

THE LIFE AND RECORDS OF EADBERHT,  
SON OF KING WIHTRED.

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THIS is the story of a prince of the royal line of Kent who claimed the throne for 40 years and from time to time partly or entirely succeeded in attaining it. The records of his life are confused and contradictory to an extent which has been the despair of all historians. The chief difficulties are (1) the complete unreliability of Kentish interpolations in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles and (2) the irresponsible carelessness of those monks whose task, or penance it was to copy out ancient charters and cartularies. It may be pleaded in extenuation that the real facts of Eadberht's life were so far from normal that a true record might have seemed incredible to our earliest historians.

THE CHRONICLE RECORDS.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles were calendars of events from the beginning of the world to the date at which they were written. They were transcribed from each other and from older chronicles which are now lost and they all have a great deal of matter in common. But the particular monastery to which an individual copy belonged was always apt to interpolate events of interest or importance to itself or anything the particular copyist had heard or believed. Of the surviving Chronicles those of most importance for our purposes are those which are known respectively as the Parker and Laud MSS and MS 'F'. The Parker MS was commenced at the end of the ninth century and brought up to date at various later periods. In this there are many Kentish interpolations in a hand of about the year 1100. The Laud MS was commenced about 1100 and carried on until 1154. Neither the Laud MS nor the interpolations in the Parker MS can be regarded as first class authority for events which took

place 300-400 years before they were written but they are often the only authority which has been available to historians and they can only be checked by a detailed study of charter material for which the general historian, even the writer on Anglo-Saxon history, cannot easily find time. The Chronicle entries which bear upon the history of Eadberht are set out below. Interpolations are in italics.

- 725 (Parker). Her Wihtred Cant wara cyning forthferde & *Eadberht feng to Centrice.* (This year Wihtred king of the Kent men died and *Eadberht began to reign in Kent.*) (Laud.) Her Wihtred Cantwara cining forthferde, etc. Another MS ('F') which is written in the same hand as the interpolations in Parker adds "*& Eadberht rixade aefter him innan Cent*" (and *Eadberht ruled after him in Kent.*)
- 748 (Parker). Eadbryht Cant wara cyning forthferde & *Aethelbyrht Wihtredes sunu cinges feng to tham rice.* (Eadbryht king of the Kent men died and *Aethelbyrht son of king Wihtred came to that rule.*) The Laud MS repeats only the fact of Eadbriht's death. Eadbriht may be taken as an alternative form of Eadberht.
- 760 Both MSS report the death of Aethelberht. An interpolation in the Parker MS adds '*se was Wihtredes sunu cing*' (he was king *Wihtred's son.*)
- 768 (Parker.) No original entry for this year. An interpolation reads '*768. Her forthferde Eadberht Eating cing*' (This year died king *Eadberht Eating.*) The Laud MS repeats this. MS 'F' in its latin version calls the king '*Eadberhtus cognomento Eating*'.

These entries appear to make a clear consecutive story. First of all King Wihtred dies in 725 and his son Eadberht succeeds. In 748 he in turn dies and his brother Aethelbert follows him. In 760 Aethelberht dies. Unhappily for this tale we have in the British Museum an original charter (BCS 148) of King Aethelberht showing that he was already king in 732 and another to bear witness that he was still king in 741 (BCS 160). In addition to this there is other evidence which discredits the story of the chronicles and we can only arrive at the facts by regarding these records as quite unacceptable without confirmatory evidence.

