

Old Records of
Monks Risborough

PART 3

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PART III.

FOLLOWING the plan adopted in Part 2, I will deal first with the criticisms and corrections of former parts which have reached me.

In the first place I have been assured that 500 B.C. for the origin of the Icknield Way (see Part 2, p. 39) is much too late. It will be noticed that what I wrote was that the "Way" was there in 500 B.C. and what I meant to imply was that it was certainly there in the Iron Age, though how much, if any, earlier I did not know. Since that was written the valuable little books on "Ancient Monuments," by the Rt. Hon. Ormsby Gore, have appeared and some estimate of the age of the "Way" seems possible.

Mr. Ormsby Gore shows that modern research points to the Icknield Way being originally a communication between two great centres of Neolithic occupation; the one around Thetford and Brandon in Norfolk, where the flint mining and implement making were carried on at Grim's Graves; the other round Avebury on the Wiltshire Downs. It is, however, very important not to confuse different cultural periods with different races of men, and I must point out that three separate races in Britain have successively lived in the Neolithic or New Stone Age. Firstly, the descendants of the men of the Palæolithic or Old Stone Age. Secondly, the Mediterranean Race or Long Barrow People and, thirdly, the Beaker or Bronze Age Folk who, when first they came, had no bronze.

Ormsby Gore suggests four thousand years ago, or about 2000 B.C., for the Neolithic period, though probably nearly the end of it, but even this would make the Icknield Way some four thousand years old.

Then I have been told of an old man who remembered clearing away evidences of the Old Road near the line of elms by Askett Farm. This confirms the tradition that the King's Street passed along there (see Map No. 4, Part 2, p. 33).

Another suggestion that has reached me deals with p. 16 of Part 1, where I mentioned the "Burying Field" as the only alternative site to the "Ragpit" for the "Heathen Burial Place" of the charter of 903, in spite of the fact that no burials have been found in this field. The suggestion is that neither the "Burying Field" between Whiteleaf and Princes Risborough, nor "Bury Close" by Chestnut Farm at Monks Risborough owe their names to burials, but that they were land specially held by the Burgh, Bury or Borough on which the original homestead of Monks Risborough was built; in other words, that they were part of the demesne land cultivated by the landlords. It seems a perfectly reasonable alternative, especially as no burials have come to light. I think, too, that it is supported by the old name of "Burton" in Mill Lane, noticed in Part 2, p. 23. Bury Fields are common elsewhere. Then there is the obvious correction of the scale accompanying Map No. 2, on p. 16 of Part 1, which, instead of representing a mile, as it should, only represents half a mile.

It will be noticed that, with this Part, a reproduction of the original charter of A.D. 903 is included. Permission to do this has been kindly granted by the Trustees of the British Museum, and I am grateful to Mr. J. R. Witney of Princes Risborough for his help in gaining this permission. Undoubtedly the reproduction

should have appeared in Part 1, but, in preparing that, I thought that so few of my readers would be interested in old documents that a translation would meet all the needs. I am now assured that this was a mistake and that many people would like to own an exact copy of so early a record of their district. Moreover, since the charter deals with such debatable things as Whiteleaf Cross, Weland's Stock, the King's Street and how far Ethelgyth's property corresponded with the present parish boundary, it was pointed out that a mere translation, even though it has been submitted to experts, does not give those whose views differ from mine a fair opportunity of criticism.

I am glad that what I believe is the first reproduction of this charter should take place here in Monks Risborough, to which place it undoubtedly refers, and I have added a copy of it in modern type, which makes the spacing of the words easier to follow.

Perhaps those who have a copy of Part 1 may care to transfer the reproduction to that part, where the translation has been printed.

THE LATIN CHARTER IN MODERN TYPE

Regnante interperpetuum et mundi monarchiam gubernante altithroni patris sobole qui coelestia simul et terrena moderatur. Illius eternim incarnationis anno DCCCCIII indictione vero sexta. Contigit quod Æthelfritho duci omnes hereditarii libri ignis vastatione combusti perierunt; Tali igitur necessitate cogente prædictus dux rogavit Eadwardum regem. Ætheldredum quoque et Æthelfledam qui tunc principatum et potestatem gentis Merciorum sub prædicto rege tenuerunt. Omnes etiam senatores Merciorum ut ei consentirent et licentiam darent alios libros rescribendi.

Tunc illi unanimitè omnes devota mente consenserunt ut alii ei libri scriberentur eodem modo quo priores scripta erant, In quantum eos memoriter recordari potuisset. Si vero quoslibet recordari minime potuisset tunc ei ista kartula in auxilio et adfirmatione fieret. Ut nullus cum contentiose eum aliis libris affligere valuisset. Nec propinquus nec alienus quamvis aliquis homo aliquem de vetustis libris protulerit quem prius fraudulentur in hora ipsius incendii vel alio quolibet tempore per furtum abstraxisset; Novimus namque quid omnia quae in hoc mundo contingere solent aliquando citius aliquando vero tardius ex memoria mortalium delapsa deveniunt, nisi in scedulis litterarum caracteribus adnotantur, Quapropter in hac kartula innotescere ratum atque gratum satisque commodum duximus de illa videlicet terra aet thaem Easteran Hrisan Byrge cujus quantitas est XXX cassatorum quod cum Athulf Æthelgythe filiae suae cum hereditaria libertate in propriam ac perpetuam donavit hereditatem.

THE SAXON CHARTER IN MODERN TYPE

This synt tha land gemæro. Ærest of tham garan innan tha blacan hegcean. Of thære hegcean nyther innan thone fulan bróc. of tham fulan broce with westan randes æsc thanon on thære ealdan díc with westan tha herde wíc. Of thære díc thinnan wealdan hrige on Eadriccs gemære. And lang Eadriccs gemære thinnan Cynebellinga gemære and lang gemære thon Icenhylte. And lang Icenhylte oth thone hæthenan byrgels. Thanon on Cynges stræt. Up and lang stræte on Welandes stócc. Of thā stocce nyther and lang rah héges est (. . t?) on heg lcaeg. Of thære leage nyther thæt eft on thære garan.

Eadweard. rex. Eathelred. Ethelfæd. (Pleg)mund. arcep. Willferth. ep. Wig-
mund. ep. Werferth. ep. Eadgar. ep. W . . . episcopus. Ccolmund. ep. Æthel-
wcard. Osferth. Ordlaf. co. Ordgar. co. Beorhtulf. co. Ælfwin. Æthelferth. co.
Ælfwold. co. Athelmer. ep. Cynelm. abb. Eadnoth. m. Ælfred. m. Ælfcrc. m.
Eadric. m. Æthelwald. m.

WHITELEAF CROSS

We who live in Monks Risborough and see the Cross every day seldom talk very much about it. We know how greatly it interests visitors, many of whom ask how it came here? and who made it? and why? and when? But we have heard so many different answers to these questions, most of them reasonable enough if they did not contradict one another so flatly, that we have learnt to look upon it as an old friend who wishes the past forgotten; and so, like considerate neighbours, we seldom trouble it with impertinent questions or discuss its private affairs among ourselves.

