

Archæologia Cantiana.

THE MAKING OF THE GREAT PARK AT OTFORD.

BY GORDON WARD, M.D.

THOSE who have studied the later history of the great preconquest Lordship of Otford have relatively little difficulty in identifying its ancient holdings. But there is always one area in which clues fail and identification is halting and difficult. This is the area of the Great Park, so called to distinguish it from the New and Little Parks there. It would, therefore, be of some assistance if we could determine the age of this park and this must be the writer's excuse for discussing the two Saxon charters which seem, together, to convey to Wulfred, Archbishop of Canterbury, the whole of the area in question.

These charters are dated 821 and 822 but they are not the first historical mentions of Otford or its neighbourhood. The Saxon Chronicle tells us that Offa of Mercia defeated the men of Kent at Otthanford in the year 775. It is also said that Offa gave Otteford to Christ Church, Canterbury. The authority for this is the addition of the words "Idem Offa dedit ecclesie Christi in Dorobernia (villam) nomine Oteford" to a charter of Offa dated 790. These words occur only in twelfth and thirteenth century manuscripts and are not in the original charter which has nothing to do with Otford. But the manuscripts in question are cartularies showing the then possessions of Christ Church and there is no reason to suppose that the words quoted embody anything but a genuine tradition.

What exactly was comprised in the gift of "Oteford" or "Otthanford" in the time of Offa is very uncertain. The

question is not sufficiently relevant to our present subject to warrant full discussion. The writer believes that it was mainly the western part of the existing village and parish, and that the Church and Manor House were erected by the Archbishops on ground previously vacant at the east end of the village. Both probably originated after the time of Offa. That theory would allow of new grants in 821 and 822. On any other theory these later grants must probably be regarded as confirmations only.

It has been necessary to mention Offa's alleged grant because the discussion of Saxon Charters must involve a considerable appeal to inherent probability rather than to recorded fact. This paper includes several conjectures for which the grounds are given. Individually they would have no very great force because the available grounds fall far short of absolute demonstration. But when it is seen that each conjecture, without undue straining, dovetails into the next and completes in time a coherent picture of the granting of the Great Park, one is entitled to claim for the whole a much greater inherent probability than the separate parts could warrant. The writer makes this claim and is therefore anxious to include all the references to Saxon Otford which may have any bearing on the question.

The grant of the Park area seems to have been in two parts. The first charter grants three named places, second grants five hides not named though the boundaries are given. These five hides were in two parts, which are hereafter referred to as Lot 1 and Lot 2. The suggested position of all places named is shown on the accompanying map. The second charter also includes three denes in the forest. These are not in the Otford area and cannot be shown on the map. They are briefly referred to later as are also Mylentum and Bydictun, whose significance will then be referred to. They have no bearing on the making of the Great Park.

The first charter is dated 821. We have no original. There are two manuscripts of the twelfth century, namely, Lambeth MS. 1212, p. 316 and Corpus Christi College MS. 180.

“ Evidentia ecclesiae Christi Cant.” in *Chronica W. Thorn*, p. 198. It is nowhere suggested that these are other than genuine reproductions of a lost original but they do not use quite the same spelling. In Somner’s *Antiquities of Canterbury*, 1640, p. 213, and Dugdale’s *Monasticon*, 1655, p. 19, we find other variations.

The Cambridge MS. reads :

“ Anno dominicæ incarnationis. DCCCXXI, Ego Cenulfus rex concedo venerando archiepiscopo W. pro remedio salutis æternæ partem terræ juris mei in tribus locis, id est, Coppanstan, Greatenearse, and Scealdefordan libera ab omni seculari servicio & regio tributo.”

The Lambeth MS. gives “ Gretaniarse,” with the other places as in that of Cambridge. Somner and Dugdale both give “ Coppanstan, Gretamarsc and Shaldeford.”

There is no mention of Otford nor anything in the MS. to show that these places were near Otford. But something is known of one of them from other sources. This is Greatenearse. This occurs in a different form in the charter of the following year which leaves no doubt that it is in the Otford district. Moreover the *Textus Roffensis* shows that Otford had a “ capella ” named “ Gretenersce.” This was the Hospital of St. John to which Otford regularly paid “ the alms appointed ” in 1289, etc. (see Lambeth Court Roll, No. 830). In these Rolls it is spelt variously, e.g., Gretenese and Grettenesse. It is no doubt identical with the chapel of Greatness of which the remains were still to be seen a hundred years ago (see Colbran’s *Guide to Tunbridge Wells*, 1800) but of which no trace now exists.

