



Notes on the Domesday Survey, so far as it relates to the Hundred of Wirral

BY WM. FERGUSSON IRVINE

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MY first step has been to prepare a careful synopsis of the Records, and to draw a map of the Hundred, placing on its surface the names as they occur in Domesday in their most probable positions.

On looking at this map, one is struck by the extent to which Wirral was already occupied, the whole surface being well covered by the names of Manors, with the exception of the neighbourhood around Stanney, and between Saughall Massey and Wallasey, both doubtless being due to the existence of marsh land.

The next point to notice is that the boundary of the Hundred was not the same as it is now, the four Manors of Picton, Wervin, Mickle Trafford, and Guilden Sutton being included in Wirral.

Another very curious feature is the almost total absence of forest; with the exception of the wood 1 league long and 1 broad, in the Manor of Prestone; that 40 perches by 40, in the Manor of Sumerford; and 2 acres at Mollington, there is no wood or forest mentioned in the Hundred, and we may take this



Wirral in Domesday Survey.

	FORMER OWNER	PRESENT OWNER	Hides	Carucates	Value R. E.'s	Value when the Earl came	Present Value	Population	Priests
1. Sudtone	The Bishop	The Bishop	1	3	40s.	..	20s.	7	..
2. Wiueurene	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	1½	3	30s.	..	20s.	6	..
3. Crostone	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	1	1	10s.	..	10s.	4	..
4. Wisdelea	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	1	3	10s.	..	10s.	6	..
5. Sudtone	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	1	5	40s.	..	30s.	14	..
6. Salhare	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	1	1	16s.	..	16s.	4	..
7. Sotowiche	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	1	3	16s.	..	13s. 3d.	6	..
8. Nestone	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	2	1	17s. 4d.	..	17s. 4d.
9. Rabie	St. Werburgh	St. Werburgh	2	1	6s. 8d.	..	6s. 8d.
10. Estham ¹	Earl Edwin	The Earl	22	22	480s.†	80s.	192s.	85	1
11. Traftod	Ordin..	The Earl	2	6	100s.	W.	40s.	8	..
12. Edelaue ²	Earl Edwin	The Earl	1	1	..	W.	2s.	1	..
13. Optone	Earl Edwin	The Earl	4½	12	60s.	..	85s.	31	..
14. Stanci ³	Ragenal	The Earl	1	2	12s.	..	14s.	7	..
15. Sudtone	Tochi..	Robert Fitz-Hugh	1	3	40s.	6s.	5s. 4d.	4	..
16. Molintone ⁴	Godwin	Robert de Rhuddlan of Earl Hugh	1½	3	W.	20s.	15s.	9	..
17. Molintone	Gunner & Ulf	Robert de Rhuddlan	1	2	W.	W.	14s.	3	..
18. Lestone ⁵	Leuenot	Robert de Rhuddlan	1	2	15s.	..	15s.	5	..
19. Torintone	Ulchetel	Robert de Rhuddlan	½	2	10s.	5s.	5s.	4	..
20. Gaitone ⁶	Leuenot	Robert de Rhuddlan	1	2	15s.	2s.	3s.	6	..
21. Eswelle	Ulchel	Robert de Rhuddlan	2	4	16s.	20s.	13s.	7	..
22. Turstanetone..	Leuenot	Robert de Rhuddlan	2	4	30s.	8s.	16s.	11	..
23. Caldars	Leuenot	Robert de Rhuddlan	3	10	50s.	10s.	24s.	12	..
24. Melas..	Leuenot	Robert de Rhuddlan	1	1½	15s.	W.	10s.	5	..
25. Melas..	Leuenot	Robert de Rhuddlan	1	3	10s.	8s.	12s.	7	..
26. Walea	Uchtred	Robert de Rhuddlan	1½	4	7	..
27. Nestone	Osgot	Robert the Cook of the Earl	1	3	13s. 4d.	..	16s.	8	..
28. Haregrave	Osgot	Robert the Cook	1	2	6s. 8d.	4s.	10s.	5	..
29. Pichetone	Tochi..	Richard de Vernon	1	3	40s.	5s.	20s.	6	..
30. Hotone	Tochi..	Richard de Vernon	1½	3	30s.	5s.	16s.	9	..
31. Nesse ..	Erniel	Walter de Vernon	1½	2	20s.	..	16s.	10	..
32. Leuetsham	Erniel	Walter de Vernon	1	2	5s.	8s.	10s.	3	..
33. Prestune ⁷	Uluiet, Edric, Lauede	Walter de Vernon	1½	3	7s.	..	5s.	4	..
34. Wiurene	Colbert	William Malbedeng	1	1	8s.	..	4s.	2	..
35. Pol ..	Ernuin	William Malbedeng	1*	1	4s.	..	4s.	2	..
36. Salhale ⁸	Saughall-Massey	William Malbedeng	6	6	20s.	22s.	45s.	13	..
37. Landechene	Landican	William Malbedeng	7	8	50s.	W.	40s.	20	1
38. Optone	Oxton	William Malbedeng	3	5	25s.	..	20s.	12	..
39. Tuignelle	Thingwall	William Malbedeng	1	2	8s.	..	5s.	5	..
40. Chenoterie	Knocorum	William Malbedeng	1	1	15s.	W.	10s.	5	..
41. Nestone	Neston (Great) [2]	William Fitz-Nigel	1½*	4	20s.	20s.	25s.	7	1
42. Rabie	Raby [2]	William Fitz-Nigel	1½	1	10s.	14s.	20s.	6	..
43. Capeles	Capenburst	William Fitz-Nigel	1½	1	5s.	5s.	8s.	4	..
44. Bernestone	Barnston	William Fitz-Nigel	1	2	..	W.	10s.	6	..
45. Caldars	Great Caldey	Hugh de Mara of Earl Hugh	1	3	5s.	..	10s.	1	..
46. Potintone	Puddington	Hamon of Earl Hugh	2½	3	..	W.	20s.	11	..
47. Blachehol ⁹	Blacon	Randle of Earl Hugh	2	4	14s.	..	40s.	12	..
48. Pontone	Poulton Lancelyn	Osbern Fitz-Tezzon of Earl Hugh	2	4	25s.	W.	25s.	9	1
49. Gravesberie	Greasby	Nigel of Earl Hugh	2	3	25s.	10s.	20s.	9	..
50. Stortone	Stoeton	Nigel of Earl Hugh	2	3	15s.	W.	20s.	9	..
51. Sumreford ¹⁰	Tranmere	Tezelin of Earl Hugh	1*	3	6s.	..	4s.	4	..
			97½	177	£70 16/-		£51 12 7	441	4

