

THE SAXON HUNDREDS OF SUSSEX.

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IN an endeavour to prove that the Rapes of Sussex were of pre-conquest origin, Mr. Joliffe (*E. H. R.*, July, 1930) set out to show also that the Hundred in Sussex consisted of eighty Hides. The Hon. Editor had already suggested that this was so, and in his reply to Mr. Joliffe (*S.A.C.*, Vol. LXXII) he mentioned several groups of Hundreds, under the Norman divisions but with the Saxon Hidage of the Domesday Survey, which formed multiples of eighty. With his advice and encouragement I have tried to follow up this grouping, and I have been led to certain tentative conclusions upon the character of the Hundred.

Owing to the probable inaccuracies of the Survey for the pre-conquest period all work on Domesday Book to rediscover the face of England before 1066 must necessarily be speculative. My work has been not merely speculative but arithmetical, but it was necessary to arrive at some definite hidation for each manor. This assessment has been mainly empirical though usually I have relegated to their legal and not their territorial homes those manors which "lay in" others. Also for the Rape of Hastings I have used the eight-virgate hide. My figures agree tolerably well with those put forward by the Hon. Editor, but I have been unable to probe the principles of Mr. Joliffe's arithmetic; for West Sussex our totals differ by as much as eighty hides; among our differences I find that he has omitted the small Hundred of Westringes. I have consciously laid my theory open to another charge of inaccuracy because I have used as a subsidiary

measuring rod the acreage of meadow allotted to each manor. But the use is only subsidiary. It is likely that the incidental mention of meadowland would be more open to errors of omission and commission than the ordinary hidation, as it was not important and was difficult to measure, but I believe that the distribution gives the order of magnitude in each area. On this assumption great contrasts of distribution are shown between neighbouring areas, betraying perhaps a contrast of interests. These contrasts bear out the geographical contrasts of the county and I have found that groups of Norman Hundreds under the assessment T.R.E. can be formed, each group covering a homogeneous geographical area, being almost exact multiples of eighty. Further, I have attempted to divide these groups into subsidiary groups of eighty hides each, every group covering an area of definite geographical homogeneity whose acreage of meadow diverges from the general average for that half of the county. These groups are equal only in hidage, no comparison of general acreage can be made.

I have separated West and East Sussex at the River Adur because if they were separated the line of division would be there. That such a separation did exist is made to seem more probable by the great difference of the average acreage of meadow per eighty-hide unit on each side of the river. It is, moreover, convenient to explain the general details of reconstruction in two parts, though even so it is impossible here to enter into all the considerations which led to the particular divisions I have made, so that any notes must be for explanation rather than for justification.

TABLE I.—WEST SUSSEX.

Group.	Description.	Domesday Hundreds.	Hides T.R.E.	Suggested 80- hide units.	Acres of meadow.
A.	Western Harbours.	Boseham	121½		i } 68
		Stocbruge	33		
		Westringes	6½		ii }
			—161		

TABLE I.—WEST SUSSEX—*continued.*

Group.	Description.	Domesday Hundreds.	Hides T.R.E.	Suggested 80-hide units.	Acres of meadow.		
B.	Coastal Plain and east of Waltham.	Summerleg	52	Summerleg	52	} i 12	
		Bosgrave	112	Bosgrave	28		
		Pagham	60	Pagham	60	} ii 107	
		Benestede	95½	Bosgrave	5		
		—	319½	Benestede	15		
			Bosgrave	79½	iii 17		
			Benestede	80½	iv 151		
C.	Western Downs	Ghidentroi	105½	Sillentone	80	i 60	
		Sillentone	135½	Ghidentroi	36	} ii 38	
		—	241	Sillentone	45		
					Ghidentroi	69½	} iii 14
			Sillentone	10½			
D.	North of Downs and Rother Valley.	Eseburne	43½	Harting	80	i 30	
		Hamesforde	147	Eseburne	43½	} ii 121	
		Redrebruge	50	Hamesforde	17		
		—	240½	Redrebruge	20		
					Hamesforde	50	} iii 72½
			Redrebruge	30			
E.	Roman Group.	Berie	25	25		47	
F.	Downs and south of Downs Clymping-Findon	Risberg	158	Risberg	81	i 62	
		Moham	3	Moham	3	} ii 78	
		—	161	Risburg	77		
G.	North and south of Downs Findon-Adur.	Staninges	258½	Staninges	81	i 113	
		Iswerit	107	Iswerit	79½	ii 76	
		Grenestede	3½	Staninges	81	iii 4	
		Bradfota	113½	Staninges	48½	} iv 58	
		—	482½	Iswerit	27½		
					Grenestede	3½	} v 122
					Staninges	7½	
					Bradfota	73½	
			Staninges	40½	} vi 27½		
			Bradfota	40			
Total ..			1629½				
Average meadow acreage per 80 hides, 63·8							

