

## ANGLO-SAXON LONDON AND MIDDLESEX.

## THIRD PAPER.

*Read at a Meeting of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society, held at the London Institution, Finsbury Circus, on Friday, 20th February, 1903.*

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IN this paper, I propose to refer chiefly to traces of Anglo-Saxon life and archæology in Middlesex. Time has been powerless altogether to obliterate them, and whether we recognise them or not, they are present with us. As, however, the connection between London and Middlesex is so ancient that no date can be given for its beginning, Middlesex in this respect cannot be considered apart from the archæology and history of the City.

The boundaries of the county were determined mainly by natural features, the Thames on the south, the Lea on the East, the Colne or its brooks on the west, and a ridge of high land for the most part on the north. The bridge at Staines, the Old Ford over the Lea, the north gate of Enfield Chase, and Waltham Cross were on the early boundaries of Middlesex. There existed, however, in this county during the Saxon age certain large areas which were in it, but not of it, and which were under separate jurisdiction from the rest of the county, viz., those extensive manors that belonged respectively to the archbishop and his monks at Canterbury, the Bishop of London and his canons at St. Paul's, and the Abbey at

Westminster. All these had seignorial jurisdiction, and the charters show that whatever words may have been used to confer this authority in the earlier Saxon age, it existed. It is beyond the scope of a paper to attempt a full description of Saxon life in Middlesex or in the City. The traces of it which exist, are in many instances like wreckage, which have come down to us from the break up of an ancient form of society, and the decay of an ancient language. London has in the course of a thousand years seen many great changes, but not a greater one than in the 12th and 13th centuries, when the Anglo-Saxon tongue ceased to be spoken. It was then the old language died, many words of which we still use, in another sense, or as personal names only, such as *spinstre*, *brewstre*, *webestre*, and *bakestre*, all of which in Saxon London and Middlesex denoted women following well-known occupations. As regards Middlesex, the earliest grants of lands in it, by the Saxon kings, of which the charters, or early copies of them, have been preserved, range in date from A.D. 687 to the end of the 8th century. Some of the estates, for example, held by Westminster Abbey, were certainly in its possession centuries before the end of the Saxon period. These estates comprised the manors of Staines, Sunbury, Shepperton, Greenford, Hanwell, Cowley, Kingsbury, and Hendon, as well as the great manor close to the Abbey itself, all of which were within one jurisdiction.

Similarly the estates held by the bishop and canons of St. Paul's in Middlesex during the Saxon period comprised the manors of Twyford, Willesden, Stepney, Harlesden, Rugemere, St. Pancras, Islington,

Fulham, Hoxton, Newton, Drayton, and Stanestaple, as well as Soke of St. Paul's within the City, all of which were within another jurisdiction.

Another abbey which held an estate close to the City was the Anglo-Saxon Nunnery of Barking, to which the manor of Tyburn belonged, and which was practically the same as Marylebone. What is now Regent's Park was part of Marylebone Fields, and as the old manorial name "Fields" denotes common arable land, we arrive at the conclusion that what is now Regent's Park must have been part of the common land of the Saxon manor of Tyburn. One of the most interesting considerations in reference to the topography of Anglo-Saxon London and its suburbs, is the origin of the name Westminster. In Domesday Book it is called "The vill in which the abbey of St. Peter is situated," but very soon afterwards it became generally called Westminster. The origin of this name was clearly a popular one. It was the common name by which the abbey was known to the Saxon people of London, and later on it became its general designation. The abbey land extended over what is now the City of Westminster and the parts of London immediately east of it, *i.e.*, from the boundaries of Kensington and Chelsea on the west, to the old City boundaries on the east, and as far north as Oxford Street, the wide "here stret" mentioned in king Eadgar's charter.

Thorney Island, on which the Abbey of St. Peter was built, was one of those fluvial islands in the Thames, of which Bermondsey, Battersea, and the island known as Suthereye in the Saxon period, are examples on the south side of the river.

Thorney Isle is said from a survey made, to have been about 470 yards long and 370 yards wide. On the east side of it was the Thames, and on the west side a watercourse known as the Long Ditch, but which in Anglo-Saxon time was called Merfleote. In the boundaries of the abbey land, mentioned in the charter of king Eadgar, and which now forms practically the City of Westminster, Merfleotes or Merfleote is the starting place of the perambulation, and the place at which the circuit of the bounds finish, after passing from the City bounds by the Thames, "up on middan streame, and be lande and be strande eft on Merfleote."\*

It is sometimes taken for granted by writers who have not looked into the evidence of the early charters, that Westminster Abbey owed its origin to Edward the Confessor, the last of the Saxon kings. That king was its later benefactor. The Abbey existed nearly three centuries before the date of his death, as is shown by a charter of Offa, dated A.D. 785, in which he granted to the Abbey of St. Peter, land in Hertfordshire.†

Two centuries later, in 959, King Eadgar granted, or confirmed a previous grant to the Abbey, the land between Tyburn and St. Andrew's Church in Holborn, and in this charter the Cowford, the place I think afterwards called Knyghtsbridge, the Roman Way called the herestret, now Oxford Street, and the Old Stoke, at the bottom of what was then Holborn Hill, are mentioned.‡ There is also a charter in which Eadgar gave land to the Abbey at a place called

\* Cartularium Saxonicum, III, 692.

† Cartularium Saxonicum, I, 339.

‡ *Ibid.*, III, 692.

Lohthere's leage, between Edgeware and the River Brent, in A.D. 972. In this charter some interesting old names occur in the boundaries mentioned,\* viz., the Old Roman Way, Watling Street, Iccenesford, the River Brægent, Heandune gemearc, or the boundary of Hendon, and the king's mearc, or the boundary of Kingsbury, near Willesden.

The first mention of the Strand and Holborn, as far as I know, occur in Eadgar's charter of A.D. 959, in the words "be strande" and "holeburne."

