

DELAFIELD'S MANUSCRIPT NOTES ON FINGEST.

For writing a history of Buckinghamshire, important treasures are deposited in the Bodleian. A mine of information is contained in the voluminous manuscripts of Browne Willis which have never been patiently investigated, but besides these there are also manuscripts relating to the County to which we wish to call the reader's attention. They are by Thomas Delafield, who styles himself "Curate of Fingest and Schoolmaster of Stokenchurch, County Oxon." His Curacy of Fingest commenced in 1726. His manuscripts now in the Bodleian, confining ourselves to this County, are comprised in three volumes, viz., one on the parish of Fingest, one on the parish of Chilton, and the third is a collection of historical matter relating to Bucks generally.

We shall now give our attention to the volume relating to Fingest. The history of the parish is carefully prepared, and with it is included a list of the Kings, when this was, as it would appear, a Royal Demesne, and the lives of the Abbots of St. Albans and the Bishops of Lincoln during their respective tenures of the Manor and Church of Fingest, with illustrations of their coats of arms attached to each brief biography. Delafield entitles his volume "An essay toward the account of Fingherst in the County of Bucks, both with respect to its ancient and present state, whether civil or ecclesiastical." He gives the different names of the parish as known at different times and found in various documents, as follows:—Fingest, Thengest, Vengest, Tingehearst, Tynghurst, Tynghurst, Tyngehurst, Thinghurst, or Tinghurste. His derivation of the name of the parish may be questioned, as the investigation of place names had not in his day been so critically undertaken as it has at the present time. He suggests that the name is an application of Saxon terms, and may signify either a habitation or a valley in the woods, "ing" being habitation or abode, so that Thinghurst may be conceived to be Th'inghurst or the dwelling in the wood. Matthew Paris gives the name as Tynhurst.

It is conjectured by Mr. E. J. Payne that the name should be spelt Thing-hurst, *hing* equivalent to the Saxon word *hangen*, and the name fully interpreted meaning at-the-hanging-wood.* The situation of the woods at Fingest certainly corresponds with a descriptive name of this kind. Tingwick in this County would, according to a like interpretation, signify the hanging village. The situation of the Church of Tingwick and the hill suggest the descriptive name, so Stonehenge is the hanging stone.

Whilst upon the source of place names we may interpose Delafield's derivation of the name of Desborough the name of the Hundred in which Fingest is situate. He conjectured that the name Desborough, the place of the meeting of the people, signified Deys or Days-borough, that is, the place or borough of judgment. He then refers to the meaning of the word Daysman, which signifies an umpire or judge, and connects this with the word Desborough as a place where the Court of Judicatory was held, or where the Aldermen, subsequently the Hundredaries or Chief Constables, together with the Barons or Freeholders, were judges. He gives another interpretation, viz., the name might be derived from the characteristics of the earthwork which has a double ditch and bank, and he conjectures that it might be called Dwysborough from its double entrenchment. Then he hazards another derivation—might not the name have a religious significance, and be derived from the British *Div* or *Dyw*? or, again, it might be from *Dis*, the first fabulous people of this island, so that Desborough in this sense would be the consecrated fortification. Leaving Delafield's comments for the moment, other interpretations of the name of Desborough have been conjectured; for instance, it was in the midst of the Chiltern forests; it might therefore have been the burgh in the dark forest, Dewsborough or Duborough, *Duo* being the Celtic verb to blacken or darken.

It is of the first importance to remember, in seeking the origin of such a name, that Domesday should be consulted, and we find that the name is always known in Domesday as *Dustinburgh*. *Dustin* is evidently a

* *Hangen* to hang—*hangian*—Bosworth.

word indicating some distinctive meaning which cannot well be associated with either of the derivations of the name as hitherto attempted. The Saxon word *Dust* has the same signification as the modern word. Might it not be fairly conjectured, therefore, that this was a ruined Burgh at the date of Domesday, and was so designated at the time of the Survey?

Langley, we should mention, to complete the various suggestions as to the origin of the name, considered it probable that it took its rise from the two towns, Wycombe and Marlow, Duo burgi, but, as we have before suggested, the word Duo might as well be referred to the Celtic verb to blacken or darken.

