

CHAPTER I.

1. FINS-HAM, IN SAXON TIMES.

The formation of parishes in England commenced about the seventh or eighth century, in the times of the Anglo-Saxon kings. The inhabited parts of the country no doubt had their small inclosures and clustered dwellings long before, but it was not until about this time that the whole country was marked out into regularly defined districts. These districts were at first called *Marches*, and many of them took their name from the head or chief of a united band, who had settled down in them for the purpose of cultivating the land. As the Christian religion took root in England, the chief or lord of the soil considered it a duty, and a meritorious act, to build a church for the good of his tenants and people ; and having done this, he next endowed it with a portion of tithe lands, or glebe, and appointed thereto a priest or minister, with a defined district, over which he was to exercise his holy functions. This district was then called a *parish*,¹ still retaining in most instances the ancient name by which it had been known ; larger divisions were called *hundreds* ;² and still larger constituted the *shire*,³ or *county*.

¹ *Parish* is from *parochia*, which is formed from two Greek words signifying *near* and *house*, or a *neighbourhood*.

² *Hundreds*, according to Hallam, were originally districts inhabited by 100 free families, and were formed before parishes. They were divisions known among the Germans, even in the time of the Roman invasion, and were no doubt introduced here by our German ancestors upon their earliest settlement.

³ *Shire* is from the Anglo-Saxon *sciran*, or *schyran*, to *divide*, and this division as to extent was the district or territory of an earl or *count* and thence called *county*. -- Rev. G. M.

The manner in which this local name was very frequently derived was by calling the place the *home* of the original first lord, or of some early settler; and very often including the word *ing*, which means *family* or *people*. Thus we have *Ant-ing-ham*, the *hame* or home of the *family* or *people* of *Ant*, or *Anant* ; and *Wals-ing-ham*, the home of the descendants of *Walsæs*. And so of many others. But greatly more numerous are the names of places having the word *ham* simply attached to some other Saxon word or name. There are about 167 of these in Norfolk alone. Amongst them is FINCHAM, and the origin of the name may be safely traced to one of two roots, namely, either to *Finc*, which is *Finch*, or else to the still more simple and elementary *Fin*.

Of *Finch* little more can be said than that it is the name of a genus of birds. But *Fin* was unquestionably a Saxon patronymic, or family name, and perhaps not uncommon amongst the various Teutonic races who colonized England in the 5th and 6th centuries. It is found in the Anglo-Saxon chronicle of that time. It occurs in old records of Lincolnshire. And there was also one Fin, a Dane, who held lands in Bucks, before the Conquest. The etymological spelling of the word is *Finn*,¹ and is still preserved and used ; a gentleman of this name, for instance, being British Consul at Jerusalem.

Moreover, we read that the Frisians of Friesland, in Northern Germany, established themselves with other tribes in England, and that Fin was their chief. We may trace their progress to this day in the names of certain places in England, such as Friez-land, Frais-thorpe, and Fry-stone, in Yorkshire; Fries-thorpe and Fries-ton, in Lincolnshire; Free-thorpe, in Norfolk; and Fris-ton

¹ The Saxon is from the old Latin *pinna*, for *penna*, a feather ; hence the *fin* of a fish, and *fan* also, all "light moving shapes"; and even *fun*, "light boisterous merriment." -- See Kemble's Pref. to Beowulf, vol II, p.24.

in Suffolk ; together with Fin-don, Fin-mere, Fin-stock, Fins-bury, Fin-borough, and Finn-ing-ham, which last two are in Suffolk. Now it is both reasonable and natural to class with these our own *Fins-ham*, which would be pronounced *Fin-sham*, or *Fincham*. And in further corroboration I may add that this original spelling of the name is found occasionally in other places ; for instance, in 1667, an administration was granted in relation to the effects of Robert *Finsham*.¹ There was also "Thomas *Fynsham*, sometyne fellow of King's Hall, Cambridge."² Blomefield's derivation, "a place where low meadows abound," is one of his speculations (or perhaps of his continuator, Mr. Parkin,) of the watery origin³ of the names of about three-fourths of the villages of this hundred, and perhaps of the county.

