

Old Records of Monks Risborough

PART 2

BY

F. G. PARSONS, D.Sc., F.S.A.

AUTHOR OF

"HISTORY OF ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL"

Published by

The Rector and Church Council of St. Dunstan's Church

In aid of the Church Restoration Fund

OLD RECORDS OF MONKS RISBOROUGH

PART II.

THE former number of the Old Records of Monks Risborough tried to make it clear that their hope, after doing what they could for St. Dunstan's Church in its need, was to exchange the local knowledge already collected for some of that stored up in the memories of the older inhabitants—in other words to pool what we know of the history and topography of the Ecclesiastical Parish—and I am very grateful for the many criticisms and scattered fragments of folklore which have reached me, to be worked into my tale as it grows. Some of these deal with matter already written and point out mistakes which I hope there is still time to correct, an advantage gained by publishing what one has to say in parts with an interval between; while others, which may or may not have been new to me, though in any case just as welcome, will be dealt with in their proper places when they are reached.

Dealing first with the mistakes, I hasten to admit that the position of the Cross on the map facing p. 16 of Record No. 1 is not accurate, since the top of it should point due east and its face should look directly west. Then, by a slip, Mill Lane, running north from Monks Risborough past the "Halt" has, in the same map, been labelled "Well Lane."

These are the sins of commission which hitherto have found me out; but what a mass of things which I did not know have come to light! Firstly, I was advised to study the Parish Registers and account books, which go back to 1587, for old names of places which are now seldom used, and I was astonished at the number of these which were new to me but which, luckily, were still identifiable from various sources.

Few of us, for instance, hear the name of Burton spoken now, but in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was that part of Monks Risborough village bordering on Mill Lane and must have been the site of many humble cottages, the names of the dwellers in which may still be found in the Church register. How it came to be called Burton I do not know, but a suggestion which, because it is not an assertion, is at least harmless, is that the neighbourhood of Place Farm, which surely must have been the site of the raised and moated "Burgh" or manor house, may account for it. Then again, that part of Mill Lane near the Turnpike Road was known until living memory as "The Bar" and the change of one letter makes "Barton" into "Burton," though this suggestion does not appeal to me so much because Burton is mentioned centuries before the Bar appears.

It must have struck many people as an unusual thing that the Village Church should have been built so far away from the road as is St. Dunstan's, and that the little that is left of the Village Green has to be reached by turning up a narrow road at the side of "The Nag's Head." The Green lay on the south-east side of the Church, Burton on the north-east, and the two sites are joined by Burton Road running parallel to the Turnpike Road which is the present omnibus route. Again a suggestion arises that this Burton Road may have been the original

Risborough-Kimble track which long ago has been straightened and shifted farther away from the Church and Village Green just as it has been shifted, farther still, quite lately. (See Map 4, facing p. 33.)

Several people came to church from Tiffenham, which was a group of cottages on the road leading from the Lower Icknield Way to Owlswick; some came from Cutmill, still the name of a field on the left-hand side of Mill Lane just beyond the railway and separated by only one field from that containing what is left of the watermill where, we are told, the millward used to cheat the serfs and tenants of the prior of Canterbury. Talking of mills reminds me that in Domesday Book (A.D. 1085) none are mentioned in Monks Risborough, but that at the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540 there were said to have been two. The remains of one of these are in Mill Lane to-day, but I do not think that the site of the other is known. There is, however, on the farther side of the Lower Icknield Way and on the right-hand side of the road known as Tiffenham Lane running thence to Owlswick, a Windmill Field the name of which suggests the former presence of a windmill there.

One more place where a few cottages must have been was "Ye Ham," the field beyond the railway halt where Council houses are now springing up. Ye Ham suggests part of the home farm or demesne which the monks originally farmed directly by means of their bailiff instead of letting it to serfs or tenants. One cannot be too clear, however, that there is no evidence that any monks ever lived in Risborough at all, for it was only one of some thirty manors which the great monastery of Christ Church at Canterbury owned. In an old Parish map I see that "The Ham" is labelled "Ham Butts"¹ which suggests that it was the place where archery was practised compulsorily every Sunday after church. This custom lasted in every parish until Tudor days, though by that time the bow had lost its importance in battle.

The Church Registers, at first sight so dull and monotonous, give many a hint of what went on in the parish since Elizabethan days, and it was at the suggestion of the Rector that I turned to them. Among other things one finds with surprise that between A.D. 1600 and 1700 the population of the parish had decreased considerably. The Plague may have had something to do with this, but I fancy that more was due to arable land being turned into pasture, which only needed a few shepherds where many farm labourers once gained a livelihood. And so we find numbers of large families disappearing completely, just leaving their old homes for places where more corn was grown. Plague would have reduced but not blotted out whole families like this; and, besides, there is no record of increased mortality during the Plague years 1665-6.

About 1700 was the time when the "Woollen Burial Act" was in force, in order to stimulate the use of wool, and an affidavit had to be made before every burial that the deceased was shrouded in flannel. The Quakers at this time buried their dead at Meadle, but they had to send their certificates to St. Dunstan's, and thus we may learn something of their names and numbers. They still sleep peacefully in their old graveyard behind the "Three Horseshoes" at Meadle, but it is now an orchard and pigs have levelled all the graves.

We learn too from these registers that, at the end of the seventeenth century, Whiteleaf was written, and presumably called, Whitecliff; Askett, Arcot; Owlswick, Oulswick; Cadsden, Catsden and Green Hayley, Green Highland.

¹ See Map 4, facing p. 33.

In the eighteenth century the population of the parish increased considerably, and we find the names of many new families in the register.

Another source of information which the publication of these Records has opened is the number of deeds of old houses which I have been shown, or which it has been promised that I shall see ; indeed were I to publish all that is coming to hand I should need a very large volume to hold it.

Turning now from the new knowledge gained from the suggestions of those who honoured me by reading the first number of these Records, it will be remembered that the bounds of the present Ecclesiastical Parish of Monks Risborough were contrasted with the boundaries of an estate granted to a Saxon lady, in a Charter dated A.D. 903, when Edward the Elder was king of southern England. The site of a burial place of heathen Saxons was also discussed, but the question of how these people came there was left to be considered in this record.

In these random talks we are free from the fetters by which the orthodox historian is bound, and are not obliged to keep events in any definite sequence, unless from time to time we wish to do so. We were free, for instance, to jump back from A.D. 1936 to 903 because definite information about the same places was there on each occasion.

To me it is a great relief to feel that I am not obliged to begin the story of Monks Risborough at the beginning and to go on to the end because, in doing so, much of the human and local interest would be lost. If, for instance, these Records had not begun at the end, with a description of the parish as it is to-day, the Saxon Charter of A.D. 903 would have lost much of its meaning ; but when places now well known are found to have been talked of more than a thousand years ago their interest becomes much greater.

And thus, some interest in Saxon Risborough having, as I hope, been raised, our thoughts turn naturally to the doings of our Old English forefathers in the little bit of this our England in which we live.

About Ethelfrith, the giver of the estate in 903, I have been able to find out very little, save that he must have been a nobleman of some importance for his name often occurs as a witness in other Charters, and I find that the fire in which he lost the title deeds of East Risborough also destroyed those of another estate which he owned at Wringtone in Somersct. For this he obtained a new Charter in A.D. 904.

