

ON CERTAIN OBSCURE WORDS IN CHARTERS, RENTALS, ACCOUNTS, &c., OF PROPERTY IN THE WEST OF ENGLAND.—(Continued.)

BERBIAGIUM ; BARBAGE.—Blount, in his *Fragmenta Antiquitatis*, mentions, under villenage tenure, the berbiage rent paid by the serfs of Clymesland and Calstock in Cornwall. The following are the extracts contained in his notes :

“ A. B. nativus de stipite quondam tenuit unum messuagium cum pertinentiis in Clymeslond. . . et respondet inde per annum ad quatuor terminos. 2^s. 4^d ; et berbiagii ad fest. Apost. Phil. et Jacob. 16^d. &c.

“ Nativi tenentes de Calistoke reddunt per annum de certo reddito vocato berbiagium ad le Hokeday.”

His authority is an ancient survey of the duchy. The word also occurs in his *Glossary*, as well as in Cowel's *Interpreter*, voc. Berbicage.—“ Why this rent was called berbiagium,” says Blount, “ I am to seek.—For the meaning you must consult some learned Cornish man.”

As neither Cowel nor Blount had the advantage of the labours of Ducange, their inability to explain the word is not inexcusable. Later annotators on Blount have obtained from that author some obscure conception that it had something to do (as it certainly had) with *brebis* or sheep. The word is noticed by Ducange, who cites several examples of its use in French documents ; but he does not seem to have been aware of its use in this country, and the instances which he gives look, at first sight, rather like a tax than a regular, annual, rent, such as it was in Devon and Cornwall. The best explanation of its meaning will be afforded by extracts from the records which throw light upon it, in connexion with other documentary notices which seem to throw back the proof of its existence *in fact* to a period long before it occurs *in name*.

The Domesday survey shews that customary payments in sheep and cattle were received from tenants of different manors in Cornwall and Devon. Under St. Petrock is a list of lands alleged to be usurped from that priory. Five out of the seven parcels of land rendered, or had before the Conquest rendered, either oxen or sheep, as well as money. The following are instances ; “ In Trefornoc dimid. hida terræ. Reddebat 12

oves et 15 denarios. In Talcarn dimid. hida terræ. Reddebat unum bovem," &c.^a

In the succeeding century we have a charter of Walter de Clavile granting to the priory of Canons Leigh, among other things, "decimam reddituum meorum in gablis, et in redditu molendinorum, et in redditu ovium de Hockeday^b." (Oliver's *Monasticon Exon.*, p. 227. Num. II.)

In the Extent of the lands of De la Pomeray, in the Testa de Nevill, f. 186, the "nativi operarii" (i.e. the customary tenants owing agricultural and other labour to their lord) are stated to render yearly at Hockeday 4 sheep or 2*s*. In the same record, among the free tenants of the bishopric of Exeter (*libere tenentes de episcopatu*) assessed to the aid levied by Henry III. on the marriage of his sister, we find a long list of tenants rendering to the bishop money rents, sheep, aids, and various agricultural services: thus

"Rogerus clericus [tenet] dim. acram et dim. ferling' pro 15*d*. et dimid. ove et 8^a parte ovis et auxilio, ut alii." (f. 203.)

"Will. Travail un. acram et ferling' pro 2*s*. 6*d*. et un. ove et quarta parte unius ovis, et arurâ et seurâ et auxilio, ut alii." (Ib.)

The above, which are only two out of a long series of similar entries, furnish examples of fractional sheep rendered by the bishop's tenants. Another and later rental of the see, to be noticed presently, exhibits the same feature.

One of the first occasions on which I have met with the word *berbiage* is in the *Inquisitio post mortem* of Earl Edmund, taken in 29 Edw. I.^c It is there named under several manors; thus, under Liskerreth (Liskeard), we have, among other rents of the conventional and villan tenants, "De berbiagio eorundem" (i. e. *conventionariorum*) "et villanorum, ad Pascham, 13^s. 5^d."

