

## OKEHAMPTON BEGINNINGS.

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THE object of this paper is rather to state the data for the early history of Okehampton, than to trace that history itself.

Okehampton first finds written record eight hundred years ago, in *Domesday*,<sup>1</sup> wherein it appears as Ochenemitona in the Exeter, and Ochementone in the Exchequer version. Either of these agrees far more closely with the traditional folk-form Ockington, than with the corrupt modern version, common to polite society, maps, and railway stations—Okehampton. Precisely the same change has taken place as in the case of Walkhampton—given as Walchentone and Wachetone in *Domesday*, but Wackington still in the familiar speech of the country-side. And we find the same influence at work in the conversion of Cedelintona into Chittlehampton.

The first tendency to vary in the modern direction now traceable is seen late in the thirteenth century. Thus in *Testa de Nevill, circa* 1270, the name is Okmeton; in the *Hundred Rolls*, 2 Ed. I. (1274) Okhamton; while in the Bishops' Registers we find it Hochantone in 1328, Hochampton in 1332, Okamptone in 1333. *Testa de Nevill*, moreover, preserves the old form in its version of Monkokehampton—Muneckeckementon.

It is perfectly clear that we may altogether dismiss from our minds the "ham" as a component part of the name of

<sup>1</sup> In the course of the discussion on this paper, the Rev. O. J. Reichel called attention to the fact that in *Leofric's Missal* there occurs among the manumissions "freode huna æt ocmund tune on mides sumeres messe euen." If this "ocmund tune" is Okehampton, as seems probable, we no doubt get the name recorded before the Conquest, for Leofric held the see from 1050 to 1073. Of course, ocmund may very well be a variant of Okement, if not an earlier form in the stricter sense.

the borough and the parish, and that the still current Ockington is about as near as we are now likely to get to the sound of the original. It is clear also that as Tavistock is the "stock" of the Tavy, so Ockington was once the "tun" or enclosure of the river or rivers now known as the Ockment, or the East and West Ockments. But we find ourselves in face of a somewhat difficult problem when we try to ascertain what the precise name of this river originally was.

If it had always been the Ockment, or at least if it had borne that name before the Saxon planted his "tun" in the valleys, then Okehampton is simply the "tun," or, as we should now say, the "town," of the Okement, as Tawton is the "tun" of the Taw. If, however, the "ment" is a corruption of the "ing," we have to deal with a duplex question. "Ing" may be the Saxon for meadow, in which case Ockington would mean the "tun" of the meadow of the Ock—such meadow being practically identical with what is called in Scotland a strath. Or it may represent the Saxon patronymic particle or clan affix, signifying descendants. Then Ockington would be the settlement of the family or tribe of Ock. This rendering of "ing" is strenuously advocated by Mr. Kemble and his followers, and set forth at length by Canon Isaac Taylor in *Words and Places*. And that the syllable frequently has this meaning no one can dispute; but I think it must always be a matter for individual enquiry in each particular case whether the patronymic or the meadow meaning is to be chosen. I cannot myself for a moment believe, in the case of Cockington, for example, that we are to see in it the settlement of a special family, when "Coch ing" is the red meadow, patent to all observers—just as Cocks Tor is the "red tor" it may not infrequently be seen. Besides, if we accept the clan idea in this case, we have to believe that the common progenitor gave name to the river, unless indeed the stream had been regarded as a figurative parent.

Hence, I cannot escape from this conclusion—either we have Ockington, the settlement in the lowlands of the Ock valley; or the "ing" represents the second syllable in the name of the river, which we now have as "ment"; and we must dismiss from our minds the idea that in historic times the stream was ever called simply the Ock or Oke. This is certainly the direction in which *Domesday* points.

And here we can get some help from analogy. There is, for example, the Derwent. The "Der" = *dwr* is one of the most familiar Keltic words for water, and the "went" is



commonly accepted as *gwent*, the compound meaning the "clear water." The Darenth, near London, affords another shape of the same combination, still further contracted at Dartford. And this leads up to our own most forcible illustration—the Dart. Here the *dwr* is still preserved in the Dar, but the *gwent* is only represented by its final "t." It reappears, however, in fuller form, if the Dart and the Okement afford a parallel, in the second syllable of Dartington—Dertrin-tone in *Domesday*, but Derentun when we first find it mentioned, in 833. The process which changed Dwr-gwent-tun into Dartington, and that which is suggested as having turned Ock-gwent-tun into Ockington, would be absolutely identical.

And here we cannot afford to ignore the fact that the valley has two Ockingtons—Okehampton proper, and that which is now called *Monkokehampton*, clearly for distinction. That both tuns should be named from the river is natural and common, while any other suggestion must be more or less forced. The two forms in which the latter name occurs in *Domesday* are *Monac-ochamantona* in the Exeter, and *Mon-uchementone* in the Exchequer, which is quite as near as we could reasonably expect to get to the Ochenemitona and Ochementone of our subject. We are not very much concerned with the prefix. It has been turned into Monk, and taken to indicate a former ecclesiastical ownership. As to which we can say little more than that we find this prefix in *Domesday*, when the manor was in Baldwin the Sheriff's own individual occupation, and that the Saxon owner in the days of the Confessor was one Vlnod. If any monks ever held it, therefore, they must have lost it before that date—a thing quite possible, but, as it seems to me, extremely improbable. Is it not, to say the least, quite as likely that we have here simply the very familiar prefix *men* = "stone," or its derivative *maenic* = "stony"? This, however, by the way.

