

## MICHELDEVER.

[From the *Hampshire Independent*.]

The visit of the Hampshire Field Club to Micheldever brings home to us the circumstance of how little has been written of the history of this interesting place. The histories of Hampshire tell us nothing about it, and yet its actual history, although for the most part probably uneventful, extends over a thousand years. Its human antiquities, however, sink into insignificance when compared with its geological record, which tells of the formation of these chalk valleys and the removal by natural agencies of those beds of sand and clay which once covered the chalk in this part of Hampshire, and of which some patches still remain, at East Stratton, a mile or two to the eastward. I have come upon a reference to the debris of these Tertiary sands at Micheldever a thousand years ago in the metion of a sandpit in an Anglo-Saxon Charter defining the boundaries of this manor, but as rain and local floods, and other natural agencies have been at work in addition to man's operations for nearly a thousand years since sand was dug there by the Anglo-Saxons, there must be less of it on the chalk now than there was in those days.

### MICHELDEVER IN CELTIC AND ROMAN TIME.

The story of Micheldever and its manor is a long one. It has a pre-historic interest and it has a long unwritten history. Its earliest inhabitants probably selected this site as the headquarters of their clan or tribe, from similar considerations to those which were noticed at the last meeting of the club at East Meon—for here again, we find an ancient village settlement at the springs or highest water source of the stream we have been following to-day. Micheldever, or Muchledever, is so named from being at certain seasons a place of much water. We shall pass near some of the highest springs presently, and any old inhabitant of this village will tell you of the great volume of water which they occasionally send out. The word *dever* or *dufr* (water) is a Celtic word more resembling the

Cymric or Welsh than the Gaelic language, as spoken at the present day—but this word may itself have become modified from a still earlier form, and may possibly have come down from a pre-Celtic people, whose name for water was oure or dour. We only find a few traces in Hampshire of a pre-Celtic race, *i.e.*, those people who did not cremate their dead, as those did who erected the tumuli we find in this country; certainly the round tumuli all show signs of cremation. This still earlier race, whose remains are so few, were those who buried their dead in a flexured or sitting posture in cists, often scooped out of the chalk or made of other material. Of these I have records of a few interments, and from one of these, some years ago, I was fortunately able to secure the bones for the Hartley Museum. This mode of burial can be traced from Britain through Western France to the Iberian peninsula or ancient Spain, and thence to North Africa. From this circumstance these people are known to anthropologists as the ancient Iberians or ancient Basques, and they called water oure, as shown in the name of the river Adour in the Basque country of Southern France. In this country, we have our river Oure and our village of Ouerton or Overton, and the earliest name of this place may have been a word compounded of dour as Micheldour, or Mucheldeure, in the same way as Andover appears to have been also known as Andeure, the letters u and v being interchangeable. Micheldever still has one remarkable survival of Roman time in the great high road about a mile to the eastward, which connected Winchester with Silchester, and which is still used as a main thoroughfare. It is probably the road which is mentioned in a charter nearly a thousand years ago as the law path or army path. Another remarkable survival of Roman influence prevailed in the outlying dependent manors of this great manor of Micheldever until the time of the Norman Conquest. These outlying dependent manors were those of Popham, Cranbourn, Drayton and Stratton, and in Anglo-Saxon time they were held, by what Sir Henry Spelman, who wrote on tenures of land two centuries ago, calls Colonial tenures, *i.e.*, the holders of the land were in the same position as the Roman coloni, they could not sell their land or remove from the land without losing it. The Domesday record states that these places were

held in the time of King Edward the Confessor as four manors by four freemen, who could not remove without losing the land according to the testimony of the jury of the hundred. Only a few examples of this tenure existed in Hampshire at the time of the Conquest.

This great manor of Micheldever, with its dependent manors, appears to have been ancient demesne land of the kings of Wessex, and there can be little doubt that it was the land which King Alfred specially intended as the endowment of his projected new Abbey of Hyde or the New Minster. Certain it is that his son King Edward the Elder, who carried out his father's intentions, conveyed Micheldever to the Abbey of Hyde in the first year of his reign.