We have dwelt rather at length on the derivation of Desborough, the name of the Hundred, taken from that of the ancient fortress, and so at least of special local interest. The earthwork is a remarkable one, indicating a strongly fortified post, and from its double entrenchment affording evidences of a formidable position of defence as a means of checking an invading force in primitive warfare. Here it will be appropriate to introduce a few extracts from Delafield on this Desborough entrenchment—

“The Hundred takes its denomination from a depopulated and demolished place of that name, in the Parish of West Wycombe, belonging to Mrs. Hughes. It is situated about a mile from West Wycombe to the east, and a small distance from the London Road on the right hand. The remains of it still apparent is a place on the hill, called Desborough Castle. It is an oval double entrenchment with a high bank to the inside, and a graff outwardly of a considerable depth. Before the western entrance is a half-moon with two apertures for greater security, as there is also a proper outlet at the east end. In the innermost part there seem to have been some material buildings of strength and account; many foundations with broken tiles, bricks, mortar, and rubbish being now to be found. And in the year 1743, the wood that grew on it being cut down, there was dug up an entire stone window frame of the fashion (according to the information given me) of those in ancient church buildings. Its round form and double fortifications would induce one to think it is a work of the Saxons. And its situation near the grand road to London might design it as a check to the inroads and devastations of the Danes, who more than once made their excursions this way.

“From thence (perhaps) it might get the name of Danesborough, Densborough, now shortened to Desborough, as being a fortress on a hill designed to put a stop to the ravages of that barbarous people. For I can hardly allow myself to imagine that it got its name from them as being their work.

“King Edward the elder about 915 lodged a considerable time at Buckingham, which he fortified to prevent the incursions of the Danes. And might not this small fortress be erected about the same time, and on the same consideration? for we find that the Danes took their route in 1009 through the Chiltern country to Oxford, which they plundered and burnt, and we have other accounts of their ravaging these parts.

“This very place might be designed as a folkmete, *i.e.*, a place for the meeting of the folk or people, to consult about their mutual defence in a more than ordinary danger; upon the apprehension of the invasion of an enemy; whose approach being discovered from the watch-mount in it, they gave the alarm to the next folkmete (in the nature of beacons): which notice they gave to others, till the whole country was advised to be upon their guard against the common enemy. It is observable that there are two considerable hills at no great distance from this, to which on such occasions notice might be given at once, *viz.*: one above High Wycombe,* and the other that on which West Wycombe church is built.

“It was from this original design we may presume, that this place upon the setting out of Hundreds was continued to be the place of the meeting of the people. And the district over which its power did extend was called the Hundred.

* * * * *

“Finding one of the great masters of our English antiquities, Mr. Camden, calling the surviving wife of Ina, king of the West Saxons, by the name of Desburga, I was for some time pleased with the thought that that lady might either give her name to, or receive it from, this our place of Desborough, especially as she was a woman of martial and adventurous spirit. But upon search it appears that the whole stream of our historians call her Ethelburga, Edelburh (though doubtless Mr. Camden had sufficient authority for calling her Desburga.)

“But after all that has been said, what if I should suppose this Desborough or Disborough to have been a fortified place of residence of the ancient Britons? Caesar’s well-known and often quoted description of such places might countenance us in it. *‘Oppidum Britanni vocant quum sylvas impeditas vallo atque fossâ munierunt, quo incursionis hostium vitandæ causâ convenire consueverunt.’* † As will also the account of this matter by Strabo—‘Woods are their cities; for, having cut down the trees, they inclose a great circle, and therein erect cots for themselves, and temporary stalls for their cattle. The entrenchment here exactly answers these descriptions.’”

Browne Willis considered Fingest to be the Dilehurst in Domesday which is described as lying in Burnham

* “Castle Hill.” The Castle which stood here was probably erected in the reign of Stephen.

† De bello Gallico, lib. v., c. 21.

