

BYGONE

SILEBY No. 7



Sileby

in the

DOOMESDAY BOOK

Map 1.

Showing the village of Sileby  
in the Leicestershire Wapentake of Goscote.

SCALE - 4 MILES to 1 INCH



SILEBY BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST

About 1050 A.D., Sileby still had the old Norse atmosphere which it had acquired after the Danes had settled along the Soar Valley. The Danish language was spoken in both the village and in the town of Leicester.

Along the narrow lane which joined Sileby to the villages of Barhou (Barrow-on-Soar) and Cosintone (Cossington), there were some forty wood and thatch houses in which dwelt farmers and tradesmen.

At least a third of the village was uncultivated, lying as waste and woodland.

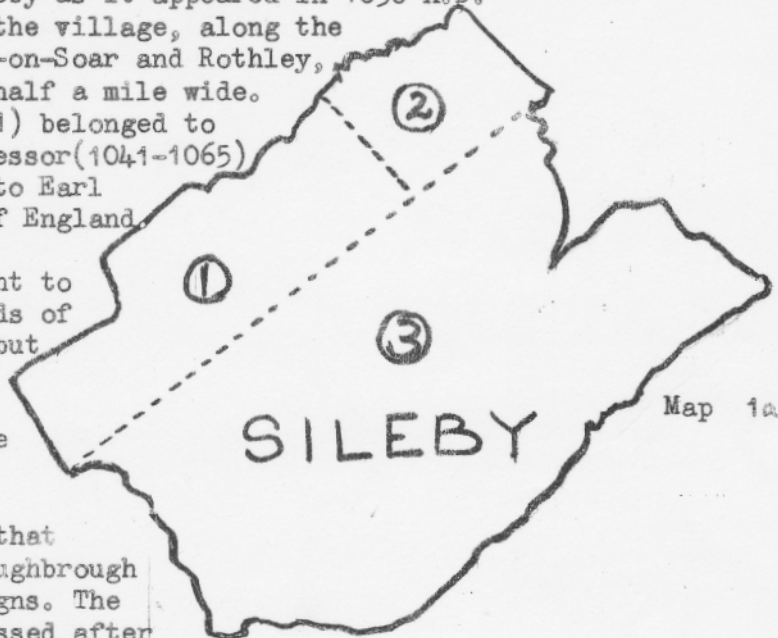
Map 1<sup>a</sup> shows Sileby as it appeared in 1050 A.D.

On the west side of the village, along the boundary with Barrow-on-Soar and Rothley, was a strip of land half a mile wide.

The larger portion (1) belonged to King Edward the Confessor (1041-1065) and the smaller (2) to Earl Harold, later King of England.

The remainder of the village (3) is thought to have been in the hands of Anglo-Saxon thegns, but at this distance in time, it is not possible to determine who held the larger part of the land.

It is known that at that time, the town of Loughbrough was held by five thegns. The thegns were dispossessed after the Normans arrived in England.



Map 1a

THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

On the death of King Edward the Confessor in 1065 A.D., the Witenagemot, or great council, elected Harold, the eldest son of Earl Godwin to succeed him, and he was crowned King of England. William Duke of Normandy, a rival claimant to the throne crossed the Channel with an army, and the two forces met in battle near Hastings, on 14th October, 1066 A.D. King Harold was slain and the English defeated. The Norman Duke was crowned King William the First, on Christmas Day, 1066.

## ENGLAND OCCUPIED

William's expedition was based on the resources and the support of the powerful Norman lords and landowners, most of whom were interrelated by descent and marriage. Having risked life and money in the invasion and conquest of England, they looked for, and obtained, due reward for their services. The Conqueror granted land, titles and estates to his followers. The Norman occupation of the country is clearly shown in the Domesday Book.



King  
Harold  
in the  
Bayeux  
Tapestry

## THE DOMESDAY SURVEY

In 1086 A.D., the year before he died, William the Conqueror ordered a Survey to be made of the whole kingdom. Commissioners were sent to the shires, where a jury was appointed in each of the wapentakes, who declared on oath, the extent of each village and estate, the number and status of its inhabitants, its value before and after 1066 A.D., and the tax payments due to the Crown.

