PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN

SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)

VOLUME LXV

(Part 2)

JANUARY 1973 TO DECEMBER 1974

IMRAY LAURIE NORIE AND WILSON

1974

Published for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society (incorporating the Cambs and Hunts Archaeological Society) by Imray Laurie Norie and Wilson Ltd, Wych House, Saint Ives, Huntingdon

Printed in Great Britain at the University Printing House, Cambridge

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Proc. Camb. Ant. Soc. Vol. LXV (1974), pp. 28–40.

HEREWARD 'THE WAKE'

CYRIL HART

I. HEREWARD'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

IT was Hereward's fate to join that select company of national heroes whose memory is preserved more vividly in legendary sources than in the pages of the history books.[1] Tales of his stubborn but forlorn resistance to the Conqueror captured the imagination of the Anglo-Norman chroniclers, and an extensive folklore literature was circulating within a few decades of his death. Much of this was made easily available in print in the middle years of the last century;[2] it was just the sort of material that contemporary writers were looking for, and Charles Kingsley's stirring tale was a landmark in the development of the historical novel in England.[3]

But for Kingsley's story, it is doubtful if Freeman would have devoted quite so much space to Hereward in the fourth volume of his *Norman Conquest*, published just five years later.[4] 'All that is known, or could possibly be surmised, about Hereward is exhaustively discussed by Freeman' is the surprising claim made recently by Professor D. C. Douglas, who thus summarily dismissed the topic in a footnote.[5] Alas, it is not so. Freeman's account suffers from his uncritical acceptance of Florence of Worcester, and his failure to make use of Hugh Candidus as a source; he wrongly

[1] Plummer summarized it neatly: 'Hereward ... has a brief life in history and a long one in romance' (*Two of the Saxon Chronicles*, II, 265).

[2] Florence of Worcester by Thorpe in 1848–9, with English translations by Stevenson in 1853 and Forester in 1854; Orderic Vitalis by le Prevost and Delisle in 1838–55, with English translation by Forester in 1854; William of Poitiers by Giles in 1845; Gaimar by Michel in 1836; the pseudo-Ingulf translated by Stevenson in 1854; the *Gesta Herewardi* by Michel in 1836 and Wright in 1850; the *Liber Eliensis* by Stewart in 1848; the *Chronicle of Abbot John* by Giles in 1845.

[3] *Hereward the Wake*, 1866. Kingsley, who was Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge (though seldom appearing there) acknowledges in his preface his indebtedness to Thomas Wright (an editor of the *Gesta Herewardi*) for an introduction to the sources. There have been very many subsequent editions and reprints, right up to the present day; one in 1954 contains a useful account of the literary background by L. A. G. Strong. Needless to say, Kingsley's work did not mark the final culmination of Hereward's mythology; fresh contributions continue to appear. In 1909, for example, Douglas C. Stedman, B.A., Dublin University Prizeman in Anglo-Saxon and Middle English, produced his *The Story of Hereward, the Champion of England*. On p. vi of the introduction he wrote: 'The incident (chapter X) of Hereward's single combat with Harold Hardrada is, perhaps, a somewhat daring innovation. But I trust its description is true to the spirit of the period, and what more natural than that the two most famous champions of the day should seek to show their valour on each other's crest?'

[4] *Norman Conquest*, IV, 454–65, 804–12.

[5] *William the Conqueror* (1964), p. 221 n. 5.

thought the *Gesta Herewardi* to contain 'essentially the same' account of Hereward's doings as the *Liber Eliensis*; and as long ago as 1895 Round drew attention to important information about Hereward in Domesday, which Freeman had overlooked.[1] More recently, E. O. Blake has subjected some of the sources to a fresh analysis;[2] new editions of the chroniclers have appeared,[3] and sufficient materials have been brought together on the career of one of his companions to shed more light on the story of Hereward's insurrection.[4] A century has passed since Freeman wrote on Hereward, and the time is ripe for a reappraisal.

Not without trepidation, therefore, we venture to review once again Hereward's place in history. Starting from the solid ground of the Lincolnshire Domesday, we shall explore the rather more sticky territory of the fenland monastic chroniclers, journeying first to Peterborough, thence to Ely, and so back to Peterborough and Crowland; after a brief glance at the legendary quagmire that engulfed later chroniclers further afield, we return to *terra firma* with an account of one of Hereward's companions, drawn mainly from Domesday and the records of Thorney and Ramsey. Having reviewed the evidence, we shall then see if it leads us to any fresh conclusions.

