

DUDDA'S LAND IN CANTERBURY

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THE charter dealing with these lands is numbered 426 in Birch's *Cart. Sax.*, and is one of the most confused and difficult in the Kent series of Anglo-Saxon charters. It is also one of the most interesting, since it throws a strong light upon life in Canterbury in the first half of the 9th century. The original charter was lost about a thousand years ago and we have only a rather inferior copy to guide us. This was evidently made, from a document already much damaged, by a clerk who felt at liberty to supply letters and words he could not make out clearly or, alternatively, to run together the few remaining letters of a word in a most misleading manner. In spite of these defects the charter is one very well worth studying and is not really obscure to any significant extent.

BIRCH'S COMMENTS

The charter is written in a single hand (except for the endorsements) on a moderately large sheet of parchment. Birch (*Cart. Sax.* 426) describes it as a "Nearly contemporary charter of late and careless handwriting," and says also that "This charter is written by a scribe ignorant of the language." He also seems to think that more than one hand is involved. Few people can study this charter except in the pages of Birch and it is therefore necessary to point out that the scribe was not really so ignorant of the Latin language and, indeed, he would hardly have been given the job of making this copy if he had not been a fair Latin scholar. Nor is the reference to "late and careless handwriting" particularly felicitous. Birch was a fine scholar, but it is difficult to understand how a charter can be both "nearly contemporary" and "late," and there is nothing particularly careless about the handwriting itself, although the sentences written are certainly open to criticism on that score. Remembering the enormous amount of work that Birch got through, with resources much less than those available to-day, it is not surprising that he should now and then have fallen into such minor errors, and I should not like to be thought of as rejoicing in criticism of those to whom we owe so much. Nevertheless, one cannot deal with this charter without reference to his published views.

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THE HANDWRITING OF THE CANTERBURY SCHOOL

This is at first sight, characteristic of a group of charters which are peculiar in showing certain special forms of commonly used letters. The most typical of these charters are numbered in Birch (*Cart. Sax.*) 403, 405, 426, 467, 496, 497, 507, and 519, and are of dates from about 839 to 868. In the main they follow the lettering usual at that period, but in all cases the letter "t" (both in the middle of the word and at the end) shows a downward hook at the end of its short upstroke. The letter "a" often shows the same peculiarity and there are other characteristics of a somewhat similar sort. At least one of the charters so written is still preserved at Canterbury (*B.C.S.* 507) and some of the others deal with agreements between the Archbishop and the priory monks and so would not leave church hands. It is a fair inference that these charters were written in the scriptorium at Canterbury. Since all the charters are not in the same hand it may further be inferred that this hand was taught in a writing school there. So far everything is plain enough, but of these eight charters one only, and that is the copy charter with which this essay deals, shows signs of having been written later than the others. These signs are in the formation of the letter "q" and, on one occasion, of the letter "a." I am happily able to quote the views of Mr. Neil Ker who is an authority on such matters. He writes in a private communication "I think it (this charter) is a 10th-century copy. The square straight-topped 'a' typical of the 10th century has slipped off his pen once . . . the 'q' is consistently of this form. I don't think one finds it earlier than the beginning of the 10th century or possibly very late 9th."

It seems then that this copy was made by a monk who had been taught the Canterbury hand sometime previously, but had become infected by the different fashion of the late 9th-10th century. The Canterbury hand is extant in charters as late as 888 (*B.C.S.* 562), and we should probably find it later had we enough charters. In point of fact it is almost certain, for reasons set out below, that this particular copy-charter was made in the time of Archbishop Dunstan (940-988) by one of the older monks of the priory, and for the express purpose of receiving the endorsement concerning Dunstan's dealings with the land.

THE DATE OF THIS CHARTER

By this I mean the date at which the copy was written and not the date of the original charter. There is one sure clue to this date. On the back of the charter is a long four-line endorsement in a hand of the time of Dunstan. This must have been written before the

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charter was folded, because (a) the writing shows no sort of interruption at the folds, (b) the writing is not parallel to the folds, and (c) the endorsement is hidden when the charter is folded. To anyone acquainted with the habits of the monks in writing, endorsing and folding charters these facts will certainly be accepted as conclusive evidence of the endorsement having been applied before the charter was folded, i.e. it was written in the time of Dunstan.

The date of the original charter, the grant by King Aethelwulf to Dudda, is given in the copy as 839. This is the first year of King Aethelwulf of Wessex, and agrees well enough with the known dates of other witnesses, including Archbishop Ceolnoth (833-870). That the grant was not quite so gracious as it seemed is strongly suggested by another charter of 832 (*B.C.S.* 380) which shows that Dudda already possessed the land in the time of a previous archbishop. However, this sort of purchased confirmation of existing possessions was not unusual, and it is known that some of the monks of Christchurch (presumably the seniors) were, at this time, enjoying the use of their own private houses and lands. Cynehard (*B.C.S.* 380) and Waerheard (*B.C.S.* 402) seem also to have been amongst those enjoying these privileges.