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to discover whether his daughter Ethelgyth made East Risborough her home or whether she farmed it under a reeve and received an income from it. One would like to think of her as the "lady bountiful" of the neighbourhood, riding over the ground on which we live, for "Lady" is our modern form of the Old English "Hlæfdige" (the giver of bread) ; but one cannot be sure that she really lived here, because it is so likely that the estate came to her as a wedding gift, and her husband may have been a wealthy lord whose other property lay in some distant part of the country.

In any case it seems almost certain that the "Ham" (home or burgh), whether she lived in it or not, must have been near a stream and that the Church was built later close to the Ham with the village nestling round it. Granting this, what place could be more likely than that of the space between the Church and the present Place Farm for the timber homestead surrounded by its moat and stockade and raised upon a low mound called the "burgh" ? (See Map 4, facing p. 33).

It is said in the "Place Names of Bucks" that Risborough takes its name from the scrub (A. S. *Hris*) covered hills near it, though many towns whose names end in the same way have no hills near them, and in that case the borough, burgh or bury with which they end must have been derived from the burgh or mound on which the original homestead was raised. If, however, the name of our village is taken from the neighbouring Chilterns it is worth noting that they are spoken of not as beech, but as scrub-covered; for it is one of several hints that the beech woods were not always there; indeed, in earlier times still it is held that oak woods clothed these hills where the soil was deep enough, and even to-day small oak woods, such as Oaken Grove at Hampden, may be found.

There are some who think that "*Hris*" meant the scrub beech, though it must be unusual to find this without the adult trees as well. The whole subject is a difficult one because in Old English there were two names for brushwood—"hris" and "scrob"—one of which appears in *Hrisanburge* and the other in *Scrobbes burh* (*Shrewsbury*).

We know nothing definite about East Risborough between 903 and 995 when Ethelred the Redeless or ill advised was king. At that time the Danes had taken Canterbury and demanded ninety pounds of unalloyed silver and two hundred mancuses of pure gold in order to save St. Saviour's Church (Canterbury Cathedral) from being burnt. The poor Archbishop, Siric, not having the money to give them, sent to his friend, Æscwin, Bishop of Dorchester on Thame, asking him to lend the amount on the security of Risborough (*Riscnburga*) which was now the property of Christ Church Monastery. Æscwin at once sent the money and the Cathedral was saved. All this we learn from a Saxon Charter printed in Kemble's *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici*, Vol. III, p. 286, and witnessed by twenty-three bishops, aldermen, abbots and thanes, including the king himself. Its object was to confirm the transfer of Monks Risborough, as we are now entitled to call it, to Æscwin.

On the next page of the *Codex* there is another Charter of the same year (A.D. 995) confirming the return of Risborough to Canterbury by Bishop Æscwin, not on repayment of the money, but as a free gift: "For the fear of the Lord and the hope of eternal salvation."

Later, when Edward the Confessor was on the throne, it was thought advisable that he should confirm all the gifts to Canterbury and he therefore wills: "That all the lands which in his father's (Ethelred's) day belonged to Christ Church (St. Saviour's) should remain; were it King's gift, were it Bishop's, were it Earl's, were it Thane's." Unfortunately this document is undated, but we know that the Confessor reigned from A.D. 1042 to A.D. 1066.

Looking over these Charters, it is quite clear that at some time between 903 and 995 East Risborough had been given to the Monastery of Christ Church and not to the See of Canterbury or to the Archbishop himself, a point about which we shall be glad to be quite clear later. Then we notice that, since the two Charters of Ethelred are witnessed by exactly the same twenty-three people, it is likely that they were signed at the same time. Lastly, we cannot help being impressed by the businesslike methods of the Danes; for, though they were just as ready to burn and slay as the ancestors of the Saxons had been, they were generally willing to compound for a cash payment, and it seems that quite often they kept their bargain.

The Old English and the Danes were alike in being fearless sailors and brave

soldiers, but they differed in that the former, when the fighting was done, settled down as farmers and sportsmen while the latter became traders, and thus we find the towns increasing in size under the Danish kings.

Another change which happened during the blank years between 903 and 995, during which Ethelgyth's estate of East Risborough must have been given to the Monastery of Christ Church at Canterbury and thus earned its name of Monks Risborough, is that the Shire of Buckingham came into being. In the Charter of 903 the estate was described as being in Mercia, but soon after this Edward the Elder divided the Midlands, which he was wresting from the Danes, into shires (*A. S.* *sciran*, to divide) or arcas for military concentration on special centres. Buckingham was chosen as the headquarters of our shire, I suppose because it was nearer the fighting line, though Aylesbury has always been the larger and more central town. At all events our address in 903 was East Risborough, Mercia, but in 995 it had become Monks Risborough, Buckinghamshire.

Could we go back to one of those ninety-two years between A.D. 903 and A.D. 995 and stand once more upon the top of Whitelcaf Hill, how like and yet how unlike would be our outlook. The first thing to strike us would be the absence of hedges in the vale below. Here and there a thick blackthorn hedge, protecting the cultivated areas from the deer of the woodland beyond is seen, but the chequered pattern of the modern countryside we look for in vain. Still, as we become accustomed to the change, the general view seems familiar enough.

The Bledlow Wainhill and the distant Oxfordshire hills have the contours we know so well; below us is the Upper Icknield Way, a broad, unmade track along which a flock of sheep or, it may be, a lumbering ox waggon is slowly passing. We know just where to look for East Risborough and see the timbered homestead with its barn and gallows and the timber or wattle and daub huts of cotters and serfs. The Church, I think, we do not see because of its dedication to Dunstan who was not canonised until after 988, and once dedicated, it is quite unusual for a church to change its Patron Saint.

The mention of St. Dunstan takes our minds off the view for a while and opens this new line of thought: Why was the Church dedicated to him, and was there any link between this Buckinghamshire estate and distant Canterbury which moved its owner to give it to the monks of Christ Church there?

Dunstan became Archbishop of Canterbury in A.D. 961, and one wonders whether during his rule he had ever been brought into touch with this part of the Chilterns and by his influence prompted the gift. The suggestion may be worth thinking over since it may point to the time at which the gift was made.

It is a curious thing that in Dugdale's "Monasticon," that great work in six ponderous tomes, which tells us so much of the details of all the English Monasteries, the dates at which all the manors of the great Benedictine Convent of Christ Church, Canterbury were received, are stated except those of Monks Risborough and Halton. Perhaps some day a chance allusion may be found which will clear up the matter, but at present all we can say is that it was some time between 903 and 995.

Still, surmise is allowable, even desirable, so long as it has fairly reasonable support and does not wittingly suppress contrary evidence and, if this be granted, I am inclined to suggest that the transfer of East Risborough to Canterbury was nearer 995 than 903 and that Dunstan may have been, perhaps indirectly, responsible. So long as Edgar the Peaceful was king and Dunstan his minister

and adviser, England was a happy land, and the quiet possession of estates assured; but after his death in 975 came the short reign of Edward the Martyr, and then the disastrous one of Ethelred the Redeless, when the Danes again overran the country and the fatal mistake of trying to buy them off with bribes was resorted to. The recurring collection of Danegeld must have weighed heavily on large landowners and have made them think whether it would not be better to give their landed property to the Church of which Dunstan was still the ruler until his death in 988. Thus they might earn a lessened taxation in this world and future reward in the world to come.

