

THE WITAN MEETS AT CANTERBURY

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1. A CANTERBURY CHARTER OF A.D. 1002

WE know about the meeting of the Witan at Canterbury from a charter of 1002. The story to be deduced from it is briefly as follows. In the year 1002 King Aethelred the Unready came down to Canterbury with an entourage of bishops, abbots and a few ealdormen. On July 11th, in that year he held a meeting of the Witan, composed of the chief members of his court together with some of the chief landowners of Kent, summoned *ad hoc*. The charter does not tell us why the King came into Kent nor what was the main purpose of that meeting, but only that the King did, *inter alia*, secure approval of an arrangement whereby his Reeve—his representative at Canterbury—was given a life interest in a small property in Burgate Street in return for the sum of seven pounds. After his death, or after his wife's death, if she survived him, it was to be "restored" to Christchurch.

This charter has a much greater interest for Kent historians than this brief recital of its contents might suggest. In the first place the boundaries of no less than five plots of land are recited and these enable us to throw some welcome light on the topography of the city at that period. Secondly, it refers to some sort of religious community at Appledore and thereby confirms the hint in another charter of some 30 years earlier (*Birch*, 1212). We have no other information about any such community. Thirdly, it allows—even compels—us to make several interesting deductions about the state of Kent at the time, under the daily threat of Danish devastation and ruin.

The text of the charter and the writer's translation (owing much to those mentioned below) will be found at the end of this essay.

The charter is reproduced in the Ordnance Survey *Facsimiles of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, Vol. iii, No. 36 (Southampton, 1884) wherein there is also a literal translation by W. B. Sanders. A somewhat freer translation, without the original text, is to be found in *English Historical Manuscripts*, Vol. I, p. 540 (London, 1955) and we owe this to Miss Dorothy Whitelock. The charter was not printed by Kemble, Birch or in any other cartulary and has remained almost unknown to historians. It is now amongst the Stowe MSS. in the British Museum, No. 35, and one ought to mention that some of the witnesses are very helpfully

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discussed in *Crawford Charters* (Oxford, 1895) on pages 120-22. They are also noticed by Robertson (*Anglo-Saxon Charters*, Cambridge, 1939) but not in connection with this particular charter.

2. THE CONSTITUTION OF THE WITAN

It would seem that the number and importance of the persons present at Canterbury, of whom many were obviously in regular attendance on the king, might justify the claim that their meeting was a "witenagemot"—meeting of the wise men. In sober fact, this phrase, so familiar in our childhood history books, has no very definite meaning. A "wita" (genitive, witan) is basically "one who knows, a wise man", and secondly a councillor. It is in the latter sense that the word is usually employed in the A-S. period. A meeting ("gemot") of wise men was therefore a Council, but it might be ecclesiastical or lay, or both, and need not be assembled in any particular manner. It is tempting to antedate the King's Council (*curia regis*) and the great council (held three times a year) of the Norman era, but we do not know that the Saxon kings had envisaged either of these possibilities. The meeting at Canterbury was certainly a meeting of councillors, both ecclesiastical and lay, together with several local representatives, and such a formal meeting of councillors was clearly what was meant to be conveyed by the words "witenagemot".

Nevertheless, each such meeting must be examined on its merits and this record from Canterbury is important because it was held away from the capital and owed nothing to a formal summons on a national basis.

At the head of the Witan was the King himself. No doubt he took the chair and had next to him one of the clergy to act as secretary. This would very commonly be the Archbishop of Canterbury but it was not his ability to read or write the Minutes which was appreciated but his general knowledge of business. So far as we know, Minutes had not yet been invented, but a really wise man was needed to be at the king's elbow and to advise him very much as the Clerk of the Court advises the relatively uninstructed Justices today. The Archbishop was also a permanent member of the Court and was usually present wherever the king happened to be. At Canterbury Archbishop Aelfric had a double function. He was a local (Kentish born) as well as a national authority. He was also a man with a personal reputation for great wisdom and perhaps the wealthiest man in the whole realm. He could not only lend money to the King but could provide him with fully equipped war ships which were so much his own personal possessions that he was able to bequeath no less than three of them in his will (K. 716). The King, on the other hand, was a weak man likely to cover up his weakness by spasmodic acts of folly, such as the ravaging

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of Rochester, and the massacre of St. Brice's day, and he was fortunate in having an archbishop too important to be disregarded and wise enough to take an objective view of a very difficult situation.

Nor was the second adviser, Bishop Alfheah of Winchester, a less valuable member of the Witan, for this is the famous Bishop Aelfsige who was murdered by the Danes ten years later. He was now aged 48, a man of noble birth accustomed from youth to rule others and, particularly, to discipline himself. It is said of him that he fasted so much that the sun shone through his hands when he held them up in the celebration of Holy Communion. This did not prevent his being a man of affairs and he was the leader of the delegates sent a few years previously to interview Olaf Tryggvason. He persuaded this noteworthy raider to promise never to enter the country again. His fortitude at Greenwich and his refusal to have any ransom raised for him give further evidence of the sort of man he was. The Danes had slain his son only a year before.

Of the other ecclesiastical members of the Council less is known. Certainly Bishop Ordbriht of Selsey must have had close knowledge of the Danes for his church, now beneath the waves, was set upon the edge of the sea and was only too near to the Isle of Wight where they were apt to set up winter quarters. This must also have been true of Bishop Godwine of Rochester, who was a national as well as a local councillor. He is a little enigmatic because some years before he had witnessed a Wolverhampton charter with "a placid mind" and also with "a golden mouth and the sign of the Holy Cross". It is likely that the expression translated "golden mouth" (*crisostomo ore*), was merely intended to signify that Godwine was an eloquent speaker. In 1012 he shared the captivity of Aelfheah, for he was captured at Canterbury and probably slain or died of ill-treatment soon afterwards.