Hundred, and held by Gilbert Bishop of Liseux of Odo Bishop of Baieux.*

The suffix to the name of Dilehurst must have influenced Willis in his derivation of the word, but, although Dilehurst was in one of the three Chiltern Hundreds, it was, as we have seen, in that of Burnham. There is very little doubt that Lyson is right in saying that Fingest does not appear in Domesday. It probably formed the north part of Hambleden parish. Hambleden, at the time of the survey, belonged to Queen Matilda.

Dilehurst, according to the survey, had one mill "worth three shillings," but there does not appear to have been any mill in Fingest parish. Langley prefers the account of Delafield that this manor remained part of the ancient demesnes of Edward the Confessor, and was not again alienated until the reign of Henry I. "In the grants of the monastery of St. Albans mention is made of a place called Tinghurst with the Church and all the tithes belonging to it which was given to the Abbey of St. Albans, and the benefaction confirmed by King Henry I., but in what year is not ascertained."‡ The accession of this manor to the Abbey appears to have been made during the presidency of Richard, the 15th Abbot.

The Lords of the Manor of Fingest are divided into four sections—1st, the Kings of England as ancient demesne, according to Delafield; 2ndly, the Abbots of St. Albans; 3rdly, the Bishops of Lincoln, and 4thly, the Prebends of Dutting Court in the Cathedral of Wells.† Delafield says that the first hint of this being

* Gilbert Bishop of Liseux holds Dilherst of the bishop of Baieux for which he is taxed at ten hides of land. There is land for ten ploughs. There are two in demesne and a third might be added. There are 14 villeins with one bordar who have six plough lands and another plough might be added. There is one servant and a mill worth three shillings two carucates of pasture land and wood for pannage of 300 hogs. For all dues it is worth six pounds when he received it 40 shillings. In King Edward the Confessors time six pounds when Earl Lewin held this Manor in demesne.

‡ Langley's History of "The Hundred of Desborough," p. 211, quoting Salm: Hert: 62. Stevens An: Ab. Vol. I., p. 243.

† See Lysons Buckinghamshire, p.p. 562-563.

a Royal Demesne was a presentment of homage to a Court there held in 18 Elizabeth, 1576.

In his Chapter on Fingest Langley frankly acknowledges that the greater part of his account of the parish was taken from the Delafield manuscripts. The object of this paper is to call attention to special points in the manuscripts which may not be referred to, or may be but briefly referred to by Langley.

One of the memorable events in the history of this parish was the disagreement between Bishop Chesney and the Abbot of St. Albans, Robert de Gorham, which is fully recorded. This disagreement is given by Matthew Paris (*Ang. His.*, p. 82). To briefly refer to the circumstances. There had been a meeting at St. Neots, and a composition made and signed between both parties in this dispute, but afterwards dissensions arose between the Bishop and the Abbot, when the Abbot himself applied to Pope Alexander and obtained a confirmation of the former privileges to the Monastery "by dint of many presents and more promises." The Bishop, on the other hand, applied to the King (Henry II.), who referred to Robert De Bello Monte, Earl of Leicester and Chief Justice of England, to determine the matter with his assessors, the Bishop of Chichester and others. This reference was not successful, and the King took the matter into his own hands. The Bishop of Lincoln then produced the Pope's brief, referring the decision to the Bishops of Chichester and Norwich, and the Abbot was summoned to appear in London to answer the claim of the Bishop. The King put a stop to this proceeding, and at a Council held at the Chapel of St. Catherine, at Westminster, in the presence of the King, the question was considered but without any agreement. The King at last undertook to be the mediator, and after a private conference with both the Bishop and Abbot, he came to the following decision:— That on the convent surrendering to the Bishop land of the value of £10 per annum the Bishop should relinquish for ever his claim over the Abbey and 15 parishes in its territory, and should exclude them from his diocese. Both parties assented to this decision, and the Abbot, having offered a Church of that value which was refused, afterwards proposed the Manor and Church of Tynhurst, which the Bishop accepted, and the proper

instrument was prepared and confirmed by the King and Thomas Becket, Arch. of Canterbury (the agreement was dated in March, 1163), and finally by the Bull of Pope, Alex. III., A.D. 1163, so that Delafield says: "In this year (1163) 9 Henry II. (though Matthew Paris hath by mistake the 12th) and the 16th of the Pontificate of Bishop Chesney our parish underwent a new change, passing into the personal possession of the Bishops of Lincoln, who from that time made it one of their places of usual residence." This information is of importance, because any reference to the residence of the Bishops of Lincoln at Fingest is of interest, so little having been handed down to us of their presence here, though the site of the palace near to the Church is still to be traced.