Under Tibesta, in another part of Cornwall, the *libere tenentes*, or freeholders, are said to render "de berbiagio ad eundem terminum S^{ti}. Michaelis, 5^s. 11^d." The same payment is made in Clymesland. In these three manors, and in that of Calstock, the berbiage rents continued to be payable by certain tenants down to a very recent period.

^a Vol. i. f. 121. The Exon Domesday shews the rent to be annual.

^b Dugdale, who gives an *inseximus* charter of the Clavile grant, has misread or misprinted the word "ovium," and substituted "dominii." Dr. Oliver has restored

the true reading.

^c It will, probably, be found in some of the ministers' accounts in the time of the earl himself, of which there is a remarkably fine roll of the date of 25 Edw. I. among the records of the exchequer.

Although the above extracts are enough, perhaps, to make it probable that the berbiage and the sheep rents are identical, a decisive proof of their identity is supplied by a rental of the see of Exeter, A.D. 1308, printed in Dr. Oliver's *Monasticon*, (pp. 427—430.) From the manors in Devon and Cornwall I have selected the following notices :

“Criditon. De berbiagio ad terminum de la Hockeday uno anno 26 oves matrices, et alio anno 12 oves matrices et 5 hoggs.”

“Summa totius berbiagii in Devon 189 oves matrices et 17 hoggs uno anno, et alio anno 184 oves et 22 hoggs, et solvuntur a la Hockeday.”

In Cornwall the bishop's berbiage was paid at “Calemay,” that is, the feast of St. Philip and James, instead of Hockeday. e. g. :

“Polton. . . . Sunt ibidem ad Calemay 206 oves matrices de berbiagio præter defectum et acquietantiam, et 14 hoggs et dimidium, et 20 agni.”

“Lawytton. . . . Item de berbiagio 69 oves et di. ped.”

“S. Germanus De berbiagio 71 oves 3 ped.”

“Tregaer Berbiagium 38 oves matrices, 3 ped. ovium, et 1 agnus.”

“Kaergaul. . . . De berbiagio, 4 oves 1 hogastr.”

The render of aliquot parts of sheep may appear paradoxical, and the reader may feel curious to know how Roger the clerk, mentioned in the *Testa*, contrived to deliver to the bishop of Exeter the half and one eighth of a sheep? or how the tenants of Polton and Lawitton managed to drive into his pastures the flock of 206 ewes, 14 yearlings and a half, or of 69 sheep and one moiety of a “pet” lamb? If indeed the berbiage was rendered in the form of *meat*, cadit quæstio; but I apprehend that the delivery of so large a supply of a perishable article on a single day in each year would have overstocked even an episcopal larder of the 12th or 13th century; nor does the language of the record admit of that construction. A lawyer is, indeed, less startled at the difficulty than a layman is likely to be; for he knows well that our ancestors were often called upon to render the service due “pro tertia parte unius militis,” and he has read in our law reports the case of the West India planter who recovered a verdict in an action of “trover for 10 negroes and a half^d.” At all events the form of reservation was not new in 1308; for we find, about 400 years before, in the

^d See 3 Keble's Rep., p. 785.

Polypticon Fossatense, published by Baluzius^e, that some of the tenants of that monastery "solvunt mense maio verveces $9\frac{1}{2}$ cum agnis." In truth, the problem may be solved in various ways without resorting to the knife: thus a sheep of a certain age or condition may have been conventionally estimated at some multiple of another of a different age or state; and this actually happened with the ceorles of Hurstborne, who, as early as the 10th century, rendered, among other customary dues, ewes and lambs to their lord at Easter, and reckoned a young sheep at the half of an old one^f; or four persons, each liable to $\frac{1}{4}$ of a sheep, might unite in delivering one whole sheep; and thus it was that the Geburi before the Conquest may be said to have supplied, each of them, the keep of half a dog^g. Or, lastly, the value of the fractional animal may have been paid in monies numbered; for the practice of fixing an alternative of money in lieu of a rent in kind has universally prevailed from the earliest times^h.

With regard to the nature of this rent, a very early question arose whether it was a *real* or a *personal* charge: i. e., whether the custom attached to the land or to the status personæ.