The origin of the great religious communities of St. Paul's and Westminster is lost in the obscurity of the early Anglo-Saxon age. It is known that Æthelbert, king of Kent, established the bishopric of London, and it is stated in charters of subsequent centuries that he endowed St. Paul's. It is extremely probable that he did so, and thus the beginning of the 7th century may be accepted as the date of the connection of some, at least, of the great estates of St. Paul's in Middlesex with that religious community. These estates were given to the bishop and his church by Æthelbert or the early kings who succeeded him, either as kings of Essex or as supreme overlords of Middlesex. These royal personages appear indeed to have given away to the bishop of London, and St. Paul's, to Christchurch, Canterbury and the archbishop, to Westminster Abbey, and to Barking Abbey, very nearly all the land of royal demesne they had in Middlesex, so that at the end of the Saxon period we find, as recorded in Domesday Book, that the king was one of the smallest of the actual holders of land in the county.

\* *Ibid.*, III, 604.

The king's name, however, remains attached to Kingsbury, near Willesdon, which, to have acquired its name, must have been the property of one or more of the early kings. As the king's mearc is mentioned in A.D. 959, it may perhaps be concluded that Kingsbury passed out of the king's possession at some date between 959 and 1086, the date of Domesday survey.

Middlesex in its administration, when compared with other counties, was peculiar. It had no alderman or duke placed over it by the king as other counties had. The portreeve of London was its highest officer, and he is mentioned as early as A.D. 745.\*

Our view of Anglo-Saxon Middlesex as a county under the jurisdiction of the portreeves, the early representatives of the sheriffs of London and Middlesex, must, however, be considered in reference to the peculiar jurisdictions of the religious houses which had their great estates within it. As London itself during the Saxon age was not a city under one jurisdiction, but comprised a number of separate communities known as sokes, so Middlesex was not a county wholly under one jurisdiction. Its area as a county was naturally small, and the administrative area which was immediately connected with the City of London was necessarily much diminished by the existence of the great estates of the religious houses, which had their separate courts and administrative officers.

The chief courts of St. Paul's and the episcopal lands of London in the Saxon period appear to have been held within the soke of St. Paul's in the City, at

\* *Cartularium Saxonicum*, I, 246.

Stepney, and at Fulham. Westminster Abbey had its courts at Westminster and at Staines, and Christchurch, Canterbury, or the archbishop, had a court at Harrow. The Middlesex, which was thus under the direct administration of the City, consisted of various parts of the county only.

The peculiarity which always distinguished this county from other English counties was that the shire was abnormally small, and the chief town in it abnormally large. If the City had been separated from the shire and placed under a portreeve, the county being left under a shire reeve, the portreeve would have been in a more important position than the officer who bore the higher title of shire reeve. The portreeve of London in Saxon time was thus virtually made shire reeve of whatever parts of Middlesex remained under the king's justice. Its government thus rested on a more democratic basis, that of the free community of London. This free community is described in the Anglo-Saxon records by various names, some of them Latin terms, viz., *civitas*, *villa*, *urbs*, *oppidum*, and *vicus*. In other instances the City is mentioned by names taken from the living language of the people, as a *wic*, *tun*, *burh*, and *port*, and from this last the chief official or portreeve took his title. In one early code of laws, however, he is called the *wic-reeve*.

When the Anglo-Saxon kings endowed the great monasteries or the bishops with extensive lands, they generally gave them all the rights over those lands it was in their power to give, such as the services of the people settled on the land, the right of holding courts with the fines and forfeitures arising from the

administration of the law ; *i.e.*, the king granted the great abbeys his own prerogative of justice. It was so at Peterborough, which acquired this liberty in the 7th century, and to-day the designation Liberty of Peterborough is still used as a survival of the ancient liberty of the abbey independently of the shire. It was so in Middlesex in reference to the estates of the archbishop, the bishop and his canons at St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey. These all had seignorial jurisdiction, and their courts had the power of life and death, *i.e.*, they were independent of the king's courts. The shire court was the highest legal tribunal at that time in any county. During the Saxon age, and for many centuries later, the gibbets or gallows of the local courts existed all over the country. There were many in Anglo-Saxon London and Middlesex. The bishop and canons of St. Paul's had at one time three gibbets in the City and its early suburbs, *i.e.*, between the old walls and the later bars, *viz.*, at Cornhill, Holborn, and just outside Bishopsgate. As London grew these gibbets were abolished, and all executions decreed by the Courts of Justice belonging to St. Paul's, were carried out at Stepney and Finsbury.

The subject of Anglo-Saxon justice and the execution of criminals in Middlesex brings us to the consideration of Tyburn, the Saxon Teoburna. This was primarily the name of a stream which flowed through what is now St. James's Park and worked the abbey mill at Westminster. It was also the name of a manor that belonged to the Abbess of Barking. The manor must have been north of Oxford Street, because all the land south of it was included in the great estate that belonged to Westminster Abbey. The



boundary of the Westminster or St. Peter's Abbey land, was the "wide herestret" or Roman Road, now Oxford Street. In fixing the boundary of this land, the old Roman highway was taken as a well-known line. That boundary still remains practically the same a thousand years or more after it was first chosen. I cannot tell you when Tyburn first became the site for a gallows, but the place of execution in later centuries at Tyburn was on or quite close to Oxford Street, and its own boundary. This brings us to the fact that in the Anglo-Saxon period places of execution were very frequently at the boundaries of great lordships, or hundreds. This may be seen in the sites where old gallows existed in various counties. I could show you many examples of gallows that formerly existed on or near boundaries. From these circumstances it would appear to be probable that Tyburn was the place for the execution of criminals originally within the abbey jurisdiction, and that after the King came to reside at Westminster, its site in this respect was continued under the king's justice. The name Marylebone, formerly Maribone or St. Mary le Bourn, still reminds us of the Tyburn stream and of the Saxon Abbey of St. Mary of Barking, from which it took the dedication of the little church on the bourne.