The Survey was actually called, "The Description of England," but became known as the "Domesday," or "Doomsday" Book, as it was said that there was as little possibility of an appeal against the tax assessment, as there was against the Doom of the Day of Judgment.

## SILEBY IN THE DOMESDAY BOOK

The task of describing the kingdom was made easier for the Commissioners, because England had been mapped out long before they arrived. Sileby for example could be accurately located, as it lay in the Hundred of Beeby, in the Wapentake of Goscote, in the shire of Leicester.

The name of the village was written phonetically, or as it was pronounced, by the King's scribes. It appears in the pages of the Domesday Book as SIGLESBIE, SIGLEBI and SEGLEBI.

In the handwriting of the scribe, it looks like this -

*Siglesbie*

REFERENCES TO SILEBY IN THE DOMESDAY BOOK

" L E D E C E S T R E S C I R E

THE KING'S LAND

In Franlund Wapentake

The King holds RODDLIE. King Edward held it.

To this manor belong the following members:

In SEGLEBI, 2 carucates of land and 2 bovates and 10 acres of meadow.

THE LAND OF HUGH DE GRENTEMAISNIL

In Goscote Wapentake

Ernald holds of Hugh in SIGLEBI  $8\frac{1}{2}$  carucates of land. There is land for 5 ploughs. In demesne there are 3 ploughs and 4 serfs; and 18 villeins with 4 sochmen and 4 bordars have 6 ploughs. There (are) 2 mills rendering (de) 30 shillings and 60 acres of meadow. It was worth 60 shillings; now (worth) 110 shillings.

In Ledecestre

Belonging to Hugh de Grentemaisnil:  
13 burgeses pertaining to SIGLESBIE.

THE LAND OF EARL HUGH

In Gutlacistan Wapentake.

Earl Hugh holds of the King BARHOU.

Earl Harold held this manor with the appendages underwritten:

In SIGLEBI 1 carucate of land. "

## SILEBY AND THE THREE MANORS

The Domesday Book records that twenty years after the Norman Conquest, Sileby was shared by three Manors, illustrated in Map 3.

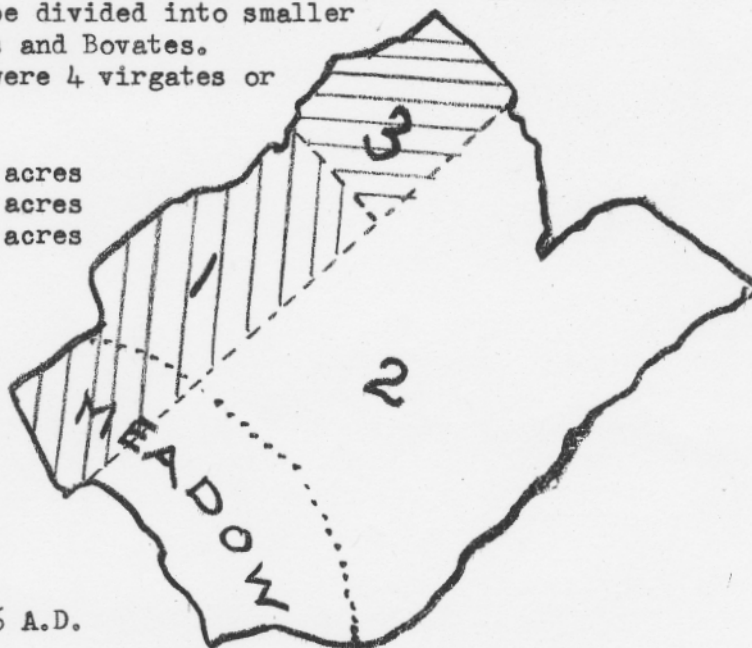
- (1) The King's land, belonging to the Royal Manor of Rothley. It was an ancient possession of Saxon kings, and shortly before the Conquest had been in the hands of King Edward the Confessor and King Harold. In 1086 A.D., it belonged to William the Conqueror.
- (2) The largest part of Sileby was granted by the King to one of his most important supporters, Hugh de Grentemaisnil, as part of the extensive Manor of Leicester.
- (3) The 120 acres in the north-west corner of the village which had belonged to King Harold, was given by the King to the powerful Hugh, Earl of Chester, as part of the Manor of Barrow-on-Soar.

