

Notes and Queries.

NOTES.

FREEBRIDGE: ITS MEANING AND SITE OF ORIGIN IN THE SO-NAMED HUNDRED.

In 1631 some long-standing territorial differences and disputes over land in the three Congham parishes in the Hundred of Freebridge culminated in Chancery proceedings between Sir Henry Spelman, Knight, the famous antiquary, the complainant, and Sir Robert Mordaunt, Knight and Baronet, the defendant.

The main points in dispute between the parties appear to have revolved around the chief lordships or manors of Congham, Rustens, and Reedhalls, belonging to Sir Henry Spelman in the parishes of Congham (All Saints, St. Andrew's, and St. Ann's, alias St. Mary's) extending into Hillington, North Wootton, Snettisham, and other towns adjoining, and the subservient manors of Alexanders, Petigards,¹ and Coldham Hall in Congham belonging to Sir Robert Mordaunt; and the respective foldcourse and shackage rights appurtenant thereto. Further, as to a certain capital messuage of Spelman's called Maries,² and another of Mordaunt's called Alexander's. Lastly, an important drain cut through Spelman's meadow called Rustens, by his license and for which Mordaunt owed an annual rent. The settlement of these matters led to extensive litigation, the chief value of which to-day lies in the disclosure of the site of the ancient place-name, Freebridge, that subsequently gave its name to the Hundred.

¹ Before the 16th Stranges this Manor belonged to a Roger Pettygard as mentioned in a Rental of the 17th Henry VII.

² (?) St. Mary's parsonage house, the site of which has long since disappeared.

Sir Henry Spelman (1564?—1641), in his "Icenia—or a Topographical Description of Norfolk" (as translated from the Latin by the Rev. George Munford in 1860),¹ says of Congham:—

"On the eastern boundary of Rising (Mantua me miserum nimum vicina Cremonæ) lies Congham, which derives its name from the little stream Cong that rises in the village. Here lies the principal part of my patrimony, which William Rusteng formerly acquired; he, when serving in the Holy Land under the Earl of Arundel in the time of Richard I., was made a Knight by that Earl, as also was . . . de Ingolsthorpe and Andrew de Sharneburn. For at this time the capital lords were permitted to knight their dependants, as also were Bishops and Abbots. But the Abbots were prohibited from so doing by a Council held in London, by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1102 (see Erdmer lib. 3 and Malmesb. lib. 1 in Gest. Pont.)."

In his Bill in Chancery (1631) Sir Henry, after reciting his manorial and other rights and claims, stated that, "having lyved about fortie yeares oute of the saide Towne of Congham, and the said Sr Robert his Father and Grandfather in the same Towne or in the Towne next thereto adjoyninge * * * moreover (being an aged Man) loath to goe to Lawe and disposed to a still and quiet life * * " and asked the Court to arbitrate on the case.

The Commissioners appointed to examine witnesses and adjudicate were Sir William de Grey and Sir John Hare, Knights, and William Barnes and William Buckworth, Esquires, who sat at King's Lynn, and reached "A ffinall Agreement of all matters in Controversy" on the 28th September, 1631, 7 Chas. I. Among many other things it was agreed that:

"Sr Henry Spelman from Hence forth doth give in perpetuall exchange unto Sr Robt Mordant one Messuage called Marys Lying in Congham Long Row adjoining to the brigg called freebridg conteneing by Estimation five acres the close adjoining conteneing by Estimation three acres Lying between the Grounds of Will Bladwell Esq. on the south and the closes called Shopp Closes² on the North on other close of pasture on the North side thereof conteneing by estimation three acres and three Roods wherof the three Rodes is glebe land and herby not exchanged siding on

¹ From the MS. in my possession.

² This may be a corruption from the personal name Chappe, a family of that name having been established in Congham towards the end of the thirteenth century, or perhaps from "Sheep Closes."

Trugate Way on the North and abutts upon the way Leading from Hillington to Grimstone towards the West And one other Close of Meadow called Broadgate conteining by Estimation five acres and an half siding upon tenn acres of the said Sr Robt. Mordant on the East and abutts upon Long Row Way on the South And so much ground to be taken out of Smithes farme adjoining upon Couldham Hall as lyeth between it and the Elme tree att the end of Smithes Maulthouse and an other old Elme tree right against it all the hedge by the high way which Leadeth from Grimstone to Hillington and also one other close by the Cherry Yard in the East feild conteining by Estimation fifteen acres and one Rood Lying by Post way on the North and abutt upon the way leading from Hillington to Grimstone towards the West and also four acres and one Rood lying att Stanmore Corner abutting upon Stanmore way towards the North.

