

# Topographical Collections of of John Aubrey 1659-1670 Devizes

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## POTTERNE AND CANNINGS HUNDRED <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No Hundred of the name of Potterne appears, either in the Hundred Rolls of Hen. III. and Edw. I., or in the "Nomina Villarum" of 9 Edw. II. In those Documents the parishes now included in the Hundred of Potterne and Cannings are registered as lying, in a Half-Hundred called "Roubergh Episcopi", and in the Hundred of "Cannings Episcopi": the Bishop of Sarum having the lordship of both. The other Half-Hundred was called "Roubergh Regis", and is now, nearly all, included in that of Swanborough. The general topography of Potterne and Cannings Hundred has been recently assisted by "The History Military and Municipal of the Borough of Devizes 1859", and by the "Historical Memoirs of the Parish of Bishop's Cannings", a contribution by Archdeacon Macdonald to the Wilts Archæol. Mag., Vol. iv. p. 121. The only parish touched upon by Aubrey in the single Volume of his MS. now to be found, is that of **Rowde**. If he made Collections for any others, they were probably in the missing "Liber B". The Editor's comments being therefore limited to **Rowde**, he must for the present omit the rest of the Hundred. But there is one point connected with its principle town, upon which, as it has often been discussed, he would take this opportunity of making a suggestion, viz: as the the meaning of the name now written and pronounced "Devizes"

**DEVIZES.** That it is a word of Latin origin, and that "Castrum ad Divisas" (the Castle at the Devises), was one of the oldest and commonest Latin names given to the Castle built here in the reign of Hen. I., will perhaps be allowed. The word "divisa" (dividend) is a past participle, and as such, would properly require to be joined with a substantive, as terra. But, like the word "premises" (i.e. terræ præmissæ), and others, it grew by familiarity to be considered as an independent noun: and as a noun was commonly used, not by classical, but by mediæval Latinists.

1. In John of Glastonbury's description of the bounds of "Glastonbury xii, Hides" (printed in New Monasticon, I. 23, No. 1.) the word "*Divisæ*" occurs in one and the same document no less than *eight* times. 1. "Hine in *divisas* de Bikenham et Ferlege". 2. "In *divisis* fossati", 3. "Usque ad Litelnie quæ est *divisa* de Martineseie". 4. Per *divisas* insulæ". 5. "Per *divisas* de Cedre". 6. "Deinde usque ad *divisas* de Mere et Poulton". 7. "Et sic per *divisas* versus orientem". 8. "Per *divisas* de Andredesey".

