

The Abbey, the Monk and Domesday Wandsworth

Keith Bailey examines the English holdings of the Norman abbey of St Wandrille and assesses the significance of its solitary hide of land at Wandsworth in a broader context.

Introduction

This article discusses the evidence in Domesday Book (DB) for the smaller of the two Wandsworth holdings, the one that lay west of the Wandle (Old English *Hlidaburna*, 'loud [fast-flowing] stream'). East of the river, the great Battersea-Wandsworth estate belonged to Westminster Abbey, although there was a single open-field system, farmed communally by all the tenants.¹ The manors of Down and Dunsford in west Wandsworth were sandwiched between the seventy-two hides of the Westminster estate and the Archbishop of Canterbury's eighty-hide Wimbledon-Mortlake estate. Whether either of the latter had once included the intervening area requires further research.

The shorter of the two DB entries for *Wandesorde* reads as follows:

The Abbot of St Wandrille holds Wandsworth through the monk Ingulf. Swein held it from the King [Edward], and could go where he wished. Then it answered for one hide, now nothing. There are three villeins and two bordars with one plough. It was and is worth 20 shillings.

In so far as the data are presented in a highly compressed and formulaic fashion, this is a typical Domesday entry, posing as many questions as it answers. Nevertheless, it is worth the effort in trying to tease out the underlying information, not least because any sources for the eleventh century are invaluable. In order to do this, it is necessary to consider all the DB information about the Abbey of St Wandrille and its English holdings.

St Wandrille and Ingulf the Monk

St Wandrille or Wandregisl was a seventh-century Frankish cleric (c.600-68) closely associated with King Dagobert I, who founded a monastery in 649 at Fontenelle north of the Seine between Rouen and Le Havre in what is now Normandy. It followed the Rule of the Irish missionary, Columbanus.² The original abbey was destroyed by the Vikings in 852, and restored by Duke Richard of Normandy in 1006. It was therefore closely associated with the family of William I, and received a small part of the spoils in the aftermath of the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Apart from the single hide at Wandsworth, St Wandrille held lands scattered over a wide area of southern England:

1 Six hides at Dullingham in Cambridgeshire, worth £15, plus a small holding at nearby Stetchworth taken from Ely Abbey.³

2 About one-third of the borough of Wareham in Dorset, comprising forty-five standing and seventeen waste houses along with one of the churches and one hide worth 70 shillings.⁴

3 Also in Dorset, the churches of Burton Bradstock, Bridport and Whitchurch Canonycorum with four hides between them worth £7.⁵

4 Countess Judith, one of the principal female landowners in England, had given the abbey three hides at Boughton near Northampton with the King's consent, worth 40 shillings.⁶

5 Finally, three churches on the King's lands in Wiltshire: Sherston with three virgates worth 28 shillings, Upavon with 2½ hides worth the considerable sum of £10 15s, and Rushall with two hides worth 40 shillings.⁷

Monastic cells were subsequently established by St Wandrille at Upavon (see point 5 above) and at Ecclesfield in Yorkshire,⁸ and other churches were acquired in Dorset. All of these holdings appear to have been lost over the centuries, not least when the property of alien religious houses was seized during the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453).

The variations in the way that data were collected for different groups or 'circuits' of counties and their presentation in the final version of DB make it impossible to establish the complete assets of St Wandrille in England in 1086. The basic facts are summarised in the Appendix. Referring to that table, only Dullingham and Boughton may be considered 'normal' manors with a full range of resources. The direct association with the King at various locations is noteworthy, and St Wandrille clearly owed the bulk of its English holdings to the continuing patronage of the Dukes of Normandy. Equally notable is the number of quite valuable churches that the Abbey had gained. All of the churches in Wiltshire and Dorset have indications of superior status, and some may have been pre-Conquest minsters.⁹ Overall, its total worth of £42 13s represents an average £2 1s 7d per hide, about double the notional value of £1 per hide. Almost three-fifths of this is accounted for by seven churches. Dullingham may have had a church in 1086, but if so, St Wandrille soon lost control of it.¹⁰

