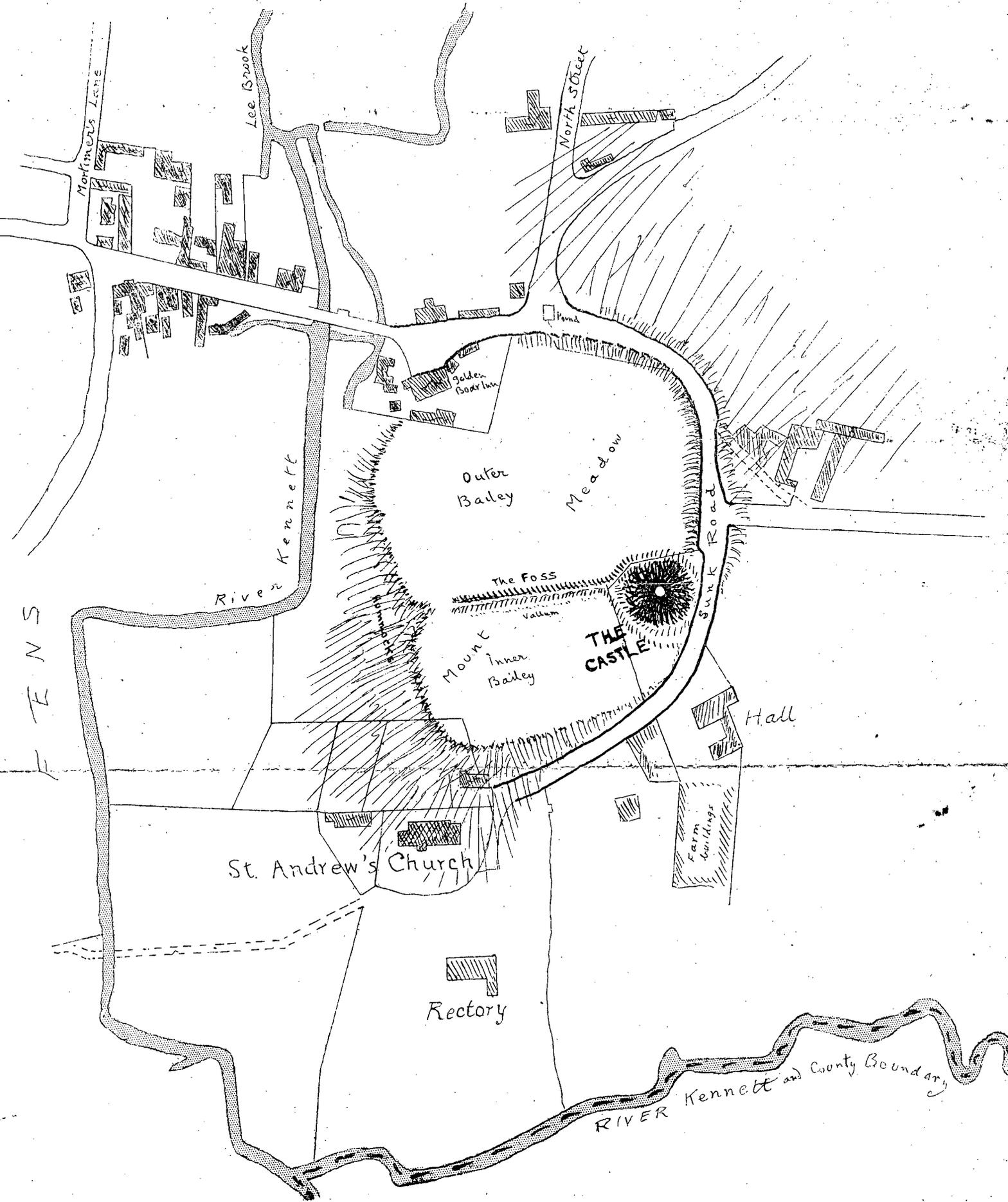


FRECKENHAM, SUFFOLK :

NOTES AND THEORIES ON THE VILLAGE AND ITS UNRECORDED CASTLE.

BY CLAUDE MORLEY, F.E.S., F.Z.S., Etc.

