



The Saxon Charters of Brightwell, Sotwell and Mackney, Berks.

By John Edward Field, M.A.

(Continued from page 52, Vol. 12.)

WE have already seen that this third charter, dated 945, is of a later period. It is made up, in fact, from the two that we have examined, with some further points added. Briefly summarised, it states that Eadred grants to Æthelgeard "thirty hides which lie in three distinct places, all adjacent to the vill which the inhabitants call At Beorhtanwille; to this ten hides belong, and fifteen are in a part of the village called At Suttanwille, and five in the island which they name Maccanig; and there are also several fields about the fortress which is called Welingafoord, thirty-six acres being arable and ten being meadow; together with the marshes which the brook called Gybhild surrounds." It is given to him to bequeath it to whom he will, and it is freed from all service except the three necessary things, namely military expedition, bridge-building and castle-building. The boundaries are then given in Saxon, and it is significant that the westward portion of Brightwell parish, which does not appear in the other charters, is described first. "*These are the landmarks of the thirty hides at Beorhtanwille: first from the moor at the west of the town (tune) to the old dike.*" At Moorend Cottage, on the high road west of Brightwell, appears to be the point at which the Roman road from north to south forked into two courses; a track behind the cottage representing (as we have seen) the starting of the one way which followed directly southward along Kibble Ditch, while the high-road itself, towards and through North Moreton, led on up Langdon Hill to Lowbury, and branches must have been thrown off from it to Blewbury and to Speen and elsewhere. Opposite Moorend Cottage the "old dike" still exists, leading up by "The Coomb" and by "Haddon Close" to the hill-top. Thus the boundary proceeds, as the charter defines it, "*west along the dike to the heathen burial mounds.*" These were doubtless at a

point on Haddon Hill where the parish of Brightwell ends in an acute angle, side by side with that of North Moreton, meeting Long and Little Wittenham which are also divided from each other at the same point. So from this point our boundary returns: "*Then east along the way; from the way to one little thorn; from the thorn east and somewhat south straight on to the way as far as Gaferbice; thence north by the high land as far as the brook (lace); along the brook out on Thames as far as mid-stream; along the water from the old street.*" Some of this corresponds obviously, and probably all corresponds, with the present boundary. From the extreme western point it returns a few yards east along the road leading from Wittenham towards Wallingford. Then the boundary diverges north-east for a few yards, as far as the spot where we must presume that the "one little thorn" stood. Then it turns slightly towards the south-east for nearly three-quarters of a mile, till, passing along a field called Mellaway, it reaches the foot of the deep hollow way already described as descending from Sinodun Hill. Either this, or more probably the Roman road just beyond it, must be "the way" that the boundary meets in the charter; and at the north-east of this point we must place "Gaferbice," of which more must be said presently. Then the boundary passes "north by the high land," along the depression between Sinodun Hill and Brightwell Hill, and then towards the Thames. In Eadwig's charter we were to approach the river "along the old street." But in the charter of Eadred this boundary passes along a stream; and the ditch has already been described as skirting the eastern edge of Wittenham Wood. The ditch, therefore, bounded the western side of the road at this part of its course just as Kibble Ditch bounded it along the Mackney part. And there we shall find, as here, that the ditch is the boundary, and not the "street" as in the other charter. The width of the street is here included in the land that is granted.

Then the boundary, after leaving the line of the old street at mid-stream, continues "*forth along the water to the hollow well*" (*to holan wylle*; but in the other charter, *to holan pylle*; where the similarity of the Saxon *w* and *p* may readily account for the difference); then "*from the hollow well to the hollow way.*" In the other charter it was "up along the dike"; but the two terms may doubtless describe the same thing. Then "*from the hollow way to Bridge-way; from Bridge-way to the riding-way (cerninc wege) from the riding way to Meosdene.*" This is the same as in the other charter; only that instead of telling us to follow Bridge-way one

furlong and then turn off to Mossdene, this one tells us to turn off at "the riding-way" to Mossdene. It is more specific, indicating that a cross way had become recognised since the original was written. We then go on "*from Meosdene to Meldanige eastward as far as Sandlace.*" The boundary comes to the east of Millony, as in the other charter, but not to stop at the middle of the moor, as then. It is to proceed to Sandlake, and then "*along Sandlace to Ceolesige, to the pollard trunk*" (*tham hnottan stocce*). Sandlake—that is, Sand-stream—can be no other than the Moreton brook, which is to be followed from the east side of Millony to Ceol's isle, the island-hill which has the village of Cholsey on its southern side. When this charter was written an old pollard trunk must have been a conspicuous object beside the brook at the point which the other charter described as Mackney Ford; and clearly it marked the turning-point of the boundary with more exactness. Thus the charter concludes: "*From the trunk north along Gybhild to the old dike where we first began.*" So the western boundary of the Mackney lands is marked, not by the "street" as before, but by Kibble Ditch, to include the width of the street within the limits of the grant.

