



William Camden, *Britain, or, a Chorographical Description of the most flourishing Kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland*

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From thence Eastward [Mendippe](#) hills extend themselves in length and bredth; Leland calleth them [Minerarios](#) , that is, the Minerall hills; and rightly (as I suppose), seeing they be in old writings named [Muneduppe](#) , for rich they are in lead mines and good to feede cattell. Among these hills there is a cave or denne farre within the ground, wherein are to be seene certaine pits and riverlets, the place they call Ochie-hole, whereof the Inhabitants feine no fewer tales, nor devise lese dotages, than the Italians did of their Sibyls Cave in the mountaine Appeninus. The name (no doubt) grew of *ogo* , a British word that betokeneth a Den, even as of the like den the Isle Euboea was by such another name sometime called Ocha.

Not far hence, in the raigne of King Henrie the Eighth, was turned up with the plough a table of lead somewhat long, ? which lay long at Lambith in the Duke of Norfolkes house, ? erected sometime for a trophee in token of victorie, with this inscription:

TI. CLAVDIVS CAESAR AVG. P. M.  
TRIB. P. VIII IMP. XVI DE BRITAN.

This Tribuneship of Claudius here mentioned fell out to be in the 802 yeere after the foundation of Rome, when Antistius and M. Suillius were Consuls, what time P. Ostorious Governour of Britaine as Vice-Pretour

was welcomed thither with many troubles. Out of this time, give me leave, I pray you, to frame certain conjectures. That in this yeere Claudius erected two Trophees or monuments of victorie over the Britans his owne antient coin sheweth as a most certaine witnesse, in the forepart whereof is this plaine Inscription, TI. CLAVD. CAESAR AVG. P. M. TR. P. VIII IMP. XIII. P. P., and in the reverse thereof, DE BRITAN., and there is expressly stamped a triumphall Arch with an Image of one galloping on horsebacke, and with two triumphall pillars. What Britans these were then vanquished Tacitus sheweth, testifying that this yeere Claudius by the conduct of Ostorius subdued two Nations of the Britans this yeere, [sic], to wit, the Iceni and the Cangi. But forasmuch as the Iceni lay (as it were) in another climate, what if I said this trophee was set up in token of victorie over the Cangi, a smaller nation among our Belgae, and that those Cangi were seated in these parts? For not farre from here is the sea that lieth toward Ireland, neere which hee placed the Cangi, of whose name there seemeth as yet in certaine places of this tract some shadow to remain, namely, in [Cannington](#) and Cannings, pettie countries and Hundreds, as also in [Wincaunton](#), which elsewhere is called [Cangton](#). But of these matters let the reader be judge; my selfe (as I said) doth no more but conjecture whiles I seeke to trace out these their footsteps, and hope to find them out somewhere else.

18. Among these hils standeth [Chuton](#), which was the habitation (if I take not my markes amisse) of William Bonvill, whom King Henrie the Sixth called by his writ of Summons to the Parliament by the name William de Bonneville and Chuton, among other Barons of the Realme, made him Knight of the Garter, and richly matched his sonne in marriage with the sole daughter of Lord Harington.

But when he (unthankfull man that hee was) in the heat of civill warre, revolted, and tooke part with the house of Yorke, as if vengeance had pursued him hard at heeles, that onely sonne of his he saw taken from him by untimely death, and his nephew by the same sonne, Baron of Harrington, slaine at the battell of [Wakefield](#); and immediately after (that his old age might want no kinde of miserie) whiles hee waited still and long looked for better daies, was himself taken prisoner in the second battell of [Saint Albans](#) and, having now runne thorow his full time by course of nature, lost his head, leaving behind him for his heire his Grandchilds daughter Cecilie, a Damsell of tender yeeres, who afterwards with a great inheritance was wedded to Thomas Greie, Marquesse Dorset. But his bloud after his death was by authoritie of Parliament restored.

19. Under [Mendip](#) his northward there is a little village called [Congersburie](#), so named of one Congar, a man of singular holinesse. Capgrave hath written that hee was the Emperours sonne of Constantinople, who lived there an Eremite. Also [Harpestre](#), a Castle by right of inheritance, fell to the Gornaies, and from them descended to the Ab-Adams, who, as I have read, restored it to the Gornaies again.

Southward, not farre from the foresaid hole, where [Mendip](#) slopeth downe with a stonie descent, a little citie with an Episcopall Sea is situat beneath at the hill foot, sometime called (as saith Leland), but whence he had it I wot not, [Thodorodunum](#) , now [Welles](#), so named of the Springs or Wels which boile and walme [well] up here, like as Susa in Persia, Croia in Dalamatia, and Pagase in Macedonia were named of the like fountaines in their cuntry speech, whereupon this also in Latine, is called [Fontanensis ecclesia](#) , as one would say, Fountain-Church. For multitudes of Inhabitants, for faire and stately buildings, it may well and truely challenge the preheminance of all this Province.