The king, who in nearly all counties in the later Anglo-Saxon period, held the chief, or some of the chief manors within them, manors which produced a great revenue, held in Middlesex a few small areas of land only. The early kings had given nearly all the land in this county which they were able to give to the great religious houses. This is shown in a strong light by the Domesday record, which only enumerates

a few small areas as being held by the king. One of these was a piece of land consisting of twelve acres and a half only, by which the royal revenue was augmented to the extent of five shillings per annum, and which was called *Nane mannes londe*, or No Man's land. It was situated in the same hundred as Harrow, and must, I think, have been somewhere in that district. Domesday book tells us that it was held by King William, and had been held similarly by King Edward. It was a piece of land of singular interest as regards Middlesex, and of interest also in comparison with lands of the same kind in other counties, which have from time immemorial been called No Man's land. These small areas of No Man's land were in many instances the lands which small occupiers acquired by the process of squatting. It was probably squatter's land. In Hampshire we know of several small areas of land called No Man's land, and we know of the custom by which squatters in ancient time, and until almost within living memory, who settled upon unoccupied land acquired their customary rights. This was that commonly known as key-hole tenure, under which by ancient custom, if a man built a hut, covered it, and lighted his fire within it during the course of one night, he acquired by custom a right not to be disturbed. As time went on he was allowed no doubt to improve the architecture of his habitation, but for undisturbed possession it was necessary for him to build it, roof it in with sods or other material, and establish himself with a hearth and a fire burning on it, all without observation, on forest land subject to common rights, or some similar site. One of the most remarkable observations that may be made at

the present time round the outskirts of the New Forest, is the existence of hamlets of very small habitations. These apparently were originally huts of squatters. Similar groups of ancient cottages may be observed round the fringes of ancient forests in other parts of England.

The origin of this custom in very ancient time must, I think, be attributable to one of two causes, or to both of them. The sacred character of the hearth was a feature of antiquity which came down to the historic period from prehistoric ages, and this may have led to the toleration of these ancient squatters' hearths. Another cause which may have led to the custom is that by which temporary huts were allowed to be erected on the common lands, far distant from the villages or permanent settlements, as shelters on the summer pastures. If we apply this to Middlesex in the Anglo-Saxon period, we may see in the huts or small cottars' dwellings on No Man's land, the later survivals of the summer shelters in the forest of the herds-men, which gradually became permanently occupied. The earliest name for the Anglo-Saxon tribal people who settled in and round what is now Harrow was "gumeninga hergae," the descendants or sons of the men of hergae or Harrow. In a previous paper I have referred to Harrow as a very early possession of the archbishop, or of his monastery of Christchurch, Canterbury, and I have shown also that the so-called Jutes of Kent must have been largely Goths. The word "guman" is the old northern Gothic word for man, and the word gumeninga is a plural form denoting the sons of the men, derived from it. In Scandinavia, including northern Gothland, the custom of

erecting temporary shelters on the common pastures for occupation in summer still prevails, and it probably prevailed on the high forest land of northern Middlesex close to the City as it was in Saxon time.

The name Finsbury shows by its termination that it is of Saxon date. It was no doubt *an agricultural village*, and the name Old Street probably marks the line of one of its earliest roads.

Another small agricultural community that existed close to Saxon London was that just outside Bishopsgate. *Domesday Book* tells us that at the time of the survey, and previously in the time of king Edward, the canons of St. Paul's had, "at the gate of the bishop," ten cottars who held nine acres, for which they paid 18s. 6d. rent. This little community was composed of cottars, or agricultural labourers with a certain degree of freedom, living under the canons as their lords.

Another interesting Saxon estate was that of Westminster Abbey in and near Staines. It included Yeoveney on the west of Staines, Halyford and Scheperton situated east or south-east of it. The name Halliford survives, and is a name which tells us of some sacred mark such as a cross or crucifix, placed near the ford over the stream by the abbey to show that it was church land. In one of the Saxon charters relating to Westminster crosses are mentioned as among its boundary marks, and it was a common circumstance in Saxon time for a crucifix, known as a *Christe mæl*, to be set up as a boundary mark. The curious name Watersplash farm also survives near an old fording place at Haliford, and this is clearly a survival of the use of the ancient ford, by

the splashing of the water as horses and cattle passed through the stream. Similar old splash names still survive where fords existed in other counties. Halliford was also called Hallowford, or the holy ford, in later centuries from its Saxon crucifix or cross.

As we might expect to find, many of the Saxon names in the boundaries of land in Middlesex have been lost, or become modified in the course of a thousand years. The old manorial names, Rugemere and Tyburn, have disappeared in those of St. Pancras and Marylebone. Others became obsolete through physical changes; for example, it is difficult now to say exactly where the old waterway at Westminster was, called by the Saxon name Merfleot. We know it must have been north and west of the abbey, as it was part of the water channel which made Thorney an island.

In the City one of the old names whose origin is obscure is Lothbury. It is certainly of Saxon date, and may have arisen, as Mr. J. Horace Round has pointed out, from a Lotharingian landowner in the time of Edward the Confessor. It may, however, be much earlier, for Hlothere was the name of one of the kings of Kent and a grandson of Æthelbert, who founded the bishopric of London. In any case, there was a place called Lothere's leage near London in A.D. 972, named apparently after a man called Lothere. On the other hand it should be remembered that the Anglo-Saxon word "hloth," meant a company of thieves, and bury, a stronghold. Lothbury may consequently have been understood as denoting a stronghold, not as now in the bank for gold, but for Anglo-Saxon thieves who would appropriate other people's gold if they had the opportunity.

One of the most ancient of the names on the west of Saxon London was that of the old Roman way, the "wide herestrat" of the charters, now Oxford Street, which is one of the widest of our old streets. Eastward of this along the Roman way the church of "Sancte Andreas or Holeburne" is mentioned in A.D. 959, from which we know that a church dedicated to St. Andrew existed on or quite close to the present church of St. Andrew, nearly a thousand years ago.