THE ORIGINAL CHARTER

We must now reconstruct this with the help of a photostat. Clearly the original was much damaged and the clerk had two ways of dealing with what was more or less illegible. Either he wrote down so much as he could make out without any regard at all to the resulting meaning (or lack of it) or, when he felt like it, he made a shot at what he thought might have been there. The result was rather startling. King Aethelwulf proclaims himself King of Wessex and "centuriorum," not of the centuries or the centurions, but of the men of Kent who doubtless appeared in the original as the "Cantuariorum." "Constitutionem" appears as "constituidem," and so forth—there are very many errors of various types. Nevertheless, the sense of the original grant is clear enough. For the sum of "IIII argenti" (presumably four mancuses of silver, i.e. 120 pence) King Aethelwulf confirmed to Dudda his right in certain land in Canterbury. The charter was made out on the eve of the Council at Wye, at which it was issued, and the clerk who made it out had not been given all the necessary details. He had therefore to enter a few extra facts between the end of the charter and the first attestations, a not unusual procedure. The copy of these extra facts is rather more corrupt than the charter itself and will have to be dealt with in a separate section.

The first witnesses were all laymen, except the Archbishop, and it seems that the monks of Canterbury did not go to Wye. King

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Aethelwulf therefore permitted that it should be taken back to Canterbury, and, I suppose, read in the Chapter House. After that the names of those present were added to the charter. These included two of the Kentish abbots, Baegmund of Reculver and Werheard of Dover (see *Arch. Cant.*, LIX, p. 19) and sixteen others.

Their names concluded the charter in its original form before any endorsements. The copy ought to be reproduced herewith, together with a transcription as it appears in Birch, but the cost of so doing is beyond the resources of our Society in these days, and the reader who desires to follow up any question raised must obtain access to a copy of Birch, which is to be found in the Society's library at Maidstone. Nor has it seemed wise to mention Birch's corrections of the copy, or those other corrections which were rather outside his scheme of very restricted commentary. Except where the description of the land is concerned, and the "extra facts" which really form part of this description, the bad Latin of the scribe must be left in such obscurity as now covers it.

THE LANDS FIRST DESCRIBED

Here is Birch's rendering of the description in Latin as recorded by the copyist, without any corrections :

"Aliquam partem terrae juris mei, hoc est, unam villam intra civitate Doroverniae et ad illis pertinentia xxiiii jugeras tamen in duabus locis in Dorovernia civitatis intra muros civitatis. x jugera cum viculis praedictis et in aquilone praedictae civitatis. xviii jugera histis terminibus circumjacentibus, in oriente publica strata, in australe et aquilone terra ris quam Bolis habet, in occidente prata abbatis ad sanctum Augustinam inter jacet flumine Sturae."

This may be translated :

Some part of land of my right, that is, a vill within the city of Canterbury and, pertaining to it, 24 acres in two different places in the city of Canterbury within the walls of the city. Ten acres situated together with the aforesaid vill, and in the north of the said city; 14 acres with these boundaries—on the east the highway, on the south and north land of the king which "Bolis" holds, on the west a meadow of the abbot of St. Augustine's, the river Stour flowing between them.

In Archbishop Wulfred's charter mentioning the same land, it is described (*B.C.S.* 380) as :

"illum curtem quem Dodda monachus in monasterio habuit"

that is :

That curtilage which Dodda the monk had in the monastery.

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The word "acre" had probably a fiscal rather than a real significance. We do not know how large an area of land Dodda held, but he seems to have had a house within the precincts of the land of the monastery and this must have been on the north side of them. As already noted, this was not unlikely at this time and we have a charter of Archbishop Wulfred (*B.C.S.* 342), of the year 813, expressly authorizing such holdings as then existed. Haddan and Stubbs (*Councils*, III, p. 576) say that at this time "the spirit of monachism, if not the name also, was rapidly vanishing; whilst the canonical rule . . . met with no acceptance." Many monasteries had, in fact, ceased to have much in common with the cloistered life which we associate with the name of St. Benedict, and even Canterbury was not immune from slackness and unorthodoxy.

THE EXTRA FACTS

These are facts about Dudda's holdings which were omitted from the main charter when it was first written. In the copy they appear in the following Latin guise:

"et unum mercatorem quem eam lingua nostra mangere nominamus et twygen weoras in fluvio qui dicitur Stur sivi jacenti et regenti muraque parte usque ad ter sanctam orationem donam unam hereditatem ut supra: bale in Cristo. amen."