II. HEREWARD IN DOMESDAY

Hereward was 'a Lincolnshire thegn of moderate estate'.[5] His known holdings amounted to just over eight carucates, scattered along the fenland margin to either side of the Roman road running northwards from Market Deeping through Bourne towards Sleaford.[6] They were grouped in three parcels, comprising an estate at Rippingale, Aslackby, Avethorpe and Laughton, all about five miles north of Bourne, a second estate at Witham on the Hill, Lound, Toft and Manthorpe, all lying just south-west of Bourne,[7] and a dependency of Witham at Stowe and Barholm, west of Market Deeping.[8]

In none of these was he a direct landowner in his own right. The Rippingale property belonged to Crowland Abbey, who held it *pro victu monachorum*; it was rented from the abbot by an agreement which Hereward had to re-negotiate each

[1] *Feudal England*, pp. 159–66. Honourable mention should also be made of Professor T. F. Tout's account of Hereward, published in 1891 in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

[2] *Liber Eliensis* (Royal Historical Society, 1962), pp. xxxiv, lv, lvii.

[3] Notably A. Bell's edition of *L'Estoire des Engleis*, by Geffrei Gaimar, for the Anglo-Norman Text Society (Oxford, 1960).

[4] C. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (Leicester, 1966), pp. 236–8.

[5] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd edn. 1947), p. 597.

[6] *The Lincolnshire Domesday*, ed. C. W. Foster and T. Longley (Lincoln Record Society, 1924), entries 42/9, 10, 13; 72/48.

[7] *Ibid.* 8/34.

[8] *Ibid.* 8/35–8; 72/4.

year. He held the Witham estate from the Abbey of Peterborough, but here the tenancy appears to have been on a more long-term basis.[1]

III. THE SACKING OF PETERBOROUGH IN 1070

Hereward, then, was a 'man of the monks', to quote one of the chroniclers,[2] and this relationship is the clue to much of his recorded activities. We turn with quickened interest to the early accounts of Hereward written by monks of Peterborough, whose abbot had been his chief landlord. Here our primary authorities are two parallel accounts of the abbey's affairs; one written in Old English by an unknown Peterborough monk in the year 1121, and forming a series of additions to the 'E' version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,[3] and the other in Latin by Hugh Candidus, sub-prior of Peterborough, written some time between 1155 and 1175.[4] Both draw on a still earlier version of Hereward's activities, now lost; each reproduces the substance of this prototype, and the bulk of the story is identical in the two derived versions, but each preserves some details missing in the other. This early Peterborough material traces the main outline of events during the first part of Hereward's revolt; factually the story is trustworthy, but the account is of course coloured by the bias of the monks.

The scene is set in the late spring of the year 1070, when the arrival of the Danish king Swein at the mouth of the Humber found the monastery of Peterborough *sine baculo*, for Brand, the last abbot of native extraction, had died towards the end of the previous year. On Swein's arrival, the local population made peace with him, for he was expected to gain the English crown. A group of Danish housecarls under Earl Osbeorn were dispatched to Ely, accompanied by Bishop Christian (of Aarhus). Here they were joined 'by the English (*sic*) people of all the Fenlands', including Hereward.

At Peterborough, the monks received a warning that Hereward and his companions were going to plunder the monastery, giving as their excuse the fact that a

[1] This may be deduced from careful examination of the Domesday entries for the 'Land of St Peter of Burg' (*ibid.* 8/1–39); and see Round, *Feudal England*, p. 307. Here the first twelve items list the demesne estates (with their dependencies) which must have been farmed out to tenants in the time of Edward the Confessor; of these, Hereward's holding at Witham is a typical example. It seems likely that these tenancies were in fact life leases, similar to that by which Ælfgar, a chaplain of Queen Edith, held Burghley in Northamptonshire from the abbey. Cf. *The Chronicle of Hugh Candidus*, ed. W. Mellows (Oxford, 1949), p. 67; and for the topic in general R. Lennard, *Rural England 1086–1135* (Oxford, 1959), chap. VI.

[2] Cf. *Hugh Candidus*, p. 79: '*ipse Herewardus homo monachorum* erat'.

[3] D. Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961), p. xvi.

[4] *Hugh Candidus*, pp. xvi–xvii.