There are yet other considerations to take into account. We have been hitherto assuming, with Canon Taylor and others, that the original name of the river was the Oke or Oke, and a phase of that Keltic word for water—*uisge*—which we find in Esk, and Usk, and Axe, and Exe. It may be, but I confess I do not care to commit myself absolutely to such a view. It may very well be, also, that Oxford takes name from a stream called the Oke, which falls into the Thames at that city; but it is much more easy to connect Ox with *uisge* than Ock, unless we are to fall back on the possessive form Oke's-ford. And Oke is a frequent prefix

where no river is in question. For example, Okeley or Ockley, in Bedford, Bucks, Hants, Northampton, Surrey, Suffolk, Shropshire, Wilts; Ockham or Okeham, in Rutland and Surrey; Okingham in Berks; Ockenden in Essex; Oken in Stafford; Ocknell, Hereford; Okethorpe, Derby; Hockenburie in Kent; Hochwold in Norfolk; Hockestow in Shropshire; Hockcombe in Somerset; Hacombe in Devon; and, to go no further, Oakington in Cambridge, which Canon Taylor suggests as the "tun" of the *Æ*eings.

There should be very little doubt that in most of these cases the reference is to the tree. Still, Oke does occur as a river name; and while we have Okeford in Devon and in Dorset, we have Ocklebrook in Derbyshire. Our own Devon Hockworthy, on the other hand, is a tree name, as Acland is Oakland.

Other local prefixes seem phonetically near of kin—the Ug in Ugborough and in Ugbrook, for example. The one has been often accepted as one of the forms of *uisge*, but no such hypothesis will fit the former; and, bearing in mind the cavern at Chudleigh, it may be worth while to note that the Cornu-Keltic for cavern is *ogo*, thence *fogou*, in modern mining phrase *vug*.

Another suggestion seems worthy of some consideration. *Uchel* is a common Welsh word for "high"; and Uchelton would supply all we want, if we could assume that occurred at Okehampton which we know happened elsewhere—at Molton, for example, where the blundering Saxon mistook the name of the height for that of the stream which descended from it. This derives some show of likelihood from the fact, as it seems to be, that High Willis, or Willhayes, is simply another form of this *uchel* (found also in Brown Willy), to which the Saxon, taking it for a proper instead of a common name, prefixed his own descriptive epithet. *Uchel* certainly appears elsewhere in the district, at no very great distance, as Okel Tor, near Tavistock. Oke Tor on the West Okement is more readily used as an argument in favour of the *uisge* hypothesis; and so possibly the fact that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries we find the locality now known as Hook, called The Hock, as a member of the barony.

Again, the fact that the two streams which unite at Okehampton town are called the East and West Okements, and not by different names, like their more important tributaries, points to two conclusions. First, that they were so named by persons ascending the joint stream, which they



first knew by that title; second, that in all probability they once had other distinctive names, now lost. Here again we have uncertainty.

All things considered, therefore, it does not seem a very wise procedure to attempt any *ex cathedra* deliverance upon this special point. That the real name of the town was never Okehampton, and that the current Ockington is probably as near as ever we are likely to get to its original phonetic value, should not indeed admit of controversy. The modern "ing" is generally represented in our local *Domesday* by "en" or "in." Witness Alvintone for Alphington; Ermentone for Ermington; Ferentone for Faringdon; Godrintone for Goodrington; Toritone for Torrington—and so on. Ockington thus falls strictly within the rule. This point attained, however, we find before us an embarrassing choice of paths; and, as it seems to me, there is only one certain conclusion that can be drawn—this namely, that the final "tun" must inevitably be accepted as an adequate proof of the Saxon origin of the community.

The *Domesday* record touching Okehampton runs as follows:

"Baldwin, the sheriff, has a manor called Ochenemitona, which Offers [or Osfers] held on the day on which King Edward was alive and dead, and it rendered geld for three virgates and one ferling. Thirty ploughs can plough this. Of them Baldwin has one virgate and one ferling and four ploughs in demesne, and the villeins two virgates and twenty ploughs. There Baldwin has thirty-one villeins, and eleven bordars, and eighteen serfs, and six swineherds, and one packhorse, and fifty-two head of cattle, and eighty sheep, and one mill which renders six shillings and eightpence a year, and three leugas of wood in length, and one in breadth, and five acres of meadow, and of pasture one leuga in length, and a half in breadth. And in this land stands the castle of Ochenemitona. There Baldwin has four burgesses and a market which return four shillings a year. This manor is worth, with its appurtenances, ten pounds, and it was worth eight pounds when Baldwin received it."

In the Exchequer Book the name is Ochementone; the number of villeins is given as twenty-one, instead of thirty-one; and the description leads off with the words "And there stands a castle."

Offers, whose name also occurs as Osfernus, Osferdus, and Osfers, had held under Edward the manors of Belestham (Belstone), Chenlie (Kelly), Limet (in North Tawton),

Filelia (Filleigh), Prenla (Prewley), Taintona (Drewsteignton), Spreitone (Spreyton), and Witewei (in Kingsteignton); all of which passed to Baldwin. And either he or another of the same name had held also William of Pollei's manor of Legh, or North Leigh.

