



Earmundslea at Appleton, Berks.

By John Edward Field, M.A.,

Vicar of Benson.*

(Continued from page 23, Vol. 13.)

Kenulf King of the Mercians, in 821, confirmed to the Abbey the lands which Ceadwalla had given, including Earmundelæh, which is placed in the list between Cumnor and Eaton,¹ this last being the township which forms the northern part of the parish of Appleton and adjoins Cumnor. This charter is probably genuine.² Subsequently Earmundesleah was one of the places seized by the Danes³; but King Eadmund in 940 made a grant of Earmundeslea and Appeltun to his thegn Ethelstan, who gave it to the Abbey.⁴ The charter describes the gift as consisting of ten hides of land in the place which is commonly called *At Ærmundeslea* and also of the vill called *At Appeltune*; where the former is described as an antiquated and variable name.⁵ It then describes "the boundaries to Ærmundeslea and others call it At Appeltune."⁶ We have also another set of boundaries of Earmundeslea, but containing only five hides⁷; and in this passage nothing is said of Appleton. There is one more reference to it. King Eadgar in 959 confirmed to the Abbey certain lands which the Danes had taken, including Ginge, Goosey, Worth (Longworth) and five hides in Earmundesleah.⁸ It is worthy of notice that four years previously King Eadred had granted the lands in Ginge, Goosey and Worth, with thirty hides in

* The writer desires to acknowledge much assistance from the Rev. W. Moore, M.A., Rector of Appleton.

1. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 26. 2. *Ibid.* II. 500, note 10.

3. *Ibid.* I. 257. 4. *Ibid.* I. 99.

5. *Ibid.* I. 100, dignatus sum largiri x. mansas agelluli ibidem ubi vulgares *prisco more mobilique relatione* vocitant æt Ærmundeslea villamque nomine æt Æppeltune.

6. *Ibid.* I. 101, This synt tha landemæro to Ærmundeslea and othre naman æt Æppeltune.

7. *Ibid.* I. 260; see also 101, note 1.

8. *Ibid.* I. 257; compare II. 515, note 82.

Cumnor,⁹ no mention being made of Earmundesleah. We learn therefore that Earmundeslea is closely connected with Appleton, and is even spoken of as being at Appleton, while again the two are named together as if distinct from each other, and yet again there seems to be ground for supposing that Earmundeslea was accounted part of Cumnor.

We must next proceed to examine the boundaries in Eadmund's grant of Earmundeslea which was also known as At Appleton.¹⁰ It includes ten hides, but the parish of Appleton with Eaton has an area of more than two thousand acres. Accordingly we shall find that Eaton is not included in these boundaries, which are as follows :—

First up from the Thames to the ditch at Docca's grove, as far as the rivulet that runs through Hazel-lea forward towards the ditch that runs to the Was ; thence along the Was till it arrives at Tubba's Ford ; then on the brook till it comes to the street ; from the street to the ditch that runs to the high ground ; thence to the west side of the high ground six yards on the west of Yttings Hlaw ; thence to the row ; from the row to the Thames ; then in the passage along the Thames back to Docca's ditch.

The boundary between Appleton and Eaton runs up from the Thames along a deep and evidently ancient ditch as far as Hengrove. This, being an ancient wood (and *hen* is said to mean *ancient* in the British language) may doubtless be identified with Docca's Grove. Along the east side of Hengrove the boundary still follows a ditch, which must be taken to represent the rivulet of the charter. It is described there as a *sic* ; and the term *sike* is still used for a rivulet in Yorkshire and the northern counties.¹¹ It ran through some land grown with hazels (*hæsel-lea*), and beyond this it followed a ditch running into the "Was." At the present time the ditch by Hengrove stops at the modern roadway leading to Eaton, but the boundary passes on to follow a ditch in the direction of the Osse brook. In the charter it appears that both boundary and ditch went forward directly to that brook ; but if so, the eastern part of the ditch has disappeared, probably when the wood hereabouts was grubbed up a few years ago ; and the present boundary, instead of going direct to the Osse brook, makes a short divergence along the Cumnor and Appleton road as far as the edge of New England Copse, and reaches the brook a little further west. This may per-

9. Ibid. I. 125. 10. Ibid. I. 100.

11. *Abingdon Chron.* glossary, II. 487.

haps imply that some alteration has taken place since the period of the charter. It should be added that a road skirting Hengrove is called Hazellane.