Two other bishops were present, of Sherbourne and Crediton, but little is known of either of them.

Next in importance to the bishops were the three ealdormen, Aelfric, Leofwine and Aelfhelm. These were constantly with the King.

Aelfric has an evil reputation but it must be admitted that where a man bears so common a name there is room for mistakes in identity. He was ealdorman of Hampshire and the West Country generally and was even now in the King's good books although he had ten years earlier been accused of cowardice and treachery. The King could not at that time secure his person so he put out the eyes of his son as a reminder of his annoyance. This was considered, even then, so beastly and vicious a thing for a king to do that the knowledge of it has been preserved by the Chronicler. His second treachery was a year after this charter was signed when he is said to have betrayed into the power

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of the Danes the levies from his own counties. He was probably slain at Assundun in 1016. Even if we discount accusations of gross treachery it seems clear that Aelfric must have been a man whose advice would be looked at with more than a little distrust.

Of Ealdorman Leofwine little is known except for the odd detail that he is referred to in one place as "Leoftaeta's son". We know nothing for certain of Leoftaet but there was a lady of that name who forfeited her lands because of her "unfitness". Since no one else of this name is known she may well have been the mother of the ealdorman. Of himself we are told by Searle (*Onomasticon*) that he was Ealdorman of the Hwiccas, the area of Worcester.

Aelfhelm was Ealdorman of Northumbria and constantly in attendance on the King. He was murdered four years later by Eadric Streona, whose reputation was much worse than that of Ealdorman Aelfric. Aelfhelm's daughter Aelfgifu was friendly with King Cnut and her son was Harold Harefoot, the first king of England of that name.

Although not in office as Ealdormen there were two other lay councillors of considerable importance. Both are described as relatives of the King and their names were Aethelmaer and Ordulf.

Aethelmaer may well have been a son of that Ealdorman Aethelweard who helped Bishop Aelfheah to make peace with the Danes in 994, and he is described as "consanguineus" of the King about that time. He is also described, about 1006 (*K.* 715) as "Mines hlafordes discthen", i.e., as the King's butler. It is evident that the domestic attendants of the King are already among his most influential advisers. This may have been due to his Norman Queen and the generally high prestige of Norman customs at this time.

Ordulf is correctly described as the King's uncle. He was the brother of Aethelred's mother. He was the son of an ealdorman and seems himself to have been the King's representative ("high sheriff") in Devonshire. He founded Tavistock Abbey.

Still another member of the Canterbury Witan has his own small place in English history. If we may believe Florence of Worcester, who has the following note under the year 1006: "King Aethelred deprived his especial favourite Wulfgeat, son of Leoueca, of his possessions and dignities; because of his unjust decrees and haughty deeds." (*Edn. Church Historians*, 1853.) Although at this date he may have enjoyed the especial favour of the king he was clearly an uncomfortable councillor. In fact, *K.* 1310, a charter of 1015, specifies that his precise crime was that of associating with the king's enemies. So there were at least two potential traitors at the Witan meeting.

The remaining members were either abbots of whom little or nothing is known or purely local representatives.

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3. THE MEN OF KENT

Of these we must deal first with Abbot Wulfric of St. Augustine's. Thorne (Edn. Davies) says he was elected in 990 and was known as "the Elder", to distinguish him from a later abbot of the same name. He died in 1006 and that is about all that is known about him.

Abbot Wigerd is last on the list of the abbots and this is good evidence that he represented the most junior foundation (*Arch. Cant.*, Vol. LIX, p. 19). Only two other abbots of this name are recorded in Searle's *Onomasticon*. One attested in 816 and so does not come into the picture. The other was a witness about 1022 (*K.* 972) but this is only known from a charter with a quite incredible list of witnesses and the name of Wigerd may have been copied—even from this very Canterbury charter. In any case Wigerd, last on the list at Canterbury, may well have been that Abbot of Appledore whose land is mentioned among the boundaries. There is no other place in Kent to which he can be assigned but there are so many unallotted Saxon abbots that one can do no more than make a very tentative and biased suggestion. He might possibly be from some other part of the country. It is worth noting that Abbot Aelfhun who witnesses a shire court charter in 996 (*K.* 929) may have been his predecessor.

Aethelric, a minister or thane, had a long and honourable career in Kent. As early as 987 he was witness to a Bromley charter (*K.* 657) and by 1006 he is "Aethelric ealda", so that he presumably has a son named Aethelric, or perhaps only a contemporary. About 1016 he witnesses with "many other good men within the city (of Canterbury) and without" (*K.* 1315) and a year later he is addressed by King Cnut as one of the prominent thanes of Kent (Harmer's *Writs*, No. 26). He is presumably the "Agelric" who was present at the translation of the body of St. Alphege to Canterbury, when Cnut himself was in Kent. This was in 1023 and it must be allowed that some of these records may refer to a younger Aethelric but he if they do, must have followed very closely indeed in the footsteps of his predecessor. In 1035 there is still an Aethelric who is a "prefectus" and a thane of Kent (*K.* 1323). Is this the same man? If it was, we must allow him 48 years of active service for his county. It is not very unlikely but actual demonstration is impossible.

With him at Canterbury, and of about the same age, was Leofwine. They had attested together the Bromley and other charters. He is known as Leofwine of Dictune (Ditton) from his residence there, and is probably also "Leofwine, Athulf's son" of 993 (*Liber de Hyda*) but is less likely to be the Leofwine the Red who rode over to Brightling in Sussex to bring back a bride for his friend Godwine. This was after 1016 (*K.* 732) and the original Leofwine was probably a bit old for such joy rides at that date.