That this statement is somewhere near the truth is borne out by the fact that of all the scores of people who have written upon the subject, I can only think of two—Mr. Benjamin Chilton, a native of Risborough, and myself, a comparatively modern settler—whose inquisitiveness has overstepped the bounds of good taste. All the rest, after a more or less thorough examination of the Cross and its surroundings, have worked out their solutions of the riddle from a distance.

Whether the eight years which I have spent in Whiteleaf entitles me to write about the Cross as an old neighbour or merely as a visitor I do not feel sure but, in any case, I cannot ignore it in an account of the "Old Records of Monks Risborough." It obviously must be dealt with; and what I would do is to sum up all that is really known about it—a task that will not take very long—and then to follow up some of the clues supplied by history, tradition and natural surroundings. After that perhaps we may be in a better position to appreciate the value of the numerous unsupported suggestions that have been made, suggestions which, because they are unsupported, may or may not be true; though since they so often cancel one another, if one is true the rest probably are not.

I shall try not to lay undue stress upon any piece of evidence or plausible suggestion nor will I knowingly omit any fact which supports or weakens a particular theory; and thus I hope that each reader will have all, or nearly all, that is at present known about the Cross at his disposal and may either choose the explanation of its presence that seems most reasonable to him, or conclude that there is not enough known about it to justify any explanation at present.

We know beyond doubt that the Cross is two hundred years old and are sure that it must be as much older than that as local memory and tradition would then reach. We have good reason to believe that its fellow upon Bledlow Hill was mentioned in 1350, and some think, but have no evidence, that the two crosses were made about the same time. We know too, from definite record, that two hundred years ago, and presumably earlier, the inhabitants called the triangular base of the Cross, the "Globe," and believed that a former association with some of the Oxford Colleges had existed.

Having said this, we have, I fear, said all for which any real record is forthcoming and the rest of the great mass of literature on the subject consists of inference and plausible suggestions only.

But perhaps this atmosphere of mystery surrounding the Cross is its chief attraction, and, were some definite historical account of its origin to come to light, as indeed it may do at any time, the symbol would lose much of its popular interest; and a topic of a good deal of pleasant suggestion, speculation and discussion would thus cease to attract us by its aloofness.

There are many who believe in the great age of the Cross; and the highly competent archaeologists who, in 1909, wrote the article upon it in the "Victorian County History of Buckinghamshire" (Vol. 1, p. 189) thought that it may have been pre-Christian in origin and coeval with other hill figures, such as the "Long Man of Wilmington," the "Giant of Cerne Abbas" and the "White Horse of Uffington." They gave as evidence for this theory the facts that all these signs are placed upon hillsides where they are visible from a great distance, that they are all very large and that they all have a westerly aspect (though this does not apply to the "Long Man of Wilmington").

Other reasons they may have had but these were the ones they considered it necessary to mention. To me, however, these points of correspondence, fairly accurate though they are, seem hardly enough to show that the Cross is contemporary with the admittedly ancient hill signs; for all the characteristics mentioned could have been copied at any time and certainly apply just as well to the "Lion" lately cut upon the hillside at Whipsnade. A point the V.C.H. does not notice, though it helps its argument, is that both Whiteleaf Cross and the "Uffington White Horse" are close to the Icknield Way.

Here I must call attention to a statement, perhaps not intended to be taken too literally, of the V.C.H. that the Cross is "cut into the turf," whereas the cut goes and, so far as we know, always went, a foot or more into the subjacent chalk. I only mention it because it is to the disintegration of this exposed surface of the cut chalk edge that I believe the grotesque proportions of the present triangular base are due. But to this I will return later.

The V.C.H. suggests the possibility of part of the Cross being originally a phallic emblem to which arms have been added later, in order to make it into a Christian symbol. This gave me the idea that perhaps the upright part of it might have had the same significance as the maypole and have been made in Neolithic times; and that later it was called by the Saxons "Weyland's Stock" (already mentioned on p. 13 of Part 1 of "Old Records of Monks Risborough." This I mentioned to Mr. H. J. Massingham who regarded it as a possible and pleasing theory and, in his book,¹ credited me with having originated it. Since then I have been told that the same idea had already been put forward by another writer and I must therefore disclaim all responsibility for it, other than that of pointing out that Weyland's Stock and the upright part, at least, of the Cross seem to have stood on the same spot, by the side of the "King's Street." My only other evidence in support of the suggestion is that there is no mention of the Cross as one of Ethelgyth's landmarks in the charter of A.D. 903, an omission which makes one very doubtful of there having been a complete cross at that time on Whiteleaf Hill.² The

¹ "Through the Wilderness."

² I am accepting the decision of a well-known authority on Anglo-Saxon that the "stoc" of the original charter means a "post" or "upright" of some sort rather than a "place." The accented "stoc" is translated "place" in the Anglo-Saxon dictionary, and the unaccented "stoc" a post or stake. The authority referred to prefers the latter because of the double "c" at the end of the word and regards the accent as an error. In this he is supported by the fact that "stoc" again appears in the charter but without the accent.

suggestion of the V.C.H., however, seems to be that the Cross alters and disguises a pre-existing figure, like those at Wilmington and Cerne Abbas, rather than a mere upright band some twenty feet wide. This would mean that in many places the figure must have taken up more space than the existing Cross; for neither the "Long Man" nor the "Giant" could be altogether covered by a cross of this size. The chalk, therefore, beyond the limits of the head and arms of the Cross should show signs of having been disturbed at an earlier period; for chalk once cut into and broken up never, of course, becomes solid again. Excavators of Saxon burial places sometimes use a pointed steel rod which they strike into the turf and, by the depth to which it penetrates, learn where the subjacent chalk has been disturbed. I have tried this method all round the head and arms of the Cross, hoping to find some evidence of early disturbance, but without any result, and I feel sure that no figure like that of the "Long Man" or the "Giant" could have been converted into the Cross.

Another well-known authority, Sir Flinders Petrie, deals with the possibility of a very early origin for the Cross in "Occasional Papers of the Royal Anthropological Institute" (No. 7, 1926). He speaks of it as a "Greek Cross," which it neither is now nor could have been in earlier times; hence his deductions, founded on this mistaken belief as to its shape, are, though interesting, quite irrelevant; for although Greek crosses were often pre-Christian, Latin crosses on a pedestal or globe were not. He seems to have been unacquainted with the charter of A.D. 903 as well as with the important work of Francis Wise, to which I shall have to refer later.

But although the letterpress of Petrie's monograph does not help very much, the accurate scale drawing which accompanies it is of the greatest value. It shows the Cross, to a scale of 1 in 500, as it was in 1926, and Dr. E. J. Mackay, F.S.A., and I found, in 1935, only slight differences in the size of the triangular base, for which the lapse of nine years would readily account. It is to this figure of Petrie's or to the scale drawing of 1906 in the V.C.H., or to the Cross itself on the hillside that I refer when I point out that the stem is to-day more than half as long again as the head; moreover, there is clear evidence that the triangular base has encroached, and may still further encroach, on the stem and thus shorten it. I admit that when the Cross is looked at from a distance, all four limbs seem to be equal, an optical illusion which I suppose is due to the obliquity of its slope on the hill; but this appearance of a Greek cross is not borne out by measurement.