Group A.

The two Hundreds here are inseparable.

Group B.

- i. Summerleg Hundred with Mersitone, Rochitone and Henton. This has part of the eastern arm of Pagham Rife for its eastern boundary.
- ii. Pagham Hundred with Stratone, Bernham, Gate and eight nameless hides from Benestede Hundred. This lies between Pagham Rife and part of the Ryebank Rife.
- iii. This includes Aldingbourne and goes north to Duncton Hill with part of Stane Street as the probable eastern boundary.
- iv. The rest of Benestede Hundred with a high acreage of meadow.

Group C.

- i. The manor of Sillestone is assessed at $97\frac{1}{2}$ hides; this might point to a unit of 100 hides but
- ii. the manors of the Lavant Valley with the manor of Bourne have 74 hides,
- iii. and the remaining manors lie entirely to the West of the curve of Bow Hill. Therefore it is very tempting to guess that Sillestone straggled into these two areas by the time of King Edward. However that may be, it is important to notice the well-defined northern boundary along the northern summits of the Downs.

Group D.

- i. After 80 hides have been subtracted for Harting there are two groups:—
- ii. lying mainly along the lines of Eseburne Hundred, forms a group entirely in the valley of the Rother with a very high acreage of meadow.
- iii. another eighty-hide unit from Hamesforde and Redrebruge Hundreds lies along the foot of the Downs.

Group E.

This group provides the greatest difficulty. For convenience I have called it the "Roman Group" since this provides a possible explanation of the mystery. It comprises the known Roman settlements north of the Downs and west of the Arun and includes the two vital crossings of that river. It may represent the segregation of a non-Saxon social order from the society of the South Saxons, an antagonistic community of interest assessed perhaps at a later date than the rest of the County. An explanation on these lines, either as a different society or as a vitally strategic point, seems the most obvious, even though it is not altogether satisfactory.

Group F.

- i. In this unit I have included 22 hides for Clepinges. Of the geographical accuracy of the Survey it is impossible to judge, but if Clepinges really belonged to Benestede Hundred, the error is rather glaring. It is possible that in the low-lying area about the mouth of the river, Clepinges was then more closely in touch with the eastern bank than with the hinterland. It is also possible that if there was a Saxon invasion at the mouth of the Arun the invaders might have settled on both banks at the mouth, as the Normans themselves did at the mouth of the Seine; or the two banks may have been brought deliberately under common government in the interests of defence. The rest of the Hundred extends as far East as Highdown Hill and back to the Downs.

- ii. This is the rest of Risburg and includes all the Downs West of the Findon Gap to the Northern Escarpment including Moham (Iswerit), part of Angemare and Lollinminstre.

Group G.

- i. This is the Manor of Steyning, after the additional hides lying at Garinges and elsewhere have been discounted. It seems clear from the context that these additional hides had been assimilated to the larger Manor.
- ii. This includes all Iswerit except Taceham and Perham, and covers the Arun Valley and the valleys of its eastern tributaries.
- iii. This comprises the three manors of Haningedene, Cumbe and Wasingetune.
- iv. This is the rest of the area North of the Downs from the rising ground East of the Arun valley across to the Adur.
- v. This is South of the Downs and West of the Adur as far as
- vi. which is the Findon gap and a narrow strip to the coast including Hene, Derrentune and Tarringes.