At the end is appended the passage of the charter of 948, relating to the forty-six acres north of the town, the mill, the portion within the town north of the street, the seven houses outside and the three churches. The forty-six acres must be intended to mean some land that has not been already included in the specified boundaries; and therefore they can only be, as in the middle part of the last charter, the land close to Wallingford which was added to Brightwell afterwards. If the compiler of the charter took the words "on the north of the town" (*be northam tham porte*) to mean "on the north of the gate" (reading *porte* in the second sense which is often bears), he might describe thus the Brightwell lands which lie to the north-west of the west gate of Wallingford. And if this is so, the charter defines the united lands of Brightwell and Sotwell just as the parishes now remain. In addition to the fifteen hides of Edwig's charter we find now the westward projection of Brightwell, probably reckoned as five hides, and all the southern parts of Slade End, Sotwell and Brightwell, with the south-eastern half of Mackney, probably reckoned together as ten hides, thus completing the thirty; and then, lastly, the fields outside Wallingford reckoned as forty-six acres.

It is interesting to trace the correspondence of parts of these boundaries with those of adjacent lands as defined in other charters.

Thus in a charter of King Alfred, in the year 891, by which he granted certain lands to Denewulf, Bishop of Winchester, in exchange for others in Cholsey and the neighbourhood, the northern boundary of Cholsey is defined as running "to Tibbæld stream; thence to Maccaneige along the moor; thence to the old ditch; back to Temese at Welingaford."* Here the Moreton brook, the "sand stream" of the spurious charter of Eadred last noticed, appears to be called the old ditch; and the tributary stream round the west of Cholsey Hill, dividing that parish from South Moreton, appears to be Tibbald stream. It will be observed that as the boundaries of Maccanige in the other charter brought us to Ceolesige so here the boundaries of Ceolesige bring us to Maccanige; and in each case the term includes the whole of the rising ground of the *ige* or island, surrounded by brooks and marshes; for in each case the village is on the further side of this.

We have also an ancient charter of Wittenham, purporting to be a grant of Ethelred to the thegn Athelwulf who gave it to Abingdon Abbey;† though being dated 862, four years before Ethelred's accession, it cannot be genuine.‡ It defines the same boundary that we have already traced between Wittenham Wood and Brightwell. This begins at "Gatecliffe," which we must take to be the gate or entrance of the Roman road from the river, under the cliff-like rise of the hillside. It continues "up by Scilling's brook," which we identify with the stream (*lac*) already noticed as skirting the old track on the Wittenham side. It follows the stream as far as "Caberes bec" or "bæc"; and we may infer that the name which the other scribe wrote down, presumably from hearsay, as "Gaferbice," is the same that this scribe wrote as Caberes bec. It cannot be a "beck," in the sense of a stream; for a brook (*broc*) would hardly be described as leading up to a beck, and the situation makes this impossible. It must, in fact, be on the high ground. It seems evident that it is *bæc*, the back or ridge of a hill, and that *bice* in the other charter is a mere corruption. Then the description is clear. There is the possibility that *Gafer* or *Caber* may represent a tradition of the name of the hero who rests under the barrow close by. But Scillings-brook is a name that carries with it a more certain interest. Down the river, opposite the point where the Brightwell and Sotwell land ends, we have Shillingford. The

* Add. MS. 15,350, f. 111, in *Cart Sax.* II. p. 205, and *Cod. Dipl.* V. p. 136.

† *Abingdon Chronicle*, I. 134, 135.

‡ *Ibid.* II. 502, note.

reasonable inference is that the Scillings were the Saxon clan who settled themselves along this ridge of rising ground beside the river which was eventually included in Brightwell and Sotwell ; that these Scillings gave their name to the Scillings-brook, which possibly formed the western boundary of their settlement ; and that they gave their name also to the Scilling-ford from which in turn the hamlet across the river took its name afterwards.

Baulking Church, Berks.

By W. H. Hallam.

BAULKING is one of those "queer, straggling, old-fashioned places ; the houses dropped down without the least regularity ; in nooks and corners, each with its patch of garden, and with a lot of waste ground by the side of the road amounting to a village green." Although close to Uffington Junction, which is really in Baulking parish, the hamlet seems to have secluded itself as much as possible from the high road, and has probably seen but little change in generations. Even the railway, which passes almost within a stone's throw of the Church, is happily carried in a deep cutting, out of sight and almost out of sound ; while the red brick railway bridge, by which you enter the hamlet, is an antiquity as railways go, having been constructed by Brunel when the line was made 66 years ago.

The Church, surrounded by its churchyard, stands in the midst of the village green and is still, with the exception of its three nave windows, practically the same as when its builders left it 700 years ago ; unspoilt by either enlargements or restorations and yet well cared for, inside and out.

St. Nicholas' Church consists simply of nave and chancel, is built in the Early English style of architecture and has a quite plain exterior. The east window is of three lancet lights of the usual design, and on the north and south sides of the chancel are two