Returning once more to the view from Whiteleaf Hill, we would have noticed two great open fields, one under cultivation, the other lying fallow for a year, while here and there are special pasture or Lammas meadows where hay is grown and the milch kine graze. It will be remembered that the question of Green Hailey has been discussed as perhaps one of these hay leas but, if it were, it was far away from the cultivated area and could hardly have been the only one belonging to the estate. Here and there, too, the clearing of a *sócman* (a freeman who owns or rents a holding of his own) may be seen, and I fancy that in this way some of the older farms may have arisen.

Askett Farm, perhaps, may have been one of these, and no doubt owes its name to its situation as the East Cot at the extreme east of the parish. It was still spelt Ascot in 1830 and probably owed its site to the crossing of two, or possibly three, roads which will be dealt with later. I do not know whether we could hope to see a little hamlet here in the tenth century, because the earliest known mention of it is in the thirteenth, but I think that the Farm was there.

In spite of the clearings, widening each year, the greater part of our view of the Vale from Whiteleaf Hill in the tenth century is woodland with many glades where the swineherd watches his pigs, as Gurth did in "Ivanhoe"; not actual forest, I think, because the real forest country near the Oxfordshire boundary is specially described as the Forest of Bernewood in old charters.

We have been talking hitherto of our neighbourhood in the tenth century, and are reminded by the "Heathen Burial Place," beside the Icknield Way, that Saxons had been living and dying here before the coming of Christianity to these parts in the seventh or early eighth century. If I am right in believing that the site of this burial place is the "Ragpit" near Whiteleaf, on the Chiltern side of the Upper Icknield Way, and I would remind the reader once more that three separate lines of evidence—the Ordnance Survey, the Charter of A.D. 903 and Sheehan's account in his History of Bucks—all support one another in confirming this belief, we may feel certain that the Icknield Way formed the south-eastern boundary of Ethelgyth's estate.

In any case it is clear enough that when work had to be found for the hungry and workless men of the parish, about A.D. 1030, some of them were given the task of surfacing that part of the Upper Icknield Way which runs between the Askett-Missenden Road and Whiteleaf Village, for, as we who live here know, the "Way" has not even yet been surfaced beyond these points at either end. Can we doubt, therefore, that they dug the chalk and flints, known as "rag," from some place along the line of their work or that the present ragpit is the place from which they dug them? There is no other ragpit near here where human remains have been found, nor indeed, is there any other ragpit at all along this part of the "Way" until Kimble Parish is reached. The Inclosure

Act Award, published in 1830, shows us that there was no ragpit before that time, for its site is marked as two acres of land held by the parish.

The discovery of Saxons buried here by the side of the Icknield Way is only one more in the long line of these people's burial places, from Dunstable to Bledlow, along the escarpment which our forerunners knew as "Chilternes Eavcs." Most of these burial sites have little to show in the way of personal ornaments and are technically known as "poorly furnished"; some of them, however, show signs of cremation as well as of inhumation, and suggest that the bones were those of Saxons who had only lately arrived in this country and had not altogether foregone their old custom of burning the dead, nor yet had learnt to provide them with the wherewithal to make a brave show in another world.

Nowadays the belief is gaining ground that many, perhaps most, of the English who reached the central parts of the island came by way of the Wash and, if the lately published Survey Map of "England during the Dark Ages" is looked at, it will be noticed that the Icknield Way may now be traced to the southern promontory of the mouth of the Wash where the Roman fort of Brancaster was placed. This may have been the landing place for wave after wave of immigrants from the Frisian coast who at once struck the "Way" and journeyed along it until they found a fertile spot which appealed to them as a settling ground. This seems a more plausible theory than that they rowed up the Great and Little Ouse and then deserted their boats. It must be remembered that the Frisians were great boat builders and may have done a steady trade in ferrying settlers across and then going back for more. Some of the newcomers settled in the fertile Vale of Aylesbury and were known as "Chilternsætan" or Chiltern Settlers while others pushed on as far even as the Upper Thames.

It is not necessary to think of them as coming in one great army; more likely a few shiploads came at one time and, as the news of the fertile country they had found travelled back to North Germany and Friesland, others followed them, only too willing to exchange the barren, sandy soil of their old home for the rich pasturage of the new.

Undoubtedly they brought or sent for their womenfolk, otherwise they would have intermarried with the Britons, and the English tongue would soon have died out; moreover, those anatomists who have examined large series of Saxon bones know that there is little difference between the two sexes in number.

There is every reason to look upon our Whiteleaf bones as those of typical Chiltern Settlers and to believe that the oldest of them came here in the latter half of the fifth century or early in the sixth, while the later ones are those of Saxons born nearby; but Monks Risborough must have seen something of another, later incursion in A.D. 571, only this time it was that of West Saxons led by Cutha or Cuthwulf, a brother of Ccawlin, king of Wessex.

In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle there is a connected and mutually supporting series of entries dealing with the activities of these people. The first is dated A.D. 568 and tells us how Ccawlin and Cutha fought with Ethelbert, somewhere in Surrey, and drove him back into his own kingdom of Kent, thus stopping a westerly advance of the Kentishmen into the West Saxon area. The second, in 571, shows us Cutha who has reached Bedford, probably on the Ouse, though the Place Name authorities say that it could not have been Bedford, turning south-west and taking or coming to terms with four towns in the Vale, Lygeanbirg (Limbery near Luton), Aylesbury, Benson and Eynsham, at which place he died.

The third entry shows how Ceawlin, in 573, having made his easterly flank secure against the Kentishmen and Chiltern Settlers, was free to begin his meditated advance into the West Country in which he took the towns of Bath and Gloucester and added greatly to the Kingdom of Wessex. The interest of this to our story of Monks Risborough is that, in taking Limbery, Aylesbury and Benson, Cuthwulf must have used the Upper or Lower Icknield Way and thus have passed through our parish.

But what, it may be asked, became of the Britons whom the Chiltern Settlers drove out of the Vale when they came? There is good reason to believe that they retired into the country on the other side of the Chilterns and for a considerable time inhabited unmolested the area now covered by the counties of Hertfordshire and Middlesex. It does not seem that the hysterical account which Gildas gives need be taken at its face value, and that the English pursued and slaughtered the Britons for the mere pleasure of doing so. For long periods during the conquest of Britain the two people agreed upon certain limits separating them and it was not until increasing population made more land necessary that the English farmers became soldiers once more and started a fresh advance.

