

The Descent of the Manor of Allerton.

BY PREBENDARY COLEMAN.

I PROPOSE to set down in order the notes that I have collected on the manor and the "Libera Capella" of Alwarditone, more familiarly known as Allerton. Distinguished from Stone Allerton, it has been designated in recent times Chapel Allerton, as possessing the "Capella" erected in the thirteenth century. In Domesday book it is written Alwarditone or Aluarditona, and this form undergoes many changes between the eleventh century and the present day. In the twelfth century it is found as *Alwareton*,¹ in the thirteenth, as *Alewortun*,² *Alvrinton* and *Alverinton*,³ and *Alvar-ton*⁴; in the fourteenth, *Alwerton*,⁵ *Alwardtone*⁶; a favourite form in later years was *Alwerington*, and sometimes *Alvington*, a multiplicity of modes of spelling which is not a little confusing. But the prefix "Chapel" is not found on any map of Somerset until the year 1792,⁷ nor is it used in the leases of the manor granted by the Dean and Chapter of Wells until the year 1708. The origin of the place-name is perhaps to be found in the "ton" or parcel of ground belonging to "Alward." Who

1. Pipe Rolls, 16 Henry II.
2. Kirby's Quest, Fo. 313, dors.
3. Somerset Pleas Memb. 12 and 19, 22.
4. A.D. 1246.
5. A.D. 1302.
6. A.D. 1327.
7. In a map printed for C. Dilly.

this Alward was we have no means of knowing, but the name survived in the neighbourhood at the time of the Norman Conquest. "Alward and his brother held Stocke.¹ Their father held it in the time of King Edward."² There was also an Alward who was the Saxon owner of Ternoc, now Tarnock,³ some two miles distant from Alwarditone. The name was sometimes spelt "Alvert," and hence "Alverton" and Alwerton as forms of the place-name.

Both the Exchequer Domesday and the Exon. Domesday give the survey of Allerton: the latter is of importance in that it leaves no doubt as to who was the first Norman tenant of the manor, and it enumerates the cattle belonging to the lord, no less than the serfs and villeins and cottagers.

The Exchequer Domesday is as follows: "Ralph holds of Walter⁴ Alwarditone. Ulnod held it in the time of King Edward and gelded for five hides. There are added six hides which two thanes held in the time of King Edward for two manors. The arable in all is eight carucates. In demesne are nine hides wanting one yard land, and there are three ploughs and four servants and nine villeins and nine cottagers with four ploughs. There are forty acres of meadow, and three hundred acres of pasture. When he received it, it was worth eight pounds, now one hundred shillings."

The Exon. Domesday has some variations: "Walter has one manor which is called 'Aluarditona,' which Ulnod held in the day when King Edward lived and died, and gelded for five hides. To this are added two manors which two thanes held in the time of King Edward equally (*pariter*), one of whom held one manor of five hides; the other another manor of one hide. The eleven hides have eight carucates of arable. Radulfus de Contiulla holds these now of Walter for one

1. Now Rodney Stoke.
2. Domesday Survey.
3. *Eyton's Domesday Studies*, ii, 13.
4. Walter de Douai.

manor. Of these [eleven hides] R. [Ralph] has nine hides in demesne wanting half a virgate. There are three ploughs. The villeins hold two hides and half a virgate. Here R. [Ralph] has nine villeins, nine cottagers, four serfs, four animals, thirteen hogs, forty acres of meadow, three hundred acres of pasture, and is worth one hundred shillings a year. When Walter received it, it was worth eight pounds.”

The important point brought out by the Exon. Domesday is that the Ralph mentioned in the Exchequer survey as the Norman sub-tenant under Walter de Douai, was Ralph de Contivilla, the foster-brother of the king himself.

Mr. Eyton's observation¹ on this survey must be added to the above. He says: “This was a case of excessive hidation. The measured contents of the three manors here combined were only 1,300 acres—960 + 40 + 300. This leaves only 118 acres of profitable land to the gheld hide. What extent of moor and waste may have attached to the three manors does not appear; nor does the present extent of the parish (1,169 acres) say much more than that the ancient manor land was considerably and perhaps indefinitely greater.”

Ulnod, the owner of the manor before the Conquest, is a name met with also as owner T.R.E. of Ile Brewers. He gelded for no more than five hides. Ralph de Conteville, by two other manors being added, gelded for eleven hides, an estate of greater extent than any other in the hundred of Bimastane, as far as hidage went, greater even than the episcopal manor of Wedmor, by one hide. Walter de Douai *alias* Walscinus de Duaco, was the tenant in capite, of by far the larger part of the hundred: so that Mr. Eyton does not hesitate to say that “it would seem that the old hundred of Bimastane was formed chiefly with the object of concentrating the tenures of Walter, both those which he held in capite of the crown, and those which he held contiguously under Glaston-

1. Somerset Domesday, i, 109.

bury Abbey.”¹ Bempstone hundred has still a portion of its hundred-stone, but it has long since been removed from its original site, a commanding position on the high ground of Allerton, which retains the name of Hundredstonefield, and had been appropriated by some former tenant of the farm, for use as an “uppin-stock.” It was not a monolith, as was that of the hundred of Stone, but consisted apparently of three or more blocks of stone, placed one upon the other, the largest of which survives. Forty years ago the “old inhabitant” pointed out two other stones as parts of the structure, but it would probably be difficult now to recover them. It is matter of regret that so venerable a monument of antiquity, reaching back perhaps to the time of Alfred, or to a still earlier period, “the old and long continued trysting place of the hundred,” should have been treated as of no account.