Some of the old boundary marks of the Saxon age in Middlesex are of interest, such as those I have mentioned, the "kinge's mearc" and "heandune's gemærc," which may be identified certainly with the old limits of Kingsbury and Hendon. Two of these old boundary marks of the county are of special interest, viz., the stones at the south-west and north-west corners, one at Staines, and the other between Harefield and Rickmansworth. The name Staines is written in the Saxon charters in the singular, Stána or Stáne, the stone from which the name has arisen. The other stone which marked the jurisdiction of the city in the north-west of the county was known as the city boundary stone, and its modern representative may still be seen on the roadside north of Harefield.

This subject of boundaries brings us to one of the most ancient of all the remains of the Saxon period in Middlesex, the Grimsditch, at Pinner, and Harrow Weald. It is but a high mound, now much worn down, and a ditch, now much filled up, extending for some miles, near the north-west boundary of the county, the ditch having been on the Middlesex side. It was probably a tribal boundary. The name is mythological, and it is certainly one of the Saxon

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period, and pre-christian. It may have been given by the early settlers in Middlesex to work that existed before their time. There are several dykes called Grimsditch in other counties, and as the name Grimsby for the Lincolnshire town is found in one of the Northern Sagas,\* the name is probably early Scandinavian. The Saxons settled in Wiltshire called a similar ditch Wansdyke. After the introduction of christianity, such an excavation would probably be called *Devil's ditch*, as in the case of the great ditch across Newmarket Heath. A work of this kind, whose origin the pagan Saxons could not understand, they attributed to Woden, and after their conversion, the origin of such old engineering works, as well as here and there the origin of the Roman roads were attributed to the work of the devil.

We can look on Saxon Middlesex from various aspects, and view some of the phases of country life round London in no uncertain light. Its ecclesiastical aspect, for example, during the later Saxon period, was very different from what it was during the time of the settlement. During the early period the people were pagans; during the later period they were christians. The name Grimsditch, which I have mentioned, reminds us of the mythological Grim, which was one of the northern names for Woden. The name Harrow, also, anciently *hergae*, denotes a temple, a heathen place of worship, on a high place, such as heathen worshippers commonly chose. It is not necessary to go out of Middlesex to find a site of ancient pagan worship on a high place. We first meet with the name

\* Heimskringla. Hakon the Good, c. 3.



Harrow in A.D. 787. I know of only two old place names of the Saxon age in England of the same significance, one called Pepper Harrow, near Godalming, and the other, now lost, in Sussex. Harrow, one of the highest places in Middlesex, must have been during the early Anglo-Saxon period a sacred heathen place. There was probably a deep significance in its early grant to the archbishop, and in the erection on the highest site in Harrow of a church by the highest of English prelates.

While pagan rites were dying out, and that was a long struggle, during the Saxon age, the earliest church at Harrow must have been to both London and Middlesex a symbol of the triumph of christianity over pagan worship.

The influence of Saxon London as a city on Middlesex can be viewed from many aspects. London in this period was relatively a great city. The evidence I have brought forward in former papers proves this. Three great roads, in addition to others, passed through the county into the City. These were the highways of its internal trade to the north and to the west. In addition there was the great waterway of the Thames and the lesser waterway of the Lea. Along these roads and on these rivers, merchants with their wares or goods for sale, were constantly passing and re-passing, and on these highways for trade the king's peace prevailed. This was an Anglo-Saxon institution for the better protection of merchants and their goods. If any merchant was injured on one of the Roman highways, or on a navigable river, a more severe penalty was inflicted than for a similar offence elsewhere. The king's peace thus prevailed

through various parts of Middlesex and on the rivers that formed its boundaries on the south and east. We have next to consider the old markets on the outskirts of the county, Chipping Barnet and Stanestaple. These names, Chipping and Staple, denote that they were Saxon markets, and they must have had some connection with the supply of country produce to the great City. At these markets there must have been, in accordance with king Æthelstan's law, witnesses to transactions. "Let there be," says Æthelstan's 5th law, "at every bargain two or three witnesses." Go to one of these markets or fairs now, and after much haggling you will see the buyer strike the hand of the seller, as his forefathers did a thousand years ago.

The earliest primitive places for the exchange of commodities we can trace in the country districts are the Staples at the boundaries of primitive settlements, hundreds, or counties. These early markets of Middlesex are on its boundaries. By the market rights of London itself, other places nearer to it probably could not have markets.

Again, the citizens of London had hunting rights over Middlesex; such a privilege could not have failed to have exerted an influence in the direction of freedom on the people of the county. This seems the more probable when we remember that within about two centuries of the Conquest, the people of the county claimed as an immemorial custom, the right of fishing in the River Brent, and the proprietors of the adjoining lands were restricted from erecting weirs which would interfere with the accustomed right of fishing there by the commonalty, nets of due

assize being used. As such a right as this is not likely to have originated after the Norman Conquest, it must have been a customary privilege come down from the Saxon period.

The greatest influence, however, which Anglo-Saxon London exerted on Middlesex, was probably that which affected the social condition of the country people. The citizens of London being all personally free, were subject to no lord except the king, and were under the government of their own courts and customary laws. The inferior tenants in all parts of Middlesex were manorial tenants, mostly villeins, who cultivated so much land for themselves, and worked part of their time with their teams for their lords, and cottars who occupied cottages and had a small area of land around it, generally about four acres, and who were liable to work one day in the week at least for the lord. A great free community such as the City of London, was thus in near proximity to agricultural communities under their lords. Personal freedom in the Saxon period outside the cities and boroughs was variable. The manorial tenants were more or less free according to the custom of various places. In Kent they were all personally free. In Middlesex they were more free than in most counties. The villein tenants in most counties occupied a virgate of land. In Middlesex some of them occupied four times as much, or a hide, that is, they were more important men. In Middlesex also most of the manorial labourers were cottars, who were more or less free, with land of their own. In this we cannot but recognise the influence of the City. The administration of justice under the system of compurgation by

which a free man's innocence or guilt could be proved by so many oaths of his kindred or guildsmen was the system under which only the free men were acquitted or convicted. For those living in parts of Middlesex who had not the status of free men, the mode of trial was by ordeal. The earliest code of laws specially drawn up for London was that of Æthelstan about a century and a-half before the Norman Conquest, probably about the year 925. The special code, as it must be presumed to have been necessary, proves the relative greatness of the City at that time. For trial by compurgation to be equitable, it was essential that the oath takers should be truthful, and this was an apparent difficulty in Æthelstan's time, and probably always had been. That king, however, made an effort to reform the evil of this archaic system by ordering that search should be made for men who were known not to be liars, so that there might always be a number of truthful jurors forthcoming when their attendance was required to vouch the character of a litigant.\*