1 A Mill.

2 A man ploughing.

3 A fishery—A claim by the Church.

4 Two acres of wood.

5 Two fisheries.

6 Two fisheries.

7 A mill—A wood one league by one league broad.

8 A fishery.

9 A fishery.

10 A wood 40 perches by 40 perches.

† These are merely approximate estimates.
 * I have estimated a pound to contain twenty shillings, though I am aware this was not always the case with the Domesday pound.

evidence, I think, as fairly conclusive, since woods and forests were important items, and seem, in other Hundreds, to have been always carefully noted.

We may fairly deduce therefore, that Wirral must have presented a somewhat bleak moor-like aspect to the Norman surveyors; a character which it retained until the beginning of this century, as is witnessed by Dr. Ormerod's description in his history.

It is also noticeable that in the field names of Wirral to-day, the words gorse, furze, heath, and its Norse equivalent "ling," are of frequent occurrence, *e.g.*, Gorsey Butts, Gorsey Meadow, Great Furze, Heathlands, The Riddings, Lingholme, Lingdale, &c., &c.

On the other hand, at a very early date, we hear of heavily timbered land between Blacon and Saughall,¹ and woods at Capenhurst, a name which in itself indicates that at a date prior to Domesday this township was distinguished by its hurst or copse.

The great Wirral forest was of course of a later date than this; and also a Norman forest did not necessarily imply trees, but merely a place where game could range.

