

CLITTERHOUSE MANOR, CRICKLEWOOD, HENDON.

BY

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ST. DUNSTAN, Archbishop of Canterbury, acquired the manor of Hendon and caused King Edgar to grant it direct to the Abbey of Westminster. The great charter exists among the Archives of Westminster Abbey, dated A.D. 959, and the Donative charter of Dunstan, which includes much other property specifies as well as Hendon, five houses in Bleecenham and six in Lotherslege also three cassatos in a place called Codenlaw. Cowdenlaw, as we shall see, is identified as Cowhouse, now Avenue Farm. Bleecenham, is not located, but, meaning Blackened House, may have been afterwards Clitterhouse, (? burnt down by Danes on leaving). Lother's lega appears to have been situated between Edgware and the Brent, and now the northern part of Hendon, encircled by Hale Lane. The possessions of the Abbey were confirmed to them by Charters of Edward the Confessor in 1047 and 1066. The second mentions 16 hides and demesne 20, and in Hampstead five. The authenticity of these Charters is doubted by experts and although the boundaries are said to date from pre-Norman times it is questionable whether the land south of the Brent belonged to Hendon Manor, or parish, until after the Conquest.

Sir Montagu Sharpe in his "Middlesex in British, Roman and Saxon Times" states that in consequence of the opposition to his coronation manifested by the Abbot of St. Albans the lands in Middlesex held by that Abbey were confiscated and were still in the Crown's hands at the time of the Domesday

Survey. If this is so, it may explain why the land between Finchley and Cricklewood became lay property and were later made sub-manors of Hendon, Hodford and Cowhouse extending from Brent Street to the Hampstead Border and Clitterhouse between Brent river and "the Creek" at Cricklewood, south west of the other. The Domesday book records the 20 hides which the Abbot of St. Peter's held in Hendon and the five he held in Hampstead but this measurement is based on Saxon ones, which in turn closely followed the general lay-out of the Roman pagus as demonstrated by Sir Montagu Sharpe.

Because the Crown held these lands, they, with those of Finchley and others, escaped records in the Domesday book; but I venture to believe that the moat at Clitterhouse dates from Danish invasions, if not from Roman. It was in the winter of 879-880 that the Danes encamped at Fulham and constructed there the moat which until a year or so ago existed round the Manor House (or Bishop's Palace). That contains no less than 28 acres. This was then their base, and may reasonably have had out-posts (for their own safety) on Watling Street, at such a situation as Clitterhouse. The province east of Watling Street was under Danish law until 886 by treaty between Guthrum and King Alfred. "Reed-moat" at Islington was Roman, and enclosed 45 yards square. Hornsey moat had two deep ditches, and enclosed 70 yards square, St. Pancras may have been of Roman origin, Fulham, Hammersmith and "Ravenscroft" are believed to be Danish, and Twyford, Acton, Finchley and Finsbury (or Newington) probably Saxon. There are remains of Roman occupation in Hendon and along the road. During this long period of some 900 years the Great British and Roman road was much used but latterly had become neglected. Narrow as the actual Roman Road was. land on either side was laid bare for a distance of some hundred feet to prevent the risk of ambush. The natives, British and Saxons, being intimate with their own byeways, were,

however, able to rush down on invaders from the little hillocks and dense forest, and thus take unwelcome travellers by surprise. This sort of guerilla warfare went on from generation to generation, degenerating into the pillage executed by "Knights of the Road." *Honourable* Knights there were, who guarded wayfarers; but many so called, and officially recognised "Knights," demanded money for their own pockets, and so late as the 17th and 18th century there were skilled riders, who having inherited the habit frequented this great road to London for no other purpose than their own gain. On the way in Willesden, at a farm still standing, called Dollis, local families named Turvin and Sheppards were highway robbers by habit and the hiding place and modes of egress for famous highwaymen are known to have existed there. This is almost at the back door of Oxgate, which, in conjunction with Clitterhouse, was peopled for defence of the highway.

I may here remark that the word Brigand may well be associated with the river Brent which the Romans called *Breganta*. It was by the river the Danes and other 'Creekers' silently reached the most prosperous farmsteads and carried off the valuables setting fire to the native homesteads. The Saxon Bleccenham may well have been one of these raided homesteads, blackened by fire, but restored in time to a structure almost fireproof. A house of clay, truly, but of such thickness of wall that even a modern bullet would scarcely penetrate. It was reinforced by oaken timber and overlaid with logs, on which clay sun-dried tiles would be laid at a slight angle. (Blackett's Well was by Childs Hill).

From the ashes, Clitterhouse, the Clayhouse, probably arose, but it does not come into recorded history by that name until after the Norman Conquest.

The Normans, being given to the Chase when not engaged in war, beheld in Hendon an ideal forest for hunting. Thus here more farms were laid waste by them to add to the forest rather than clear the forest to establish agriculture.

For the militant clergy particularly, the land adjoining the great highway was a most desirable place of residence and always within easy access of Westminster and London. Passing over Tyburn and Kilburn they would find the Church lands of St. Paul's on their left and the lands of St. Peter's on their right for two or three miles. While beyond on those hills of Hampstead and Hendon boar hunting and other sport could be indulged in, with good company.