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Lifing of Malling (East Malling) and Leofstan of Mersham were also Kentish landowners of importance who witness from time to time and who were called to the councils of Aethelred at Canterbury.

We come next to the two brothers, Sigeward and Sigeraed, that is, Siward and Sired, for the older and more formal spellings were already regarded as unnecessarily antique. The name of Siward usually comes first, while Sired is merely mentioned as his brother. So we also should take Siward first. As early as 993 he is known as "Sigeward on Cent" and seems to be attached to the Court. Much later on he describes his position as that of "cinges thegan aet raede and aet runan"—and that does *not* mean "for riding and running" or anything of that sort. It is scarcely capable of literal translation except to say that "in whispering and in talking", i.e., in secret and in public, he is the king's servant. It may be that it is a paraphrase for "through thick and thin" but I can find no authority who has faced the point. He is constantly present in Kent but his name ceases to appear after about 1006.

Sired lived longer. They attested together until 1006 but our next relevant charter shows "Sired" only approving the grant of Surrenden to Leofwine the Red. In the next year he is at Godwine's marriage feast or, at least, attests the deed of gift to his bride before King Cnut at Kingstone. It is his son Aelfgar who actually rides to Brightling. He is now Sired the Old (*K.* 732) but as ever the "faithful thane" of the king (*K.* 1285). His last appearance seems to be at the ceremonies attending the translation of St. Alphege in 1023, after more than 30 years service to his county. We are not told where the brothers lived but they did figure amongst the three or four witnesses to a charter of Cliffe near Dover (*K.* 429) and Sired himself had a grant of land at Sibertswold. It may be that he resided thereabouts although his brother seems to have followed the Court, at least as far as London.

Their friends among the landowners of Kent who were present at the meeting of the Witan included Wulfstan the elder of Saltwood and also Wulfstan the younger, presumably of the same address. This, however, is not quite certain because he is once mentioned as "the other Wulfstan" which is less suggestive of relationship. Here also were Waerelm, father of Leofwine, and Guthwold. Of these nothing is known except for their occasional witnessing of charters.

It is evident that the business of the Witan was felt to need a strong representation of local interests and this was secured by a dozen or so of Kentish landowners and leaders.

A striking thing about these Kentish witnesses is that so many of them can be identified witnessing over long periods as if the county was safe and peaceful. We know, in fact, that it was quite the opposite. There was no enduring peace until Cnut came to the throne in 1016,

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and this was very late on in the lives of most of them. Here is a list of their manors, their places of residence:

Ditton	East Malling	Mersham
Saltwood	(?Sibertswold)	

It cannot be said that any of these was out of reach of the Danes riding about on stolen horses. Yet they continued to support landowners of sufficient importance to be called to meet the King at Canterbury. This hardly supports any theory of wholesale devastation such as the Chronicles would have us believe in. Perhaps these places had this at least in common, that they were too small to attract serious notice, and yet alive enough to deal with the generality of small raiding bands.

4. THE BUSINESS OF THE WITAN

The charter itself is concerned with only a very small fraction of the business of the Witan and we have no clue to the remainder except our knowledge of current affairs. This is full enough and the Chronicle for the previous year, 1001, sets out what was in everyone's minds:

“ This year there was constant fighting in England because of the pirate army. They harried and burned almost everywhere. They were opposed by the men of Hampshire . . . among the slain were . . . and the son of Bishop Aelfsige, eighty one men in all. Then they went west until they came to Devon where Pallig joined them with the ships he had, for he had departed from the allegiance he owed to King Ethelred, contrary to all the pledges he had given . . . then they went back eastward again until they reached the Isle of Wight and the next morning they burnt down . . . many manors. Soon after this, terms were settled with them, and they made peace.”

The peace negotiations were early in 1002 and the terms were settled by Ealdorman Leofsige (who was soon thereafter exiled for manslaughter): the English had to pay £24,000, which was the second payment of Danegeld made in this reign.

Although Canterbury was not itself attacked at this time, no one knew where the next blow would fall. West Kent had been ravaged in 999 and it might with any favouring wind be the turn of East Kent to suffer from the great army which “ went almost everywhere ”, by sea, on horse or on foot. If one could have listened to the ordinary gossip of Canterbury, one might have heard some satisfaction at the presence of the King, which could be interpreted as showing his interest in the county, and even as evidence that no immediate attack was to be expected. It would also be known that many Kentish men were to meet the King and would be able to voice the dire effects of their

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sufferings, and possibly even get some easement of the taxes. The common people may even have spoken of treason but it is likely that they regarded this much as we regard politics to-day, as something to be borne with lest worse things should happen.

In more educated and responsible circles the talk would have been quite otherwise. Behind their formal respect for the King as descended from "the right line of Cerdic" they would be uneasily aware of his character as a man. They knew well enough why he had come to Canterbury. He wanted what all kings wanted—more money. If the Danegeld had been paid, it was needed to refill the Treasury (the "hanaper" or hamper at Winchester). If the Danegeld was not yet collected, money was still more urgently needed lest the Danes should call for it in force.

The Archbishop especially knew why the King had come to Canterbury. It was on a business matter which could not be settled elsewhere. One can almost hear Aelfric protesting that there was no money left in the coffers of the church, the first Danegeld not yet being fully settled for, and the King replying that he would come to Canterbury and see for himself. The Archbishop himself was one of the wealthiest men in the country and his church was far from poor. There were also Guilds in the city which might be able to organize subscriptions, and rich land-owners whose broad acres had escaped the Danes so far. It is surprising that the King did not bring his second Queen with him (or did he?—she is not named in this charter as she is in others). She had only reached this country in the spring and the possibility of wedding gifts might be exploited. Or, perhaps, there might be some honours to sell. In any case, and by any means, Aethelred needed money, plenty of money, and he came to Canterbury to see what could be done about it. Some aspects at least of Danegeld consequences, and of Danish warfare, must have been the main business of the Witan, although there would also be other aspects better dealt with in secrecy.