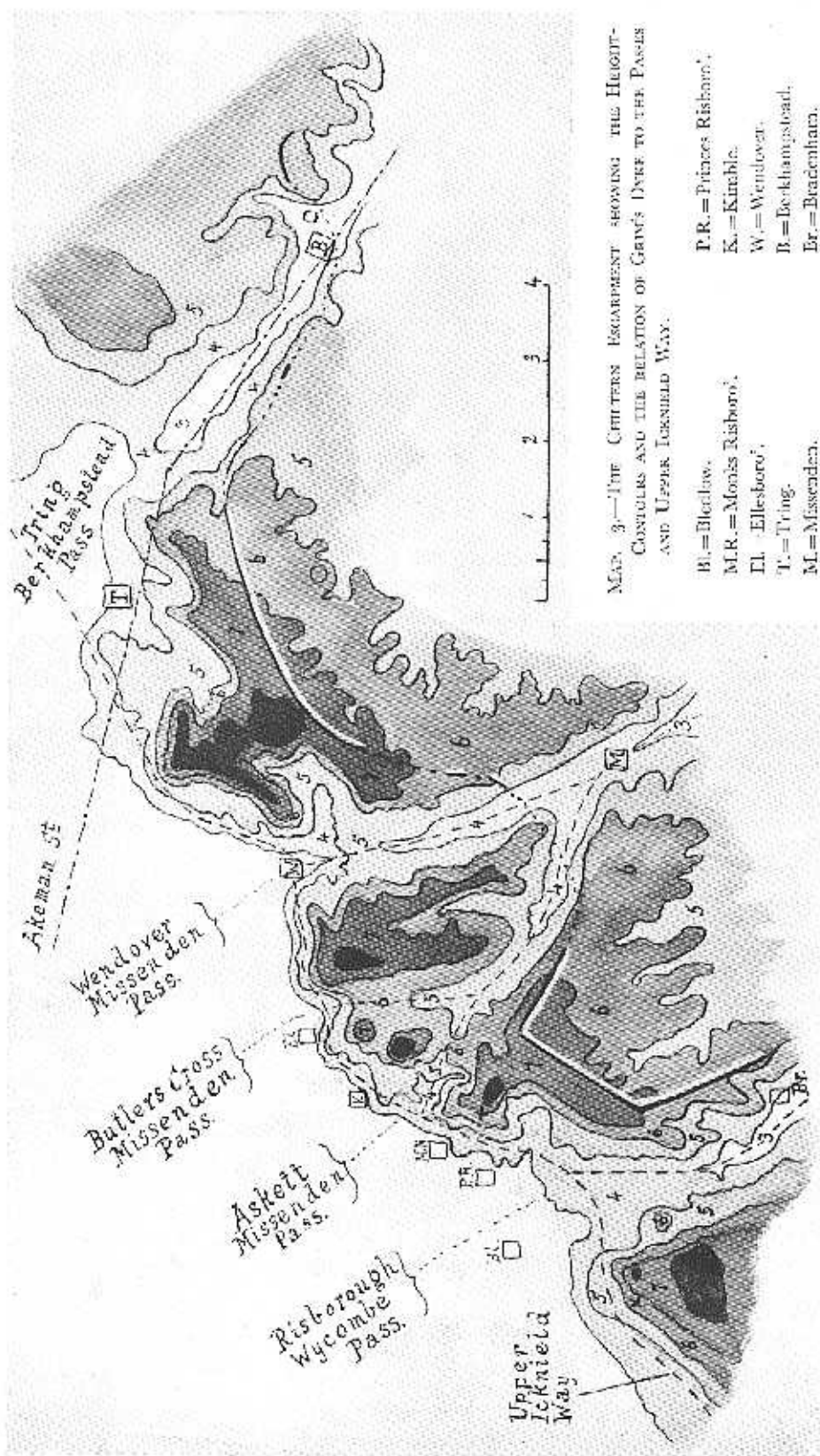
Such a limit, no doubt, was the crest of the Chilterns, beyond which the English had no wish to go, since they had all they wanted in the Vale, but their increasing flocks and herds must have been a great temptation to the Britons to do some cattle lifting from time to time, and this leads me without a break to the consideration of another relic of the past in our parish.

GRIM'S DYKE

In beating the parish bounds, with which these records began, it was noticed that Grim's Dyke enters Monks Risborough at Lily Bottom Farm and, after a course of less than half a mile, leaves it at Redland End. We cannot, of course, learn all about it from so small a sample, but a good deal is possible. Map 1, in the first Record, shows a road running from the Pink and Lily Inn to Hampden, which cuts across the Dyke where the road from Redland End comes in on the left, and this is quite a good place to study it since many of the trees have been cut down lately, indeed it is quite possible to walk along it as far as Lily Bottom Farm.

The Dyke is not very deep now, for wind, rain and frost have been at work on it for more than a thousand years and exposed chalk does not resist these influences very well. Still it is quite clear that the soil was thrown up on to the Vale side of the ditch and then, as now, the rule held that the bank was on the owner's home side.

Then we notice that the Dyke does not lie on the highest points of the Chiltern escarpment but a little below it on the side away from the Vale, thus leaving the skyline in the hands of the vale dwellers and giving them the advantage of overlooking instead of being overlooked by their neighbours on the other side of the hills. Of course it may be objected to this that on hills covered by thick beech woods the advantage of the sky line was not very evident, but I am inclined to regard it as another little piece of cumulative evidence that in olden days the beech woods were not there; indeed, when one thinks about it, the labour of cutting a deep, fairly straight ditch, forty feet wide by thirty feet deep, through



MAP. 3.—THE CHILTERN ESCARPMENT SHOWING THE HEIGHT-CONTOURS AND THE RELATION OF GAIM'S DYKE TO THE FENS AND UPPER ICKNIELD WAY.

- B. = Bloxlow.
- M.R. = Monks Risborough.
- El. = Ellesborough.
- T. = Tring.
- M. = Missenden.
- P.R. = Princes Risborough.
- K. = Kirable.
- W. = Wendover.
- B. = Beckhamsstead.
- Er. = Bradenham.

a thick beech wood for fifteen miles would have been almost impossible for a small and scattered population.

Something more about the object of the Dyke may be learnt by plotting its course on a height contour map of the Chilterns and then surveying its whole length. This I have attempted in the accompanying plan (Map 3) where the deeper shades show the higher parts and the numbers indicate the hundred feet levels. We now see that it has a definite relation to the passes through the hills, and is so arranged as to keep them in the hands of the dwellers in the Vale. Starting at Bradenham, it runs northwards along the east flank of the Wycombe Pass for a mile and a half and then at Lacey Green bends to the north-east for nearly two miles as the pass widens out to form its funnel-shaped opening into the Vale. It is in this part of its course that Monks Risborough parish is traversed, and at the north end of Hampden Park the Dyke turns suddenly at a right angle to form a great semicircular loop with its convexity to the south-east; the map suggests that its object was to include three of the minor passes through the hills, all of which converge upon Great Missenden.

The first of these is the Askett-Missenden Pass through which the Killington track originally led (see Pt. I, p. 6); the second is the Butlers Cross-Missenden Pass, and the third is the easier and more important Wendover-Missenden Pass and, since these three passes join before reaching Missenden, one big loop of the Dyke was enough to keep them all in the hands of the vale dwellers. When the loop ends on the farther side of the Wendover-Missenden Pass the Dyke continues its original north-easterly course until it nearly reaches the great Tring-Berkhampstead Pass where it turns east-south-east and flanks the south side of this gap; finally its line crosses the pass and it ends north of Berkhampstead town.