It would be possible to occupy an entire evening by biographical notices of the Norman lords of the soil; but as my desire is to deal only with matter strictly affecting Wirral, I shall pass them by without comment, except to point out that the earl's cook seems to have been an important member of his household, since he appears as holding the Manors of Little Neston and Hargrave. It is worth adding that Cook is a name which until within the last century was of common occurrence in the Neston registers, though by no means so in those of Bidston, Wallasey, and West Kirby, on the other side of the Hundred.

¹ 26th Rep. of Dep. Keep. of Pub. Records, p. 38—44 Hen. 3.

Of the original English owners, the most interesting is the illfated Earl Edwin, who held the rich Manors of Eastham and Upton-in-Overchurch. Leuenot, who also held property in other hundreds (though of course there may have been more than one of the name), held six Manors, the juxta-position of which is remarkable—they were Leighton, Gayton, Thurstaston, Caldý, and Great and Little Meols.

At Wallasey the dispossessed Englishman was one Uctred. Whether he was a member of the great Northumbrian House of Eadwulf, it is of course impossible to say. He was, however, probably the same Uctred who held so many Manors on the Lancashire side¹; Wallasey, down to recent times, being quite as much in touch with Lancashire as with the rest of Wirral.

One other interesting fact I would like to point out, in connection with Gamel, who held Poulton (Poulton-cum-Spittle) in English times. Twice, recently, I have met with mention of a pool, to the fishery of which allusion is made in 16th century documents relating to Birkenhead Priory, called Gomel of Gamel Pool, and which, from the context, can be no other than Brombro' Pool, on the banks of which Poulton is situated; so it seems probable that we have here the survival of the name of a pre-Domesday lord of the soil, five hundred years after his deprivation.

In this question of original holders, there is abundant material for a classification of nationality, for any one versed in the distinctively English and Norse names. Of Norse names, Gunnes, Ulf, Osgot, and Uluric, are

¹ Vide a paper published in the *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, vol. xxxix., on "The Domesday Record of the Land between Ribble and Mersey," from the pen of the Rev. A. P. Gray, M.A., F.S.A., Rector of Wallasey.

probably examples; though Toret, Colbert, and Tochi have a Northern ring about them.

Among the under tenants we have some good Norman names—Hamon, Nigel, Tezelin, 8 Williams, and several Roberts, Rogers, and Randles.

Colbert, who formerly held Noctorum and a township which I hope to prove to you is meant for Oxton, is the only original owner who came through the fire and still continued to hold his lands of Oxton after the Conquest, though in the reduced condition of under tenant. The name of the tenant of Capeles has rather a Welsh flavour about it—David.

An interesting feature in Domesday is the Priest. Four are mentioned in the survey, and no churches. That the churches are not alluded to need cause no surprise, since, except incidentally, they would not come under the head of those points into which the surveyors were instructed to enquire.

The omission of any mention of the rest of the priests (because there must have been more than four), is rather perplexing, because one would have thought that they would at least have come under the head of *inhabitants*. The omission may be explained, however, by noticing that in the case of the four priests alluded to, they are only spoken of in conjunction with other inhabitants, as holding certain lands under the Lord of the Manor, and it is possible that the priests of the other parish churches were not of an agricultural turn of mind, and so did not come under the ken of the surveyor, since they neither tilled the ground nor owned it, and therefore, so far as the king was concerned, were of no moment.

The fact that a priest is recorded as being at Landican, does not necessarily imply that the church stood in that now obscure hamlet, especially as in 1093 (only seven

years later than the survey), mention is made of Woodchurch in the charter of the Abbey of St. Werburgh.

In the same way a priest at Pontone or Poulton (now cum-Spittle), doubtless refers to the Church of Bebington, which was likewise granted in 1093 to the Monastery of St. Werburgh.

The mention of a priest at Eastham is evidence in support of Dr. Ormerod's suggestion, that Brombro' was comprehended in the survey under Eastham. The priest at Neston calls for no comment.