Sir Arthur Evans, in criticising a paper by Mr. Freshfield at the Society of Antiquaries in 1916, was evidently well aware that he was dealing with a Latin cross and said that crosses of this kind, standing on a triangular or pyramidal base, were unknown before the time of Constantine in the fourth century. Coming from so great an authority, this statement seems conclusive that the Cross, as a cross, was not at Whiteleaf in pre-Christian times; it is not invalidated by the evidence to be noticed later that the now triangular base was once a globe or disc.

We must now pass hurriedly over very many suggestions, unsupported by any evidence, some quite good if each did not cancel out the rest, others not so good, but most of them ingenious and plausible. Whitgils, the reputed father of Heugist, and Whitlaf, a little known king of Mercia, are suggested as founders merely because their names seem to resemble Whiteleaf; and yet Whiteleaf is quite a

modern name which until the seventeenth century was White Cliffe or White Cleft, probably so called after the King's Street was cut through its base.

Then come Alfred the Great, though no cross seems to have been there in 903, after his death; then Edward the Elder, the Danes, Asgar the Staller, the monks of Monks Risborough, though there is no evidence that any monks ever lived here; then Sir John Shorne, the reputed earliest known rector of the parish; then John Hampden and his Parliamentarians and, lastly, the brighter youths of Princes and Monks Risborough. All these have their supporters but all need something more in the way of evidence than their supporters' pious opinions.

Other theories there are, unconnected with any founder's name, which regard the two crosses as signposts to help travellers. On looking at the contour map of the Chilterns on p. 31 of Part 2 of the "Old Records of Monks Risborough," it will be noticed how the crosses stand out on the two hills, like lighthouses, to mark the funnel-shaped opening of the important Risborough-Wycombe Pass and point it out, for miles away in the Vale, to the north and west. That they were useful as beacons seems likely enough, but we have no evidence that this was the purpose for which they were made.

Another suggestion of this kind is that they were signposts to show travellers along the Icknield Way where they should leave the hillside and traverse the mouth of the pass to the opposite Cross-bearing hill; but this theory is marred by the fact that the Bledlow Cross cannot be seen from Whiteleaf Hill.

Among the suggestions that the Cross is nothing more than a signpost is the one already mentioned that it was made by Hampden and his followers. This was suggested by the late Mr. E. G. Payne ("Records of Bucks," Vol. 7, p. 559), and deserves special discussion because it has been so often quoted. It refers to the time of the Civil War, when Charles I had his headquarters at Oxford and Prince Rupert was making cavalry raids in the Vale of Aylesbury against the Parliamentarians who were defending the line of the Chilterns. Payne states that the Whiteleaf Cross was cut by the latter to indicate to their troops in the Vale the chief road to Amersham which was the Parliamentary headquarters; and he says that the Cross was the figure chosen because there were cross-roads at Whiteleaf. The tone of his communication is assertive rather than suggestive and he brings no evidence to support it. He tells us, without giving any authority, that the base of the Cross had four steps, an unusual number for a Calvary. If, as he asserts, it has no religious significance, it is difficult to see why so much ecclesiastical detail should have been added to a signpost on a road which was not the nearest way to Amersham, though it was to Wycombe. Then there is the question of the Bledlow Cross. Did that mark the junction of two cross-roads? Finally it must be remembered that the Roundheads were more likely to destroy than to make religious emblems and would hardly have spent their time in carving a fully-equipped Calvary for use as a military signpost.

The main point, however, to bear in mind is that all these suggestions are modern and that none of them are earlier than 1738. No one in the Middle Ages or in early recent times seems to have described the gigantic cross at Whiteleaf. Leland, Camden, Selden and Drayton (in his "Polyolbion") deal with the neighbourhood without a word for the Cross and, had it not been for the incidental mention of "Henry atte Crouche of Bledlowe" in 1350, Bledlow Cross would have been unmentioned too.

We must not, I think, lay too great stress upon this dearth of historical records;

for it applies equally to some of the other hill signs regarded as ancient. Antiquarian interest before the seventeenth century was rare, and were we to make a list of all the objects of antiquity which Leland might have noticed in the reign of Henry VIII, but did not, it would be a long list indeed.

The Rev. Francis Wise, B.D., Radcliffe Librarian at Oxford, gives the earliest recorded account of Whiteleaf Cross, in a book which he published in 1738, from which the accompanying drawing is reproduced. It is in the form of a letter to Dr. Richard Mead, a physician whom everything interested, and deals with the White Horse at Uffington as well as with the Cross. In it are the measurements of the Cross and its base as they were two hundred years ago; and, by reducing these to the same scale and superimposing them on Petrie's drawing, an idea of how greatly two hundred years of frost and rain have increased the size of the triangular base may be gained.

Thus there can be no possible doubt that, when Wise wrote in 1738, the Cross was a Latin one, as indeed it is to-day, and that the triangular base was about half the size that it reached in 1926. This is shown in his sketch although it has been reduced.

That Wise had never heard any record or tradition as to when or how the Cross was made is clear from his suggesting the unsupported theory that Edward the Elder was responsible for it; but he mentions the fact that, so long as local tradition had endured, it had been the scene of periodical scourings, always accompanied by merry-making. How long we should allow for local tradition to carry is uncertain but a space of three generations is usually agreed upon, and I find that among the older families of Monks Risborough in the present day a memory of events that happened a hundred years ago has been accurately handed down from father to son, and I think that such an impressive event as the cutting of the Cross could not have been entirely forgotten in less than that time.

It seems hardly possible, therefore, that the Cross was made later than about 1640, though as to how much earlier it may have been we have only scattered hints to guide us, unless we believe in the probability of the two crosses having been made about the same time, in which case Whiteleaf Cross, like that at Bledlow, was there in A.D. 1350.

Wise also tells us that the inhabitants in 1738 were in the habit of calling the then certainly triangular base, "the globe," and I think that this statement has hitherto been passed over too lightly. There must have been some definite reason for it, and it seems to suggest that the triangular base, as they then knew it, had been in the days of their forefathers a globe or disc. Hence I feel bound to believe that the base of the Cross did not originally represent a pyramid but a globe; and that we have at Whiteleaf to deal with a recognised variant of the Constantine Cross which Evans dated for us, a variant which became the regal symbol of the cross surmounting a globe, such as we see on royal crowns and orbs and on the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Will this tradition of a globe help us at all in dating the Cross? Perhaps it may to a certain extent, for Wise reminds us of the well-known winged figure of "Victory" surmounting a globe, or sometimes an altar of three steps, which was used by the Roman Emperors. After Constantine's conversion to Christianity he replaced the winged figure by a Latin cross and the emblem was then known as the "Crux Victorialis." We cannot tell whether the globe was part of the cross from its beginning; for we must remember that a globe could have been

added as easily as arms to an upright band and that this might have been done at any time between, say, A.D. 400 and 1640.

Of course the astrological sign, ♃, for the planet Mars, now adopted in Zoology as the mark of the male sex, must be borne in mind; though in that sign there is an arrow rather than a cross on the circle, and the arrow is oblique rather than vertical.