Radulfus de Contivilla then was the first sub-tenant of the manor, after the Conquest. In him we have the ancestor of a long line of de Contevilles, who were lords of Allerton for a period of nearly three hundred years. In Richard de Conte-ville (1348), whose issue was an only daughter, the name died, so far as Allerton Manor was concerned.

Conteville—Comitis villa—is a village situated in the department of Eure, and distant three-quarters of a mile from the rapidly flowing river Risle, before it empties its waters into the wide expanse of the mouth of the Seine. It may be approached from Pont Audemer, the nearest town, or from Honfleur. The inhabitants are for the most part occupied in agricultural pursuits, especially in the cultivation of fruit trees. The village lies on ground which slopes to the Seine, but a part of it is situated on the top of a hill which rises out of a flat plain.²

Conteville has its church dedicated to St. Maclou, parts of

1. Domesday Studies, Somerset, Vol. i, 109.

2. For this information I am indebted to M. Jules Charlesson, the British Vice Consul at Honfleur.

which belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and it possesses a font of earlier date.

From this brief description of the place which gave its name to the lords of Allerton, it is time to pass on to some account of Ralph, and his connection with the Conqueror.

For more than a hundred years before the Conquest there had been an alliance between the family of de Conteville and the dukes of Normandy.¹ But Ralph could claim the relationship of foster-brother to William, by the marriage of his father Herluin, to Herleva, or Harletta, the tanner's daughter of Falaise, the mother of William. Ralph was the son of Herluin by his first marriage, and William now loaded not only his step-father with great honours, but also enriched with large possessions, in Normandy and in England, his step-father's sons, Ralph, born to him before his widowhood, and his half-brother Robert, Earl of Mortain, and Odo, the famous bishop of Bayeux. Although little is known of Ralph,² beyond the fact of his being the eldest son of Herluin de Conteville, and that he accompanied William in the invasion of England; it is stated that it was he who built the tower of the Basilica of the Priory of St. Vigor, in Normandy, which was overthrown in the year 1579.³ Herluin, his father, occupies a more conspicuous place in history. William of Jumièges speaks of him as "Herluinus quidam probus miles."⁴ William of Malmesbury describes him as "vir mediocrium opum."⁵ But for us the interest in this "petit chevalier" is that he was the founder, in the year 1040, of the abbey of Grestain, within some two or three miles of Conteville, an abbey which became the patron of the church of Norton-juxta-Hamedon, in this

1. Anderson's History of House of Yvery ii, 88.

2. Orderic iii, 246, "C'est la seule mention de ce fils aîné d'Herluin de Conteville que nous rencontrons dans l'histoire." Footnote in loco.

3. Nobiliaire de Normandie, par. E. de Magny.

4. Will. Gem., vii, 3.

5. Gesta reg. Angl., ed. Hardy, vol. ii; iii, § 277.

county, and to which, just two hundred years afterwards, in the year before Bishop Jocelin's death, it was appropriated.¹

From Ralph's close connection with William it might fairly be supposed that he held other estates in Somerset besides Alwarditone. And such was the case. In the Hundred of Bempstone he held two virgates, in Hecui-wicea, alias Ecewicke, a manor said to be obsolete,² and one virgate in Hiwis (Hewish-juxta-Highbridge), both under Walter. In the ancient Hundred of Meleborne (now Horethorne), he held one hide one virgate in Adber, in Trent, also under Walter. Besides which he held two estates, the modern names and situation of which have not been identified. They were in "Comtuna al Contune," and contained together five hides (4 x 1) still under Walter. Here in this double manor Ralph possessed (*inter alia*) one hundred and twenty sheep and seventy goats, a circumstance which certainly suggests that the situation was on the Mendip Hills. Collinson³ identifies it with Compton Bishop, but after a thorough investigation into the probabilities Mr. Eyton feels it impossible to say where it was.⁴

But we must return to Ralph and his nine hides in demesne at Alwarditone. The physical features of the landscape in broad outline cannot have been very different then from what they are now. The Mendip Hills were seen on the one side, and the Polden Hills and the Quantocks on the other. The Bristol Channel came into the view in clear weather then as now. Brent Knoll rose out of the level in the near distance. The manorial lands, as we have seen, were then as now partly arable, partly meadow and pasture. But the proportions of the one to the other have been entirely altered. In 1086, the plough land was more than twice as much as the grass land,

1. Lib. Alb. iii, fo. 185, in dors.

2. May it not be identified with North Wick or South Wick in Mark ?

3. iii, 582.

4. Domesday Studies, i, 215, 216.

whilst now there is comparatively little of the former remaining. Allerton moor was at that date a waste swamp, unenclosed, unmeasured in the Survey, and of no value. There were no roads through it, no rhines to carry off the water, no drainage. The main watercourse from the higher grounds was Rawlins' lane and the village street, on the one side, and Stone Allerton street on the other. Of the ancient cultivation there remain the traces, in the acre and half-acre strips of land in Northfield. A manor house existed, not improbably on the same site as the present one. Ralph's dependants were only twenty-two adults, the majority of whom would naturally dwell around the manor house. "Poolhayes,"—the park and the pond—in close proximity to the house, is another landmark of the earliest times.

We have no record of the year in which Ralph died. Assuming that he was about the age of 35, at the battle of Senlac, he may have lived through the reign of William Rufus, and during the earlier years of Henry I, until 1108 or 1109. Nor is it known who was his immediate successor in the manor, but towards the end of the twelfth century we meet with *Adam de Conteville*, as lord of Alwarton. From A.D. 1169-70 (16 Henry II), his name occurs in the Pipe Rolls until 1175, as debtor to the crown of five marks for one knight's fee in Alwareton.