Freckenham is a large village of some two and a half thousand acres, extending from the River Lark near Judes Ferry southward to Herringswell ; on the east it marches with Worlington, and its western border is that of Cambridgeshire, conterminous with Isleham in that county. This west border follows the River Kennett from the Lark for nearly a mile ; it then abandons it in order to embrace a rectangular area of the erstwhile Fens and rejoins the Kennett at Freckenham church, about which I am unable to trace anything older than mediæval work ; thence the river southward again bounds both parish and county. The southern quarter of the river, thus enclosed, has obviously been (like that at Chichester) quite artificially diverted in a rectangular manner ; and the road, subparallel with it easterly describes a complete semicircle. Both these peculiarities are explained when we find that the present pasture thus confined, locally known as Mount Meadow, contains conspicuous vestiges of an ancient Castle. The church lies low on the edge of the Fens immediately south by west of this meadow ; and from it a sunk road runs due east, turns north, and finally west to the village inn. A hundred yards or so east of the church and just south of this semi-circular road is the Hall, also on the Fens-edge ; the present house is of red brick and no great age. Exactly opposite the Hall, on the north of the road, rises a circular chalk mound, locally called The Castle (whence, of course, a subterranean passage is said to extend below the road to the Hall). It is some forty feet in height, and its level summit is about forty feet in circumference, with no evidences



Mortimer's Lane

Lee Brook

North Street

River Kennett

Outer Bailey

Meadow

The Foss

Vallem

Mount Inner Bailey

THE CASTLE

Hall

St. Andrew's Church

Rectory

Farm Buildings

RIVER Kennett and County Boundary

FENS

Golden Barchin

Pans

of stone-work ; its base I was unable to measure, and, indeed, purposely allot an adequate description to more capable hands than my own. The mound is flanked on the south and east by the sunk road bordering the Fens ; and on the north by a considerable foss, extending from the roadway westward right across Mount Meadow, a distance of about two hundred yards. The vallum of the great dry ditch is on the southern side, still of some height, surmounted by stunted trees and composed of chalk. Westward the foss terminates in the Meadow's abrupt declivity, yet retaining the irregularities of presumably defensive earthworks, to the Fens at the diverted section of the Kennett, beyond which stretches away the erst-while Fen Sea only. Between the foss and the sunk road, which seems to have originally constituted a first line of defence, is a plain or outer court, similar to the Horse Shoe Bailey of Framlingham Castle, and the "constabulary" of Eye. Little of all this is visible from the curved road, since the great foss is hidden by hedge and the mound entirely masked by undergrowth. I myself quite failed to notice any such features during my first casual visit or two to Freckenham ; but this is hardly sufficient to account for the utter ignorance of these considerable works evinced by both the Suffolk and Cambridge antiquaries from the earliest times to the present year of grace ! For Mount Meadow as a whole is a conspicuous HOH, commanding the Fen Sea on both the west and south, protected by the semi-circular sunk road to east and north, where the inner bailey and mound are further defended by the great foss. Local people have no conception of the Castle's age.

AGE OF THE CASTLE.

We possess very few evidences to direct us in fixing Freckenham's first selection as a fortress, yet for-

tunately such as exist agree in point of time. That this time was very early in the Anglo-Saxon regime may be gathered from Prof. Skeat in *Camb. Antiq. Soc.*, 1913, p. 53, since the Domesday spelling Frakenaham points to the genitive plural *frecena*, as if it had been the "home or enclosure of a band of warriors," rather than to the genitive singular, i.e., *frecan*, "of a warrior"; through mediæval times it was called Frekenham, and Kirby misspells the word Freckingham, as though it had belonged to the family of Freca. The presence here of the Fen Sea-coast sufficiently accounts, I think, for that of the warrior-band to defend it; and the necessity for such defence is, I venture to believe, proved to have been before the year 1000 by the absence along any of the upper reaches of The Wash of those Danish (as opposed to Norse) place-names that occur so frequently upon the coasts of both Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Concerning Suffolk's Anglo-Saxon history before the middle of the sixth century we have nothing but nebulous legends, into which I am unable to read a consecutive trend; and it really begins with Bede's account of Raedweald, who was King here about 593 to 617.