Trial by compurgation was, however, the right of only a privileged class among the Saxon people. For the others who owed bond service to a lord, unless their lords would answer for them, there was no such trial, for they had legally no kinsmen whose oaths would be accepted. For them consequently if any man was accused of a crime, he had to abide by the Judgment of God, *i.e.*, an appeal was made to the archaic system of the Ordeal. There were ordeals of various kinds. I shall only allude very briefly to them, and I do so because there are still existing in

\*Inderwick, F. A. *The King's Peace* (quoting the *Laws of Æthelstan*) p. 10.

various parts of Middlesex some old buildings, portions of which are as old as the 11th century, and some of the walls may be even older. I mean the most ancient churches. The Ordeal of hot iron or hot water as an appeal to the Judgment of God was a religious office, and took place within the Anglo-Saxon churches. It was not finally suppressed until the 13th century, when this archaic custom, continued in early christian time as a religious office, finally gave way under the influence of Trial by Jury and the order of the Pope.

This society has visited the churches of Perivale, East Bedford, and others in Middlesex, in which the solemn Anglo-Saxon office of Trial by Ordeal may have taken place, and probably did take place. In a county so much frequented, accusations of crime against some poor manorial tenant whose kindred were legally no kindred, must have occasionally been made. To establish his innocence he had to appeal to the Judgment of God, the Ordeal of red hot iron or boiling water being two of its forms. The process of each is well known.

Another form of ordeal which is less known, was that of cold water. The accused man was stripped of his clothes; his hands were bound crosswise to his feet, and his body was sprinkled with holy water. The cross from the altar and a book of the gospels were given him to kiss. Then a cord with a knot in it, two ells and a-half from the extremity, was fastened round his waist, and he was slowly lowered into a pool of water. If he sank so as to draw the knot below the surface, he was pronounced innocent. If he had the misfortune to float, he was delivered

over to the officers of justice. If, unfortunately for himself he was a fat man, it is difficult to see how he could escape. This reads like romance. In reality, it was part of the semi-ecclesiastical judicial procedure of the Anglo-Saxon people of Middlesex. London appears, however, to have been free from this kind of trial.

Another Saxon method of settling legal accusations of crime was Wager of Battle. This is mentioned in the Laws of king Alfred. The accused man could claim in court to settle the matter by fighting his accuser, and although the citizens of London were by special custom exempt from challenges of this kind, the people of Middlesex were not. In a county through which so much traffic passed, it is certain that trial by combat must have been challenged or claimed more frequently than in some other counties. England is indeed a country of astonishing survivals of customary law. Although practically obsolete for centuries, this Anglo-Saxon process survived until within living memory, the last cases on record having occurred on November 17th, 1817, when an accused murderer challenged the brother of a murdered woman in a trial before Lord Ellenborough in accordance with ancient customary law, and the challenge not being accepted, he escaped the penalty of his presumed crime. It is probable that he had as his legal adviser a man who was an archæologist.

In former papers I have alluded to the forest land of Middlesex, and to its inhabitants, to the herdsmen, the swineherds, the charcoal burners, the unlicensed coiners, and the thieves. There were many other circumstances of interest connected with the Anglo-Saxon

woodlands and forests. One of these was the regulation concerning honey. Wild bees abounded in the woods, making their hives in the hollows of the old trees. Honey was one of the sources of revenue from a Saxon forest or woodland. No man could take honey from a hollow tree without being liable to fine or punishment,\* the owner of the woods being the owner of the honey. The Anglo-Saxon bees legally worked only for the lord of the wood.

Again, on the roads leading to London passing through its forest land there existed ale houses, to which people in Saxon time often resorted for liquid refreshments, sometimes drinking from a common measure, generally, no doubt, of ample capacity. These drinking vessels were commonly marked by pegs. The first man drank to his peg and passed it on to the next, who drank to the second peg, and so on. This custom was the result of a public house reform by King Eadgar under the guidance of Dunstan. He tried to lessen the evils of excessive ale drinking by ordering that these pegs should be fastened to drinking horns at regular intervals, and whosoever drank beyond the pegs at one draught should be liable to punishment.† This, I think, must generally in practice have been a liability of paying for more ale.

Dunstan was Bishop of London, and he forbade his priests to be in no wise "ale scops" or reciters in an ale house, a prohibition which tells its own tale of Anglo-Saxon life in and round the City.

The word "gumeninga" I have mentioned in reference to Harrow, and the Gothic word "gumma,"

\* Inderwick, F. A. "The King's Peace," p. 145.

† Bickerdyke, J. "Curiosities of Ale and Beer," p. 97, quoting Strutt.

for man, reminds us of the marriage customs of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers. Ale drinking, which was so common among them, was, with vocal entertainment, an indispensable accompaniment to rejoicings, such as those at marriages. Bede, writing towards the end of the 7th century, tells us that at Anglo-Saxon entertainments, it was the custom for all present to sing in their turn. There is no reason to doubt, as far as I know, that the word bridal is a surviving form of bride-ale, its original significance being now forgotten. To be invited to a bride ale in Anglo-Saxon London or Middlesex, was to be invited to a drinking bout. The Gothic word "gumma," a man, survives in the modern word bridegroom. Some special barrels of ale were brewed for a Saxon bride ale, at which the guests consumed also the great loaf made by the bride, as her introduction to the duties of house-keeping. This loaf was presumably the ancestor of the wedding cake. It was not every Anglo-Saxon matron in London, however, who made her own bread. There were bakers in the City, and we know they were forbidden to heat their ovens with fern, straw, stubble, or reeds. They were compelled to use wood, and by the assize of bread also compelled to give good weight. As a last punishment for short weight, a baker was drawn on a hurdle through the City and forbidden henceforth to practice his trade within it. I need scarcely remind you that a journey on a hurdle was the most ignominious mode of travelling in Anglo-Saxon London.