2. THE FIGHT AT FINNES-HAM, OR FINSBURGH.

Without seeking any further proof of what is advanced in the preceding section, that which follows is introduced as curiously illustrative of it, and likely to amuse the reader. In the celebrated legendary Saxon poem of *Beowulf*,⁴ the Dragon-Slayer, there occurs the story of a fierce feud between certain clans or tribes, of whom on one side *Fin* is the chief, and *Hnæf* with

¹ Probate Court, London.

² Cole's MSS., Br. Mus., vol. lx., p. 141.

³ "The ancients were bad etymologists, and some of the moderns, it is to be feared, do not excel them." -- Bl. in Hunstanton, vol. vii. See also the preface to vol. vi.

⁴ "Beowulf" is the oldest poem in any Germanic language. There is only one manuscript of it extant, -- viz., that in the British Museum, in very bad condition, having been injured by fire. It was written about the first half of the 11th century. *Thorpe's Edition*, pref. p. xi.

Hengist on the other. The scene has always been supposed to lie in *Friesland* or at least somewhere on the northern continent of Europe. Hengist and his men are slain by Fin, who in consequence is soon after set upon and slain by the Danes, under Guthlaf and Oslaf. *Finnes-ham* is plundered, and *Hilburgh*, Fin's queen, is carried away to the Dane's land.

But it is not only in *Beowulf* that we have the legend. There exists a fragment of another poem, entitled "The Fight at Finnes-ham," the history of which itself is curious. It was first discovered on the cover of a manuscript of Homilies, in the library of the Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth, but it is not now to be found, having probably perished under the hands of an ignorant workman in re-binding the volume.¹

I quote first a few introductory lines in *Beowulf*, which present to us a picture of the mode in which our forefathers were entertained, -- by the recital of the exploits of their ancestral heroes at their feasts. "There was song and sound "all together, the lay oft sung, when Hrothgar's minstrel, the "joy of the hall, should tell about Fin's sons, when the "invasion came upon them."²

The "*Fragment*" introduces Fin, the Frisian King, arousing his followers on seeing a glare of light in his palace, which has been fired by the Danish invaders in an attack by night. "Then the warlike young king cried aloud, This dawns not "from the east, neither does a dragon fly here. . . . Now "shines the moon, wandering under the welkin. Now deeds of "woe arise that this people's enmity will do. But wake up "now, my warriors, hold your land, think of valour, march in "array, be unanimous. Then many

¹ "The Fight at Finnesham" was first printed by Hickee, in his Thesaurus, and afterwards with *Beowulf*. -- *Thorpe*.

² Canto xvi., Kemble's Prose Translation.

“a golden decked thane arose and girded on his sword. Then
 “noble champions went to the door Then was the din
 “of slaughter in the hall. The castle floor resounded until in
 “the fight Garulf, Guthhere's son, fell first of all
 “earth-dwellers. The corpses of many good foes surrounded
 “him. The sword gleam stood, as if all Fin's castle were on
 “fire.¹

For the sequel we must revert to *Beowulf*.

“Hildeburh was bereaved of the guiltless ones, her
 “beloved children and brothers at the war play ; they fell in
 “succession, wounded by the spear. That was an afflicted
 “lady. Not in vain did Hoce's daughter (Hildeburh) mourn
 “their death, after morning came, when she might see under
 “heaven the slaughter of her kinsmen. War took away all
 “Fin's thanes, save a few only. . . . Then they pledged a
 “covenant of peace on both sides. . . . Hengest there yet
 “abode with Fin, through the death-hued winter. The sea
 “boiled with storms, wave against the wind. The winter
 “departed, the bosom of the earth was fair. The exile
 “departed, the guest from the dwellings. He thought more of
 “vengeance than of a sea voyage, if he might contrive a
 “hostile meeting Savage sword-slaughter afterwards
 “overwhelmed Fin at his own home, when Guthlaf and Oslaf
 “-- considered their portion of sorrows. Then was the hall
 “surrounded by the hosts of his foes, Fin also slain, the king
 “amongst his troop, and the queen taken. They bare to the
 “ships all the household wealth, of jewels and mounted gems,
 “of the earth king, such as they might find. at Finnesham.
 “They bare the noble lady on the sea way to the Danes, led
 her to their people.”²

The immediate purpose of these quotations will now
 appear. A work has recently been published,³ in which

¹ *Thorpe's Edition*, ii., 24, &c.