The most startling item here is the phrase "usque ad ter sanctam orationem" and I feel no doubt that the original read "usque ad terminum illae terrae," or even "illam terram" for the accusative would probably have been just as acceptable as the genitive. Birch would read "donavi" for "donam," with which I quite agree, and "bale" is surely an error for "Vale." We can therefore suggest as a likely translation:

"and one merchant, which we in our language call a monger, and two weirs on the river Stour, to throw in and draw out (nets) on either side as far as the boundary of that land. I have given these in the same heredity as above. Farewell in Christ. Amen."

It is quite uncertain if the four last words were really in the original charter, but it is difficult to say what illegible sentence the clerk may have interpreted in this manner. The words as they stand would be appropriate in a Will but quite out of place in a mere addendum to a charter. I take it that the weirs were where the Stour flowed beside the fourteen acres and the merchant must have lived somewhere on the lands of Dudda. It was rents and services which would be due to Dudda from this merchant, but the man himself was not being bought or sold.

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It will be obvious to scholars that very much more might be done in the way of amending the Latin of this charter, and someone might make a plausible guess at how the word "Bolus" found its way into the manuscript. The capital letter B is not in the charter itself which reads "quambolis," but is suggested by Birch. It seems unlikely that any personal name was intended. However, to discuss these details here would probably serve no useful purpose even if the writer felt equal to the task. It must suffice by way of summary to say that Dudda had a house in the precincts and quite a lot of land, fishing rights, etc., outside them. All of these he made over, on his death, to Christchurch.

KING ALFRED'S CONFIRMATION

This appears in the copy charter, on the front of it, but scrawled in all along the bottom after the first list of attestations and it was probably added in much the same position to the original charter. It takes the form of two sentences each lacking a verb:

"I Alfred king of the West Saxons this my donation with the sign of the holy cross of Christ (have confirmed). I Aethelred, by the grace of God Archbishop, this same donation with the sign of the holy cross (confirm)."

There is no date. Alfred reigned from 871 to about 900, and Aethelred was archbishop from 870 to 889. This date must therefore be between 871 and 889. It seems likely that this relatively insignificant business may have had to wait until after the Peace of Wedmore in 878, for Alfred's jurisdiction cannot have been very sure in South East England in his earliest years, so that we may perhaps date this confirmation provisionally as between 878 and 889. Nearer than that we cannot get. By this time Dudda was probably dead and the land should have passed into the possession of Christchurch. It seems probable that Archbishop Aethelred was building up once more the community at Christchurch which the Danes had destroyed and that Alfred confirmed his possession of the Dudda lands as part of this process.

LULLA'S PURCHASE

The next endorsement, crammed in beneath that of Alfred, is in the narrative words "*Lulla gebote thas boec and this lond aet Aethelwalde mith ealr athesa l'portweorona gewitnisse,*" i.e. "Lulla bought this deed and this land from Aethelwalde with all the oaths of the townfolk as witness." We have no real clue as to the date of this transaction. Birch describes it as "somewhat later" than Alfred's confirmation, and so it probably is, but there is no direct evidence. Nor can we say for certain how much of the Dudda land was in question. It seems

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hardly likely that the land within the precincts was allowed to go out of church ownership, but there would be less objection to parting with the 14-acres near the river. Moreover, it was only this 14 acres which Dunstan subsequently repurchased. On the whole it seems probable that Lulla did only buy this 14 acres.

DUNSTAN'S PURCHASE AND GIFT

We have now come to the end of the copy charter except for the list of witnesses which present no features of very particular interest. There remain only the endorsements on the copy. Of these only that of Dunstan's time need be discussed. In translation it reads as follows :

"This deed and the 14 acres and the meadow that belongs Archbishop Dunstan bought from Uhtlufe and his two sons for ten pounds, and with the witness of the brotherhood of Christchurch and all the men of the city, and gave it to St. Martin to the everlasting ownership of God's servants there, with God's displeasure and St. Martin's if any turn aside or take away the property."

The fact that this is written in the past tense does not mean that it is not a contemporary record of the transaction. We can confidently date it to the days of Dunstan as Archbishop (940-988), and the style of writing agrees with this dating.

SUMMARY

We have therefore in this single charter notices of several transactions concerning particular pieces of land within the city of Canterbury. We can see the unusual conditions within the precincts, with professed monks actually inhabiting their own houses (for Dudda was not the only one), and the garden city aspect outside but still within the walls. The fishermen fished in the river, and the "monger" carried on his trade—all within the walls. Nevertheless, it was hardly a time of peace, for the Danes were very active. In the year after the passing of this charter very many men were slain in Romney Marsh and throughout Kent (*A.S.C.* sub anno 838).