Taking all these points into consideration there can be little doubt that the Dyke was made by or for the dwellers in the Vale to mark off their area of influence from that of the people who lived on the other side of the Chilterns but that, at the same time, its breadth and depth show that it was a defence as well as a limit. It is unlikely that its whole length could ever have been held by troops, but it is quite possible that sentinels from the Vale were posted at intervals along the skyline from which they could give notice of any attempt on the part of the hill dwellers to bridge or fill up a passage for a hostile incursion. As to the passes, since these were all in the hands of the vale people they could not well be used for an attack upon them.

The probability that, after the coming of the Chiltern Settlers in the fifth century, the Saxons and Britons were neighbours for a good many years has already been noticed, and there are few archaeologists nowadays who do not regard Grim's Dyke as a piece of Saxon work. It could hardly have been made much later than the sixth century, by or against the Danes for instance, without being noticed in some historical record, while no useful object in making it during Roman or pre-Roman times suggests itself, for before the Claudian invasion it would, had it been there, have run through the middle of the Catuvellaunian kingdom for no apparent reason. Then, again, its proportions are those of other dykes known to have been Saxon.

The possibility of Cuthwulf and his West Saxons making the Chiltern Grim's Dyke has been suggested by Mr. W. M. Hughes in "Antiquity" (Vol. V, p. 291), and in connection with this it will be remembered that three years passed between A.D. 568, when Cuthwulf and Ceawlin defeated Ethelbert of Kent at Wibbandune,

somewhere in Surrey, and 571, when Cuthwulf was fighting the Britons at Bedcanford, probably somewhere upon the Great Ouse. Three years seems a long time to have taken in travelling from Surrey to Bedfordshire, and the possibility of his having spent this time in cutting Grim's Dyke naturally suggests itself. To me it seems a possibility rather than a probability since he was a West Saxon and would hardly have spent his men's time in making a protective limit for the Chiltern Settlers' south-eastern frontier.

After the four towns were secured in 571 Cuthwulf died, and his followers presumably returned to their homes in order to take their part in the great westerly drive which Ccawlin undertook in 573. It seems hardly likely that they would have gone back leaderless to the Chilterns from Lynsham in order to cut a dyke which the Chiltern Settlers were quite able to do for themselves, if they had not already done it.

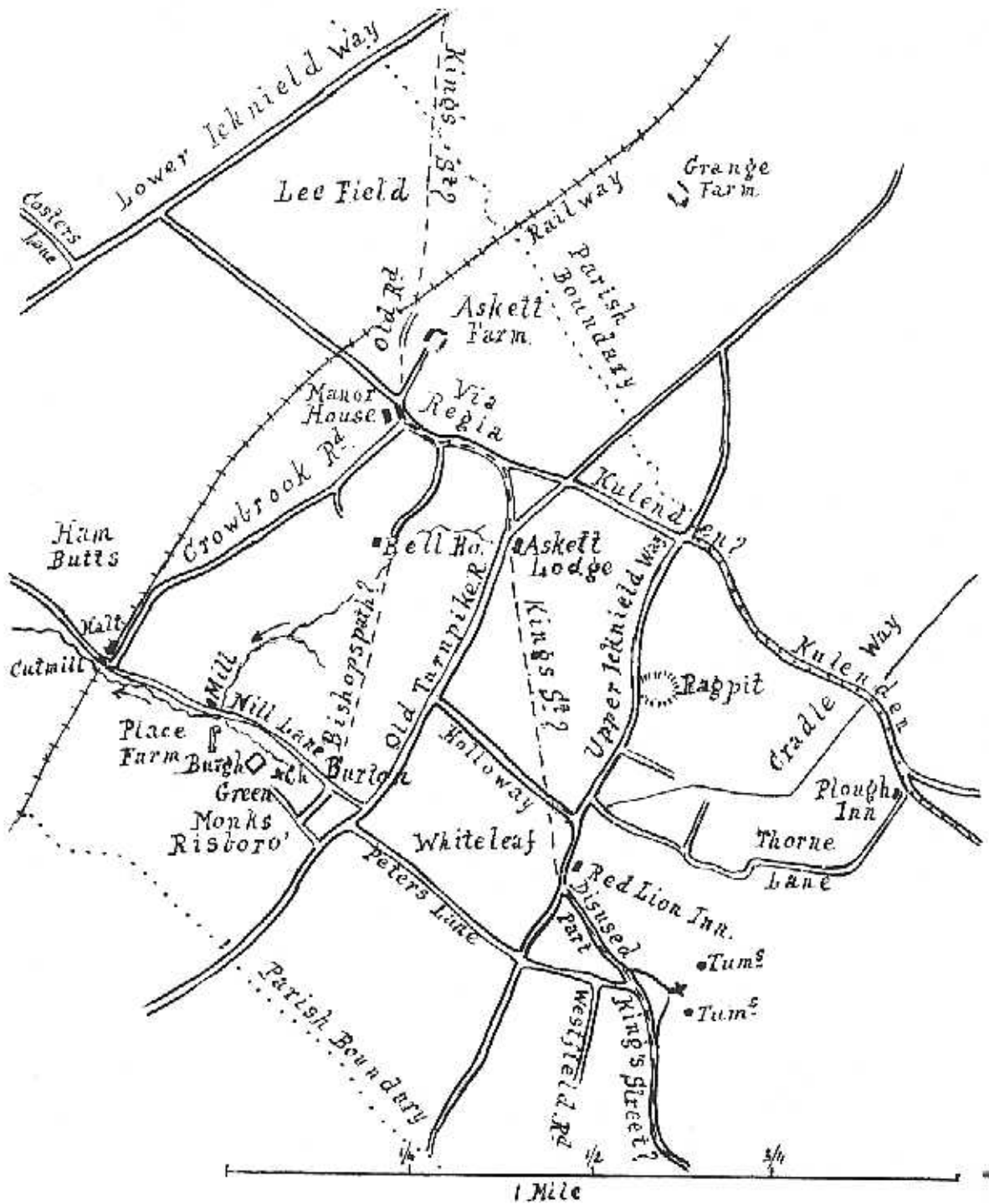
Returning once more to our own parish, it may be asked why Grim's Dyke is not mentioned in the Charter of A.D. 903, when the much less important "Old Dyke" on the Vale side of the Icknield Way is noticed. I expect the answer to this is that it would have been noticed had Ethelgyth's estate corresponded with the whole of the modern parish, but that the absence of any reference to it is one more indication that her territory did not include the tail-like extension into the hills.

Why the Dyke should have been named after Grim is not very clear; we know that it is not the only dyke so named, for there are three or four others called after the same person, while Grime's Graves probably have the same ancestry. In old English the word "grim" meant pretty much what it means now—something dire or horrible—and after the Saxons had been converted to Christianity it seems to have been used to personify the devil. We know how fond our ancestors were of ascribing anything they did not understand to the enemy of mankind, as in the case of "The Devil's Punch Bowl" and "The Devil's Kitchen," and it is quite possible that this is how the Dyke was named.

On the other hand, it is sometimes thought that Grim was the name under which the half-converted Saxons cloaked a lingering regard for their old god Woden, just as they did for Thunor or Thor, under the name of Wayland the Smith.