"*Adā de Conte vill deb ̄ v̄ m̄ p̄ recto feodo 1 mil in Alwareton.*" In 1170-71 the entry is headed¹ "*De plac Alan de Nevill Junioris,*" and so also in the two following years.² In 1174-75, "*De Aux ad Mař fil R;*" that is to say, "concerning the aid for the marriage of the king's son."³

A memorandum is added to the entry in 1172-3, and following years "*sz n pot in̄veri,*" "cannot be found." Adam had disappeared, and had not yet reappeared in 1175.

1. Pipe Roll Soc., xv, 116.

2. Id. xvi, 15.

3. Id. xxii, 23.

A.D.
1162

In 8 Henry II Adam de Cunteville gave a fine to the king to have a writ of right to a knight's fee in Alvoceston, that is Alfoxton.¹

The manor of Stringston came into the possession of Adam de Cunteville (temp. Henry II), by his marriage with Amelia de Stringston, daughter and heiress of Ranulph de Stringston, the owner and inhabitant of that township. Adam and Amelia had two sons, William and Hugh de Cunteville. William settled at Dodington, and took the name of Dodington, which continued in his descendants ever after: Hugh inherited Stringston.²

In the time of King John (1199-1216), William granted all his lands in Dyche and Lymbury to John de Alfakeston.³

1196

A few years later, in the seventh year of Richard I, the "Feet of Fines" of that year has preserved the name of "Richard, the son of Robert, of Aluer-ton." It occurs in an agreement made between Ralph de St. Barbe and Richard, as to three virgates of land, with their appurtenances, in Aluer-ton. This document has not been printed in the Somerset Record Society's volume, but it is to be found in the Pipe Roll Society's publication, and⁴ certainly deserves a place in our county history. It is particularly interesting for the purpose of this paper, because it shows us how soon the sub-division of landed estates began, and it supplies us with the name of Robert as lord of the manor, as the successor, most probably, of Adam.

7 RICHARD I, 1196. 30 JAN.

"This is the final concord made in the court of the lord the king, at Westminster, on Tuesday next after the conversion of St. Paul, in the 7th year of king Richard, before Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, Gilbert, Bishop of

1. *Collinson* i, 264. Rot. pip., 8 Henry II.

2. *Collinson* iii, 518.

3. *Idem.* i, 266.

4. P. R. S., vol. xvii, p. 91-92.

Rochester, Ralph of Hereford, Richard, Archdeacon of Ely, Osbert Fitz Hervey, Richard de Hiet, Symonde Patishull, and others, the faithful of the lord the king, then there present, between Ralph de St. Barbe, claimant, and Richard de Cuinteuill, tenant, as to three virgates of land, with their appurtenances, in Aluerton, by a fine of a duel in arms, waged between them, that is to say, that the aforesaid Ralph acknowledged the whole of the aforesaid land to be the right, by inheritance, of the aforesaid Richard, and quit-claimed it from himself and his heirs, to him and his heirs for ever, and for this acknowledgment and quit-claim the aforesaid Richard granted to the same Ralph, for his homage and service in Aluerton, one virgate of land, with its appurtenances, out of the aforesaid three virgates of land in Aluerton, that is to say, that one which Richard, the son of Robert, of Aluerton, held of him and his heirs, to be held by him and his heirs for the service of the twenty-fourth part of one knight's fee, for all the service which belongs to Richard himself. And besides the same Richard gave to the same Ralph two marks in money."

Three months after this, on May 11th, we have the first mention of Robert Tortesmain and his wife, in connection with Allerton, in a plea taken at Westminster. It appears in the original in P. R. S., vol. 17, p. 127, and in English, in "Somerset Feet of Fines," No. 1.

7 RICHARD I (A.D. 1196).

"This is the final concord, made in the court of the lord the king, at Westminster, Saturday next after the feast of S. John Evangelist ante portam Latinam, in the seventh year of King Richard, before Hubert, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard, Bishop of London, and Gilbert, Bishop of Rochester, and Richard Barr, Archdeacon of Ely, and Ralph, Archdeacon of Hereford, and Thomas de Husseburn, and Simon de Pateshull, and Osbert Fitz

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Hervey, and Richard de Hiet, justices of the lord the king, and others, the faithful, and barons of the lord the king, then there present. Between Richard Parfet, claimant, and Robert Tortesmains and Matilda, his wife, tenents by the same Robert, her husband, put in the place of the aforesaid Matilda, to gain or to lose in the aforesaid court, for half a virgate of land, with its appurtenances, in Alurinton, when plea was brought between them in the aforesaid court; that is to say, that the aforesaid Robert and Matilda acknowledged the said half virgate of land, with the appurtenances, to be the right and inheritance of the said Richard, and they quit-claimed the same for themselves and their heirs, to him and his heirs in perpetuity, as his right and inheritance, and for this acknowledgment, and quit-claim, and concord, the aforesaid Richard gave to the aforesaid Robert and Matilda twenty shillings sterling."

1201-2 There are two documents of the third year of King John, relating to Allerton which follow: The one belongs to the month of June, the other to October, 1201-2. The former is No. 49 of "Somerset Fines," and is an agreement between Richard de Cunteville and Robert and Matilda Tortemains. These names we have had already; but two other names mixed up with the estate now come before us, viz.: those of "William Turkil"¹ and of "Richard Bulgun." This instrument reads as follows:

"At Ivelcestre, Wednesday next after St. Barnabas, between Richard de Cuntevile, claimant, and Robert Tortemains and Matilda his wife, tenents; for three virgates of land in Aluerinton; recognizance of mort ancestor was summoned: Robert and Matilda acknowledged the land to be the right and inheritance of Richard; and for this concord Richard conceded all the said land to Robert and Matilda, to be held of him and his heirs for the life of

1. *Turkil* held Clewer, and Backwell, T. R. E.