### LAND MEASUREMENT

The unit of taxation was the CARUCATE, an area of land which could be tilled in a year by one plough drawn by a team of eight oxen. A carucate could vary in measurement, according to the nature of the land. It is supposed that a carucate in Sileby was 120 acres. It could be divided into smaller units called Virgates and Bovates.

In a carucate there were 4 virgates or 8 bovates. Thus :

1 carucate	=	120 acres
1 virgate	=	30 acres
1 bovate	=	15 acres



Map 3

Sileby in 1086 A.D.

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THE ESTIMATED AREA OF SILEBY IN 1086 A.D.

The King's Land

2 carucates	240	acres
2 bovates	30	"
meadow	10	"

Hugh de Gretemaisnil

8½ carucates	1020	"
meadow	60	"

Hugh, Earl of Chester

1 carucate	120	"
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1480 acres

Total Recorded Area

Arable land	1410	acres
Meadow land	70	"

The estimated area of Sileby from the Domesday figures in 1086 A.D., was 1,480 acres. In 1970, the area of the village is 2,295 acres. It will be seen from these calculations that the village appears to be 815 acres larger today than it was at the time of the Domesday Survey. It should be noted however, that the Survey takes no account of woodland, furze and heath, waste or marsh land. In another Survey of the village made about 1129 A.D., there is evidence that the Sileby farmers were rapidly clearing and cultivating these wasted areas, because there was an increase of 450 acres of arable land above the total shown in 1086 A.D.

NORMAN LANDHOLDERS IN SILEBY

The King

Two hundred and eighty acres of Sileby belonged to the King himself as part of Rothley. The Domesday Book shows that the Royal Manor of Rothley possessed land in twenty-two Leicestershire villages:



Allextton, Barsby, Seagrave, Tugby, Skeffington, Marefield, South Marefield, Halstead, Coldwell, Wycomb, Tilton, Asfordby, Keyham, Wartnaby, Twyford, Somerby, Frisby, Saxelby, Grimston, Baggrave, Gaddesby and Sileby.

In Danelaw, a number of dependent vills grouped round a central Manor was called a Soke. The lord of the great Manor had jurisdiction over the whole area of the Soke.

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The Old English words "Sacu" and "Socon," meaning Cause and Seek, became "Sake and Soke" in the 10th Century, indicating the right of the lord to hold a court at which tenants of all the vills were required to attend. Here the peasants held pleas and paid their customary dues. The residents in the King's land in Sibleby had at sometime sought the protection of a Saxon king, and in consequence, had been incorporated in the Manorial group, the Soke, yet still maintained a real measure of economic and tenurial freedom.

In Leicestershire, there were two Royal Manors, Rothley and Great Bowden .

### Hugh de Grentemaisnil

The largest land holder in Sibleby was Hugh de Grentemaisnil, the second son of a powerful Norman Baron, who fought at the side of Duke William during the Battle of Hastings. His valliant conduct in that decisive struggle brought him great reward from the Conqueror. He was made lord of sixty-seven Manors, and in 1068 A.D., was appointed an assistant to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and William Fitz-Osbern, in the administration of justice in the kingdom. In 1069, he was made responsible for the government of Hampshire, and a little later, granted the Manor of Leicester, with the title Vicecomes of Leicestershire.



He married Adeliza de Beaumont, a member of a rich and noble family, which brought him in dowry, the Barony of Hinckley.

When William the Conqueror died in 1087, he left the Dukedom of Normandy to his eldest son, Robert. The kingdom of England was given to his second son, William Rufus, and his large fortune to his youngest son, Henry.

In 1088, Hugh de Grentemaisnil with other Norman noblemen took up arms against King William Rufus, in support of Robert's claim to the throne, but the insurrection was soon suppressed, and after certain concessions, the Vicecomes of Leicestershire was restored to favour. Hugh de Grentemaisnil died on the 22nd February, 1093, holding office as the Lord High Steward of England, and enjoying vast wealth and possessions. His wife, Adeliza de Beaumont, died in 1085.

### Ernald de Bois

The 1,080 acres of Sibleby which belonged to the Manor of Leicester, were held of Hugh de Grentemaisnil by Ernald de Bois, alias Ernald de Bosce, described in the Domesday Book simply as "Ernald." He was lord of the Manors of Great and Little Claybrook, and Thorpe Ernald, which still retains his name today as Thorpe Arnold.