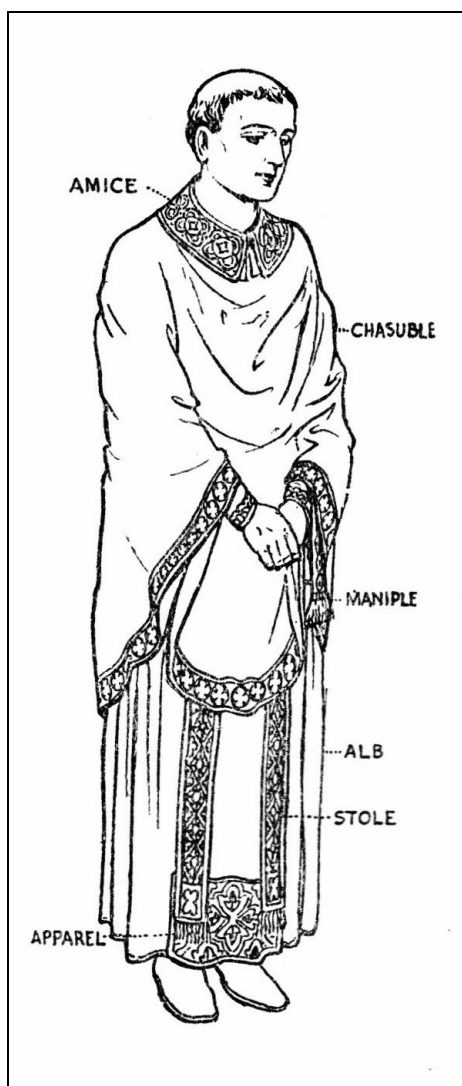
What then of St Wandrille's holding in Wandsworth? In terms of size and resources it resembles most of the others, a small agrarian unit with a single plough and a handful of peasant cultivators. There is no evidence of royal largesse here. The holder in 1066 was Swein, unfortunately a very common Anglo-Danish name. He may or may not be the same as the individual who held four hides at (Upper) Tooting in 1066, which by 1086 had passed to Westminster Abbey.¹¹ That Swein was a relative of Edward the Confessor, who had issued a writ confirming Swein's grant of four hides at Tooting to Westminster between 1057 and 1066, although by 1066 it seems to have been lost to Earl Waltheof.¹² Waltheof was a scion of the Northumbrian comital house. Around 1065 he became an earl controlling Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire. He submitted to William I in 1066, but was involved in two revolts against the new regime, and was executed in 1076. His widow, Judith, was the King's niece and remained in possession of extensive estates, however, and



A fanciful impression of the royal assessors gathering data for the Domesday survey.

was associated with St Wandrille at Boughton (see the Appendix and above). Waltheof was interred at Crowland Abbey, where a minor cult grew up, thereby providing a direct link with Ingulf the monk.¹³

Ingulf 'the monk' is much more interesting than might be thought from the DB entry for Wandsworth. An Englishman (with a name of Scandinavian origin), he was a royal scribe, who became prior of St Wandrille. It is possible that Ingulf was the monk-warden of



A Norman priest in his vestments.

the holding at Wandsworth. St Wandrille's English estates were later called priorates.¹⁴ In 1085, he was appointed abbot of the Fenland monastery of Crowland, where he remained until 1110. Ingulf was the reputed author of a chronicle, which was in fact concocted centuries later. The wording in DB implies that Ingulf acquired the Wandsworth holding as successor to Swein, and that St Wandrille was only involved indirectly. There is no subsequent mention of the latter in connection with Wandsworth, so we have no clue as to whether they lost it by virtue of Ingulf's move to Crowland, which coincided with the collection of data for DB, or in some other way.

Given that most of St Wandrille's English holdings were related to specific churches and their landed endowments, is it possible that this was the case at Wandsworth? Although a pre-Conquest date has been suggested,¹⁵ there is no direct evidence of the church prior to the mid-twelfth century, when it was under the control of Westminster Abbey and was appropriated with Battersea church to the abbey infirmary.¹⁶ Westminster already controlled the church at Battersea in 1086, as well as the eastern half of what became Wandsworth parish.¹⁷ All Saints' is west of the Wandle, however, and given the substantial population of the other Domesday estate on that side of the river, it may well have come into existence before 1066. (With Ingulf's holding, there were eight villeins and twenty-four bordars, compared to fifty-nine on the much larger Battersea estate.)

Given the large number of new churches being founded on relatively small estates in the second half of the eleventh century, it is not impossible that either the tenant-in-chief of the principal Wandsworth estate, William FitzAnsculf, or his main subtenant, Ansfrid, had decided to provide a church in Wandsworth. This would have inevitably gravitated to the control of Westminster instead of remaining with far-off St Wandrille or Ingulf, who was fully committed to Crowland after 1086. There is some later evidence that Wandsworth was once a chapel-of-ease to Battersea, although that may not reflect the situation in 1066-86.¹⁸ Ansfrid may have been one of the six sokemen who held this estate in 1066. His five hides represent the generally agreed threshold for a thegn's holding, along with a hall and a bell-tower.¹⁹ Many such individuals were adding a church to their manorial centres at this time.