With reference to this Episcopal residence, in alluding to Bishop Hugh Wallys or de Welles Delafield writes: "I find him personally residing at Fingest, where the Bishops all along had without question a Palace, and that he there exercised some part of his episcopal functions, for in 1226 II. Henry III., Martin De Ramsey, Abbot of Peterborough, being newly elected, received the blessing of Hugh Wallys, Bishop of Lincoln on the Feast of S. John the Evangelist at his Palace of Tinghurst." (Stevens, An. Abb., Vol. I., 478.)

Browne Willis records of this Bishop that "he rendered himself infamous by adhering to the seditious barons and the Dauphin of France against the King for which being excommunicated by the Pope he was forced to buy it off at a 1000 marks."*

In his list of Bishops, Delafield speaks of Richard De Gravesend, who was consecrated on the 3rd November, 1258, as having in 1267 consecrated and confirmed the Abbot of Osney upon S. Vincent the Martyr's Day at his palace of Tingehurst. Delafield quaintly writes with regard to the name of this Prelate: "If I should say that some adjoining to the parish and still bearing the name of Gravesend might be possibly so called from this Bishop it were more easy to deny and dispute than to disprove it." We believe that he refers here to land and not to persons in the parish bearing the name of Gravesend, although this is not clear.

* Willis's Cathedrals—Lincoln, p. 50.

Of all the Bishops who made their residence in this parish, Bishop Burwash or Burghersh is the one whose individuality will not easily be lost to memory on account of the curious story with which his name is connected. Neither does Browne Willis nor Langley give this story as set out in Delafield's manuscript. It therefore appears of sufficient interest to present a verbatim quotation from Delafield. He says: "Of all Bishops of Lincoln who had relation to this place this Bishop hath rendered this our parish of Fingest, according to the account of the monks who have written history of this domain, most remarkable. The posts that our Bishop held were of great influence and authority as well as profit which could intoxicate though they could not satisfy the mind for as riches and years increased upon him he grew excessive covetous and encroaching."

It should be mentioned that he was a Prebendary of York, consecrated Bishop of Lincoln at Boulogne July 20th, 1320, and was Chancellor of England in the reign of Edward III.

As an instance of his covetousness, Delafield continues: "He is said to have enclosed a great part of the common of this Manor of Thinghurst or Tynghurst now Fingest in prejudice of the right of his neighbours to make a park and kept it from them to the day of his death. (Walsing, His. Ang., p. 150). Although he persisted in this injustice to the last day of his life, yet, if report says true, is was said of him that he could not lie quiet in his grave, for he is said to appear to one of his gentlemen in the dress or accoutrements of a keeper or ranger with a green jerkin on his back, a bugle horn hanging at his side, and the bow and arrows in his hand, and to declare that he was doomed to this penance until his encroachments should be deparked by being again thrown into the common, and desired the good offices of the Canons of Lincoln to see it effected. This message from their late dead Bishop the gentleman delivered (as it is said), and the Canons were so wise as to give credit to the report, or at least to pretend that they did so, and deputed one of their number, William Batchelor by name, to see it effected, which, being done, the Bishop (as I think) was at rest, and never more appeared. The account that Dr. Fuller