In dealing with the matter of land measurements, I shall not attempt to enter into an explanation of the various terms used in the survey, as these propose only to be notes on the survey so far as it relates to Wirral.

The quantity of land rateable to the geld is about 98 hides—an interesting fact in support of the theory that the term "Hundred" was originally applied to districts containing one hundred hides. The area of the land surveyed amounted to $176\frac{1}{2}$ carucates.

The total value of all the Manors in King Edward's time was £70 16s., but in 1086 had sunk to £50 12s. 7d., though the improvement between 1086 and 1070 (or whatever date the Earl first received the lands of Cheshire), in all cases where it is given, is very marked.

In King Edward's time there were four Manors lying waste: Barnston, Puddington, and the two Mollingtons, which number had been increased to eleven when the Earl first came, though at the time of the survey all were once more in cultivation.

The position of the Manors lying waste is rather curious, situated as the bulk of them are in the centre of the Hundred, and the reason of their condition is not very apparent, except in the case of the Mollingtons and Trafford, where their close proximity to Chester would readily account for their devastation.

The population consisted of 32 under-tenants, 163 villeins, 137 bordars, 35 serfs, 25 radmen, 40 cowherds, 12 foreigners, and 4 priests, in all amounting to 448. Allowing 4 to a family, we have a population of about 2,000, as opposed to 4,000, which I calculate (from Subsidy Rolls, &c.) to have been the number in 1500; and 10,000 the population in 1801.

As one might expect, there are several mentions of fisheries—one at Stanney, two at Leighton, and the same at Gayton, one at Blacon, and another at Salhale, which Beamont identifies as Great Saughall, but which I venture to think refers to Saughall-Massey.

Two mills are mentioned, one at Eastham and the other at Prestone—usually taken to refer to Prenton in Woodchurch Parish. As a mill in Domesday always meant a water-mill, the mention of one at Eastham, proves that Brombro' was included in Eastham in the survey.

Sir Henry Ellis, in his "Dissertations on Domesday," says: "In Domesday Book wherever a mill is specified we generally find it still subsisting." Mr. Beamont says: "There is no church in Domesday which does not now exist, and it is believed there is hardly such a mill." Of the two mills mentioned in Domesday as existing in Wirral, one only now remains, the mill on Brombro' Pool.

I was at first inclined to doubt the correctness of apportioning Prenton to the Domesday Prestune, as it seemed so extremely unlikely that any mill could ever have been situated in that township. There is only one stream in the township, a small brook not a yard in width, and I have recently made a careful examination of its course, with the interesting result that I have discovered what, there can be little doubt, is the site of

the Domesday water-mill. Almost on the Landican border of the township, is a wooded glade called "The Dale," through which runs a little stream, eventually emptying itself into the Fender. The Dale has high banks on either side, and varies in width from 50 to 100 yards, and is comparatively level bottomed for about 300 yards before it embouches on the little valley through which runs the Fender. Just before it reaches this point the sides close in, and the Dale is here crossed by a broad high dyke, which, without doubt, was once the mill dam. The dam is now cut in two places, through one of which breaches the little stream finds its way.

To come now to the question of Domesday place-names. Canon Isaac Taylor remarks somewhere in his book on "Words and Places," on the wonderful vitality of the original forms in place-names, and adds that they, of all words in a language, are least liable to change.

Except a natural tendency to shorten a word, and elide some not very distinctive syllable, few changes seem to have taken place during the last 1,000 years in our local place-names.

A careful study of the Domesday nomenclature convinces me that the difference in pronunciation of our local names, between that of a genuine native of Wirral to-day and of one living at the time of the Norman Conquest, would be of the most trifling description. And so I think we have a right to expect to find in Domesday no *very* great discrepancies; and if we find these discrepancies, to seek for some other explanation than that they are changes which have taken place in the words themselves.

In the bulk of cases practically no change has taken place, *e.g.*, The Suttons, Mollingtons, "Melas," Neston, Gayton, Upton, Storton, Trafford, "Estham," Raby, Hargrave, "Berneston," and so forth.