## EADBERHT'S EARLY LIFE.

King Wihtred came to the throne of Kent in 692 and thereby brought to an end some years of great trouble. The cause of this trouble was Cadwalla, a freebooter from Wessex, who had slain Wihtred's predecessor and probably also his next heir, a nephew who had at first been assisted by Cadwalla and then deposed in favour of Mull. It is not certain that this was the exact course of events but it is undoubted that Mull was set up as King and that the people of Canterbury burnt him, his followers, and his palace together. Immediately after this Cadwalla was succeeded by Ina who seems to have brought back the rightful king, Wihtred, to his long suffering kingdom of Kent on the strict understanding that he should pay a heavy fine for the murder (as he called it) of Mull. This was paid and Mull was interred in the royal place of burial (Thorne, p. 23). Only after this payment was Wihtred a true independent king of Kent. Such were the circumstances of the early life of Eadberht. His mother's name was Kinigitha which is a name of the type then prevalent amongst the princesses of Mercia. She died before 696, by which year Wihtred had already taken a second wife. Although we cannot arrive at certainty it is likely that Eadberht was born in exile in Mercia or very soon after the return to Kent, say, between the years 690 and 694. He lived until 762. His upbringing was presumably supervised by his step-mother who was named Aethelburga (BCS 90) and afterwards by a second step-mother named Werburga (BCS 91-95) but we have only two actual records of his early years. These must now be considered.

## THE BAPCHILD COUNCIL.

There are various records of this Council and Birch prints the best (BCS 91-95). He gives the date as "A.D. 696 or 716 (?697)." This is rather unsatisfactory and we must accordingly turn aside from the main thread of our argument in order to find the narrowest limits of date, or the actual date of this famous assembly. In Chronicle F, a very suspect authority, under the year 694, it is said that Wihtred called

this meeting as soon as he was King. A Canterbury Register (Reg. C.C.C.A. f. 88) gives the same date. But the names of the witnesses make this date impossible. I suggest that we must argue as follows :—

- (a). Tobias, Bishop of Rochester was present. His predecessor attests as late as April 8th, 699 (BCS 99). Therefore the Council was after 699.
- (b). Queen Aethelburga attests in 696 (BCS 90) and 700 (BCS 97, 98 : original charters, for date see *Arch. Cant.* XLVII, 11) but at the time of the Bapchild council she was dead and had been followed by a new Queen, Werburga, who already had a son. The Council can hardly therefore have been within a year of Aethelburga's death and therefore after 701, which agrees with the reasoning in 'a' above.
- (c). The proceedings at Bapchild were re-enacted at Cloveshoh, by a general ecclesiastical council of all England, in the year 1716. The Bapchild meeting must therefore have been between 702 and 716.

These are what we may call fairly safe limits but conjecture may take us a little nearer. Abbot Adrian of St. Augustine was alive until January 9th, 708. He was then a very old man ; it was more than 40 years previously that Pope Gregory had wished to send him, already an abbot, to be Archbishop of Canterbury. He had refused this honour but had accompanied Archbishop Theodore as a spiritual mentor. Theodore died in 690. It is understandable that Adrian may from age and infirmity have been unable to get to any Council held between 702 and 708. It is much less easy to understand how the name of his successor Albinus fails to appear amongst those present except on the hypothesis that he had not yet been appointed abbot when the Council was held. The tendency of this argument is to place the date of the Bapchild meeting before the consecration of Albinus on April 22nd, 708. It has a little extra force since Albinus was the first Englishman to become abbot of St. Augustine's and a Kentish synod would have meant more to him than it need have done to a foreigner. He was also Bede's assistant in

writing the Kentish parts of his Ecclesiastical History and must have had some pride in Kent as a kingdom. He would presumably have been present if he had been consecrated.

Another fact which rather tells in favour of the foregoing is the likelihood that Wihtred may have been prompted to hold the Council, which dealt chiefly with how abbots, etc., were to be elected, by some difficulty which had actually arisen at St. Augustine's owing to the age of Adrian.

The provisional date for the Bapchild Council is therefore between 702 and 707, since before April, 708, means for all practical purposes in 707. We now pass on to consider the royal witnesses to its proceedings. The first four attestations are :—

- + Ego Uuihtredus auxilio Christi rex his legibus constitutis pro me et Uuerburgam reginam itemque filio nostro Alrico subscripsi
- + Ego Berhtuuald gratia Dei archiepiscopus his legibus a nobis constitutis subscripsi
- + Signum manus Aethelberhti pro se et fratre suo Eadberto.
- + Signum manus Tobie episcopi.
- + Signum manus Mylthrythe abbatisse.