The Earl of Chester

The  
Manor  
of  
Barrow  
-on-  
Soar



In the Wapentake of Goscote, Ernald also held Grentemaisnil lands at Alton Grange, Barlestone, Nailstone, Staunton Harold and Sutton Cheney, which together with Sileby, made a total of more than 2,000 acres.

There were four Ernalds de Bois, greatgrandfather, grandfather, father and son, who held office under the Earls of Leicester. They were the founders of the Abbey of Biddledon, in Buckinghamshire, and generous in their respective generations to the support of the Abbey of Leicester.

#### The Earl of Chester

The smallest of the three Manorial divisions of Sileby, belonged to the Manor, or Soke of Barhou. The Domesday Book records:

" In Guthlaxton Wapentake Earl Hugh holds of the King in BARHOU ...15 carucates of land... Earl Harold held this Manor with the appendages under written.."

The appendages are shown in the map above: 1. Barrow-on-Soar 2. Sileby 3. Cossington 4. Seagrave 5. Prestwold 6. Hoton 7. Rearsby 8. Gaddesby 9. Brooksby 10. Rotherby 11. Frisby and also Castle Donnington.

Before the Conquest, the Manor was held by King Harold, who obtained it as the dowry of his wife Ealdgyth, the sister of the Earls Edwin and Morcar.

These lands which had been held by King Harold were granted by William the Conqueror to his warlike nephew, Hugh, Earl of Chester. He was the son of Richard, Vicomte de Avranches. Hugh, known as Lupus, (the Wolf) because of his disposition, was a feudal magnate whose possessions throughout the kingdom were so numerous, it would require a book to record them.

The Manor of Barrow with its portion of Sileby descended with the Earldom of Chester until the death of Ralph, the Sixth Earl, in 1232.

THE PEOPLE OF SILEBY  
IN THE DOMESDAY BOOK.

It has been shown that in 1086, the land of Sileby was shared by three Manors, but 150 years later, the whole village was in the possession of the Segrave family. An examination of numerous ancient documents referring to the Manor of Sileby show that throughout its long history, no lord of the Manor ever resided in the village, but were always represented by a Reeve.

The Domesday Book records that there were five classes of people living in Sileby in 1086. These were Burgesses, Sochmen, Villeins, Bordars and Serfs.

THE BURGESSES

During the early Norman period there lived in the village thirteen freemen, who were numbered among the burgesses of the Borough of Leicester. These Sileby-born men had as it were, a two-fold allegiance, first to Ernald de Bois, who held most of the village land, and was virtually lord of the Manor, and secondly to the Borough, where they paid taxes and attended the three meetings of the Moot each year, using their vote in the town's affairs.

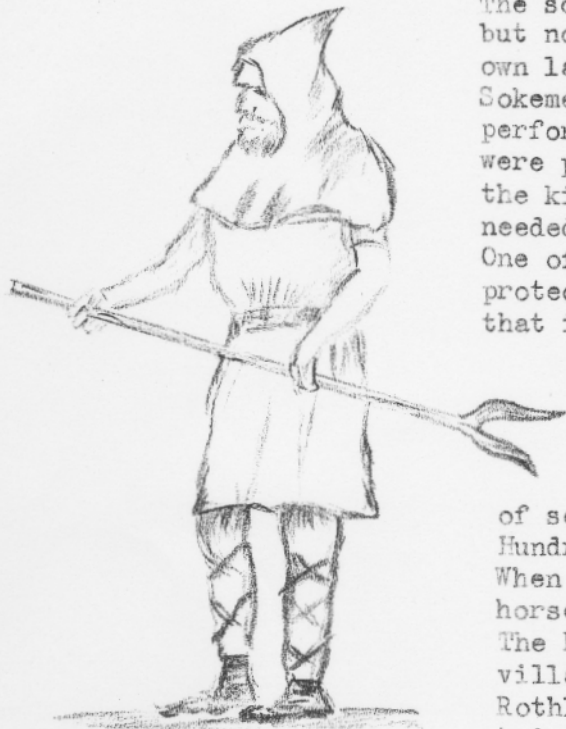
These Sileby tradesmen, craftsmen and farmers were economically and socially superior to the other inhabitants of the village.