With this before us, let us see if nothing can be done to account for such puzzles as Capeles, Chenoterie, Tuigvelle, Prestone, and what is usually spelt as Levetsham.

Firstly, a careful comparison of Domesday spelling makes it clear that the surveyors, in nearly all cases, used the symbol *ch*, when they wished to represent the hard *c* or *k*, *e.g.*, Chenth for Kent; Chingeslie for Kingsley; Chirchedele for Kirkdale; Chenulveslei for Knowsley. Secondly, the symbol *v* frequently represents the sound *u*: and thirdly, I would remind you that the various surveyors' returns were sent up to head-quarters, where a fair copy was made of them, and is the Domesday Book as we now possess it.

Anyone acquainted with early court-hand, will know how many of the letters were practically interchangeable; how three strokes of the pen might represent *m* or *ni* or *in* or *iu* or *ui*; how easily a *p* and an *x* might be mistaken; and how a contraction might be read as a final *e*, and a dozen other possibilities of mistakes arise. In speaking thus I am of course not alluding to the exceptionally clear caligraphy of the survey itself, but am assuming that the various commissioners, in sending in their reports, employed the usual style of handwriting then in vogue.

Bearing these things in mind, then let us examine these words.

Tuigvelle: read the three strokes following the T as "in" instead of "ui," and you have Tingwell, or Thingwall.

Levetsham: pronounce Leuetsham, and you have Ledsham; or as the natives call it to-day, Loodsham.

Chenoterie: pronounce the "ch" hard, and you have Kenoterie; imagine that the surveyor employed the customary final curl to represent the genitive plural of a second declension noun, and that the copyist unaccus-

tomed to such an unwonted termination to English place names, read the curl as a final *e*, and you have at least a fairly close approximation to Knocktorum.

These explanations may be described as fanciful, but in reply, I would ask for better ones; they may at least stand as suggestions.

How to work Capeles into Capenhurst I know not, and should almost be inclined to doubt the reference.

Before leaving this subject I might mention that if the Domesday people called Knocktorum and Capenhurst, Chenoterie and Capeles (supposing Capeles to refer to Capenhurst), it is certain that no one else ever did; since however much other names may have been mis-spelled and twisted about in mediæval deeds, curiously enough, from the very earliest date within a few years of the making of the survey, both Knocktorum and Capenhurst appear in the garb that they wear to-day, and though they occur again and again, never suffer any appreciable alteration.

And now to deal for a few moments with the townships more in detail.

Who first apportioned the various Domesday townships to their modern representatives, and on what system, is a question that has often occurred to me; and while in the main prepared to accept Mr. Beamont's decision in this matter, may I be permitted to suggest some alterations?

Firstly, then, the list is headed by Sudtone, which Mr. Beamont, in common with Dr. Ormerod, identifies as Great Sutton, but which might surely be taken to represent Guilden Sutton (a manor *not elsewhere accounted for* in Domesday), for the simple reason that Great Sutton is mentioned a little later on as being held by Robert Fitz-Hugh, from whom it appears to have passed

to the Abbey of St. Werburgh, whereas the Manor of Guilden Sutton, which you will observe is mentioned as belonging to the Bishop, was actually in possession of the Bishop of Chester a few years subsequent to the survey.

The next point is a small Manor of the name of Edelaue, which had been formerly in the possession of Earl Edwin, and which Mr. Beamont is inclined to identify as Eulowe, near Hawarden, in Flintshire, though it is distinctly mentioned under Wilaueston Hundred; and Flintshire, headed by Hawarden itself, occurs much later in the record. The termination *laue*, judging from Bochelau (Bucklow), represents what we would now call *low*, and so we have to look for a township in Wirral bearing some name approximating to Edlow, and such I have no doubt we find in the long disappeared Hadlow, the name of which is only now known to us in the road leading from Willaston towards Burton, which is called Hadlow Road.