“Item the said Sr Robt Mordant from henceforth doth give in perpetuall exchange unto the said Sr Henry Spelman the Messuage of Alexanders conteining by Estimation tenn acres and one close of pasture commonly called Reefhams conteining by Estimation tenn acres and one other pasture conteining tenn acres commonly called the fourteen acre close Lying on the Back side of the said Messuage called Alexanders and also the Hempland ther that Runneth up by Lynn high way all which wer late in the occupation of Thomas Wiles att the rent of 22^{li} 10^s p. ann.

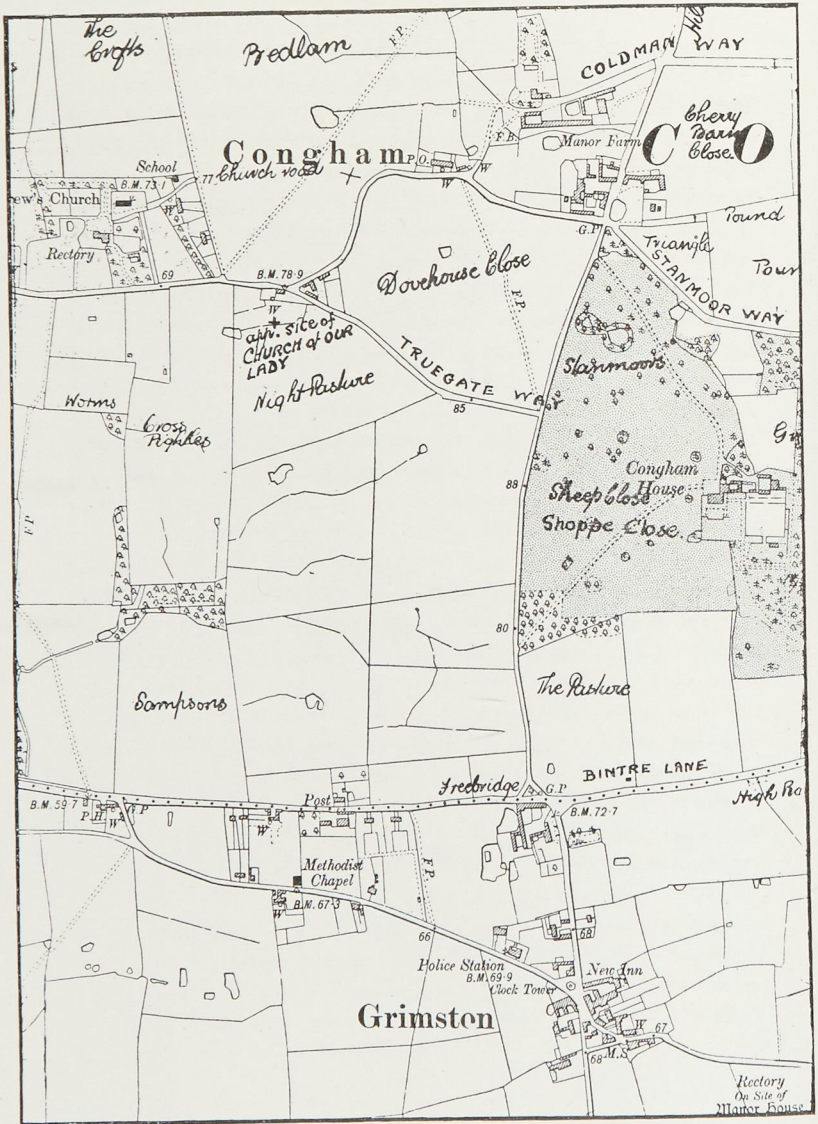
“Item the said Sr Robt Mordant shall yerely allow unto the said Sr Henry Spelman for the Shack of Sheep and great Cattell in Alexanders Crofts Church Crofts and tenn acres being the upper part of Rustens and thereabouts the sum of 4^{li}

“Item that Sr Robt. Mordant shall pay Sr Henry Spelman yearely for a water draine through Sr Henry Spelmans clos called Rustens 2^s 6^d but Sr Robt att any time bestow the cost to cutt the said Draine then the said Sr Robt to pay nothing for that year.