The question now arises—could a disc, representing a globe, cut in the chalk become a triangle by the action of frost and rain? I think, from what I have seen going on to-day, that it could and, if everything is taken into account, almost certainly would. Those of us who live on the chalk know that this substance, when it is exposed, is crumbled into powder by the action of frost and that when rain comes the powder becomes slime and is washed away. This explains the fact that the present triangular base is always increasing and has now reached its present unwieldy shape. This has happened because the figure has been cut deeply into the chalk, thus allowing the exposed edge of the latter to be eroded so much that we see to-day the turf overhanging the dissolved chalk margin by as much as a foot in some parts of the edge of the triangular base. Thus the base tends, each winter, to grow larger, but this does not happen to the upper part of the Cross because the cut chalk edge has there been saved by a covering of turf; probably in 1826. With a disc at the base of the Cross the tendency is for the force of the descending water to attack the lower part of it most strongly; and, in time, to make it into an oval figure with its long axis vertical.

But if one looks at the lower part of the base one notices that there is a bank between it and the road, which must have acted as a dam and thus kept the oval base from extending farther downwards; and the erosion of the pent-up water would have to extend sideways along the bank, and thus the oval outline would become changed into a triangle with its base along the bank. At last, no doubt, the force of water rushing down the stem after heavy rain would cut its way through the bank and escape, by the gap thus made, into the road. The bank and the gap are very distinct, though I do not remember seeing them recorded, and it is thus, I would suggest, that the globe became the triangle which Wise saw and figured in his book.

It must not be thought that the change from the cross which Wise described in 1738 to that which Petrie measured and drew in 1926 was a continuous steady process, for Lipscomb ("History of Bucks," Vol. 2, p. 413) tells us that by 1826 the disfigurement was so great that the outline had to be recut and, apparently, returfed in part, at the expense of the Earl of Buckinghamshire. It does not seem that any measurements of the Cross, after its restoration in that year, exist; but I think that what was done consisted in recutting the cross itself on a rather larger scale than it had when Wise and his "ingenious friend" measured it in 1738. The restorers seem to have realised that if future disfigurement were to be avoided, the exposed edge of the chalk must be protected by turf. Evidence of this is still to be seen and, since 1848, when the Rev. A. Baker measured it, the outline of the actual cross has altered very little.

I am indebted to Mr. F. Colmer for calling my attention to a paper in "The Records of Bucks" (Vol. 1, p. 222) where Baker's measurements of the arms and the breadth of the shaft agree with those recorded by Petrie in 1926 and with those of the present time. It does not seem, however, that the renovators of 1826 did anything towards restoring the triangular base to the dimensions recorded

by Wise, even if they knew them ; indeed the refilling and returfing of so large an area would have been a difficult and very expensive undertaking on such a steep slope.

We are now able to compare the measurements of the triangular base at the three dates of 1738, 1848 and 1926, each of them separated by about a century, and we can follow the steady enlargement caused, I submit, by frost and rain during two hundred years. Here are the measurements :

(1) Total height of the cross, including the base.		
1738—About 200 feet.	1848—230 feet.	1926—225 feet.
(2) Height of the triangular base :		
1738—About 100 feet.	1848—180 feet.	1926—138 feet.
(3) Width of lower side of base :		
1738—189 feet.	1848—340 feet.	1926—385.4 feet.
(4) South side of base :		
1738—126 feet.	1848—212 feet.	1926—212.5 feet.
(5) North side of base :		
1738—140 feet.	1848—234 feet.	1926—237.5 feet.

This comparison shows that the growth of the base during two hundred years, though continuous, was not uniform and that there are discrepancies in the rate of growth which need accounting for—I should have been suspicious had there not been—but on the whole it suggests that the base has increased from a comparatively small triangle, which probably was at first a disc or globe, and that the increase is due to natural rather than artificial causes. The suggestion of Evans that the base represents the pyramid of a Constantine Cross is very attractive, and so, too, is the theory of others, that it may have begun as the three steps of a Calvary ; but neither of these agree with the definite evidence of Wise, that the base, in 1783, was called "The Globe." I do not think that we are justified in rejecting or ignoring such reasonable evidence as this until it is proved untenable by other evidence from a more reliable source. It seems obvious that evidence is more valuable than suggestion, though this is not always appreciated in the heat of argument.

Now I come to another piece of evidence which Wise records. It is that the inhabitants of Whiteleaf in 1738 remembered a tradition that some of the Oxford colleges helped to defray the cost of scouring the Cross. Wise could find no records in Oxford supporting this and the tradition is seldom referred to by later writers. Since his time, however, a somewhat vague confirmation has come to light ; for, in a footnote on p. 223 of Vol. 1 of the "Records of Bucks," is a statement that the late Sir Scrope Bernard Morland believed that he had found a record in St. John's College, Oxford, saying that the monks there used to keep the Cross scoured and that they raised a mound in their garden from the top of which they could pray within sight of this holy symbol.

There is also a reference to a private letter in which an anonymous writer says that as a boy he visited St. John's College to see whether the Cross was visible there, and came to the conclusion that it was.

We cannot accept this statement as it stands ; for no mound is present or remembered in St. John's College grounds, and all are now agreed that the Cross could not have been seen from any of the Oxford Colleges, though it is visible from the tops of Shotover and Boar's Hills. Still, the reference to the monks is borne out by the fact that St. John's College was originally a Bernardine college

which Archbishop Chichele founded for Cistercian monastic students in 1436. It was not until 1555 that it became St. John's College (Dugdale's "Monasticon," Vol. v, p. 745).

Friends in Oxford¹ are trying to trace the evidence in St. John's College on which Sir Scrope Morland relied and, if Whiteleaf Cross is definitely mentioned, it will almost certainly prove that it was in existence about 1436.

Until we know more we must believe that either the monks prayed from some mound on one of the hills above Oxford, or else that they prayed within sight of some other cross; though, and this is important, it must have been one cut on the side of a hill, because they are said to have helped in keeping it scoured. This, if we set aside Whiteleaf, limits us to Bledlow Cross, which it is equally impossible to see from Oxford itself.

I think, therefore, that this evidence of Morland, though it presents difficulties, must be taken seriously, especially as it is supported by the evidence of Wise that some of the Oxford Colleges were traditionally said to have contributed to the scouring of Whiteleaf Cross. We cannot at present be sure that this latter Cross existed in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries, but the evidence, so far as it goes, makes it reasonably probable that it did.

Perhaps the probability that the Cross was looked after by the Bernardine (Cistercian) monks may account for there being no mention of it in the "Literae Cantuarienses," which record the acts of the Benedictine monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, one of whose manors Monks Risborough was. Recognising that it was under the care of another Order, they could hardly be expected to interest themselves in it.

The latest theory of the origin of the Chiltern Crosses is that of Mr. Lindsay Scott, F.S.A. ("Antiquity," March 1937), who for some time has been excavating the barrow above that at Whiteleaf and has therefore had good opportunity to examine it. He is the latest advocate for a comparatively modern origin of the two crosses and, as a trained archaeologist, his views deserve careful consideration and criticism. He reviews much of the real evidence published hitherto but accepts and adopts the statement of the V.C. History, that the Cross is cut in the turf, as well as that of Petrie that it is a Greek cross. These details he may be perhaps persuaded to investigate once more.