For its own interests, apart from those of their King, Westminster Abbey placed on this great highway to the north loyal men of arms who patrolled and kept watch at points of advantage, where signals to the next post were possible. In this they did but follow the lead of the Romans. Gervase de Blois, a natural son of King Stephen, granted land in Hendon to Gilbert Fitz Gunter in 1150. His grant was doubtless to ensure a resident warrior well disposed to guard both his acquired lands and the interests of the Abbey. Gunter's lands passed to Robert de Rous and others of his family, also men of arms. Fulke de Breauté and many others proved their worth to their King, but were apt to fall from favour by asking too much for their recompense, Fulke de Breauté being daring enough to imprison Henry de Braiebroke, a justice, and daring the King's forces in 1224. I mention these as evidence that it was for centuries a policy to sentinel the King's highway by giving trusted retainers a holding near by. These had their own retinue, men at arms, who occupied their peaceful days constructing defences, simple homes, and the growing of crops, yet ever alert for the greater excitement of wayside battle or as beaters at the chase. In 1297 Sir Richard le Rous held a capital messuage 240 acres of arable and nine acres of meadow land by service of rendering 21s. yearly, also lands in Finchley. He represented Middlesex in Parliament nine times between 1297 and 1313 and exchanged his interest in the Manor of Hendon for that of Hodford with Cowhouse, since when the Hodford Manor has remained with Westminster Abbey.

Official inquiry was made on behalf of the king as to whether this exchange was detrimental to the Royal interest and license was granted by the Crown. The Inquisition sets forth the rent and services payable by le Rous, which clearly indicate that service as well as rent was required. Hodford Manor thenceforward paid fee in lieu of service to the Manor of Hendon, and it may at first have included Clitterhouse.

Another Knight who about this time held land in Hendon was Sir Richard Rook, M.P. for Middlesex in 1363, and authorised Steward of the Abbot of St. Peter's, Westminster. His position as steward or renter took him far afield and he must have had deputies in many of the places where rents and services were levied.

Just below Clitterhouse are three or four fields called Rowkhowlles, Rokolte, Ruckalls, and Rockhall, which suggests that this frontage to the main road may have been one of his holdings. On the corner of one by Cricklewood Lane, years later there was a cage or lock-up for rogues, while opposite, on the site of the present Chichele Road, was a triangular piece of waste on which gallows stood. See Rocque's *Survey*. It is, however, important here to notice that many years before Rook was made Steward to the Abbey, Robert de Cliderhou, clerk, and Martin de la Rokele, paid a fine for transfer of property in the parish of St. Giles without the Bar of the Temple, London, Tyborne and Westminster (1311, 4 Ed. II). Perhaps they derived their names from residence at the spot now under survey.

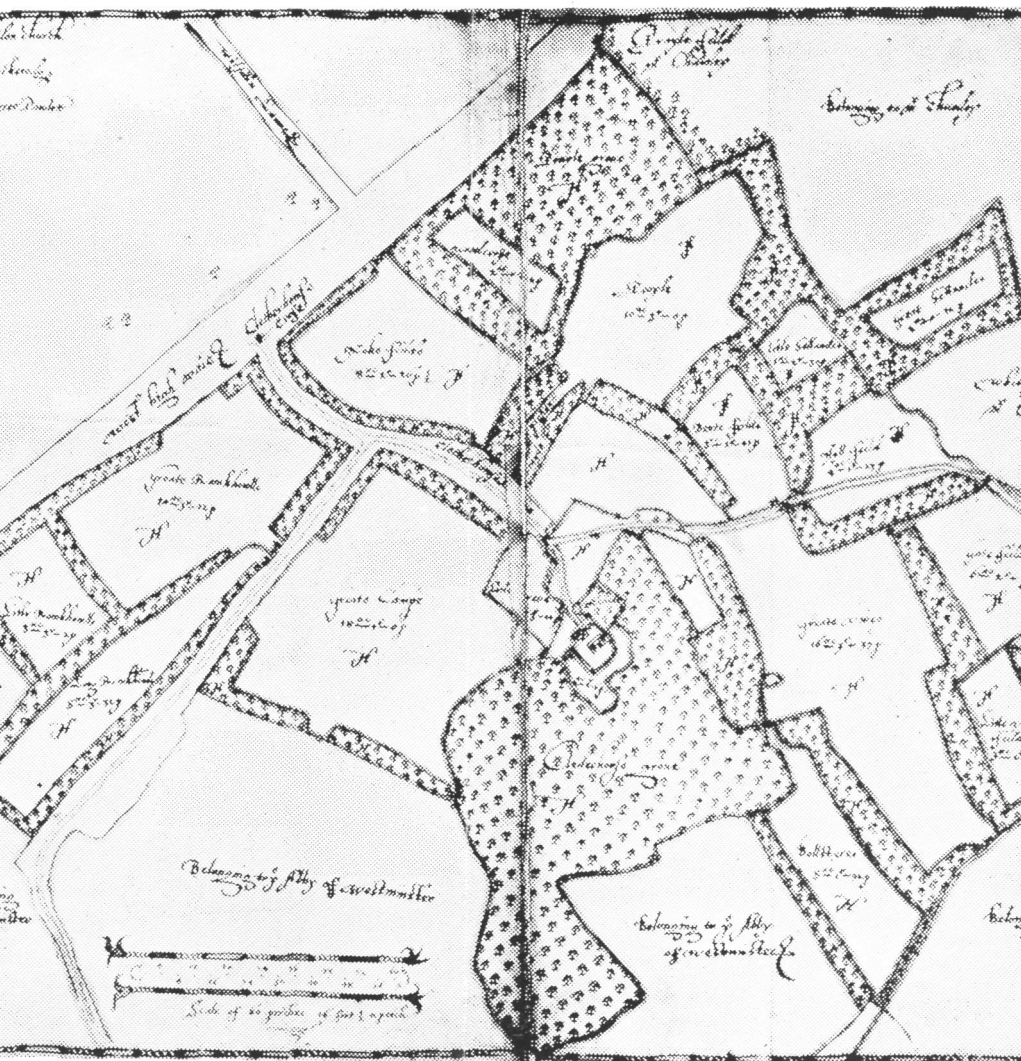
In the early 15th century Henry Frowyk, another M.P., held lands in Hendon consisting of a copse and 20 acres of arable and pasture known as Rokeholed and Newland, another was Newport which had formerly been the property of Robert Vince, Hugh Wynkebourne and others. These lands can be easily identified on the 16th century map of Clitterhouse Manor.