The Was or Wæs is named again in the boundaries of Cumnor in a charter of Eadgar in 968¹² and in those of Fyfield in a charter of Eadwy in 956.¹³ It is undoubtedly the Osse Ditch, as old records call it, though now it is occasionally varied as Ores Ditch and Weirs Ditch; the name Was being presumably a variant of Ouse, and reminding us also of the Wash, familiar as the name of a brook in "the Wash of Edmonton so gay." The Osse Ditch rises near the ancient fishponds of Cumnor Place, and a sluice of some antiquity is to be seen upon it just before the point at which it begins to skirt the parish of Appleton three quarters of a mile from its source.

The boundary in the charter continues "along the Was till it arrives at Tubba's Ford." So the Osse Ditch is the boundary between Appleton and Bessels Leigh, skirting on the Appleton side what was formerly known as Steeple or Stipple Common (doubtless to be connected with *stabulum*, a standing-place for cattle), which until recently was wood. It next divides Appleton from Tubney; and we must place Tubba's ford (*Tubbanford*) at the extreme southern point of the parish of Appleton, whence the Osse Ditch passes Fyfield, Frilford and Marcham, running into the Ock near Marcham Mills. The name of Tubba's ford is interesting. It occurs again in the boundaries of Marcham in a charter of King Edgar in 965.¹⁴ Close to the east of the point where we are placing it we have at the present day Tubworth Barn, marking doubtless the site of Tubba's *worth* or protected settlement. The same Saxon settler has left his name in Tubney—the Tobenie of Domesday Book, the Tubbeney of *Testa de Nevill* and other early records; this being Tubba's *Ey*, or island; for the parish of Tubney is surrounded by brooks and ground which must once have been marsh. From the ford we turn north-westward by north, following a brook (*rithig*) which bounds the west side of Appleton Upper Common, till we reach the "street." A road runs south-west from Appleton, and after crossing the boundary and entering the parish of Fyfield it takes an abrupt turn southward to Netherton. But if, disregarding this turn, we pursue its natural direction westward, the antiquity of

12. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 268.

13. *Ibid.* 233. A brook further west bearing the same name is a boundary of Buckland, I. 243.

14. *Ibid.* I. 265.

the road is at once evident. We find the original track again a mile north of Kingston Bagpuize, leading to Draycot Farm; thence a footpath to Longworth and through Longworth and Hinton Waldrist, the Churches of both these places being upon it; then a footpath and afterwards a road direct to Buckland Church, then by Carswell, Barcote, and Littleworth, and finally a footpath to Faringdon.

From this "street" the boundary passed "to the ditch that runs to the high ground; thence to the west side of the high ground, six yards on the west of Yttings Hlaw." So the existing boundary continues in a direct course skirting the high ground of Appleton Common, and descending thence to the river. Relics of the name of Ytting's Hlaw (*Yttingeshlawe*) still exist. Just at the point which is here indicated, in the middle of Appleton Lower Common, we have Titlow (corruptly in modern times Titlar) Hill; and a mile further west in the parish of Fyfield the older ordnance maps mark Yethill Wood, which is now cut down. The boundary then descends along the edge of Appleton Lower Common, and as it approaches the river it meets an ancient track descending from the northern part of the village and known at its upper end as Millway and at this lower end as Ox Eye Road. It may be that "the row" (*rewe*) was a row of trees upon this road. Just below this point the boundary reaches the river at Langley Weir, otherwise called Hart's Weir. It then follows down the river back to Docca's Dyke, this being the same which at the outset was called "the dyke at Docca's Grove."

We conclude therefore that the boundaries of "Earmundeslea otherwise called Appeltune" in the charter of 940 were the same as the modern boundaries of Appleton, except that a little portion at the north-eastern corner appears to have been transferred to Eaton.

The boundaries of five hides in Earmundeslea are described in a charter of King Eadgar, of the year 959, restoring to the Abbey this and other possessions of which it had been deprived by the Danes.¹⁵ We shall find that they correspond to a great extent with the boundaries of Bessels Leigh, which is situated east of Appleton and south of Cumnor, and is bounded by Tubney on its southern side and by Wootton on its eastern side. But as the parish of Bessels Leigh contains 900 acres we must conclude that only two thirds, at the utmost, of its present area are included in this grant. The boundaries are stated thus:¹⁶

First from Sandford, to the foul stream, along the boundary hedge,

15. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 257.

16. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 260; and 101, note 1.

out to the cot ; thence along the boundary to hazel ditch ; along the street out to Stirian Pool ; along the ditch east to the Was ; thence to Hroc Lea northward ; along the ditch to the upward hedge-down ; as far as up to Snoddes Hill ; upward to the Hoar Stone ; thence to the old wolf-hedge ; thence along the slad, as far as Lakesford ; thence along the Lucring, back to Sandford.