It would appear by no means impossible that, considering its name, Freckenham was the rendezvous for that expedition of Eastengles, which slew Æthelfrith at the Idle and placed Eadwine on the throne of Deira and Bernicia in 616; or, of course, for some similar and even earlier expedition now unknown. But in this case no defensive works would be needed, since attack does not appear to have been apprehended; and I would suggest that it was during the Mercian wars of Raedweald's step-son, King Sigeborht, or his nephew, King Anna, that the great foss was first excavated. Of the former's campaigns we know little and the locality of his final overthrow is unrecorded;

but of the latter we have a fuller account, e.g., his daughter Æthelthryth of Ely was baptised at the neighbouring village of Exning and Anna himself fell before the Mercians at Blythburgh, right away near the sea in east Suffolk, though (as Raven points out at *Suff. Inst.* 1872, p. 226) "what brought him to Blythburgh is not clear." The only Saxon relics that I find recorded from Freckenham are a couple of square-headed Jutish brooches, now preserved in the Cambridge Museum; but these certainly go to confirm the supposition that this fortress existed at the time of pagan Penda's invasion of our Eastengle kingdom. For Reginald Smith says (*Vict. Hist.*, 1911, p. 344) that they "are not only evidence of an unburnt burial there, but also of intercourse with the Jutish area; the type is practically confined to Kent and the Isle of Wight, where it occurs very frequently." The data of a close connection with Kent in our early annals are fast accumulating; and, although Raedweald himself was not unacquainted with Canterbury, this intimacy is most likely to owe its origin to Anna's eldest daughter's marriage with the Kentish King Eorconbeorht about the year 640: incidentally the preservation of our history by Bede, or the majority of it which reached him by way of Canterbury, seems traceable to the same source. Doubtless most of Anna's gesiths were yet Pagans, and, as such, would be buried with the usual mortuary furniture.*

* The innkeeper at Freckenham told me in 1920 that five and twenty years ago "a pot of Boadicea's money"—I suppose this to be the "hoard of ninety gold coins" referred to in Evans' *Coins*, p. 578—was dug up in the garden of a cottage in the village, north-west of the Kennett; and that it is now in the British Museum. If this ascription of the coins be correct, they should be dish-shaped and concave, like those of the same Queen, recorded at *Suff. Inst. Archæol.* iv., 1866, p. 100, from Haverhill. It should certainly be noted that all the Celtic (or earlier) Great Dykes of Cambridgeshire are also cut through chalk (the two greatest run peculiarly exactly through three cretaceous strata from the north-west alluvium to the south-east boulder clay); though that south of Icklingham is on valley-gravel and boulder-clay only. Yet Celtic hill-forts seem to have been so rare in Eastengle—only Dunwich, and perhaps Lidgate, occur to my mind—that Freckenham is very unlikely to have constituted one of them.—C.M.

With the silting up of the Fen Sea to the extent that it became no longer navigable, between the years 870 and 1000, the purpose of Freckenham Castle would automatically become nugatory; and its waste of waters gradually became the rush-grown lagoons described by Abbo in 985. But the advantages of its original strategic position, upon the west Suffolk coast, midway between the Brandon Creak with Eriswell Lode in the north and Soham Mere with perhaps even Burwell in the south, are sufficiently obvious when coping with internecine invasion from Mercia and Northumbria, or extraneous piratical raids.

The possession of this place by the bishops of Rochester seems likely to date from the above association with Kent of King Eorconbeorht's consort, who succeeded her sister Æthelthryth in the abbacy of Ely during 679. I own to small faith in either the following note or the Grant, whereupon it is a commentary.

“Anno Domini dcccclxxx. Ethelwulf, King of the Saxons [i.e., of Wessex, 839-856], gave to the Church of St. Andrew, Cuckelstane and put it in charge of bishop Swithulf [Swithwulf, b. of Rochester c. 868—c. 894]. Swithulf died and Burricus [not immediately, but c. 933—c. 946] succeeded him, to whom Alured, King of the Saxons [Alfred the Great, 871-901], gave Frekenham; and afterwards Edmund, King of the English [940-946], gave Mallynge to the same (bishop) for the increase of his monastery as the documents tell, which also we find (stated) in very many places. For the old writers call the Church of Saint Andrew sometimes a Church, sometimes a Monastery. When Burricus died Ceelmundus [Coelmund, usually given c. 897-909] succeeded him, and to him Kyneferdus [Cynefrith, usually given c. 909-933], to him Elfhanus [Ælfstan, 946-995].

In the time of this (bishop) the Danes occupied the kingdom, and took away and sold Frekenham, which King William first gave to Lanfranc, with Stoke and Deyntone; and Lanfranc restored them to the Church and to [its bishop] Gundulf.

Seeking truth, either in our annals or in the writings of historians, for example Bede and William of Malmesbury, we find the Church of St. Andrew disturbed by the incursion of the Danes. For, long before the coming of the Normans, these Manors were taken away:—Stokes Denitone, Frekenham, Derente, which Lanfranc recovered and gave up to bishop Gundulf for the maintenance of the monks.—E. Regist. Temporal. Ep. Roff.