"From this evidence," he says, and I am inclined to agree with him, "It is difficult to infer any considerable antiquity for Whiteleaf Cross." He says, truly enough, that: "It was already regarded as an antiquity by Wise in 1742," but goes on to say that: "In itself Wise's statement hardly puts the Cross back before 1700." Here I cannot agree with him and must call his attention to the fact that the first publication of Wise was in 1738. Mr. Scott's suggestion, therefore, is that the Cross might have been cut only thirty-eight years before Wise wrote, and well within the memory of people then living. Is it reasonable to suppose that all tradition of so important and recent an event as making the Cross would have faded away in thirty-eight years? The action of frost and rain upon exposed chalk, in altering the shape of the cross and its base, naturally had little weight with Scott, since he believed that the cutting went no deeper than the turf; hence he tells us that: "Its present form as a 'Greek Cross' and the broad, triangular shape of the base would be due to the repair of 1826"—a statement which Baker's and Petrie's measurements do not bear out.

¹ I am specially indebted to Gordon Stark, Esq.

So far, Scott has been concerned with fixing the latest possible date for the Cross and this he does at A.D. 1700, which seems to me half a century too late. Then he deals with its earliest probable date and, very properly, calls attention to the absence of any mention of it as one of the landmarks of Ethelgyth's property in A.D. 903; but this, if I read him aright, he explains by his inability to accept my suggestion that the "King's Street" of the charter is the road descending the hill from Green Hailey to the cross-road which shows up so well in his air photograph—and turns off in that photograph at a right-angle when it reaches the foot of the Cross. Really the original road was, and still is, continued as a deep hollow-way, now in private grounds, which Scott does not seem to have explored, though I am sure that he will have no difficulty in obtaining the owner's (Miss Taylor's) leave to do so. That it does not show up in the air photograph is because it is lined on each side by large trees; and, if Scott's only difficulty in recognising it as the continuation of the King's Street is the orthodox belief that only a Roman, or at least a paved road could be meant by the Saxon word "street," he will find that I have already discussed this matter on pp. 16 and 17 of Part 1, as well as on p. 33 of Part 2 of "Old Records of Monks Risborough," and I would only remark, in addition, that the village where the Icknield Way (not a Roman road) crosses the Thames is called Streatley.

Now if this archaeological dogma about a Saxon "street" is to be taken as overriding all local evidence, some paved street fulfilling the requirements of the charter must be found; and, though I have lived here, on the Icknield Way, for many years, I have been unable to find or hear of anything of the kind. But the disused hollow-way, in everything but stratification, fulfils every requirement.

Returning from this digression, to the Cross itself, I should like to make it quite clear that I never at any time thought or suggested that the term "Wlandes Stócc" represented it: for the Cross, by Christian Saxons, was always spoken of as the "Halig Ród" (Holy Rood). What I did suggest, and still think possible, though without any evidence to support it, is that the upright part of it may have been present in A.D. 903 as the remains of a former phallic emblem, an emblem to which arms were to be added later. Doubtless, Mr. Scott, quoting Mr. Massingham, misunderstood me.

The subject of "The Globe," which appeals to me as of serious importance, Mr. Scott is content to brush lightly aside: "It seems probable," he says, "That this name arose from mere fancy, the vaguely rounded base, surmounted by the cross, suggesting the royal orb."

If, as I believe, a disc cut in the chalk was gradually changed into a triangle by frost and rain, there would naturally have been a transition stage during which the figure was vaguely rounded, but, unless we accept the earlier form of a disc or globe, it is a mere assumption to suggest that the triangle ever was vaguely rounded. If, at one time, its shape was such as to suggest to those who saw it that they were looking at a globe it is more than probable that it was a globe that they saw.

I would gladly join Scott in explaining away the globe if I could, for I like so much better Sir Arthur Evans' simple theory that the Cross was originally a Latin one upon a triangular pedestal—in other words, a Constantine cross—but unfortunately there is nothing to destroy the direct evidence of Wise, that the base of the Cross was known as the "globe" and, therefore, in default of any evidence to the contrary, was a globe at one time.

Having fixed upon A.D. 1700, or thereabouts, as the probable date at which the Cross was made, Scott feels able to suggest, as its makers, the brighter youths of the two Risboroughs. From experience I have gained in indexing the parish registers I doubt whether any of the youths, especially of Monks Risborough, were even moderately bright; though, no doubt, Scott is justified in assuming that some were brighter than others. They married very early and proceeded to raise enormous families whose support must have taxed all the brightness they had. I wish that Scott had been able to tell us why they wanted to cut a cross about 1700, in the later years of William III, or the earlier, of Anne. It was hardly a time of great religious fervour nor was there anything particularly epoch making to mark. Still, a suggestion, even though quite unsupported, is always interesting and provocative of thought. My chief objection to the date of 1700 is that Wise, in 1738, would certainly have heard some memory of so important an event.

Scott's remarks about the Bledlow Cross may or may not help us in dating that at Whiteleaf, but we cannot afford to neglect them, because of the possibility of the two crosses having been made about the same time, for a common purpose. In support of this, it will be noticed that, setting aside the "Wallington White Mark" as traditionally not more than a hundred years old, there are no crosses cut elsewhere on the Chilterns. Then both of them are situated upon a hillside and both have the same westerly outlook. On the other hand, one is a Latin cross on a pedestal while the other is Greek in shape. We have clear evidence that Bledlow Cross was hidden by brushwood and was only rediscovered by a farmer named Clarke, about 1805 ("Records of Bucks," Vol. 1, p. 221) and it is therefore difficult to accept Scott's suggestion that it was cut, as a small copy of the one at Whiteleaf, in the later eighteenth century.

Although there is, at present, no evidence that one cross was a nearly contemporary copy of the other, there is documentary proof in the Calendar of Patent Rolls for 1350 that a cross then existed at Bledlow; for Henry atte Crouche of Bledlowe was in that year sent to Wallingford gaol. Mr. Scott tells us that Mr. O. G. Crawford, the Editor of "Antiquity," has suggested that "Atte Crouche should be read as equivalent to a surname, the phrase being interpreted as Henry Atcross, of Bledlow": but, before accepting this interpretation, we must be sure that it is reasonable and likely.

It suggests that in 1350 "atte" had ceased to be used as an indication of a man's dwelling-place and referred merely to that of his ancestors; moreover, the whole sense of the sentence may have been altered by the arbitrary insertion of a comma before "of Bledlow" and thus "Henry atte Crouche of Bledlowe" becomes "Henry Atcross, of Bledlow"—in other words: "Henry of Bledlow whose ancestors once lived near a cross."

In criticising this suggestion we must first ask whether any interpretation is needed and why we should not read the sentence as it stands, indicating that Henry lived near the Cross of Bledlow? This is the sense in which Messrs. Stenton and Mawer read it and, I think, the sense it conveys and is meant to convey. Why alter it?