There is something to be learnt from these. First of all, Wihtred has a son by his new Queen Werburga, whose name, by the way, is also suggestive of Mercian origin. This son is Alric. On the authority only of Kilburne's Topography it was a leader named Alrick who was defeated by Offa in 775 (*Arch. Cant.*, XLIII, p. 112). He can hardly have invented this detail but I do not know where it came from. It is possible that he had read the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which records the death of an Alric, son of Heardbearht, in 798, at Whalley in Northumbria, and transferred his name in error to the Kingdom of Kent.

The attestation next to the King, Queen and Alric, is that of the Archbishop and not that of the other princes. These come next and, since Eadberht was absent, we have his brother attesting for both. It may, of course, have been that Eadberht was under age, as Alric was, and not absent

from any other cause but detention in the nursery. In any case, it is not his father who witnesses on his behalf but his brother, presumably an elder brother. This is the first mention of the Eadberht with which this essay deals. We next hear of him at least eight years later and probably after an interval of as much as 16 years.

#### MY DEAREST GERMAN.

On July 11th, 724, King Wihtred was still alive, but he had probably handed over some of the reins of power, for his son Aethelberht made a grant of lands in Ruckinge (*Arch. Cant.*, XLV, p. 129) to Abbess Mildrith of Minster (BCS 141). Here again it is the list of witnesses which is of importance. Only five are mentioned in the copy which is all we now possess. They are set out as follows :—

- +Ego Aethelberhtus praesentem donationem meam signum sanctae crucis scribendo firmavi. Testesque quorum nomina subter digesta sunt ut subscriberent petii.
- +Ego Wihtredus rex Cantuariorum rogatus a dilectissimo filio meo Aethelberhto praesentem donationem illius consensi et subscripsi.
- +Ego Berhtuualdus gratia Dei archiepiscopus expetitus ab inclito Aethelberhto hanc donationem illius subscripsi.
- +Ego Eadbertus ad petitionem karissimi germani mei Aethelberhti praesentem donationem ipsius consensi et subscripsi.
- +Signum manus Putan testis.

A straightforward translation of the above would be somewhat as follows although it must be admitted that "inclito" may possibly be intended as equivalent to Prince and "germani" is also a word of more than one possible meaning.

- +I Aethelberht have made good my present gift by writing the sign of the Holy Cross. And I asked the witnesses whose names are set out below to subscribe.

- + I Wihtred king of the men of Kent at the request of my very dear son Aethelberht have consented to this gift of his and subscribed.
- + I Berhtwald, by the grace of God archbishop, asked by young Aethelberht, have subscribed this gift of his.
- + I Eadberht at the request of my dearest brother Aethelberht have consented to this gift of his and subscribed.
- + The sign manual of Puta, witness (he was the bishop of Rochester).

I deduce from this charter that Eadberht was of age to act as a good witness and this accords with the view that he was born about 690-694. He was also of age or independence enough to record that he not only witnessed the deed of gift but gave formal consent to the giving. In this he does as King Wihtred does and as the archbishop and bishop do not do. It was a sign of things to come. It is possible that some authorities would prefer to read these attestations as being of a formal character devoid of exact meaning but I see no reason to suppose that this was the case. I am therefore disposed to read "inclito" in its classical sense of "young" and, if Aethelberht deserved that title, it must have applied still more to Eadberht, for I think we are bound to assume that he was the younger brother. All this fits in well enough with the story which we have discovered up to date. The next record takes us to the year 727 and it is one of the pieces of evidence very hard to accept as it stands.