The Domesday Book does not show the trades of these men, but later generations of burgesses from Sileby were mercers, bakers, tanners, butchers etc. From the beginning of the 13th Century, their names are found among the freemen and members of the powerful Merchant Guild of Leicester. The history of these Sileby traders and craftsmen will be given in a future booklet.

It is interesting to note that the Domesday Book records 37 burgesses in the survey of Leicester, and they belonged to only two villages, Anstey, with 24, and Sileby with 13.

## The Sokemen

Sileby had four freemen who belonged to the class known as sokemen, or sochmen, and were associated with the Royal Manor of Rothley. At some period, these men or their ancestors had turned to a Saxon king for defence or protection during a local calamity. They had once attended the Rothley Manor court, and surrendered their land to the king through his representative, and had received it back again as the gift of the king.



The sokemen then held their land UNDER the king, but not OF the king, because it was still their own land, and they were still freemen. Sokemen did not pay rent for their land, or perform any regular service for it, but as they were part of the Soke, were obliged to fight for the king in one of his armed bands when they were needed.

One of the advantages in being a sokeman was protection by Wer-geld and a Man-bót. This meant that if the sokeman was slain, his dependants or nearest relatives were given a sum of money known as Wer-geld. At the same time, his lord claimed compensation for him, called the Man-bót.

In the event of a sokeman being accused of some crime, his lord could defend him in the Hundred court.

When a sokeman died, his lord could claim his horse, armour and his best beast.

The Domesday Book records that in the twenty-one villages which had allegiance to the Soke of Rothley, there were 204 sokemen, including the 4 in Sileby. In Leicestershire, there were 1,926 men of this class.

## The Villeins

The typical villager in Sileby was the villein, who was similar to the former Saxon ceorl. There were 18 of them in the village when the Domesday Book was written.

The villein was a freeman with his own land, which he held of the lord of the Manor, and was bound to the demesne, spending his life in economic and personal subordination to his lord.

Ancient records called *Rectitudines Singularum Personarum*, *Chronicon Petroburgense* (the Black Book of Peterborough, c.1125), the Templar's Land Book of Guiting, Gloucestershire (c.1185) and the book of the Priory of St. Mary, Worcester, help to determine the duties and obligations of the midland villein, which seem to have been as follows:

On reaching age to enter into the service of the demesne, the lord of the Manor provided the young vellein with the essentials of agricultural life, two oxen for ploughing, a cow, six sheep and seed for seven acres of land. The villein built his own simple cottage of timber, mud and wattle, and his lord supplied the bare requirements of the home, a cooking-pot, a rough table and bench, and a few wooden bowls and drinking-horns. Although a freeman, he was dependent on his lord for all that he had. At his death, all his good and chattels were returned to the lord of the Manor.

The villein normally held a virgate, or 30 acres of arable land, which he cultivated with his family.

He was obliged to plough 4 acres of the lord's demesne land in the spring. He supplied 2 oxen for the plough-team which had to be available for work in the demesne 3 days a week in spring, and 1 day in summer.

He must work on his lord's land 2 days in each week from Martinmas (11th November) until the time of haymaking, when he helped in mowing the meadows and carrying the hay.

From the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula (1st August) he worked 3 days a week reaping and carrying the demesne corn.

In addition, there was other labour, known as "boon-work." He was required to sow  $1\frac{3}{4}$  acres of land, and harrow it for winter sowing. Plough 2 acres of pasture. Give two days for the washing and shearing of his lord's sheep. Twice a year, at Easter and Christmas, he must present a quantity of malt to the Manor, and provide the wood to dry it. When not engaged in the compulsory work of his lord, the rest of his time was his own, to labour on his own virgate of land.

Besides manual labour, the villein paid to his lord Garfol, an annual toll of 2s. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in money, presented a sheep, a quantity of barley and a hen with 16 eggs.

The villein could sell his land to another man provided it was first offered to his lord and refused by him. It could only be sold to someone who lived in the village, and it still remained in the jurisdiction of the lord of the Manor. In the event of a sale, he had to pay 3s. for the change of tenancy.

He could not send his sons out of the village, make them Clerks, or give his daughters in marriage without consent from his lord. If a daughter was given in marriage, he paid a fine called Merchet. Permission was required also to sell an ox or a horse.

