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**Note on the Entry in Domesday Book Relating to Westbury-on-Severn**

by C. S. Taylor  
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## NOTE ON THE ENTRY IN DOMESDAY BOOK RELATING TO WESTBURY-ON-SEVERN.

BY THE REV. C. S. TAYLOR, M.A., F.S.A.

THE entry relating to Westbury-on-Severn in Domesday Book runs thus :—

“ f. 163. Terra Regis. In Wesberie xxx hide. Ibi habebat Edwardus Rex v carucas in dominio & xxxii villanos & xv bordarios cum xxviii carucis. Ibi i servus. Hoc manerium reddebat unam noctem de firma tempore Regis Edwardi. Similiter tempore Regis Willelmi per iiii annos. Postea ablate sunt de isto manerio vi hide in Chire & in Cliftone x hide In Noent & Chingestune viii hide In Ladevent i hida. Has terras tenent modo abbatia de Cormeliis & Osbern & Willelmus filii Ricardi & tamen de remanente invenit Vicecomes totam firman. Dicunt autem homines de Comitatu quod Sapina jacuit in Westberie ad firmam Regis Edwardi.

“ In Westbury xxx hides. Here King Edward used to have v teams in demesne and xxxii villeins and xv bordars with xxviii teams. Here is i serf. This Manor used to pay one night's ferm in the time of King Edward. Likewise for four years in the time of King William. Afterwards there were removed from this Manor vi hides in Chire, and in Cliftone x hides, in Newent and Chingestone viii hides, in Ladeuent i hide. The holders of these lands are now the Abbey of Cormeilles, and Osbern and William fitz Richard, yet the Sheriff finds from the remainder the whole ferm. The men of the County say that Sapina lay in Westbury to the account of the ferm of King Edward.”

The entry is clear enough except with regard to the

locality of the estates removed from the ferm of Westbury. Of these Noent is clearly Newent, which appears on f. 166 as an estate of vi hides in the possession of the Abbey of Cormeilles, by gift of Earl Roger son of Earl William Fitz Osbern. Of the rest we are told that they belonged to the Abbey of Cormeilles, and Osbern and William fitz Richard. This Richard was Richard son of Scrob or Scrupe, who came over to England with the Confessor; he was the builder of what was apparently the earliest of those castles which were so hateful to the English,—Richard's Castle in Herefordshire,—about 1048, and he survived the Conquest. His son Osbern was Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1060, and appears as a large landowner there in Domesday Book.

The entry relating to the vi hides in Chire and the x hides in Cliftune, the i hide in Ladeuent, and the remaining ii hides in Chingestune, has been a source of difficulty and confusion from the time of Atkyns downwards, because these places have been identified from time to time with Shirehampton, Clifton and Kingsweston near Bristol, on the supposition that records which should really have been placed under Westbury-on-Trym have been misplaced under Westbury-on-Severn. It seemed, therefore, well that an attempt should be made to clear up the difficulty.

The first person who seems to have had an inkling of the true state of the case was Mr. A. S. Ellis, who in a note to his article on the "Manorial History of Clifton,"<sup>1</sup> referred to the identification of the Cliftune and Chire of the Westbury entry with Clifton by Bristol and Shirehampton, remarking that in his opinion these two places should rather be identified with Clifton-on-Teme in Worcestershire, and Kyre, which are mentioned in a Worcester Cathedral document<sup>2</sup> as having been stolen from the cathedral in the time of King Ethelred the Unready. If Mr. Ellis had gone on to refer to the Domesday entries concerning these two places he would no doubt have put the matter right thirty-five years ago.

<sup>1</sup> *Transactions*, iii. 212, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon*, i. 593.

We are told that the separated lands belonged to the Abbey of Cormeilles and the two sons of Richard ; but the two brethren held no lands in Gloucestershire according to Domesday Book, and the abbey held no estate there called Chingestune. It is needful, therefore, to go farther afield. Chingestune indeed is not far to seek. On f. 182b in Bremese Hundred in Herefordshire it is recorded that St. Mary of Cormeilles held ii hides in Chingestune, and paid geld and rendered services in Gloucestershire ; but that those who lived in that hundred attended its courts to give and receive justice. The vi hides in Newent and the ii hides in the Herefordshire Chingestune then satisfy the viii hides in Noent and Chingestune of the entry.