TABLE II. EAST SUSSEX.

Group. Description.	Domesday Hundreds.	Hides T.R.E.	Suggested 80-hide units.	Acres of meadow.	
A. Downs Adur-Ouse.	Burbece	54	Burbece 54	} i 22	
	Eldritune	52 $\frac{3}{4}$	Eldritune 27 $\frac{3}{4}$		
	Presteton	80	Welesmere 33 $\frac{1}{4}$	} ii 41	
	Welesmere	33 $\frac{1}{4}$	Eldritune 25 $\frac{1}{2}$		
	Soaneberge	80 $\frac{1}{2}$	Homestreu 17	} iii 134	
	Falemere	46	Paythorne 4		
	Homestreu	124	Homestreu 28	} iv 99	
	Paythorne	4	Falemere 46		
			—474 $\frac{1}{2}$	Presteton 80	v 209 $\frac{1}{2}$
				Soaneberge 80 $\frac{1}{2}$	vi 140
			Ramelle 79		
B. North of Downs Adur-Ouse.	Botingelle	65	Poynings 62 $\frac{1}{2}$	} i 121	
	Poynings	62 $\frac{1}{2}$	Hamfeld 18 $\frac{1}{2}$		
	Hamfeld	23	Botingelle 65	} ii 167	
	Windham	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	Hamfeld 4 $\frac{1}{2}$		
	Bercheham	44	Windham 8 $\frac{1}{4}$	} iii 161	
	Estrat	117 $\frac{1}{2}$	Estrat 80		
	Grenested	1	Bercheham 44	} iv 202	
			—321 $\frac{1}{4}$		Estrat 37 $\frac{1}{2}$
			Grenested 1		
C. Ouse-Cuckmere	Malling	80	Malling 80	i 195	
	Totnore	158	Totnore 36	} ii 144	
	Edivestone	61 $\frac{1}{2}$	Flexberge 39		
	Wandelmeistre	63	Wandelmeistre 6	} iii 150	
	Flexberge	39	—401 $\frac{1}{2}$		Totnore 57
				Totnore 22 $\frac{1}{2}$	} iv 62
				Totnore 52 $\frac{1}{2}$	
				Edivestone 28	} v 72
				Totnore 48	
				Edivestone 33 $\frac{1}{2}$	

TABLE II.—EAST SUSSEX—*continued*.

Group.	Description.	Domesday Hundreds.	Hides T.R.E.	Suggested 80-hide units.	Acres of meadow.	
D.	Cuckmere-Pevensay Haven and Backwoods.	Willendone	117	Willendone	10½	
		Borne	55	Borne	4	
		Pevensel	23½	Pevensel	23½	
		Avronelle	20	Avronelle	20	
		Latille	1½	Latille	1½	
		Hertevél	3	Hertevél	3	
		Ristone	9	Ristone	9	
		Reredfelle	9	Reredfelle	9	
		—	238	Borne	58	
		—	—	Willendone	20	
		Willendone	79½	iii	92	
E.	Old Haven-R. Brede-R. Rother.	Nerefelle	4½-3		}	201½
		Bexelei	25			
		Baldeslei	36½-6			
		Gestelings	11½			
		—	78½-1			
F.	Pevensay Haven-Waldron Gill-Kent Ditch.	Babinrerode	26½		}	183
		Colespore	6-3			
		Staple	12½-11			
		Hailsaltede	7-5			
		Folsalre	15-2½			
		Hauchsberie	1			
		Shoeswelle	4½			
		Henbert	4½-1			
—	79-6½					
Total	..	1592¾-7½				
		Average meadow acreage per 80 hides	..	118.9		

Group A.

