

TWO TOWNSHIPS IN BLYTHING HUNDRED

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HOPTON

Hopton or Opton, described in Domesday Book as within the Hundred of Blything, has not been identified, so far as we are aware, by any previous writer. There is a Hopton near the Little Ouse, in Blackbourn Hundred, and another north of Lowestoft, in Lothingland Hundred, but these are distinctly enumerated in Domesday, and Blything Hundred does not now contain any parish or township of the name. The explanation is given by a cartulary or register written upon three sheets of paper sewn together, in a handwriting of the reign of Henry VII or Henry VIII, which the present writer found in 1912 among the muniments at Cockfield Hall, and is now at the Ipswich and East Suffolk Record Office. It includes abstracts of deeds which may be translated:—

Know, etc., that I Reginald de Han'mille of Darsham have granted, etc., to Robert son of Thomas Godsweyn of Framlingham one piece of land in Hopton in the parish of Yoxford between land of the said Robert and land of John Rysing on one side, and it abuts upon land of the Prior of Thetford towards the east and upon the way which leads towards Kelsale on the west, etc. Rendering thereout to me four pence, etc. Dated time out of mind, etc.

Know, etc., that I Adam Beveriche of Yoxford have granted given and [the '&c.' is obviously a copyist's error for '&'] confirmed to Agnes daughter of John the Hayward of Middleton one piece of land and the marsh which is called the Meadowland, lying in the hamlet of Hopton belonging to the town of Yoxford, between a marsh of Walter le Poer on the east side and [here the word *super* seems to have been inserted by error] the marsh which is called Cottonfen on the west side, and it abuts upon a marsh of Reginald Carpenter towards the north and upon land of John Hunteman towards the south. Dated time out of mind, etc.

Know, etc., that I William Gibelot of Kelsale have given and quit-claimed [reading 'q' for the meaningless '&c.'] for me and my heirs, to Robert Deyse and his heirs and assigns, all that my land with the appurtenances which

I have held of the said Robert in Hopton in the parish of Yoxford, which lies between land of John de Risinges and land of Thomas the smith [*faber*], and abuts upon the king's highway towards the west. Dated time out of mind, etc.

The words *dat' ante memoriam* indicate that the documents belong to a period before dating, as we now understand it, came into vogue. We know from other sources that a John de Rysing claimed to be lord of part of Westleton in the autumn of 1302; and Robert Deyse, by another charter abstracted in the same register, had a grant of land from Jordan le Neve of Stikingland, while Jordan le Neve himself is witness to two original charters in a handwriting of Henry III's reign, granting land to Sibton Abbey, which may still be seen at the British Museum. It may fairly be concluded that two of the three deeds cited belong to the second quarter of the thirteenth century and probably the third does not differ greatly from them in date. At that time, Yoxford evidently contained a hamlet or district called Hopton.

In the Sibton Abbey cartulary ¹ is a copy of a deed undated, by which 'Sayer Beuerach de Jokeford' (who was living in 50 Hen. III, 1265-6) conveyed to the monks the homage and service of Geoffrey Beuerach his brother, 'together with the tenement which he holds of me in Hopton, namely one piece of land in Clarice's Croft (*in crofta Claricie*), which lies between the land of William Huscarl on the west, and the way of the said Geoffrey Beuerag' on the east, and abuts upon the king's highway on the south, and at the other end upon the stream of water. Also one other piece of land called Medweslade, which lies between the land of the said William Huscarl and the said way of Geoffrey Beuerag', and abuts upon the king's highway on the south and at the other end upon the stream of water.' By another deed Walter son of Peter de Risinge gave the homage and service of Geoffrey Carpenter of Darsham, 'with all the tenement which he held of me in Jokesford; namely a certain alder-bed (*alnetum*) in Hopton (*Hopetun*), which lies between the old river (*vetus riuariu*) towards the north, and the Hopton alder-beds (*alneta de Hopetun*) towards the south, and abuts upon the marsh of William Baldry (*Baudri*) towards the east, and at the other end upon the alder-beds of Walter Godsweyn.' These documents refer to the family which gave its name to 'Beveriches', an old farmhouse upon the Middleton Road, and probably the 'way of Geoffrey Beverich' is the present private road leading from the main road to the house. The 'old river' alluded to is presumably the existing river, but whether the 'stream of water' is the same,

¹ Add. MS. 34560.

or some watercourse or millstream—for we know that there was a watermill in Middleton, close to the Yoxford boundary, in very early days—cannot be stated with certainty. In any case it is clear that Hopton ran down to the river in that neighbourhood, and further, that it was already reckoned as part of Yoxford. In all probability both deeds belong to the latter part of the reign of Henry III or the beginning of that of Edward I.