There is no need to assume that the reason must be because, as it stands, it destroys the theory of an eighteenth-century origin, suggested for Bledlow Cross by Scott. It is just as likely to be because there is no reason to believe that in 1350 "atte" was usually an hereditary surname which did not indicate the place where the bearer lived. In order, therefore, to learn what sense was attached

to "atte" in the Patent Rolls, I studied several years of the Calendar and gathered the following facts which seem to bear upon the point :

(1) That the son of a man called (for example) "Atte Field" is very seldom given his father's suffix unless he is living in his father's home. Henry atte Field's son would be called either after his own dwelling, e.g. as John atte Woode, or else as John son of Henry atte Field; thus showing that the habitation label had not become an hereditary surname in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

(2) That in the Patent Roll list of peasants pardoned for taking part in Jack Cade's rising in 1450, a hundred years after the time of Henry atte Crouche of Bledlowe, there were some fifty identified by "atte," and one of these, of special interest, is "Richard atte George of Southwark." Can there be any doubt that this Richard was living or serving, in 1450, at the well-known "George" Inn, next door to the "White Hart" in Southwark High Street, where Cade had his headquarters? Mr. Crawford, if he treats this as he treated Henry atte Crouche of Bledlowe, must interpret it as "Richard Atgeorge, of Southwark"—again inserting the intrusive comma—after which it could not be used as proof of the existence of a "George Inn" in Southwark, though, in its original form, it is a most convincing proof.

That this is no exceptional case is shown by the following extract from the Close Rolls of February 13th, 1348, in which "John atte Belle of Greschirchstrete London hostilier" is mentioned. As it stands this suggests, and I submit is meant to suggest, that there was a tavern called "The Bell" in Gracechurch Street, in 1348, at which John was 'Ostler. The phraseology, it will be noticed, is identical with "Henry atte Crouche of Bledelowe" and the dates (1348 and 1350) are within two years of one another. But, treated as the Editor of "Antiquity" treated Henry atte Crouche, with the punctuation altered, it can be made to suggest that John Atbell, an 'ostler, lived in Gracechurch St. in 1348; after which it can no longer be used to show that a Bell tavern existed there in that year. It might be well that readers of "Antiquity" should consider these points in forming an opinion of the age of the Cross at Bledlow.

(3) That later, when place names did become hereditary surnames, the "atte" was usually dropped and only the locality retained; thus, any descendants of Henry atte Crouche would be much more likely to become "Crouch" or "Cross" than "Atcross." This may be verified by taking any directory and contrasting the number of Attwoods with Woods, Attfields with Fields or Attlees with Lees.

For these reasons I do not think that Crawford has made out a convincing case for his interpretation nor that he was justified in adding the comma with which he has separated the "Cross" from Bledlow," and I cannot join Scott in using this interpretation as a means of discrediting the Patent Rolls in its evidence that there was a Cross at Bledlow in 1350.

As I have said, the subject of Bledlow Cross does not specially interest us here in Monks Risborough unless we can regard it as of about the same date as that at Whiteleaf, and of this no real evidence has come my way at present. Nor is there any evidence to support those, like Scott, who hold that the Bledlow Cross was a later copy of the one at Whiteleaf, nor those who regard Whiteleaf as an improved copy of that at Bledlow.

The evidence that Bledlow Cross existed in 1350 is very strong indeed and the attempt to weaken it lacks historical support, but it does not follow that the

Cross at Whitelcaf was there in 1350 too, though there is nothing to show that it was not.

The above is all that I know and, so far as I can learn, all that anyone knows about the Cross. The evidence points to its formation, as a cross, after A.D. 903, and, seemingly, before 1436. My belief, if anyone cares for it, is that it is much more likely to have been cut—perhaps by Cistercian Monks from Oxford—before, than after the Reformation. There is still the possibility, without a shadow of proof, that the upright stem may be much older than the arms or the originally globe-like base and may once have been the emblem of a pre-Christian Fertility Cult. It is not too much to hope that some day the story of the making of the Cross may be found; and it is this hope that has made me try to interest those who live near it, as well as those passing by, in what is known about it at the present time.

MONKS RISBOROUGH AND THE DANES

How often the Danes came into what is now Monks Risborough no one, I suppose, really knows ; but that they came through it once, on the occasion of the march of the Great Army from Thetford to Reading, is practically a certainty. This Danish army had landed in East Anglia in A.D. 865—very nearly two hundred years before the Normans came—and for four years ravaged the northern part of England ; but, returning to East Anglia in 869, it took up its winter quarters in a fortified camp at Thetford. Edmund, then king of East Anglia, fought with the invaders and was killed, like St. Sebastian, by being shot to death with arrows at Hoxne in Suffolk. This is only tradition but, in any case, his death was such that he was afterwards venerated as a martyr and his Saint's Day is on November 20th. In Lombard Street the Church of St. Edmund, King and Martyr, is dedicated to him.

In December 870, the Danes stole away from Thetford and marched to Reading where they formed a camp between the Thames and Kennet, from which they hoped to conquer Wessex, as they had already the North and West of England.

Nothing, unfortunately, is told us about this march—how long it took or which way it went—we cannot assert that the Danes followed the Icknield Way, but we can say most surely that, unless they had some reason unknown to us, they were great fools if they did not follow it. There was the way, leading almost from door to door, above the level of rivers and marshes and with easy gradients for an army which was certainly mounted. No one has yet had the hardihood to suggest that any other way was used and, since the march took place in December, there can be little doubt that these fearless, capable heathen used the Upper Icknield Way, passing through East Risborough and thus crossing the Thames at Stratley gained the angle between the two rivers at Reading. The battles which Alfred and his brother Ethelred fought with them ending at last in the Treaty of Wedmore, only concern Risborough as a part of the rest of Southern England ; but by then Wessex was saved and a complete Danish conquest of the island averted.

A.D. 870, it will be noticed, was only thirty-three years earlier than the date of Ethelgyth's charter, described in Part I of these Records, and thus there is every possibility that East Risborough was already in the possession of her father, Ethelfrith the Alderman ; but the coming of the Danes was so sudden and unexpected that no attack upon them could have been organised, and I do not think it at all likely that the Whitclaf Cross was made in order to record any Saxon or Danish victory on this occasion.

The puzzling "Weland's Stock," however, does suggest the possibility of a Danish origin ; and "Weland" undoubtedly was a Danish, or at least a Norse name ; it is therefore possible that some unrecorded leader called Weland may have placed a sign, perhaps an upright strip cut in the hillside, as a mark for scattered foragers in the Vale. This, of course, is mere guesswork, but I find it hard to refrain from following any clue to this little-known charter of A.D. 903, since it has been ignored or misinterpreted by so many writers, to some of whom East or Monk's Risborough seems to have been an unknown place.

Ten years before the "Great Army" passed along the Icknield Way another Danish leader, named Weland, had attacked Winchester, but, since he was driven back by the men of Hampshire and Berkshire, it does not seem likely that he was able to push his way as far north as Whiteleaf.

Another occasion upon which Danes may have reached our neighbourhood was in A.D. 916, when those who had settled in the Danelaw, north of Watling Street, raided the Chiltern country and did a great deal of damage, especially between Aylesbury and the Forest of Bernewood. It is quite possible that detachments of these people used the Upper or Lower Icknield Way, though Bernewood lies on the other side of Aylesbury, towards the Oxfordshire border.

Perhaps the record of this raid may have suggested to Wise and others the possibility of the Cross at Whiteleaf having been cut by Edward the Elder's followers, in memory of the defeat and dispersal of these invaders; and, no doubt, the uncertain derivation of the name of Bledlow from "Blede Lawe," the bloody hill, was an additional argument though, unfortunately, like so many other plausible suggestions, it is a quite possible but very far from a proved explanation of the origin of the Cross.