“Item that the said Sr Robt. Mordant shall release his Challeng to any right or liberty for a Goyt belonging to Alexanders for 200 sheepe upon Sr Henry Spelmans lands and Fouldcourse and Sr Henry to allow for the same 30^s p. ann.

“Item that all closes of Sr Robt Mordant shalbe freed from all Shacks of Sr Henry Spelman except the close in the feild next Massingham.”

This final agreement was duly embodied in a Writ of Execution of Decree dated the 4th January, 1633.



freebridge Lane is mentioned in some manorial papers for the years 1603 onwards,¹ and its site is clearly marked on the Enclosure Award map for the parish of Congham dated 1812. In the "Description of the Parochial Boundaries" the importance of the place called FREEBRIDGE is emphasised by the fact that "The Boundary of the said parish begins at a place called freebridge adjoining to the parish of Grimstone in the said County and proceeds thence in a West direction in the middle of the road leading from Grimstone aforesaid to King's Lynn in the said county to the south end of an antient Lane called Broad Gate Lane and," etc. It is interesting to observe that, although the site was so very close to the Grimston parish boundary, it is not mentioned in the Award for that parish dated 1780, and is strong evidence therefore that it was most definitely a Congham place-name. Between the date of the Award (1812) and the commutation of the Tithes (1838) the name disappears and is not mentioned either in the schedule of fields to the latter document or the accompanying map. The name is not known by any of the local people resident in the parish to-day (1929).

Blomefield (vol. viii., p. 327) it was, I think, who first hazarded the guess that the Freebridge Hundred took its name from a bridge over the Ouse, and indicated the St. German's bridge as the most likely one in question. Since his day numerous antiquaries have explained the meaning of the name and its probable source of origin, but none has ever imagined it to be the name given to a place spanning an obscure and unimportant spring or ditch in Congham! Again, a chance find, when on another trail, has enabled me to contribute this note on the identification of the place from which the important Hundred and half of Freebridge derived its name. The accompanying portion of the Ordnance map for the parish of Congham fixes its position exactly.

Such place-names as are mentioned in this note and can be identified from the Award and Tithe maps respectively are marked on the tracing from the modern Ordnance map here reproduced.

In conclusion, I cannot do better than quote the considered opinion of the Rev. A. Goodall, M.A., until recently the Rector of

¹ An extract from the Court Leet for the Manor of Congham Reedeheall, et Ruteyngs, in 1631, reads:—"Off Urslie Swanton because she have suffered her ditch neare the Close called Congham Yards nexte Freebridge Lane by the space of twoe rodde to be unscoured by weh the King's heighe waye there is very much drowned to the annoyance of the kings leidge people there passeinge by."

the adjoining parish of Grimston, an authority on place-names and the author of several important books on that subject, concerning the name and site. Mr. Goodall says:

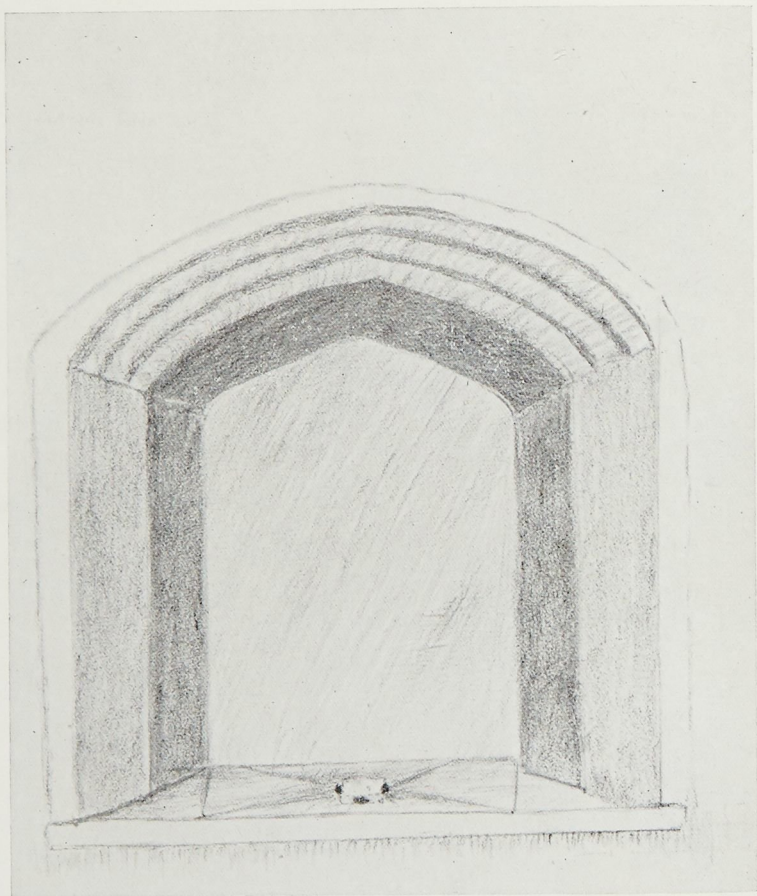
“We now turn to the name itself, which occurs in ancient documents from Domesday times onwards. The best of the old spellings, FREDREBRUG occurs in 1086, but in the 13th and 14th centuries the common form is Frethebrig, and because of this we can rewrite the Domesday form as FRETREBRYGE. This form is incapable of explanation as an English name, but it yields its secret at once when looked upon as Scandinavian. It represents the Old Norse FRITHAR-BRYGGJA, a name which means ‘bridge of peace,’ that is, ‘peace bridge’—the bridge where a treaty of peace was arranged. It is a Danish name given by the Danes.

“What we are to see, then, is a conference held near the bridge—a conference between Danes and Angles—a conference where a peaceful arrangement was ratified in the presence of men probably from all parts of West Norfolk. We can assign the date, in or about 880, when Guthrum and his Danes swept down in East Anglia. Guthrum was King of East Anglia up to 890, and there were other Danish Kings until about 916. As the result a peaceful arrangement agreed upon at Freebridge, Grim was placed in the shoes of the former Lord of Grimston—so at least it seems; at the same time Glor was probably settled at Glosthorp; and Ingvald at Ingoldisthorpe; while as it appears members of the rank and file of the Danish army—sokemen, as the Domesday record calls them—were settled down under the jurisdiction of Grim at Grimston, others under the jurisdiction of a Norseman at Wiveling, others in Roydon, Well Hall, Gayton, and elsewhere in the immediate neighbourhood.”

H. L. BRADFER-LAWRENCE.

A WELBORNE WILL.

In the Surtees Society's publications, Vol. 116, dealing with “North Country Wills,” there is a will (p. 8) which is likely to escape the notice of Norfolk historians owing to a false surmise. The will in question is that of William Roos, Rector of Welburn, and it is dated 12th May, 1413. The Editor has apparently assumed that the Welburn mentioned is either the village of that name between Helmsley and Pickering, or that to the S.W. of Malton, both in the North Riding of Yorkshire. Obviously,



PISCINA, SOUTH WALL,
"THE MONASTERY," HAPPIBURGH.

however, the will belongs to Welborne, near East Dereham. The testator, William Roos, was Rector of Welborne from 1402 until, apparently, 1416, when the next presentation was made. One of his executors, John Davy, was Vicar of East Tuddenham from 1398 to 1434; and one of his bequests is 6d. to John *Fouldon*, chaplain. These details are quite enough to localise the will in Norfolk, and possibly other names as Edwey and Robert (the other executor) may, to those who know the district, still further strengthen the evidence. The *Surtees Society's* Editor gives the date of Probate as 12th August, 1430. This sounds rather doubtful, and it would be well to verify it with the original will [*Lambeth Wills*, Arundel, ii., 194].

J. F. WILLIAMS.

AN OLD COTTAGE AT HAPPISBURGH.

Near the summit of Happisburgh Hill, and facing the West away from the sea, is a row of four cottages, with thatched roofs and walls of flint and rubble. The third of these, now known as the Monastery, presents some curious and interesting features.

The oldest part of this cottage consists of one large room, with 18-inch walls, and a low ceiling with several old oak beams. Penetrating the western wall is an early Perpendicular doorway, with a flat pointed arch, and mouldings visible only from the inside of the room.

