

BRAMSHAW AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

[From the *Hampshire Observer*.]

Bramshaw and its neighbourhood were certainly of some importance early in the history of Hampshire. The county boundary extends for some miles through this parish, and as this boundary was in all probability marked out in early Anglo-Saxon time, it follows that the natural features of the neighbourhood must have been considered adapted for this boundary when the limits of the counties of Hants and Wilts were marked out. Two boundary oaks formerly existed north-west of the church which marked the limits of the forest as well as the division of the shires. The church stands on a mound which also marks the county boundary. As the road likewise from Bramshaw to Brook marks this boundary its antiquity is proved thereby.

There is another consideration which leads us to conclude that a second road passing through part of this parish is of very ancient date, viz., the early importance of the ford over the Avon at Fordingbridge. Fords are natural crossing places, and consequently there must have been traffic from the ford of the Test westward to the ford of the Avon at Fordingbridge as long as this part of the country has been inhabited. From the circumstance that Fordingbridge is almost due west of Nursling, and that Roman remains have been found in this neighbourhood on or near the line between these places it would appear probable that a Roman road passed into Dorsetshire across the Avon at Forde, the ancient name of Fordingbridge. There is some documentary evidence in support of this view for in the perambulation of the forest in the time of Edward I, the king's road which leads between Fritham and Fordingbridge is mentioned. In the perambulation also of the New Forest made in 1670 "the highway that used to go

from Fritham to Fordingbridge" is again mentioned, so that this highroad which was in use in the 13th century had become disused before the 17th century. This road westward from Brook can still be followed to Fritham, and beyond Fritham it probably passed through Sloden and Blissford. The remains of Roman potteries which have been found prove that some road of the kind was used, as this part of the Forest was a manufacturing district.

Both Bramshaw and Fritham are mentioned in Domesday Book, Bramshaw being included in the Wiltshire survey. Fritham was apparently an early settlement of some kind. The area of land under cultivation at either place was small both in the time of King Edward and at the time of the Domesday Survey, a circumstance which shows that the district was more or less naturally forestland. Bramshaw has derived its name from the Anglo-Saxon word *brembel*, a bramble. The original form of the name still survives in the name Bramble Hill. Its name is variously spelt in the records. In Domesday Book it is spelt *Bramessage*. In Henry III. time *Bromeshawe*; in the time of Edward I. *Bremelschae*; in the time of Edward II. *Brembelshawe*; in the time of Edward III. *Brembelschare*, *Brembulshaghe*, and *Brembelshawe*; in Richard II. reign *Bremelshawe*; in the time of Henry VIII. *Bremshawe*. The latter part of the name is perhaps derived from the Anglo-Saxon *haga*, a hedge or haw, denoting a place hedged in, or the Anglo-Saxon *hawe*, a view or prospect. If from the latter then Bramblehawe or hill must have given the name to the place.

The entry relating to *Bramshaw* in Domesday Book is as follows:—"Ulnod holds half an assed hide in Bramessage. His father held it. Here is half a ploughland. It is worth 10s" "Edmund hold half a yardland in Bramessage. It is worth 30d." The entries are included among those relating to the lands of the king's thanes in Wiltshire. The land at Bramshaw was held by two of these thanes; as they had Saxon names, and one of them succeeded his father, it is probable no confiscation took place at Bramshaw after the Norman Conquest.

Fritham, which is now part of this parish, gave its name to one of the smaller hundreds of Hampshire before the Norman Conquest. The hundred was absorbed in other hundreds and disappeared after the Norman Survey. It is entered in Domesday Book as *Fruham*, probably an error by the Norman French scribe to whom the name would be strange. The word *frith* denotes frankpledge, and it may have been that Fritham was so named from being the Frithborh of the small Jutish settlement in the New Forest. Fritham Hundred included a number of small places such as Battramsley, Hinchelsey, Fritham itself and Pilley, scattered through the forest—and for the separation of these tythings to form a hundred of their own there must have been a cause. That cause may well have been connected with the small Jutish settlements united in a frithborh of their own. The earliest mention of Fritham is in a grant by king Cuthred to the Old Minster at Winchester of land at Fritham, A.D. 749. The Domesday entries are as follows:—"Hugh de Port holds a hide in Fruham and Hugh de St. Quintin holds it of him. Wislac held it in parcenary. Then it was assessed at one hide, now at nothing, because it is all in the forest except one acre of meadow. There are two ploughlands and the value is 30 shillings." It is worthy of note that this land at Fritham which was held in the time of King Edward by the Saxon thane Wislac, was at the time of the great survey held by the Norman knight Hugh de St. Quintin under the great Hampshire baron Hugh de Port. The other entries in Domesday Book are:—"Hunta had a hide in Frithim but it is now in the forest. Aluric the Little had a hide and 2 yardlands but they are now in the forest. Sawin had one yardland, but it is now in the forest, except one acre of meadow which is held by Hugh de St. Quintin. Hunta and Pagen held 2½ yardlands, but they are now in the forest, except an acre of meadow held by Aluric." Fritham was held in 7 Edward II. by Queen Margaret, the widow of King Edward I., with Canterton as one manor or lordship, and from her by Nicholas de Canterton. In the 3rd year of Edward I. both the tythings of Fritham and Canterton were fined or amerced because their tything men did not fully appear at a Forest inquisition known as the

