

A NOTE ON EARLY FINCHLEY

Finchley is one of the Middlesex parishes not mentioned in Domesday Book, and a few people have from time to time wondered why. Dr. Lysons wrote that the manor of Finchley had belonged from time immemorial to the see of London, and he added in a footnote that Fulham and Stepney were the only manors mentioned in the Domesday Survey as belonging to the see.¹ The older historians were content to leave it at that, until Sir Montagu Sharpe, in a series of books, pamphlets, and addresses (many of them printed in earlier volumes of these *Transactions*), put forward his own ingenious theory for the reconciliation of the Domesday figures with the known areas of the modern Middlesex districts.² It is time that the whole of this theory received careful critical attention; but here, for the moment, only one point about it is at issue. This is the suggestion that William I, in consequence of opposition to him in 1066, seized and retained a strip of land belonging to St. Albans abbey "stretching from Barnet to London," including the whole of Finchley. "Twenty years later at the D.B. inquest these Middlesex lands were still in the King's hands, and so it was superfluous for his Commissioners to include them in returning profits accruing to the King."³

To anyone who has so much as looked inside a county transcript of Domesday, this must seem an odd argument, because the first thing that one sees, in the Middlesex Domesday as elsewhere, is an entry about "Terra Regis." This contention of Sir Montagu Sharpe's has been refuted in detail by Dr. S. J. Madge, in a substantial pamphlet, *The Early Records of Harringay alias Hornsey*, published by the Hornsey Public Libraries Committee in 1938. While the succession of Sir Montagu Sharpe's writing is to be found in almost every library which has a Middlesex collection, Dr. Madge's book is less well known, and as it has not hitherto been referred to in these *Transactions*, it is worth calling particular attention here to Dr. Madge's argument.⁴

Addressing himself (principally in respect of the manor of Hornsey) to the proposition that a number of Middlesex districts were forfeited by St. Albans abbey to the King, Dr. Madge apparently succeeded in convincing Sir Montagu Sharpe that throughout the period Hornsey must have remained a portion of Stepney manor and that the theory was untenable so far as Hornsey was concerned. At all events, Hornsey was removed from the list of "omitted lands" in the last (1941) version of the reconciliation of land areas; but for some reason Finchley still remained in the list. It is difficult to understand this, for an important part of Dr. Madge's argument was that a passage in the chronicle of Matthew Paris, which was the source of the statement about St. Albans

losing land to the Conqueror, was in fact an untrustworthy interpolation of late date. The refutation was in fact complete, and the idea of St. Albans having possessed Middlesex lands between Barnet and London ought to have been given up altogether.

It still remains, however, to assign Finchley to one of the bishop of London's Middlesex manors. Here C. J. Fèret's large history of Fulham, written over fifty years ago, offers some help, for it included a list of the manors administered from Fulham, as follows:—

“In the pre-Reformation Rolls, the expression ‘Lordship of Fulham,’ bore a far wider signification than that of ‘Manor of Fulham,’ since the former included four distinct manors, viz.:—

Fulham and Hammersmith,
Zilling and Brayntford [Ealing and Brentford],
Acton,
Fynchesle [Finchley].”

No precise reference was, however, given in support.⁵ More useful is another of Dr. Madge's Hornsey pamphlets, this time on the medieval period.⁶ Here he quotes a document (No. 63) from the Middlesex Assize Rolls (*Placita de Quo Warranto*) of 22 Edward I (1294), in which the following passage (translated) appears:—

“And the Bishop comes and says that Hakeneye and Heringeye are members of Stebenbethe [Stepney] and that Gilling [Ealing], Actone and Fynchesleye are members of Fulham. And he says that he and all his predecessors from time immemorial have held in the same vill and their members the goods of fugitives . . .” etc.⁷ It is reasonable to suppose that the words “from time immemorial” here effectively rule out a change in ownership, especially a transfer from royal ownership, since the compilation of the Domesday record.

A further convincing demonstration that Finchley was reckoned with Fulham in the bishop's estate office is given in the list of Middlesex manorial records published in the 1954 number of these *Transactions*. There, in the brief particulars of Church Commission papers relating to Middlesex in the Public Record Office, there are frequent mentions of Finchley—in every case bundled with Fulham, and in most with Acton and Ealing as well. (In one case it is with Ealing only.)⁸ These papers run from 1383 to 1682, which is not of course direct evidence about the Domesday ownership; but traditions no doubt died hard in estate record offices, and procedures would tend to reflect circumstances very long past. Taken with the precise statement in the 1294 Assize Roll, this repeated association of Finchley with the Fulham estates seems to establish that Finchley manor had affinities with Fulham from very early times; indeed, that it was managed from there.

If this was so, it would help to account for the very large Domesday assessment of the Fulham property, including—what is very difficult to explain otherwise—pannage for no less than 1000 swine. The heavy soil of Finchley, and not the gravels of Fulham and Ealing, is the place to look for thick woods.

All these indications, taken together, seem to establish justification for the view that at Domesday Finchley was included in the Fulham manor. My recent book on Middlesex included a sentence: "Finchley . . . belonged to the bishops of London 'from time immemorial,' perhaps as part of their manor of Fulham."⁹ In my own copy I have now deleted the word "perhaps."

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¹ D. Lysons, *Environs of London*, Vol. II (1795), p. 336, n. 4.

² See, for example, M. Sharpe, *Middlesex in British, Roman and Saxon Times* (2nd ed., 1932), Ch. XIV; "Middlesex in Domesday Book", *Trans. Lond. and Mx. Arch. Soc.* N.S. 7 (1937), p. 509; *Middlesex in the Eleventh Century* (Brentford, 1941).

³ *Middlesex in the Eleventh Century*, p. 15.

⁴ S. J. Madge, *The Early Records of Haringay alias Hornsey* (Hornsey, 1938), pp. 31-32.

⁵ C. J. Fèret, *Fulham Old and New* (1900), Vol. I, pp. 13-14.

⁶ S. J. Madge, *The Medieval Records of Haringay alias Hornsey* (Hornsey, 1939), pp. 80-81.

⁷ Also in J. H. Lloyd, *History of Highgate* (1888), p. 63.

⁸ *Trans. Lond. and Mx. Arch. Soc.* N.S. 11 (1954), pp. 298-299.

⁹ M. Robbins, *Middlesex* (1953), p. 253.