



## A Salisbury-Cathedral-centric view of History.

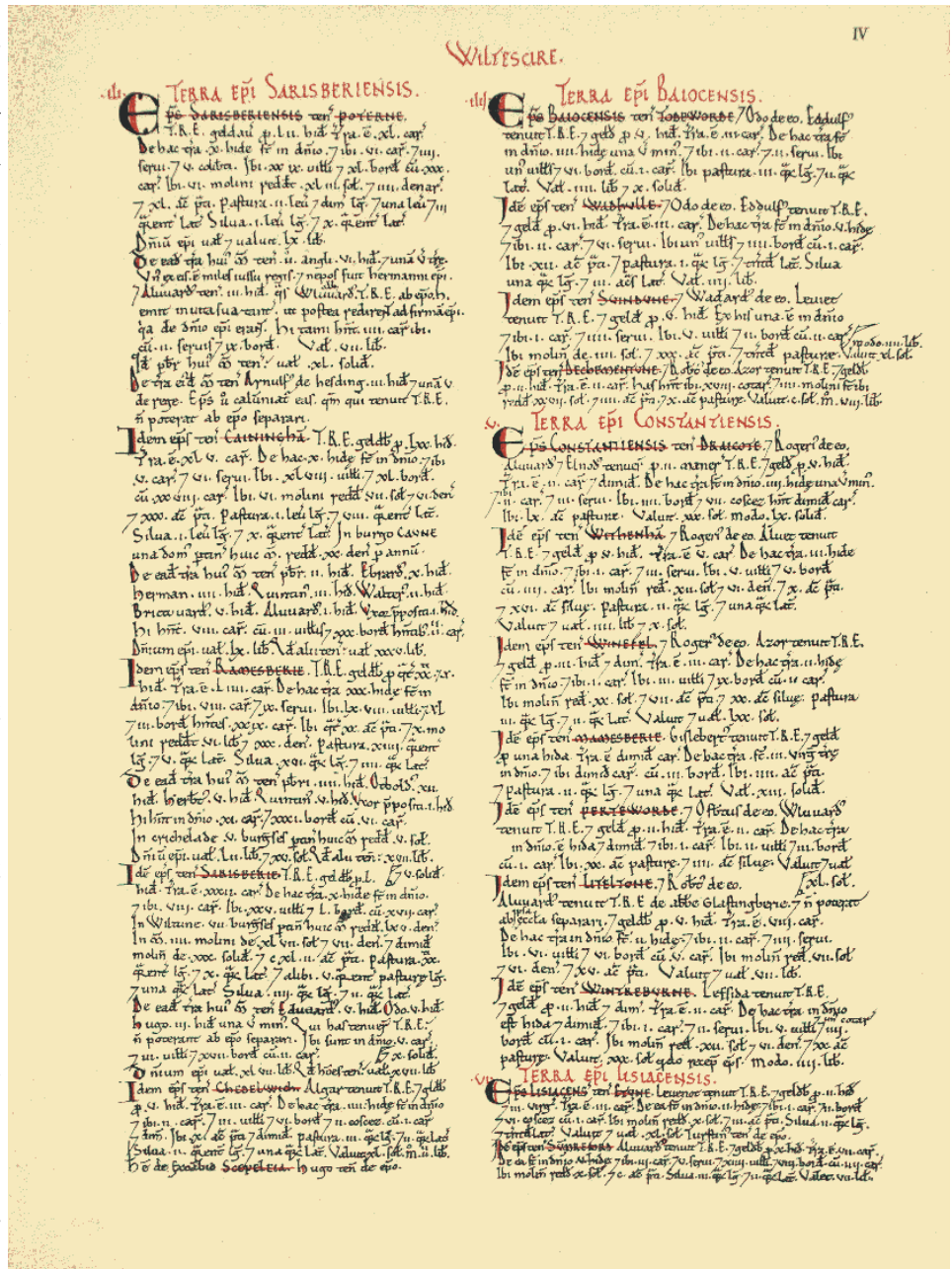
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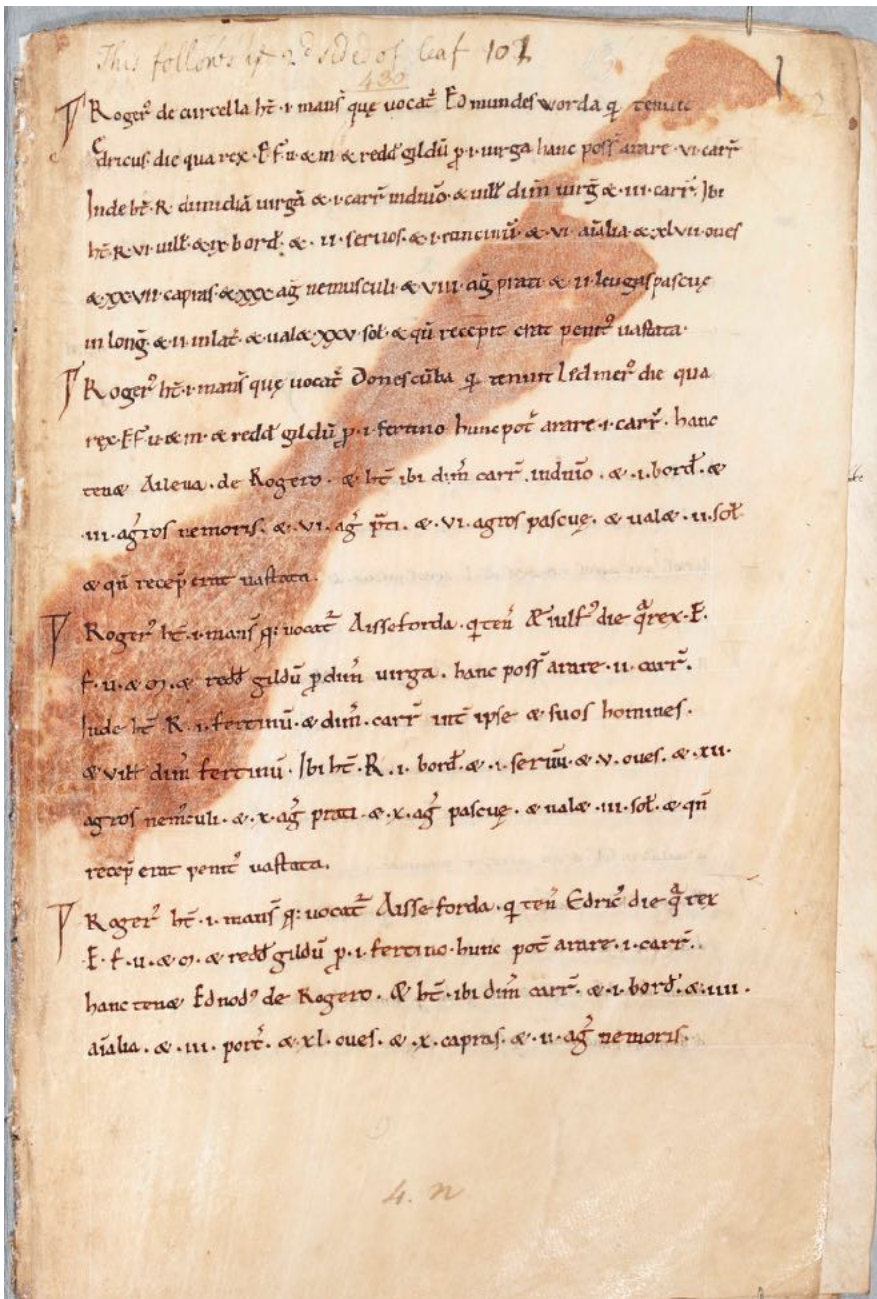
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### THE GREAT LAND SURVEY

One of my Christmas presents was the *Alecto* translation of the *Domesday Book* published by Penguin in 2002. The *Domesday Book* was a survey carried out it had become known as *the book of the day of judgement* (*Domesday* in Middle-English) due to the awe with which it was regarded. Professor G H Martin believes that although it was commissioned by the king at Christmas 1085 in Gloucester, it is the work of a single hand and mind; after all it is unlikely that William thought of the idea himself. The Anglo-Saxon government machine was a great boon to the new king and he must have been amazed at the result of the survey which gave him a detailed record of the land and their division between the King and the lords to whom he granted them.

The manuscripts have come down to us as the *Great Domesday* in two volumes (right), and the *Little Domesday* in three volumes. There is also an earlier manuscript known as *Exon Domesday* (page 2) covering the south-west, which includes animals left out of *Great Domesday*. The names reflect the size of the parchment in much the same way as The Great Charter and the Charter of the Forest. The commissioners were made up of seven or





eight panels of bishops and earls, each panel taking a circuit of several counties. They are of course snapshots of a moment in history and in fact some estates changed hands during the survey. One pattern that showed up straight away was the wealth of the towns and this was reflected in subsequent taxation. To put things into perspective, the population at the time is estimated to be around 2 million. The books are held in the National Archives.

Much of the land around Salisbury was held by the King. The list includes Calne, Chippenham, Warminster, Britford, Tilshead, Compton Chamberlayne, Corsham, Melksham, Coombe Bissett, Westbury, Netheravon and East Knoyle. The Bishop of Winchester was also a sizeable owner with his estates including Fonthill Bishop and Downton. The Bishop of Salisbury as we

know held Ramsbury, Potterne and Bishops Canning as well as Old Sarum, then simply known as Salisbury.

To give you a flavour, here is the entry for our town: TRE it paid geld for 50 hides. There is land for 32 ploughs. Of this land 10 hides are in demesne, and there are 8 ploughs. There are 25 villans and 50 bordars with 17 ploughs. 7 burgesses in Wilton belonging to this manor pay 65d. In the manor [are] 4 mills rendering 47s 7d, and half a mill rendering 30s, and 142 acres of meadow. . [There is] pasture 20 furlongs long and 10 furlongs broad, and elsewhere pasture 5 furlongs long and 1 furlong broad. [There is] woodland 4 furlongs long and 2 furlongs broad.

Of the same land of this manor Edward holds 5 hides; Odo 5 hides; Hugh 3 hides less 1 virgate. Those who held them TRE could not be separated from the Bishop. There are in demesne 5 ploughs; 3 villans and 17 bordars with 2 ploughs.

The demesne of the Bishop is worth £47; what the men hold is worth £17 10s.

I shall now try to make some sense of the above passage but bear in mind that measurements were not standardised and varied by region. Money was in LSD with 12 pence to the shilling and 20 shillings to the pound:

**TRE** is the abbreviation of *Tempore Regis Edwardi* in the time of King Edward (The Confessor).

**Geld** was the English land tax based on the Hide.

**Hide** was the amount of land reckoned to support a household (up to 12 acres).

**Plough** was reckoned to be an 8-ox team which required a substantial headland to turn at the end of each row. The plough was guided by a *conductor* and the team was controlled by a *fugator*.

**Demesne** was land held for the Lord of the Manor's own use (ie *domain*).

**Villans** (*villeins*) were peasants tied to a lord's land.

**Bordars** were lower-ranking peasants who held land in return for menial work.

**Burgesses** were borough (urban) dwellers with full rights as free citizens.

**Mill**, mainly water driven and regarded as a source of manorial income. Some 5,000 are mentioned in DB. Tax was based on the *Ora*, combinations of 16p - 8 ora is a Mark worth 13/4d.

**Meadow** was hay land and more valuable than arable.

**Furlong** was the length of a furrow and equivalent to 40 perches or 220 yards long by 22 yards wide.

**Virgate** was a quarter of a Hide 20 to 30 acres.

The bishop's income would today be equivalent to around £50,000 against £15,000 for the men. Society was very hierarchical and two titles that are also found in DB are **Colibert**, a freed slave who ranked below a villein but above a serf, and **Reeve**, the royal official administering a king's estate. Later he became more the village headman and the *Shire-Reeve* of course became *Sheriff*. The illustration below (courtesy of Wikipedia) shows the Reeve in action at harvest time.

I am indebted to *A Dictionary of Medieval Terms & Phrases* by Christopher Corèdon with Ann Williams, D S Brewer 2004.



## BANISHING THE MYTH

Ian Wheeler updates his J&T booklet *The Spire and the Storm*.

How common is it today to hear stories of the damage done by the spread of “misinformation”? But there is nothing new about this phenomenon as is now becoming clear as I continue my enquiries into the spire scaffolding. Two quite alarming factors seem to have been responsible for a misconception that the cathedral website continues to promulgate today despite my attempts to correct them.

When I met with Prof. Dan Miles up at 8-doors last year I had no idea who he was and little knowledge of his earlier work. His 2004 report for English Heritage had been brought to my attention by fellow tower guides and, as it was freely and fully available on line, I visited it with some enthusiasm. It seemed to be a highly specialised and detailed report that was both technical and thorough in its coverage of many aspects of timber dating around the Cathedral – but not for the man in the street – so I can understand why there is limited knowledge of its content and significance today. What I have more recently discovered throws a slightly different light on Dan’s original report for a toned down summary was published the following year in

issue 5 of the Sarum Chronicle. The article is again written in tandem with Gavin Simpson and brings the matter of the spire scaffolding to a much wider local audience. Perhaps you have a copy of the magazine gathering dust..... whatever, it is clear that the excellent article has been forgotten.

***Above the square base tower the scaffolding fans out in all directions but is never built into the external stonework.***

Photo right courtesy of James Wright (Pinterest).

The long standing misconceptions



about the spire scaffolding and other matters seem to have their origins in the 1753 work on Salisbury Cathedral published by architect Francis Price, popularly reprinted in 1775. Price's tome seems to have been the ultimate source on all Cathedral matters for a very long time – and why not when he was appointed Surveyor to the Cathedral in 1734 and Clerk of Works until his death in March 1753. He was quoted at length in Dodsworth's study of the Cathedral (1796) and his views continued to be supported through to Roy Spring's 1987 book.

*Right, Clerk of Works Roy Spring ascending the spire during the 1985 spire appeal (Courtesy of Salisbury Journal).*



It was not until Gavin and Dan made their visit in 2004, Clerk of Works Roy Spring MBE having retired in 1996, that a further close examination of the spire timbers was made.

Our current Clerk of Works, Gary Price, had already completed 18 years at the Cathedral when Gavin and Dan arrived in 2004. The Major Restoration Programme was well advanced and access to all parts of the spire was unusually open offering a chance to examine the structure in more detail but sadly no thought had been given earlier to dendrochronological sampling. Gavin and Dan noted that medieval illustrations of spires under construction always showed an external scaffold. The Salisbury scaffold is quite impractical from this point of view, being constructed in nine stages with vertical intervals of between 12 and 18 feet. This would have made it impossible for a mason working within the structure to see what he was doing! An internal structure would also get in the way of all the building materials being lifted up as noted by several experts in construction who have attempted to explain how an internal assembly might work – it wouldn't!

Add to this one strange detail of the internal wooden structure – it is not built into the main external structure but exists to keep the centre post in its central position. Small sections were added to the inclined positioning beams at the last moment because of the restricted space. So imagine the problem facing Cathedral authorities after the disastrous storm of 1362. The spire was at that stage a hollow cone, all having been constructed using external scaffolding. The extent of the damage had to be assessed and so an internal scaffold was inserted. Just how much of the spire had to be repaired is difficult to determine but the best clue is probably the position of the weather door. This would indicate that at least 20ft had to be rebuilt, possibly twice that.

Finally attention should be given to the materials used in the Salisbury scaffold. Medieval records from around the country indicate that pine, alder and ash poles were preferred for



scaffolding work. These would be roped or nailed together depending on the durability and length of service required. But in the Salisbury spire we find “durable oak timber, carefully cut morticed and nailed joints along with the use of specially forged iron fittings...” The Salisbury scaffold was built to last – in case there was another great storm of 1362 proportions.

So how long is the myth of an internal scaffold that was built to support the spire going to survive? My hopes are that the forthcoming publication of the detailed results of “Stable Isotope tree ring dating” will finally convince all that our scaffolding was inserted **post 1362** as a major repair project took shape.

Francis Price (see J&T No. 104) was a great architect and a great champion of Salisbury Cathedral – but he didn’t get everything right! New technology can enable us to understand his errors and to better safeguard our shared heritage.

### ENDPIECE

Extracts from Kenneth Ponting’s *Wiltshire Portraits*, Moonraker Press 1975.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles for AD 552: West Saxon Cynric fought against the Britains in the place which is called *Searabyrg* (Old Sarum) and put the Britons to flight.

Saxon sculptures are difficult to date but one major piece that could well come from the 7<sup>th</sup> century is the carved stones at Britford (right).



The finest piece of all will be found at Codford. *The Dancing Man* (left) there probably dates from the time of Alfred.

John of Salisbury, Becket’s friend and a cosmopolitan writer in the classical tradition, was born at Old Sarum between 1115 and 1120 and went on to study under Abelard in Paris.

Hertford tried hard to legitimise his children by Catherine Grey but without success. The eldest son Edward Lord Beauchamp, if legitimate, had as good, if not more lawful, a right to the throne as James 1st. Elizabeth on her death bed was reputed to have said *I will have no rogue’s son in my seat* (Locke). They became

legitimate in 1660 after the civil war.

By the time of Domesday, Wardour had passed to the nuns of Wilton and remained with them until the Dissolution.

Henry Arundell became Sheriff of Dorset in 1531-32 and gentleman of the Privy Chamber to Wolsey and then rather oddly, a *commissioner for the suppression of religious houses*. However his Catholic sympathies soon led to a spell in the Tower. Finally he was involved in the Cornish rising of 1550-1 and executed as a traitor the following year.

During the Civil War a third force appeared on the scene in the *Clubmen of Wilts and Dorset*, peasants and labourers who were tired of the extortions by both sides. Ed: these were paramilitary self-defence units. Right Declaration, *in the public domain*.

