with the Longleat MS., and so it would seem does a MS. in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, which is said to be of William of Malmesbury, but I suspect to be Adam of Domerham.

was granted so early, though one need not blame the monks much if they in after times strove to date back their jurisdiction to this early time. We may suppose that the charter of liberties was more likely a capitulation of the British monks to their now Christian conquerors, which did give them valuable rights and liberties, which saved the holy place from devastation, and possibly put them into a position to intercede for their countrymen, and make the inevitable conquest less dreadful than the events which had preceded it.

The chronicle and the other authorities state that in 682 Centwine drove the Bretwealas to the sea, and of this fact there is no doubt, though the place is not certain, for Florence of Worcester and Geoffry of Gaimar say that they were the West Brits, while William of Malmesbury in his *Life of Aldhelm, Scriptores xx.*, v. 2, p. 349, says that Kentwine's affair was with the North Welsh which would mean driving them to the sea in what is now Cheshire. The older authorities are ambiguous.

I do not know enough to presume to give an opinion whether Florence or William be the greater authority. If the latter, who was a Somerset man and magnified Glastonbury, had been able to bring Centwine's conquest down into these western parts, he would doubtless have done so, especially when relating the history of Aldhelm, a western celebrity.

At p. 43 of our *Transactions* for 1872, Mr. Freeman, following Florence, gives reasons for thinking that this victory must have resulted in Centwine obtaining possession of the land between Quantock and the sea and perhaps beyond, and it seems quite reasonable that those who had command of Polden Hill, and therefore of the Bristol Channel, should extend their ravages further west and gradually conquer the coast, especially if, as Dr. Guest taught us, they had already held possession of Mendip for many years. The land round Glastonbury and on the lower courses of the Cary, Parrett, and Tone, must have been under water after the Roman drainage

had gone to ruin,⁴ and except where the tide came, would be an impassible thicket: and in these times, as afterwards in those of Alfred, would be most difficult for an invader. Glastonbury had been defended on the only accessible side, towards Pennard on the east, by the great earthwork named Ponter's Ball in the Ordnance Map, the passage through which is still called Havyat, possibly half way gate, as being half way between Glastonbury and Pennard.

Nearly in a line with this is a similar earthwork in Butleigh Wood ending southwards on a combe at the head of Sedgemoor. This earthwork, if prolonged for a mile to the low ground on the north of Butleigh, would protect Polden Hill. When this barrier was forced the conquerors would readily extend their power to Pawlett and cross the estuary of the Parrett at Combwich.

Our rivers and drains have been for ages annually cleaned, the weeds cut, and the principal water course made as much of as possible, both for drainage and navigation, and we cannot easily get an idea of the state of things on the line of coast where the tide met the fresh water outlets when all was in a state of nature. In winter and wet weather the fresh water would accumulate in the low grounds, and there would be but little that this fresh water could do to help the scour of the ebbing tide, it is likely therefore that the channels between the fresh water and the salt would be many and small—circumstances most beneficial and protective to the natives, if the invaders had command of the sea.

The surrender of Glastonbury indicated by the grant of 678, probably on terms as satisfactory as possible to the natives; and the storming of the Polden Hill barriers, indicated by the

(4). I have always assumed that our low grounds had been drained by the Romans. So far as I can remember the Roman remains found near Bridgwater and Huntspill do not supply any certain proof of this. Mr. Green, I see, at pp. 10 and 11 of his book on the *Making of England* assumes the contrary. I do not think it matters for the present purpose. If I am right in supposing that the level of this part of western Europe sank somewhat about the 7th century, Roman improvements, if there where any, would be worthless afterwards.

language of Florence, p. 536, and Henry of Huntingdon, p. 718, would put the low grounds of Somerset very much in the power of the English, who would no doubt at the same time occupy the hills at Langport and Aller. The centre part of the ancient road from Sherborne to Paulett, where it is the boundary to Butleigh for a mile, at the beginning of Polden Hill, appears (*Kemble C.D.*, vol. vi. p. 227) to have been called Wrinwold's Way or Reynold's Way, and gave its name to the eastern part of what is now Whitley Hundred, mentioned in Exon Domesday. *K.C.D.*, vol. v. p. 102, records a barrow of a hero of the same name, Ringwold, on the south-east border of the vale of Taunton Dean. It is not improbable that the maker of this military road was slain some 20 or 30 years after, while helping the conquests of Nun and Ine.

This road, then, may have been made to lead the invaders to the mouth of the Parrett, from whence they would spread themselves over as much of the country between Quantock and the sea, and on the coast beyond, as they cared to occupy.

If, then, Glastonbury mediated between the conquerors and the conquered, what was so natural as that a tract of country should be granted to Glastonbury to hold as a neutral ground between them, and so keep the peace, until a new wave of conquest went further. It is in 710, 28 years after—that Mr. Freeman (p. 44 of the *Transactions* of 1872) supposes that the district about Crewkerne, Ilminster, and west of them was conquered. This, I conceive, must have been in consequence of the line of the upper Parrett being forced by a battle at Wigborough, just south of the Foss, where it crosses the Parrett. After this the vale of Taunton Dean lay open to the invaders from the east, and the breathing time allowed to the Britons by the neutral ground of Monkton passed away.