gives of the matter is this: 'Bishop Burwash by mere might against all right and reason took in the land of many poor people without making also the least reparation therewith to compleate his park at Tinghurst. These wronged persons though seeing their own bread beef and mutton turned into the Bishop's venison durst not contest with him who was Chancellor of England, though neither law nor equity in this his action only they loaded him with curses and execrations. This Bishop Burwash is said after his death to have appeared to one of his former familiar friends appparelled like a forester all in green with his bow and quiver and arrows and his bugle horn hanging by his side. To him he complained that for his injury done by him to the poor whilst alive he was now doomed to the penance to be the park keeper of that place which he so wrongly had enclosed and therefore desired him to repair to the Canons of Lincoln and in his name to request them that they would take order that all hedges being cut down and ditches filled up all might be reduced to their property and the poor men be restored to their inheritance.' It is added that one 'W. Batchelor was employed by the Canons aforesaid to see the premises performed which was done accordingly.' (Fuller's Ch. His., Century 15, Bk. III., pp. 106, 7.) This is the story as Fuller, in his quaint and humorous manner, relates it—at the same time calls it justly a gravefoolery. There is probably a great deal of truth mixed with falsehood in this romantic story. It is very likely that the Bishop did take some part of the common into his park. The traces of the mounds in high banks and deep and wide ditches being, after more than 400 years (as I observed in a late parochial procession or perambulation), even at this day frequently to be seen and called even now the Park ditch and some parts within the enclosure being still common. And this being a reach of power to the prejudice of right, one Batchelor, a member of Lincoln Cathedral, might probably be deputed to see it deparked, there being a gentleman of that name one of the Prebendaries from 1327 to 1341, which agrees very well with the time (Willis, Cat. Lin., p. 172), but the apparition of the Bishop, the bow and arrow, the green jacket, and the horn (it is a wonder that the

quarter staff was left out), have all the air of fiction, and seem to be an improvement of the monks on the circumstances of the facts, and one of them as true as the other. Such fictions, as one said, 'keep up the best park of popery, viz., purgatory, whereby their fairest game and greatest gain is preserved.' (Fuller's Worth: Sussex, p. 103.)"

It is said of this Bishop that he was a great oppressor of King Edward II., and an instrument of his deposition. He died at Ghent in December, 1340, and his body was brought over to England and buried in his own Cathedral, where he had founded a chantry to pray for his soul. His tomb was at the east end of the Church under a sumptuous monument, with his effigy lying on it in his pontificals and coat of arms, the latter being a *lion rampant*, though in some accounts his arms are said to be *gules*, a *cross argent* between *four lions rampant or*.* According to Fuller, he was descended of a noble family in Sussex.

Delafield's description of the ancient road below the Desborough earth works, as it appears in the manuscript, is of value as a topographical record. "The way going below hath from great antiquity been part of the high road from Middlesex into Oxfordshire though it hath been of later times somewhat altered, for as I conceive the old way passed from West Wycombe to Chorley Farm, where is a bank visible for some part of it, so along Port Lane by Cross Lane pond through the middle of Radnage and thence by Bennet End comes into that which is called Colliers Lane, and so down the hill into the Oxfordshire valley. On the left-hand side of this Colliers Lane in the estate of Mr. John Mason at the distance of about a furlong are two hillocks or tumuli of moderate size and height in a field called Banky Burrow field † which might possibly be occasioned by the battle hereabouts fought by some forces that passed the road below, and they might possibly be Danish though not placed just by the high road. . . ."

And here may be added a brief sketch of Delafield's life, which we are enabled, though imperfectly, to

* See Willis Cathedrals—Lincoln, p. 52.

† Qy. Barrowfield.