One more point about Grim's Dyke and I shall have told all I know that has any bearing on Monks Risborough; it is that, except for the big loop already noticed, it ran parallel to and above some road for the greater part of its course. At first there was the Wycombe Gap trackway which joined the Upper Icknield Way south of Princes Risborough, then the Icknield Way itself except for the four or five miles where the Dyke makes its loop; and, finally, the Roman Akeman Street which ran, from Bath to Verulam, through the Tring-Berkhampstead Pass. All these roads were in the hands of the English and must have been handy for concentrating troops on any threatened spot. The Britons, on the other hand, had no such road system on their side of the Dyke.

In the twelfth century one of the privileges of the citizens of London was to hunt as far as the Chilterns on the west and as far as "The Waters of Cray" on the east, and, though it may be no more than a coincidence, it is an interesting one that both these limits are marked by dykes—the Chiltern Grim's Dyke on the west and the "Fastendic" at Bexley in Kent, through which place runs the river Cray, on the east. Moreover, in both cases the foss is on the London side



MAP. 4.—PLAN OF THE KING'S STREET.

and the rampart away from it. I do not mean to hint that the dykes were expressly made in order to limit the Londoners' hunting, but it is quite possible that they were used as convenient landmarks within which a freeman of London might hunt in his own right but beyond which he became a trespasser in pursuit of game. He might, for instance, hunt in our parish from Bryant's Bottom to Redland End, but no farther.

THE KING'S STREET (CYNGES STRAET)

This, as I believe, important road in mediæval days has already been referred to once or twice, and now that we are talking of Saxon East Risborough seems a suitable time to consider it. I bring the subject forward humbly enough, for I fear that I have not yet succeeded in persuading any antiquarian expert that such a road ever existed; yet the evidence seems so clear to me that some of my fellow dwellers in these parts, who know the lie of the land as well as, perhaps better than, I do, may think it worth while, in the light of their local knowledge, to check the facts upon which I rest my belief.

We have already seen in the first number of these Records that the road is mentioned in the Charter of A.D. 903 as one of Ethelgyth's boundaries, and I must remind the reader that this Charter has been overlooked or ignored in most cases by writers on Monks Risborough and its antiquities. Perhaps this is because of the regrettable mistake of Mr. Birch, who, in his book on Saxon Charters, described East Risborough as Princes, instead of Monks Risborough.

In any case I have, in Part 1, p. 16, of these Records, given my reasons for believing that the King's Street of the Charter is the disused hollow way lying behind Whiteleaf House, which, at the foot of Whiteleaf Cross, directly continues the road coming down the hill from Green Hailey. It would reach, and evidently once did reach, the Upper Icknield Way, but Whiteleaf Cottage has interfered with it.

With this knowledge I was content until I found in the "Records of Bucks" (Vol. XI, No. 6, p. 343) a Latin Charter dated 1461 mentioning the "Via Regia" in Askett and stating that it continued thence to Aylesbury. The owner of Askett Farm, Mr. Lavington, showed me a row of seven elm trees which bordered traces of this old road and had very nearly, though not quite, the same direction as that of the road behind Whiteleaf House. He told me, too, and I have verified this, that some of the older country folk still speak of the present road from Askett to Meadle, which crosses the railway by a bridge, as the "New Road," and I left him with the impression that it was the railway which had caused the old road to be replaced by the new. This I found later was a mistake, for the Inclosure Award Map, published in 1830, shows the present road and no old road, though of course there was no railway then.

Now the question arises are we justified in joining up these two pieces of road which are separated by about a mile—which have the same name and both lead nearly in the same direction? Is this evidence good enough as it stands or is there anything against it which should be considered?

The objections which I have heard are the following: First, that the only old roads entitled to the name of "Street" were those made and stratified by the Romans; and the Icknield Way is quoted, which, in spite of the Ordnance Survey Maps, is always regarded as pre-Roman. To this I would reply that

sometimes, in charters, roads which were little more than lanes are loosely spoken of as streets and an example will be found in the Askett Charter above, where the "Green Strete" is mentioned.

The second objection, which rather neutralises the first, is that King's Street was a term used for any well-known thoroughfare, and that, therefore, the fact that these two sections had the same name does not necessarily mean that they were parts of the same road. The answer to this is that the two sections have so nearly the same direction, allowing for the curve which the road is making near Whiteleaf, that they ought to meet but that, if they do not, we shall have to account for two main roads, both called King's Street, running through the parish nearly side by side.

A third objection is that, even if the missing connection between the two sections were supplied, no one would have been so foolish as to use a road which ran up the steep hillside to Green Hailey when the much easier Wycombe Pass was so near. The answer to this is that, by using the road through Whiteleaf, Green Hailey, Redland End, Bryant's Bottom and Hughenden to High Wycombe—all part of the King's Street—instead of following the road to West Wycombe, through the Pass, nearly two miles were saved by the traveller between Aylesbury and High Wycombe and this I submit would have ensured the King's Street plenty of traffic in spite of the stiff climb to Green Hailey, a climb compensated by a long gradient down to Wycombe when the crest of the escarpment had been reached. Those who live here know the advantage of this route when walking or cycling to Wycombe.

Lately a fourth objection to the existence of the road has appeared in "Antiquity" (March 1937), where Mr. Lindsay Scott points out that no road could have run round the foot of Whiteleaf Hill by the Cross. This is perfectly true if he will add the words: "without cutting and levelling." That the Saxons, before A.D. 903, were quite able to undertake the cutting which exists to-day is shown by the fact that Offa cut his dyke—a far heavier piece of work—in the eighth century.

Thus, I think, there is reasonable evidence for my belief that the Whiteleaf and Askett parts of the King's Street were originally united, though it is more difficult to say exactly where the missing part ran, or when and why it has disappeared. Its course through Askett Village will be dealt with later, in connection with some old records of that place, but we may sum up its direction in Monks Risborough by saying that it enters the parish, on its way from Wycombe, as the road from Bryant's Bottom and runs through Redland End and Green Hailey, then down the steep hill to the foot of the Cross; straight on, as the old disused road in the grounds of Whiteleaf House to the Upper Icknield Way, across the "Way" to Askett Lodge site where it crossed the present course of the Risborough-Kimble road and probably persists as the west side of the triangle of roads at Askett. After this it forms the village main road until the turning to Askett Farm is reached where it is marked by the row of elm trees. Then it probably ran obliquely across the great Lee Field to the hedge which marks the present Kimble boundary and thus reached and crossed the Lower Icknield Way at the point where the Old Hackney Lane leaves it on its way towards Marsh and eventually Aylesbury, though after it leaves our boundary I must hand over its study to the Kimble topographers.

There can be little doubt, I think, that it was a Saxon road, because it was

there in A.D. 903, while Wycombe and Aylesbury only became important centres in Saxon days. Probably its connection with other roads determined the sites of the hamlets of Whiteleaf and Askett.

I must remind those who are not satisfied with my plea for King's Street that they are left with the task of finding a more reasonable explanation for the old road behind Whiteleaf House and the Old Road at Askett and will also have to show to what the Charters of A.D. 903 and 1461 referred when they spoke of the King's Street.

