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A WEALDEN CHARTER OF A.D. 814.

(Harleian Charter 83 A. I.)

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THE Charter, which is the subject of this Paper, contains the names of a number of places in the Weald of Kent early in the ninth century; and since this district is nearly unnoticed even in the Domesday Survey, this early list is of great interest.

The Charter runs as follows :—

✠ In nomine Dei summi Igitur anno dominice incarnationis deccxiiii regni uero nostri a Deo concessi xviij Ego Coenwulf rex Merciorum Suinoðe meo comite terram i aratrorum in propriam possessionem 7 libertatem sibimet uel suis heredibus in perpetuum fruiere perdonabo scilicet juxta silua quae dicitur CÆRT cum campis cum siluis cum pascuis cum pratis xii carra de feno capientia cum una molina 7 Paldbera Djothtringden 7 ðorningabyra 7 beardingaleag 7 focgingabyra 7 speldgisella 7 hegeðonhyrs 7 hriðden 7 cunden 7 begcegebyra 7 sponleoge 7 ðetfirðe bituihn longanleag 7 ðem suðtune 7 ða snadas illuc pertinentia cum (*cum*) antiquis terminibus liberabo predictam terram a notis causis 7 ignotis a magnis uel modicis actiam nomina testium infra adscribuntur pro cautella futuri ambiguitatis augentis hanc donationem meam a misericordissimo domino aeternam benedictionem consequantur. Si quis uero regum uel principum seu prefectum hunc libertatem meam infringere aut minuere uoluerit sciat se separatim esse in die iudicii a consortio sanctorum nisi digne emendauerit ante reatum suum.

(Witnesses Subscription.)

[*Facsimiles of Ancient Charters in British Museum, Part II.*, 1876. *Birch Cart. Sax.*, vol. i., p. 480, No. 343.]

The following translation was made for me by Mr. H. J. Bell of the British Museum, who remarks: "The Latin of

the Charter is very bad indeed, and in some places means nothing as it stands, but my rendering, I think, gives the sense intended"—

(*Translation.*)

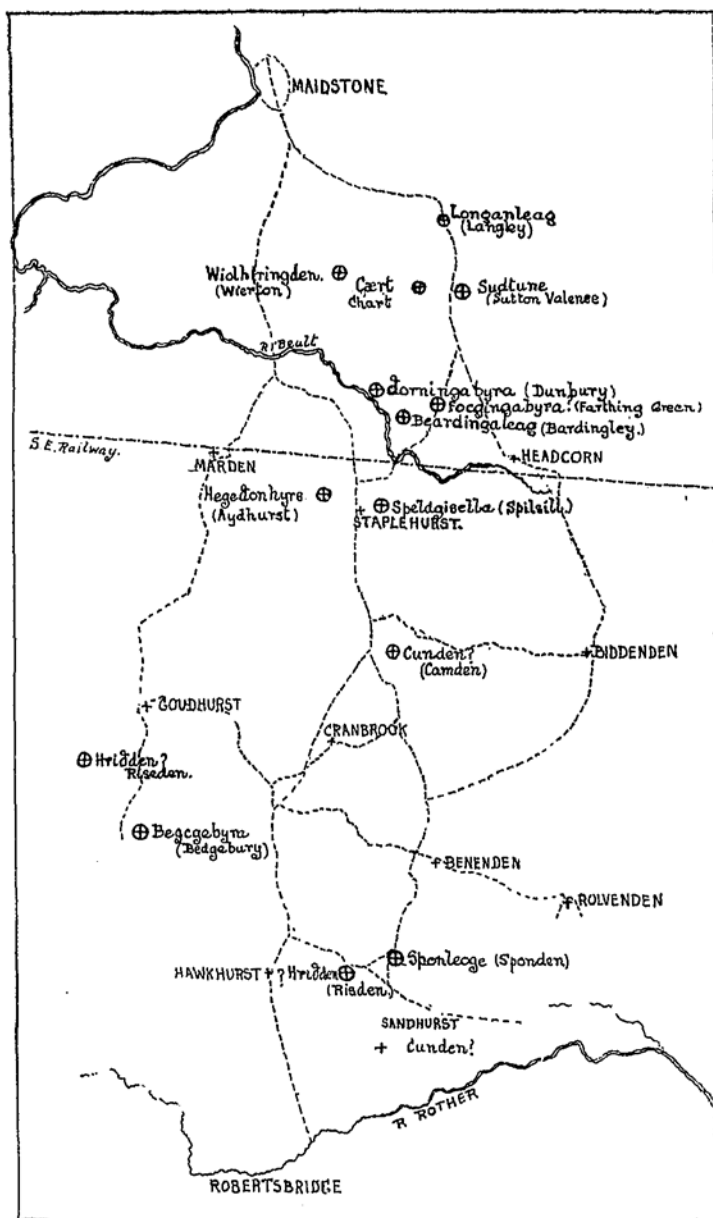
In the name of the Most High God: Therefore in the year of our Lord's incarnation 814, and of our reign granted by God the 18th, I, Coenwulf, King of the Mercians, to Suithnothe my companion (comes = earl) will grant one plough land to his own possession and liberty, to be enjoyed for ever by himself or his heirs, namely (that) next to the wood which is called Cært, with fields, with woods, with pastures, with meadows yielding (?) 12 cart(loads) of hay* with one mill and the pannage (waldbera) of Wiohltringden and Thorningabyra and Beardingaleag and Focgingabyra and Speldgisella and Hegethonhyrs and Hrithden and Cunden and Begcebyra and Sponleoge and the frith† between Longanleag and the South town (ðet firhde bituihn longanleag 7 ðem suðtune) and the plots of land‡ thereto appertaining with the ancient boundaries. I will acquit the aforesaid land from known causes and unknown, from great or small. Moreover, the names of the witnesses are added below for a guarantee in case of dispute (that) fortifying this my grant they may obtain from the most merciful Lord eternal benediction. But if any King or prince or ruler shall infringe or lessen this my liberty let him know that he is cut off on the Day of Judgement from the fellowship of the Saints unless before his indictment he has made worthy reparation.