The acreage of Baldwin's manor totals up to 4025, while the present area of the parish is 9552. It must be borne in mind, however, that the parish contains a large area of waste, which would find no place in the *Domesday* assessment, and certainly two, probably three, other manors—Meldon, Alfordon, and Cheesacot. But Baldwin's manor was by far the largest and most valuable, including the town, castle, and park.

There is one very significant detail in the *Domesday* entry. The manor was worth £8 a year in Offers's time, and had risen to be worth £10 a year in Baldwin's; but it is only assessed at three virgates and a ferling, or, in other words, at three ferlings less than a hide. And as the Saxon hide, as an actual land area, was practically the same as the Norman carucate—a plough land—it follows that since the date of the imposition of the Danegeld, the arable land of the manor must have increased between thirty and forty fold. For the hidage was originally imposed on the whole area actually cultivated, though the hide soon drifted into a fiscal unit, having no closer connection with actual land values than the land-tax of the present day.

Okehampton, then, it is perfectly evident, was a flourishing community long before Baldwin the Sheriff saw how admirably it was situated, from its central position, and its capabilities of defence, for the seat of his shrievalty, and the head of his barony.

*Domesday* contains a full list of the manors held by Baldwin, but does not set them forth in their relations as parts of his great barony—members of the Honour of Okehampton. There is, however, an early record, already cited, called the *Testa de Nevill* (temp. Henry III.—Edward I., circa 1270), which is primarily a register of the various knights' fees in the kingdom, and I have thought it well to take out the list of the members of the barony of Okehampton, held at that date by John of Courtenay, with the names of their holders, and the statement of their services in fees, or portions of fees. It is worthy of note that there are considerable variations in this record from the list in *Domesday*. True, the number of estates or manors separately



mentioned (including repetitions, which cannot always be distinguished from different places of like name) is about the same—183 in one case, and 182 in the other. But only some two-thirds of the holdings in the later list can be distinctly connected with those in the earlier. Quite half of the remainder did not belong to Baldwin when *Domesday* was compiled; and though the bulk of the remnant probably represent divisions and changes of name rather than of ownership, the variations are greater than might have been anticipated. The list is taken from the official published copy, but it is manifest that this is inaccurate in some details of nomenclatural orthography.

A point to which incidental reference may be made is the evidence afforded by the list of the growth of territorial surnames. This is seen most clearly when we regard the “de” as it was treated in those days, as the simple equivalent for “of,” instead of the distinct nomenclatural entity of modern aristocratic ideas.

# TESTA DE NEVILL.

## FEODA DE OKEMETON JOH'IS DE CURTENAY.

Roger Cole	holds in Hardewineslegh	half a fee.
Thomas of Chenne	Chenneston	fourth of a fee.
William of Wray	Wyk	fourth „
John of Regin	Eggenesford	half a fee.
John, son of Roger, } and Joel of Bosco }	{ La Legh } { Pertricheswall }	fourth of a fee.
Heirs of Richard the Espet	Wemmeworth and Briggefurd	two fees. [fee.
Alan of Hallesworth	Cloveneburgh	three parts of a
William of Punchardun	Waleston, La Thorne	fourth of a fee.
John Burnel and Simon Lamprye	Burdenileston	one fee.
Walter of Nimet	Nimet Stillandeslegh, fee with member and in Bere	
Elienor of Hause	Hause	half a fee.
Robert of Greneslade	Greneslade	third of a fee.
Hugo of Niwelaunde	Niwelaunde	sixth „
Adam of Risford	Braddemmet, Apeldure, one fee. and Miweton	
Richard of Chedeledune	Chedeledune	tenth of a fee.
William of Hospital	Le Hospital, and in Hamtenesford	third „
Robert of Stoddune	Cadebirie	fifth „
Galiene of Bonevileston	Bonevileston	eighth „
Henry of Corelaunde	Corelaunde	eighth „