After recounting that [the Normans] bishop Gilbert succeeded bishop Gelerannus and found the buildings in the bishopric ruined and destroyed and that he rebuilt them, so at Frakeham nothing but miserable hovels were found and houses levelled with the ground. These he entirely rebuilt." (E. Anglian Notes and Queries, xii., 1908, p. 326).

Copinger in his *Manors of Suffolk* iv., p. 162, quotes the Grant printed by Birch in *Cartularium Saxonicum*, ii., p. 212, no 571, in which he detected nothing suspicious (nor is its authenticity questioned at *Suff. Inst.* iv., 1874, p. 368), but from which he states: "King Alfred gave this estate in 895 to the Diocese of Rochester. Harold seized it, and in 1066 it was vested in William the Conqueror, who granted it to Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1071, and he restored it in 1087 to the bishop [Gundulf] of Rochester. There is an order in 1207 on the Close Rolls (9 John, 6) that this manor be committed to the Bishop of Rochester. In 1218 the Bishop had the grant of a fair and market here, and in 1249 a grant of free

warren." Alfred's grant is regarded by Skeat as "a twelfth century copy of an A.S. charter originally dated 895:" certainly the spelling of the proper names is Norman. It is starred by Kemble; and I consider it quite an impossible document, because Alfred had no authority whatsoever here after the Pact of Wedmore. But at least we may rely upon the fact that Freckenham possessed a "castel" at the time of its fabrication; and, perhaps to a lesser extent, that the grant of "lands" to the west—strips of the fast-drying Fens (Undley, hardly above their surrounding level in Lakenheath, had already become a manor in Domesday Book)—extended to Saint Æthelthryth of Ely's; that they marched with those of one Beorhtric on the north, doubtless at West Row; and to the south (at Chippenham in Cambs.) and east (at Worlington) with the property of Ælfric and Ætheling, whereof the latter is a very suspicious form, though possibly Ætheline for Æthelwine. Actually this document shows us nothing beyond the fact that our Castle existed at Freckenham during early Norman times; but I am not prepared to date the present chalk mound, apart from the foss: it is doubtless coeval with similar erections in the county at Haughley, Eye, and nine other places.

SUIT TOUCHING THE TENANT-IN-CHIEF.

One of the most celebrated of early Norman cases in legal procedure before 1085 is the "suit of Gundulf, bishop of Rochester, against Picot, the sheriff, to recover an estate at Fracenham, which the sheriff had treated as king's land, and which Gundulf averred to belong to the church" (Regist Roffen., ed. Thorpe, pp. 27-32).—Every stage of this case is full of instruction. As a whole, it illustrates how the two jurisdictions met and worked together in the early Norman days, though without any defined system.

It shows how William, unjust as he was in many great matters, caused the law to be administered justly, and how he did this by using the English courts of procedure. It is a forcible comment on the enactment which he is said to have made, that "men should have and hold the law of King Eadward, with such additions as he himself made for the good of the English." The case was first tried in an English court. When there was evidence of a miscarriage of justice, the *venue* was changed, and it was heard before the king's great tenants or barons. The inquest by oath of the twelve men was a Norman innovation, which was destined to become of great importance. In the criminal case the Norman justiciary ordered the accused to clear themselves by the English method, and when their guilt was established, they were condemned by the men of their own shire. Had they been "Frenchmen," they would have claimed the wager of battle, but being Englishmen, they were not forced to adopt this foreign custom" (Hunt's Norman Britain, 1884, p. 123).

Several charters, of which some like the above grant from Alfred the Great seem to have been fabricated for the occasion, are printed at E. Angl. N. and Q., xii., 1908, p. 326, et seqq.; and these would appear to have been put in as evidence upon the various occasions when Rochester's title was called in question: Among them is one touching the above trial, which would be more convincing were it not that in the Rochester archives is an entirely different form of restoration of Freckenham to that bishopric! Firstly, the Conqueror gives it to Canterbury thus:—"William by the grace of God King of the English to Erfastus the Bishop [of Elmham, 1070-84], Baldwin the Abbot [of Bury, 1065-98], to Picot and Robert Malet the Sheriffs [of Cambridge and Suffolk respectively], and to all other my faithful subjects: greeting. Know