Norman named Turold had been appointed to the abbacy by the Conqueror. Turold had previously been abbot of Malmesbury, and had acquired there a reputation for tyranny which had already reached the Peterborough area before he himself had arrived at the monastery. On the eve of the sacking of Peterborough, Turold had got as far as Stamford in his journey to take up his office. He had with him 160 French knights, and it was evident that the success of Hereward's raid would be dependent on his reaching the monastery before the arrival of Turold's company. The monks sent Ivar the sacristan to warn Turold of the situation; he carried with him as much as he could of the abbey's portable treasures.

He was, however, too late. The next morning (2 June) Hereward and his companions arrived at the abbey in a number of small boats, which had negotiated by night the fenland waterways between Ely and Peterborough. The monks would not admit them, so they burned down their houses, and indeed all but one of the houses in the town.[1] Then, having set fire to the Bolhithe gate, they forced entry through it into the grounds of the monastery. Ignoring the monks' request for a truce, they entered the abbey church and commenced to rob it of its treasures. Their plunder included the golden crown and footrest of the rood, a renowned altar frontal worked in gold, silver and precious stones (which they found hidden in the steeple), eleven gold and silver shrines,[2] fifteen gold and silver crucifixes, and treasure in money, books and vestments beyond price. They told the monks that they did this out of loyalty to the monastery, to save it all falling into the hands of the Normans. The monks were scattered, but apparently unharmed physically. Long before Abbot Turold could arrive on the scene, Hereward and his men had re-embarked upon their boats for Ely, carrying the treasure with them, together with Æthelwold the Prior and many of the older monks.

IV. THE ELY CAMPAIGN OF 1071

Soon afterwards, by agreement with the Conqueror, the Danes who had come from Northumbria left Ely in their boats, taking with them the loot from Peterborough. In spite of a storm in the North Sea, most of them reached Denmark. Hereward and his local compatriots remained behind in the Cambridgeshire fenlands, unmolested by

[1] To understand this passage fully, one must remember that the abbey itself was surrounded by a wall; the 'houses of the monks' consisted of a cluster of tenements which had grown up outside the wall, to house the servants of the abbey, and which were therefore abbey property. The Bolhithe gate gave access to the abbey precincts from the waterfront of the River Nene; it lay therefore to the east of the abbey.

[2] In one of these were the relics of the holy Oswald, considered by the monks to be the most sacred and precious of all treasures. *Hugh Candidus*, p. 81.

the Normans for the best part of a year, during which we have no news of their activities; and with this gap, our authorities change. The Peterborough chroniclers no longer show any interest in Hereward, and we pick up his story from almost identical passages entered in the 'D' and 'E' versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The passage in 'D' was thought by N. R. Ker to be entered in a strictly contemporary hand, or very nearly so.[1] Professor Whitelock has queried this,[2] but her argument for a later date for this entry is not a strong one; in any case, the hand cannot well be later than the closing years of the eleventh century. Next to Domesday, therefore, this entry represents our earliest surviving information on Hereward, and deserves respect accordingly.[3]

The annal is dated 1072 in D, but relates to events in 1071. We are told that Earl Morcar (of Northumbria), Bishop Æthelwine (of Durham), and Siward Bearn (a Northumbrian leader),[4] who were in revolt, came by boat to Ely with many hundred men. The Conqueror blockaded Ely, placing a naval force on the seaward side and then building a causeway[5] to allow his land forces to enter the occupied territory. Hereward slipped away with some followers and is heard of no more; all the remainder, with their ships, weapons and treasure, fell into the Conqueror's hands.

There is no difficulty in understanding the gist of this entry, if one pays sufficient regard to the topography. The Cambridgeshire fenlands at this period consisted of a wide expanse of undrained swamp, through which meandered the many tributaries of the River Ouse. Here and there, islands of firm ground stood out above the surrounding fen. Some of these were quite small, sufficient to support the population of a single village, such as Stuntney; others, rather larger, provided sufficient tillage and pasture for communities the size of Whittlesey, Chatteris or Littleport; one narrow island some six miles long was the site of three separate village settlements at March, Wimblington and Doddington.

All of these were eclipsed in size by the island upon which Ely itself lay, together with the villages of Downham, Witchford, Wentworth, Witcham, Sutton, Haddenham, Linden End, Wilburton and Stretham.[6] This fertile tract of land, measuring

[1] N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), p. 254.

[2] D. Whitelock, *op. cit.* p. xvi.

[3] This part of D appears to have been written while the Chronicle was at York; the archetype of E was written at Canterbury, some time before 1121; it is not known whether this archetype copied D directly for the annal concerning Hereward, or made use of some later revision of D, now lost.

