

THE DE ALDEHAMS.

BY GORDON WARD, M.D.

ALTHOUGH the name of the Manor of Aldham, Ealdeham or Yaldham in the parish of Ightham strongly suggests a Saxon origin, and although the sizes of the fields immediately to the north of it attest a very early settlement, we have no written evidence until the year 1275.

The statement of Hasted (V., p. 37) that an early Thomas de Aldham was knighted in Palestine by Richard I is equivocal, since we do not know on what evidence it is based ; and Hasted is often inaccurate. But there is nothing inherently improbable in his statement. The siege of Acre, at which Richard I was present, lasted three years and, if Thomas de Aldham there received the honour of knighthood, it may well have been about the year 1192. In this case he may have been the grandfather of that Thomas, of whom we have a more definite record.

This record exists in the form of an Inquest Post Mortem, for which a writ was issued in December of the year named. This record states :—

“ He held no land in chief of the King in co. Kent, but held of Sir Nicholas Payns half a Knight's Fee in Eldeham, 36 acres of Acard de Audeham & 2s. rent, and of one Waldere 17 acres ; of the heirs of Richard Werstan 7 acres ; and a certain wood of Sir William de Valenc' of the fee of Kemsing.”

It will be convenient to continue here the inquest report in so far as it concerns Kent :—

“ Baldwin is his son and heir, aged 16½ years, and is heir of the Knight's Fee, and the said Baldwin and William his brother, aged 14 years, heirs of the socage land.”

This I.P.M. is in File 14 (10) of Edw. I, and on another membrane (No. 12) is found the additional statement that the

Manor of Audham is and has been held of Hugh Payns of the Manor of Lullingeston. The half of a Knight's Fee is usually supposed to have been the Manor House and demesne of Aldham (now Yaldham) but we have evidence of at least one other landowner there, namely Acard de Audeham, from whom Thomas held 36 acres. He was perhaps resident at West Aldham or St. Cleres. The family of Werstan is variously described as of Kemesing (Close Rolls. Henry III) and of "La Zele" (Kent Fines, 17 Edw. II) which is the present Seal. Sir William de Valence was "the King's Uncle" and is so described in various records. He was Lord of the Manor of Sele and Kemsing.

In the following year Isabella, wife of Thomas, recovered from the Sheriff certain lands of Thomas' estate which he had seized upon in the King's name. These were part of her marriage portion and were apparently "certain lands in Wodland, Kemesing and Audeham." This fact rather suggests that she may have been a member of that other local family of which Acard de Audeham, perhaps her father, was a representative. In any case, she seems to have brought her husband many lands other than those in Ightham, and he also had manors elsewhere.

In due course Baldwin, the eldest son, inherited. One is almost inclined to find in his name, which was that also of the Kings of Jerusalem, some corroboration of the Crusader legend of the first Sir Thomas. He died in 1290 (I.P.M. 19 Edw. I) and his wife Nicholaa a few months later (Chancery I.P.M. same date).

They had a son Francis who inherited the estates and died in 1327. His Inquest Post Mortem (File I(5) Edw. III) is an incomplete, but very interesting, document. There is no writ for lands in Kent, but on membrane 7, described in the Calendar as "Memorandum annexed" we read:—

"The right inheritance of Thomas de Aldeham, the manors of Aldeham and Romschede in co. Kent and the manors of Exseet, Lauytye (*sic*) and Lambham in co. Sussex, etc."

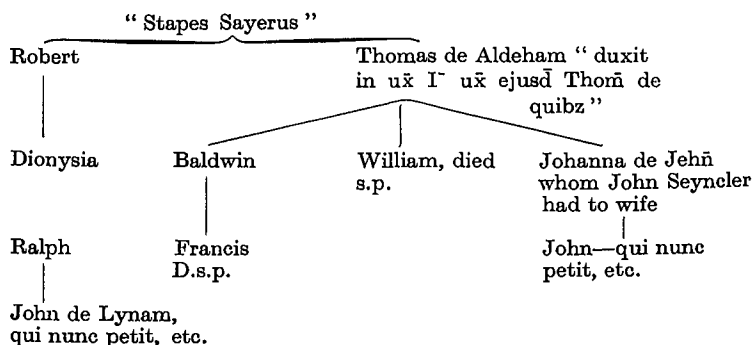
"The right inheritance of Iſ de la Haye, namely, the manors of Geffynghon, Torrynge & Brembeltye in co. Sussex. And

also the manor of Chiselbergh in co. Somerset. And also the manor of Wodepreston in co. Northants, etc.”

Judging from the correspondence in the lists of the counties mentioned in the I.P.M. of Thomas, these latter manors were those of that Isabella who was his wife. It is not clear why she is now “de la Haye.”

So far we learn little new except that Romschede manor in Kent was an Aldham possession. There are two manors of this name. Both are represented by existing farm houses, one in Hucking near Maidstone, the other at the junction of the parishes of Seal, Sevenoaks and Hildenborough. It seems likely that the latter was in question, since it came later to the Pekhams, as did the manor of Aldham. But positive evidence is lacking.

On the back of this I.P.M. is a note of not less interest than its contents. It is a pedigree of the Aldham family, and it suggests that there was a claim for the estates from two different quarters. It runs as follows :—



Whatever dispute there may have been was apparently decided in favour of Johanna St. Clere and her issue, so far as Aldham was concerned. Her son died in 1336 and the I.P.M. is number 686, Edw. III. He possessed :—

“Aldham. The Manor of Aldham (extent given) held of Roger de Chaundrois, chivaler, as of his manor of Lullyngston, by service of half a Knight’s Fee, rendering 8d yearly, and doing suit at the said Roger’s court at Lullyngston every three weeks. And 10 acres of land held in gavelkind of Peter de Grandisono,

miles, as of his manor of Kemsyng, by service of 2s 8d yearly, and suit, etc.

“John, his son, aged 3½ and more, is his next heir.”

This evidence as to the termination of the family of De Aldham hardly accords with the statements of Hasted (based no doubt on Philipott, p. 141) that Thomas, the husband of Isabella, had three daughters and co-heirs, one of whom married John St. Clere and another Martin de Pecham. Nor is the writer in any position to harmonise them, since his only object was to render available evidence of interest to himself in so far as it bore on the ownership of the manor of Romschedde.

It may however be remarked that there is, in *Arch. Cant.*, xxi. 208, mention of a Thomas de Aldham who was summoned to Parliament in 1337. Moreover in 1346 (*Arch. Cant.*, x. 149) we find Guido de Ealdeham holding one quarter of a Knight's fee in Aldham. It seems evident that these gentlemen were not members of that family of whom a pedigree has already been given, and that the suffix of “de Aldham” should not be interpreted as having any such significance.