The locality in which this chapel existed is now part of the parish of St. John’s and the name Greatness is reserved for another but adjacent part of the parish. The latter includes Greatness Farm and Mill with various modern buildings. The farm and the chapel or Hospital are only half a mile apart but it is important, in view of what is to follow, to note that they may have been separate centres at a very early date. This suggestion, in the case of the farm,

rests on the payment by the tenants of "Greteness" to the Manor of Otford in the year 1534 of the sum of 4d. This sum appears to be a very interesting due known as the "yoke groat" or the "suit groat," and most, if not all, of the holdings which paid it were of immense antiquity. It can scarcely have been paid by the chapel, and one assumes that it was the modern Greatness farm and mill which provided it.

In default of some other claimant, we may identify the "Gretenearse" of 821 with one or both of these holdings. This, in turn, warrants us in looking for Coppnanstan and Scealdefordan in the same district. The strength of that warranty must be judged from the result of the search for no one has yet thoroughly edited our Saxon charters or told us how often the lands they grant are to be found in one district and how often in many.

The name "Coppnanstan" is not to be found on modern maps but the Otford Tithe Map of 1841 shows a field called "Copstone." The writer is greatly indebted to Mr. and Mrs. R. B. Polhill Drabble for permission to study the local charters in their possession from which the following forms of this name are taken :

1289. Coppelston, in an original deed.

1425. Soppilston, in a much-mis-spelt copy of a Rental.

1475. Coppilston, in a Rental.

1635, 1667, 1702 and 1758. Copstone, in various deeds.

All these references are to the field shown on the accompanying map. It is scarcely likely that King Cenulf was granting only so small an area. We must consider what larger holding may have left its name in this field. In 1425 it was part of the yoke of Oxeneye which last was roughly the same as the Warren House farm of a later date. The field was part of this farm. There is no other yoke or farm with which its position connects it. It seems clear that "Coppnanstan" is Coppa's "tun," the homestead of Coppa.

If there was continuity of occupation on this site from Saxon times to 1289 (and there is no evidence to the contrary) it is probable that the "tun" enshrined in the field name had its centre at what was later the Warren House of the Archbishops and then Warren House farm buildings. That the "tun" should later acquire the name of Oxeneye is not surprising. Amongst the yokes of Otford, all of which seem to have been what we should now call farms, there are several which bear post-conquest names, such as Le Reye and Maleville, which must have supplanted earlier Saxon denominations. The writer is informed that the corruption of Coppnanstan to Coppelston is not so unusual a change that it conflicts with the theory that the Coppnanstan of 821 is to be identified with the later Yoke of Oxeneye and Warren House farm.

We come next to Scealdefordan, which also does not appear on modern maps, at least not in an easily recognisable form. But in or about the year 1280 (undated Polhill charter) we meet with a witness named "William de Chelde." The charter deals with land on the Otford-Kemsing boundary and the witnesses are all local worthies, e.g. Robert Longe de la Sele and William atte Welle de Kemesing and Walter Bety, William Dawe, etc., who were from Otford. William de Chelde occurs again in a charter of 1295 (from the same source) as a witness to the grant of land in Kemsing but on the Otford boundary. In 1539 (Kent Fines 22-134-59) King Henry VIII buys from Thomas Tottysherst "the Manor of Childe" with 160 acres and 6s. 3d. rent in Kemsing, Otford and Sevenoaks. It seems justifiable to look for a place called Chelde or Childe somewhere near the Otford-Kemsing boundary. Unfortunately the writer knows of no other reference to this place.

But there is in the required position (see map) a field called Mill Pond Field on the Tithe Map and in this field are the very considerable embankments which made the mill pond, which is now a marsh. Past this field runs a road which is carried over the mill stream by a bridge. In 1644 this was called Childebridge, and it is called Childsbridge

to-day. It is difficult to resist the suggestion that William de Chelde lived near this spot. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that, before the bridge was built, there existed here a ford, which may well have been called Childeford. The last step is the identification of Scealdefordan with this hypothetical Childeford. The loss of the initial "s" would be in accordance with a well-known rule which tells of the loss of the first of two supporting consonants and "Cealdefordan" and "Childeford" are certainly not very far apart. But this is an example of a conjecture that each must value as he chooses. The writer remains encouraged by the opinion of Dr. F. W. Hardman, to whom he put the problem that "I do not feel any doubt that Scealdefordan is to be identified with Childsbridge."

The suggested identifications of the first charter are therefore as follows :

Greatenearse with the modern Greatness.
 Coppanstan with Warren House farm.
 Scealdefordan with Childsbridge.