On the south wall is a piscina, roofed by an arch very similar, both as to mouldings and pitch, to that over the door. The measurements of the piscina inside the arch are: Width, 22 ins. Depth, 27 ins. Height, 32 ins.

The stone slab of the piscina, containing the drain, projects slightly, about 2 ins., beyond the face of the wall. It has a square cut on it, which is hollowed slightly to a central knob. From each corner of the square four channels run to the centrally raised knob, through which they drain.

In the east wall, and probably on the south side of the altar, at a level of about 6 feet from the ground, is a square niche for a statue, or else an almy, to hold chalices, etc. It has a flat pointed arch, without mouldings.

The cottage has some carved oak, which has been moved from an upstairs room to form part of a mantelpiece in the room below. This calls for no particular comment. On the north wall, showing

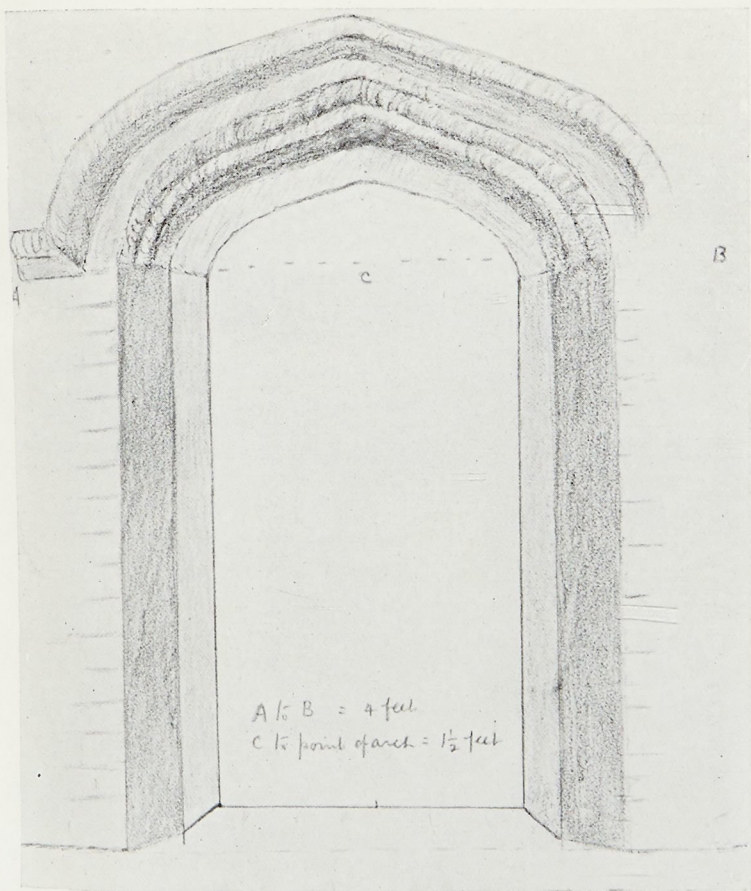
from the outside, is an old oak lintel, with scroll-like mouldings. The doorway or opening was a large one and is now partly built up, leaving a doorway of ordinary size.

William de Albini, butler to Henry I., who founded the Priory of Wymondham, as a cell of Black Monks to St. Albans, granted the greater part of Happisburgh to that Priory. He had been given Happisburgh on his marriage with Maud, daughter of Roger Bigot. She is said to lie buried at the east end of the north aisle of Happisburgh Church. In the time of William de Albini, son of the founder of Wymondham Priory, the men and tenants of Happisburgh refused to pay their dues and services to the Prior. Considerable disturbances followed, and in due course Richard, the Abbot of St. Albans, visited Wymondham and resolved to go to Happisburgh, but the Earl sent a large posse of men thither, charging them not to suffer the Abbot "to enter the house belonging to the Monastery," which they did, with the result that the Abbot cited the Earl first at Northampton, and then at London, before a satisfactory agreement was arrived at.

It is possible, one would think, that "the house belonging to the Monastery," referred to above, may be the cottage now called the Monastery, which might have been used for monks from the Wymondham Priory in looking after their extensive rights and property in Happisburgh and the neighbourhood.

[References : Blomefield on Wymondham and Happisburgh.]

C. H. W. PAGE, M.A., M.D.



INSIDE VIEW OF DOORWAY,
"THE MONASTERY," HAPPISBURGH.