MONKS RISBOROUGH AND THE NORMAN CONQUEST

It is not easy to be sure who owned East Risborough during the eleventh century because it so often passed backwards and forwards between the Archbishop and the great Benedictine Monastery of Christ Church, whose Abbey Church was the Cathedral at Canterbury. We have seen that in A.D. 995 Archbishop Siroc pledged it to Bishop Æscwin in return for money with which to buy off the Danes (see Record, Part 2, p. 26), and it seems therefore that it should have belonged to him at that time, forming what is known as "an Archbishop's Peculiar."

In A.D. 1006 its transference to the monastery was confirmed by Ethelred II and it was granted for life by the monks to Asgar the Staller or Constable (Comes stabuli), who was also the Standard Bearer of Christ Church. It was this connection between Canterbury, Monks Risborough and Asgar that made Lipscomb suggest that the Cross was cut in his honour. Asgar fought and was badly wounded in the battle of Hastings; and William, who regarded all who had fought against him as traitors, transferred his estates, except Monks Risborough, to Geoffrey de Mandeville. Risborough, however, the Conqueror freely restored to the monks, "For the honour of God and the good of his own soul."

The difficulty is that in Domesday Book it is recorded that in the time of Edward the Confessor, Risborough belonged to the Archbishop himself and that when the survey was published in A.D. 1086, "He (Lanfranc) owned it." The discrepancy is not, perhaps, a very important one because the Archbishop and the monastery were so closely connected; still, it would be interesting to know when our parish really first became Monks Risborough. It may be that Lanfranc, who lived for some years after Domesday appeared, bequeathed the greater part of the manor to Christ Church, retaining some of it in his own hands, and that this may explain the puzzling entry in the Askett charter of A.D. 1291 (see Record, Part 2, p. 36), in which Hugh the Clerk holds his land from the Archbishop; and his house from the Prior of Christ Church.

I wish we knew whether the tail-like extension of the present parish into the hills was part of the manor in A.D. 1086, but all we are told is that it contained

thirty hides, though land measurements seem to have been very roughly estimated in those days. My belief is that the "tail" was taken into the parish, though not necessarily into the manor, at a later time when the hills became inhabited enough to need parochial supervision.

In returning Monks Risborough to the Church, the better side of the Conqueror is seen; but, before that, our forerunners here had known him at his very worst. This happened in October or November 1066, after the battle of Hastings, when he had approached London and, realising that it was too strong to attack, had burnt Southwark and retired westward, along the south bank of the Thames, as far as Wallingford. Here, having crossed the river, he fortified a camp and marched northwards through Buckinghamshire, burning and laying waste the country as he went. His march ended at Berkhamstead where he formed another camp from which he could easily command the approach to London, either along the northern or, by passing through the Tring gap in the Chilterns, along the western roads.

The course of this march, partly encircling London, is traceable according to the Hon. F. H. Baring (Domesday Tables) by the drop in the value of the wasted manors through which William passed. Monks Risborough, for instance, contributed £16 p.a. in the Confessor's time but in A.D. 1083, when the Domesday statistics were collected, it was only rated at £5; and by noticing where these depressed values lay, Mr. Baring came to the conclusion that the main force of the Normans marched from Wallingford, along the north-west side of the Chilterns, laying waste the country round Bledlow, the Risboroughs, Ellesborough, Stoke Mandeville, Weston Turville and Aston Clinton where, in order to cover a wider tract of country, the army divided and the two divisions followed nearly parallel courses to the north of Buckinghamshire. After this they turned to the east and made their way back along one or the other side of the Chilterns to Berkhamstead.

The object of this great turning movement, devastating a strip of country round the south and west of London, is generally thought to have been in order to cut off the Londoners' supplies and thus starve them into surrendering; but it will be noticed that it was very incomplete and, even where it was made, left a radius of thirty miles in Middlesex and Herts whence provisions might be drawn.

It seems possible that William may have had another object in view, one that brings the two Earls, Edwin and Morcar, into the picture. They were Harold's brothers-in-law and, according to Freeman ("Norman Conquest of England," Vol. 3, App. P.P.), were at this time in their respective earldoms of Mercia and Northumbria, watching events. If they decided to come to the help of London, William would have to be prepared to meet an advance from the north or the west or both.

Now if the Duke had laid waste all the country in the Vale of Aylesbury along the line of the Chilterns, any advance of Edwin from the west would have been seriously hindered, because he would have to traverse not only the devastated Vale but the naturally barren country of the Chilterns, and this would have given the Normans time to advance against him through the Tring-Berkhamstead pass or to intercept him in some of the other more difficult passes of the hills.

If, on the other hand, Edwin and Morcar joined one another in the north of Mercia and advanced towards London along Ermine Street, William had only

a short march from Berkhamstead to St. Albans to be across their line of advance. Thus, clearly, the former was the best strategic position he could have chosen.

As I see the state of things, Edwin, whose younger brother Morcar was always guided by him, held the fate of England in his hands; for if the Northumbrian and Mercian forces had joined and advanced from the north and the Londoners from the south, William with his sadly depleted army would have been caught between them and would probably have been wiped out.

But instead of this Edwin and Morcar decided not to move, thinking perhaps that William would leave them their earldoms uninterfered with; and thus the Londoners were forced to offer him the crown.

The foregoing suggestion depends, of course, upon Freeman being right in his belief that Edwin and Morcar were no longer in London while William was making his destructive way through Bucks, but that they had retired in dudgeon to their earldoms because Edwin was not chosen king. Other authorities believe that they had not yet left London; and Green suggests that the object of William's march was to put himself across the line by which they would have to retire northwards and thus intercept them. Still another objective is given to William by Ormsby Gore ("Ancient Monuments," Vol. 3, p. 35), who thinks that he had made his long, semicircular march to Berkhamstead in order to attack London from the north-west, through the Ivinghoe Gap. We who are not historians cannot pretend to decide as to which of these authorities is most likely to be right, but we may point out that William's behaviour in our own county lends colour to Freeman's view which is based on the account of William of Poitiers, the Conqueror's chaplain. A valuable criticism of the comparative trustworthiness of the older historians who record William's march, written by G. J. Turner, appears in the "English Historical Review" for 1912.

I fear, however, that I have wandered far from Monks Risborough with whose story I am at present only concerned, except that we are part of England. Duke William interests us because, in passing along the Chilterns from Wallingford, he must have used one or both of the Icknield Ways and must certainly have laid waste all the country we know so well. It was in October or November, remember, when all the harvest was in the barns and the hay in stacks, while the cattle were being fattened in the byres before being killed and salted for the winter at Martinmas.

We can imagine easily enough the excitement and terror in our homesteads when the news came that the Normans were advancing from the Thames, destroying all that they did not need for their own use and burning every house and barn that could shelter an enemy. Fortunately an advance such as this must have been a slow one and we may hope that most of the people, with their horses and perhaps a few of their cattle, were able to escape across the hills where it is unlikely that the enemy would trouble to follow them.

No pity on account of its being Church property could then be expected by Monks Risborough; not even the wooden church, which probably was there at that time, is likely to have been spared.