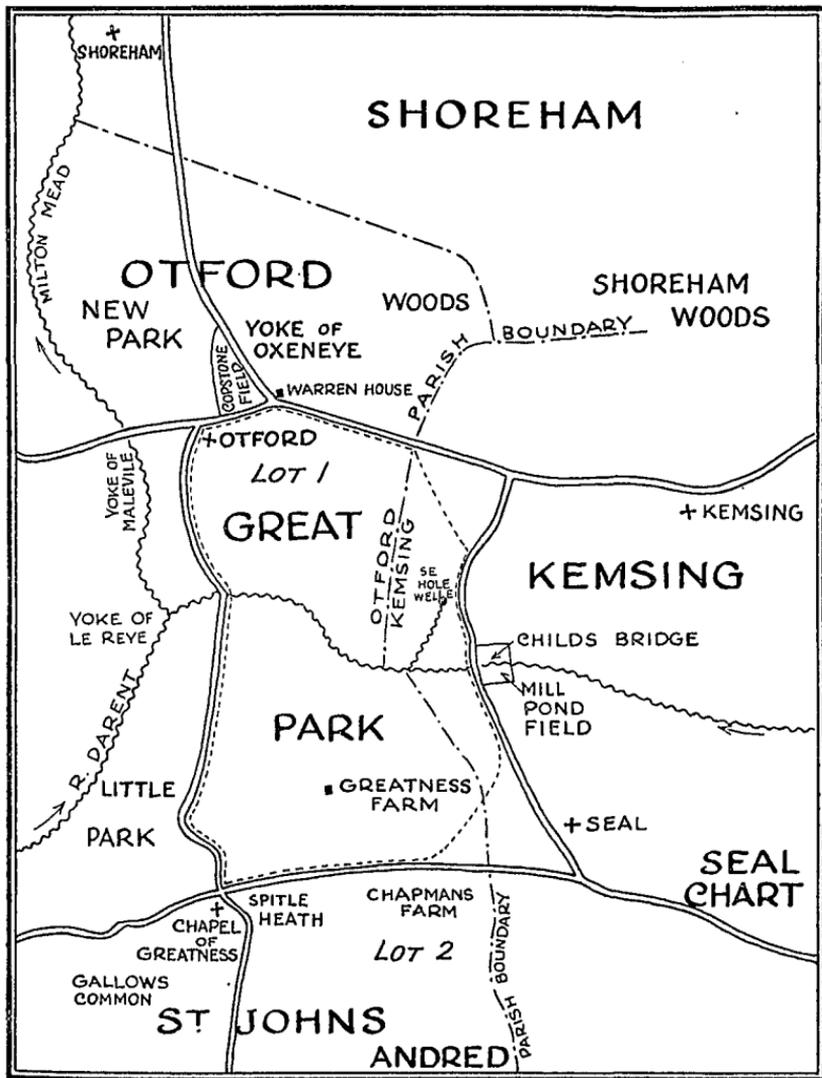
The charter of 822 is still extant in the British Museum (Cotton, Augustus II, 93). The boundaries of the land conveyed are stated in the original to be :

"ab oriente cymesinc, in australe sehole welle. et occidente diorente. ab aquilone scorham silba similiter qui dicitur cert ab occidente. et aquilone grootan edesces lond In oriente cymesinges cert et in austra ondred :"

The punctuation is curious and Haddan and Stubbs (*Councils*, vol. 3, p. 589) vary it considerably. It is given above as it is in the original. Two pieces of land seem to have been granted of which the first was bounded by :

Cymesinc, i.e. Kemsing, on the east.
 "sehole welle," on the south.
 Scorham silba, i.e. Shorham wood, on the north.
 Diorente, i.e. the River Darent, on the west.

The identifications given are nowhere disputed but two of them require further consideration. Shoreham lies in a



valley which is not wooded. Nor do the early place names of this valley suggest that it was wooded in Saxon times. But the parish of Shoreham extends right across the hills on the north of the area later occupied by the Great Park and this extension is well wooded. It is the only part of Shoreham which is visible from the Great Park and is an especially prominent boundary owing to its position on the top of the chalk hills. The Great Park lies below it in the valley. The large size of the yokes on these hills as compared with those in the valleys also suggests a considerable proportion of waste at least as early as Saxon times. For all these reasons the writer would identify Scorham silba with woods in the position shown on the map.

“Sehole welle” is so written in the original but the spacing of words in early charters is often inaccurate and it may be rendered “se hole welle,” i.e. the hollow well. But “welle” in Saxon times meant rather a stream or spring than what we should call a well. The three boundaries already accepted for Lot 1 call for a fourth on the south, and this should be a stream. The map shows that there is a stream in the required position, the same stream which turned the mill at Childebridge. This is reinforced by another stream originating in a strong spring which rises from the base of a steep bank. This bank must once have surrounded it but has been worn away by the water on its southern side. There are other such banks and springs near Otford but none so well placed as claimants for identification with “se hole welle” of 822. That this spring was known and used at an early date is attested by the frequent finds of Roman pottery in its course. An alternative suggestion is that “sehole” is one word equivalent to the modern Seal, and the boundary “Seal spring.”