In an assession or arrentation roll of the lands of the earldom of Cornwall, anno 7 Edw. III. the following entry occurs under Calstock manor. "Mem. quod tenentes supradicti non onerantur de berbiagio quia berbiagium unâ summâ continetur in extentâ¹. Levantur (*sic*) de aliquibus natis ratione personæ et non ratione tenementi." Yet I find the berbiage rent subsequently paid by several free as well as native tenants.

In a register of the Black prince's letters &c. extending over the years intervening between 25 & 39 Edward III., there is a mandate to enquire whether berbiage is due "ratione sanguinis," or "ratione terræ;" but no return to it is there recorded. It is evident indeed that the prince's officers 500 years ago knew as little as (it may be less than) we know about the nature of the rent; and as they were removed, perhaps, by a like interval of 500 years from the date of its origi-

^e 2 Capitularia Reg. Franc., f. 1390.

^f "We talað two geong sceap to eald sceapan."—Kemble, Dip. Anglo Sax., vol. v. p. 147.

^g "Duo et duo pascant unum molosum." Rectitudines singularum personarum, in Thorpe's Ancient Laws of England, vol. i. p. 435.

^h The Gebur in the Rectitudines (*ubi supra*) "Dare debet ad pascham I ovem juve-

nem vel 2. denarios." For the learning on sheep, and their treatment, under the various names of oves, multones, castores, agni et hogastri, the reader must consult that learned lawyer and practical farmer, the author of Fleta, lib. ii. c. 79.

¹ This refers to an old extent or survey, possibly that of the Queen Isabella, which is also extant among the Augmentation Records.

nal establishment, this ignorance is not surprising. We have seen that the freehold tenants of the bishop of Exeter owed sheep rents as well as other agricultural services and dues in the time of Henry III., and, with respect to the duchy manors, it is certain that the berbiage or, as they are now called, *barbage* rents, have been paid by *free*, as well as by *freehold*, tenants, as far back as any record of their payment can be traced. It is remarkable that, as we are able to trace back the payment of sheep rents in money or kind to a period of nearly 200 years before they are noticed in the Domesday survey, so we can bring down the immemorial payment of *barbage* money to the present day. The commissioners, who sat under an act passed in 1844, (7 and 8 Vict. c. 105.) commuted and merged it, with other dues, in one entire rent-charge, payable out of each of the different tenements subject to it^k.

There is, of course, no ground for supposing that a rent payable in, or in respect of, sheep, is locally confined to Devon and Cornwall, although the Norman designation of it has not been noticed in the records of other English counties. The Welsh rentals contain like payments. Thus in an extent of the possessions of the See of St. David's, A.D. 1326, (Fenton's Pembrokeshire, App. p. 38,) the jurors say, "Quod omnes (tenentes) prædicti dabunt collectam ovium quolibet 3^{tio} anno in Kal. Maii;" and in another entry in the same work, (p. 4,) we find a "collectio de tenentibus, vid. t. de quâlibet carucatâ terræ Anglicanâ unum bidentem pretii 12^d, vel in pecuniâ 12^d. . . . solvenda ad fest. S. Mich."^l I have little doubt that an equivalent rent under some name or other will be easily detected in other counties.

BLESTARIA—In a deed of the 12th century, executed by Odo Fitzwalter, lord of Treverbin, in favour of the monks of Tywardreath, mention is made of *blestariæ* in the lands granted or reserved. We there find a "*blestaria ad molendinum pertinens*;" also an exception of *blestariæ* and pasture in Rostadec (probably Roscradoc.) Over other land rights of common are granted, with the exclusion of certain meadows, from the 1st of April to the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, and of *blestarias* from the same day to the feast of St. Peter ad Vin-

^k Their award finds that the tenants then paid *Auxiliary, Barbage, Head Silver*, and some other dues of which the meaning had long perished. They were no other than the *auxilia, berbiagium, and capitagium* of

the early rentals.