² *Beowulf*, fol. 154-5, cantos xvi., xvii.

³ *The Anglo-Saxon Sagas*, an examination of their value, &c., by Daniel W. Haigh.
 London : J. R. Smith. 1861.

these poems have been examined, “in regard to their value as “aids to history,” and the author has propounded an entirely new theory upon them. “I believe,” he says, “that all the “events here recorded (not including, of course, the giant and “dragon stories), with the exception of two, occurred in this “island, and most of them in Northumbria, during the fifth “and sixth centuries.” And as to the *Fragment, &c.*, “the “Finnesham. of the poem appears to be the place which still “bears the name in Norfolk ; in the neighbourhood of which “(about nine miles distant) the name of Fin's queen, “*Hildeburh*, occurs at *Hillborough* ; that of her father, Hoce, “at *Hockwold*, and at *Hockham* ; and that of Guthhere, one of “the heroes of this expedition, at *Gooder-stone*.”

I cannot even glance here at the arguments by which this theory is upheld. They are undoubtedly ingenious, and whatever may be the value of the author's judgment in putting such honor upon our place and neighbourhood, the coincidences are at least remarkable, and the reference far too good to be uninteresting to the present generation of the people of Fins-ham!

3. PHINCHAM, IN DOMES-DAY BOOK, AND THE 11TH CENTURY.

The only source of information in any thing like detail relating to parochial history, at so early a period as the Conquest, is the celebrated *Domes-day Book*.¹

¹ Domesday Book is a record of the lands of England, begun A.D. 1080, and completed in 1086, by order of William the Conqueror. The original is a manuscript of two volumes, a folio and a quarto, now kept in the new Record Office. It was printed in 1783 for general use by command of George III. For further information see Mr. Munford's *Analysis of Domes-day, &c.*

But even from this we can gather but very little as to the general state and condition of any parish. Of its agriculture we can only judge by the very imperfect descriptions we have of the rural economy of England at that time, in connection with the scanty particulars that are here recorded. The Saxons certainly, though a race more addicted to war and rapine, had attained to some skill in husbandry. They succeeded in keeping considerable portions of land under cultivation, and reclaimed large spaces for the pasturage of their flocks and herds.

The arrangement of the Domes-day Survey is according to the *Hundreds*. Fincham is in *Clackclose*.¹ This district is divided by the river Ouse, not in halves, but into a *Hundred and Half* ; which was its original designation. This is involved in the quotation from Spelman, in the title page of this book. "Crossing the Isis, or Ouse, [from "the Half Hundred,] we enter the Hundred of Clackclose." This Hundred now comprehends both parts, and extends to Upwell and Outwell. The lordship of Clackclose was given by the Saxon King Edgar to the Abbey of Ramsey, in Huntingdonshire, and at the Conquest was valued at 70s. per annum. Its great privileges were confirmed by Henry I. and John. In the 3rd Edward I. it was valued to the Abbey at 11 marks, or £6 13s. 4d. ; and the Abbot had the taking out and return of all writs, &c., view of frank pledge, forfeitures, felons' goods, the lete, a gallows and a prison connected with it. The Hundred Court was held at *Clackclose Hill*, in Stradsett, where also was the gallows, and the prison at Wimbotsham. The Abbot had also a Coroner for the Hundred. On the dissolution of religious houses this

¹ Clackclose, written anciently Clacheslosa, Clakeslosa, &c., may be derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Clacleas*, *free*, and *locen*, an *inclosure* or boundary, from some immunity, or privilege with which it was endowed. Rev. G.M. – Blomefield derives it from the Norman, which is clearly wrong it being called before the Conquest.

lordship came to the Crown, and having been granted to Lord North, was afterwards purchased by Sir Nicholas Hare, Baronet, and is now with Sir Thomas. Some of its peculiar jurisdiction still remains, -- as for instance, the Coronership for the Hundred. See Bl., vii., p. 268.