shape through the courteous assistance of the Rev. W. Gilbert Edwards, Rector of Great Haseley, who refers to Britton and Brayley's "Beauties of England and Wales," Vol. XII., Part 2, the Rev. Henry Joscelyn, Rector of Fingest, and the Rev. C. C. Luxmore, Vicar of Great Milton. The sources of information, however, for a connected narrative are unfortunately extremely scanty. Thomas Delafield was born at Haseley on December 21st, 1690, of humble parents, and was sent to the village Free School among the poor children of the parish. There was then no house appropriated to the Master, and the boys were taught in the church. In play hours Delafield improved himself in reading by conning the inscriptions on the tombs, it is said that by his attention being thus given to these memorials of the dead the boy acquired a taste which originated his love for antiquities. Subsequently he went to school under the Rev. John Hinton, Vicar of Great Milton, where he made a record of the successive Vicars and Curates of that parish. The list of Vicars commences in 1550. Delafield observes of the Milton Register "that it was on the whole the most accurate he had ever seen." Upon the vacancy of the Mastership of Haseley School in 1717 he made application for the post, but though supported it is said by all the respectable persons in the parish, he was rejected by the Trustees. In consequence of this failure, at the request of the principal inhabitants of Haseley, he opened a private school there, and by the encouragement of influential persons in the neighbourhood and the favour of Richard Carter, Esq., of Haseley, the venture so far proved a success that he was enabled to support himself and his family in comparative comfort. Delafield, it should be mentioned, never had the advantages of a University education. In the year 1724 he, at the recommendation of Mr. Carter, obtained orders from the Bishop of Lincoln, and was presented to the living of Great Milton. In the beginning of the year 1725 he removed to the free school of Stokenchurch. At Lady Day, 1726, he entered on the curacy of Fingest, and on the August following he resigned the living of Milton in favour of the Rev. Richard Cornish, A.B., on the death of whom, and of his brother, successive Vicars of the

parish, he was in 1737 again presented to the living, and in 1749 resigned it a second time in favour of the Rev. William Pease. Delafield resided at Stokenchurch School during his second incumbency of Milton, and continued there until his death. In the accounts of Delafield handed down to us it is conceded that he possessed invincible industry, but was unfortunate in having selected subjects of limited interest. Besides his manuscript works on Bucks, it appears that he wrote voluminously on the history of Haseley.* He also wrote a history of Milton in one volume. These histories are also in manuscript, and are, we are informed, deposited in the Bodleian among the Gough collection. Delafield was buried in Haseley churchyard. A flat gravestone marks his last resting-place, the inscription on which is now almost illegible from age. The present Rector is anxious to perpetuate his memory, and it would be a graceful act if, through the members of this Society, a sufficient sum could be raised to renew the tomb of one who, although with restricted opportunities, was a true and laborious archæologist.

The present Rector of Fingest writes of Delafield that "he has left more records of the parish of Fingest, of which he was only curate-in-charge, than any Rector before his time or since." He prepared a list of the successive rectors from Will. de Benningworth, collated A.D. 1217, to Francis Edmonds, A.M., collated in 1713, who was rector of Fingest in Delafield's time, and also of Tingewick, and left benefactions to both of these parishes. His incumbency of Fingest was of great length, for the next Rector, Philip Bearcroft, was not collated till the 28th May, 1759. No doubt Langley made use of Delafield's list of the Rectors for his History.

The following memorandum occurs in the Fingest Registers:—

"That on Holy Thursday 1753 there was a procession or parochial perambulation round the bounds of this parish of Fingest.

"Thomas Delafield, Curate."

* He compiled a history of Haseley, which, if printed, would make about one quarto volume. His MSS. came into the possession of a Mr. Cooper, of Henley, and were purchased by Mr. Gough.

Here is another entry by Delafield:

“Registrum Ecclesiæ parochialis de Fingerst Com:
Bucks. 1746.

“Dr. John Potter, A.Bp. of Canterbury.

“Dr. John Thomas, Bp. of Lincoln.

“Mr. Francis Edmonds, Rect: of Fingest.

“Thos. Delafield, Curate.”

Then follow some unfinished lines of Latin verse in Delafield's hand, the fragments of a prayer to God for the rectors and ministers. Incomplete as they are—in fact, too fragmentary to be reproduced—they disclose much religious fervour on the part of the writer. At the head of the registry of christenings Delafield has written in Greek v. 19, c 28 of St. Matthew's Gospel, and before that of marriages v. 4, c. 13 of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Considering the disadvantages under which Delafield laboured, the references to his life and to his literary efforts, though but scanty, will leave upon us the impress of one who devoted his energies to his clerical office, to education, and to the history of the parish of his birth, and the parishes he served, a devotion all the more to be admired when we reflect that he lived, to quote a recent utterance of a learned prelate, under the influence of the “awful coldness of the mid-eighteenth century.”

JOHN PARKER.