[4] For Siward B(e)arn, see *Symeon of Durham*, Rolls Series, II (1885), 190, 214. He was clearly a man of the North, and Round's suggested identification with a Warwickshire landowner has little to commend it (*VCH Warwicks*, I, 277, 283).

[5] OE *brycge*, probably wrongly translated as 'bridge' in this context (e.g. by Whitelock, *op. cit.* p. 154); see E. V. Gordon, *The Battle of Maldon* (1954 edn), pp. 3–4.

[6] The fenland islands are best shown on the map facing p. 220 of E. Miller's *The Abbey and Bishopric of Ely* (Cambridge, 1951), and the map in the end cover of A. K. Astbury's *The Black Fens* (1958).

some twelve miles from southwest to northeast, and ten miles from southeast to northwest,[1] was admirably suited for defence, for the normal means of approach was by water only. Sea-going vessels could reach it from the North Sea via the Wash, the River Ouse, and its tributary the Wellstream, navigable as far inland as Littleport.

The strategy of the Conqueror consisted of placing a naval blockage across the Ouse or the Wellstream, so bottling up the Northumbrians and preventing their escape, then attacking overland from the southeast, constructing in the course of the campaign a long causeway across the tributaries of the Ouse and their adjacent fenland to gain access to the island. The establishment of this landward approach suggests to me that the Conqueror was relying mainly on horse-borne troops for the reduction of the defenders.[2] Foot soldiers could have reached the island on small boats.

V. HEREWARD'S LATER CHRONICLERS

To some extent, the account of the Conqueror's campaign against Ely given in the D version of the Chronicle can be supplemented by material surviving in Book II of the *Liber Eliensis*; but here we must tread warily, for the ground is treacherous. The compiler of this section of the *Liber* drew from a range of sources of widely differing historical credibility. These he brought together in a most unskilful manner, and the sources themselves have since mostly disappeared. The complicated history of the management of this material has been admirably described by the recent editor of the *Liber*,[3] and only the briefest summary will be attempted here.

The most valuable of these lost sources comprised a series of recollections of Hereward's associates at the siege of Ely, compiled by Richard, one of the monks, early in the following century. These heavily embroidered tales of dimly remembered events by old campaigners were probably written down in the vernacular. Later, some time between 1109 and 1131, Richard revised and translated his story into Latin; two slightly differing versions survive, forming chapters 21–5 of the *Gesta Herewardi* (which we shall consider later), and chapters 104–7 of Book II of the *Liber Eliensis*. Yet a third version of these tales was composed in Latin by an anonymous author, who modelled his narrative on the language of a biblical source, I and

[1] These are the measurements based on modern maps. The Ely monks were underestimating the distances when they reckoned the island to be 'seven miles long from *Cotinglade* to Littleport or to the Abbot's Delph . . . and four miles broad from *Churchwere* to Stretham Mere' (*Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake, pp. 2–3). *Cotinglade* was evidently between Stretham and Cottenham, not far from the present Cottenham Lode. Abbot's Delph is the extension of Crooked Drain to Shippea Hill. *Churchwere* is probably to be sought to the northwest of Sutton. See further Miller's *Ely*, pp. 12–13, and *Liber Eliensis*, p. 3 n. 1.

[2] The cavalry is, indeed, mentioned specifically in *Liber Eliensis*, II, c. 102.

[3] *Ibid.* pp. lv–lvii.

II Maccabees; this *opusculum* was then enriched with a few other details drawn from the stock of tradition at Ely, and the resulting account is preserved for us in chapter 102 of the *Liber*. Finally, in chapters 109–11 we have a separate description of the Conqueror's assault on the island, told from the Norman angle.

As might be expected from such local sources, these accounts, though muddled in their chronology, are reasonably accurate in matters of topography. Their location at *Alreheðe* of the causeway constructed by the Conqueror is a case in point.[1] Writing *c.*1150, Hugh Candidus mentions three landward approaches to the island as being in existence in his day.[2] He does not name them, but it is apparent from later references that these were the three causeways at Earith, Aldreth and Stuntney.[3]

In recent years an attempt has been made to controvert the assumption that *Alreheðe* in the *Gesta* refers to the Aldreth causeway, but the argument put up against this ancient identification appears to me to be weak and unconvincing.[4] What settles the issue, to my mind, is the account in *Liber Eliensis*, book II, c. 107, which states that the Conqueror's operation at *Alreheðe* followed immediately after his successful crossing of *Cotinglade*, which from other Ely references we know to have divided Cottenham and Stretham fens. This points clearly to Aldreth as the objective of the attack; and indeed the place-name evidence for this is so strong that it allows little room for any other conclusion.