- i. In East Sussex the coastal plain practically disappears, and this is the last unit in which it is at all clearly defined. I have taken the division of Eldritune to correspond with that used at the formation of William de Braiose's Rape.
- ii. This is mainly a Downland unit from Herbertingtes to Thunderbarrow Hill, almost divided by the Hundred of Presteton. The division between Welesmere and Falemere is roughly along Falmer Hill.
- iii. The great acreage of meadow in this unit is almost entirely accounted for by Suesse with 130 acres.
- iv, v, vi. These units need no explanation, each being dominated by one fertile manor with wide meadows.

Group B.

- i. This is the Hundred of Poynings, north of the Downs with those vills lying in the recesses of the Downs, with Hamfeld and Odemanscote.
- ii. This covers the well-watered area of the Adur and its tributaries.

- iii. This includes all Estrat Hundred except Vernnigore, Pluntone and one manor in Childetone.
- iv. This well-meadowed unit lies almost entirely towards the valley of the Ouse.

Group C.

- i. The Archbishop's Peculiar of Malling makes a clear division between the fertile Hundreds of the Glynde area and the Hundreds of the backwoods. Its eastern extent beyond Framelle was probably indeterminate.
- ii. This includes the Downs, the small manors at the northern foot which had no recorded share in the meadow of that area and Litelforde with the rich lands of the Ouse Valley.
- iii. This includes Alciston and some smaller villis.
- iv. This comprises Beddingham, Lestone and Ripe.
- v. This is Ferle and the rest of Edivestone Hundred.

Group D.

- i. This large and wide-spread group of small settlements seems to have a certain homogeneity in the size of the manorial units. Territorially there is very little unity.
- ii. This is a definitely Downland unit with Essete and Dene from Willendone Hundred.
- iii. This comprises Willendone, Radtone and Walnoch.

Groups E and F.

These two groups which constituted the Rape of Hastings are defined by rivers and streams. The accuracy of this division depends upon the identification of Rameslie with Brede.

These figures reveal a certain amount of inaccuracy, but for each half of the County the divergence from the exact number (1625 and 1600) is only about three-eighths of one per cent. Of course, for the smaller divisions the divergence in each case becomes greater, but it is rarely more than one per cent. Also these inaccuracies are greater for East Sussex. But in spite of this there is an approximation of geographical areas and groups of manors which are multiples of eighty. The most notable coincidence is that almost the whole of the northern ridge of the Downs forms a boundary for these groups. The general plan seems to be a longitudinal division by rivers and a latitudinal

contemporary with and may be earlier than the use of the Hundred as a police organisation. There are two decrees of the Frankish Kings Clothaire and Childebert (sixth century) which instituted a police system upon territorial Hundreds. The references in Bede are scattered and inconclusive. In Tacitus there is mention of the "pagus" in Germania and attempts have been made to connect this with the German "Gau" and the institutions of the hundred warriors and the Hundred counsellors. But there is obviously a great discontinuity of evidence between the institutions of Germany before the collapse of the Western Empire and English institutions after the firm establishment of an English Monarchy.

My approach, being only upon evidence from one county, cannot make the discontinuity continuous, but it can bind together some of the loose ends of the theories based upon known facts. The Hundreds were, on the evidence for Sussex, based upon the natural community of interest among households living under similar geographical conditions, and were disposed in the main with reference to the chalk hills and the valleys of the rivers, involving entirely different types of agriculture and sometimes different methods of transport. Where there is meadowland it may be possible to keep a number of cattle through the winter; certainly the mown meadow was better autumn pasturage than the stubble of the open fields or the rough grass of the common pasturage. Such are the foundations of common interests among early settlers. On the Downs, for instance, the obvious natural landmarks were set too far apart to form adequate boundaries between settlements, and it would be necessary to make adequate conventions to avoid disputes over strayed or stolen cattle. Similarly, in river valleys agreements might be reached or attempted for mills, and a highway down the river, for fishing rights or the herding of cattle when the pastures were flooded.