A goodly Church it hath, and a Colledge founded by King Ina in honour of Saint Andrew, and soone after endowed by Princes and great men with rich livings and renews: among whom King Kinewolph by name, in the yeere of our Lord 788, granted unto it verie many places lying thereabout. For in a Charter of his wee read thus,

*I Kinewolph King of the West-Saxons, for the love of God and (that which is not openly to be spoken) for some vexation of our enemies, those of the Cornish Nation, with the consent of my Bishop and Nobles, will most humbly give and consecrate some parcell of Land to Saint Andrew the Apostle and servant of God, that is to say, as much as commeth to Eleven Hides, neere to the River called Welwe, for the augmentation of that Monasterie which standeth neere the great fountaine that they call Wiclea .*

This Charter have I set downe both for the antiquitie, and because some have supposed that the place tooke name of this River; verily, nere the Church there is a Spring called Saint Andrews Well, the fairest, deepest, and most plentifull that I have seen, by and by making a swift Brooke. The Church it selfe all thorowout is verie beautifull, but the Frontispiece thereof, in the west end, is a most excellent and goodly peece of worke indeede, for it ariseth up still from the foot to the top of all imagerie, in curious and antike wise wrought of stone carved and embowed right artificially, and the Cloisters adjoining very faire and spatious.

20. A gorgeous pallace of the Bishops, built in manner of a Castle, fortified with walles and a mote, standeth hard by, Southward, and on the other side faire houses of the Prebendaries. For Seven and Twentie Prebends, with nineteen other pety Prebends, beside a Deane, a Chaunter, a Chancellour, and three Archdeacons, belong to this church. In the time of King Edward the Elder, a Bishops Sea was here placed. For when the Pope had suspended him because the Ecclesiasticall discipline and jurisdiction in these westerne parts of the Realme began openly to decay, then he, knowing himselfe to be a maintainer and Nurse-father of the Church, ordained three new Bishopricks, to wit, of Cridie, Cornwall, and this of [Welles](#), where he made Eadulph the first Bishop. But many yeeres after, when Giso sat Bishop there, Harald Earle of the West-Saxons and of Kent (who gaped so greedily for the goods of the Church) so disquieted and vexed him that he went within a litle of quite abolishing the dignitie thereof. But King William the Conquerour, after he had overthrowen Harold, stretched out his helping hand to the succour of banished Giso and reliefe of his afflicted Church.

At what time (as witnesseth *Domesday booke* ) the Bishop held the whole towne in his owne hands, which paid tribute *after the proportion of fiftie Hides* . Afterwards in the raigne of Henrie the First, Johannes de Villula of Tours in France, being now elected Bishop, translated his Sea to [Bathe](#), since which time the two Seas growing into one, the Bishop beareth the title of both, so that he is called the Bishop of Bathe and Welles. Whereupon the Monkes of [Bathe](#) and Canons of [Welles](#) entred into a great quarrell and skuffled, as it were, each with the other about the choosing of their Bishops. Mean while, Savanaricus Bishop of Bathe, being also Abbot of Glastenburie, translated the Sea to [Glastenburie](#), and was called Bishop thereof. But when hee died, this title died with him, and the Monkes and Canons aforesaid were at length brought to accord by that Robert who divided the Patrimonie of [Welles](#) Church into Prebends, instituting a Deane, Sub-Deane, &. Joceline also, the Bishop about the same time, repaired the Church with new buildings, and within remembrance of our Grandfathers, Raulph of Shrewburie (so some call him) built a verie fine Colledge for the Vicars and singing men fast by the North side of the Church, and walled in the Bishops Palace.

But this rich Church was despoiled of many faire possessions in the time of King Edward the Sixt, when England felt all miseries which happen under a child-King. As yee go from the Palace to the market-place of the towne, Thomas Beckington the Bishop built a most beautiful gate, who also adjoynd thereto passing faire houses, all of uniforme height, neere

the Market-place, in the middes whereof is to bee seen a Market-place supported with seven Columnes or pillars without, arched over-head right daintily, which William Knight the Bishop and Wolman the Deane founded for the use of people resorting thither to the Market.

Thus much of the East-part of the towne. In the west-side thereof I have seene the parish Church of Saint Cuthberts, next unto which standeth an Hospitall, founded by Nicolas Bubwith Bishop, for foure and twentie poore people.

21. Out of those [Mendip](#) or Mine-hils springeth the River Frome, which running Eastward by Cole-pits, before it hath held on along course that way, turneth North-ward, and serveth in stead of a bound confining this shire and Glocestershire, and passeth hard under [Farley](#), a Castle not long since of the Lord Hungerfords, situat upon a Rocke, where Humfrey Bohun built sometime a Monkerie, not farre from [Philipps Norton](#), a great Market-towne which tooke the name of a Church consecrate to Saint Philip.