We turn next to the lands of the two sons of Richard. William does not detain us long, for he held only two estates in England, Coleshill and Childrey in Berkshire. Osbern, however, held estates in six shires, and in Dodintret Hundred in Worcestershire on f. 176b among his lands we seem to find the manors for which we are seeking :—Cliftune iii hides held T.R.E. by the King ; Chure iii hides, also held by King Edward ; Cuer i hide, held formerly by Osbern's father Richard ; and Edevent i hide, held by Vlsac. Edevent is here identified with Ladeuent, because the place-name Ladeuent nowhere appears in the text of Domesday except in connection with Westbury-on-Severn. The two names are very similar, and Edevent appears among Osbern's possessions close to Clifton-on-Teme and Kyre. But of course the identification of this estate does not stand on quite the same footing with that of the other two. Edevent is now Edwin Loach, an island of Worcestershire in Herefordshire, a fact which so far as it goes tends to mark a former close connection with some estate in Worcestershire. A ready objection to these identifications lies in the distance of the places named from Westbury. Clifton-on-Teme is about six miles north-east of Bromyard in Herefordshire, Edwin Loach about two miles north of it, and Kyre about six

miles north-west, while Bromyard itself is about twenty-six miles north by west from Westbury.

But subject estates were often situated at long distances from their court house. Widford, in Oxfordshire, was fully thirty miles from St. Oswald's, Gloucester; Shenington, in the same shire, was at an equal distance from Tewkesbury; and Sutton-under-Brailes was also about the same distance from Deerhurst. The matter of distance in itself is no bar to the identification. It is to be noted, however, that the hidages differ. The Cliftone of the Westbury entry is credited with ten hides, while Osbern's Cliftone was only rated at three, and Chure and Cuer together only account for four out of the six hides in the Westbury Chire. Still, sixteen years had elapsed between the scattering of the Westbury estates in 1070 and the compilation of Domesday Book in 1086. Most of the land in England had changed owners in the interval, and it is no matter for wonder that the hidages of the estates at the later date should be smaller than they were at the earlier one, for this would only mean that the estates had been split up, as Chire had evidently been divided, and that part was at the later date known by another name.

There is then good reason for thinking that Cliftone and Chire are represented in Domesday Book by lands which are now known as Clifton-on-Teme and Kyre, and also reason for thinking that Ladevent of the entry is Edewent in the book, and Edwin Loach at the present day. It remains to find out whether we can discover anything about the history of these places in the eleventh century which would bear on the subject, and we turn to the document mentioned by Mr. Ellis.<sup>1</sup>

This is a schedule of the lands of the Church of Worcester which were seized by the Northmen in the reigns of Kings Ethelred the Unready, Cnut, and Harthacnut who ravaged Worcestershire in 1041 in consequence of a revolt against the exaction of danegeld.

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale, *Monasticon*, i. 593.

The plundered lands are arranged geographically, beginning with those to the west of the Teme, and it is related that in the time of King Ethelred Cliftun, and Homme, and Eastham, and Bufawuda, and Cyr, with all that pertained to them, belonged to the Church of Worcester; but that Earl Hacun seized these lands and held them as his own. His wife Gunnild, however, perceiving the injustice, caused a figure of St. Mary to be gilded as service for these lands, which were thus lost to the Church.

Hacon and Gunnild were well-known people in their day, being both of them grandchildren of King Swegen. Hacon was the son of Eric, jarl of Norway, who was appointed to the Earldom of the Northumbrians by Cnut in 1013, and was banished by the same king in 1017. Eric had married Cnut's sister Gytha. Gunnild was the daughter of an unnamed daughter of Swegen, who had married Wyrtegeorn, King of the Wends. Hacon and Gunnild then were cousins, grandchildren of King Swegen, and nephew and niece of Cnut.

Mr. E. A. Freeman thought that Hacon held the Earldom of the Hwiccians;<sup>1</sup> if so, this must have been in the time of Cnut, for he was banished to Norway by that king in 1029. When his father Eric went to England with Cnut in 1015, Hacon had remained in Norway as Earl, but was soon driven out by St. Olaf; his stay in Norway this second time was not for long, as he died at sea in 1030.

Gunnild remained in England after the banishment of her husband, and married Earl Harold, son of jarl Thorkell, who died in 1042. Edward the Confessor was crowned on April 3rd, 1043, and in 1044 Gunnild and her two sons, Hemming and Thorkell, were banished; no doubt personages so closely connected with Kings Swegen and Cnut were counted dangerous.

The Abingdon Chronicle records under 1053 that in that

<sup>1</sup> *Norman Conquest*, ii. 578.

year the Welsh slew many English at Westbury of the wardmen—weardmanna. These may have been keepers of the forest, for the king was a great hunter, or they may have been warders of the Welsh border. The incident may very well have led to the strengthening of the force at the king's Manor of Westbury, and Gunnild's forfeited estates would have been a convenient source from which the strength might be drawn. But the Welsh border was ever unquiet, and nine years later a great effort was made to secure peace in that quarter once and for all. Soon after Christmas, 1062, Earl Harold invaded North Wales, and burned King Gruffydd's castle at Rhuddlan, the king barely escaping. At the end of May, in the following year, Harold invaded Wales from Bristol, and Tostig entered it from the north. The two brothers joined their forces, and systematically harried the country till in August the Welsh submitted, slew King Gruffydd, and sent his head to Earl Harold. As a consequence, Gwent, the low-lying land between the Wye and the Usk, was annexed by the English, whose tenure, however, was not very secure, for in August, 1065, Prince Caradoc destroyed a hunting lodge which Earl Harold was building at Portskewett.

