

DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP.

By **W. Hastings Kelke, Rector,**

I. NAME AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PARISH.

Drayton is a name borne by nearly twenty places, and yet its etymology has not yet been satisfactorily explained. Shaw, in his History of Staffordshire, (vol. ii., p. 1), says, "Dr. Wilkes, in his notice of Drayton Bassett, supposes Drayton to have received its name from the brook, or rivulet, near which it is seated." On this Shaw remarks, "Sir Henry Spelman enumerates twenty Draytons in his Villare Anglicanum. Whether all these places have a brook near them I cannot positively say; but all I have seen have, and yet I cannot find any word in Mr. Somner's Saxon or Mr. Humphrey Loyd's Dictionary of this signification. One of the rivers in Germany is called the Drave. The Doctor in another MS. is of opinion that this, and other towns in this County beginning with Dray, were named from their situations, Draï, or Dray, being, he imagines, a common name for a river among the Britons. Drayton, according to Mr. Baxter, is a contraction of Draith Ruidun, which words in British signify a town standing upon a strait or narrow road. Though the Britons generally named their places of abode from hills and rivers, yet doubtless they sometimes had regard to roads, the nature of the soil, and other remarkable things that were near them, in their names of places." That most, or even all, of the places named Drayton, were situated near a brook, would scarcely justify the attributing the name to this circumstance, unless it were the name of some particular brook: for almost all ancient towns and villages were so situated, the proximity to a river or brook being always one great object in the selection of the site. I will therefore venture to suggest another derivation; for it not unfrequently happens, that learned men fail to find the true origin of a name from searching for it in too learned a manner, while it is to be found only in some common word known by every English rustic.

Now, a brewer's waggon is called a *Dray* in every part of the kingdom, the horses which draw it are called *Dray-horses*, and the driver a *Dray-man*. We have also the words *Drag*, *Draw*, *Draught*, *Draught-horse*, and in the northern counties *Draught* or *Draft-road*, i.e. a waggon road. All these, which are evidently derived from the Saxon *Dragan* to draw or drag, have reference to carriages of burden. I would therefore suggest that the name *Drayton* had reference to such carriages, and was given to places where they were made, repaired, or accommodated; or to towns near a road on which such carriages travelled; and all the *Draytons* that I know are situated near some ancient road. The name ending in *ton* shews that there was a village or collection of houses in Saxon times. The additional appellation of *Beauchamp* was acquired from a family of that name about 1288, to distinguish it from other *Draytons*.

Drayton Beauchamp lies at the eastern verge of the County of Buckingham, in the hundred of *Cotslow*, and in the Deanery of *Mursley*. The parish occupies a narrow tract of land, about seven miles and a half in length by half a mile in width, and is bounded by the parishes of *Tring* and *Puttenham* in *Hertfordshire*, and by *Buckland* and *Choulesbury* in the County of Buckingham.

It comprises the Hamlets of *Elstrop* and the Village of *Drayton*, with several scattered houses; and contains upwards of 1,700 acres of land, the greater part of which is arable, with about 128 acres of woodland. Formerly the parish of *Choulesbury* was a hamlet of *Drayton*, and is supposed to be included in it by the *Domesday* survey, as it is not otherwise therein mentioned. *Browne Willis* supposes that *Choulesbury* was purchased from the *Cheyne* family by *Sir John Baldwin*, in the reign of *Henry VIII.*, and thence became a separate and distinct parish.

The ancient British road, called *Ichenild* or *Iken street*, crosses the parish of *Drayton* not far from the Church, as does also the *Aylesbury* and *Tring* turnpike road. Two canals, the "*Aylesbury Arm*," and the "*Wendover Feeder*," both branches from the "*Grand Junction*," likewise intersect the parish; the latter passing close by the Churchyard. The Church stands near the centre of the parish, being within a few hundred yards of the village, and about fifty from the Rectory House. The Vil-