He was compelled to have his corn ground at the demesne corn-mill, by the river Soar. He had to attend the court of the Manor when it was held. In time of war, he took up arms, and followed his lord, though he was forbidden to possess weapons of his own.



2

A villein could not move from the village or quit his lord. He might obtain freedom only by charter, a quit-rent or by escaping to a nearby town, where he must conceal himself for a year and a day. Manor lords made great efforts to recapture a runaway villein, but if he was not taken within four days, he could only be recovered by an appeal to the courts.

### The Bordars

The Domesday Book shows that there were four men in Sileby who belonged to the peasant class known as bordars, who were the Norman equivalent of the Saxon kotsetlas or cottars. They were inferior in status to the villeins, and were the lowest order of the freemen.

The bordars held some five acres of arable land, and were provided by the lord of the Manor with 2 oxen, a cow, 6 sheep, some poultry and a parcel of land already ploughed and sown. He was supplied with household goods. The annual labours and boon-service of the bordar to the demesne were somewhat similar to those of the villein. As a payment for his holding, he ploughed and provided seed corn yearly for another 3 acres. The bordar took his turn as watchman over his lord's flocks during the winter months, from Martinmas to Easter. He partnered another bordar in being responsible for feeding one of the hunting hounds at the Manor kennels. He was required to pay ten pence each year on Michaelmas Day, a supply 20 bushels of barley and 2 lambs at Easter. He paid six pence to the swine herd who took the village pigs into the woods and waste land each year, and a further offering of a penny for each goat he grazed on the pasture. There were 1,373 bordars in Leicestershire.



### The Serfs

There were four serfs in Sileby in 1086. A serf was a slave without legal rights, a chattel of the lord of the Manor, who could do with him as he pleased, except maim him, or slay him. He was equivalent to the theow of Saxon times. In Domesday times, a serf had no land of his own, but was given food and shelter by his master. His work included the cultivation of the demesne land with the villeins and bordars, and apart from bondage to the Manor, he was equal in many respects to his neighbours who were freemen.

A man could be a serf by birth, or by being sold into slavery. If a man became a serf, it was at a ceremony with all the villagers present. If a serf had the good fortune to become a freeman, this was also at a public ceremony, held in the Parish Church. A serf might have many relatives in the village who were freemen.

13

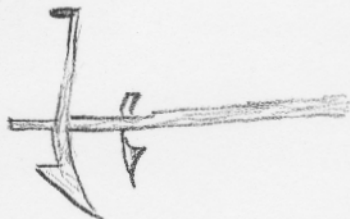
A serf was easily identified by other men, because he wore a metal collar, bearing the name of the Manor lord. Serfdom continued in France until the Revolution. In Leicestershire there were 394 serfs at the time of the Domesday Survey, which meant that 6 men in each 100 in the shire was a slave.

### Agriculture

The Domesday Book distinguishes between the ploughs which belong to the villagers, and those of the Manor :

" In demesne there are 3 ploughs and 4 serfs.

18 villeins with 4 sochmen and 4 bordars have 6 ploughs."



On the left is a drawing from an ancient document illustrating the Norman plough that would be in use in Sileby. A plough team was 8 oxen.

#### Crops

The average yield from an acre sown with 2 or 2½ bushels of winter wheat was about 8 bushels. Even on a well managed farm, the

yield would be no more than 10. Today, the same land would be expected to return more than 30 bushels.

#### Livestock

The prices of farm animals in the Domesday period were:

An ox for ploughing, 30 pence.

A full team of oxen, 240 pence

A bull or cow, 20 pence.

Sheep, 4 pence.

A horse, 120 pence.

Breeding boars and sows, 12 pence.

#### Village Life

The inhabitants of Sileby in 1086 A.D. were 13 burgesses, 4 sokemen, 18 villeins, 4 bordars and 4 serfs, a total of 43 men. If we add to these wives and children, it is estimated that there were about 100 souls in the village.

Their year was based on the great Christian festivals of Candlemas, Easter, Lammas, Michaelmas, Martinmas etc., which were related to the seasons of ploughing, sowing, haymaking, reaping and harvest thanksgiving. On festive days, the villagers entertained themselves with wrestling, cock-fighting and bull-baiting.

