

# The Early History of Horne : an Addendum

by JOHN BLAIR

In the last *Collections*<sup>1</sup> I discussed evidence for the origins of this Wealden parish which may be summarised as follows: Horne was probably a member of Chivington manor, and may be represented in Domesday Book by the half-hide which 'Roger' held there as a sub-tenant of Richard de Clare; it next appears in the mid 12th century when Peter de Tolworth, a substantial Clare tenant, released Horne church to Lewes Priory together with the adjacent Church Farm. An article in the same issue by the late C A F Meekings contained a crucial fact, previously unknown to me, which goes a long way to confirming this interpretation and is thus of some general significance for the history of settlement in the Surrey Weald.

Early in the 12th century, Ingram d'Abernon granted to Gilbert de Clare's alien priory of Stoke-by-Clare a tithe-portion at 'la Bysse'.<sup>2</sup> This name (Old English *bysc*, 'bush', 'thicket' and thus suggestive of an assart settlement) is not particularly common, and the most likely identification is with Bysshe Court in Horne, which appears in early forms as 'la Bisse' or 'la Bysse'.<sup>3</sup> How, then, did Ingram d'Abernon acquire property in Horne? The obvious answer is that the otherwise unidentified 'Roger' who held of Chivington manor in 1086 was identical with Ingram's predecessor Roger d'Abernon, Domesday tenant of other Clare manors at Molesey and Albury, and that his half-hide is indeed to be identified with land in Horne. This in turn strengthens the conclusion that Chivington and Horne made up a single large strip-like estate, separated from Blechingley and Burstow by a long north-south boundary.

However we interpret the chronology of Wealden settlement, it is clear that Domesday Horne was relatively under-exploited: with its single demesne plough and five bordars, Roger's half-hide had only a small fraction of the population and resources attributed to the main manor of Chivington, though the two components seem to have been roughly equal in area. It has been argued that a solitary population of bordars sometimes indicates a recent and expanding assart settlement,<sup>4</sup> and the early 12th century reference to titheable land at 'la Bysse' suggests one centre for such expansion. Thus there is evidence for two settlement nuclei in the parish: one at the church and Church Farm (though the latter may have been a priest's house rather than a secular homestead), the other at Bysshe Court.

Early tenurial developments remain vague. The de Tolworths evidently enjoyed a general lordship over Horne by the third quarter of the 12th century, while a Robert de Tolworth's presence as witness to Gilbert de Clare's grant of Blechingley church to Lewes Priory in 1138-52 may take the connection back a little further.<sup>5</sup> But in the late 12th and 13th centuries a family of de la Bisse was prominent locally, and it is very suggestive that in *c* 1150-75 it was necessary for one John de la Bisse to ratify Peter de Tolworth's release of Horne church and to release his own right in the Church Farm property.<sup>6</sup> This suggests that Horne had been sub-infeudated at some relatively early date to this locally-based family via the mesne lordship of the d'Abernons or the de Tolworths. Thus its development followed a parallel course to that of nearby Burstow, though probably lagging some decades behind it.<sup>7</sup> Through such scattered fragments of evidence we may begin to glimpse the dynamics of Wealden settlement.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Blair, J, The Surrey endowments of Lewes Priory before 1200, *SyAC*, 72 (1980), 106-11
2. Meekings, C A F, Notes on the de Abernon family before 1236, *SyAC*, 72 (1980), 158 (quoting cartulary of Stoke-by-Clare Priory, Brit Lib MS Cotton App XI, No 143)
3. Gover, J E B, Mawer, A & Stenton, F M, *The place-names of Surrey*, 1934, 322
4. Harvey, S P J, in *Medieval Settlement*, ed P H Sawyer, 1976, 197-9
5. *SyAC*, 72 (1980), 109, 117
6. *Ibid*, 118; cf *ibid*, 109. At the end of the 12th century William de la Bisse confirmed land, probably in Horne, which had been held of his father (Brit Lib Add Ch 7598)
7. *SyAC*, 72 (1980), 100. Burstow, farmed at £8 in the late 1080s, must have been considerably more valuable than Horne at the same date