Matilda by the service due to the king. And after the decease of Matilda one virgate of the aforesaid land which William Turkil held and one ferlingate which Richard Bulgun held shall remain to the said Robert Tortemains and his heirs, to be held of Richard and his heirs, doing therefor such service as belongs to five ferlingates : for this Robert and Matilda gave Richard three marcs in money. And be it known that the residue of the three virgates other than the five ferlingates ought to come back again. And Richard de Cunteville and his heirs freed Robert and his heirs after the decease of Matilda.”

A.D.

The latter is from Somersetshire Pleas (S.R.S.), Roll No. 1171, Memb. 12d., in the Assize taken at Taunton. In this matter Hugh de Grenton and his wife Sabina, with others “seek against Robert Tortemains one virgate of land with the appurtenances, in Alverinton, as the right and inheritance of Robert,¹ father of Sabina, Rohesia and Amabel, the first being the wife of Hugh, the second, Rohesia, of Thomas le Border, and the third, Amabel, of William de Vauton or Walton.”

“Robert came and demanded a view. So let him have a view. A day is given him in the month after Michaelmas, at Westminster. In the meantime let the view be had. And be it known that the writ speaks of the same Robert, and of Henry de Cunteville who essoined himself *de malo veniendi* and that Robert answered of his own free will without any coercion.”

In this third year of King John, Ralph Lovell of the Barony of Kary, representing Walter de Douai, was the overlord of Richard de Conteville, and was succeeded by Henry Lovell in 1207. He died in 1218, leaving a widow Christiana and a son and heir, Richard. Henry had settled on her in lieu of her dower (inter alia), the services, reliefs, marriage, and wardship due of the manor of Alwarton, held of him as of his honor of Kary by Richard de Counteville. In

1201-2

1207

1. This Robert is shewn to be one Robert Pakerel.

A.D.

1218-19 3 Henry III (1218-19), Christiana became the wife of Richard Cotel.¹ Accordingly, Richard and Christiana put in their claim at Ilchester in the same year for "the services, escheats, wards, reliefs, marriages and fees" of Richard de Counteville, in respect of "one knight's fee and two hides, and one virgate of land in Alwarton."² Richard was a witness to the transaction.

1242 There is a writ of the grand assize for 26 Henry III,³ in which Andrew, son of William le Fraunceys, tenant, appears against Robert de Cuntevill concerning half a ferling of land with the appurtenances in Alleuarton, and prays a recognition to be made which have the greater right in that land."

Pleas of the crown at Yhevelcest'r on the quindene of S. Hilary before Roger de Thurkileby and his companions in the 27th year of the reign of King Henry, son of King John.

1243 At this date one mode of bringing an offender to justice was "the appeal" or private suit of the injured person.⁴ And we have now a case to record of Richard de Cuntevill *appealing* Nicholas Eylward and Matilda his wife, of breach of the peace and robbery. Richard comes and sues against them.⁵ Nicholas and Matilda do not come. They were attacked by Walter Emeri, Walter Tortemayns, and Richard de Alverington. Therefore, all are in mercy; that is to say, they are at the arbitrament or discretion of the court for punishment.

What would be termed to-day a cross summons follows :

"The same Nicholas Aylward appealed Richard de Cuntevill, David Costentin, Peter de Cuntevill, and many others of breach of the peace of our lord the king. He does not come, and he had no pledges beyond the aforementioned. All the appealed come, and have not compromised, and are

1. *Anderson's History of House of Yvery I*, 230.

2. *Somerset Feet of Fines*, p. 33.

3. *Somersetshire Pleas*, p. 122, memb. 13.

4. *Introd. to Somerset Pleas*, xlvi.

5. *Pleas*, p. 249, 250.

not guilty. Therefore all are quit, and Nicholas and his pledges are in mercy.”

It appears, as will be seen later on, that ill feeling existed between the Eylward or Aylward family and the de Conteville family: and this little quarrel may have been the beginning of differences in time to come; but we must not anticipate an event of the 14th century when we have not yet reached the middle of the 13th.

In this year we have a notice of Robert, and of Nicholas de Cuntevill. It occurs on the roll of the Eyre, of 31 and 32 of Henry III. They are summoned after non-appearance at Newport Pagnel, where the assize was held, in the matter of restoring to Muriel, formerly wife of Robert de Sancta Barba, chattels of hers to the value of £10, which they owe her.¹

Richard de Cunteville, one of the jurors is fined half a mark for default at assizes, at Lambeth, before Henry de Bracton, 38 Henry III.

Item. Ricardus de Cunteville tenet Alewortun de Hugone Lovell, per servicium feodi unius militis, et idem Hugo de Rege in capite.² 14 Edward I.

Richard de Conteville held a knight's fee in the village of Bagdripe, of Hugh, Lord Lovel, of Castle Cary (Lib. feod. 19 Ed. I).³

He also held two knights' fees and a half in Cricket S. Thomas, of Sir Hugh Lovel, Knt.⁴

Both Hugh and Richard de Conteville are named as among the possessors of land of most note in the time of Edward I.⁵

Sixteen years later the manor was still held by Richard, for in that year a cause was tried at York between Richard de Cuntevill, of Alwerton, and John, son of Isabella de Wyk,

1. Somersetshire Pleas, p. 351, memb. 32d

2. Kirby's Quest., S. R. S., vol 3, p. 8.

3. Collinson iii, 91.

4. Id. iii, 116.

5. Id. Introd. xxvii.

A.D.