An ancient rhyme describes how their day was reckoned :

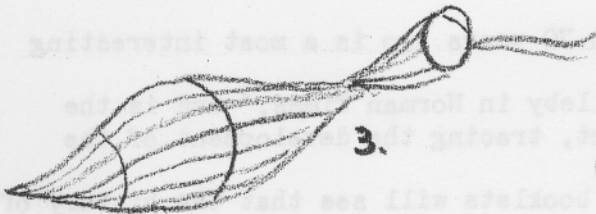
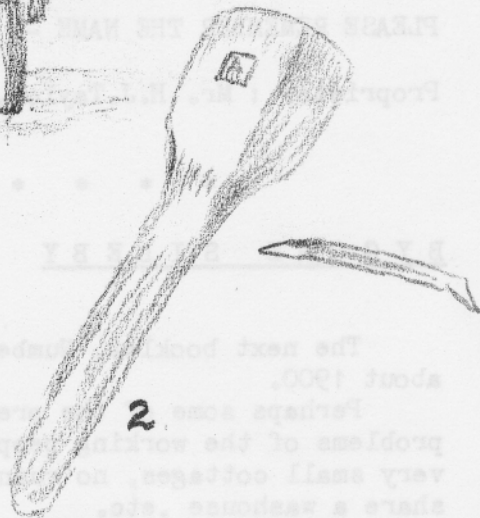
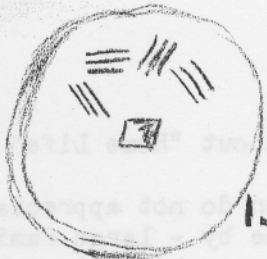
" Lever a cinque, diner a neuf,  
Souper a cinque, coucher a neuf,  
Fait vivre d'ans nonante et neuf."

" Rise at five, dine at nine,  
To sup at five, to bed at nine,  
Makes a man live to ninety and nine."

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## Sileby Mill

The Domesday Book states that in Sileby there were:  
" 2 mills rendering 30 shillings."  
The mill stood by the river, probably on the site of the present day  
"mill." The Domesday entry does not mean that there were two buildings or  
two water-wheels, but the building contained two pairs of millstones  
being operated by the millrace. The mill belonged to the Manor, and  
is mentioned in documents relating to the Manor hundreds of years later.



The millstones (1) were cut with grooves to assist the work of grinding the corn. The tool used to make these grooves was known locally as a "threave," (2) and the one illustrated above, was made of apple wood in the early 19th Century. It is owned by Alan Dewey, who is presenting it to the Leicester Museum.

A Norman eel or fish trap is shown (3). Fishing the river was the sole right of the lord of the Manor. Traps in this part of the river can be remembered by people who saw them about the turn of this century.

Sileby mill was still being used for grinding corn until the close of the 1800's. Almost 300 years ago, Robert Barnard who owned the mill, left a clause in his will that it should annually be charged to provide a charity for the village. The Vicar receives ten shilling each half year to preach the "Barnard Charity Sermon," on the first Sunday in March, and the first Sunday in October.

## ADVERTISEMENTS

### HIGHGATE TAXIS

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How can you get a TAXI ? RING SILEBY 2015  
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Wool Shop at 28 King Street, Sileby - Telephone Sileby 2962.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE NAME - "HIGHGATE TAXIS."

Proprietor : Mr. H.J.Taylor.

\* \* \* \* \*

### BYGONE SILEBY

The next booklet, Number 8, will be about "Home Life" in Sileby  
about 1900.

Perhaps some of the present generation do not appreciate the  
problems of the working people in days gone by - large families in  
very small cottages, no running water, no gas, housewives having to  
share a washhouse, etc.

Life in the village more than 70 years ago is a most interesting  
subject.

Booklet Number 9 is about "Sileby in Norman Times," and is the  
continuation of the present booklet, tracing the development of the  
village after the Domesday period.

Those who are collecting the booklets will see that the history of  
Sileby will gradually unfold, and soon, ancient documents will enable  
us to meet individuals with unusual names, who lived and worked in  
our village more than 700 years ago. The first man we can identify by  
name, was living in Sileby about 1150 A.D.

### INFORMATION REQUIRED

A booklet is being prepared on the subject, "Sports and Pastimes"  
in bygone Sileby. If any of our readers have information on the  
development of the game of BOWLES in the village, we should be glad  
to receive it.