"Placiti de viridi." which was held in that year. In 1334 for the Taxation of the 10th and 15th for the French war of Edward III. Fritham paid 9s, and Canterton paid 13s. 10d. Fritham was held in the time of Edward III. by Henry de Welles, and the manor was in that reign escheated and so passed into the possession of the Crown as appears by an inquisition held in the 26th year of Edward III.

The church of Old Sarum had a peculiar interest in the tithes of the New Forest. Henry I. gave by Charter to the canons of the church of Sarum all the tithes of the New Forest and of other royal forests in Hants, Wilts, Berks, and Dorset. The forests of Pancet (Pamber), of Andover, Hurstbourne, are specially mentioned. Henry II. in 1161 extended the privileges of the canons of Sarum. Among other privileges Henry II. gave them the church of Bramshaw, which is mentioned in his charter dated 1161; this is as far as I know the earliest mention of a church at Bramshaw. The architectural remains of the present building are of the Early English date, about the same time as Salisbury Cathedral.

I am not able to trace fully the descent of the manor of Bramshaw, but I can give some information concerning it, which may serve as a nucleus around which to gather other details concerning its history. It appears for several centuries to have been held by a family known as de St. Omer, who also held estates in the eastern counties. This family derived its name from St. Omer a town, now in the French department of Pas de Calais. In the reign of Henry III. Bramshaw was held by William de St. Omer, who, by his attorney, brought up before one of the superior courts and apparently from the court leet of the Abbot of Beaulieu, Richard Lustemund, of Lyndhurst, Richard Pickenet and others to prove their right to hunt in his wood at Bromeshawe, and also their right to cut down his trees in the same wood, which they had done and taken away to the great injury of the said William de St. Omer, and a precept was issued restraining them. The de St. Omers were settled at Britford, near Salisbury, in the time of Edward I. Thomas de St. Omer was required to prove his right to the important privileges of assize of bread and ale, view of frank pledge in Britford, and also free gallows on his

lands—*i.e.*, the privileges of a Court Leet. He showed that he held these privileges by right of a grant made to Petronilla de Tenny at Exeter. The manor of Bramshaw was held with Britford as one manor in the time of Edward II. It was then known as Britford-Brembelshawe, and is so entered in the "*Nomina Villarum*" of Edward II. The Charter Rolls show that Edward III. granted to William de St. Omer a messuage, 22 acres of land, three acres of pasture, and three acres of wood with their appurtenances at Bramshaw, and pasturage in the forest, which had reverted to the king under somewhat peculiar circumstances. This farm or small estate had been held by a man named John le Whyte, of Brembleshawe, and he had committed a felony of some sort; what it was is not stated, but as a result of this felony the record states what his end was in the words—"qui p. feloniam suspensus fuit," *i.e.*, John was hanged; and his land was granted to William de St. Omer on payment to the king of 30s. 8d. per annum. John was perhaps hanged on the gibbet which stood near Brook, in the place still known as Gibbet Wood. From the St. Omer family, Bramshaw passed to others who were probably connected with them. Walter Russington held the manor in the latter part of the reign of Edward III. In the 17th year of Richard II it was held by Richard Horn and Elizabeth his wife, and apparently he was succeeded by Elizabeth de St. Omer, who died, seised of Bremelshale manor, in 1404. There is an entry concerning the revenue of the church of Bramshaw among the Inquisitiones Nonarum about the year 1340. Three parishioners of Bramshaw formed the jury, viz., Henry at Penn, John Wodenhull, and John at Stoke, and they declared that the value of the ninth of sheaves, wool, and lambs was 68s. 8d. per annum. They also said that the church had a virgate of land worth 3s. 4d. per annum, three acres of pasture worth 8s. per annum, and that the oblations and small tithes were worth 20s. per annum. In 1670, when claims were made on the New Forest and entered on the Lord Chief Justice in Eyre's Court, the Manor of Bramshaw, then also known as Moore Close, was held by Jonathan Rivett, gentleman, and he claimed forest privileges for himself and his

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tenants on account of 180 acres of land in the parish of Bramshaw, in the County of Wilts, without the bounds of the forest. The Dean and Chapter of Salisbury also claimed their forest rights on account of the Rectory of Bramshaw and 100 acres of land in the County of Southampton, within the bounds of the forest.

The north side of the church of Bramshaw in the broadway that goes up from thence to Platford was the boundary of the forest as declared according to the perambulation made in that year, 1670.