querents, and William de Burne, deforciant, for a messuage and a ferling and forty acres of land in Alwerton and Overwere. The fine proceeds: "Plea of covenant was summoned. Richard acknowledged the right of William; for this William, at the request of Richard, granted the same to John to hold, to John and the heirs of his body, of the chief-lords of that fee. If it happen that John shall die without heirs of his body, then the said tenement shall wholly remain to Agnes, daughter of Richard de Cuntevill and the heirs of her body, to hold of the chief-lords of that fee. If it happen that Agnes die without heirs of her body, then the said tenement shall wholly remain to Egelina, daughter of Richard, and her heirs, quit of the other heirs of John and Richard, to hold of the chief-lords of the fee by the services belonging."¹

It so happened that both John de Wyk and Agnes de Cunteville died without issue, and so the lands came into the hands of Egelina, who married one John Bole, of whom we shall hear again in the year 1345 (19 Edward III). The above Richard, who appears to have died in 1303, was the father of six children, two sons and four daughters. His heir was Baldwin. The four daughters were Isabella, Agnes, Margaretta and Egelina. Isabella had become the wife of — de Wyke, and was the mother of a John de Wyke. Egelina, as already stated, was the wife of John le Bole. Margaretta married Nathaniel Pecche. Agnes appears to have died unmarried. Besides Baldwin there was a son, whose name was John.

[The signature of Baldwin is found on a Wells charter, A.D. 1307,² and among witnesses, in A.D. 1339, to documents, is Sir John de Wyke, knight.³]

308-9

Hitherto no mention has been made either of that part of the parish which is known as Ashton, or of the existence of the mill, or of the church. But in the early years of the four-

1 Feet of Fines, S.R.S., vol. 6, p. 320.

2. Lib. Alb. i., Fo. 123.

3. Wells Cath. MSS., No. 261.

teenth century, in the Feet of Fines of 3rd and 11th Edward II, we have reference made to them. A family of considerable importance in the county was that of the Langelondes, and a name which occurs in the after history of Allerton was Welsh. Ashton and Allerton are mentioned together in the year 1308, in connection with these names.

“ At Westminster, in three weeks of Easter, between Nicholas de Langelonde, querent, and Robert le Walys, of Wol-lavyngton, and Isabelle, his wife, deforciant, for a messuage, forty acres of land, twelve acres of meadow and nine shillings rent, in Asshton and Alurinton. Robert and Isabelle acknowledged the right of Nicholas to hold of the chief lord by the services due ; and they warranted. For this Nicholas gave Robert and Isabelle forty marcs of silver.”¹

Baldwin de Counteville, son of Richard who died circ. 1303, was lord of the manor of Allerton, in succession to his father. And in the Fine subjoined, of the 11th year of Edward II, is the first recorded notice of “ a mill ” and “ the advowson of the church.” A mill was one of the most necessary adjuncts to a manor house, and probably a mill has stood on the site where the Allerton mill stands to-day for more than 800 years. In the reign of Edward VI the old mill was in ruins, and was rebuilt, as will be shewn under the year 1549. From the manor house to the mill, and from the mill to the hundred stone must in old times have been a frequent walk.

There is reason to believe that the church, the advowson of which is referred to in this Fine was built in the early part of the thirteenth century. It has been said that the old font is Norman, but that is doubtful. There is no trace of Norman work in the fabric of the church, but there is an early thirteenth century window in the south wall of the nave, to the west of the porch. And that a church existed in the year

1. Som. Fines, S.R.S., vol. xii, p. 16

A.D. 1247, as a "capella," appertinent to the church at Wedmore, can be shewn by documentary evidence.

17-18 "At Westminster, in the octave of S. Michael, between Baldewin de Countevill, and Richard his son, querents by John Manship in their place; and John le Riche of Wedmor, deforciant; for a messuage, a mill, a carucate of land, and twenty-four shillings rent in Alewarton and the advowson of the church. John granted the tenement and advowson to Baldewin and Richard to hold to them and the heirs of the body of Richard begotten; and if Richard die without such heirs, then after the decease of Baldewin the same to remain to John, the brother of Richard and the heirs of his body; and if John die without such heirs then to Constantia the sister of John, the brother of Richard; and if Constantia die without such heirs, then the whole shall remain to the right heirs of Baldewin. For this concord Baldewin and Richard gave John one hundred marcs of silver."

1327 v. 23rd. The Exchequer Lay Subsidies, as they are termed, were a tax of $\frac{1}{20}$ th granted by Parliament to Edward III in the first year of his reign, of all movables which were in each man's possession on the preceding Feast of S. Michael and All Angels. The Rolls of Parliament give us the lists of those taxed in each hundred. The special object of the tax was to provide the king with money to defend the kingdom against invasion by the Scots.¹ The sum total of the assessment in the hundred of Bempstone was £17 10s., whilst that of Alwardtone was three shillings. The highest sum received from Alwardtone was xii^d. paid by Nicholas Kyle; four others paid vi^d. each, viz.: Peter Bygoyn, Elias Talpayn, Henry Wyne, and Henry Wylles. This is by far the smallest amount paid by any place in the hundred, and this fact leaves the impression on our minds that the Conteilles were certainly not resident at this time. It must, however, be remembered that

1. cf. Preface to Vol. iii, S.R.S., p. xxvii, note.

the names under Alwardtone refer to the Tything, and not to the parish. In the list of those paying in Boydesham and Tornock (Biddisham and Tarnock), John Contyvyll's name appears as one of the larger payers.

With the name of John de Conteville, two incidents connected with Alwarton come before us. The first is a petition of John, as "rector of the free chapel of Alwarton," to the Archbishop of Canterbury to restrain Bishop Ralph de Salopia, bishop of the diocese, from interference with him, on the ground that the Dean of Wells was his "ordinary," and not the bishop. The free chapel of Alwarton had now been standing on its present site for more than a hundred years. Chaplains or rectors had been presented to it by the lords of the manor. It was among the "pertinenciæ" of the Church of Wedmore, and the Dean of Wells, as rector of Wedmore, exercised jurisdiction over it.