As regards *Phincham* (so spelt in this ancient record) we learn that there were about 734 acres under the plough here in the time of Edward the Confessor, and about 109 acres of meadow land. This would be about one third of the acreage of the parish. This land was tilled by 71 *free men* and two *free women*, one of whom was named *Ailid*, or *Alid*, and was a lady of considerable consequence, holding lands in other neighbouring Hundreds, of all which she was deprived by the Norman invaders. To assist in cultivating these lands there were 49 *bordarers*, a superior kind of labourer, permitted to hold a cottage and a small plot of land or garden, for his own benefit. There were also 23 *servi* and three *villani*, whose relative position and condition it is difficult exactly to define.¹

Then there were 18 head of cattle, 10 horses, 500 sheep and 65 swine. All the ancient freeholders were either entirely driven out of the village, or reduced to the condition of labourers, by the Norman invaders. Their husbandry was most probably of a better kind, but not much improvement is shewn by the Survey after 20 years' occupation by them.

The distribution of the lands of the parish, as gathered from the Record, will appear from the following summaries, in which the manors and possessions of each tenant-in-chief are consecutively described. The extracts, with a translation subjoined, are arranged in parallel columns, and a few explanatory notes added. These are taken chiefly from the "*Introduction to Domes-day Book*," by Sir Henry Ellis ; and the

¹ Cowell says that the *villani* were "conveyed as a pertinence of the manor or estate to which they belonged." -- *Law Dict.* in voce *servus*.

“*Analysis*” of the same, for the County of Norfolk, before mentioned.

To assist in understanding these extracts it must be borne in mind that three periods of time are embraced by them, namely:

(1) *tc, tunc, t.r.e.* = *then., the time of King Edward, (the Confessor).*

(2) *p, post, postquam* = *after that time.*

(3) *mo, modo, nunc, t.r.w.* = *now, in King William’s time.*

Also may be noted *sem, sep, semper*, as embracing them *all*.

I. WILLIAM DE WARREN, Earl Warren, Count de Guarrenne in Normandy, one of the king's most powerful adherents, having married his daughter Gundreda, received the largest share of lands here. He had about 375 acres, on which he placed two of his dependents, -- viz., “*Hugh*” and “*William Brant*,” -- as sub-tenants. This nobleman had 139 lordships from the king in this county, valued at £329 4s. 0d. He built a magnificent castle at Acre, thence called Castle-Acre, and died A.D. 1089. The following is the record of his lands : --

NORDFOLC. Vol. ii., fol. 159b.

Terræ WILLIELMI DE WARRENNA. HUNDRET DE
CLACHESLOSA.

In Phincham tenuit lib ho ad
socham abbis de rameseia ii
car¹ træ t. r. e. mo tenet
hugo. tc xxiv libi hoes et
modo vi bord et iv serv et x
ac pti. Semp

In Fincham, a free man held (in the time of King Edward), within the soke or jurisdiction of the Abbot of Ramsey, two carucates of land: they are now held by Hugh, (under the Earl). Then also there were 24 free men holding lands here, and now there are six bordarers and four servants upon them; also ten acres of meadow. Always two

¹ Carucata = a measure of land of 30 acres and upwards, varying in different localities ; as much as a team could plow in a year.

ii car in dnio¹. Tc dim car
hom mo i. Semp val lx sol.

In eadem villa semp viii
lib hoes q tenet W et xi bord²
et v serv³ semp ii car in
dominio et dim car hom. xvi
acr pti.

Quando recepit cc ovs xx
minus et modo c. Semp vi
an⁴ xxiv porc et iv rune.
Tunc val xl sol p et modo lx.

In eâdem villâ ten Willm
brant ii car terræ⁵ quas tenuit
i libera femina t. r. e. Semp
ii libi hoes et iv bord iv serv
et xvi ac pti.⁶ Semp ii car in
dnio et xx ovs et iii porc et
val xxx sol. In ead vill xii ac
et val xiid.