For judicial proceedings, whether concerning bakers or others, it was necessary that freemen, who in some counties were commonly called soemen,



should be available in each hundred and county to constitute the Hundred Courts and for other legal purposes as oath takers, and we find in the Domesday record that at the close of the Saxon period there were some free men of this description in Middlesex. The earliest forty shilling freeholders, of whom we have heard so much, were no doubt their later representatives. Anglo-Saxon justice in country districts could not be carried on without such men.

The records concerning London in the time of Æthelstan, as already mentioned, tell us of thieves who lurked in the woods and forests within reach of the City. Their usual punishment, if caught, was death on the gallows.

In reference to a thief at large for robbery in Saxon London, the Dooms of Æthelstan relating to the City say : " If we should be able to come at him that the same should be done to him that would be done to a Wylise thief, or that he be hanged." The Wylise thief was a Welsh thief who was much in evidence in the Saxon period on the border counties, and also in some others, such as Huntingdonshire, in the interior of England. From the reference in the Saxon records to the trade in cattle with the Welsh, and also to the Wylise thief, in the Saxon Dooms of London, it would appear that among cattle drovers there were Welsh thieves sometimes at large in Middlesex. This reference to Welsh thieves appears to give a probability of great antiquity to the well-known doggerel lines concerning a Welshman's former habit of appropriating goods which did not belong to him. The laws of Anglo-Saxon London are particularly directed against thieves. There were great

thieves and little thieves as there are now, and if caught, the big thieves were certainly hanged.

Great indeed must have been the risk from thieves in such a city. Think of the arts of metal working alone. In these arts, during the later Saxon age, there was one in which London was probably the centre, viz., that connected with gold work and embroidery. This art appears to have been introduced into England by the northern Goths of Scandinavia, who preserved the metallic arts during the downfall of the Roman Empire. Very elegant specimens of Anglo-Saxon gold embroidery have been preserved from the time of Ælfred. The Goldsmiths of London are known to have been prosperous citizens before the close of the Saxon period. In those days even Germans came to England to learn the art of gold-working from the Anglo-Saxons.

For this art to have flourished and its manufactures to have found a ready market in London, a supply of gold was necessary, and this the country itself supplied. The geological evidence that gold was obtained from old alluvial deposits near some old auriferous quartz rocks in the northern and western counties of England appears conclusive. This gold embroidery of our remote forefathers found its way by the eastern trade route across Europe, and excited the admiration of even Greeks and Saracens. One of the Northern Sagas tells us of the admiration it also excited in Iceland.

For the purposes of its foreign trade and supplies for daily life, it is certain that in the Saxon period there were men passing through Middlesex, to and from London, whose business took them on long

journeys. Of such were the salt men, corn and metal merchants, the cattle sellers, and the chapmen mentioned in a former paper. In the laws of Ine, in the 8th century, such a traveller is mentioned under the designation of "a far coming man." London being the chief commercial mart of England in the Saxon period, it is certain that more "far coming men" must have been constantly passing through Middlesex to and from the City, than through any other county. The laws of Ine tell us what a stranger or far coming man had to do on his journey in Wessex, and a somewhat similar law probably prevailed in Mercia, the ancient laws of which, except a few fragments, have been lost. Ine's law says: "If a far coming man, or a stranger, journey through a wood out of the highway, and neither shout or blow his horn, he is to be held for a thief, either to be slain or redeemed." In the woods of Anglo-Saxon Middlesex, there must have been a great deal of the necessary shouting or horn blowing as honest men passed through them. Amongst these far coming men, there must have been drovers taking cattle and sheep for the food of the great Saxon city, which could not exist without such supplies. This brings us to the subject of cattle brought into Middlesex as payments in kind to the king.

It was probably not until the reign of the last Saxon king, that the payments of the king's ancient food rents were made at Westminster. He made Westminster his chief residence, his predecessors having, from the traditions of Wessex, regarded Winchester as the centre of their government. There were many manors in Wiltshire, Hampshire, and

Dorset, which by a custom come down from a time immemorial, paid the king a certain rent in corn, cattle, and other food. This they had to deliver for the king's household. When Edward the Confessor transferred his court from Winchester to Westminster, the food had to be delivered at Westminster, and we know, from the evidence of an old man, taken in the time of Henry I, that the roads leading to Westminster in the last Saxon king's reign, were, at certain times of the year, choked with waggons and droves of cattle brought there in payment of these royal dues. During the reign of the last Saxon king, however, the change began by which in lieu of this archaic food supply for the royal household, so much money in white silver was paid. This was known as Blanch ferm, or white money. This change was, in those cases in which the computation was considered satisfactory, probably an advantage to the people who paid the old food rents, for in driving their cattle to Westminster, they were liable to lose some of them by the way through thieves, or by the animals straying. One thing is certain. We may still see at Westminster the very ancient vaulted chamber, probably built in the time of the last Saxon king, near to or in which the fineness of the silver offered in lieu of the old food rents was assayed to show that the full value of the Blanche ferm was received.

One of the survivals of the Anglo-Saxon period which has come down to us in many parts of England, is the ancient provision of the manor for wood and pasture, often an outlying part of the manor. In Middlesex we still have outlying parts of Edmonton, Hillingdon, Hanwell, Ickenham, and Cowley, some of which were probably similar arrangements.

Of all the ancient manorial arrangements for pasture and wood that existed in Saxon Middlesex, very few survive. At Hadley, however, close to Barnet, a part of its ancient commonland and wood is still left, and the open pasture there, with its wood, and gates to prevent the animals from straying beyond its limits, is a pleasing sight for archæologists, and a surviving example close to modern London of the remains of an Anglo-Saxon institution.