Among the Davy MSS. in the British Museum are a full copy of a cartulary of Sibton Abbey at that time in the possession of the bishop of Salisbury (John Fisher, who married the heiress, Dorothea Freston Scrivener), and extracts from the sub-cellarer's accounts for 18 Ed. II, in the same possession. The cartulary includes a confirmation dated 1178, by John bishop of Norwich, of various gifts, including those of Roger de Glanville and Thomas de Hopetun in Stikingland. The accounts include a reference to an alder-bed 'in Hopetun, a hamlet of Yoxford' (*hameleto de Iokeford*), which formerly belonged to Roger son of Geoffrey Carpenter, and its boundaries are defined in a manner which clearly identifies it with the alder-bed held by Geoffrey the Carpenter of Darsham.

Advancing two centuries, the Yoxford local survey of 1471-2, now at Cockfield Hall, supports both cartularies with the words 'Hopton field', which appear as a heading in the middle of a page, and apparently refer to all the land mentioned subsequently. That land lay for the most part behind and beyond Rookery Park, as far as the Middleton and Kelsale boundaries, and covered 384 acres.

Lastly, in the court rolls of 1685, two hundred years later still, we find mention of 'twenty-eight acres of copyhold land lying in the field (*agro*, elsewhere *campo*) called Hoptonfeild *alias* Optonfeild,' and of 'a piece of copyhold land containing by estimation one acre, called Baldwynsyard, lying in Hoptonfeild between the tenement Ellenors (i.e., the Rookery) on the south and land formerly of William Bokelard on the north.'

From these evidences we conclude that the Domesday 'Hoppetuna' or 'Oppituna' in Blything Hundred was a vill or township extending originally from the river on the north to Kelsale on the south and Middleton on the east. It may have included some portion of both these parishes, but was mainly in Yoxford. Its western boundary may possibly have run from Yoxford Bridge to the corner by Satis House, and thence up Love Lane and along the footpath to Kelsale, but perhaps a line drawn from the river to Kelsale through the Rookery Cottages, Rookery House, and Rookery Farm would be more nearly correct. Hopton contained two small manors, of which the northern probably formed the nucleus of Brentfen, and the other was annexed to Kelsale manor

or split up after the same fashion as the main manor of Stickland. Of 384 ac. 1 ro. 20 po. following the heading 'Hopton Field' in the survey of 1471, the assignment to particular manors is as under:—

	ac.	ro.	po.
Yoxford		Nil	
Cockfield	27	3	0
Brendfen	190	3	0
Moryell	1	0	0
Thetford Priory	22	1	20
Sibton Abbey	10	0	0
Leiston Abbey	4	0	0
Knoddishall Priory	12	2	0
Kelsale	93	3	0
Westleton	5	2	0
Risings (a manor mainly in Westleton)	4	2	0
Manor uncertain	8	1	0
John Hopton, esq. (apparently extra manorial though belonging to the lord then living)	4	0	0
	384	1	20

It is a mere coincidence that the township of Hopton, or what was left of it, came during the fifteenth century very largely into the lordship of a family bearing that name. These Hoptons were of Yorkshire origin, being illegitimate descendants of the Swillingtons, whose ancestral seat was at Swillington near Leeds. They succeeded, under a settlement, to the property of the Swillingtons, which included Blythburgh, Walberswick, Westleton, Wissett, and other manors in Suffolk, with much of Yoxford and Darsham. John Hopton, who died in 1478, lived mostly at Westwood Hall in Blythburgh, though owning Cockfield Hall in Yoxford also. This, no doubt, led Lord John Hervey to suggest (in *Suffolk Domesday*, 1890) that the 'Hoppetuna' of Domesday might be Westwood Lodge, the manor-house built nearly on the site of Westwood Hall, and still existing. But the first five of the documents here cited as proving that Hopton was in Yoxford belong to a period which is not only earlier than the arrival in Suffolk of the Hopton family but slightly anterior to that of the Swillingtons, whose property in Yoxford and neighbourhood was acquired from 1288 onwards.

Domesday Book mentions 'half a church' in Hopton. This means, of course, that one half of the profits, or the alternate right of presentation to the benefice, ran with the land there. We can trace no record of any church having existed in that part of Yoxford, but Darsham also contained 'half a church' at the time of the

Conqueror's survey. Seeing that Hopton, when it extended as far north as the river, must have adjoined Darsham (for the river is the boundary between Yoxford and Darsham from the Middleton border to a point on the Yoxford side of the railway embankment), we may not be far wrong in guessing that the church of Darsham is the church referred to. There was other connection between the parishes in matters manorial and ecclesiastical: Alwin the priest, lord of Stickland manor in Edward the Confessor's time, held also a small manor in Darsham, and the monks of Thetford, who subsequently acquired extensive property in Darsham and a certain amount of Hopton and Stickingland, obtained the patronage of both Darsham and Stickingland churches.