Did William see the great cross as he rode by Whiteleaf Hill?—I wish we knew—but even had it been there, I fear that its sight would not, by its pleading, have saved a single cottage. Other things that might very well have happened we would like to know. Did Sir Geoffrey de Mandeville, for instance, ride behind the Duke and, noticing the rich, pleasant vale that was being laid waste, ask

that some part of it might come to him as a reward for his share in the conquest of the country? and was that, or something like it, how Stoke Mandeville earned its name? These, perhaps, are only idle thoughts, but it is no idle thought that the Normans passed through Monks Risborough on that autumn day in A.D. 1066 and left it a land of smouldering homesteads and burnt cattle, perhaps even of dead peasants and their children.

A HILL-TOP TRACKWAY

I want now to take my readers back to much earlier times, before even the Icknield Way was in use. Back to the days before iron was known, and the inhabitants of what is now England relied on stone implements for defence and tilling the land.

We must remember that the earliest inhabitants of whom we know anything were hunters only and followed their prey wherever it led them, using caves and perhaps rough shelters of boughs as a protection from the weather. They knew nothing of agriculture nor of domesticating animals and thus had no ties to keep them in one fixed habitation for long. They are called Palæolithic men because their weapons were primitive, roughly-chipped flints, and to make these they had from time to time to visit places where flints were found.

That they wandered about the Chiltern region is clear enough, and a visit to the Aylesbury Museum shows a large collection of their stone implements which have been found in the county. One of them left a very perfect hand axe of the Acheulean period in what was later to be my garden in Whiteleaf, though how many thousand years it lay there while the soil gradually deepened above it I dare not say; but by mediæval times, when the ploughshare began its work, the palæolith was too deep to be disturbed and, if I had not dug my garden two spits deep, it would have been lying there still; instead of in the Aylesbury Museum.

The Palæolithic men were succeeded by the Neolithic, who learnt to improve their flint implements by polishing and sometimes by boring holes in them. Plenty of these have been found in this county, though I do not think that any have actually come from Monks Risborough hitherto.

When the Neolithic cultural stage succeeded the Palæolithic is not known, but it must have been many thousand years ago. Afterwards a race of short, dark, long-headed Neolithic people came into this country from the South-East; they are known as the Mediterranean race because they had gradually worked their way westward along the shores of that sea and at length reached the most westerly projection of the Continent, which was later to be cut off by the sea to form the British Isles. Sometimes they are called the Long Barrow Folk, from the shape of the barrows in which they buried their dead. To give a definite date for their coming is impossible, but it is likely that, could we go back seven or eight thousand years, we should have found them here.

Life was easier for them than it had been for their forerunners of the old Stone Age because they knew how to grow corn, had domesticated the horse, ox, sheep and dog and could make pottery of a rough kind. These things we learn about them from the bones and other contents of their tombs.

Since they grew corn and grazed cattle, they must have had permanent settlements, clear of the swampy forests which covered most of the country; and thus

we find signs of them on the chalk hills and downs. When they wanted to travel from one settlement to another they kept to the hill tops where the land was clear of forests and they would be less liable to surprise attacks from enemies or wolves; even to-day, some of us are glad to use this system of tracks, known as the "Ridgeways," when we wish to avoid attacks by motor cars. There is a very definite ridgeway running along the crest of the Chilterns from the south as far as Bledlow Hill, so definite that it is used as the boundary between Oxfordshire and Bucks, and when the three-mile gap between the Wain Hill at Bledlow and Whiteleaf Hill is reached, at the mouth of the Wycombe Pass through the Chilterns, this ridgeway descends on to the level and we naturally expect to pick it up again on the top of Whiteleaf Hill. In this we are disappointed, and it has been said that the Chiltern Ridgeway is not continued on our part of the hills. This seems unlikely and I do not think is the case. The ridgeway is there as the "Cradle Way," but for some reason part of it has been diverted and part has disappeared.

Those who followed me when I was beating the bounds of Monks Risborough in Part I of these Records will remember that, as we traced the parish boundary along the Askett-Missenden road, the Cradle Way was noticed coming out of the gate of "Cradlecombe" grounds and crossing the road to enter the golf links by a little gate. There is a right of way here, probably since Neolithic days, and we may follow the ancient footpath up the rising ground, along the hedge, and notice that we are heading straight for the top of Whiteleaf Hill.

Soon the gate of a picturesque old cottage known as "Middle Cadsden" is reached, where the line of advance is altered and the right of way diverted either to the right, towards Whiteleaf Village, or else to the left, along a lane leading to Lower Cadsden. But if, without any right of way, we follow the original line straight on to the eastern end of Upper Cadsden, where the golf club house is situated, and then, crossing Thorne Lane, climb the stiff escarpment of Whiteleaf Hill through the beech wood, we find ourselves between the two tumuli, looking across the three miles to the Wainhill at Bledlow.

It is this part of the ridgeway, between Middle Cadsden cottage and the Wainhill that is the missing part of the Cradle Way and, in making a new green, close to the club house a year or two ago, a copper coin of Antoninus Pius was found, exactly on the line which the Way must have followed. How interesting it would be to know who dropped it and under what circumstances.

At present, therefore, we must content ourselves with the great probability that travellers in far-off Neolithic days followed the Chiltern Ridgeway from the south until they came to the mouth of the great pass where they had to descend and follow a track, now invisible, to the opposite hill at Whiteleaf. We know that they used to make marks on the hills to guide others and, if only Bledlow Cross could be seen from Whiteleaf, the suggestion that some parts of both crosses were guides of this kind would have been a useful one. It is interesting, however, to notice that, where the hills were left and regained, tumuli are found, though it is unwise yet to guess at their meaning, since they are now being thoroughly explored and before long many facts about them will no doubt be known.

All that we can say at present is that there is every reason to think that travellers from the South reached the top of Whiteleaf Hill, though, as soon as they had done so, they had to begin an equally steep descent in order to cross the mouth of yet another pass—the Askett-Missenden or Killingden one.

But why the sudden diversion of the track at Middle Cadsden? It is too sudden and sharp to have been made voluntarily by the ridgeway users even had they wished to skirt the base of Whiteleaf Hill and thus avoid the apparently profitless climb up, followed by an almost immediate climb down. It seems to me more likely that, much later, when a hamlet was built at Whiteleaf, a footpath was formed between it and Lower Cadsden and that where this crossed the Cradle Way most of the traffic along the latter turned to the right towards Whiteleaf, which became much more important than Upper Cadsden because of its position on the Icknield Way.

This short piece between the Askett-Missenden road and Middle Cadsden Cottage is all that Monks Risborough parish now owns of the original Cradle Way, but if we follow it into the next parish of Kimble through the grounds of "Cradlecombe," up the hill and across the rifle range, we find it continuing the same perfectly straight course until Chequers Knoll on the skyline is reached. Soon after this it runs into one of the tracks leading up to the so-called British Camp on Bulpit Hill, which I notice is described in the V.C.H. of Bucks (Vol. 2, p. 25) as being in Monks Risborough parish though this I think must be a slip. After this the modern footpath leads to Ellesborough and joins the Icknield Way; but this is probably another diversion made when Chequers Park was enclosed.

It seems more than likely that the original ridgeway followed the top of the Chiltern Escarpment over Beacon and Coombe Hills, for old though the Icknield Way may be, the ridgeways were probably older, and this one was unlikely to have left the top of the Chiltern escarpment except where it had to cross the mouth of a pass.