There was a subsidiary reason for the Canterbury visit which was always of importance in the King's journeyings. He was hungry. The preservation and transport of food was not well understood. Transport was slow and could not well cope with large amounts. Brine was the commonest preservative and tubs of brine make awkward loads. Something might be done with dry-salting and with sun-dried fish but, generally speaking, it was advisable for the King and his Court to go to their food rather than expect it to come to them. It was also cheaper for, as was still the case some centuries later, the citizen who was honoured by a visit from the King was not expected to ask for payment. Nor were "all the King's horses and all the King's men" anything but a very severe burden upon town and country alike.

We do not know what sort of great hall may have been available in

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Canterbury, in the Archbishop's house or at St. Augustine's, or even in possession of the citizens, but it seems likely that the Witan met in the Saxon cathedral. All that is known about this is brought together in Chas. Cotton's *History*, published in 1929. No doubt the King's retinue was accommodated in private houses and the chief clerics and their followers at Christchurch and St. Augustine's.

There is one matter, worth a word, which may at least have been in the King's mind at Canterbury. This was the suggestion that the Danes of East Anglia and elsewhere, the settled Danes, were conspiring to change the succession by murdering him. The Witan met on July 11th. On November 13th—four months later—took place the massacre of St. Brice's day, wherein most Danes of any prominence were murdered. This could not have been arranged at short notice but only by the efforts of personal messengers who could approach the task in secrecy. A good part of the four months would surely be taken up with these preliminary orders and their acceptance. The excuse was an alleged plot among the Danes and this at least may well have been in the King's mind if not actually brought forward for public discussion. It is worth remembering that in Kent there seem to have been no organized Danish (or Norse) communities at any time. We have no Danish place names, nor, with one or two possible exceptions, any Danish law or custom, commercial or otherwise.

5. THE BUSINESS OF AETHELRED, THE REEVE

This charter of 1002 says nothing of the office held by Aethelred but only that he paid seven pounds for a life tenancy of a house in Burhgate Street. He appears, however, in a charter of 996 (*K.* 929) when he is present at a meeting of the shire court at Canterbury. He there attests as "Aethelred portgerefa on Byrig". Thorpe (p. 301) translates this as "portreeve at Bury" but this gives a wrong impression. Aethelred held this office "on Byrig" which means "in the City" and the city was undoubtedly Canterbury, where the Court was sitting. His main duties were to collect the king's dues, on the roads and in markets, and wherever else anything was owing. He was not a city official except in the sense that he represented the king's interests there. Nor was he a man of high rank. He is not addressed as a thane or minister but as "my faithful man" although he could afford to pay seven pounds for a life's lease of a small house. It is interesting to consider how big that house may have been. The land measured 45 by 24 feet. The house would presumably be thatched and this would mean that 2 ft. all round would have to be allowed so that the "eaves' drip" from his roof did not fall on that of his neighbours (*B.* 519). This would give a possible frontage of 20 ft. Even if we allow somewhat for a "trades-

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men's entrance " to the back, there would still be a respectable frontage, as much as many people have to-day—about the normal front of the average council house, with one front room and the front door showing.

The fact that he had to agree to a condition that the house would revert to Christchurch strongly suggests that he was already in wrongful possession. In that case the seven pounds would represent a bribe to the King to secure him in undisturbed possession. The King, of course, would hand the seven pounds to Christchurch, to whom the house belonged, and then borrow it back again—without any security for repayment. The church has ever suffered from the depredations of Kings.

6. TOPOGRAPHY OF CANTERBURY IN A.D. 605

This must be considered here because it is necessary to get some clear idea of the western boundary of St. Augustine's land before discussing the charter of 1002. Our knowledge of it comes mostly from the foundation charters of the Abbey of SS. Peter and Paul, later St. Augustine's. These have come down to us in forms which have gained the support of Miss Margaret Deanesly (*Trans. Roy. Hist. Soc.*, 4th series, XXIII, 1941), and have been severely disparaged by W. Levison (*England and the Continent in the Eighth Century*, Oxford, 1946) but neither writer disputes the validity of the boundaries mentioned in them.

The first charter (*Birch 4*) gives the boundaries of the monastery grounds and the second (*Birch 5*) includes the endowment land, stretching far to the east and south of the monastery.

We are here concerned only with the boundary towards the walls of Canterbury, for this is the boundary mentioned more than once in the charter of 1002. The monastery land is said to have the following boundaries in *Birch 4*:

East. The church of S. Martin.

South. The way to the Burhgate.

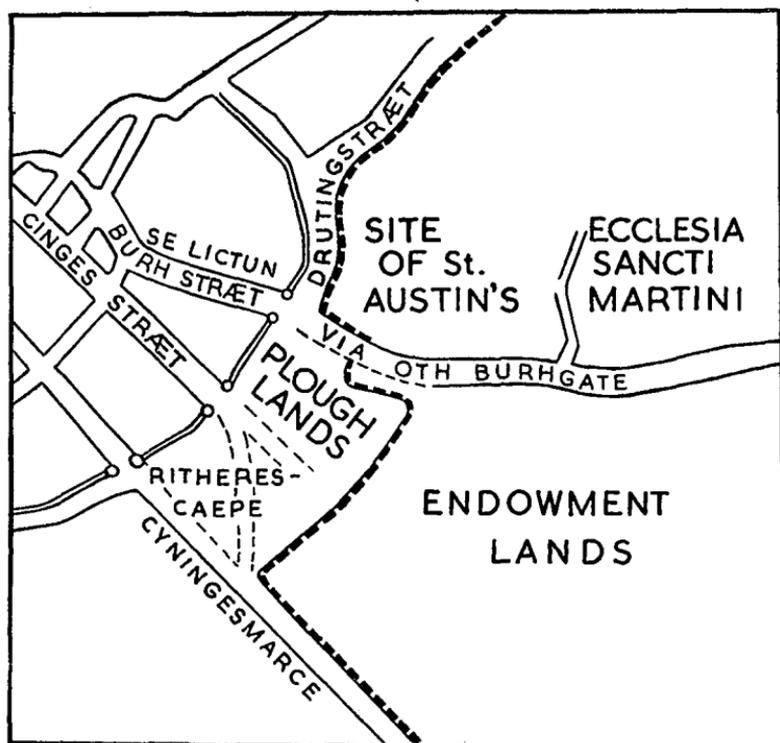
West and North. Drutingstreet.

The position of St. Martin's is well known and " the way to the Burgate " must be the extension of Burgate Street along Church Street to Longport. No doubt this was then a track wider and straighter than the roads of to-day. Of the " Drutingstraet " which constituted the W. and N. boundary we have a reminder in Old Ruttington Lane and the remainder must have been what we now call Broad Street together with the land (now built over) extending to the wall of the monastery.

The second charter includes the land given in *Birch 4* and also the farm land given for endowment and the boundaries towards Canterbury are—this is a perambulation—" so to the west to Ritherescaepe (the

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cattle market) and so north to Drutingstraete ". These boundaries are dealt with in Thorne's *Chronicle* (Ed. Davis, Oxford, 1934, p. 9) and those with which we are concerned are translated into the terms of fourteenth century Canterbury as " And so to the west to Rederchepe and so to the north to Drontyntone ". The boundary from the Cattle Market to Ruttington Lane clearly corresponds to the modern Monastery Street but its northern and southern extensions as they were in 605

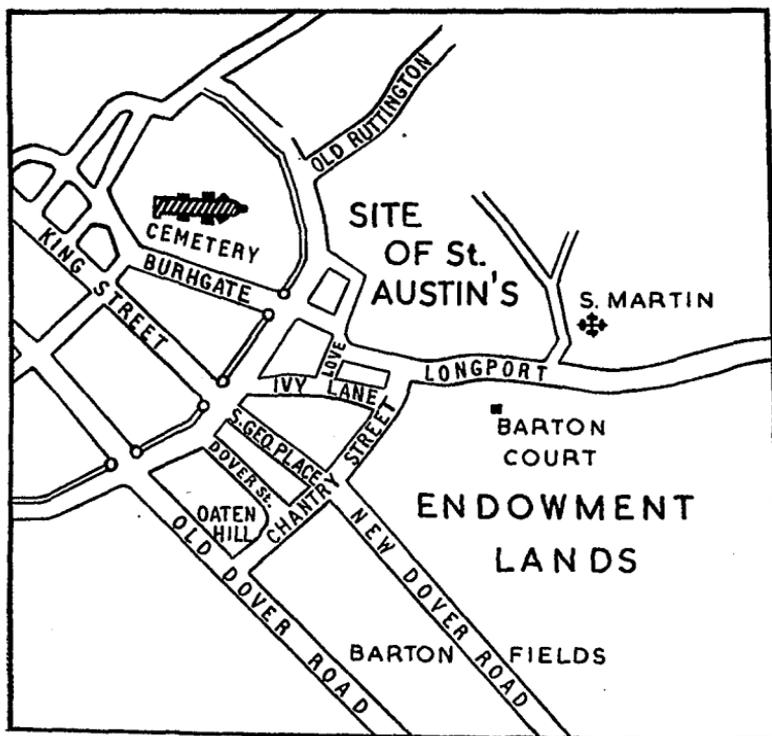


have been obscured by buildings and we cannot be sure of the true line of the southern extension towards the cattle market.

There is no doubt that the endowment land of the second charter was inclusive of what was later called Abbot's Barton and Barton Fields, both of which names appear upon the modern map. St. Augustine's southern boundary would thus run around this area along the Old Dover Road, north-west to the neighbourhood of Oaten Hill. Here it would have to turn north, for Oaten Hill was of old the city's place of execution and also an area of markets, none of which were likely to be on St. Augustine's land. It would then proceed along Chantry Lane

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and Lower Chantry Lane towards Longport. In taking this route it would apparently have on its left hand a considerable area of open land devoted to markets (*Hasted*, XI, 102), and much of the parish of St. George—an ancient parish (*Urry*, *Arch. Cant.*, LXI., 142). It must not be supposed that either Chantry Lane or St. George's parish existed in 605 but the fact that they could grow up subsequently in their present positions suggests that the bounds of St. Augustine did not invade that



area. A boundary continuing along Chantry Lane would arrive at Longport but not, as required, at "the way to Drotyntone". It must therefore have turned aside before it reached Longport and passed to the west of the line of Chantry Lane. According to *Hasted* (XII, 235) the boundaries of the old liberty of St. Augustine, known as the Liberty of Longport, passed in his day along Love Lane (joining the south end of Longport to Ivy Lane but not named on the Ordnance Map), and then by Ivy Lane to Chantry Lane and so to the neighbourhood of Oaten Hill.

It is therefore possible to plot the 605 boundaries with some exacti-

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tude but it is not to be supposed that Love Lane, Ivy Lane, etc., were therefore in existence at that date. The truth seems to be that there were no buildings, and probably no cultivation, between the bounds assigned to St. Augustine and the ditch outside the city wall. Rather was there a wide and insanitary space, devoted to markets of all sorts, and perhaps to public executions. It had doubtless been the site of burials without the walls and it seems that old Roman burial mounds were a prominent feature (Urry, *loc. cit.*). Across this space ran more or less well defined tracks to join up with the Dover road which entered the city at Riding Gate, towards Sandwich and to Ruttington (wherever that was) as well as various cross tracks such as one may always find on unenclosed ground. The cattle market was not confined to its present boundaries until soon after 1800 and it no doubt spread all over this open space in the time of Aethelbert I, although, as we shall presently see, at least part of the area had come to be enclosed and cultivated by the time of Aethelbert II.

7. OUTSIDE THE WALLS IN 1002

The charter provides us with the boundaries of four plots of land. Taking the last first we have the boundaries of "the sixth acre" as follows:

- East. Cingges Street (King Street).
- South. Hrytheracep (the cattle market).
- West. Aethelstane's land.
- North. Omitted in error.

The cattle market undoubtedly adjoined the present market but included an area to the east and south-east of it which is now built over. To the east of this, even allowing for the fact that the cardinal points are seldom exactly used, there can be no street entitled to the name of King Street except the road coming out of St. George's Gate and going towards the old Dover road at Oaten Hill. This might well pass through the position of the block of buildings between the present St. George's Place and Dover Street and it is possible that the sixth acre was actually on the site of that block. This particular section of Aethelstan's land may also have been in that block.

We pass next to the boundaries of the other single acre plot, the fifth acre, of which the boundaries are:

- East. Aethelstan's land.
- South and west. King Street.
- North. Land of the brotherhood of St. Augustine.

We have clearly passed to the side of King Street remote from the cattle market and we are obliged to suppose that St. George's Place had

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a forerunner along the present line (as Somner's map clearly shows present in his day). North might be Ivy Lane—a St. Augustine Boundary—and east a second plot of land belonging to Aethelstan and possibly bounding to Chantry Lane.

We come now to a two acre plot which bounded:

East. Aethelstan's land.

South. King Street.

West and North. Brotherhood land of St. Augustine.

It is difficult to find any spot which would have St. Augustine land on the west and north, unless we suppose that some plots in the area south of Ivy Lane, but outside the old boundaries, belonged to the Saint. This is quite likely to have been the case for we are, as I have done my best to prove, dealing with the enclosure of what had been common land and St. Augustine as one of the bordering owners would be likely to have his share.

The last plot also contained two acres bounded:

East. Brotherhood land of Christchurch.

South. Land of the Abbot of Appledore.

West. Portmannaland—City land or Citizens land.

North. King Street.

Here we are once more south of King Street but apparently clear of the cattle market.

From these boundaries taken as a whole we may deduce that the continuation east of the main road through St. George's Gate was an important highway on either side of which the land was being enclosed in small plots, although not at this time for housing, for the land is expressly granted by the charter for ploughing. The exact line taken by King Street outside the walls is uncertain. If it was to avoid the enclosed land of St. Augustine—the Barton Farm—it would have to run from St. George's Gate to Oaten Hill but I am not persuaded that it could originally have made so sudden a turn to the right as it left the city to pass up the modern Dover Street. This is eminently a problem of local topographers.

8. BURGATE STREET IN 1002

The plot of land upon which the Reeve had his house is described as being 15 virgas in length and 8 in width, i.e., 45 by 24 ft. The boundaries were:

East. King's land.

South. Burhstraet.

West. Land of the brotherhood at Christchurch.

North. "se lictun"—the Cemetery.

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The position of the cemetery is well known. Its site adjoined the cathedral, as it was in later days, on the south and perhaps also on the east, and extended southwards to Burgate Street. The latter is obviously the same as the Burhstraet of the charter. The map suggests that there are many frontagers in Burgate Street to-day who have a depth of 45 ft. and a frontage of 24 ft. or part of it. The King's land on the east might well adjoin the vanished Burh gate but here again we must leave it to the local topographer to fill in the picture. It suffices to show that the Burh-straet which Aethelbert II knew was very similar in lay-out to the Burgate Street of 950 years later. The main highway of the city, then called King Street, has, alas, lost its name if not its direction and is now known by a series of not very inspiring labels, St. Peter's Street, High Street, Parade, and St. George's Street.

9. THE COMMUNITY AT APPLIEDORE

In a charter of the year 968 (*Birch*, 1212), which is illustrated and discussed at some length in *Arch. Cant.*, XLIX, p. 229, there occurs amongst the names of witnesses to a Tenterden charter as a sort of afterthought the words "se hioraed to apuldre" which can only be translated as "the brotherhood at Appledore". In that volume of *Arch. Cant.* the writer hazarded the suggestion that "It seems most likely that it was a small party of only two or three monks and servants in charge of an Appledore manor farm of either Christchurch or St. Martin of Dover" and made some comment as to why this should be the case.

In the present charter the name of Appledore appears in the recital of the boundaries of a two acre plot outside the walls of Canterbury. The four boundaries are:

East. Thaer hiredes land inn to Cristes cyricean (the land of the brotherhood at Christchurch).

South. Thaes aþþ inn to Apuldere.

West. Portmannaland (common land of the citizens).

North. Cinges straet (King Street).

The word "aþþ" has a line drawn through the letters indicating that it is a contraction. In the remainder of the charter (written, however, by a different scribe) "abb" always stands for "abbod"—the abbot. This accords well with the usual custom and we do not find "abb" as an abbreviation of abbacy or abbey. An abbey would be rendered, if necessary, as "the church at so and so" or the church of some named saint, and its community as the brotherhood at some named place. The conception of an abbacy seems to have been unknown. We must, therefore, accept "abb" in these boundaries as an abbreviation for "abbot". We have now to ask whether it ought to be read as

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“ abbod ” in the nominative or as “ abbodes ” in the possessive genitive. The preceding word “ thaes ” is the genitive of “ se ”, meaning “ the ”, and I think we ought therefore to supply the word “ land ”, make “ abb ” into “ abbodes ”, and read the boundary as being “ the land of the abbot at Appledore ”. Since the land was clearly at Canterbury it must have been the abbot who was at Appledore. There was then an abbot of Appledore in A.D. 1002, and there was a regular community there in 968 and not a mere “ two or three monks ”. One should add that there seems no doubt at all that the Appledore in question is actually the Appledore of to-day. This manor had large dens in the Tenterden area and only a community owning property there would properly witness the Tenterden charter of 968. If we were dealing with some spot where the name of Appledore had been forgotten since 1002, it would not have appeared in the Tenterden Charter.

There remains one further problem. Why did the Abbot of Appledore own arable land at Canterbury? I would suggest, although without any other evidence, that this land was attached to a “ refuge ” in Canterbury similar to that given to the nuns of Lyminge in the year 804 (*Birch*, 317) when the first attacks of the Danes were more than threatening. Now, in 1002, when the second great wave of Danish attacks was in progress, it is likely enough that the community of Appledore had been obliged to leave its exposed position for a safer home in Canterbury. The history of their Appledore house is almost wholly unknown and its exact site remains to be discovered, but the Danes were at Appledore in 893 and would have destroyed any monastery there at that time, as they did all other coastal churches. We have, however, no reason to suppose that any such community existed in 893. There is no record of its founding or existence prior to 968, or of any abbot who might have presided there.

The first wave of Danish attacks faded away after the victories of Alfred and his immediate successors round about the year 900. It would then have been quite possible for a monastery to be founded at Appledore with some hope of usefulness and survival. There was certainly such a house in 968 but it cannot long have survived the Danish onslaughts which began again about 980. The Abbot who had land in Canterbury may well, therefore, have been the last abbot of a very short-lived house. If he appeared at the meeting of the Witan his name was probably Wigerd, the last name on the list, and so that of the representative from the last formed community (see *Arch. Cant.*, LIX, 19).

10. TEXT OF THE ORIGINAL CHARTER WITH CONTRACTIONS EXTENDED

Cum igitur omnis mortalium momentanea dulcedo eiulande amaritudinis dolore finienda sit et ueluti flos agri lugubriter cassabunda

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marcescit de uisibilibus; transitoriisque applaudentis fortune diliciis inuisibilia atanaliterque manentia celestium comparanda sunt gaudia. Quapropter ego AETHELRED primicerius et basileus gentis anglorum trado cuidam meo fideli homini nomine AETHELRED In dies suos uxorisque eius quandam agelli mei particulam id est xv uirgas in longitudine et viii in latitudine: vi. agros ad arandum foris murum pro eius humili famulatu et competenti pretio hos sunt vii. librae . intra abbitum dorobernie ciuitatis istius modi rationis causa interposita ut post dies eorum sanctae christi aecclesiae iure perpetuo restituatur pro anime meae remedio.

Terminibus; autem istis circumagitur terra.

Aerest on east healfe ys cingesland. 7 on suth healfe burh straet. 7 on west healfe thaes hires land to cristes cyricean. 7 on north healfe se lictum.

Nu is this thara twegre aecera gamaeru.

on east healfe lith thaes hires land inn to cristes cyricean. 7 on suth healfe thaes abb inn to apuldere. 7 on west healfe portmannaland. 7 on north healfe conges straet,

Nu is elf this thara othra twegra secera gamaeru.

on east healfe lith atheastanes land. 7 on suth healfe cinges straet.. 7 on west healfe. 7 on north healfe thaes hires land inn. to sancte augustine.

Nu is this thaes anes aeceres gamaeru.

on east healfe lith atheastanes land. 7 on suth healfe 7 on west healfe cinges straet . 7 on north healfe thaes hires inn to sancte augustine.

Nu is this thaes syxtan aeceres gamaeru

on east healfe lith cinges straet 7 on suth healfe hrytheraceap 7 on healfe atheastanes land 7 on north healfe.

Si autem quod non optamus aliquis tippo turgens supercilii. hanc meam donationis kartulam adnihilare temptauerit sciat se domino rationem in die iudicii redditurum nisi digna ante emendauerit. satisfactione.

Scripta est Anno MIII°. Indictione. xv. Aepacte. iiii. Data. die. v. iduum iulii. luna xxvii . Scripta in ciuitate dorobernensis quae est metropolis cantuariorum.

+ Ego AETHELRED rex anglorum hanc meam donationem cum uexillo sancte crucis christi roborauit et subscripsi.

+ Ego AELFRIC archiepiscopus dorobernensis aeclesie hanc donationem AETHELREDI regis libenti animo confirmaui.

+ Ego Aelfheah wintoniensis episcopus concolidaui.

+ Ego Wulfstan lundoniensis episcopus adqueiui.

+ Ego Godwine hrofensis episcopus impressi.

+ Ego Ordbriht episcopus consensi.

+ Ego Aethelric scireburnensis episcopus adnocauit.

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- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------|
| + Ego Alfwold cridiensis episcopus conclusi. | | |
| + Ego Wulfric abb. | | + Ego Aelfsie abb. |
| + Ego Aelfwerd abb. | | + Ego Wulfgar abb. |
| + Ego Leofric abb. | + Ego Wulfgeat min. | + Ego Wulfstan. |
| + Ego Wigerd abb. | + Ego Leofwine min. | + Ego Waerelm. |
| + Ego Aelfric dux. | + Ego Aethelric min. | + Ego Guthwold. |
| + Ego Leofwine dux. | + Ego Lifincg Minister. | |
| + Ego Aelfhelm dux. | + Ego Leofstan minister. | |
| + Ego Aethelmaer min. | + Ego Siwerd minister. | |
| + Ego Ordulf min. | + Ego Wulfstan minister. | |
| + Ego Wulfric min. | + Ego Sired minister. | |

On the back:

- + This ys thaes hagan boc.