The Ely traditions we have been discussing contain much mythology and folklore,

[1] *Gesta Herewardi*, cc. 21, 25; *Liber Eliensis*, book II, cc. 104, 107, 111. The spelling *Aldreheðe* occurs in one version of c. 111.

[2] *Hugh Candidus*, p. 5.

[3] See the map on p. 107 of H. C. Darby's *The Medieval Fenland* (Cambridge, 1940). Professor Darby devotes pp. 106–13 of his book to an account of the fenland causeways.

[4] T. C. Lethbridge, 'An attempt to discover the site of the battle of Aldreth', *Proc. C.A.S.* XXXI (1931), 155; see also XXXIV (1934), 90–2; XLIV (1944), 23–5; and *VCH Cambs* I, 332–2. See also A. K. Astbury, *The Black Fens* (1958), pp. 49–51.

Lethbridge's main argument rests on his failure to discover archaeological evidence of a battle at Aldreth High Bridge, and on some finds suggestive of a battle at Stuntney causeway. To my mind, archaeological techniques are not yet so far advanced as to allow one to reach such decisive conclusions from failure to demonstrate the survival of artifacts from a battle site. Moreover, Lethbridge himself admits that the Norman archaeological level of the fens has disappeared, through wastage. As for the finds from Stuntney, no doubt there were many campaigns for the possession of the island, other than the one in 1071 which we are considering. There is in fact no literary evidence for the existence of causeways at Stuntney and Earith prior to 1150.

The next point he makes is in connection with the length of the causeway, given as only four furlongs in the *Gesta*; the shortest route for the passage of the fens at Aldreth would have been two miles. But we have seen already how wildly inaccurate were the Ely chroniclers in their estimates of linear dimensions; the same degree of inaccuracy is to be found in many passages in Domesday, and in early estimates of road distances (cf. *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England*; the papers of F. M. Stenton, edited by D. M. Stenton, Oxford, 1970, p. 243: 'the distances set down upon the map are nearly always less than the measured mileage between the same points').

but here and there one encounters statements on matters other than topography that carry conviction as to their historical content. We shall have occasion to return to some of these later in our review.

Meanwhile, we must return to Peterborough to take stock of a work known as the *Gesta Herewardi*, the surviving form of which is entered into the thirteenth-century Register of Robert of Swaffham, a manuscript preserved until recently in the Peterborough chapter library, but now, I believe, transferred to the University Library at Cambridge.[1] We have noted already that this was written *c.* 1109–31 by Richard, a monk of Ely. Of its thirty-six chapters five (cc. 21–5) deal with 'things we happened to hear from our own people (i.e. the inhabitants of the island of Ely), with whom he (i.e. Hereward) was intimate', and these are paralleled closely by chapters 104–7 of book II of the *Liber Eliensis*, discussed above. The remainder comprises a translation of extracts from 'a few scattered leaves, partly rotten by damp, and decayed, and partly damaged by tearing', which formed part of a larger book concerning 'the acts of giants and noble warriors', written in the vernacular, allegedly by Leofric the Deacon, who is said to have been Hereward's priest at Bourne (Lincs).

If we can accept this derivation, the cultivation of saga by the native peasantry and freemen of Lincolnshire continued into the early years of the twelfth century, and Hereward's exploits, real and imaginary, figured largely among the tales that were told in the mead hall. The *Gesta* would indeed repay a literary investigation by those interested in the influence of the Anglo-Saxon epic on the development of the Anglo-Norman romance.

The historical content of this material is much lower than that derived from the recollections of the Ely inhabitants, but we are probably safe in accepting the tradition that one of Hereward's motives in going to Ely resulted from a rumour that the Conqueror intended to replace Thurstan, the English abbot, by a Norman (c. 21), and that when the Conqueror was discussing peace terms with Thurstan, he threatened to establish his knights on the Ely possessions outside the island (c. 26). We shall find confirmation elsewhere that Hereward's later activities were centred partly on *Bruneswald* (c. 22), and attention might also be drawn here to the prominence given in this chapter of the *Gesta* to one Thurkil whom it names as a companion of Hereward, and whose career remains to be considered.

A later Peterborough manuscript, the Chronicle of Abbot John,[2] reproduces much

[1] The edition from which I have worked is that of S. H. Miller, *De Gestis Herewardi Saxonis*, with a translation by the Rev. W. D. Sweeting, published at Peterborough in 1895. It is usually to be found bound up with *Fenland Notes and Queries*, vol. III (1895–7). For other editions, see *Liber Eliensis*, p. xxxiv n. 11.