#### MICHELDEVER IN ITS RELATION TO ENGLISH HISTORY.

This charter of Edward the Elder is dated 901, so that Micheldever has nearly a thousand years of history. The charter states that the king gave this land, amounting to 100 hides, to the Abbey "for the good of his soul," and the gift was witnessed by many of the chief men of the kingdom. The moot, or meeting place, for the hundred is mentioned in this charter. In 904 the same king made a supplementary grant of land adjoining his former grant, this latter being specially given for the purposes of the monks' refectory. This second grant was what is now Stoke Charity, and the extensive lands of these and other grants were peaceably held by the Abbey until the time of the Norman Conquest. At that time Hyde Abbey was ruled by an abbot named Elfwy, who was a brother of Earl Godwin and uncle of King Harold. Under such circumstances, when the Norman invasion was imminent, the Abbey resolved to support the cause of Harold, and twelve monks of Hyde took up arms and joined the Saxon army with twenty other men-at-arms, some of whom were no doubt drawn from this manor of Micheldever. The monks were all slain on the field of Hastings or Senlac, and probably many of the men-at-arms also. The Conqueror on learning that the monks had fought against him is said to have remarked that the "abbot was worth a barony and each monk worth a manor." He took from the Abbey the lordship of

Andover and several great manors. In addition, he laid his hand heavily on Micheldever. I have already mentioned at Stoke Charity that 200 years afterwards the title of the de Ferity family to that manor was still that derived from the right of Conquest, and is entered in our National Records as "ex conquestu Angl." (in right of the conquest of England). That part of this great domain which had been given to the Abbey of Hyde by King Edward the Elder for the purposes of the monks' refectory was taken from them, and never returned; while, in addition, the Conqueror worked his vengeance on the abbey whose military monks died while fighting against him on the field of Senlac, by imposing on Micheldever manor for the future the burden of three knights' fees. There appears to me to have been stern irony in this vengeance, in thus imposing military burdens on the monks of that abbey whose predecessors dared to assume military functions, although in the defence of their country. As we study the antiquities of our country parishes in Hampshire we have brought before us very forcibly many circumstances in the ancient life of England which the history of our towns does not bring out so well. One country place has archæological associations of one kind and one of another. Micheldever brings before us the consequences of the Norman Conquest, and brings home to us the nature and burden of knight's service. This military tenure of land prevailed in England from the Norman Conquest until the time of the Commonwealth, when the great political revolution swept it away, and on the restoration of the Stuarts an Act of Parliament was passed, 12 Charles II (so quoted), *i.e.*, 1660, which abolished it by statute. Since that time the national defence has been provided for by other means. We may feel quite sure that this military tenure of land at Micheldever was intended by the Conqueror to be no nominal matter, and we may also feel sure that the Abbot of Hyde was often called upon during the reigns of the Norman and Plantagenet kings to send his Micheldever contingent to their frequent wars. We can realise to some extent what this feudal tenure was like, from the number of writs requiring his military service which the Abbot received during one reign, that of Edward II, a record of which exists.

In the second year of Edward II the Abbot was summoned to send his service against the Scots, to assemble at Carlisle on August 22.

The dependent manors of Micheldever, which were held of the Abbot by knight's service were Cranbourn, Drayton, Popham and Stratton, and about this time the knight of Cranbourn was Sir Hugh de Braiboef, the Knight of Drayton was Sir Robert Woodlock, the Knight of Popham Sir John de Popham, and the Knight of Stratton, Sir Richard de Stratton, all of whom held their lands under the Abbey and were liable for service.

In the third year of Edward II the Abbey received another writ, ordering his service to meet for further war against the Scots, at Newcastle-on-Tyne, on September 29.

In the fourth year of the same king the Micheldever knights were ordered by the Abbot's writ to assemble at Tweedmouth on September 19, and probably owing to their deaths or wounds in previous campaigns the Abbot was unable to supply three knights, and so he begged the king to allow the services required of the three knights from this manor to be performed by one knight and four men-at-arms, with six barbed horses, and his request appears to have been allowed.