The tenants on the country manors in Middlesex had, in addition to pasture for cattle, other forest and woodland rights, viz., housebote and haybote, whose names clearly point to their Saxon origin, *i.e.*, they had a right to the wood for the building and repair of the houses and cattle sheds, and for the making of necessary hays or fences, the delivery to be made or approved by the wood seer. The wood the cottars were entitled to for fuel, etc., was probably the same as that by custom at Loughton and at Wimbledon, and known in later centuries as a "Christmas block and a Midsummer bough."\*

The cottars, however, were only entitled to such wood as they could carry away on their backs, a regulation which many an artist has commemorated in pictures of rural scenery, without perhaps understanding its ancient significance.

Among the natural features of interest in Saxon Middlesex were the fords. The names of most of these still survive, although they have long since been superseded by bridges. The best example I know in the county where the old ford may still be seen close to the bridge by which the ancient road now crosses the

\* Fisher, W. R. "The Forest of Essex," 258.

stream, is at Greenford, near Ealing. We may stand and see by the great extent of pasture land there, how the place got its name. Its name is true to its surroundings to-day, as it was a thousand years ago. The name Old Ford for a passage across the Lea, survives, and the name Stratford also reminds us of this ford, which must have been the most important ford across which a direct road into London passed.

Fords necessarily prove the existence of roads at the places where they existed. In the northern parts of Middlesex some of the old roads, worn down by the traffic of ages below the level of the ground on either side, are a manifest survival of the Saxon age. They are some of our chief antiquities of this period, and the old bridle roads, now in some cases only pathways, are equally significant. Again, from the lines of the old Roman highway going to Edgware, or across what was Hounslow Heath, you may see roads or lanes branching off from the ancient highways. These are the same old roads our Saxon forefathers used, and at some of their sharp bends we may note the probable sites of old settlements which have long since disappeared, and which often caused such turns in the road. The Saxon age in Middlesex still affects our lines of travel in the country districts. It does more than this. It influences our lines of locomotion even in parts of London, as may be observed at Stepney in the irregular lines of the oldest streets there, which when houses were first built along them, followed the irregular roads of the Saxon village.

The most notable of all the fords that formerly existed in Middlesex was that very remarkable one which has interesting archæological associations of its

own, and which led in certain conditions of the river across the Thames itself into Surrey near Walton.

Of the bridges, the earliest was of course London Bridge, another existed at Staines, and another at Kingston in Saxon time. Of others over the larger streams, those at Stratford and Uxbridge were probably the earliest.

To the Middlesex stokes or staked places, by which some sort of a crossing place was made over alluvial marshes and streams, we have several references in the Anglo-Saxon land grants, the most frequented one being the old stoke at the foot of Holborn Hill I mentioned in a former paper. It is so named in Eadgar's charter to Westminster, and its site must have been near the present line of Holborn Viaduct, across the Fleet rivulet, and the marshy ground or the Lundene fenn, mentioned as adjoining it.

The same charter tells us of a stoke named Pollene stocce west of Westminster, and the named Stoke Newington also points to the existence of another stoke at the Saxon Neuton, now Newington.

It is of some interest to consider the probable level of Saxon London. In all old towns the streets rise from century to century. In Southampton there still exist ancient Norman wine cellars which were entered at a level six feet below the present level of the streets. The Roman level beneath the present streets of London varies, but where it has been ascertained, as in Cheapside, it was about sixteen or eighteen feet below the present level. The floor or level of Anglo-Saxon London was probably from ten to twelve feet below that of the existing streets.

Between the City of Westminster it may have been somewhat less. In Westminster, and especially near the Abbey, the surface has probably risen more than in the Strand or Whitehall. In digging the foundations for modern buildings on or near the course of the great ditch or Anglo-Saxon Merfleet, much alluvium has been met with. The buildings of Scotland Yard rest on very deep foundations, built from a depth of forty feet. Some of the old houses near the Abbey, but along the alluvium, were built on piles. The Merfleet stream appears to have had a curved course. At the edge of the alluvium or beneath it, there was a deposit of river gravel, or sand, or both. Hence the name Strand. The foundations of the new War Office are laid upon this gravel, this ancient strand, at varying depths, according to the varying depth of the gravel beneath the surface, part of the foundations being very deep, and part comparatively shallow, all resting on the gravel bed, which forms a better foundation than would be got by making the foundations at a uniform depth.

This river gravel bed is a continuation of that from which the Strand obtained its Anglo-Saxon name. Similarly to some buildings close to Westminster, it is certain that some Anglo-Saxon houses close to the City at Moorgate, Finsbury, and elsewhere on the London Fen were built on piles. We have no exact knowledge of the materials of which the bulk of the houses in London during this period were constructed, but we know that stone houses were the exception. It was the richer citizens alone who could afford to build their houses with stone. Most of the



dwellings were probably constructed of wood, and as far as known the earliest regulations for building in London were made about a century after the Norman Conquest, when Fitz-Alwyne's Assize was enforced, and this was probably the earliest Building Act. Under its provisions, party walls were required to be made of stone three feet thick, and sixteen feet high, apparently with wood and plaster above this height. The houses were required to be covered with tiles or thatch. Brick making was a lost art in England in the Saxon period, but tile making survived.

Fires, of course, in the City must have been common, and in the year A.D. 764 a very great fire occurred, comparable in its destruction to that of the 17th century. It is, however, practically certain that even as late as the 10th century, some buildings of the Roman period existed in the Saxon City, for in that century Ethelweard in his chronicle tells us that in his time such buildings did exist in England. Wood, however, was the chief building material of the Saxon City. The earliest Icelandic writer, Snorre Sturlason, tells us in one of the Sagas that Olaf, king of Norway, as an ally of King Ethelred, pulled down some old houses in London to use the wood as shield coverings for his ships in his attack on the Danes when they held London Bridge.