ASKETT IN BYEGONE DAYS

In the muniment room of the museum at Aylesbury are three charters dealing with Askett, which have been published by Mr. G. H. Fowler in the "Records of Buckinghamshire" (Vol. XI, No. 6, p. 343). Mr. Fowler tells us that he has no local knowledge of the place, but his knowledge of mediæval Latin charters is evidently very great and his explanatory remarks make these doubly interesting to us who happen to have the local knowledge which he lacks.

The first of these deeds is undated—before A.D. 1290 private charters usually were—and it guarantees the holder against interference by Jews as well as Christians: this again helps us because in 1290 Edward I expelled all Jews from England; but Mr. Fowler is able to date it more closely still because Alexander de Hampden witnessed it as sheriff of Bucks, a post he held from 1249 to 1252 and again from 1259 to 1264.

In this Charter James de Ulucswike (Owlswick) grants two and a half acres and one perch of arable land, in the Vill of Risborough, to John, the priest of that parish. At first I hoped that this might have been the famous John Shorne who afterwards worked wonderful miracles at North Marston, but I fear that it cannot be because Shorne was ordained by Archbishop Peckham in 1289 on a title to St. Dunstan's Church (Lipscomb's "History of Bucks," Vol. II, p. 419). He is usually mentioned as the first recorded Rector of Monks Risborough, but the present Charter shows us that an earlier John the Priest held the living at some time between 1249 and 1264.

The two-and-a-half acres and one perch were in four separate holdings, and it is a difficult though interesting task to try to find out where they lay.

The first acre, we are told: "Lies below the road called Akeman Street and extends to the spring called Hathewise Well and lies between the Green Way (elsewhere called Greene Streete) and the land which belonged to Robert the carpenter of Medhulle (Meadle)." Of course, as Mr. Fowler says, this Akeman Street could not have been the well-known Roman road which runs through the pass between Tring and Berkhamstead, and I feel sure that he is right in thinking that in the thirteenth century one or other of the Icknield Ways was known locally as Akeman Street, for the popular belief that the title of "Street" was only used for a paved Roman Road is by no means always true.

It could hardly have been the Upper Way because that seems purposely to have run well above the level of the springs, but near the Lower Way is a well-known spring, from which the Meadle Brook rises, which would fit very well because it lies about a furlong from the Meadle side of the road, and an acre strip in those days was a furlong (220 yards) by 33 yards wide. I do not know any other spring which lies more nearly at the required distance from a main

road than this, but hitherto I have been unable to find anyone who recognises Hathewise or Haweis as the name of a spring.

The second acre : "Lies towards the Horestone, between the land which belonged to Richard of the Lithe (at Bledlow) and Akeman Street and reaches on the East to Kimble." I had no difficulty in finding several country people who knew the "Lorestone" but none seemed to recognise the "Horestone," and had it not been for Mr. Jaques of Kimble, I should have assumed that when French was the legal language in this country Horestone had been written "L'Horestone." He, however, tells me that there are still two fields in Kimble Parish where Smoky Row joins the Lower Icknield Way, one of which is the Horestone and the other the Lorestone, and so I am now inclined to think that the latter is a contraction for Lower Horestone.

This knowledge of the position of the Horestone clears up all doubt that the Akeman Street of the Charter was certainly the Lower Icknield Way. Probably in the thirteenth century the Horestone was really a stone which marked the parish boundary.

The half-acre and the perch : "Lie above Pebworth, the former reaching from a wood called Inwood to a road known as Bishopspath." Unfortunately, the memory of these names no longer endures, but we are told that the perch runs from the Bishopspath to the way called Kulendene. In the latter I think that I recognise the Killington track which we followed through the woods, after passing the Plough Inn at Lower Cadsden in beating the parish bounds (see Part I, p. 6) and probably the road from Askett to Cadsden was also, in those days, called Kulendene or Killingden.

Bishopspath suggests a way which the Bishop used in his visitation of the Churches of Princes Risborough, Monks Risborough and Kimble; and the present Risborough-Kimble Road naturally comes into one's mind; I cannot help thinking, however, that this road is of later date and replaced an older communication between Monks Risborough and Askett, for it will be noticed that the real village of Askett, where the old houses are, is set well back from the present main road, as is the case at Monks Risborough.

When, however, we reach the Three Crowns Inn, which, though rebuilt, is no doubt upon the site of the old time village ale house, a blind road called Askett Lane on the opposite side of the way is seen, along which are some of the oldest cottages in the village, charming relics of the sixteenth century with their half-timbered walls and thatched roofs, and it seems to me that like, perhaps, Burton Road in Monks Risborough, it is the original track between the two villages and that both parts persisted after the new road was made because houses, which in both cases are very old, had been built along them.

If this be the Bishopspath we are seeking, and I think it must be, the perch which ran between it and Kulenden was probably in the angle between these two roads just before they crossed, since it was only $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet long. If only we could localise Pebworth and Inwood most of our difficulties would vanish.

The second of these Askett Charters deals with the same plots of land as does the former one, but in A.D. 1291 we learn that they are now held in fee by Hugh, the Clerk, from the Archbishop of Canterbury. We learn too that Hugh lives with his sister Dulcie, in a messuage in Askett which he holds, not of the Archbishop, but of the prior of Christ Church at Canterbury. The deed was signed at Monks Risborough and settled all the property upon Dulcie; it was witnessed

by William Queynterel and Henry de la Ponde (of the pound), members of families which were found in the parish for several hundred years.

The third Charter bears the date of 1461 and brings us to the time of Edward the Fourth. It is 170 years since Hugh and Dulcie lived in the messuage in Askett, which is now described as owning a garden and belonging to a man named Robert Sloo. It has the cottage of Thomas Eyre on the west and the Via Regia or King's Street on the north; and this, I think, is most important, for it is now clear that the King's Street, which it is said "Leads on to Aylesbury," was then, and is now, the main village street of Askett, and that the messuage about which we are talking lay upon the left side of it as one walks towards Meadle.

In 1461 the scattered plots of land have the same distinctive marks as in the two former leases save that the second acre abuts on a field known as "Kymbelfelde," which bears out the suggestion that the "Hloestone" was close to the Kimble boundary. The half-acre which John the Priest and Hugh the Clerk owned near Pebworth has in 1461 grown into an acre and the foresaid perch has become a rood (roda). I confess that I am surprised at this great expansion and wonder whether the scribe could not have meant a rod or perch, instead of a rood, by the Latin "roda."

Robert Sloo, in this third Charter, confirmed the land to William Alkoner and John Goodman, and it is probable that by 1461 these second names had become definite surnames though it is evident that one of William's ancestors had been the Ale Conner or Ale Taster, while Goodman was originally an epithet which denoted a man of some little importance, below the rank of Gentleman. The witnesses of the two earlier Charters of the thirteenth century had not yet earned hereditary surnames. Henry Mason was then really a mason; while in the first one we find Bartholomeo de Ponde, and in the second, Henry de la Ponde, which does not necessarily imply that they were related—only that they both lived near, or had charge of, the village pound.

The reason why these three strips of land were so far apart was that they were, and had to be, in separate divisions of the great common fields of the three-field system, and thus each grew wheat or rye in one year, oats or barley the next, and in the third year lay fallow. Had the tenant or freeholder owned all his land in only one of these fields he would have had no crop at all every third year.