Roger Fromund and }	{ Shitelesbere and }	four parts of a
Robert of Denlegh }	{ Worthi }	half fee.
Hugo of Baylekeworth	Baylekeworth	sixth of a fee.
Robert of the Estane	Stayne	eighth „
Roger Cole	Hamtenesford	tenth „
Nicholas Avenel	Mansard	one fee.
Henry of Yerde	Yerde	half a fee.
Ralph of Esse	Esse	third of a fee.
Robert of Sideham	Rakneford	one fee.
Jordon, son of Rogon	Wodeburn, Westapse	one fee.
Philip of Beaumont (Bello Monte)	Asford	one fee.
Heirs of Richard Beapel	Westesford	half a fee.
William of Punchardon	Hyaunton & Hakynton, three fees. with Blakewille	
Abbot of Dunkevill	Lincumb, Worcumb, two fees. and Middelm'wode	
Roger, son of Simon	Worcumb	fifth of a fee.
Heirs Oliver of Champer- nowne (Campo Ernulphi)	Alfrincumb	one fee.
Walter the Lou	Kentesbir	one fee.
Nicholas of Filelgh	Filelgh	half a fee.
Robert of Hokesham	Well [West] Boclaunde	one fee.
Nicholas of Avenel	Snyddelg'	half a fee.
Philip of Beaumont	Shirevill	one & a half fees.
William of Punchardon	Charnes	one fee.
Ralph of Esse	Anestye	half a fee.
Roger the Monk (Moyne)	Frodetone & Westecot	half „
Vincent of Loliwill	Niweton and Weston	half „
Heirs William of Aubernun	Bradeford	eighth of a fee.
John of Molis	Lethebrok, Durneford, two & a half fees. Yekesburn, Hyaunton	
Richard Cadyo	Lewidecot', Cockescumb, one fee. Westcot, & Rokewrth	
Heirs Baldwin of Belestane	Belestane	half a fee.
Richard, son of Ralph, and }	{ Harpeford and }	
Geoffrey of Radeweye }	{ Radeweye }	half „
Drogo of Teynton	Wythelegh'	twentieth of a fee.
Adam of Risford	Brigteneston	third of a fee.
William of Legh, }		
Walter of Mumlaunde, }	Hunichurch	one fee.
& Adam & Margery }		
of Hunichurche }		
Richard of Langeford	Munekeckementon	half a fee.
William of Kelly	Brawode	third of a fee.
Peter Corbyn	Corbineston	sixth „ [fee.
Heirs Elie Coffin	Wardlegh & Westecot	one & a quarter
Geoffry Coffin	Cakeb' and C'fite	half a fee.



Philip Perer	Gorehiwisse	half a fee.
Heirs Peter of Syrefuntayne	Maddeford	fourth of a fee.
Richard Passem'	Well [West] Pulewrth	tenth "
Lucy of Buredune	Buredune	tenth "
Philip of Beaumont	Lancarse	fourth "
Heirs Baldwin of Belestane	Parkeham	two fees.
William the Cornu	Hunshane	half a fee.
Ralph of Estaneston	Puderigh	one fee.
Roger Giffard	La Meye	one fee.
Ralph of Wulledane	Wulledane	half a fee.
Heirs William of Aubernan	Stockelg'	half "
John of Satchvill (Sicca Villa)	Yauntone	half "
William and Alexander Tany	Comton	eighth of a fee.
Robert of Shete	Cumbe	half a fee.
John of T'l	Smalecumbe and in T'l	half "
Henry of the Forde	La Forde	eighth of a fee.
Roger the Ver and Stephen of Uffeville }	Suttecumbe	seven parts of a fee.
William of Colevill	Colevill	one fee.
Roger the Ver and Stephen of Uffevill }	Uffevill	one fee.
Herbert of Pryun	Braunford	one fee.
Heirs Alexander of Tanton	Rollandeston	sixth of a fee.
John of Nevill	Dunesford	half a fee.
Ralph of Bosco	Matford	eighth of a fee.
Heirs of Richard Cadyly	Racumbe	one fee.
Warin, son of Joel	Medenecumbe	half a fee. <sup>2</sup>
Peter of the Pole	Medenecumbe	half "
Richard of Teyng	Teyng	half "
Stephen of Haccumbe	Ridmore and Clifford	two parts of a fee.
Heirs Ingram of Aubernan	Teyngton	three parts of half a fee.
William of Risford	Risford	three parts of fee.
Philip Talebot	Spreiton cum memb'	one fee.
Same Philip	Hutteneslegh'	half a fee.
William of Kelly	Eggebere, Buledune	one fee.
Heirs Nicholas of Fuleford	Fuleford	half a fee.
Heirs of Melehiwiss	Melehiwiss	one fee.
Thomas of Tetteburn	Tetteburn	fee and quarter.
Heirs Richard Cadiho	Wallerige	half a fee.
Henry Guraunt	In same	half "
Reynold of Holleham	Calchurch	fourth of a fee.
Ralph of Albemarle (Alba Mara)	Westecot and Haghe	one fee.
Richard of Langeford	Wyk	half a fee.

<sup>2</sup> de antiquo s3 nunc nullum facit militare.

Hamel of Dyandune, } Walter of Bathon, and } Richard the Bret }	Bratton, Cumbe, and } Coddescot }	one fee.
Henry Gubant	Alfardesdane	half a fee.
Robert of Meledune	Meledune	sixth of a fee.
Geoffry of Hok	La Hok	sixth „
Elias of Tempol	Stackelegh	half a fee.
Muriel of Bolley	Byrightestowe	one fee.
Roger of Telegh	Dunterdune	one fee.
William of Kelly	Kelly and Medvill	one fee.
William Trenchard	Lew (Lim) and Wadeleston	three parts of a fee.
William of Arundel	Orcherd	fourth of a fee.
Roger Giffard	Payhaumbiry, Seghlak	half a fee.
Roger of Hele	Hele	one fee.
Henry, son of Henry, and } Heirs Hugo of Bolley }	Kentelesbere, Pauntesford, three fees. Kyngesford, Catteshegh'	
Richard of Langeford	Langeford	half a fee.
Oliva of Seghlak	Seghlak	tenth of a fee.
William of Chivethorne	Chivethorne	half a fee.
Alice of Ros	C'tecumb	two parts of a fee.
Hugo of Bonvill (Bynnevill)	Hackewrth	half a fee.
Jordan, son of Rogon	Holecumbe	one fee.
Richard of Hidune	Hidune	sixth of a fee.
Herbert of Pynn	Culum	one fee.
Jordan, son of Rogon	Navicote	half a fee.
Abbot of Dunkevill	Bolleham	third of a fee.
Richard of Hidune	Clill [Clist?]	half a fee.
Wydo of Briaune	Torre and Weston	one fee.
Henry of Sparkevill	Sparkevill	half a fee.
John, son of Richard	Blakedune	half a fee.
Stephen of Haccumb	Haccumb	third of a fee.
Abbot of Torr	Wullebergh <sup>3</sup>	
Richard Cimenet'	Hyanac	one fee.
Heirs Hugo of Langedene	Parva Maneton	fourth of a fee.
Robert of Hylam	Nitheredune	sixth „
Reginald Bernehus and } William of Sttokeswrth }	Asmundeswrth	half a fee.
Sameric of Sarmunvill	Parva Ernescumbe	one fee.
Ruard, son of Alan	Doddebrok and Por- lemue and Lamsede }	half a fee and third of a fee.
Roger of P'ulle	P'ulle [Prawle]	four parts of a fee.
Heirs William of Bikebiry	Engeleburne	one fee.
Girard of Spineto	Teyng	half a fee.
Robert of Hylum	Shaplegh	one fee.
Herbert of Cumb	Judaneston	sixth of a fee.
Hugo Peverel	Mammehavede	one fee.

<sup>3</sup> Formerly one fee, now in pure alms.



Thomas and Reginald de } Uppecott and Son of } Geoffery of the Hak }	Holecumbe and } Uppecot }	half a fee.
Osborn the Bat	Teigemue	sixth of a fee.
Unfrey of the Shete	La Shete	fourth „
Roger the Poer	Yetematon	eighth „
William Herizun	Daledich	half a fee.
John Tebaut	Rakebere	half „
Heirs Baldwin of Balestane	Rakebere & Dodetoni	one fee.
John of Curtenay	Ailesbere	half in demesne.

The older general records of the nation supply very scant material to the early history of Okehampton. Rymer and his *Foedera* are practically silent. The *Taxation of Pope Nicholas* gives the value of the church of Hocamton at £10 13s. 4d. annually, and of the vicarage at £1 6s. 8d. This was of course in 1291; and much about the same date we find Hugh of Courtenay showing, in reply to a *quo warranto*, that he and all his ancestors had held the barony “from a time when memory of man ran not to the contrary” —rather a big phrase for little more than two hundred years —with its various liberties, including assize of bread and beer, rights of gallows, tumbrel, pillory, market, pleas of blood, and free warren.

The only place in short where we do glean any detailed information is in the *Hundred Rolls* of 2 Edward I. (1274), where we have the finding of the following jury for Okehampton: John son of Dean (fil Decani), Richard Osmund, Michael of the Gate (de Porta), Martin Smith (Faber), Walter Halpeni, Walter Taylfer, Geoffrey Osmund, Richard the Hare, Geoffrey of the Mill (de Molend), Randolph Globbe, Richard son of Smith (fil Faber), and John Painter (Pictor).

These declare on their oath, on behalf of the “Burgh of Ochamton,” that the manor of Lydford, with the castle and the forest of Dertemore, pertained to the Crown until King Henry, father of King Edward that then was, gave them to his brother Richard, Earl of Cornwall, how, or by what warrant, they knew not. Moreover, the lords of the manor of Lifton, whosoever they were, held the “foreign” (*forinsecum*) of the hundred of Lifton (that is those parts of the hundred lying outside the manor), and had the return of writs of the Sheriff of Devon and the Crown, with the right to hold pleas of court, and to have two separate judges (*coronatores sepeiales*), one in the hundred “foreign” of Lifton, and one in the manor of Lideford.

I give the deliverances of the jury with regard to Okehampton in fuller form.

"They say also that Hugh of Curtenay held the manor of Okhamton with its purtenances of the king in chief, that his ancestors had held the same from the time of the Conquest in baronage, and that the manor of Okhamton was the head of all the barony of the aforesaid Hugh.

"They say that the aforesaid Hugh holds of the lord king in chief ninety-two fees by the service of two (*duorum*) knights (*milites*) in the army for forty days.

"Which and what fees he now holds, and by whom they are held, and for what time, save those in the manor of Okhamton, they know not.

"They say that Robert of Meledon holds of the Lord Hugh the fourth part of a fee, and for what time, and by what homage and service they know not.

"They say that William, son of Ralph, holds a fourth part of a fee, as the aforesaid Robert.

"They say that John of Uppecot holds the eighth part of a fee in manner aforesaid.

"They say that Nicholas of Hok holds the tenth part of a fee aforesaid.

"Of others they know nothing.

"They say that Hugh of Curtenay and his ancestors have and had royal liberties (*libertates regias*) as gallows, assize of bread and beer, and a free chace in the manor of Lideford as far as to the bounds of the forest of Dertemore, with a free warren, from the time of the Conquest.

"They say that John of Wyk, clerk, and Reginald Botrigan, sometime bailiffs of the hundred of Lifton, had, by the hand of the aforesaid Reginald, levied and received to the use of the lord king (*opus dni Reg.*) of the burgh of Okhamton 8<sup>s</sup> 5<sup>d</sup> of the tenth which hitherto had been in gross with the hundred of Lifton (*adhuc veniunt in sumonicione in grosso cum hundredo de Lifton*).

"Finally they say that John of Curteney, who held the manor and barony, died on the Sunday next before the Invention of the Holy Cross, in the second year of King Edward, and that the burgh was thence for two months in the hands of the lord king, nothing being thence received."

Let us now see what we can glean from the evidence of Okehampton's oldest antiquity, the earthwork on the hill above the East Okement, which we have been told to regard as a "camp," and in which Mr. Fothergill and his followers have seen the result of successive operations of Kelts, Danes, and Romans.



In the first place let me say that there is not the slightest indication of the Romans in or near Okehampton—that the so-called “Roman road” so plainly marked on the map traversing the Park is a mere figment of exuberant antiquarian fancy; and that it is most difficult to understand how anyone can have imagined the lower of the earthworks could ever have formed part of a Roman “camp,” or, indeed, that they ever were a “camp” at all. The sole foundation for the hypothesis was clearly the fact of their rectangular plan, and dates back only to the time when all square earthworks were as certainly dubbed Roman as all round ones Danish.

Surely the slightest reflection ought to have shown that earthen banks so placed, approaching the lower slope of a hill, whatever else they may have been, could have had no primarily defensive purpose. We cannot imagine any fighting people so utterly wanting in military foresight, as either to have placed a “camp” in such a position while the crest of the hill was open to their occupation, or when that crest was occupied by the defenced post of an enemy. Either alternative is absurd. It is far more probable that these banks had a much later and utilitarian origin, akin to that of the more modern hedges with which they are now connected; and, if anything like the age of the higher earthwork, they would probably date from a time when the absolute need of defence had so far passed away, that it was fairly safe to store the sheep and cattle in an enclosure away from, while overlooked by, the stronghold, as a matter of greater convenience than within the fortified enclosure itself. A Roman camp, had there been one in the neighbourhood, would have been planted on the plateau, probably not far off the site of the present artillery quarters. We may dismiss the Romans, with the fancied pretorium and speculum, (on the lowest point, too!) from our purview altogether.

The earthwork on the crest is quite another matter. It is the remnant of a hill fort of considerable strength, on a site admirably chosen for defence, and may unhesitatingly be given a British or Keltic origin. It consists of the tongue of the headland bounded on two sides by the precipitous ravines of the Moor Brook and the East Okement, cut off from the main hill by a strong earthen vallum and fosse. This is precisely the method of defence which we find in the so-called cliff castles of Cornwall, and which Caesar describes as the defensive custom of the Venetii. Exactly the same thing was done by the Kelts at Lydford, but on a larger

scale, as is still plainly visible. Only in the case of Lydford the site was adopted by the Saxon, and in turn by the Norman, and has come down to our days a place of habitation. This hill fort, without reasonable doubt, was the original of what we now call Okehampton—a fact of which Mr. Fothergill indeed seems to have had a glimpse. And it never had anything to do with the Danes. Their only recorded local raid stopped at Lydford; and it is abundantly evident that the name of the “Dane’s battery” is traceable to the familiar linguistic blunder that led the common people and older antiquaries alike to see Dane’s castles in each “Castle-an-dinas,” ignorant of the fact that *dinas* was simply the Keltic for a fortalice or stronghold on a height, of which castle was merely a reduplication. A part of the Keltic name of this earthwork must have been “dinas”; and as there were no others in the immediate vicinity, it may very well have been known as “*the Dinas*.”

The position, as I have said, is one of great strength. Better defences could hardly have been wished for south and east than the precipitous sides of the converging ravines, connected as these natural escarpments were by an earthen mound, which must have been originally at least twenty feet high on the exterior, from the bottom of the ditch whence the greater part of the materials were dug. The present highest point is about fifteen feet on the exterior, and portions of the ditch are still at least five feet deep. What appears at first sight to be the entrance is not so, but a spot where a part of the vallum has been thrown into the ditch to make a readier access to the pasture area within. The original entrance was at the south-west corner, in the narrow angle between the vallum and the ravine of the Moor Brook; and, ruined as it is, still indicates somewhat of its defensive character, the natural dangers of the point of access to an attacking party rendering further outworks unnecessary.

Mr. Fothergill and others speak of the presence of traces of walls within the area. But this is pure error, and one into which they have evidently been led by the broken jointing of the outcrop of the natural rock, the ground being traversed by bands of greenstone. Man is responsible for the earthen bank, but for nothing more.

Whether the Saxon followed the Kelt in the occupation of the fortalice we cannot say. Probably not, for the name of Halstock shows that a Saxon “strength,” defended by stockades, was planted on the other side of the Moor Brook



valley—Halstock meaning simply the “stock” or “stoke” on the moor. It is as plain now as it was eleven or twelve centuries since, that this site, while easily defensible, was better adapted for tillage; and we may very fairly assume that it was the cultivated land about Halstock which we find represented in the Danegeld assessment of three virgates and a ferling (or less than a hundred acres); and that the chief cause of the later prosperity of the manor was the shifting of the settlement to the meadows in the fork of the Okements, and the foundation of Okington or Ockmenton, when the special need for defence had so far passed away that the more peaceful enclosure of the “tun” might safely replace the more warlike “stock”—Halstock, however, being in all likelihood still retained as a place of special retreat and shelter.

At the same time the matter of defence was not overlooked in the choice of the new site. Placed, as the new tun was, in the fork of the two rivers, two sides of the triangle were very fairly defended by these natural moats; while the enclosure of the infant burgh must have been completed by a bank cutting off the triangular area which formed the germ of the infant community. It is not very difficult, from a consideration of the plan of the present town, to form some idea of its original. In the first place, it would not have extended beyond the limits of the two Okements. In the second, the wide road now called Fore Street must be the direct successor of the open space in which the markets were held, and the various outdoor gatherings of the good people of the ville took place. In the third, the long tenemental strips, into which the apex of the triangle north of Fore Street is divided, with their respective dwellings, must more or less closely represent a number of the original burgage holdings. In the fourth it seems a fair inference that the limit of the “tun” southward may be regarded as substantially marked by a line following the present lane from the ford at the gas works on the East Okement, and so more or less directly to the West—just where the dip of the ridge ends—possibly fairly along existing property boundaries. However much it may have been the custom in later days to build houses on or against town walls, in these primitive strongholds it was of more importance to keep up the most direct means of communication along the internal cincture. But this, of course, is more or less speculative. The gate would be somewhere on the south (it was many a long year, certainly not until Norman times, ere Fore Street became the

thoroughfare between East and West), and in all probability near the point where the roads now intersect.

The comparatively small increase of value—£2—in the twenty years or so between the reception of the manor by Baldwin and the Survey shows that it owed little of its prosperity to him. He was probably far more concerned in building his castle, and the fortunes of the burgh would be quite subsidiary, and with the building of the castle the special need for burghal defences would pass away.

When did the original "tun" become a "burgh." Certainly before *Domesday* was compiled; for we find it stated that Baldwin had four burgesses there and a market returning four shillings a year.

And the coupling of the burgesses with the market, and the correspondence of *four* shillings with *four* burgesses, point pretty plainly to the conclusion that burghal character and market powers went together, and that the distinguishing franchise of these four burgesses was the farming of the market. As the castle was founded by Baldwin, so no doubt was the market, alike for the convenience of his household, and for his own personal profit. The mill, it will be seen, was worth considerably more than the market—6s. 8d. a year.

There is good evidence in the record of two charters—one granted by Robert Courtenay in the earlier part of the thirteenth century, and the other by Hugh Courtenay in 1291. The originals of these charters are not known to exist, which is the more unfortunate, since the printed translation of the first is clearly inaccurate in sundry points, and the copies of both are said to present sundry variations. The Turberville charter of South Molton still holds the first place with us in point of original antiquity.

One of the most important points in Robert's charter, for which he was paid ten marks, is the statement that the liberties and free customs thereby conferred dated from the time of Richard, son of Baldwin the Sheriff, which infers the existence of a special grant by him. It seems also as if a yearly payment of twelve pence by each burgage as the condition of the enjoyment of these franchises dated from the same period. By Robert's charter the burgesses were empowered to elect a "Prepositum et Praeconem," which Richard Shebbeare's copy renders a "portreeve and beadle." The portreeve is clear enough; he is simply the continuation of the old Saxon headman or reeve of the township. But why praeconem should be rendered beadle, when, as Du Cange



will show, the name may be applied to all sorts of municipal officials, from a mayor to an apparitor, or serjeant, or crier, it is not quite easy to see, especially as the only duty assigned to him is to pay 6d. in order to be quit of tallage, while the portreeve, one of whose duties it was to gather the market toll in the town, was not only free of tallage, but had a shilling of the toll by way of salary. If we assume that the praeconem was the assistant and officer of the portreeve in the discharge of his duties we shall not, I suspect, be very wide of the mark.

The fine set forth for offences against the lord is twelve-pence, to be increased for repeated trespass.

Timber was granted from the wood of Okehampton to build houses on new burgages; and men could become free of the burgh in three years, paying fourpence each to the lord and the burgh the first year, fourpence to the lord the second, and the third year taking up a burgage. Burgesses were free to sell their burgages (except to houses of religion, which would deprive the lord of his rights) on paying their debts, twelvepence to the lord, and fourpence each to the burgh and portreeve. Moreover, they could leave them to their heirs, could marry (also their children) as they would; and could have a sow and four pigs without pannage in Okehampton wood. The market regulations were severe, and the tolls somewhat high, save for ware under fourpence, which went free—the toll for a horse being a penny, for an ox a halfpenny, and for five sheep or five hogs a penny. The penalty for defrauding toll was 5s. for a farthing, 10s. for a halfpenny, 20s. for a penny. The burgesses were authorized to take the law in their own hands if any man bore away the debt of any burgess, until satisfaction was made; and were made toll free throughout the grantor's right in Devon.

Hugh Courtenay's charter deals with an exchange of the rights of the burgesses to common of pasture, for other rights on other parts of the manor, in order to settle controversy which had arisen, the condition being the gift by the burgesses of two casks (*dolia*) of wine. Here of course is the historic origin of the existing common rights.