With regard to Lot 2 we have possible alternative translations of the original. It might mean :

“Similarly, what is called Chart (has) on the west and north “greetan edesces lond,” on the east Kemsing Chart and on the south Andred.”

or, possibly :

“ Similarly, what is called Chart on the west, and on the north “ greotan edescas lond,” on the east Kemsing Chart and on the south Andred.”

It will be better to discuss the known boundaries first. Chart land is now, and presumably was in Saxon times, sandy land with such wood, furze and heath as can grow on it. Kemsing Chart can hardly be other than the Seal Chart of to-day, for Kemsing was the predominant partner in the Manor of Kemsing and Seal, and the church of the latter was once no more than a chapel of Kemsing. Ondred is certainly the Wealden forest and the chart land lay in a strip extending east and west between the forest and the Holmesdale valley in which Otford and Kemsing lie. In either case the northern boundary was “ greotan edescas lond ” which means the sandy park land and is the same as Greatenearse, which had been given to the Archbishop in the previous year. This identification is not the writer's, but seems to be admitted by those qualified to judge. Mr. E. G. Box communicated it to the writer as well as the whole of the foregoing references to the various manuscripts of the Saxon charters. His assistance is most gratefully acknowledged but he is not to be held responsible for the use which the writer has made of it.

We have now to decide whether the western boundary was also “ greotan edescas lond ” or whether it was “ qui dicitur cert.” If it was the former, it must have been the area about the later chapel of Greatness, the farm being the subject of the previous grant. If the latter, we may still place it in the same position, for here was certainly land “ qui dicitur cert,” land which was called Gallows Common at a later date. The writer believes that the second of the proposed alternative readings is the correct one, and that the land called Chart was the western boundary only, and not the actual land granted. It seems, in fact, to have been the north-eastern corner of Sevenoaks parish, the Spittle Heath of a later generation, the “ 100 acres of rough ground ” which Thomas Tottysherst sold under the name of Chapmans Ford

in 1558 (Sevenoaks Library Deeds, No. 132). It does not seem to have been included in the Great Park at any time, but was part of the Manor of Otford.

An attempt has now been made to identify the whole of the lands granted in the two charters. The map also shows the area of the land included in the Great Park. This amounts to 731 acres, whereas Major C. Hesketh (*K.A.S.*, xxxi., 1) gives estimates of 425 and 654 acres, the latter in 1705. It is impossible to say how much of the 731 acres which undoubtedly belonged to the Archbishops was actually park land. But Symondson's map (1596) shows a paling reaching quite clearly south of "se hole welle" and well into the area of "greetan edescas lond." It is therefore possible that the original boundaries did reach as far and the word "edesc" makes it possible that the paling was first put up as early as 822. There is no extant licence to empale, which, if anything, argues an early origin. But even if this was so, it is probable that much of the area was under cultivation at different times and that the boundaries were rather those of a varied demesne than of a park wholly devoted to deer. The latter seem to have been accommodated particularly in the northern portion about the Manor House.

A few other points in these charters merit a short note. The lands granted in 822 are said to be "in prouincio cante. ubi nominatur mylentū." Furley (*History of the Weald*, i, 77) identifies this with Milton by Sittingbourne. It may be noted that there is in the valley just south of Shoreham village a long riverside meadow called Meleton (1305) or Milton (1841) mead. It may possibly retain the name of this lost district. It has no apparent significance in the light of other local place or personal names known to the writer.

This same charter is dated "In loco regale qui dicitur bydictun." This is identified by Haddan and Stubbs (iii., 589), with some hesitation, as possibly Boddington in Gloucestershire, Bodington in Northamptonshire or Buttington in Montgomeryshire. I am permitted by Dr. Hardman

to repeat his identification with Ditton near Maidstone on the grounds that this place is mentioned in Domesday Book as having been a royal manor and is also mentioned in 1011 (Kemble, C.D., IV., 266). Moreover, the only other known charter of the grantor, Ceolwulf, who reigned only two years, is dated from Kent. Also Haddan and Stubbs say that the charter of 822 was given at the consecration of Ceolwulf, King of Mercia, he having succeeded to the throne early in 822 or at the end of 821. But the charter of 822 is dated as late as the 17th September and, says Dr. Hardman, seems more likely to have been given on Ceolwulf's consecration to the throne of the subject kingdom of Kent, which may well have followed by some interval his formal induction to the throne of Mercia. The position of the lands granted seems also to accord with this view.

The three denes given are described in the printed cartularies of Birch, etc., as "in Hyrst Sciofingden Snadhurst." The original charter seems to give quite clearly a rather different reading. This affects the first word in particular which is there "iuhurst," i.e., one word instead of two and "Iuhurst" instead of "in Hyrst." The place referred to is possibly Ewhurst in Sussex close to the Kentish border. Whether its neighbour Sandhurst can be identified with Snadhurst seems open to doubt but the identification of Ewhurst may afford a clue to those acquainted with that district. There are, however, other Ewhursts in Lamberhurst, etc.