If we follow the present boundary of Bessels Leigh beginning at the south-eastern angle, it starts at a point where the road crosses the Sandford brook near Cothill Mill, and it proceeds along a tributary brook westward. This agrees with the "Sand-ford" and the "foul stream" of the charter. It then passes in an irregular way over Cothill Moor, jutting out south-westward to a point marked on the older ordnance map as Cothill Pits ; but we must assume that in the tenth century it had a direct course along a "boundary hedge" leading "out to the cot" which gave the hill its designation. The site of the cot may possibly be marked now by Row Leigh Farm ; or it may well be the site which the ancient manor house and Church of Bessels Leigh now occupy. We then pass on from the Cot "along the mere to hazel-ditch." We found in the boundaries of Appleton a "lea" on the west of the Was known as Hazel-lea. Hazel-ditch, therefore, appears to be a ditch running down through Hazel-lea into the Was ; and we infer that a mere or boundary ran direct from the Cot to the point of outflow of this tributary ditch. From this point we follow up Hazel-ditch till we come to "the street" ; and this we must take to be the road from Cumnor to Appleton which in its further progress south-westward was named as "the street" in the other charter. We are then to follow this street till we come "out on Stirian Pool," whence we follow a ditch east to the Was, or Osse Brook. If we leave the high road by the present boundary between Appleton and Eaton it passes along the north-eastern edge of a small wood called New England Copse and in the eastern angle of this copse there is a considerable pool, measuring some sixty yards in length by fifteen in breadth. It is now nameless, but we may without hesitation take it to be the Stirian Pool. In the charter there was a ditch eastward from it to the Was ; possibly a very short one ; or there may have been some alterations ; for the pool is now close to the Osse Brook ; but the discrepancy is not great enough to leave doubt about the identity of the pool.

We note therefore that these boundaries of Earmundeslea have here crossed the Osse Brook and enclosed what is now the north-

east corner of Appleton, this being either the whole or part of New England Copse. It was defined in 959 as lying between the Street and the Was, and bounded at one end by Hazel-ditch and at the other end by Stirian Pool.

Near the ditch by which we have been brought to the Was or Osse Ditch from the west we have on the opposite side another deep ditch coming from the east, conveying the water of a rivulet of which the source may be traced from Rockley Wood, and forming the northern boundary of Bessels Leigh Common which it divides from the parish of Cumnor. This is the boundary which the charter now follows northward (or more strictly, as it seems, north-eastward) to Rockley (*on Hrocan Leagan*), a small hamlet a mile and a quarter south of Cumnor. Thence it passes along a ditch to a certain hedge-down, or enclosed down, stretching upward, as far as an eminence called Snoddes Hill; and it still proceeds upward to a certain Hoar Stone, perhaps a stone sacred to heathen rites. Then it is marked by a hedge known as "the old wolf-hedge"; whence it proceeds along the slad, or valley, to Lakesford (*læcesford*), a name still surviving in Latchford Lane by which the boundary of Bessels Leigh descends to the brook. The same ford is called by this name in the boundaries of the adjoining parish of Wootton.¹⁷ The brook bore the name of the Lucring; and along it we reach again our starting point at the Sand-ford. It is evident, therefore, that the boundaries marked in this grant to the Abbey correspond for the most part, though not entirely, with those that mark Bessels Leigh at the present day.

It remains to compare the boundaries defining thirty hides at Cumnor which were granted to the Abbey by King Eadgar in 968.¹⁸ These run:—

First from Sterigan Pool to the ditch; along the ditch to the clearance in the wood¹⁹; by the boundary to the Thames; along the Thames to Wadley; from Wadley to the old ditch; along the ditch to the four boundaries; from the four boundaries to Ruh Lea; from Ruh Lea to the hoar stone; from the hoar stone to the Was; from the Was back to Stirigan Pool.

We may at once identify Sterigan or Stirigan Pool, where these boundaries begin and end, with the Styrian Pool of the other charter. They are traced from this point by certain landmarks to the Thames; and it seems probable that the "clearance in the

17. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 401.

18. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 267, 268.

19. *Infyrd.* See *Abingdon Chron.*, glossary, II. 484.

wood" is in Docca's Grove and that we have here the boundary between Appleton and Eaton, the latter being included as part of Cumnor. For the present purpose we are not concerned with the remainder of these boundaries of Cumnor until we come round to the south-eastern portion of them. For it seems likely that Ruh Lea is the Hroc Lea or Rockley of the boundaries of Earmundeslea. A certain lea, or open space of untilled ground, which had acquired the name of *Hroc* lea from the rooks which frequented it, might by a very natural error be called the *ruh*, or rough, lea in the later document.