Henry Frowyle was brother of Sir Thomas Frowyk who

owned Oxgate at this time, both being intimate with, if not related to Robert Warner of Hays, Middlesex, and of St. Bartholomew's Hospital. This Robert was another M.P. for Middlesex and by his will proved in 1439 left estate to that hospital, subject to his wife's life interest. Probably she had inherited part of the Rous portion of Hendon, for we find that she gave her consent to the transfer in her lifetime. Her son-in-law, Walter Green of Hays, Middlesex, another M.P., and Elizabeth, his wife, conveyed to John Wakeryng, Master of the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, premises in Hendon called 'Clyderhous' in 1445. A Frowyk made over his Roehold property to the same Hospital in 1446.

John Wakeryng of St. Bartholomew's was an active good business man, he well managed the hospital properties,—already very large—and interested people to give and bequeath property to his fine institution. Under him, a scholarly scribe, John Cok, or Coke, the Renter, a wonderful repertory was made, setting down carefully their numerous and far scattered holdings, and the size of each field. We find that, according to his register, in 1456, the hospital held in Hendon next to Goldherd Mill nine acres and a messuage near the rectory, and three farms, Rokoltes, "Clederhouse" and Vynces. It is now clear that these once separate portions were henceforth grouped as a manor and confirmation of the estates made in the time of Henry VIII, mentions "Clytherhouse," Hendon.

There was an annual Visit of Inspection when the Master and Renter of the Hospital with many others went thoroughly over their estate at Clitterhouse. On such occasions there were view dinners or search dinners, and after trees had been selected for felling and their use allocated, Master, Brethren, tenants, and labourers were feasted, the "quality" perhaps in Camp field, near the moated house, while villagers picnicked along the Rushey Green and under the trees of Clitterhouse Lane. In the 16th century these feasts cost the hospital



CLITTERHOUSE MANOR CRICKLEWOOD, HENDON, c. 1575.

from 26s. to 33s. a time, quite a large sum compared to their rent.

The map which I have had reproduced was the outcome of a survey made on such a visit. After the enclosures already mentioned of Vinces and Rockalls we find others called Great Camp, Sellandes, Greens and Bolsteres. (The last we hear of in connexion with Cowhouse).

The Cartulary of John Cox was continued by other careful "Renters" and we find recorded the lease to Humphrey Kemp from 1556 (he having held it previously under the previous tenant, Master Robt. Hammond). The Records tell us how in 1649, on May 12th, Edward and Thomas Kemp are to have the timber trees that were at this fall marked to be cut down this year. The Kemp family continued at Clitterhouse until 1794.

NOTE.—At the date of the map *circa* 1575, of which I have made mention, a survey was made of the whole of the Manor of Hendon and this gives details of the holding and of every tenant of that manor, but not of those of Clitterhouse, Hodford and Cowhouse. No such map as that I have had reproduced is known to exist as the outcome of the survey but at the same date All Soul's College had similar maps prepared by skilled draftsmen of their various holdings at Cricklewood and Willesden. These beautiful coloured maps are at All Soul's College, Oxford. They give the name of the tenant on each field. I have an original Survey made in 1686 fully listing the holdings, tenants, rent and boundaries. This, however, does not include Clitterhouse Manor nor Hodford and Cowhouse, yet any waste within these sub-manors fell to the Manor of Hendon and the tenants of these sub-manors were summoned to appear at the Manorial Court of Hendon for neglect, infringement of right, or misbehaviour.

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