Conclusion

By examining the complete English holdings of the Norman abbey of St Wandrille, it is possible to assess their solitary hide at Wandsworth in a broader context. It seems distinctly possible that it represents the land assigned to a church, along with its small group of cultivators. Unlike the abbey's holdings in Wessex, it was not especially valuable and seems more likely to have belonged to the wave of churches founded by thegns as the large *parochiae* of the old minsters were broken up. How Ingulf the monk became involved in Wandsworth was unfortunately not relevant to the

Domesday enquiry. He may have had some family connection with one of the pre-1066 sokemen who held the larger Wandsworth estate, some of whom seem to have survived as the sub-tenants of Ansculf the sheriff as late as 1086. Alternatively, he may have a connection with Waltheof and Swein through their estate at ‘Tooting’. Beyond that we can only guess.

Appendix

Place	County	Hides	Ploughs	Population	Value	Comment
Wandsworth	Surrey	1	1	3v, 2b	20	
Rushall	Wiltshire	2	1½		40	church
Sherston	Wiltshire	¾			28	church
Upavon	Wiltshire	2½	2		215	church
Wareham	Dorset	1	1	2b	70	1 church/ 62 houses
Burton Bradstock	Dorset)			(church
Bridport	Dorset) 4			140 (church
Whitchurch Canonicorum.	Dorset)			(church
Stetchworth	Cambridgeshire	¾				
Dullingham	Cambridgeshire	6	12	17v, 10b, 2s	300	
Boughton	Northamptonshire	2⅞	6	14v, 12b	40	
TOTAL		20½	23½	34v, 26b, 2s	853	

Note: ‘v’, ‘b’, ‘s’ are villeins, bordars and slaves. All values are in shillings.

Editor’s note

The illustrations accompanying this article are taken from *The Story of Saxon and Norman Britain Told in Pictures*, a book produced for schoolchildren by C. W. Airne and published c.1933 by Sankey, Hudson & Co. of Manchester.

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References

Abbreviations: DB – Domesday Book, followed by vol. and folio number / ODNB – Oxford Dictionary of National Biography / VCH – Victoria County History / WAM – Westminster Abbey Muniments

¹ D. Gerhold, *Wandsworth Past* (1998), pp. 14-16. See also *Terrier Belonging to the Survey of Wandsworth* (1755).

² See *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* (1905-13). See also ‘Histoire’ at St-Wandrille.com.

³ Dullingham: DB I, 193a; Stetchworth: DB I, 190c.

⁴ Wareham: DB I, 78c.

⁵ Burton Bradstock, etc.: DB I, 78c.

⁶ Boughton: DB I, 229a.

⁷ Sherston: DB I, 65c; Upavon: DB I, 65c; Rushall: DB I, 65a.

⁸ Ecclesfield: *VCH Yorkshire*, vol. 3 (1974), pp. 387-91; Upavon: *VCH Wiltshire*, vol. 3 (1956), pp. 396-97.

⁹ See J. Blair, ‘Secular Minster Churches in Domesday Book’ in P. H. Sawyer (ed.), *Domesday Book: A Reassessment* (1985), pp. 104-42.

¹⁰ For a general introduction to Crowland, see *VCH Lincolnshire*, vol. 2 (1906), pp. 105-18.

¹¹ Upper Tooting: DB I, 32b; *VCH Surrey*, vol. 4 (1912), pp. 92-107. Note that the precise location of this estate is unresolved, given that it has no obvious separate history after 1086. It seems to have been absorbed into the main Battersea estate of Westminster, and is therefore more likely to be situated at the southern edge of Wandsworth/Battersea, rather than in Streatham or Tooting Graveney.

¹² F. E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (1952), no. 92. King Harold II had an older brother, Swein, who, since their sister married Edward the Confessor, would have been related to the latter. He died in 1052, however, although it is not unknown for DB to use landowners' names anachronistically.

¹³ See article on Waltheof in *ODNB*.

¹⁴ See article on Ingulf in *ODNB*.

¹⁵ *Surrey Arch. Coll.* X, pt. II (1891), p. 220.

¹⁶ *WAM Domesday Charters*, ff. 570b, a papal bull of c.1157, discussed in J. G. Taylor, *Our Lady of Batersey* (1925), p. 21.

¹⁷ See discussion in Taylor, p. 6. Also a writ of William I dated 1070 x 1082, in E. Mason (ed.), *Westminster Abbey Charters 1066-c.1214* (London Record Society, vol. 25, 1988), no. 17.

¹⁸ *WAM Domesday Charters* ff. 4b-5, a papal bull of 1157, discussed in Taylor, pp. 20-21.

¹⁹ F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1947), p. 480.