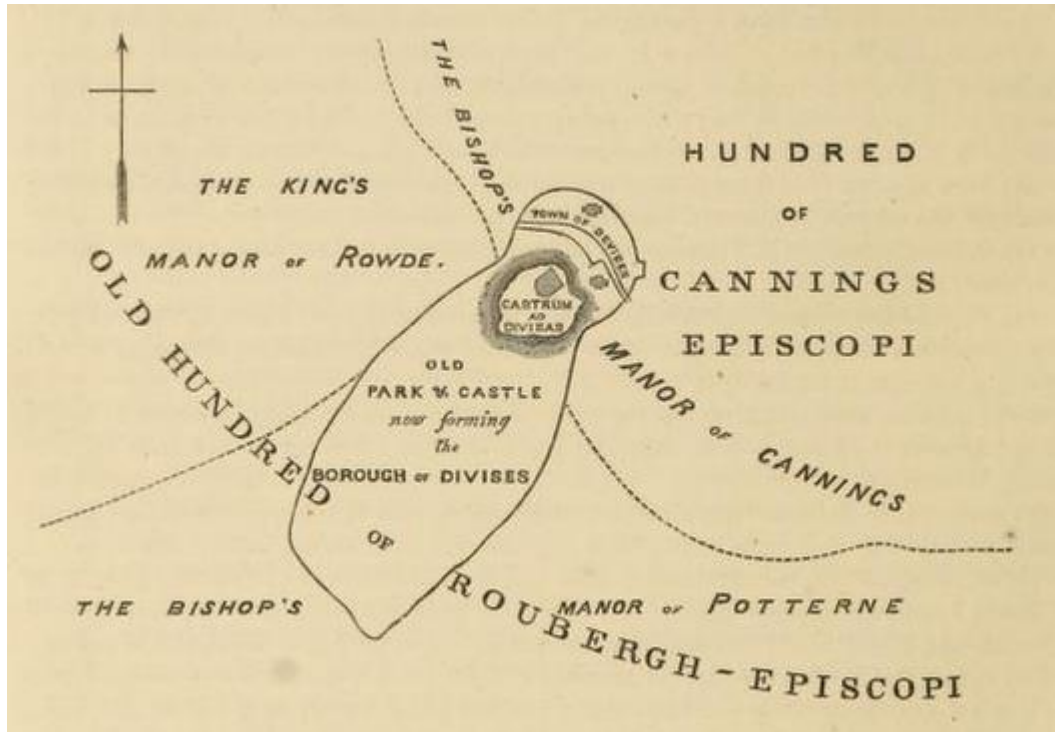
2. In the same Abbey Register (New Monasticon, p. 35), "Super insulam juxtà *divisas*, &c., A.D. 1261.
3. In the partition of Godeney Moor (ditto p. 52), 2Ita quod Abbas habeat in longitudine illius *divisæ*": where the word seems to signify one of the moieties. A.D. 1283.
4. In an ivy-Church charter (New Monasticon, No. 3); "Totam prædictam placeam infrà *divisas* prædictas, &c". A.D.1256.
5. In the Book of the Prory of bath (Lincoln's Inn Library, No. xliv., Art. 4), is mention of lands between the "*divisas* de Corston" (near bath) "et Wodensdiche".
6. In a Deed relating to Stansal in South Yorkshire, dated A.D. 1236, the boundaries are described : "De illâ fossâ usque *ad divisas* de wadworth": and again, "Ad terram arabilem de Stansall et *divisas* de Wadworth". [Hunter's South Yorkshire, I., p.247].
7. "The whole manor of New Hall within the *divisas* of Darfield". [Ditto, Vol. II., p. 112].
8. Sir Thomas Fairfax, describing the march of his troops in 1642, says that "he passed to Thorne, and then across the *devises* of Hatfield ot Crowle". Here, in its English form which is very rare, the word is considered by the late Mr Hunter to mean Border-lands [Ditto, Vol 1., p. 74].
9. Jacob (Law Dictionary) under "Divisa", says, "Sometimes it is taken for the bounds or limits of a parish, or farm, &c., as 2divisas perambulare", to walk the bounds of a parish : in which sense it has been extended to the division between countries, and given names to *towns*, as to the *Devises* in Wiltshire, situated on the confines of the West Saxon and Mercian Kingdoms". [But of any town so called from lying on the frontier *between countries*, or of this particular one having separate Wessex from Mercia, Mr. Jacob produces no evidence].
10. Bracton, Fleta, and R. Hoveden, are said to use the word for Boundary. [Davoess's Origines Divisianæ, P. 6].
11. "S. Maria *de Divisis*" was in early charters, the name of Pipewell Abbey, c. Northampton.

The historians of that county cannot explain the reason, but only conjecture that some ancient partition gave rise to the name.

From these instances it appears that the word "*divisæ*" was used to signify, either 1. Lands parted between two proprietors, or 2. Border -lands, of 3. (which is by the far most frequent dense), Boundaries. To apply this to *Devizes*. Were there boundaries of any sort at this place in ancient times : and if so, were they boundaries of kingdoms, provinces, shires, hundreds, parishes or manners?.

No authority has ever been produced to show that any limit either of a British Kingdom, or of a Roman Province ever passed over, or by, this place. (In the latter case the more classical name of "Ad Fines" would probably have been used). As to the Saxon period, it does not any where appear that *Devizes* was ever the boundary of the Shire of Wilts. We are therefore driven to look for some subordinate partition, either between Hundreds, or, on a still smaller scale between manors and Parishes. And it is after all in the one the one or the other of these, that the explanation of the matter is most likely to be found, because all the instances above produced (and produced in detail, for this very purpose), show that the word *divisa* was not used in the case of the larger, but only in that of the less important kinds of partition.

1. As a boundary between Hundreds. It may be mentioned that there is already an instance of the word *divisæ* having been used precisely in this sense in speaking of another place in the county of Wilts. In an ancient Survey of Braden Forest, the limit "runs from East to West, including the Mill of Mighall, Baillard's Ash, and the *Tres Divisas*", i.e. : a spot at the point of union of the Three Hundreds of Kingsbridge, Highworth, and Malmesbury". "This" (says Mr. J. Y. Akerman) "suggests the origin of the town of *Devizes*, which probably once stood at the junction of ancient boundaries obliterated in an age long past, and of which no record remains". [Archæologia, xxxvii., p. 50]. It is however no so easy to obliterate all record of old boundaries. Owners vanish quickly enough, bur rights, and the limits that define them are more enduring. It is the fact, that certain local distinctions of territory observed here at this very day, are exactly the same as they were at the time when the Castle was built. Further, they are precisely of the sort which would have been rendered into Latin in those days by the word "*divisæ*". These are submitted to the reader's eye in the annexed plan.



All that is now included in the "Borough of Devizes" was formerly a Castle and its Demesne. The Eastern portion of the Borough runs in to, and is enclosed on three sides by lands in the parish of Bishop's Cannings. In a similar manner, the Western portion of the Borough invades, and is very closely pursued by, lands in the Parish of Potterne. Both these parishes were Manors belonging to Bishop Roger the builder of the Castle. Nothing appears to be known of any town here before that time, nor has the name (*Ad Divisas*) been met with before it is given to the *Castle* by William of Malmesbury, a historian contemporary with the Bishop who built it. From the peculiar way in which the Demesne (now the Borough), appears to trespass upon the otherwise continuous Manors, it would seem to be not improbable that, in forming it, the bishop took the Eastern part of Bishop Cannings, the Western from **Potterne**.

If this was so; then, Bishop's Cannings on the East was in one Hundred, that of Cannings : whilst **Potterne** on the West was in another, the Old Hundred of Roubergh Episcopi. Consequently, the Western walls of the Bishop's new Castle must have almost touched the *divisa* that separated the two Hundreds.

2. As a boundary between Manors. Before Bishop Roger, out of the two manors, Bishop's Cannings and **Potterne**, belonging to his See, thus, (as we may conceive), enclosed his Demesne, the boundary lines of these two Manors, and that of a third, the King's Manor of **Rowde**, met at one point. At that particular point, (in those days, literally "*ad tres divisas*"), stood the Castle which the Bishop built.

From this peculiarity of situation ; that is, on the dividing line between Two Hundreds, and, at the Meeting of Three manors, possibly arose the name of "*Castrum ad Divisas*".

Insert this in Liber B, or bring that hither.

In the highway here is a spring called Stockwell : on both sides of the way are gravelly cliffs, which in dry weather are candied white : it turns not with gall powder, which were it vitriol it would : I hope it may have the effect of of Epsham water. The sediment by precipitation is almost a perfect white Nitre. The inhabitants tell me that it is good for the eyes, and washes very well, and that it used for making medicines.

At the fall of the leafe the water in the ditches heresabout looks blewish. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This Manor, under the name of "Villa de Rudes", was demesne of the Crown in A.D. 1275 [Hund. Rolls, ii, 236], and was sometimes granted out for life, with the Constablership of the Castle of Devizes, and the Forsets of Chippenham and Melksham, &c. It was thus held by Plessetis, earl of Warwick (Hen. III.), Matthew Fitz-John (Edw. I.), Sir Edmund Hungerford 1455, and Richard Beauchamp Bishop of Sarum. When in hand of the Crown it was generally dower of the Queens of England. Under the Queen it was laesed to a "Farmer of the Manor", the last of whom was Robert Maundrell, 27 Eliz, (1584). (The martyr burnt at the stake at Salisbury 1556 was John, son of Robert Maundrell of Rowde). Before 1597 it had been perpetually alienated to Sir Edward Hungerford of Farley Castle, who died 1607. His widow re-married Francis Manners, sixth Earl of Rutland, who held for his life about 1158 acres, and received Quit Rent for various Assart lands. In the Hungerford Rent Roll (in the writer's possession) all names of tenants, &c., are given. The principal occupier of the "Site of the Manor", at that time was W. Norden. The Reversioner, after the death of the Earl and Countess of Rutland, was Edward Hungerford, then a minor, (afterwards Sir Edward the Parliamentary Officer), son of Sir Anthony Hungerford of Black-Bourton, and Stock (near Bedwyn). The following letter from Sir Anthony relates to an Enclosure of a Common Field, which appears to have been contemplated about the year of its date, 1619.

"To Robert Flower and John Lewes, These ;  
At Rowde

Wheras there hath bin a generall agreement by yo' selves and all the tennants Free-houlders of the Mannor of Rowde, as likewise the Parsonn there, for the Inclosing of your Common Field, Whereunto my Lord of Rutland by his Steward and Mr. Pewe his Officer, and my Selfe in the behalfe of my Sonne, have given our assent, Since which time as well yourselves as the rest of the Inhabitants there whome this concerneth, have submitted your selves to the judgement of fower perconnes equally named to see that everie weann (one) in this partition might respectivelie have what righte perteines unto him, whoe beinge nowe willinge to doe their best endeavour to this purpose : It is said that you two onelie, contrarie to your former assents, doe now intend to interrupt this worke : the which if you shall persever to doe I presume you wil be enforced to make good your former agreemente, with your Charge and trouble : I doe therefore wishe you for the avoydinge of bothe, quicklie to joyne with your Neighboures in his Worke, the rather for that I conceive you shall reape benefitt by this Inclosure as well as others : And soe I recomend you to God. From Stocke this xxth of Januarie 1619. Your loveinge Friend  
Anth : Hungerford"

Sir Edw. Hungerford, the Parliamtary officer, died owner 1648. His arms with his wife's (Halliday) on a scutcheon of pretence, are on the third bell : which however was given after his death, as the date is 1654. **Rowde** is named in the Will of his half-brother and successor Anthony, 1657 : by whose son the last Sir Edward it is most likely sold. Francis Eyles (of South Sea notoriety) was owner 1721. Mr. Demé 1770. The estate at Rowdeford formerly belonged to Mr. Richard Tuck, who resided there : afterwards to Mr. Wyatt, of whom it was purchased by the late Mr. Wadham Locke, father of the present owner Francis A. S. Locke Esq. Sheriff of Wilts 1858, of Rowdeford House. The House stands in the parish of Bromham. Some part of **Rowde** was held 39 Hen. III. by the serjeantry of providing the King, or, in his absence, the Constable of Devizes Castle, with hawks from Michælmass to Lent.

"Foxangre" in the oarish was given by the Empress maud to Monkton Farley Priory.

The Rectory was anciently in the Crown : when enjoyed by a subject, as by Walter de Leuche and Robert de Chauy in Hen. III. the rector nominated a vicar. In 1377 the Tithes had been appropriated to Stanley Abbey : and at the Dissolution were bought by the Bayntons of Bromham, whose successors at Spye Park have since presented to the Vicarage. The Church, all but the tower, was rebuilt in 1833. Of Ferdinando Warner, a very voluminous writer, vicar here 1730, there is a memoir in Chalmer's Biog. Dict. He is said to have declared (according to a, probably foolish, story) that he wrote his "Ecclesiastical History" and his "Dissertation on the Common Prayer", three folio volumes, both the original copies, with one single pen, which was an old one when he began, and when he finished was not worn out. His son Dr. John Warner, Rector of Stourton, died 1800. Of William Higginson, vicar 1808, and his family, there is a notice in Baker's Northamptonshire, "Gretworth", p. 510.

Above St Edith's marsh, (now corrupted into Titty-marsh) a Mosaic pavement was found about 1600. [Mo. Brit.] This was opened again a few years ago.

Some extracts from the Rowde Registers were printed in the Devizes Gazette, 25th July 1839.

**Published by the Wiltshire Archæological and Natural History Society 1862.**

**OPC Note:**

See Bishops Cannings (Roundway) for the article in the Devizes Gazette, titled "Battle of Roundway Down".