Ye that I have granted unto Archbishop Lanfranc the Manor which is called Fræcheham, as Harold held it on the day in which I crossed the sea [14 October 1066] and as Turbetus and Gotinus held it from the same Harold [*sic* sec. Domesday; but these two mesne-tenants, Thurbeorht and Goding, may have succeeded Thegn Orth after Eadweard's death during the preceding January] with all its lands, meadows, pastures, woods, serfs, and socmen, and all other things." (Bib. Cott. Domit. A, x, 9): *OR* "with all the lands, the advowsons of the Churches of Frekeham and Isleham and all other liberties pertaining to the Manor aforesaid and to the Churches aforesaid in any Manner soever. Given at London in the month of January in the fifth Year of my coronation and of the incarnation of the World one thousand and seventy-one" (Bibl. Cotton Vespas. A, xxii., fol. 127ab).

Secondly, Lanfranc himself restored the "Manor of Frakeham with Isleham and the advowsons of the Churches which belong thereto unto the Church of St. Andrew of Rochester, because in former times by ancient right and usage they belonged to it." This re-grant is printed in *E. Angl. N. and Q., loc. cit.*, and is dated 1087; yet the *Victoria History* ii., p. 8, tells us that so early as 1073 this same archbishop was appointed to arbitrate in the quarrel between the bishop of Thetford and abbot of Bury: "the archbishop had got as far as Freckenham in Suffolk, where Siward bishop of Rochester [Siward, 1058-75] had a manor-house, when he was attacked with sickness and abbot Baldwin was summoned to his bedside in the capacity of a physician. On his recovery, Lanfranc proceeded to Bury, and gave a decision" on the question at issue. Also, either the above Justiciary or Lanfranc had certainly restored Freckenham to

Rochester by 1086 for we find the entire parish in

Domesday Book.

Lacforda Hundret.—FRAKENAHAM.—*Lands of the Bishop of Rochester.*

Orth, Harold's Thegn, held TRE twelve hundred acres of land as a manor, and afterwards Lanfranc by the King's command decided (*derationatus est*) that they should belong to the bishopric of Rochester. Then as now sixteen villeins, and eight bordars, and six serfs. And then as now five ploughs on the demesne. And six ploughs belonging to the men; but eight might be stocked. And twenty acres of meadow. And one mill [doubtless the lord's water-mill on the Kennett]. And two fisheries [showing the condition of the Fens here]. A church, with twenty acres [of glebe]. And three horses, thirteen beasts, forty swine, two hundred and thirty sheep, and six hives of bees.

Then it was worth twelve pounds, now fourteen pounds.

It is one league long, and half a league broad. And in geld (pays) 20d.

To this manor Earl Ralph [de Guader, before 1075] added four freemen, whom he appropriated (*invasit*), with eight acres of land. Then as now half a plough. Worth 8d.

The said Bishop had the soc of this manor and [the abbey of] Saint Edmund has the soc of the freemen.

Here is no reference to any earlier lordship of Rochester, nor to the above suit with the Sheriff. But it is plainly stated that some time subsequent to

the tenancy of Thegn Orth, mentioned nowhere else throughout the Suffolk Domesday, which was quite probably co-eval with Harold's earldom of Eastengle-with-Essex during 1045-53 (for Domesday does not always give the owner *immediately* preceding the Conquest), Lanfranc had been instrumental in securing the manor to Rochester, in the Temporal Register of which is a note :—" William the King and Duke of Normandy who is called the Conqueror, at the instance of Lanfranc, gave up and restored to the Church of Rochester, Freckenham, Stoke Dennitone, and Falkenham, and all other lands which the princes had taken away in the Danish wars, and which Harold afterward held in occupation."

I do not propose to here pursue the history of Freckenham beyond the completion of the Norman conquest: its subsequent devolution seems to have been smooth and uneventful, even decadent. Enough has been brought forward to show that it was once a place of no small consideration, even without including the lordships of Saint Dunstan, Canterbury's archbishop from 957 to the time of his death in 988, and of the Conqueror's step-brother Bishop Odo of Bayeux, both of which are mentioned in Bibl. Cotton Vespas. A, xxii., fol. 127ab, because they appear to me more than doubtful. But this consideration was at so remote a period and entirely owing to a physical cause so long removed that it is now at the best only partially recoverable: that it existed throughout the west coast of Suffolk will gradually emerge as more attention is devoted to the subject, whereof one of the most interesting problems is to fix somewhere in the adjacent town of Mildenhall the exact site of Clovesho, where the celebrated councils were wont to deliberate, also on the eastern shores of the great Fen Sea.