

Letters to the Editor

DINTON

To the Editor of the Salisbury and Winchester Journal.

DEAR SIR,- Sir R. Colt Hoare, in his work on South Wilts, informs us, quoting a passage from Domesday-Book, that in Saxon time the village of Dinton was called Domnitone. He derives the present name from the river Nadder, which he conceives must once have been named Don, hence Donyton, Dinton.

I am no Anglo-Saxon scholar, but in an Anglo-Saxon Dictionary I find that Domne in that language means lord, and that Ton or Tun (for, from what I read under "Tonbridge," they both mean the same thing) may be translated a place fenced round, a residence, or even a fortress, a tower, or fortified hill.

Now there is evidently a fortification or strong earthwork, not Roman, on the bridge at the back of Dinton House. Why then should not Domnitone signify the lord's residence or fortress, and Dinton be derived from that rather than the supposed name of the river? And is it not possible that this lord might have been King Alfred? Dinton belonged to Alfred, for it was granted by him with other manors to the Abbess of Shaftesbury.

If this were so there would be three notables intimately connected with Dinton – King Alfred the Great, Henry Lawes, the eminent musician, baptized in Dinton Church the 5th day of January, 1595-6, and Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, the grandfather of two Queens of England, baptized on the 22nd day of February, 1608-9.

It is commonly said that the latter was born in the Vicarage house, but that could hardly be when there was a resident Vicar, Stephen Robertes, whom as evidenced by the Parish Register, had a large family. Can anyone give information on this subject, and say what property the Hydes possessed in Dinton besides the rectorial tithes and the advowson, or when and how they became possessed of them? Dr Robert Hyde, Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, and son of James Hyde, M.D., Principal of Magdalen Hall, bequeathed them to Magdalen College, A.D. 1723.

Will antiquarians kindly bear with the suggestions of one who signs himself

NO ANTIQUARIAN.

(Salisbury and Winchester Journal, 6th March, 1858)

DINTON

To the Editor of the Salisbury and Winchester Journal.

DEAR SIR- It may seem unreasonable in me to ask you to devote so much space in your valuable paper to etymology of the name of a village, but a careful inquiry into the etymology of one place may suggest a clue to ascertaining the true etymology of many others. I therefore present you with the observations of a zealous antiquarian friend, on the letter you kindly inserted in your paper under the head 'Dinton.' "If, instead of stopping at the Anglo-Saxon language you had proceeded to the British, you would have elicited the truth. Before the Saxons broke into your beautiful country, the earthen

fortress in Dinton was called 'Din,' and when the Saxons formed it into a Parishm they added to its former appellation, not knowing the meaning of it, 'Ton,' Dinton.

"In Owen's Dictionary you will find the following explanation of 'Din' – 'which surrounds', 'a fortified hill' or 'mount,' 'a camp,' a fort.

"It is curious that the latter part should be the translation of the former part of the name, but we have an instance of the same kind in this neighbourhood – 'Pontesbridge.' It is situate on a Roman road where a river is crossed. To the Roman name 'Pontes,' the Saxons gave the additional name bridge, not knowing the meaning of the former.

"My opinion always has been that Dinton took its name from 'Din,' a fort, and Ton or Town, which has the same meaning, and I feel more confident in this observation by learning that there is an old earthwork in the parish."

Probably many more names of places than is generally imagined are derived from the British.

I remain, &c., &c.,

NO ANTIQUARIAN.

(*Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 20th March, 1858)

DINTON AND DONHEAD

To the Editor of the Salisbury and Winchester Journal.

DEAR SIR,-In my first letter to you I mentioned that Sir R. Colt Hoare suggests that Dinton may have derived its name from the river near which it is situated, and which though, as he allows, certainly called Noddre in Saxon times, he conceives may have been some time called 'Don,' and have given its name to the Donheads as well as Dinton.

I see, however, by the Ordnance map of Wilts, that the head of the Nadder must be nearly two miles above the Donheads, I would therefore suggest that the name of those two villages may have a different derivation. In Bosworth's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, 'Dun' is translated 'a hill,' 'a mountain,' and 'down,' is given as derived from it; and Heafd signifies head. I therefore conceive that Donhead may have originally been written Dunheafd, and have been so called from the abrupt hill upon which the church at Donhead St. Mary stands. Donhead St. Andrew may have received its name from its location under the hill or headland.

In support of this view I find many important geographical names derived from headlands, such as Beechy head, St. Allen's head, &c. &c. &c.; but do not call to mind any important place called 'head,' from the source if a river.

Under 'Gat,' in Bosworth's Dictionary, will be found the derivation of Gateshead, in the county of Durham-

'Gates-heued [Gateshead], Goate's Head, *Durham, Som.;*' *i.e. Som.- Sommer's Anglo-Saxon Dictionary.*

In my first letter, which the printer, I fear, did not find it easy to decipher 'Bridge' should have been printed 'Ridge' as the back of Dinton House; and the first line of the epitaph (second letter) should have been-

'Here lyes dear Jo: his Parents love and joy,'

With regard to the residence of the Hydes, I think it must have been the *Rectory* House, not the *Vicarage*. The latter stood in the rick-yard at the back of the present parsonage, and the Vicar was resident. The late Mr Wyndham always pointed to a spot in front of the parsonage nearly opposite the west window of the Church, as the situation of the house they lived in, and the present well remembers the remains of an old wall covered with ivy standing there. I suggest the *rectory* house because the Hydes possessed the Rectorial tithes, but I have not yet discovered that they had any lanned property in Dinton.

I will conclude with a few words as to the derivation of the name of the river Nadder or Noddre. The Anglo-Saxon word for an adder or snake or *serpens enjusvis generis*, is NAEDDRE. The Welsh and Cornish (different dialects of the British), Neidr and Naddy. The woods about Dinton abound in adders, snakes, &c., and probable the whole district to a much greater degree when it was in a wild state. May not the river have taken its name from the abundance of these reptiles to be found near it ?

A spring in Germany derives its name – Schlangenbad – from the quantity of serpents that exist in the woods surrounding it and bathe in it. See “Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassan.”

I remain, &c., &c.,

NO ANTIQUARIAN.

P.S.- The name of the Wiley may be derived from the Wilig or Wilek (a willow tree) from the abundance of willows growing on its banks; or more probably from Wylle-stream, rendered in Bosworth Well-stream, a river, e fonte rivus, from ‘Wyl’ or ‘Will’ a well, and ‘stream’ a stream or river.

(*Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 3rd April, 1858)