In Bishop Ralph's register is the inhibition of the bishop from disturbing John in peaceable possession of his benefice. It explains how matters stood.

"The Official of the Court of Canterbury to Bishop Ralph.

"The petition of John de Conteville, rector of the free chapel of Alwarton, exhibited to us contained that, although the same John had possessed the said chapel, being notoriously exempt from your immediate jurisdiction, and subject to the jurisdiction of the Dean of Wells, and on the part of the said John, fearing prejudice, it was appealed to the apostolic see. You, nevertheless, *at the instance of John Alward, priest*, ordered the said John to show his title to the said chapel, and as well by yourself as by John de Middelton, rector of Bledon, and Stephen Tripp, rector of West Cammel, your commissaries disturbed the said John de Counteville. Wherefore we inhibit you and your commissaries pending the matter of appeal in the Court of Canterbury, xviii Kal., May, A.D. 1338.¹

1. Fo. 174.

A.D.

Who this John Alward, priest, the instigator of the bishop was, we cannot say—there was one of this name who was Vicar of Timberscombe in 1336¹—but, if he was a descendant of Nicholas Aylward, A.D. 1243, this looks like a continuance of the animosity of the previous century.

The second incident is a dismal one. It is recorded in the *Liber Ruber*,² that in the month of September, 1338, Cristine Cokes de Cokelake was charged with the crime of fornication with John de Countevyle the younger of Albartone; and that she was sentenced to walk twice barefooted round the church of Banwell, a penance which may possibly have been performed in the presence of Bishop Ralph.

1344-5

In *Somerset Fines*, p. 229, vol. xii, there is reference to a messuage, and a ferling and forty acres of land in Alwerton and Overwere when John Bole and Egelina are deforciant, and Nicholas Fraunceys and John Queynt, querents.

1347

Richard de Conteville, the son and heir of Baldwin and Margerie, was lord of Allerton in 20 Edward III, and with him the direct male line of the de Conteilles came to an end. This Richard had an only daughter, Elizabeth, who became the wife of Thomas de Gournay, son of Anselm de Gournay, Lord of Overwere, and by this marriage the two manors of Allerton and Overwere became united for a time in the one family of de Gournay.

To Thomas and Elizabeth de Gournay was born an only daughter, Joan or Joanna. She married George de la More, or Bythemore, lord of Nailsay, with whose descendants the manor of Allerton remained for one hundred years. The family of Bythemore, alias de la More, alias Attemore, alias More of Nailsea, was an ancient and honourable one. It traced its descent from Ralph de Mora, who lived in the reign of Henry I. The name of Richard de Mora occurs in connection with Somerset in A.D. 1205. The immediate ances-

1. *Somerset Incumbents*, p. 457.

2. Fo. 67.

tors of George were Stephen, his father, and Bartholomew, his grandfather.

A.D.

In the 14th year of Richard II, George and Joan Bythemore were party to a Fine in which the reversion of the manor of Overwere was limited to George, and to the heirs of himself and Joan after the death of Aleanor, then wife of Richard Power, and widow of Thomas de Gournay, who held the same in jointure.

1391

Another deed of the 7th Henry IV is a suit in which William Howys and Philip Cliffield were plaintiffs, and George and Joan Bythemore were defendants. The estate is described as containing at this time 11½ hides of land together with the advowson of the church of Alwarton, and was limited to George and Joan for the term of their lives. Remainder to *William*, son of George, and Isabel, his wife, and the heirs of their bodies.

1406

William succeeded his father before the 7th year of Henry VI. Among the Wells Cathedral MSS. is a charter (No. 630), in which William More, of Naylsey, esqre., grants his manor of "Alverton" to Thomas Brown, Baldwin Brown, John Torell, John Whytynge, and John More, of Brydcombe,¹ and the heirs of Baldwin. It was signed and sealed at "Alverton," on the Saturday after the Feast of S. Bartholomew the Apostle, in the 25th year of Henry VI, and the witnesses to the deed were Sir Walter Rodney, Knt., Thomas Wake and Richard Arthur, esqres., William Gascoigne, mayor of Wells in that year, and M.P. for the city of Wells, Thomas Whytton, and many others.

1429

1447

William Bythemore was a man of high standing in Somerset, for when in the 7th year of Henry VI an order was issued from the crown to the sheriffs and justices of the different counties to select a certain number of men-at-arms from among the most ancient knights and gentlemen, of the respective

1429

1. For an interesting account of Brydcombe see S.A. and N.H. Soc. Proceedings, xxvii. pt. 1, 37, 38.

A.D.

counties, whose ancestors had borne coats of arms from times of antiquity, to serve the king in their own persons, for the defence of the realm, this William Bythemore was among the twenty men of Somerset who were chosen.

William's first wife was Isabel . . . who appears to have died without issue. His second wife was Joan Warre, by whom he had a son and heir, John Bythemore, lord of Nailsey, Overwere and Alwarton.

The notices of John extend over the years 1462-1481, a period almost corresponding with the reign of Edward IV. His wife was Alice Toky, alias Pedyll, of Bridgwater, and by her he had a son, William.