[2] Edited by Joseph Sparke in *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores Varii* (1727), and by J. A. Giles for the Caxton Society (1845). The MS is described by W. T. Mellows in *Henry of Pytchley's Book of Fees* (Northants. Record Soc. II, 1927, xxv–xxvii).

of the material in the *Gesta Herewardi*, and twice refers to Hereward *le Wake*, the name by which Hereward is known to a larger public, through its adoption by Kingsley for the title of his novel. It is of course quite unhistorical, being derived from the same local tradition as that underlying the spurious pedigree in the pseudo-Ingulf, in which Hereward appears in the family tree of the Wake lords of Bourne.[1] The fact is that Hereward's family connections are entirely unknown.[2]

The pseudo-Ingulf comes from Crowland, another fenland monastery, whose history is closely linked with that of Peterborough. The further development of this legendary pedigree can be studied in B.M. Cotton Charter xiii, 9. Entitled 'Role de la Genealogie des seigneurs de Brunne et de Deping', this gives the alleged descent of the family and peerage of Wake from Leofric, Earl of Chester and Hereward the Wake, to Edmund Holland, Earl of Kent in 1407; much of the legendary history of Hereward is recited, and the claim is made that he and his wife were buried at Crowland.[3]

Orderic Vitalis the Anglo-Norman chronicler stayed at Crowland in 1115, and his account of Hereward is therefore probably based on local tradition, but it is valueless, as are those of William of Poitiers and Florence of Worcester. The version by Gaimar (ll. 5457–5704) was written *c.* 1140, while the author was in all probability resident in Lincolnshire,[4] and betrays considerable knowledge of Hereward's mythology; it includes a few historical details, such as that of his activities in the forest of *Bruneswald* (l. 5548). We have now reviewed all the major sources for the history of Hereward's landed interests and his activities at Peterborough and Ely. Before attempting a reassessment of his historical significance, a pause must be made to take a look at the biography of one of his companions.

VI. TURKIL OF HARRINGWORTH[5]

A well-known passage in the *Gesta* describes the outlaws feasting with the monks at Ely, some time after the departure from the island of the Danes from Northumbria. At the high table the abbot was flanked by Hereward on his right and by one Turkil on his left.[6] Turkil *Cild*, evidently the same person, appears again earlier in the same

[1] *Ingulf and the Historia Croylandensis*, by W. G. Searle (Camb. Antiq. Soc. 1894), pp. 93–104.

[2] J. H. Round, *Feudal England*, pp. 159–66.

[3] It will be noted what a very respectable image Hereward had developed at the hands of the medieval chroniclers. From a landless outlaw of small beginnings and unknown parentage, he had risen to a place of honour in the pedigree of the highest in the land.

[4] A. Bell, *op. cit.* p. lii.

[5] For the whole of this section see C. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (Leicester, 1966), pp. 236–8.

[6] *Gesta Herewardi*, c. 22; *Liber Eliensis* II, c. 105.

chapter in a short list of the leaders of the revolt; here his name is coupled with that of Ordgar, who is presumably to be identified with the Cambridgeshire sheriff of this name.[1] These *illustres viri* are given the title of *proceres* in the Ely account, which separates them from the three *nobiliores patrie* of the northern Danelaw who make up the rest of the list. A *procer* was a thegn of substance, owner of at least 40 hides of land, and his rank is not encountered north of the River Welland.

There can be little doubt that this man is to be identified with Turkil of Harringworth, a large landowner in the eastern Danelaw, who according to an entry in the Red Book of Thorney left his lands after the Norman Conquest, and went over to 'the Danes who were his kinsmen'[2] – surely a reference to the local events of 1070–1.

Substantial biographical material survives for Turkil, who was entrusted by King Cnut, late in his reign, with the important task of apportioning the fenland west and south of Whittlesey Mere between Sawtry and the neighbouring villages.[3] A third of the vill of Sawtry, comprising an estate of 10 hides, belonged to his wife Thorgunnr, who left it by will to Ramsey Abbey just before the Norman Conquest, being then 'very old and sick of body'.[4] Turkil leased from Thorney Abbey a 6-hide estate in the neighbouring vill of Conington;[5] the remaining 3 hides, which he held as freehold, were also destined for Thorney, and he and his wife figure prominently in the early list of those admitted to the abbey's confraternity[6] – a privilege preserved for those who had made substantial gifts for the maintenance of the monks.