It might not be too extravagant a guess to suggest that the Romans and natives of Britain had already

organised such "communes" and that it was by such "communes" that they fought the invaders, which would account in part for the long-drawn struggle of the sixth century. It is more probable that an invading force, fighting its way slowly across the country and organised by tribes, would settle naturally into such definite geographical units as were displayed and use those units as their first form of government before there was peace or occasion to develop the government of larger geographical units. This conception of the growth of central government in large areas by a federation of smaller units is perhaps that which accounts most easily for the "Roman Group" in West Sussex and the inclusion of Clepinges in the Hundred of Risburg. The disparities in the average acreage of meadow between West and East Sussex suggest that the inhabitants of the two halves had widely divergent interests. When the time was ripe that men should rule over shires and even over kingdoms of several shires, the Hundred was still a unit of government, no longer autonomous, but still important. The Hundred probably gained a Treasury when it gained a Lord. It has been a habit of the English to expect their rulers to "live of their own", but their rulers have been equally consistent in refusing. So far as I am aware, this approach to the problem of the Hundred excludes no other. The police duties of the community are not instinctive, but they are an early interest, though not so early as the economic interests, or rather the interest in justice even after the Norman Conquest was primarily economic. These territorial settlements may have provided a hundred warriors each, they may have consisted of a hundred families each, but this graceful symmetry can be pushed too far; the geographical unit may have been able to support a hundred warriors in Germany, but not necessarily in England and in any case this conception of the Hundred presupposes the existence of a central government ruling over several Hundreds.

This investigation suggests an alternative explanation

to that advanced by the Hon. Editor for the settlement of the backwoods from the land between the Ouse and Pevensey. Our main difference is that while his explanation depends upon influence from above, upon the allotment of territory, mine depends upon a gradual movement of which the Central Government was not aware. Much of my arithmetic depends upon the validity of this explanation, for I have not taken the assessment of these outliers in the Hundreds in which they were territorially situated, but I have counted them as being in the original assessment of the manors in which they gelded and whose names they often bore. So far this leads one to agree that the settlement was probably not later than 1011, but I believe that it was characteristic of a movement which started soon after every hundred had been assessed for the same number of hides, or after every manor or vill had been given its quota for taxation. It is obvious that any landowner, if he was assessed for taxation without direct regard to his receipts, would attempt to reduce the ratio of his liabilities for taxation to his assets of cultivation, and the wooded areas in which these outliers were founded were admirably adapted to the economical farming of pigs. At the same time it is difficult to imagine any government letting pass an opportunity for a justifiable increase of taxation.

It has been said that figures will prove anything. If this is so, they will also prove nothing, but if the conclusions are not exaggerated they may prove something. My figures prove nothing, but when similar investigations have been conducted in other counties, they may help to solve the thorny question: "When was a Hundred not a Hundred?" The answer indicated is that before the Hundred was a Hundred it was an area of local government, perhaps autonomous, which developed because people, perhaps kinsmen, living in proximity, under the same geographical conditions, in contrast to the conditions under which the people surrounding them lived, facing the same problems of war and peace, of plenty and of starvation,

were drawn together by the sheer force of nature to seek common solutions to common problems. More than that cannot be said, but the theory on this line of investigation has far-reaching possibilities stretching out as far as a possible determination of the course of the Anglo-Saxon Conquest of Britain. As a counter-weight to such a vision, I leave others to erect theories on the fact that King Edward, his Queen and his sister owned land assessed at 399 hides in Sussex and the House of Godwin probably either 1200 or 1280 hides, all multiples to all intents and purposes of the magic number eighty! My investigations have given no clue to the magic of that number in Sussex, nor have they decided in favour of the four- or five-hide vill. The future of research on my lines lies in the solution of the problems of the larger units before the existence of the hides, and when this has been pursued in other counties "the time may come," as Maitland said, "when the substance of Domesday Book will have been rearranged. Those villages and hundreds which the Norman clerks tore into shreds will have been reconstituted and pictured in maps."