Totum hoc manerium
Phincham ht i leuga⁷ in
longo et dim in lato, quicunq
ibi teneat. qu hund reddit xx
sol de gelto⁸ et hæe villa
xvid.

carucates in demesne. Then half a
carucate held by the tenants, now one.
Their value has always been 60
shillings.

In the same village there had been
eight free men whose tenures the Earl
Warren flow holds, with 11 bordarers
and five servants. There have been
always two carucates in demesne, and
half a carucate among the tenants with
16 acres of meadow.

When he took possession there were
180 sheep, and now 100. Always six
cattle, 24 swine and four cart horses.
The value then was 40 shillings,
afterwards and now 60.

In the said village William Brant
holds (of the Earl) two carucates of
land, which a certain free woman held
in King Edward's time with two free
men, and four bordarers, four servants,
and 16 acres of meadow. Always two
carucates in demesne and 20 sheep and
three swine ; all valued at 30 shillings.
In the same town are 12 other acres
valued at 12 pence.

This whole manor in Fincham is one
leuca long and half a leuca broad
whoever may hold it. When the
hundred pays 20 shillings gelt this
village pays 16 pence.

¹ In dominio = in domaine, or demesne = in the lord's own holding.

² Bordarii = bordarers, having a bord or cottage.

³ Servi = inferior agricultural labourers.

⁴ An = animalia, oxen or cows.

⁵ Terra, always means *arable* land in D.B.

⁶ Prati = meadow, or pasture land.

⁷ Leuga = league, about a mile and a half.

⁸ Gelt = land tax, payable to file king.

II. The next largest portion of the soil fell to HERMERUS DE FERRARIIS, a powerful Norman baron, whose heirs or successors were the Lords Bardolf of Wirmegay, where they had their castle and resided, traces of which still remain. He had 22 manors in Norfolk, valued at £67 0s. 8d. Here he possessed about 180 acres, and at the survey we find that his live stock had diminished. He was a man of violent nature, and *invaded*, or seized upon many other lands, besides those granted to him by the king, to the extent in value of £20 19s. 9d.

Terræ HERMERI DE FERRARIIS, fol 205b.

In Phincham iii vill¹ xv bord vii serv et iii car in dominio. xiii ac pti. Tunc iv runci modo i. Tc xii an modo ix. Tc xxx porc modo xxvi. Tc cclx ovs mo clxxv. quarta pars eccliæ. semp val viii lib. huic manerio adjacet dim lg silve et i qr in longo et i qr² in lato.

In Fincham Hermer possessed three villeins, 15 bordarers, seven servants, upon three carucates in demesne, with 13 acres of meadow. There were formerly four cart horses, now only one. Formerly 12 head of cattle, now but nine. Then there were 30 swine, now 26. Then 260 sheep, now 175. The fourth part of the tithes of a church. The whole manor is valued at eight pounds. To this manor there belongs half a league of wood, one furlong in length and one in breadth.

Invasio³ HERMERI DE FERRARIIS, fol. 273b.

In Phincham xx. libi hoes tenentes t. r. e. ii car træ, sed tamen viii ex ill

Hermer also seized on in Fincham two carucates of land which 20 free men held in King Edward's time, but eight of them were customaries to the fold of

¹ Villani = villeins, bond slaves, bought and sold with the land.

² Quarentena = furlong, the eighth of a mile and twelfth of a leuga

³ Invasion, or seizure, without right or title from the king.

erant consuetudinarii¹ ad
faldam antecessoris² sui, alii
erant libi pt comdonem.³ In
tra eorum st semp ii car x ac
pti, tc val xl sol mo lviii et iv
d. In ead vil xvi ac tre val
xvi d.

the lord, the other 12 were free, except
what they paid for protection.

These lands of theirs have always been
two carucates, with 10 acres of
meadow. Their value formerly was 40
shillings, now 58 and four pence. In the
same town he has seized on 16 other
acres of land, valued at 16 pence.

III. A third great lord who obtained land here was RALF
Lord BAINARD. He was lord of Castle Bainard in Thames
street, London. He held 52 manors in Norfolk, valued at £172
16s. 1d. Here he possessed about 100 acres, besides some
other portions he had seized on in this and the adjoining
hundreds, to the value of £6.