#### THE GIFT OF THE NORTH WOOD.

There is a charter of the year 727 which has long been lost but of which copies remain. One of these (BCS 846) is in a register of St. Augustine's (Cotton Julius D ii f. 86) and another in the White Book of St. Augustine's at the P.R.O. This charter records a gift to Abbess Mildrith of a place called BI NORTHANUDE (actually in Swalecliffe). The donor is given as "Ego Eadbertus rex Cantuariorum" and it is attested by "Ego Eadbertus rex." This Eadbert declares himself as being in the third year of his reign. It should be noted that the land is in East Kent and that the

year is really 727 and not 724 (as the copy declares) since neither Eadberht nor Aethelberht could have been in their third year at any earlier date than 727. Now for the argument. I am going to suggest that this is really a charter of Aethelberht and that in process of copying his name has been displaced by that of Eadberht. If it happened in one place, the next copyist would probably enter it in both. There is no very great unlikelihood of that happening especially if the original charter now lost had become damaged or indistinct as happened to many of them. The third regnal year would suit either of the brothers so that it can be disregarded. But one can't condemn awkward records on mere guesswork so one is obliged to set out the full reasons for the opinion given.

Firstly, there are reasons against any charter of this date being ascribed to Eadberht. Five years later we have an original charter of Aethelberht and others later still. We also have the charter already mentioned (BCS 141) of the year 724. There is no reason at all to suppose that Aethelberht was not king of Kent in the intervening years. But there cannot be two kings at the same place, that is, at Canterbury, and granting lands in East Kent. It would be possible in other circumstances to suppose that Eadberht ruled over West Kent but this is an East Kent charter so that this supposition would not help us. There is also a charter presently to be discussed in which Eadberht is clearly put in his place by his brother King Aethelberht for attempting to usurp the kingly rights by granting land to the Bishop of Rochester. Probably Eadberht didn't accept the reproof but its existence suggests that he had not made any such attempt previously, just as it also warns us that he was probably always looking for an opportunity of acquiring the prerogatives of kingship.

Secondly, there are reasons why this particular charter should not be ascribed to Eadberht. The body of the charter, and the wording of such attestation clauses as the scribe cared to copy, are almost word for word copies of those in Aethelberht's charter of 724. This presumably means that both were prepared in the same office, copied one from the

other, or based on the same model. That office can hardly have been under the control of anyone but Aethelberht. Moreover, the two witnesses cited, Balthard and Bynna, were Aethelberht's friends and attested his charters before and after this date. It is almost inconceivable that they should have been persuaded to do the same for the brother who, by the very granting of the charter, was claiming Aethelberht's kingdom (see BCS 148, 159, 175 and 231).

It is not an impossible alternative hypothesis that the name of Eadberht was deliberately substituted for that of Aethelberht in the original charter at some period after Aethelberht's death when Eadberht was actually King.

That is the argument. It is not conclusive but it shakes the position of Eadberht as a charter giver in the year 727. It does not matter very much what view is accepted. One has only for present purposes to weave the implications of either view into the troubled life of the man who would be king.

#### A GENUINE CHARTER OF EADBERHT.

This charter, with its endorsement, forms one of the most surprising documents of Kentish history. It is in Latin (BCS 159) of which a reasonably literal translation is as follows :—

I Eadberht, king of the men of Kent, have given some part of my land, for the healing of my soul and to secure indulgence for my sins, to the bishopric of blessed Andrew the Apostle, and to the venerable Ealdulf head of that church. It is in the region called Hohg, at a place called Andscohesham, that is, ten aratra of land, according to the reckoning of that province. Thus have I given the possession of this land to the said bishop, with all belonging to it, that is, fields, woods, meadows, fisheries, salt-pans and all their implements, within the known and set bounds. This also we have ordered, that none of my relatives or successors diminish or infringe this my gift in any way.

If anyone indeed, which we do not credit, shall be tempted by an evil mind to gainsay my precept in giving this, let him know that he shall answer for it to God in the day of judgement, this charter remaining none the less in no way

lessened in its force. If anyone however shall wish to add more, may God increase his goods in the land of the living.

This my gift I Eadberht king of the men of Kent have confirmed by my own hand and affixed the sign of the Holy Cross. I have also caused suitable witnesses, my companions, to confirm and subscribe.

Most of the above, with the exception of the attestation clause, follows more or less normal lines and needs no comment. The mention of the "comites" or immediate followers and supporters of a prince or thane is not, so far as I remember, to be paralleled in any other Kentish charter. These were normally landless men attached to the person of their lord, eating and sleeping in his hall, and rewarded by gifts of gold rings, armour, etc., as occasion required. It was their bounden duty to die at their lord's side, as men died in the house at Merton in 755 (ASC) and as no doubt they died with Mull at Canterbury. The King had no such "comites" for the whole state was bound to him and not a few men only. The attestations of Eadberht's companions are set out in a curious manner :—

I Vilbald have made my companions to confirm and subscribe

I Dimheahac have made my companions to confirm and subscribe

I Hosberth have made my companions to confirm and subscribe

I Nothbalth have made my companions to confirm and subscribe

I Banta have made my companions to confirm and subscribe

+ I Ruta have made my companions to confirm and subscribe

+ I Tidbalth have made my companions to confirm and subscribe.

It is obvious that the companions of those seven men did not in fact subscribe, nor could they have any actual "comites" of their own for they owed their whole loyalty to their lord and could not have dependants who could make any claim upon it. It is probable that the writer of the charter, or someone who copied it when it had become

stained and damaged, failed to make out the exact wording of the attestation clauses and adopted the words "commites meos confirmari et subscribere feci" from Eadberht's attestation to serve the purpose of the others also. It is some evidence of a damaged charter that only two crosses seem to have been visible when the Textus Roffensis copy, from which alone we know of the charter, was made, i.e. about 1115. It will be seen that the charter is not itself dated but we can arrive at an approximate date. It is a grant to Ealdulf who was Bishop of Rochester from 726, when his predecessor Tobias died (Bede, v. 23) until about 741 when his successor was consecrated (ASC., Fl.W.). But it was confirmed in the time of Archbishop Nothelm (735-739) and so cannot be later than the latter date. This gives us limits of date 726-739. The endorsement allows us to take the matter farther. It is headed in the Textus Roffensis with the words "Quomodo Alduulfus petierit confirmari hanc donationem" (How Aldulf petitioned to have this grant confirmed) and below these what is in effect a separate charter is set out. It was presumably endorsed on Eadberht's charter, a practice of which there are other examples. It reads, translated from the Latin :—

+In the name of the Lord God the Highest. I, Aldulf, bishop, have in the first place been wholly ignorant that this charter ought to be confirmed by the head of the church of Canterbury and by the king. Afterwards I became aware of this and earnestly requested from Archbishop Nothelm and king Aethilberht, in the presence of my benefactor Eadberht, that they would corroborate this gift under their hands. And so in the metropolitan city they have perfectly completed it. Done in the month of April, in the sixth indiction, in the 738th year from the incarnation of Christ.

- +I Nothelm by the grace of God archbishop, a witness, have subscribed according to custom.
- +I Aethelberht, king, have confirmed the said gift by the sign of the Holy Cross.
- +I Beornhard, a witness, have subscribed.
- +Sign manual of Tuna

+ Sign manual of Balthard

+ Sign manual of Eanberht

It seems clear from this endorsement (1) that Eadberht was named without any title because he could not sustain his claim to the title of king in the presence of his brother King Aethelberht (2) that he had tried to assume kingly prerogatives and was by this charter reprovved indirectly for so doing and made to be present at his own undoing (3) that Bishop Aldulf regarded his own share in the matter as being guilty in much the same degree as Eadberht's, the one lacking in duty to his Archbishop, the other to his King. It is also to be observed that Eadberht's comites were not invited to attest while Aethelberht's thane Balthard did so, with others of similar rank.

As to date we can now proceed to further enquiry. The limits 726-739 can be narrowed to 726-738 since the endorsement is dated in the latter year. But we have also the fact that Aldulf explains that he did not at first know he was doing wrong but was afterwards told of his fault. How long might a bishop of Rochester remain in ignorance of such a matter? According to Bede (*Ecc. Hist.* v. 23), Aldulf was at Canterbury, and took part in the consecration of Archbishop Tatuin, in 731, on June 10th. It is hardly possible that he can have been ignorant of the usual procedure after that date, when he had already been bishop for five years. It is, however, quite possible that he was really uninformed before that time. He would naturally look to the Archbishop for guidance but Bertwald, who preceded Tatuin, died in January "from old age" (*Bede.* v. 23) or "worn out with extreme old age" (*Flo. W.*) and we have in fact no attestation of Berhtwald after 726. This makes it possible that Aldulf could have been genuinely ignorant until 731 because his natural adviser was no longer fit for the duties of his post. It is also a point that Eadberht might well have thought that the age of the archbishop made a good opportunity for villainy, for he at least knew well what he was doing. I am inclined now to date the charter between 726 and 731. Nearer than that we cannot go at present.

The conclusion of all this discussion is that at about that time Eadberht made a deliberate attempt to gain recognition as a king of Kent, and that his brother was too much for him so that he had to eat humble pie in a quite unmistakable manner.

#### EADBRIHT COGNOMENTO EATING.

Our next duty must be to explain an anomalous charter which might be attributed to Eadberht. In 741 King Aethelberht of Kent granted certain lands in Romney Marsh to Archbishop Cuthbert for the benefit of Lyminge monastery of which the Archbishop was temporarily in charge pending the appointment of a successor to the last head of this most famous establishment. Of this charter we still have the original (BCS 60) so that there can be no doubt about its terms. But in a Lambeth register notorious for its errors and carelessness (Lambeth 1212 p. 308) we have a copy or précis of this charter in which the name of Aethelberht is replaced by "Ego Eadbriht rex, cognomento Eating." Much might be said as to how this came about but we are only concerned now to enquire whether this Eadberht of Kent (since he grants Kentish lands) can possibly be Eadberht up to his old tricks. The answer is that history knows of only one Eadbriht Eating (= son of Eata) and he was a king of Northumbria of whom Florence of Worcester records under the year 768 "that exquisitely pious monk, Eadbriht, formerly the most noble king of Northumbria, died on the 13th of the kalens of September (Oct. 20th) and was buried in the same porch in which his brother archbishop Egbert lies." We have seen that his death is also reported in the Chronicles. Clearly this Eadbriht Eating had nothing to do with Kent and his name in this charter must be a piece of gross carelessness or worse. The clerk of Lambeth 1212 has also deliberately added the clause "liberam ab omni saeculari servicio exceptis . . ." to his copy although it is not in the original so that we cannot be sure to what lengths he might not have gone. But in no case can we reason that Eadbriht Eating is an error for Eadberht son of Wihtred. It is evidently an error for the name of his brother King

Aethelberht. This charter accordingly merits no further consideration here, although it has been necessary to carry its examination thus far.

#### THE PASSING OF KING AETHELBERHT.

We come now to the death of Eadberht's brother, King Aethelberht, whereby he first had a good title to the throne of Kent.

In the year 747 an individual named Earduulf who described himself as "rex Cantuariorum" gave a charter concerning a dispute in the Weald of Kent. We have a copy of this in the *Textus Roffensis* (B. 175) and this is usually a very good authority. But in this case the date seems to be wrong. The indiction is the 15th and the year DCCLXII. Since it is attested by Archbishop Cuthbert (740-758) it cannot be so late as 762. The 15th indiction next before fell in the year 747 when Cuthbert could have been present. We must therefore date this charter as of the year 747. Its immediate importance for our purposes is that it is attested by "Aethilberchtus rex Cantiae." It will be remembered that Aethelberht himself, 23 years earlier (B. 141), had issued a charter during the lifetime of another king of Kent, his own father Wihtred. This might suggest that Earduulf was son of Aethelberht and that the latter had handed over his kingly functions. But we cannot quite assume this, for we have another charter which is undated but which still exists as an original. In this we also meet with "Eardulfus rex Cantiae" but he speaks of "my father Eadberht" although not in such a manner as to tell us whether he is alive or dead. Eadberht does not attest. Four of the witnesses are the same in these two charters, so that they are probably not very far apart in date. From these two charters we can deduce that Eardulf son of Eadberht was exercising some at least of the prerogatives of kingship in Kent, both east and west, about the year 747, with the approval of the Archbishop and of King Aethelberht. It is best to explain the evidence of these two charters by supposing that Aethelberht, feeling his end approaching, had handed over some of his power to his nephew Eardulf, son of his brother Eadberht. The

Chronicle entry of 748 should accordingly be read that Aethelberht died and was succeeded by Eadberht and not the other way on as it actually reads. No doubt Eadberht kept an eye on his son and took back all power into his own hand in 748 so that his son Eardulf enjoyed only a phantom kingship in 747-8.

I would therefore assume (a) that King Aethelberht was failing in 747 and died in 748 (b) that in his last year he allowed his nephew Eardulf to act as his deputy (c) that this Eardulf spoke of his own father as Eadberht and not as King Eadberht, and (4) that in 748 Eadberht took away from his son the deputy kingship which he had enjoyed for so short a time.

It is true that the Chronicles report the death of Aethelberht in 760. I cannot explain this.

#### EADBERHT AND THE FERRY BOATS.

In May 748 King Aethilbald of Mercia was minded to show his esteem for Eadburh abbess of Minster and also his love for his "sainted relative Mildred." His grant expressed in Latin was :—

*Unius navis quod a Leubuco nuper emisti dimidium vectigal atque tributum quod meum erat.*

Birch says that these words can best be read as relating to "half the dues on a ship." It was probably only a ferry boat. The "vectigal et tributum" would then be the passage money of those using the ferry with such dues as might be assessed on the goods carried. Sarre is not mentioned in the charter by name although this is obviously the most likely spot for Minster Abbey to keep a boat.

However that may be, there is no doubt about the fact that the first three signatories of the charter (BCS 177), which passed in a council at London, were :—

- + Ego Aethilbaldus rex Merciae suprascriptam donationem meam signo sanctae crucis, in hac cartula expresso, diligenter confirmavi.
- + Ego Aedbeortus rex Cantiae testis consentiens subscripsi.
- + Signum manus Cuthberti archiepiscopi.

Here, then, is Eadberht a king at last without dispute but, alas, very obviously a king by grace of Aethilbald of Mercia.

This king Aethilbald died in 757 and was succeeded by Offa. It was not at once that Minster had this grant confirmed but about 760 (the extremes of date are 759-761) Offa confirmed the grant and his charter (BCS 188) mentions that it was the grant of Aethelbald repeated and not a new grant. Amongst the five witnesses of which the names remain to us we do not find that of Eadberht. Perhaps the grant was made at a Council which was held when Eadberht could not attend. But a third ferry boat charter (BCS 189) of the year 761 shows that it is more likely that Eadberht was absent because he was once more asserting himself as an independent king.

Aethelbald had given half the dues on one ferry boat. Offa gave the whole dues. Eadberht was not to be outdone. He gave the whole dues on two ferry boats :—

“ id est, duorum navium transvectionis census, qui etiam juris nostri erat in loco cujus vocabulum est AD SERRAE ; juxta petitionem venerabilis abbatissae Sigeburgae . . . sicut a regibus Merciorum Aethilbaldo videlicet clementissimo et rege Offan, longe ante concessam est tributum in loco cujus vocabulum est Lundenwic ; alterius vero quod nuper aedificatum est in monasterio ejusdem religiosae Dei famulae omne tributum atque vectigal concedimus, quod etiam a theloneariis nostris juste inpetitur publicis in locis quae appellantur FORDWIC et SEORRE.

I translate this, although not quite sure if others would agree :—

That is, the toll of two ferry boats, which was our right, in a place called AT SERRAE, as asked for by the venerable abbess Sigeburg . . . just as the kings of Mercia, that is, most gracious Aethilbald and king Offa, granted a toll long since, in a place called Lundenwic. Also we have granted all tax and toll of the other boat formerly built in the monastery of the said religious family of God, together with all that is properly charged by our toll collectors in the public places called FORDWIC and SEORRE.

The charters of Aethelbald and Offa were granted at London : the ferry was not there.

There are other things of interest in the charter but we are here only concerned with the fact that it is a charter of Eadberht in, as he says, his 36th year and apparently acting as an independent king of Kent. He must have felt rather mischievous in confirming a charter of "most gracious Aethelberht" (who was dead) and "king Offa," who was very much alive, but had not yet shown his hand with regard to Kent.

Eadberht also gave the tax and tribute on a boat calling at the port of Fordwich. This was about 761 but the date is wrongly given in the only copy we have of it (BCS 173, from Lambeth 1212). He gave this to the Abbot of Reculver.

In 761 also (BCS 190) Eadberht, again describing himself as in his 36th year, gave Mongeham to St. Augustine's. This charter is dated July 25th and has many of the same witnesses as the ferry boat grant to Minster. We can probably say that at this date Eadberht was, however temporarily, undisputed king of Kent.

#### THE LAST RECORD.

After 761 we have only one record of Eadberht. It is in the year following and it seems to show that his regal dignity is seriously diminished. A charter of 762 records the grant to an old friend, Bishop Eardwlf or Aldulf of Rochester, of a plot of land in Rochester city (BCS 193). This grant is made by a king named Sigiraed whom we know from another charter (BCS 194) to have been king of West Kent only. His grant is franked or approved by the attestation of "Eadberht rex Cant." What was Eadberht's position at this time? It seems little likely that he would willingly have given up half his kingdom to Sigiraed but it is not at all impossible that he had been obliged to do so by pressure from outside. With the year 764 we commence the series of Kent charters granted by Offa of Mercia, commonly as overlord of a king of Kent, of whom there were often two at a time. The joint charter of Sigiraed (and none knows who he may have been) and Eadberht (BCS 193)

suggests that this era had already commenced in 762. That would mean that Eadberht's hardly won kingship passed out of his grasp in the last years of his life. He must have been nearly 70 when Sigiraed and whoever was behind him came on the scene and one cannot believe that he lived much longer.

I conclude that he died, nominally king of the east part of Kent but actually a vassal of Offa of Mercia, and little better than an alderman, in the year 762.

#### SUMMARY.

It is suggested that the history of King Eadberht may be summarized as follows :—

1. He was born, possibly in exile, between 690 and 694, and was son of King Wihtred and Queen Kinigitha.
2. Between 702 and 707 his brother attested for him the proceedings of the Council of Bapchild. His mother was no longer alive.
3. In 724 he attests a charter of his brother, during their father's lifetime.
4. In 727 was issued a charter of Aethelberht, dealing with Swalecliffe, which was subsequently altered, by carelessness or intention, to appear as one of Eadberht.
5. About 726-731 Eadberht issued a charter although not entitled to do so.
6. In 738 this charter was endorsed with a statement that it had been improperly granted.
7. In 741 Aethelberht issued a charter, which was subsequently so mutilated that it read as if issued by Eadbriht Eating, who might be mistaken for Eadberht of Kent.
8. In 747 Aethelberht seems to have handed over some of his prerogatives to Earduulf, son of Eadberht, who gave a charter as king.
9. In 748 Aethelberht died. Eadberht displaced his son Earduulf and seized the throne.
10. In 761 Eadberht gives a charter and claims to be in the 36th year of his reign. He gave two other charters this year.
11. He attests in a subordinate position, probably as a viceroy of Mercia acting for East Kent.
12. About 762 he died, aged about 70 years.