Turkil's remaining Huntingdonshire property was a 15-hide estate at Leighton Bromswold.[7] From here the great forest of Bruneswald stretched westwards into Northamptonshire,[8] being hunted by the king from his royal manor of Brampton.

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[1] DB I, ff. 197, 199.

[2] Dugdale, *Monasticon* II, 604. Turkil's name is of Scandinavian origin, as is that of his wife Thorgunnr. In the Leighton Bromswold entry in DB he is referred to as Turkil the Dane, a title repeated in the foundation charter of Sawtry Abbey (see below).

[3] *Cartularium Rameseiensis*, R.S., I, 163–4.

[4] *Chronicon Abbatiae Rameseiensis*, R.S., pp. 75–6, 199. After his wife's death, Turkil went to Ramsey and confirmed her bequest, offering the gift upon the high altar there in the presence of many witnesses. Subsequently the estate was leased back to Turkil by the abbey (DB, fo. 206*b*; *VCH Hunts* I, 351*a*). Early in the following century the land was used for the foundation endowment of Sawtry Abbey, a dependency of Ramsey.

[5] Dugdale, II, 604; Hart, *Early Charters of Eastern England*, pp. 38–9.

[6] D. Whitelock, 'Scandinavian Personal Names in the Liber Vitae of Thorney Abbey', in *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, XII (1937–45), 127–53.

[7] DB I, fo. 203*b*: *VCH Hunts*, p. 341*b*.

[8] F. M. Stenton in *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd edn, 1947), pp. 281–2. In c. 19 of the *Gesta Herewardi*, Bruneswald is wrongly located 'juxta Brunne', i.e. Bourne, Lincs, due no doubt to the etymological similarity between the two names. However, in c. 27 of the same source it is referred to as being part of the great woods of Northamptonshire.

It is no mere coincidence that both Brampton and Bruneswald figure in the *Gesta*,[1] for the outlaws taking refuge in Bruneswald were no doubt sustained from Turkil's estate.

Besides these large Huntingdonshire properties, Turkil owned several Northamptonshire holdings, including 5 hides at Harringworth, the place from which he took his name,[2] 6 hides at Fotheringay,[3] 5 hides at Lilford, 1 virgate at East Farndon, and 2 hides (unidentified) lying in Stoke hundred.[4] It seems probable that he is also the Turkil who held numerous estates, amounting in all to over 14 carucates, in Hereward's own territory – the wapentakes of Aveland, Ness, Beltisloe, Haverstoe and Kirton in the Kesteven division of Lincolnshire, including 6 bovates in Bourne itself.[5] If this identification is correct, Hereward and Turkil were neighbouring landowners – Turkil being incomparably the richer of the two.

Turning our attention to Cambridgeshire, we find references in Domesday to a thegn named Tochi who had held of the Confessor 2 hides in Carlton, 3 virgates in West Wratting, a hide at West Wickham, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ hides at Kennet; in addition he held by lease two Ely properties, 7 hides at Weston Colville and $4\frac{1}{2}$ hides at Trumpington.[6] In the Domesday account of the Kennet property he appears as Tochil, and in the description of the Trumpington estate in the *Inquisitio Comitatu Cantabrigiensis* he is named Tochill,[7] the version in the *Inquisitio Eliensis* gives the variants Thorkill, Torchil and Thurchil,[8] so we may reasonably suppose DB Tochi to be an abbreviated spelling of the Scandinavian personal name Turkil.

This same thegn held Castle Acre, West Walton and numerous other estates in north and west Norfolk.[9] All of these Cambridgeshire and Norfolk properties descended after the Norman Conquest to Frederick, the brother-in-law of William de Warenne,[10] whom Hereward killed, according to a passage in the *Gesta*.[11] We cannot

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[1] For Bruneswald, see *Gesta Herewardi*, cc. 19, 27, 32. 'Brandune' in *Gesta*, c. 24, and in *Liber Eliensis*, II, c. 104, is probably to be identified with Brampton, Hunts, rather than Brandon, Suffolk. By using Brampton as a base for his attack upon Ely, the Conqueror placed himself between the outlaws and their forest retreat.

[2] He is given this name in late copies of two contemporary records, *Chron. Rams.* pp. 75–6 and Dugdale, II, 604 (where the place is misspelt). For the Harringworth entry, see DB I, fo. 228*a*; *VCH Northants* I, 350*b*.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 107.