We cannot hope, to-day, to see any of the houses of 1461 in Askett, though I am told that when the "Manor House" was repaired some years ago one of its walls was found to have been of wattle and daub, like the section still preserved in the "King's Head" in Aylesbury, and might easily have dated back to the time of Henry VIII. Its deeds, which I have seen, reach back to 1599 and, though it is called the Manor House, this could have been but a courtesy title, since Askett was only a hamlet of the manor of Monks Risborough. It lies on the opposite side of the way to Askett Farm and is now divided into three tenements though it is still a good example of the home of an Elizabethan gentleman of the standing of Master Page or Ford in Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor." Its garden is surrounded by the remains of a moat, outside which were several closes. On the roadside, in front of it, grew, in Elizabethan days, a yew (spelt "ewe") tree.

What I take to be the "Bishopspath" must have passed, on its way towards Monks Risborough, just in front of a house which can be traced back farther,

though it may not necessarily be older, than the Manor House. It is known as the Bell House and has in its time been a farm-house and an hotel. There is a tradition that it was built as a rest-house for the monks of Canterbury, though I have not been fortunate enough to see any confirmation of the rumour, but, like the Manor House, it is a good example of a Tudor gentleman's homestead.

While talking of Askett and its roads seems a fitting time to gather up all the names given to different parts of the long road which led from Askett, through the pass in the Chilterns, to Missenden. We have seen in the Askett Charters good reason to believe that its whole length into the hills was called Kulenden or Kilinden, and we know that in the woods it is still called the Killington or Killinden Track. Where the Upper Icknield Way crosses, it was known a century or two ago as "Gallows Cross" and thence to Cadsden was, and sometimes still is, called Gallows Lane, and that part between Askett and the cross-roads, where the gallows stood, is often called "Long Fortin" (Fortune?) by the country folk, though I have never seen it in writing. Finally, an alternative name, still to be seen in the Inclosure Award Map, for the level part near the cross roads is Sandpit Bottom because of an outcrop of greensand there.

THE ICKNIELD WAYS

Few pages, hitherto, have been free from some reference to one or other of these roads, yet still there is something to say; for, though Monks Risborough holds less than a mile of the Upper, and only a mile and a half of the Lower Way, most of the active life of the parish lies between them, and yet their average distance apart is hardly more than a mile. Above the Upper Way are the wooded hills where one may walk all day, scarcely meeting a soul, and below the Lower Way are green fields and farm-houses as yet little disturbed by the presence of the suburban builder. Cut out the area between the two Ways and more—probably a good deal more—than three-quarters of Monks Risborough's population will vanish, and so, too, will much of its historic interest.

It is an inspiring thing, when one understands it, to walk along the Upper Icknield Way and to realise that it is probably the oldest road in England, a road which was here for hundreds of years before London was thought of, and, in spite of the Ordnance Survey label, was there long before the Romans came, for it is as unlike their straight, well-paved roads as it can be.

Let us walk along the short stretch of it which is ours and notice that where it enters the parish, about forty paces from the place where it crosses the Missenden Road, it is still, though it will not be for long, a country lane, but from the cross-roads to the farther end of Whiteleaf village it is metalled with chalk dug from the "Ragpit" in 1830 and now surfaced with tarmac. After crossing Peter's Lane, until the Princes Risborough boundary is reached, it becomes a country lane once more where one may pick blackberries in autumn.

It is never straight for more than a few hundred yards, but clings to the side of the hills, except when it is crossing the mouth of one of the passes, and never in Monks Risborough parish does it cross any streamlet. The gradients, considering that it is a hillside road, are easy, and it is only at Whiteleaf House that it reaches the 500 feet level, while nowhere does it go much below 450 feet. Trace its whole course on a map of the Chilterns and it will be noticed that, apart from being fringed with villas, our portion is quite a typical mile of the

many which the "Way" covers in its long course, and that from it may be gathered the main objects which its choosers, rather than makers, had in their minds.

It may be that the choice of this hill-foot road marked an epoch in locomotion as great as the coming of the motor-car in our own day; for until then travellers had used the ridgeways or hill-top tracks which were ill-adapted to wheeled traffic, and it is a not unreasonable suggestion that, when chariots were introduced into the country, roads suitable for their use were sought.

In the Iron Age period of our history chariot burials begin to be found, and this agrees with the time usually suggested for the origin of the Upper Icknield Way.

The two greatest needs, no doubt, were (1) absence of steep gradients, and (2) avoidance of swampy ground; and these are just the objects at which the Upper Icknield Way aims; for throughout its Chiltern course it always tries to keep between the 400 and 500 feet levels and above 400 feet few, if any, springs come out of the chalk. I admit that at Little Kimble a streamlet is crossed, but originally, tradition says, the "Way" passed across a corner of what is now Chequers Park, above the spring from which the stream rises.

One is often asked why there should be two Icknield Ways. The answer seems simple enough when looked at in the light of wheels and swamps, for we must remember that it is only between Ivinghoe and Leuknor, a distance of some eighteen miles as the crow flies, that the double "Way" exists, and in this part of its course the Upper Way curves a good deal in keeping close to the hills and thus avoiding the springs; but in dry weather, when there were no swamps, several miles were saved by taking a straighter line and in this way it seems the Lower Icknield Way was adopted as an alternative summer route.

In talking of the origin of the Upper Icknield Way I have been careful to use the word "chosen" rather than "made," for there seems to have been very little making of the road—that was an art which had yet to be learnt—and when one track became badly cut up another was used beside it; thus it would be a difficult thing now to decide on the exact line of the earliest Icknield Way. I think, however, that we may safely believe that it was being used, instead of the hill-top trackways, as early as 500 B.C. and that the Lower Way was later than the Upper.

According to the philologists practically nothing is known about the derivation of the word "Icknield." There is no doubt, however, that the Saxons called it "Icenhylte" and that a British tribe, the Iceni, lived in Norfolk where the "Way" begins. The first half of the Saxon name certainly suggests the tribe while the latter half (hylte) is probably derived from the Old English "healdan" (to hold). Unfortunately this rather obvious derivation was not accepted by Professor Haverfield, though even his great authority cannot dim the fact that the road was at one end connected with the Iceni and led to and from their country. It is difficult to see how the Saxons could have meant other than this when they called it Icenhylte; nor is there much doubt that, in spite of all the rules of philology, Icenhylte has become Icknield.

And I, who know so little of the laws which govern the way in which names change as time goes on, may still be unable to see why Icenhylte should not be derived from the Iceni, while others who have studied these laws tell us that, whatever may be its derivation, it certainly had nothing to do with these people

beyond the coincidence that it started in the country which once was theirs. After all it is but the old question which runs through all our attempts to weigh the past : the question of the weight which each piece of evidence bears. In the balance of one man's mind it may be heavy, in that of another light ; and even to the same man its weight may alter from time to time. I suppose that the motto of this moralising is that we should try to keep as open minds as we may.

In later times the country people often spoke of the Icknield Way as the Hackney or Ackney Way, and we have good reason to think, from the Askett Charters already considered, that the Lower Way was called Akeman Street in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries.