

CHOLSEY CHURCH.

Mr. Parker again addressed the party here. I will just say a few words, first of all about the name. because we possess in Berkshire, more particularly than in any other county, a large number of charters relating to land previous to the Conquest and previous to the time when words and names of places got changed in consequence of the Norman invasion. It seems to me not out of place for a Society like this to pay special attention to the names of places. In this case, as in the case of Hagbourne, there is no doubt about the final syllable, and there is just the same difficulty about the first syllable. Before the Conquest, there was only one way of spelling Cholsey—Ceolsig, ige standing for an island ; but it was an island in a more extended sense than that usually used. It meant land surrounded by water. There was a series of ditches surrounding the low ground, and the whole of the Cholsey country was a piece of land nearly bounded by water, and hence the word “ige.” Cholsey, or Ceolsig, was really “ceol-ig,” and the “ch” was merely put in to give a hard sound to the “ceol.” It was most probably called after a man's name; it was Ceol's island. Cholsey followed very closely the history of Hagbourne. The boundaries of Cholsey were mentioned in the same charter, the *Codex Wintoniensis*. It was a spurious charter, and this tract was falsely said to have been given by King Alfred to the church at Winchester ; but when they got to the year 945, we find it a very interesting charter, fixing the localities. What are often found are two names in a particular district, and those two names are in three or four other places ; so it is very difficult to identify the names on the ordnance map at the present time. Here, there is no doubt, King Eadred granted to his faithful thane thirty hides of land, distributed in three places, one of which was Beorhtanwille (Brightwell), where ten hides were situated, fifteen at Sotwell, and five in the island which the people called “Maocan-ig,” and several of the fields were adjacent to the Castle of Wallingford, and other land was surrounded and fertilised by the stream. (Here Mr. Parker traced the old boundary.) The northern plot of this land was composed of thirty-six acres of arable land and ten of meadow land, and one mill, and within “the gate” of Wallingford there are seven hearths or houses, besides three churches. I am sorry to say I cannot tell you which the three churches are. No doubt one was in Cholsey. It is a question whether one of them is one of the Wallingford churches, and which the third is I cannot tell. It is very important to know what churches were existing at the time of the Conquest. Now and then they were mentioned in Domesday Book, but curiously enough they were only mentioned there because of some reason for their making a payment to the

Crown. The two hundred mentioned in Domesday I suppose only represented one-tenth of the number of churches then existing. Alfred's will bequeathed Cholsey to his daughter. As early as 950, Cholsey and Reading conjoined, and the great interest of the church at Cholsey is its connection with Reading. This was the first time the two were mentioned together. I find a charter of King Ethelred which granted to his mother Cholsey, which he had previously received from her. This led up to Domesday, to which time Cholsey belonged to the Crown. In 1002, Ælfric, Archbishop of Canterbury, bequeathed a little bit of land to Cholsey Church. Then in 1006, there came one of the incursions of the Danes, the last in which their old energy seemed to have revived. We all know that the great battle of Æcesdun (Ashdown) was fought in 870, and one hundred and fifty years after they went up the Thames, devastated every place they came to, and went away with their booty. It was stated that they "went out through Hampshire into Berkshire, then went they to Wallingford, and were one day in Cholsey, thence to Æcesdun, thence to Cwichelius-hlœw, and there abode as a daring boast, for it had often been said if they went to Cwichelius-hlœw they were never again to get to the sea; and then they went home-wards another way." That story fitted in very well with what was to be found under the reign of Henry I. Henry I. wished to found an abbey at Reading, and as we all know he took what are supposed to have been three ancient abbeys, or most likely collegiate churches. It seems very likely that there were secular canons at Reading as at Cirencester, and that they were turned out. Cholsey and Reading had been mentioned together as property granted at the same time, and here they are to be found mentioned together again.

With regard to the church, when we look at its massive square tower and arches, we at once say it was Henry I.'s work, and that when it was granted to the abbey the first thing the monks did was to build the church. I am rather disappointed at not finding some old very rough masonry outside the church, which I noticed at a former visit. The church has been since restored, and the masonry is absolutely gone. I wanted a sketch to compare it with Ufton, which is only six miles away. The church existed before the Conquest, and the present structure occupied the site of the old church. What the monks did was to build a small cruciform church, rather grand for a country church, all of the same period. One saw where the 12th century work ended and the 13th century work began. They did not re-build the whole of the chancel. They kept all the old work they could, and built in a 13th century choir. All the north side of the chancel is absolutely modern. A 12th century church was built because all the land was granted to Reading Abbey, and then the choir not being large enough, in the 13th century they added another bay. With regard to the roof of the chancel, I cannot fix the date of that, but gifts of oak in Henry I.'s reign had to be enrolled, fortunately. I have copied out two hundred, but there are about a thousand. If I should find in the remainder a gift of oak to Cholsey, that would fix the date of the chancel enlargement.