I did not feel satisfied that this explanation was the correct one until I examined the Tithe Map (made in 1836-42), and found therein a large cluster of fields about a quarter of a mile south of Willaston, called Adler. The commissioners for the commutation of Tithes, like the commissioners for Domesday, were obliged to take down the names from spoken evidence, and "Adler" is precisely the way in which a Wirral farmer would pronounce what is written Hadlow. This discovery of Hadlow fills in what would otherwise be a rather curious gap on the face of the Domesday map.

The next point I would call in question is the matter of the two Melas, in West Kirby Parish. The first one Mr. Beamont identifies as Great and the second as Little Meols, whereas all the evidence appears to point towards

the reverse being the real case. Though it is of course impossible to get at any definite conclusion from such slight premises, it may be worth pointing out, firstly, that to the surveyors in their itinerary, Little Meols would be the first township after leaving Caldey (and they seem to have followed out a definite course in their survey); and secondly, Great Meols to-day has an acreage nearly half as much again as Little Meols (and the proportion would be still greater 800 years ago); while in the survey, Melas No. 1 is credited with only $1\frac{1}{2}$ carucates, against 3 carucates at Melas No. 2.

It may be interesting to point out that a careful examination of the survey reveals the fact that the surveyors went through the villages in a systematic manner, the apparentness of which is to a large extent destroyed, however, by the fact that they broke their results up in order to classify the Manors under the heads of the various landowners.

But in spite of this, one can detect their system; for instance, in the lands belonging to St. Werburgh, commencing with Wervin, the surveyors took the high road to Croughton, and from thence to Lea, and on to Sutton; from Sutton they turned west, and crossed the Hundred to Great Saughall, on to Shotwick, Neston, and then inland to Raby, a course which, if anyone wished to visit all these villages, would be the most direct he could take.

The same thing is to be observed, in a still more remarkable manner, in the case just cited above with reference to the two Melas, in the Rhuddlan estates. Beginning with Little Mollington they journeyed northwards through Great Mollington, straight along the high road until they reached Leighton; from Leighton they turned inland to survey Thornton (the only Manor

which did not lie on the coast); coming back over their track they reached Gayton, and from thence their course is undeflected, through Heswall, Thurstaston, Caldey, Little Meols, Great Meols, to Wallasey.

While mentioning the Rhuddlan estate, it may be well to allude to a curious court which was held until quite recently; the Court of the Hundred of Great Caldey. Why the *Hundred* of Great Caldey, does not appear; but it is worthy of note that all the townships owing service to this court are included among the Rhuddlan estates. It would be interesting to know whether the court originated in pre-Norman times, or since; it certainly existed in 1310. The English Leuenot held all the same Manors with the exception of two, and it may be that the court originated under his tenure.

That Salhale refers to Little Saughall, a township of only some 400 acres, and which it is not even certain could claim to be a Manor, seems little short of incredible, when we have the large Manor of Saughall, now Saughall-Massey (which would doubtless include Moreton, Bidston, Claughton, and part of Birkenhead), in North Wirral unaccounted for, particularly when we find Salhale grouped with Landican, Oxton, Thingwall, and Noctorum.

And lastly, the township which figures in Domesday as the second Optone. We have Upton in Overchurch already accounted for, held in English times by Earl Edwin, and here we have a second Optone coming up unexpectedly. It is extremely unlikely that Earl Edwin would have held a Manor only in part, and so we have to seek some other explanation. There is one important township which is not to be found in Domesday, and that is Oxton, and which would be quite in its right place if we could find it in the second Optone, surrounded,

as it would be in the survey, with its three co-parochial townships of Landican, Thingwall, and Noctorum. Further, it was held by Colbert, who also held the contiguous Manor of Noctorum.

Now anyone who is accustomed to old documents will know how impossible it frequently is to say whether a letter is an *x* or a *p*, the slightest alteration in the slope of the lower limb being the only differentiating sign; and what more likely than that the copyist at Winchester, so accustomed as he must have been to the familiar English place name Optone, so wrote the name in error.

I will close this list of suggested alterations with the township of Sunreford, which Mr. W. H. Black, in an able report on the Manor of Tranmere, most conclusively identifies as that township, to which report I will refer you for further details.

