

THE WI-WARA-WICS.

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THE word "wic" occurs with great frequency in place-names and many meanings have been ascribed to it. Ekwall (*Oxford Dict. Eng. P.-N.*) says, "Probably the most common meaning is dairy-farm", while Wallenberg (*Kentish P.-N.*) goes no further than to offer the alternatives "dwelling-place, village, farm". There are many -wic names in Kent on or near the sea coast, such as Sandwich and Harwich in Whitstable. Others are on a creek or river estuary, such as Fordwich, Greenwich and Woolwich. In these cases it has been claimed that the word "wic" means a creek, and that it is the English counterpart of the Old Norse "vik", a bay or creek, so familiar in the word Viking. But, as Mawer points out (*Eng. P.-N. Soc.*, I, 2), there is no warrant for such interpretations of our English place-names in -wic, and some at least of the Kentish names were well established before ever the Vikings reached these shores.

There is, however, good reason for the fact that -wic names are often found near the coast. It was in just these sites that dairy farms were most likely to be found, for the Saxon dairy farm was very unlike the modern home of pedigree cattle and milk records. The question has been fully discussed by Round (*V.C.H., Essex*) in connection with the -wic names of that county. He shows that the dairy farms were sheep farms, the cheese they made was manufactured from sheep's milk, and their favourite position was on fresh marshes bordering the sea or a river estuary.

Such considerations help us to understand the rather mysterious references, in an original charter of the year 858 (BCS 496), to "wiwarawics" or dairy farms of the men of Wye. It happens that it is also possible to identify the farms in question and so to add a footnote to the Saxon history of Romney Marsh. Hence this short essay.

There are many points of interest in the charter, but for present purposes it is sufficient to state that it records a gift by King Aethelbeorht to a thane named Wullafe of land at a place called Wassingwellan. The boundaries are recited and leave little doubt that this name then covered the whole manor of Welle, which was later divided into Eastwell and Westwell although the name of Welle, Waella, Wyllan, etc., was used for either part indifferently until the Norman conquest and later. The charter also conveys various outlying lands and rights belonging to this manor, including wealden dens, mills, meadows and marshes. The wiwarawics were amongst the latter and are specified in words which are difficult to translate and must therefore be given as they stand in the original charter :

“ Hec sunt etenim marisci que ad eandem terram rite ac recte pertinent quos hega ante abuerat id est an wiwarawic quae ante subjecta erat to wii & to leanaham & et febresham. I. sealtern & II.wena gang mid cyninges wenum to blean them wiada &. IIII. oxnum gers mid cyninges oxnum an wiwarawic .xxx. statera kasei et item .x. statera in alia wiwarawic & .xx. lamba & .x. fehta.”

The phrase “ quos hega ante abuerat ” presents difficulties. Prof. A. G. Little amends it at once to “ quos hega ante habuerat ”, and I would suggest that “ hega ” must be a bad form of some personal name and amend the phrase further to “ quos Ecga ante habuerat ”—which Ecga (*alias* Hecca) formerly held. The original shows that the initial “ h ” of “ hega ” was evidently added to the charter as an afterthought and it may even have been intended to complete “ abuerat ” but found itself by some carelessness prefixed to “ ega ”. The other main difficulty is the word “ fehta ”. It is not known elsewhere and I suppose that it must be a mis-spelling of some word analogous to the adjective fett, meaning “ fat ”. My suggested translation is now as follows :

“ These are, certainly, the marshes which truly and lawfully belong to the same land, which Ecga once held, that is, one dairy farm of the men of Wye, which was

formerly subject to Wye and to Lenham ; and at Faversham one salt-house : and two waingings with the king's wains to the Blean woods : and four oxen running with the king's oxen. The one dairy farm producing 30 statera of cheese, and a further 10 statera in the other dairy farm, and 20 lambs and 10 fat sheep."

There is nothing in the charter itself to identify the position of these wiarawics, but it is evident that they are sheep farms, as we should expect, and also that they are in marsh country. The only marsh in which Wye was interested was Romney Marsh, in which the manor of Dengemarsh was a part of Wye manor for more than a thousand years while the foreshore rights along the borders of the marsh extended far beyond the limits of any one manor. We must accordingly look for the wi-wara-wics somewhere in Romney Marsh. In the charter they are seen to be attached to the parent manors of Eastwell and Westwell and if these manors are found, at a later date, to possess lands in the marsh it is a fair presumption that such lands are the wiarawics of 858. Since Eastwell appointed one of the Lords of the Level it must certainly have possessed lands there. These are mentioned in Kirkby's Quest of about 1279 when it was found that John Luteriche held, in the Hundred of Langport, one quarter of a fee called Shingledehalle and that this was held in chief of the king by Lord Bertram de Cryall with his manor of Welles (*Arch. Cant.*, XI, 366). A little earlier (*Arch. Cant.*, V, 297) Schingledehalle is part of the manor of Eastwelle and had recently been held by Matilda de Estwelles. No such name as that of the "shingled hall" appears on modern maps, but in the old map of the Level at New Hall, Dymchurch (which Mr. Charles Stokes has kindly let me see and copy) there is a field called "Shinglehall" close to the church of St. Mary in the Marsh. There are six fields, numbered 54, 55, 56, 57, 58 and 59, on the Tithe Apportionment Map of St. Mary's, which would appear, from this numbering, to have been a single unit for many years, and which seem to centre on a building which is now the Star Inn. I suggest that this farm was the Shingledehalle of 1279 and one of the wiarawics of 858.

The other is less difficult to identify because it is possible to quote a rental of the Manor of Westwell reciting some particulars about its marsh holdings. I am indebted to Mr. H. W. Knocker for permission to quote this. It is of the year 1697. I have abbreviated the original by omitting the names of owners and so have left the following holdings and rents :

- (a) Lands upon the Den of Goose in Romney Marsh. 1s. 2d.
- (b) 27 acres of Fresh Marsh upon the Den of Goose in the parish of St. Nicholas, late Stephen Brett's in the Town and Port of New Romney. 3s. 0d.
- (c) 40 acres of marsh land in the parish of Hope All Saints on the Den of Goose in Romney Marsh. 1s. 3d.
- (d) Lands upon the Den of Goose. 1s. 3d.

I cannot identify each of these but there can be little doubt that they included the holding now known as Goose Farm, which may or may not be the lost Dudmanswike in the parish of Hope which appears in the Patent Rolls, etc., from 1326 to 1535 (Wallenberg, *P.-N. of Kent*). Since the house now known as North Fording House is called The Goose in 1653, on Boycott's maps of the Waterings, the Westwell lands no doubt included this also.

Although the word "wiwarawic" assuredly means "dairy-farm of the men of Wye" it does not refer to the men of Wye Town but to those of Wye Manor which included lands as far distant from the manor house as Hawkhurst, Denge Marsh, etc. Being a royal manor, Wye was no doubt diminished from time to time by grants made to favoured subjects, such as the thane Wullafe of this charter. One of the two marsh wiwarawics seems at one time to have been given to some owner of Lenham, but must have reverted again to the king so that it was available for inclusion in this new gift. It may be doubted whether anything like a modern freehold was conveyed. Wullafe, or Lenham, probably acquired a right to cheese and lambs and fat sheep which had formerly been sent annually to the king, but to

very little else. These were rents and, subject to their prompt payment, the free tenant in the marsh could go his own way as he liked.

The importance of this charter of 858 for the history of the marsh lies in the fact that it shows a wider influence and ownership by the royal manor of Wye than had previously been apparent. It also affords a second Saxon reference to the sheep industry in the marsh, and adds two more to the marsh holdings which can be shown to have endured since Saxon times.