[4] DB I, fos. 229*a*, 228*b*, 225*b*; *VCH Northants* I, 354*a*, 352*ab*, 336*a*.

[5] *The Lincolnshire Domesday*, trans. C. W. Foster and Thos. Longley, Lincoln Record Soc. XIX (1924): entries 2/32, 33; 12/90; 26/40, 41, 42; 27/40, 51, 52, 53; 72/34.

[6] DB I, fos. 196*ab*; *VCH Cambs* I, 380–1.

[7] *Inquisitio Comitatus Cantabrigiensis*, ed. N. E. S. A. Hamilton (London, 1876), p. 50.

[8] *Ibid.* p. 107.

[9] *VCH Norfolk* II, 83.

[10] *VCH Cambs* I, p. 355.

[11] *Gesta Herewardi*, c. 17.

refrain from suggesting that the pre-Conquest holder of these far-flung estates was none other than Turkil of Harringworth, and that Hereward's slaying of Frederick was in retribution for the sequestration of Turkil's estates.

The Thorney entry from which we have already quoted states that Turkil's lands were forfeited to the king and given to Earl Waltheof, a statement borne out, for his Huntingdonshire and Northamptonshire properties, by Domesday Book. It is significant that in 1070 Earl Waltheof, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 'made peace with the king'. His earldom included Huntingdonshire, and it may be surmised that some of his large holdings in that county and in Northamptonshire, recorded in Domesday in the name of his widow, the Countess Judith, were the sequestered estates of such local supporters of Hereward as Turkil, granted to Earl Waltheof by the Conqueror in return for his services in helping to suppress the revolt.

VII. HEREWARD'S PLACE IN HISTORY

When the Conqueror was making his appointment to the vacant abbey of Peterborough, he is said to have remarked that since Turold behaved more like a soldier than a monk, he would provide him with somebody to fight.[1] He provided him also with any army; an abbot did not normally present himself at his new monastery with a retinue of 160 knights. Their purpose, however, was not solely to effect the installation of an unpopular abbot, for a passage in Hugh Candidus (which deserves better attention than it has hitherto received) reveals that no sooner had Turold taken up the reins of office, than he settled sixty of his knights on the abbey lands, displacing their English predecessors.[2] The *Descriptio militum de Abbatia de Burgo*[3] in the Black Book of Peterborough preserves for us the very names of many of Turold's retainers.

It is still not generally appreciated that this imposition of knight service upon the lands of Peterborough Abbey was the very first step in the process which was to transform the face of England, impressing upon it the stamp of Norman feudalism. Nor was the Conqueror's choice of Peterborough as the site for the introduction of this famous constitutional development due to mere chance; it was provoked by the support given throughout the Danelaw to the northern uprising which followed Swein's arrival at the mouth of the Humber, and the revolutionary nature of William's reprisal is a measure of the peril with which he was faced. As soon as the opportunity permitted, he extended the process to the lands of Ely and of Bury St Edmunds. Not for nothing did these three abbeys carry an imposition of knight service almost

[1] William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Pontificum*, R.S., p. 420.
[2] Hugh Candidus, pp. 84–5.
[3] Round, *Feudal England*, pp. 157–68.

equalling the demands made on all the rest of the English abbeys put together. By settling their lands with Norman knights, he separated by a loyal and locally established military force the eastern from the northern Danelaw.

Seen in this context, the revolt of Hereward and his companions takes on a new light. They stood to lose everything by William's move. Hereward's total holding was made up of leasehold properties of the abbeys of Peterborough and Crowland, and many of his local followers must have been similarly placed. Even the larger landowners stood to lose much of their possessions, for most of them farmed portions of the huge landed endowments of the fenland abbeys; Turkil, for example, held much of his property by lease from Ramsey, Ely and Thorney.

The sacking of Peterborough which heralded this revolt was no wanton act of vandalism. The church itself was specifically spared from destruction;[1] its stolen treasures, far from being distributed among the outlaws, were laid up first at Ely and then in a church in Denmark; none of the monks was harmed, and eventually Hereward himself ordered the return of those who had been transported as hostages to Ely. Hereward's quarrel was not with the monks of the pre-Conquest foundation, who had been his landlords, but with the Norman usurpers of the abbey estates.

[1] There is no evidence to support Dom David Knowles's assertion (*The Monastic Order in England*, p. 105) that Peterborough Abbey was burnt by Hereward; services were resumed there within a few days of Turold's arrival.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

VOLUME LXV

JANUARY 1973 TO DECEMBER 1974

Price £2 net for members, £3 for non-members

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