Before the Norman conquest a manor in England seems to have implied little more than a homestead with its appurtenances, including the service of those who cultivated the land. The vill or township was the unit of taxation, and vill's were combined into Hundreds. Domesday gives us the measurements of vill's, and the sum paid by each for every pound contributed by the Hundred in a gelt or taxation. Yoxford paid 3d., and Stickingland 7½d. in a gelt: i.e., those were the shares borne by these vill's of each pound leviable upon the entire Hundred of Blything. Hopton's share and dimensions are not given, from which we conclude that for purposes of taxation it was reckoned as part of Stickingland as early as 1086. The Sibton cartulary, put together, apparently, in the reign of Edward III, contains a table indicating that for suit of Hundred some of the smaller townships were still combined.

Lord John Hervey, in his translation of the Suffolk entries in Domesday, has also a suggestion as to

WARABETUNA

which he would identify with Ubbeston. Copinger follows him in this case ² as in the other.³ But while Domesday has six entries of Warabetuna, with some very slight variations of spelling, it has Upbestuna separately, which does not appear to be identical with the others, and must be Ubbeston. Copinger also indexes two items under 'Rapton (Wrabet, Wrabetun)' both being twelfth century deeds. We have examined these at the British Museum. One (Harl. 84.A.10) is a grant to the monks of Sibton Abbey, by Norman son of Ralph of Peasenhall, of land including 'that which they hold of Hamo son of Lefwin in Wrabeton'. Hamo of Valoignes was a landholder in Wrabetun at the time of Domesday. The other (Campb. XXIII.5) is difficult to decipher owing to its very bad condition, but among the witnesses is one whose

² *Suffolk Records and MSS.*, vol. v, pp. 243, 298.

³ *The Manors of Suffolk*, vol. ii, p. 12.

name looks like Robert de Crec, and the seal is similar to that attached to Norman's grant, so that this may well be his father's charter, to which he makes reference ('sicut carta pris mei eis testatur'). Norman de Pesenhal, presumably descendant of the Norman who held two manors in Peasenhall temp. Edward the Confessor and William I, witnessed other charters about 1190, and Robert de Crec was concerned in a cause heard 1 John (1199-1200). *The Victoria County History*, while leaving Warabetuna unidentified, refers to a charter of Henry II (Cal. Chart. Rolls, ii, 95) as mentioning Warabetona.

Davy's full copy of a Sibton Abbey cartulary formerly in the possession of Dr. Fisher, bishop of Salisbury, who married Miss Scrivener of Sibton, includes a grant to the monks, by Roger Bigod earl of Norfolk, of 20 acres in Wrabeton called Cudwines, and 1 ac. 1 ro. in Keleshal (Kelsale), in exchange for 21 ac. 1 ro. of their demesne which he had enclosed in his park of Kelsale. The entry is headed '21 ac. in Stikingland', showing (though of this we have other evidence) that Kelsale Park extended into what is now Yoxford. Norman de Pesenhal was one of the witnesses. Anyone who can identify 'Cudwines', perhaps under a name much altered since the 12th century, will have fixed part, at least, of Wrabeton. It might be the same as Godwin's. There is more than one Godwin in the Domesday of Blything Hundred.

But the Sibton court rolls at the Ipswich and East Suffolk Record Office afford, though not at so early a date, more definite evidence. On Thursday after the Assumption, 6 Hen. VII (1491), we find mention of lands 'in Sibeton in vico voc' Wrabeton' (in Sibton in the township called Wrabeton), and on Tuesday in Easter week, 8 Hen. VII (1493), of 'Wrabeton strete in Sibeton'. In the extreme south of Sibton, about two-thirds of a mile from the Peasenhall boundary and quite close to the boundaries of Rendham on the south-west, Kelsale on the south-east, and Yoxford on the east, is a district known by the curious name of 'Rotten End'. Sixteenth-century documents relating to the transfer of Kelsale Park mention 'Yoxford Ende', but we have identified this separately as a piece of land near the Lodge, and venture to put forward, as a conjecture worth investigating, that 'Rotten', as applied to the area near Rendham, is a mutilated form of Raption or Wrabeton. If Rotten End can be regarded as the south end of Wrabeton, what are called the Half-way Houses, farther north, which lie on the road which at that point goes along the border between Peasenhall and Sibton, might be 'Wrabeton Strete'. But we must not lay too much stress on the word 'street'. Although originally the Roman *via strata*, a paved road, it is used in Suffolk for any group of houses, even far from a highway. Shingle Street, on the seashore

south of Hollesley, is a noticeable instance. The road now referred to (between enclosures 98 and 159 in the ordnance map as revised in 1903) becomes Church Street, Peasehall, before it joins the main road; and as Domesday, while mentioning manors and lands in Peasehall, says nothing about a church there but refers to one in Wrabetuna, Peasehall church may be the one. Certain lands in Wrabeton could be in Sibton even if part of Wrabeton, including the church, was in Peasehall.