lage, which is clean, pretty, and rural, consists of three farm-houses, and about eighteen cottages, each possessing a small garden. The National School is about half way between the village and the Church. The Hamlet of El-strop, which at present consists only of one farm-house and two cottages, is full five miles north of the Church. About half a mile distant in the opposite direction is Drayton Lodge, the present manor-house; and about half a mile farther on, in a picturesque valley formed by the Chiltern Hills, lie thirteen cottages and one farm-house, in three separate clusters, bearing respectively the names of Terrier's End, Paine's End, and Hang-Hill. Paine's End doubtless acquired its name from that of the first occupant of the farm-house there, as the following extract from the Parish Registers plainly indicates:— "1584 — William Payne, of Payne's End, burryed ye 5th of October." Terrier's End most probably received its name in a similar manner, but the origin of "Hang-Hill" must have been from a very different circumstance, which will presently be noticed. From this part the parish of Drayton extends about two miles farther over the Chiltern Hills, along which, passing across the parish, runs an ancient Foss called Gryme's Dyke, which will hereafter be more fully noticed.

This extensive range of hills, which begins in Bedfordshire, and, passing through parts of the Counties of Hertford and Buckingham, terminates in Berkshire, is in many parts thickly wooded, and affords from some of the more lofty eminences exceedingly pleasing and extensive prospects. They possess some Roman encampments and other ancient earthworks, and also the ruins or sites of various Religious Houses. We learn from Matthew Paris and other authors, that they were formerly so thickly covered with woods as to be almost impassable, and so infested with hordes of robbers and wild beasts as to render the neighbourhood dangerous to reside in or travel through.

To protect the neighbourhood from these depredators, Leofstan, the 12th Abbot of St. Alban's, cut down large portions of wood, and granted the manor of Flamstead to a valiant knight named Thurnoth, and his two fellow-soldiers, Waldef and Tharman, on condition that Thurnoth, besides giving the Abbot privately 5 oz. of gold

a fair palfrey and a greyhound, should protect, by himself and his retinue, the western district from the incursions of robbers and wild beasts, and that if any traveller should suffer from them, Thurnoth should be answerable for the damage. By this contract Thurnoth was also bound to defend, to the best of his power, the Monastery of St. Alban's from damage, in case any public war should happen. Thurnoth and his heirs punctually performed these stipulations till the reign of William the Conqueror, when, disdaining to comply with the conditions of the Norman rule, they were deprived of the manor of Flamstead, which was then granted to Roger de Thoni, one of William's followers; who, however, "willed that right should be done to St. Alban's, and the same service should be strictly performed."

The Chiltern hills, notwithstanding, on the Buckinghamshire side, still continued long afterwards notorious for harbouring hordes of desperate freebooters; for Michael Drayton, in his *Poliolbion*, written about 1600, in speaking of this County says :—

"Here if you beat a bush, it's odds you'd start a thief." Fuller says that Buckinghamshire "pleadeth for herself, that such highwaymen were never her natives, but fled thither for their shelter out of neighbouring Counties." Doubtless they were the outlawed and the lawless from various parts, who thought that—

"Mery it was in grene forest,
Among the leves grene,
Wher that men walke east and west,
Wyth bowes and arrowes kene.

* * *

They were outlawed for venyson,
These yemen everichone;
They swore them brethren upon a day,
To 'Chiltern'-wood for to gone."

Following the example of Leofstan, one of our early kings (but which I know not) is said to have instituted an office, called the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, the holders of which were bound to protect the neighbourhood from the ravages of these banditti, and to use their best endeavours to exterminate them. The successive Stewards sedulously discharged their duty till their office became, as it happily now has long been, a sinecure. The captured robbers were hung and gibbeted within

sight of the Chiltern Woods, for it was the practice of our forefathers to exhibit the dead bodies of malefactors, as we now often see dead birds hoisted up in gardens to deter their living comrades from pursuing a course likely to lead to a similar end. Hence the names of spots near the Chilterns indicate that they were devoted to this purpose. Gallows Hill is the name of a conspicuous eminence on the Chilterns, near Ellesborough; and Hang-Hill is the name of another such spot in the parish of Drayton, as already mentioned.

This spot, which doubtless thus acquired its ominous name, would be well suited to such a purpose. It is a lofty eminence in front of the Chiltern Hills, which here, making a considerable curve, form almost an amphitheatre around it, so that a gibbet on it would be seen for many miles along the Chilterns. While on the other hand, a spot so far distant from every town and main road would not be likely to be chosen for ordinary executions. Nor is there any reason to believe that the *privilege* of inflicting capital punishment was ever possessed by the Lords of Drayton Manor. We may therefore, perhaps, conclude that Hang-Hill was a place devoted to the execution of the Chiltern outlaws.

