

TWO MIDDLESEX HUNDRED MOOTS

I

The Site of the Gore Hundred Moot

By PERCY DAVENPORT

IN the Society's *Transactions*, New Series, Vol. VII, Part II, at page 218, our member, Hugh Braun, F.S.A., described how an entry in the Harrow Court Rolls, printed in *Harrow School Records*, led to the discovery of a triangular site which, by a skilful piece of field archæology, he identified as the site of the ancient Moot of the Hundred of Gore, one of the six Hundreds into which Anglo-Saxon Middlesex was divided.

Briefly, this entry, dated 1445, recorded the surrender by John Lyon to the use of Thomas Pernell, of 13 acres of land in Preston, a hamlet in the manor of Harrow. Among the boundaries set out in the entry, two were strongly suggestive of an old meeting-place—*Moothege* and *Gaderbrook*. These, coupled with the name *Gore*, plentifully besprinkled in many field- and place-names in the immediate vicinity, might separately have stirred a suggestive memory, but occurring in combination, they seemed to add up to much more. And when, from Mr. Braun's illustration of the southern end of the quaintly named Honey-pot Lane, at this spot, it is found that the site to which this mid-fifteenth century record applies fits into the very centre of the ancient Hundred of Gore, which, by analogy with known moot sites of other Hundreds, is the most likely rendezvous for the "gathering of the tribes," and close to the junction of ancient cross-roads (hence the modern roundabout), linking together the Stanmores, Edgware, Kingsbury, Hendon and Harrow, the constituent members of the Hundred, the possibility of this spot being the authentic site of the moot of the Hundred of Gore strengthens into strong probability.

Mr. Braun had himself no doubt about it, nor, if I may say so, had I. For some time past I had been groping towards an understanding of the significance of the name *Gore* thereabouts, and when he announced his discovery in *The Times*, I was the first to congratulate him on his brilliant field work, brought to so successful an issue.

Nevertheless, in spite of his close reasoning, not everyone seems to have been convinced that it was at that spot where, perhaps each fortnight for hundreds of years, the fathers of the villages comprising the Hundred, forgathered to administer Saxon justice. True, the English Place Name Society, in its volume *The Place Names of Middlesex*, appears to endorse it (page 50), though the statement that the venue was at Gore Farm in Kingsbury is not strictly true, as that farm was some little distance from the site, which was actually within the bounds of the hamlet of Preston, one of the members of the manor of Harrow. In the copy of that book now in the Society's library, which once belonged to our late President, Sir Montagu Sharpe, the assertion that this was the meeting place of the Hundred is queried in pencil in the margin.

It therefore occurred to me to seek some confirmatory evidence. If a reference by name to the Hundred, associating it with this locality, could be discovered, it would establish beyond dispute the identity of the site, whose physical features, as Mr. Braun had described them, afforded such strong presumptive evidence.

For documentation he had relied on the printed extracts from the Court Rolls in the Harrow School archives. Might it not be possible to find additional evidence in the original Rolls, on which, for some time past, I had been working? So, starting from 1445, the date of the extract which started Mr. Braun's enquiries, and working forwards, I came across the record, 40 years later, of a further transaction relating to the same land, in practically identical terms. It was then held, by copyhold tenure, by one John Redynge, a common name in the manor in those days, and the entry recorded his surrender of it to the use of John Lyon.

It is this transfer of the property to an ancestor of the founder of Harrow School, in whose family it remained until it passed by the founder's gift to the School Governors, which has served the cause of Middlesex history so well: otherwise the significant names would never have appeared in the school archives, and the site of the Hundred Moot might never have been tracked down.

But although here was corroborative evidence, it did not add materially to our knowledge, nor could I find any later relevant entries. Reversing the process therefore, and working backwards from 1445, my search was at last rewarded. Under

This apart, however, the entry above quoted furnishes convincing testimony of the existence here of the site of the Hundred Moot. Its very name, the Gorehundred, had survived until the fifteenth century—another witness to the illumination which place- and field-names can bring to the forgotten facts of history.

When Mr. Braun wrote, 14 years ago, he prophesied the disappearance of the site within months "beneath the inevitable pall of bricks and mortar." Since then building has still further developed in the neighbourhood, and but for the second world war, which temporarily halted the spate of urban growth, his prophecy would by now have been fulfilled. When, some eight years ago, while the Battle of Britain and the first phase of the London "blitz" were still raging, I visited the spot, the surroundings presented a picture of semi-urbanisation which was rather depressing. The site was then overlooked by the newly-erected fire station on the opposite side of a new road called The Mall, but was itself yet unbuilt on. Except that war-time allotments were under cultivation on its raised surface, it consisted of an expanse of waste ground, some $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres in extent, extremely hummocky, but still with a fair cluster of hedgerow (the moot hedge), trees and bushes. Honey-pot Lane, now widened into a broad thoroughfare, had been continued southwards as Fryent Way, though not in direct line with the ancient Eldestrete. Two small fragments of the original Honey-pot Lane, complete with circumambient hedges, looked oddly out of place among the new shops and houses and the no-man's-land around. At this point the Harrow-Kingsbury-Hendon road, now carrying substantial traffic, passed the Moot site, and on this road, the eastern part being marked Gore Lane on the Elizabethan map referred to, some 100 yards to the east, is the Kingsbury (Metropolitan) Railway Station, almost facing the new Odeon Cinema and a row of shops, where formerly stood Gore Farm, part of the extensive holdings in this neighbourhood of the Lyon family since the fourteenth century.

Since then, I have visited the site several times. Post-war restrictions have limited the amount of new building, but there are signs of increasing activity thereabouts. When last I saw it I noticed, immediately opposite, and next to the fire station, the white brick walls of a Baptist Church rapidly rising. The site itself is still intact, except that a length of the old Gaderbrook has been absorbed by The Mall. You can clearly

detect a further length skirting the site as a well-defined ditch. Allotments still cover the Gorehundred, but some ominous-looking pegs driven into the ground may mark the boundaries of building plots. At the northern apex of the "gore" a link with the past was preserved by the presence of a gipsy caravan, whose articles of domestic washing were spread out in the sunshine to-day on the branches of the Moot hedge.

Of the thousands who daily throng the roads leading past the site on their journeys to town and back, few can be aware that on that triangular patch of raised ground at the cross-roads Anglo-Saxon law was once construed. It would have been a happy gesture if the naming of the Tube station could have been associated with the Gorehundred, but I fear that such a word might be conceived to strike uncouthly on the sensitive ears of modern English folk.

But surely something should be done to keep alive this landmark in Middlesex history. Whether or not the Minister of Works would be willing to entertain action under the Ancient Monuments Acts, there is the County Council, concerned with the modern administration of justice in the Petty Sessional Division of Gore, which embalms the old name; there is the Wembley Borough Council, in whose area the site is now comprised; and there are the Hendon Borough Council and the Harrow Urban District Council; which latter three together cover the area of the old Hundred; all these, individually or in combination, might be invited to set apart for the use of the public forever as a pleasure ground this small area, erecting within it a suitably inscribed stone drawing attention to this tangible bit of Middle Saxon history.

And who but the London and Middlesex Archæological Society are the most appropriate body to associate themselves with the proposal? But if action is to be taken, it should be taken at once.

II

The Edmonton Hundred "Moot Plain"

By F. W. M. DRAPER

IN the Middlesex volume of the English Place-Name Society (1942) it is remarked that the meeting-place of Edmonton Hundred is unknown. I venture to offer a solution of this problem.