28. There remaineth now to reckon up the Earles and Dukes of this County.

The first Earle of Somerset, by tradition, was William de Mohun or Moion, who may seeme to be the very same whom Maude the Empresse in a charter whereby she created William de Mandevill Earle of Essex, taketh as a witnesse under this name, *comes W. de Moion* . Neither from that time meete we with any expresse and apparent mention of Earles of Somerset, unless it be in these letters Patents of King Henrie the Third unto Peter de Mawley, which, that I might draw out the judgement of others, I will heere set downe literally.

*Know yee that we have received the homage of our welbeloved Uncle William Earle of Sarisbury for all the lands that he holdeth of us, and principally for the County or Earldome of Somerset, which we have given unto him with all appurtenances for his homage and service, saving the roialty to our selves: and therefore we will and command you that yee see he have full sesine [possession] of the foresaid Earldome and all the pertinances thereto, and that ye intermeddle not in any thing from henceforth as touching the County or Earledome aforesaid &. And commandement is given to all Earles, Barons, Knights, and Freeholders of the County of Somerset that unto the same Earle they doe fealty and homage, saving their faith and allegiance unto their soveraigne Lord the King, and that from henceforth they be intentive and answerable unto him as their Lord .*

Whether by these words in the Patent he was Earle of Somerset, as also of Denshire (for of the same William hee wrote likewise in the very same words unto Robert de Courtney) I leave for other man to judge.

Under this King Henrie the Third (as we find in a booke written in French which pertaineth to the house of the Mohuns, Knights) it is recorded that Pope Innocentius in a solemne feast ordained *Reginald Mohun Earl of Ests* (that is, as the author doth interpret if, of Somerset) *by delivering unto him a golden consecrated rose, and a yeerely pension to be paied upon the high Altar of S. Pauls in London* . So that this Reginald may seeme to have beene not properly an Earle, but an Apostolicall Earle. For so were they termed in those daies who had their creation from the Bishop of Rome (like as they were called Earles Imperiall whom the Emperor invested), and such had power to institute Notaries and Scrobes, to legitimate such as were base borne &., under certaine conditions.

A long time after John de Beaufort, the base sonne of John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster by Catharine Swinford, being made legitimate by King Richard the Second, together with his brethren and sister, with consent of the Parliament, was preferred to the honor of Earle of Somerset, and afterwards created Marquesse Dorset; but soone after deprived therof by King Henrie the Fourth, having the title onely of Earle of Somerset left unto him.

The said John had three sonnes, Henrie Earle of Somerset, who died in his tender age, John, created by King Henrie the Fifth the first Duke of Somerset, who had one sole daughter named Margeret, mother to King Henrie the Seventh, and Edmund, who succeeded after his brother in the Dukedome: and having been a certaine time Regent of France, being called home and accused for the losse of Normandie, after he had suffred much grievance at the peoples hands in that regard, was in that wofull war betweene the houses of Lancaster and Yorke slaine in the first battaile of [S. Albans](#).

Henrie his sonne being placed in his rowme, whiles he served the times siding one while with Yorke and another while with Lancaster, in the Bataile of Exham was by those of the houses of Yorke, taken prisoner, and with the losse of his head paied for his unconstant levity. Edmund his brother succeeded him in his honor, who of this family was the last Duke of Somerset, and when the whole power of the Lancastrians was discomfited at placeName reg="Tewkesbury" cnty="Gloucestershire">Tewkesbury, was forcibly pulled out of the

Church into which all embrued with bloud he fled as into a Sanctuary, and then beheaded.

Thus all the legitimate males of this familie being dead and gone, first King Henry the Seventh honored with title Edmund his owne sonne, a young child, who shortly departed this world: afterwards King Henrie the Eight did the like for his base sonne named Henry Fitz-Roy. And seeing he had no children, King Edward the Sixth invested Sir Edward de Sancto Mauro, commonly Seimor, with the same honor, who being most power-able, honorable, and loden with titles, for thus went this stile, *Duke of Somerset, Earle of Hertford, Vicount Beauchamp, Baron Seimor, Unkle to the King, Governor of the King, Protector of his Realmes, Dominions and subjects, Lieutenant of the forces by land and sea, Lord high Treasurer and Earle Marshall of England, Captaine of the Isles Gerney and Jarsey & .* , was suddainly overwhelmed, as it were, by a disport of fortune which never suffereth suddaine over-greatnesse to last long, and for a small crime, and that upon a nice point subtly devised and packed by his enemies, bereaved both of those dignities and his life withall.

In this county are numbred Parishes 385.

[Vision Of Britain - William Camden](#)