There is also near it a field called Longshot, where it is probable that the inhabitants of Drayton were accustomed to practise archery; for the youth of every parish were trained in the use of the long-bow. So late as the 38 of Elizabeth (1595) a proclamation was issued for the encouragement of archery, in which the Commissioners were directed to "make due and lawfull searche in everie place whether everie person, for himself, his servauntes, and other youthe in his, or their severall houses, have sufficient furniture and provision of bowe and arrowes, and have and do use and occupie the same accordinge to the true meaninge of the said Statute." *

II. POPULATION.

In 1801 191. In 1831 275. In 1851 261.

HOUSES AND FAMILIES.

In 1801	40 houses, 49 families.
1855	47 „ 50 „

* The Egerton Papers, p. 219.

EXPENDITURE IN POOR RATES,

	£	s.	d.	
In 1666	7	2	4	
1700	40	19	8	
1717	35	16	6	
1733	62	14	8	including Church-rate.

From Lady-day 1800 to Lady-day 1801 ... £467 12s. 9 ¾d.

“ “ 1832 „ „ 1833 ... £627 2s. 3 ½d.

In 1854, about two shilling rates and a half, viz.—
£280 10s. 8 ¾d.

The cottagers are employed in agricultural labour, and the women and children chiefly in platting straw for bonnets.

Drayton is within the district of the Aylesbury Union.

III. CHARITIES.

John Cheyne, lord of the manor of Drayton, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, having purchased a farm called the Moze, or Morse, in the parish of Chesham, left it chargeable with the yearly rent of £1; and having also purchased other land of John Bate, in the parish of Drayton Beauchamp, left it chargeable with the yearly rent of £1; both of these rents, "in brotherly charity towards the pious poor professing the Gospel," he conveyed to certain trustees, to be yearly distributed among the poor inhabitants of Drayton Beauchamp, "that is, to such of the said poor people as should be good and godly in living, and had most need of relief." The last donation, it is presumed, is the 19s. 6d., which has been paid nominally by the lord of Drayton manor, for two centuries or more. Sir Francis Cheyne, knight, "following ye example of his good ffather Mr. John Cheyne, did by his last will, bind his heyres to pay out of landes, which ye sayd S^r. Ffrancis purchased of Sr. Marmaduke Dorrell, forever forty shillings to sixe of y^e most godly and impotent poore people of Draiton Beauchampe, being no newe comers to ye towne, nor dwelling in newe erected cottages."

This is chargeable on property belonging to the Duke of Bedford in Chesham parish.

The donors of the following are not known:—

LAND IN THE PARISH OF DRAYTON.

	A.	r.	p.
In the Great Meadow, Drayton Lodge, (marked in the Parish Map, 87a)	0	2	0
In Upper Slade Meadow (22a)	0	0	12
In Stockwell Piece (23a).....	0	1	28
In Great Field (24a).....	0	2	0
In Home Piece (32a).....	0	2	0

Total 2 0 0

Seven acres of land in the parish of Tring, being a field called "The Poor's Land," which was awarded under an Inclosure Act in exchange for various allotments in the parish of Tring, belonging to the poor of Drayton Beauchamp. One acre, which was given in exchange for this field, was left to the parish clerk of Drayton.

Half a crown, yearly, from George Humphrey's Stad Close, which appears to be lost.

The above-mentioned Charities are annually distributed in the Church, in the presence of the principal inhabitants.

There were three cottages, called "Town houses," within the memory of several living inhabitants, which used to be occupied rent free, by poor persons, or let to others for the benefit of the poor.

These are frequently mentioned in the Parish Account Book; and also a "Church-house," the existence of which is not remembered by any living person, nor is its site known.

THE ALLOTMENT GARDENS.

In the year 1844, a field belonging to the Glebe was appropriated to cottage gardens, consisting of from twenty to forty poles each. They are highly valued by the Cottagers, and the result of the experiment on the whole has given full satisfaction to the farmers.