West Monkton is here called Cantocuudu, Cantocwdu, or Quantock Wood.

Collinson does not give us any clue to the etymology or meaning of Quantock and Cannington, except some Celtic guesses.

I am disposed to connect these words. Collinson says (vol. i. p. 231), that Cannington was anciently Cantetone or Candetone. In King Alfred's will (Kemble, vol. ii. p. 114), after Carhampton, Chillington, Burnham, Wedmore, Cheddar, and Chewton, comes Cantuctune, which cannot well but be Cannington, among the land given to his eldest son; and Cannington remained as part of the ancient demesne of the crown under Edward the Confessor and William.

The greater part of the country between Quantock and the sea is now in Cannington Hundred, and the *sylva famosa quæ dicitur cantocuudu* must be the woodland on the north slope of Quantock. Whether it can have included the crest of the hills is a question botanical and geological, rather than antiquarian. I should have thought that our great hills had always been bare, but my friend Mr. Murray tells me he has found flowers on Mendip, which must have been left by woodland now long destroyed.

The Abbot's estate at West Monkton is said to have the Tone on the south, on the north a large part of Quantock Wood, extending to Helsdene,⁵ and down the rivulet to Walford. This rivulet is, I believe, the present boundary to Monkton so far as the main road at Walford, but no further. The ancient boundary, however, goes down the rivulet to the Tone, including about 1,000 acres of what is now Creech, with the church and Court Barton. It is difficult to suppose that these boundaries were wrong at the time when they were written down, which is not probably earlier than the Conquest, and equally difficult to suppose that those parts of Creech which seem to be the oldest did not then belong to it. The west boundary begins at a place which seems to be Aldwell. There is a Yalway not far off. Then to Oakwell, and then to what we recognise as Hestercombe, and along Ridgeway to Sedgebrook (now Sidbrook, not far off). And then the

(5). Helsdene. We have here the termination Dene or Den, the same as Taunton Dene, which is so uncommon in these western parts.

boundary turns to the west, and joins the Tone at Horseford.

The Charter then goes on to say that three cassates were given also south of the Tone at Creech Barrow (one of the names for the Bath Pool hill), bounded by Tone and Black Brook, which is nearly as it is now; and this which is now part of West Monkton seems to have been a distinct grant, adding three to the other 23 cassates of West Monkton.

Creech Barrow is said to be Cruc Tone in the British language. This is curious, and is the remains of an early tradition.

There is no mistake about Walford being at the eastern boundary of the grant, and this being probably Welshford, indicates the place of some battle which may well have happened here before Monkton was annexed to Glastonbury and to the English territory. One of the difficulties about this charter is the discrepancy from Domesday. Domesday records that the parish was taxed for 15 hides, and could be cultivated with 20 teams of oxen; the charter represents the district given as of 23 cassates, and apparently three more. Hides and cassates ought to be the same thing, and they frequently differ from carucates.

The word cassate is derived from *casa*, and is held to signify the plot of land—primarily arable—belonging to each house, and which each family would have to live on.

I have not seen any satisfactory etymology of the word hide, but it is plainly the same; for, as Ducange pointed out long ago, the 1,200 *familiæ* mentioned in Bede (book iv. chap. 16) as the measure of the Isle of Wight, is in King Alfred's version "twelf hund hida." The word 'measure' seems to point to a taxable area, which the hide certainly was at the time of the Conquest. But it is quite plain that whatever may have been done originally, when these countries were first conquered, the taxable area at the time of Domesday varied much in different parts. A hide near Dunster seems to have been at least twice as extensive as a hide near Bath.

Carucate in Domesday is plainly a foreign word for that which a team of eight oxen were able to cultivate, along with the grass land necessary to keep the cattle, with the cows and calves. Ducange states that the hide was 100 acres, according to the dialogue concerning the exchequer. The author of *Fleta*, l. 2, c. 72, s. 4, 5, says that the arable land of a carucate was 180 acres, where the land was tripartite, with a fallow every third year; what we should now call three-course land, but which was then arranged in three arable common fields: and that where the land was bipartite it was 160 acres, with a fallow every other year, and alternate wheat and lent crops; what we should now call four-course land, which I suppose required four nearly equal arable common fields for cultivation, the whole of each common field being sown each year by all the different tenants, as well as by the lord on his domain, which was mixed up with the rest, with the same crop. The author of *Fleta* may have been led away somewhat by the figures he uses; probably the proper quantity may be intermediate between his figures and those in the dialogue. I rather incline to think that when the grass land is taken into account, and the useless land—the moor land not then drained—is left out, the number of carucates in Somerset is very large. If cassate here means carucate some part of our difficulty disappears, because West Monkton is stated in Domesday to have contained 20 carucates. But we still have six hides to account for, and if the charter is genuine we seem almost driven to the alternative that the taxable number of hides was diminished as a favour to Glastonbury, or that land has been at some time or other taken away from Monkton and added to Creech.