In the seventh year of Edward II he received another writ ordering his knights to assemble at Berwick-on-Tweed, on June 10. This was in the year 1314. Fourteen days later the battle of Bannockburn was fought. Two years later the Micheldever knights had to meet the army at Newcastle-on-Tyne on July 10, the day being subsequently postponed by another writ to August 10.

In the eleventh year of the same king the Abbot was ordered to send his knights to Newcastle-on-Tyne by September 15.

In the twelfth year of Edward II another writ ordered them to assemble at York on August 25, all these wars being against the Scots.

In the fifteenth year of the same king the knights were required to assemble for military service at Coventry, on February 28, to fight against the adherents of the Earl of Lancaster, who was in rebellion.

A year later the Abbot was ordered to send his service to Newcastle-on-Tyne by July 1, for further war against the Scots, but probably owing to all of them and their available substitutes being killed by this time, the Abbot was subsequently discharged from sending his service. In the next year, on receipt of another writ, the Abbot still appears to have had no knights to send, and so was allowed to pay a fine in lieu of the service of his knights from this manor.

In the 18th year of Edward II he was ordered to send his knights to Portsmouth for service in Gascony, but was subsequently again discharged from this duty. Happily as regards all this fighting the times are changed, so that to-day we visit Micheldever in peace and bring some of the Scots with us.

One of the National Records has preserved for us the names of about 24 of the socmen of the Abbot of Hyde, at Micheldever, about the year A.D. 1290. These socmen were small farmers, who paid a rent to the Abbey in lieu of the manorial services they or their predecessors would otherwise have to render, and among these small tenants were those bearing the names of Herbert, Galfrey, Crock, Nigel, Clavig, Auden, Corveiser, Turville, Dunton, Grimbaud, Husseley, Alan, Marshall, Pistor, Ducket, Cheldewell, Lugman, Cocus, and Bere. Some at least of these names are names of Hampshire families at the present day, and may, perhaps, some of them, still be found in this neighbourhood.

There is no mention of a church at Micheldever in the Domesday Book, but from the circumstance that the manor was Abbey land, it is very probable that there was one here. The great Abbey of Hyde would scarcely leave their great manor without a parochial church, while the Priory of St. Swithun, which held the Manor of Wonston, had a parish church there. Probably, therefore, this was one of the omissions in that Survey which we know occurred in several other instances. The parochial clergy at Micheldever, or the secular clergy as they would be called, were well endowed in early time, for in 1291 the rectorial revenue of Micheldever Church amounted to £66 13s. 4d. per annum, and the vicarial revenue to £10 13s 4d., the value, I presume, in the main of the great and small tithes respectively. This would suffice to

maintain here a considerable staff of secular or parish clergy, but in the reign of Edward II a change occurred, and on the application of the Abbot, the king granted a license to the Abbey to appropriate, notwithstanding the provisions of the statute of Mortmain, some one church in the diocese of Winchester with the consent of the Bishop, in place of the church of Collingbourn Pewsey, in the county of Wilts, which had been made over by the Abbot and convent of Hyde to the Dean and Chapter of Salisbury, in substitution of an annual payment of £20 from the Abbey. The church of Micheldever was that one which was thus appropriated, and the Bishop's license for this appropriation recites that the revenues of the Abbey had become insufficient to meet the demands upon it arising from the large number of poor, sick, and infirm persons resorting to its hospital.

Some centuries later I think the Abbey of Hyde must have built the fine tower of the church which exists at the present day, and which is one of the finest towers of the Perpendicular style we have in the county.

On the dissolution of Hyde Abbey, the manor of Micheldever was given to Thomas Wriothesley, afterwards Earl of Southampton and Lord Chancellor, whose sepulchral monument is in Titchfield church. It was held successively by the Earls of Southampton, viz., Henry, the 2nd Earl, the supporter of Mary Queen of Scots, Henry, the 3rd Earl, the friend and patron of Shakespeare, and Thomas, the 4th Earl. On his death it passed into the family of Russell by the to Lord William Russell.

From the Russell family this ancient domain passed by purchase to the Baring family, and is now held by the Earl of Northbrook, the representative of that family.

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