^l This triennial *collectio* or *cymmorth* is the exact counterpart of the "*tributum ex ovibus*" mentioned by Ducange, voc. *Berbiagium*.

cula, during which time they are to be "in defenso," that is, the common rights are to be suspended. With regard to the moor of Penhalward, in which rights of common are also granted, the donor gives up his right "in dictâ morâ pratum vel blestariam facere in posterum." (Monasticon Dioc. Exon., p. 42, 43.) In another grant, apparently of the 12th century, to the alien priory of Talcarn in Cornwall, the donor conveys certain lands in the northern part of the county, with the addition of "pannagium de bosco, &c., et communem pascuam, &c., et omnia necessaria ad ignem suum de blastario meo ubicunque voluerint." (*Ib.*, p. 64.)

Some local knowledge enables me to say with confidence that in the vicinity of all the lands specified in the above instruments, there must still be tracts of peat and turbary ground, supplying a fuel much employed on and near the moors in Cornwall. The last charter plainly points out this meaning of the word "blestaria;" and the first is quite consistent with it.

It is singular that the word is not in the Glossaries; but the word *blesta* or *blestia*, from which it is formed, is found both in Spelman and Ducange. Spelman assigns to it exactly the sense which it seems to bear in the above charters, and Ducange makes it synonymous with "gleba." "Bleta" is also another form; in which it is used in company with turbary by the brethren of St. Robert of Knaresborough in a petition to the king in parliament, 35 Edward I.^m

I have not fallen in with the word in a Devonshire charter; though I should expect to find it in deeds relating to the Dartmoor district, where there is peat in abundance. It is indeed inserted in a charter professing to grant Gidley manor, which was dignified by an *inspeximus* or *innotescimus* under the great seal of Henry VIII., and still figures among the muniments of a gentleman whose title is certainly too sound to require the support, or even to be damaged by the aid, of so clumsy a fiction". The instrument is set forth in the MS. copies of Westcote's Devonshire, and is referred to by Risdon.

^m "Foderunt turvas et bletas in forestâ." 1 Rot. Parl. 200. The passage is cited by Cowel. Cotgrave also has the word.

ⁿ Perhaps I underrate the merits of the document; for it is said to have been recently produced with great success on a question of boundary before the Tithe Com-

mission. The main difficulties in it are that one Martin, duke of Cornwall and earl of Mortain, who never existed, is therein made to grant to one Egidius de Gidley a variety of lands, some of which are wholly imaginary, and none of which any duke of Cornwall ever had to give.

The compiler of the charter seems to have selected his discordant materials from genuine charters of various and very distant dates, and it is therefore not impossible that he found the words "cum stagnis, turbariis, *blistariis*," &c., in an authentic instrument. The word used for this purpose in such genuine records as I have seen, connected with Dartmoor, is the common one "turbaria."—"Glebaria" is employed in the same sense in some Welsh charters.

From the word *blestaria*, or *blesta*, such local names as Blisland, Bliston, and Tewan Blusty^o, appear to be derived.

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BERKSHIRE ANTIQUITIES.

IN the course of the present year, and also two years ago, some barrows were opened in the neighbourhood of Ilsley Downs, in this county; and as a record of such proceedings is always of a certain value to antiquarians, both as a guide in future researches, and to prevent useless trouble in making them, it may not be unacceptable to the readers of the Journal, to be presented with a few particulars of what occurred.

The tumuli in question are situated in the parish of Blewbury, upon the estate of John S. Phillips, Esq., who had kindly given permission for them to be examined. There had formerly been many of these, of large dimensions, on the hill above the village; but in the progress of cultivation, the plough has passed over most of them, and two, if not more, have been completely dug down and levelled, so that hardly a trace of their site remains. One, however, of the largest and most conspicuous, called Churn Knob^a, still maintains its position, partly in consequence of having been planted with fir trees about 40 years since, and forms a land-mark for many miles round, especially in coming towards Blewbury along the bottom from Kate's Gore, on which side it is seen to much advantage. Close by, and almost attached to this, is a smaller and lower barrow, now ploughed, which seemed to have been

^o Tewan or Towan Blusty seems to be the old name of Newquay on the north coast, or of some place near it. See Monasticon Dioc. Exon. p. 54.

^a A term applied also to Cuckamsley, both being a sort of knob or excrescence on the brow of the hills on which they respectively stand.