Then we may conclude that the Hedge Down and Snoddes Hill, specified there, are assumed here; for it is evident that this is merely a brief summary of the boundaries of the thirty hides as compared with the other very full account of the boundaries of five hides. Thus, if Ruh Lea is Hroc Lea, we are guided directly from that point to the Hoar Stone named in the boundaries of Earmundeslea. But whereas those boundaries turned eastward from about this point towards Latchford on the Sandford Brook, we now go westward from the Hoar Stone in a direct line to the Was, and then follow its course back to Stirigan Pool. Thus the most eastern portion of Earmundeslea and all the southern portion where "the Cot" stood are not included here.

We find, then, that these thirty hides at Cumnor, as defined in 968, take in all the northern portion of the five hides defined some nine years before as belonging to Earmundeslea; and we have seen also that they appear to include Eaton. Cumnor is said to have been one of the early possessions of the Abbey given by Ceadwalla,²⁰ and Cumnor, Eaton and Earmundeslea are among the lands confirmed to it by King Kenulf in 821.²¹ In King Eadgar's time Eaton, as also Wytham, Seacourt and Hinksey, are described as being members of Cumnor, but Eaton was afterwards lost to the Abbey.²² Appleton also disappears from the Chronicle; and the Domesday Survey shows that neither Appleton nor Eaton, each of which had become two manors, belonged to the Abbey in Edward

20. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 8, note 1. 21. *Ibid* I. 26.

22. *Ibid* I. 270. The boundaries of Eaton appended to Eadgar's charter are on the Cherwell, apparently relating to Wood Eaton and introduced here by an error of the copyist. It should be noted that in MS. C. the Saxon boundaries are only given at the end of the volume; but in MS. B. they are placed with the charters to which they are supposed to belong (Pref. I. p. xv.). The Editor of the Chronicle assigns both MSS. to the 13th century and regards C. as the older by about fifty years (*Ibid* p. xiv.); but Prof. Earle believed B. to be the older and of the 12th century (*Land Charters*, p. 378).

the Confessor's time.²³ But it seems that in 968, although Eadgar's former charter had failed to take effect, the Abbey was able to recover Eaton and part of Earmundeslea, which Eadgar now confirmed to it as belonging to Cumnor.

The name of Earmundeslea is varied as Earmundes-*læh*, -*leah*, -*lee*, or *lei*, and in Latin -*leia*. After the tenth century we hear no more of it. But we find several times in the later records of the Chronicle a place called *Leia*, *Lega*, *Lege*, or *Leoie*. It was near the town of Abingdon, and a knight's fee was due from it.²⁴ William of Lega gave the Abbey some trouble in the time of Henry I.²⁵ The chapels of Tubbenei and Lega are mentioned together;²⁶ and Appeltun and Leoie are described with Frilford as being members of Marcham.²⁷ In the time of Edward the Confessor a tenant called Norman held Leie and part of Tobenie of the Abbey.²⁸ From all these facts we may reasonably infer that this was the *lea* or *leigh* which adjoins Tubney and Appleton; that it had been named in early times from one Earmund who had occupied it; but his name did not, like that of Tubba his neighbour, cling permanently to the place, and it got a new affix when it came into the possession of the Besils family in the middle of the 14th century. In the earliest period to which the records of the Abbey relate Earmundeslea was so important that it gave its name to a large surrounding district variously estimated, as we have seen, at 80 hides and 83 hides, and possibly even at 173 hides.

23. *Domesday Book*, fol. 61 b (Apletune, Eltune and Edtune); 63 b (Apletone).

24. *Abingdon Chron.* II. 128. 25. *Ibid.* 128, 232.

26. *Ibid.* 325. Compare *Berks, Bucks and Oxon Archæol. Jour.*, X. 109.

27. *Abingdon Chron.* I. 266. Here, as in the case of Eaton already noticed, a wrong set of boundaries has evidently been inserted in the Chronicle. They are identical with the boundaries of "Thæclege" (I. 427, 456), which belongs to "Cildatun."

28. *Domesday Book*, fol. 58 b.

ROUSE FAMILY.—In Visitation of Essex, 1634, pedigree of Rouse starts Thomas Rouse of White Waltham, Berks, the words "came from the Devonshire Rouses" being added. A grandson of said Thomas, viz., William Rouse, residing at Much Waltham, Essex, is stated to be cousin and heir of Sir John Rouse. Any information respecting Sir John Rouse or connecting White Waltham family with the Devonshire pedigree would be welcome.—E. FRANCIS, 172, Friar Street, Reading.