One of the three chief antiquities of Okehampton has been already dealt with—the "camp." Of the other two the castle claims separate handling. There is no reason, however, for deferring the little that has to be said of Brightley Priory, the germ of the famous house of Ford. The accepted story

touching Brightley is, that it was founded by Richard de Redvers in 1135, and colonised by Cistercians from Waverley. Failing, however, in some way to make their position good, they resolved to return to Waverley in 1141, their patron having died four years previously. They were met, walking in procession, on their road back at Thorncombe by Adelicia, Richard's sister, and she giving them her manor of Thorncombe, instead of returning to Waverley they reared the Abbey of Ford. I must confess, however, that to my mind this incident seems a little too dramatic to have been purely accidental, and that I cannot help thinking the whole affair, if it happened as related, was pre-arranged. The site at Brightley, in the lowlands by the river, is just one of those in which the farmer monks delighted; and the name—the "bright" or "clear" pasture—seems to indicate its reputation as a pleasant place. The monks are said to have petitioned to be removed, because the ground produced only "thyme and wild nightshade," which, if so, does not increase one's appreciation of their veracity. It is much more probable that their patron's successor in the barony did not regard them with the same favour; and it is quite possible that the cause is hinted at in the clause of Robert's charter, prohibiting the alienation of burgages to houses of religion. We all know how the legislature had to interfere in later times.

The house had never grown to any notable dimensions, and the present remains are naturally very scanty; while if the buildings had ever been of any size or architectural character, there would be indications in the walls of the adjacent hamlet, in some fragments, at any rate, of worked stone. Still there should have been a chapel of sufficient importance to receive the remains of their first patron; for we read that they were removed thence for burial to Ford, with the remains of another Richard, the first abbot.

It has been commonly held that the only relic of the old Priory is a round-headed granite arch in one of the walls of the barn at the farm which now occupies the site; but having been indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Palmer, the occupier, for an inspection of the house, I feel very little doubt that some of the walls of the domestic buildings are there preserved; and the fact that the arch is in the west wall of the barn, which orientates east and west with remarkable precision, leads one to suggest that it may have been the doorway of the chapel. There are no characteristic features about it beyond the fact that it is deeply splayed



internally, corresponding with the openings in the older part of the castle. If the present Priory Farm, which belongs to the Okehampton Charity Trustees, and is only ten acres in extent, bears any definite relation to the original holding of the monks, that will be an additional reason for treating the Priory as of very small importance—merely the germ, in short, of what, under other conditions, it might have become.

The curious suggestion has been made that the presence of a cross on the presumed "tombstone," dug up while Okehampton Church was being rebuilt in 1843 (now built into the eastern wall of the fabric), indicates that the person commemorated was an ecclesiastic—hence that he might have been connected with Brightley. I need hardly say that all that it meant was that he was a Christian. One rather wonders, likewise, that there should have been any hesitation in reading the inscription, seeing that it is only at the end that any difficulty is apparent. The published reading is, "HIC IACED ROBER CVB DE MOIE B." The correct reading is, "HIC IACET ROBERTVS DE MOLES." I have called it a presumed "tombstone," because it is all but absolutely certain that it is the lid of a stone coffin, and if so, from its small size—four feet in length, and sixteen inches only in width at the widest point, the head—commemorating a child.

Who then was this Robert of Moles? It will be recalled at once that among the aliases of Baldwin the Sheriff is that of Baldwin de Molis. Roger of Moles, whom the Lysons suggest as probably a brother or son of Baldwin, was also the Domesday holder of Lew Trenchard, and the ancestor of the Lords de Meules, one of whom in the thirteenth century married Margaret, the daughter of Hugh, Lord Courtenay. At first it seemed not unlikely that the Robert in question might have been a child of that marriage. Neither the dates nor conditions, however, fit. The Okehampton church which was burnt down in 1842, was consecrated in 1261; but it is also on record that the chancel was rebuilt in 1417. There was, however, a church long before 1261; and the presumption, from what we know commonly happened elsewhere, is that at the rebuilding of 1261 the old chancel was allowed to remain, and continued in use until replaced some century and a half later. And it is certainly difficult to understand how one portion of the 1261 structure should come for rebuilding in 1417, and the remainder stand so many centuries longer.

The statement with regard to the Robertus stone is that it was found six feet below the surface, in digging up the foundations of the chancel wall, and that it had "evidently been used for a building stone"—a conclusion which depends entirely upon the accuracy of observation of the finders. It is quite clear that it was located just the right depth for an interment. It is equally clear that no memorial belonging to a family of such local importance would ever have been turned to such a use in 1261, very doubtfully in 1417; but that all the conditions might very well have been fulfilled by overlooking the interment when the later chancel was built. Of course, if it was a coffin lid, the coffin ought to have been found; but on that head I have no information.

The positive, as distinct from the inductive evidence, however, not only places the stone before 1261, but considerably earlier; for the distinctive characteristics of the lettering are Saxon, and point to the eleventh century rather than the twelfth. Whether Robert of Moles was a son of Baldwin, elsewhere unrecorded, or of his brother who finds place in the family pedigree, is of course doubtful; but one or the other in my mind he certainly seems to have been; and the memorial is therefore considerably nearer eight than seven hundred years old. I can only add my regret that this remarkable relic of antiquity was not placed within the Church instead of without.