1462

Among the Wells Cathedral MSS. there is a charter, No. 668, an abstract of which is given in the report of the Historical MSS. Commission, p. 309. It does not bear immediately on the history of the manor of Allerton, but it does so indirectly, and may therefore find some notice here. Besides which it is a document of some interest in itself. It is an arbitration between John More, and a man of Mark, named Robert Deye, alias Robert Kykke, about lands in Wurcheston, Wynnesmere and Burnham. The three arbitrators were men of great eminence. They were first, Humphrey, Lord Stafford of Southwyke, who had fought on the Yorkist side at the battle of Towton, the year before, and was knighted by Edward IV on the field, and whose execution, at Bridgwater, by order of the same king, only seven¹ years afterwards, is matter of history; second, Nicholas Carent, Dean of Wells, the "nobilis ac facetus decanus," of Ferrandus, a distinguished visitor to Wells;² third, Sir Richard Chok, then Justice of the Common Pleas, and four years after this Lord Chief Justice of England.

The award was given in favour of John More, "as kinsman and right heir of Baldewyne Countevyle, late lord of Alwarton, viz. : son of William, son of Johanna, daughter of Elizabeth,

1. Dict. of Nat. Biog., vol. liii, p. 454.

2. Correspondence of Bishop Bekyngton, ii, 321.

daughter of Richard, son and heir of the said Baldewyne," In two minor points the document is also of interest. The names of the sons of the soil in 1462 are the names of the inhabitants of the district to-day, after more than four hundred years. They are Hykkes, Gyllinge, Day, Roper, Adams, Chappell. Even the unusual name of Kykke survives in the parish of Mark. Looking back, too, over the preceding century, and the struggle for independence of the lord, on the part of the labourers, it is, perhaps, worthy of note that a release is given to these men as "*labourers*," and to one of them as a "*wener*," *i.e.*, wagoner.

From this, and from the documents that follow, it is evident that the ancient lords were relaxing their hold on the land, and that a new system of farming was beginning to find place. The growth in the fifteenth century of a farming class, and the increase of leases, were facts that the landlords had to face. Loans of money to the landlords appear among the documents: for instance, John and William Bythemore, father and son, "of Alwerton," bind themselves for the sums of two hundred, and one hundred pounds, to four men, three of whom were clergymen.¹

Through his marriage with Alice Toky, John Bythemore appears to have become associated in the business of his estate with men of standing in the neighbourhood of Bridgwater, like William Dodesham² and Thomas Tremayle.³ In 1475 we find that he had made over to these the rents and services due to him from lands and tenements "in Alwerton and Overwere." Walter and Johanna Sparke, and Thomas their son, the tenants of John, accordingly engage to render the same to Dodesham and Tremayle.

John died in 1480, leaving his son William, then of the age of thirty-eight years, as his successor. He is the last of the

1. Wells MSS., 668, 669.

2. Of Cannington.

3. Wells MSS., No. 696.

A.D. 1488 Bythemores connected with the manor. He held it for eight years, but in the third year of Henry VII he obtained a license from the Court of Common Pleas, to defeat the settlement, and effect a sale, thus conveying it away from himself and his heirs. He claimed "the manor of Alwarton and the advowson of the church, also twenty messuages, six tofts, a dovecot and a mill, six hundred acres of arable land, two hundred acres of meadow, two hundred of pasture, and a rent of twenty-four shillings in the manor."¹

1481 The Inquisitio post mortem of 20 Edward IV, makes John Bythemore to be possessed at his death of the following estates :²

"Johe's More Armiger
 Alwarton maner^o et advoc^o Capell.
 (Castelcary maner^o membr^o)
 Overwere maner^o
 Batelbourgh maner^o
 Naylesesey maner^o
 Edyngworth
 Burnham } Septem mess^s
 Hurtcote et } cum divers
 Lytelton } terr^o."

1488 One Thomas Ustewayte, and a Richard Isham, the former connected with Wells, and the latter with Isle Brewers, were the purchasers ; but four years after, they too obtained a license for the sale, and the estate was conveyed to John Gunthorpe, Dean of Wells, and the aforesaid Thomas Ustewayte. There is in the possession of the dean and chapter the deed of renunciation of the manor, by Thomasine the widow of William Bythemore.³ Thus, after the lengthened ownership through more than 400 years by the Contevilles, Gournays, and Bythemores, an uninterrupted lineal descent, Allerton, with

1. *Anderson's House of Yvery*, ii, 36.

2. I.p.m. 20, Edw. IV., No. 69, Vol. iv, 401.

3. Wells Cathedral MSS., 727.

its manor, its windmill, and the advowson of the church passed into the hands of the Dean and Chapter of Wells, through the gift of John Gunthorpe. If the Dean and Chapter had not commuted their estates with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for a fixed income in 1866, they too would have held the estate for another 400 years. As it is, they were the owners for about 370 years, and still retain the patronage of the rectory in their hands. It is not a little remarkable that for the long period of more than 800 years there should have been virtually one family, and one ecclesiastical body, lords of the manor.

Dean Gunthorpe died in 1498, having appointed John Ustewayte, and Richard Hatton, a canon of Wells, and chaplain to Henry VII, his executors. His death occurred in the spring, for, on the 9th of June, the sub-dean and chapter appoint Thomas Cornish and Thomas Gilbert, as seneschals and guardians of the deanery, *vacant by the death of John Gunthorpe*. The manor of Allerton, their new possession, comes at once to the front. Being now patrons of the benefice, they appoint Thomas Gilbert, "to the Free Chapel of Alberton, vacant by the death of William Stevens." Six months after this, "in mutual convocation assembled," they "transacted the business connected with the manor of Alberton."¹ It now appeared that the purpose for which Dean Gunthorpe had granted the manor to the Chapter, was to support and find a mass to be celebrated daily at certain altars, in the Cathedral church, for the repose of his soul. It was resolved "to begin it, and to continue it daily and for ever." It will be seen presently that the resolution was more easily made than carried out.