As far as I am aware, this Charter is not alluded to in any Kentish history or topographical work; and the suggested identification of the place-names in the Official Catalogue are in many cases so hopelessly impossible, that it is best not to discuss them. On the other hand, in the *Index of Charters and Rolls*, by H. J. Ellis and F. B. Bickley (1900), the editors appear to have got on the right track, tentatively identifying the parishes in which the places are

* The sentence as it stands has no construction, but I take it that this is what is meant: *Capientia* for *Capientibus*.—(Note by H. J. B.)

† This is probably the meaning of firhde, but, from the *Oxford Engl. Dict.*, s.v. frith, it should be firhðe.—H. J. B.

‡ ða snadas; see Bosworth and Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dict.* s.v. *snaed*: "a piece of land within defined limits, but, without enclosures, a limited circumscribed woodland or pasturage, or (?) a clearing in a wood.—H. J. B. It should be noted many woods in Kent are still called *Snowil*.—H. S. C.



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE HARLEIAN CHARTER 83 A. I.

situated, though in most cases not giving their present names—considering possibly that such identifications are provocative of controversy.

Nevertheless, I am quite certain that a number of these places can be identified with certainty, and others with a considerable degree of probability; and in any case the printing of the list may lead to research which may identify those that are now doubtful.

1. CAERT. Undoubtedly Chart, now called Chart Sutton (Certh in Domesday). Waldbera, *i.e.*, Pannage.
2. WIOLHTRINGDEN. This is the most doubtful of any. Looking at the four or five names which follow, four of which I claim to be certain, I am inclined to identify this as the modern Wierton in Boughton Monchelsea. But there was also Wornden in Marden (Furley's *History of the Weald*, ii., 832) and Witherden farm, north of Headcorn; but the last is probably modern, taking its name from the Witherden family.
3. THORNINGABYRA. This is Dunbury, a lonely farm on the edge of the sluggish River Beult. We find it as a family name in the Marden Court Rolls. Robert Donyngberi, 48 Edward III., and John Dunbery, 22 Edward IV.* I regard this identification as not open to question.
4. BEARDINGALEAG. Bardingley, a similar farm less than a mile south-east of the last.
5. FOGGINGABYRA. This is much more uncertain. There is no Folkingbury now in this district, but there was apparently such a place-name in Marden in the time of Edward I. (Folkingbery; see Furley's *History of the Weald*, vol. ii., p. 133), when it belonged to Lord William de Valence of Sutton. I am strongly inclined to believe that the name now exists in a corrupted form in Farthing Green, which is close to Bardingley and Dunbury.

* See author's *Loddenden and the Ushornes of Loddenden*, 1914, p. 39.

6. **SPELDGISELLA.** This is Spilsill, Spilshill, etc. (various spellings), a small manor half a mile east of Staplehurst Church. As a family name it was Speldesell in time of Edward III.
7. **HEGETHONHYRS.** The interesting old timber manor house of Aydhurst was about half a mile north-east of Staplehurst Church, and was only pulled down a few years ago. It was a *denne* and a manor under Sutton Valence. It was spelled Heythehurst in the time of Edward I., which is fairly near the A.S. form, and Haithhurst *temp.* Edward III.
- 8 and 9. **HRITHIDEN** and **CUNDEN.** There is Riseden near Goudhurst and Ridsen between Hawkhurst and Sandhurst, Camden between Cranbrook and Staplehurst, and Cumbden in Sandhurst. I have marked both on the map. I am inclined to the Sandhurst identification as forming a group with Sponleoge *q.v.*
10. **BEGCGEBYRA.** Unquestionably Bedgebury.
11. **SPONLEOGE.** The only place I can suggest is Sponden in Sandhurst, and this is probably correct, the "ley" having been dropped.
- 12 and 13. **LONGANLEAG** and **SUDTUNE.** Undoubtedly Langley and Sutton Valence; and the "frith between" them must be the western extremity of "Kingswood."

It will be seen that the majority of these names are identifiable with tolerable certainty; and it is most interesting to find isolated farms still bearing the names they had eleven hundred years ago. Langley (Langulei) and Sudtone are both in Domesday, but there is nothing about the others.

Lastly, as to the Charter itself, Mr. J. A. Herbert of the Department of MSS., British Museum, calls my attention to the fact that Bond and Thompson, after a careful examination of all the Charters, formed the opinion that Harl. Charter 83 A. I. is not the original Charter of 814 A.D., but a copy made in the late ninth century.