11. SCRIBAL ERRORS

It has seemed best to review the general situation before proceeding to detailed examination of this charter. We can now pass to a consideration of its textual peculiarities. Three different clerks were concerned in producing it. One wrote the Latin parts and the names of the witnesses; another filled in the Anglo-Saxon statement of boundaries; and the third was responsible for the short endorsement. We can deal with the last first.

He was responsible only for the words "This ys thaes hagan boc" which were written along two carefully ruled lines after the parchment had been folded. They appear, as one would expect, to have been contemporary with the rest of the charter. They are not quite so unimportant as they might appear. An "haga" in common parlance was a house and garden in a town. To distinguish one from another the name of the owner or some particular feature of the haga itself would be necessary, but here we have only "the" haga, as if none other ever existed. It is a fair inference that this haga was a well known bone of contention, well known, that is, to the monk who wrote this endorsement. If he knew all about the haga he was presumably a monk of Christchurch and we have further reason to suppose that he was actually endorsing a record which was intended to be preserved in the ownership of the church. This reason is the fact that the charter which is now in the British Museum was amongst the Stowe MSS., with many other spoils from religious houses. Since the endorsement is carefully written in a good hand we may suppose that there was at least one monk at Christchurch whose clerical work was reliable.

The clerk who wrote the greater part of the charter was not, however, a man of Kent but perhaps a Winchester man in the train of the King.

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Otherwise he could not have written "*Scripta est in civitate Dorobernensis quæ est metropolis cantuariorum*"—Written in the city of Canterbury which is the metropolis of the men of Kent. Here we must hesitate a moment. There were obviously at least two records, quite likely three, of the same transaction and it may be that we have here a Canterbury copy of an original intended to be preserved in the royal chancery, or by the Reeve, who would naturally wish to have a good receipt for his seven pounds and good evidence of title. If the Canterbury copy was made as exact as possible it could include these words about the metropolis of Kent but still be written by a local man. It follows that we may only conclude that one copy, not necessarily that which has survived, was written by a stranger in Kent.

Whoever wrote this charter was, in any case, not as careful as he might have been. His lines are irregular and badly spaced although he is a practiced writer, making regular use of a somewhat unusual and very irritating contraction in such words as "concedo", "arandum", etc. His chief errors are:

1. The date is wrong by one year—MIII written for MII.
2. There is a space left for the see of Bishop Ordberht to be entered but no entry is made.
3. The names of the last three witnesses are so awkwardly entered that there is no room to mention their offices.

None of these errors are serious except the date, and this is easily corrected from the other details given.

The third writer who was responsible for the Anglo-Saxon boundaries, was also a practiced writer but equally careless. His errors are:

1. "Aesthestanes" for "Aethelstanes" in three places. This could perhaps be defended as a colloquialism but seems out of place in this charter. The name is discussed in Crawford *Charters*, p. 109.
2. The northern boundary of the sixth acre is omitted although we have the words "on north healfe . . ." which should have introduced it.
3. In the first set of boundaries he writes "to Cristes cyricean" instead of his usual "inn to Cristes cyricean".
4. In the boundaries of the one acre he writes "hirides" for the very common word "hiredes".
5. In the same boundaries the word "land" is omitted after "hirides".
6. The entry about Appledore has already been discussed.

None of these faults is of great moment, except perhaps the second, but they undoubtedly show that there was a sad absence of accuracy amongst the scribes.

12. TRANSLATION

This is a free translation of the tedious and complicated phrases of the medieval Latin in which the Charter is written. It takes little notice of moods and tenses, for the student who needs a literal and somewhat incomprehensible translation has herein all the materials for making his own, but it does attempt to reproduce what is really of importance. Here it is.

“ Since, therefore, every fleeting pleasure of mortals must end in the pain of bitter remorse, these visible and transitory delights of good fortune are but a preparation for the invisible and eternal joys of heaven.”

Of course, the King had nothing to do with this rather specious reasoning, nor was bitter remorse in his programme, but it was customary that charters should commence in this manner, and some hundreds of years had made it a binding custom of which, however, few people took any serious notice. Nevertheless, the king continues:

“ Therefore I, Aethelred, chief ruler and king of the English people, grant to a certain faithful servant of mine, a small piece of my estates. It is 15 yards in length and 8 in breadth within the city, together with six acres for ploughing which is outside the walls. I grant it to him on account of his obedient service and for the sufficient payment of seven pounds.”

No doubt, the seven pounds was the real object of the transaction as seen by the King. It is at least possible that he had never possessed the land and that the Reeve's purpose was merely to get a title by Royal charter, whatever the Archbishop said. Next we have a conditional clause.

“ A condition to this effect is attached, that, after their days, it is to be restored to the holy church of Christ, in perpetual possession, for the good of my soul.”

Then there follow the boundaries, in Anglo-Saxon and in a different hand. They are set out as follows:

“ Further, the land is bounded thus—

First, on the east side is Kings land, and on the south Burh street, and on the west the brotherhood land of Christ church, and on the north the cemetery.

Now these are the bounds of the two acres—

On the east lieth the brotherhood land of Christ church, and on the south land of the Abbot of Appledore, and on the west the land of the Corporation, and on the north Kings street.

Now is further the bounds of the other two acres—

On the east lieth Athelstan's land and on the south Kings street, and on the west and north brotherhood land of St. Augustine.

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Now are the one acre bounds—

On the east lieth Aethelstan's land and on the south and west Kings street, and on the north brotherhood land of St. Augustine.

Now follow the bounds of the sixth acre—

On the east lieth Kings street, and on the south the cattle market, on the west Aethelstan's land and on the north (blank)."