Terre RADULPHI BANIARDI, fol. 250b.

In Phincham tenuit Alid liba
fern i car tre. Sep iv bord.
Tc iii serv. Sep i car xii ac
pti. Quando recepit ii r
modo i. Tc viii pore tc xl
ovs modo xviii. Tc val l sol
p lx mo xl, hanc tram
calumpniat sea Adeldret et
hund testatur.

Alid, a free woman, held in Fincham
one carucate of land (which Bainard
now holds). There have been always
four bordarers and three servants upon
this carucate and 12 acres of meadow.
When he entered on it there were two
cart horses, now but one ; then there
were eight swine and 40 sheep, now
only 18 sheep. It was then valued at 50
shillings, afterwards at 60, now only 40.
St. Audrey (the Abbey of Ely) claims
this land, as the hundred testifieth.

Invasio BAINARDI, fol. 275.

In Phincham invasit
bainard i car træ qu tener vi
libi hoes et dim⁴ t. r. e.

In Fincham Bainard seized one carucate
of land which in King Edward's time
six free men and one whose protection
was divided held ; it is now held

¹ Consuetudinarii, still paid *custom* to the lord by sending their sheep to his fold for
the benefit of the land, -- the privilege of *fald-sockne*.

² Antecessor commonly means predecessor, but here merely the lord generally.

³ Præter commendationem = except their protection payment.

⁴ Dimidium = half a service, a man under the protection of two lords.

mo vii et dim. Sep ii bord et
i car viii ac pti. Tc val xx sol
mo xl. hanc tram reclamant
sui hoes pro escangio sed
non habt libatonem.¹

by seven and one, &c. Always two
bordarers on this carucate and eight
acres of meadow. The value then was
20 shillings, now 40. His own men
claim this by right of exchange, but
they have no livery of it to shew.

IV. Terre RAINALDI filii IVONIS, fol. 230 and 276.

In Phincham ten i lib hom
t. e. r. xvi ac træ et i ac pti.
Semp ii b et val ii sol. Hanc
tram invasit Wihenoc.

Herluinus homo Ivonis
invasit in Phincham i lib ho
de xv ac et val xvi d. et i ac
et dim q Mainardus invasit et
val ix den.

Rainald son of Ivo has 16 acres of
land and one acre of meadow, which a
free man held in Fincham in King
Edward's time. Always two bordarers
and two shillings in value. Wihenoc
held this land obtained by invasion.

Herluinus, a dependent of Ivo, holds
in Fincham 15 acres, of which a free
man had been deprived, valued at 16
pence. And there is one acre and a half
which Mainard similarly holds, valued
at nine pence.

This Rainald Fitz Ivo had 58 lordships in Norfolk, whose
value, together with what he had unlawfully possessed
himself of, was £122 9s. 3d. His manor passed to the Earls
of Clare, the possessors of the ancient priory of Saint
Wynwaloe, in Wereham, now called Winnold House.

V. Terra Sancte ADELDRERE, fol. 212b.

In Phincham ten S. A. t. r.
e. xxx ac træ. Sep iii bor et i
car x ac pti. val. x sol.

Saint Adeldred (St. Audrey) possessed
in Fincham in King Edward's time, and
still does so, 30 acres of land. Always
three bordarers on this carucate, and ten
acres of meadow with it. The value is
ten shillings.

By St. Audrey is here meant the Abbey of Ely, of which
she was the foundress in 673. The greater part of the
possessions of the abbey were continued to

¹ Liberationem = no release, nothing to shew for it.

it by King William, and in his time its lordships in this county were valued at £116 5s. 6d.

VI. Terra Abbatis de Sancto EADMUNDO, fol. 209.

<p>In Phincham xvi ac træ et iv ac pti et val ii sol et d.</p>	<p> </p>	<p>The Abbot of St. Edmund's (Bury) has in Fincham 16 acres of and four acres of meadow, and they are valued two shillings and eight pence.</p>
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This Abbey was founded by King Canute, A.D. 1020, on the site of one still older, and was very rich when William, came into England. It possessed 53 manors in Norfolk, which were valued at £96 16s 5d.