Matters rested for a while, for there were greater things to think of than the punishment of marauding Welshmen. But in 1070 Caradoc allied himself with Earl William Fitzosbern, and they defeated and slew Meredydd, King of the South Welsh. Earl William founded Chepstow Castle,<sup>1</sup> before long the southern coast was a land of Norman knights and Norman castles, and there was no longer any danger of Welsh raids near Westbury.

So it is that Domesday Book tells us that the royal estate of Westbury remained as the Conqueror found it for the first four years of his reign, and that then, after the Welsh power was finally crushed, it was dismembered. For clearly there

<sup>1</sup> D. B., f. 162: "Castellum de Estrighoiel fecit Willelmus Comes."

would be no longer need for wardmen of the border at Westbury. We cannot tell exactly into whose possession all the scattered lands passed. There can be little doubt that Newent was taken by Earl William, for it was given by his son Earl Roger, with the consent of King William, to St. Mary of Cormeilles for the good of his father's soul ; and most likely Chingestune passed in the same way. The case is not so clear with regard to the Worcestershire estates ; they may have been taken also by Earl William, and held by him and his son Roger till the rebellion of Earl Roger in 1075, or they may have passed at once into the possession of Osbern fitz Richard who, as we have seen, was Sheriff of Herefordshire as far back as 1060.

So far as we can trace them then, we might think that the history of the lands separated from Westbury might have been something of this kind. Newent was probably an appendage of the royal estate of Westbury, for we are distinctly told that it did not pay geld ; and most likely Chingestune pertained to Newent. The Worcestershire estates had been stolen from the Church of Worcester by the Northmen, and were held by Earl Hacon till he was banished in 1029, and by Gunnild his wife till she followed him into exile in 1044. They would have been held by the Confessor till the wardmen were slain at Westbury in 1053, when they were annexed to Westbury to strengthen the force there ; and they remained attached to Westbury till after Earl William had crushed the South Welsh and founded the castle at Chepstow, when they passed into the possession of the Earl, or of Osbern fitz Richard, Sheriff of Herefordshire. This attempt to reconstruct history may, or may not, be truth ; but at any rate it agrees with the facts of the case, and there is nothing to tell against it.

With regard to the statement that Wesberie formerly paid one night's ferm, and that after the estates had been separated from it the sheriff still found from the remainder the whole ferm, we note that a night's ferm was the unit of tribute in

kind which was rendered annually by the ancient estates of the Crown, which were grouped for the purpose. In Somerset this tribute had been commuted for a money payment, varying from £100 10s. 9½d. in the case of Somerton and Chedder to £106 0s. 10d. in the case of Bruton and Frome<sup>1</sup>; and the payment of £101 6s. 8d. from the Gloucestershire estate of Barton by Bristol looks very much like a similar commutation. But fortunately in our shire the estate of Bitton with Winterbourne and part of Wapley still rendered its night's ferm in kind.<sup>2</sup> It was rated at 36 hides, there were 6000 acres under cultivation and 88 males. If now to the 30 hides, the 3960 cultivated acres and 48 males of Westbury we add the 6 hides, the 3600 acres and 34 males of Newent, we have a total of 36 hides, 7560 cultivated acres and 82 males, a sum closely agreeing with the similar sum at Bitton. It is likely, therefore, that the original royal estate at Westbury had consisted of Westbury and Newent, and that it was to this estate that the other estates had been added. No injustice was done by the removal of the other estates; but a very distinct injustice was done to Westbury when Newent, which must have nearly equalled it in value, was taken away, and yet the whole night's ferm was still exacted from Westbury. As it is distinctly stated that Newent did not pay geld in the time of King Edward it was no doubt a royal estate.

The last sentence presents some little difficulty. It can only be translated: "The men of the county say that Sapina" (whatever he, she, or it may have been) "lay in Westbury to the account of the ferm of King Edward." It has been translated: "Sapina laid (the separated estates) in Westbury to the account of the ferm of King Edward;" but this is to blunder in confusion between *jaceo*, *jacui*, to lie, and *jacio jeci* to cast, or lay. The meaning of *Sapina* is uncertain. *Sapinus*, however, means fir-timber, or a fir-tree; and I have sometimes thought that the sentence meant that

<sup>1</sup> Eyton, *Somerset Domesday*, ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> D. B., 162b.

the fir-wood, *i.e.* the Forest of Dean which may then have been a fir-wood like the country round Bournemouth, lay in the estate of Westbury-on-Severn in the time of King Edward, who was very fond of hunting. But I have been told by those who know the forest well that it does not appear that there is any reason for thinking that it ever was a fir-wood.