This was in the year 1014. The attack was successful, and the bridge of Saxon London fell, owing to the clever method by which it was attacked. After this success of King Olaf as the ally of the English King Æthelred, one of the Norse Skalds, Ottar Svarte, is traditionally said to have broken out into song, to express the Northmen's joy of the victory,

a song of triumph, sung from age to age in ancient Norway and Iceland :

London Bridge is broken down,  
 Gold is won and high renown,  
 Shields rebounding,  
 War horns sounding,  
 Hild is shouting in the din.  
 Arrows singing,  
 Mail coats ringing,  
 Odin makes our Olaf win.

That Olaf was afterwards known as St. Olave, and the dedication of the Church of St. Olave, Tooley Street, Southwark, still reminds us of his victory. Although the old English annalists tell us nothing of this incident in the humiliation of their country, I am not aware of any reason for doubting its general accuracy.

If we should be interested in Anglo-Saxon legends and folk-lore, Middlesex would probably be the least promising of English counties to supply material for that study. Its history in this respect must have been much the same as that of London. The busy current of national life, changing in its aspect from age to age, must have had a greater influence in Middlesex in the extinction of folk-lore and old legends than in other counties. There is, however, one remarkable fragment of an old tale that has survived, in the legend of the Two Kings of Brentford, which appears to have had its origin in the Anglo-Saxon age. The legend has passed into a proverb, applicable to the inconvenience arising from a divided authority. If we seek for an explanation of its origin we shall not be able, I think, to place it later than the time of our Saxon forefathers.

In the first place, no two kings have ever, during peace, exercised authority in England since the Anglo-Saxon or Anglo-Danish period. The legend probably refers to King Edmund and King Cnut, who were concerned with Brentford in 1016. It was a frontier war, and Edmund and Cnut fought a battle.\* The story of the two kings may, however, possibly be as old as the 8th century, for there is known letter of Waldhere, Bishop of London, to Archbishop Berctwald, relating to the meeting appointed to take place at Brentford in A.D. 705, to settle some disputes between Wessex and Essex.

Our knowledge of Saxon Brentford is supplemented by Snorré Sturlason. The reference to it, and to the two kings, *Edmund and Cnut*, reminds us of a very remarkable primitive institution by which they were connected in a sacred bond, that of sworn brotherhood. They had been enemies, but made peace, divided the country between them, and entered into the bond of sworn brotherhood, no mere profession of future friendship, but a compact made by a weird and solemn ceremony, no doubt come down from pagan time. We know what it was from one of the Northern Sagas, viz., the mingling of their blood in the impression made by a footprint. This took place near Gloucester, and it reminds us of a somewhat similar custom still prevailing in parts of Africa.

It was in the next year, 1017, that Cnut had the perfidious Earl Eadric executed in London, for plotting against his sworn brother, King Edmund, and causing his death. Only one of the existing MS.

\* Henry of Huntingdon's Chronicle.

copies of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle\* tells us of this act of vengeance, and the chronicler adds the words that the earl was executed "very rightly." It is a touching story, for after Edmund's death there was but one king in England who could exercise authority at Brentford or elsewhere, and he soon afterwards made a pilgrimage to Glastonbury, to visit his brother Edmund's tomb and mourn his loss.

In previous papers I have referred to some of the customs of Anglo-Saxon London, which we are able to discover in an indirect way, and I have shown that they resembled in several respects the known ancient customs of Kent. We know that there were recognised Saxon laws and customs of London, and that they were written in a MS. book. Fabyan, in his *Chronicle*, tells us this, and of the loss of that old book. This was perhaps the greatest archæological literary loss the City ever sustained. Fabyan tells us that the names of the early portreeves were written in it. He says of it, also, "the lawes and customys used within this cite were regestryed in a boke called Domysday in Saxon tung than used, but in later dayes, when the said lawes and customes alteryd and chaunged, and for consideration also that the said boke was of small hande and sore defaced, it was the lesse set by, so that it was embesyld or loste, so that the remembraunce of such rulers as were before the time of Richarde the firste is loste and forgotten." As Fabyan died in 1512, the old book probably disappeared in the 13th or 14th century, after Old English had ceased to be a living language. It is, I think, an object worthy of this Society, to do what it can by archæological research, to recover some part of that loss.

\* MS. Cott. Domit. A VIII, a 1017.

In conclusion, I may say that the evidence I have brought before this Society, shows, I think, that although, in the course of a thousand years, great changes have followed each other from age to age, some at least of the old landmarks of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers in London and Middlesex are practically indestructible, unless by forced and arbitrary measures. Some of the customs of the Saxon period have even survived to our own time. The place names have been modified in spelling and in sound, but most of them in Middlesex, and many old street names in London still remain. The boundaries of many ancient manors and parishes have been changed, but some are still practically the same as in the Saxon age. This Society may appropriately exert its influence in preventing the loss of the old names in both London and Middlesex. By preserving all of them we can, we may have the satisfaction of passing on to posterity some of the traces of Anglo-Saxon life which have come down to us. No new high-sounding names, however imperial or royal, could repay us for the loss of the Saxon street names still surviving in the City. In the north of Middlesex the Grimsditch is likely, in the course of time, to disappear, but even if it should be partly built on, as at Pinner, the old name might well be preserved. The preservation of Saxon names appears the more necessary when we remember that *relics of that period are much rarer than others of the Roman or any later age.*

The Roman age in London and Middlesex has left us many relics, but few living results. It has had *but a faint influence on our lives.* The Anglo-Saxon age, on the contrary, has left us very few relics, but

as it was the age of our earliest tribal forefathers in England, it has, even amidst the ceaseless activity of modern life in this great City and its old county, left us enduring traces of that period which was the beginning of our national history.

As an example probably of such a survival, let me in a few last words say that the dragon in the arms of the City may have come down from the Saxon period, a long forgotten emblem of the supremacy of Wessex over the other kingdoms of Saxon England, used as the Saxon standard at the battle of Hastings, used as the standard by Henry III, and adopted as part of the City arms in the time of some later king.

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