1498

But to keep to the documents in order of time, notice must be taken in passing of a deed relating to an annual rent charge of six-shillings and eightpence on a property described as "Benam's Place within the Manor of Alwerton," and so designated as the deed asserts "ab antiquo." It is a release of this

1501

1. Wells Cathedral, *Reynolds*, p. 197.

A.D.

rent charge from Thomas and Juliana Squery, William Trewbody, junior, and Alice, his wife, and John and Johanna Spereman. It had come to them from one William Boteler of Westbury, and to him from four men who were feoffees of the late William Bythemore, viz.: Thomas Overay, John Chok, Walter Parys, and John Bowle. And now it is conceded to Thomas Cornysh, "Episcopus Tinensis," and his assigns for the remainder of a term of eighty years. The witnesses to the deed were men of repute in Wells and the neighbourhood, viz.: Sir John Rodney, John Poulet, William Vowell, Richard Parker, and John Ustewayte. It is dated on the feast of S. Thomas the Apostle, in the 17th year of Henry VII.

1506

To return to the resolution of the Wells Chapter to carry out the conditions of the late Dean's will. For some five years this was done. But they were now involved in two difficulties. First, the estate had found its way into the Court of Chancery. Second, Henry VII was pressing Gunthorpe's executors for the repayment of the remainder of a "benevolence" of two hundred marks, forty only of which had been paid in the Dean's lifetime. They had to deal with both these matters. There is a letter extant, from the Archdeacon of Wells (Beaumont) to the Chapter, of April 3rd, 1506, from London, in which he says: "We have made serche in the Chancery for the ammortysment of Alverton, and as yet we cannot find it. The vi clerks of the said Chauncerye be so besyed in the King's causes that they can attend no pore men yet. I assure you by ther license Humfrey, my servant, hadd a sight of oon boke, ab anno VI Henrici sexti, usque annum xviii ejusdem. Ye must pardon us thoughe we can make no perfite answeere to you at this tyme."

On May 13th Philip Usthwaite was deputed to ride to London to see the executors of the late Dean about Alberton, and on May 25th the newly-elected Dean (Cousyn) the Precentor, and John Edmunds were appointed to go to London to see about the late Dean's gift of Alberton. What

the result of these journeys to London was does not appear.

But the second difficulty was more troublesome than the first. And it can be understood by the following letter from the Chapter to Richard Hatton :

“After due recommendation so it is that John Ustwayte, co-exôr. with you unto the right honourable Maister John Gunthorpe, whose sowle God pardon, sheweth unto us howe that the king’s grace demandeth of you and hym ce marks for the benyvolence accordyng as ye have written unto us afor tyme. And that neyther ye nor he can fynd remedy or discharge for the same. Wheruppon he thynketh that the king’s grace will have this money contented unto him, or ells that by your meanes ye may fall to some compromyse with the commissioners for the same. And by cause, as ye bothe affirme, that ye have disposed the goods of the same Mr. Gunthorp, and have not to content or to paye any suche somes of money of his goods left or remaynyng in your hands, the said John Ustwayte with good mynde hath instantly moved us that we wold be contributorie unto the payment of the same by parte of suche lyvelode as the said Mr. Gunthrop gave and amortysed unto our church. Maister doctor this it is. We knowe well and considre the good and faithfull mynde of this honorable man departed, howe he purchased this lyvelode, and theruppon for the helthe of his soule at his grete labour and cost, and by reason of a certeyn graunte made unto us by the king’s grace, sufficiently amortèsied the same as we have to shewe by our writyngs. Neverthelesse as the said John Ustwayte hath amoved us, seyng that ye have not of his goods to content the king’s grace, but that ye must levy hit of suche lands as he left to his kynfolke and gave unto us, we must for a season surcesse of such suffrage as we dayly doo for hym. And so to take a portion yerly of his said lyvelode towards the payment of the same some. And the remanent to remayne for his masse and obite. Sir, we trust, consideryng the grete

A.D.

mynde and favour he hadde unto you, remembryng also ye be oon of the brethren of our church, that ye will take of the same lyvelode, for the tyme, as little as ye may. And thus orderyng yourself we shalbe as gladde to folowe your mynde as ye shal desire us. Praying you that ye will give credence to our brethren, berers herof, in that they shall move unto you in our behalf to whom we geve full auctorite to conclude with you for this matter and other we have to do. And thus Jhesu have you in his blessed keypyng. At Wells, the xxxth day of May. By your lovyng brethren, Deane and Chapitre of Wells.

“To our wel-beloved brother Mr. Richard Hatton, Chapelayn to our sovereigne lord the king.”

Notwithstanding the difficulties with which the Dean and Chapter had to contend in securing the possession of their manor, the early part of the sixteenth century saw the system of leases and fines in operation, and tenants of “the farm,” paying an annual rent.

530

549

In the 20th year of Henry VIII the farm was leased to Thomas Bowyer, of Tornock, and Mary, his wife, and Luce, their daughter, at a rental of £18. At the death of Thomas, Mary and Lucy continued as tenants, certainly down to the second year of Edward VI, for at that date an indenture was made with John Mawdley, of Wells, a celebrated “clothier,”¹ for the rebuilding of the windmill, conditions in favour of “Marye Hill and Luce, her daughter, now farmers of the manor of Allerton,” being inserted. “Marye” had apparently “changed her name” from Bower to Hill. The windmill has been mentioned in 1317-18 as part of the manorial possessions, and had been included in the holding of the farm. But being now in a ruinous condition, it is leased as a separate property to a man who had capital at his command wherewith to rebuild it.

1. *Leland* in his *Itinerary*, ii, 69, 1540-42, says “Mawdelyne was a late a great clothiar, in Wellys, and so is now his sunne.”