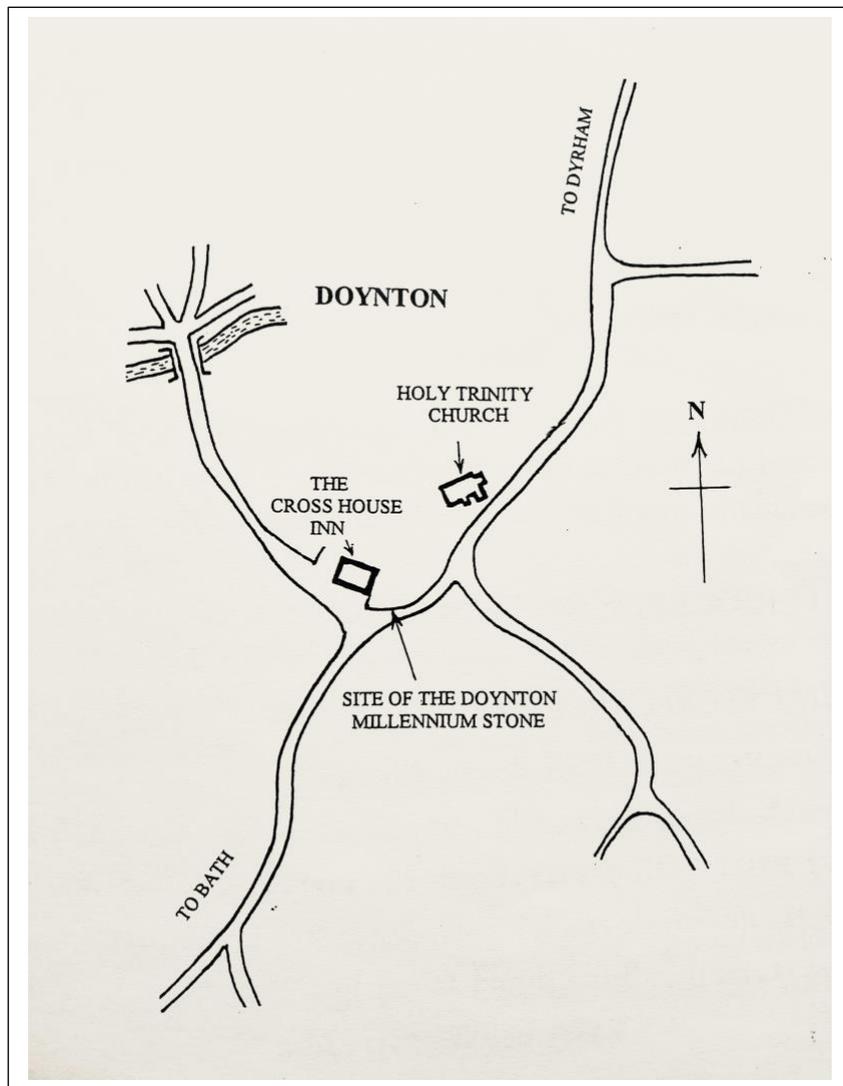


THE DOYNTON MILLENNIUM STONE

By David Vaudrey

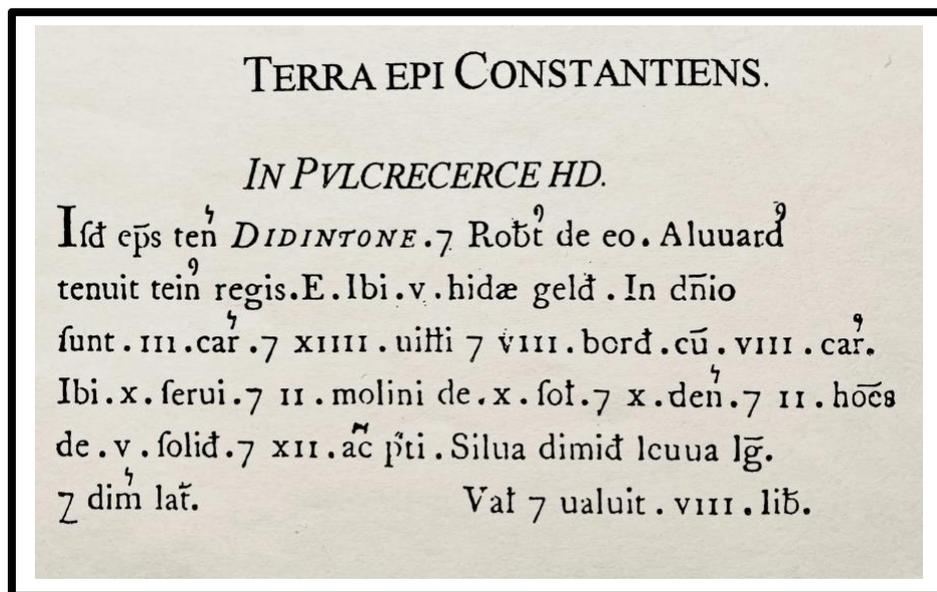


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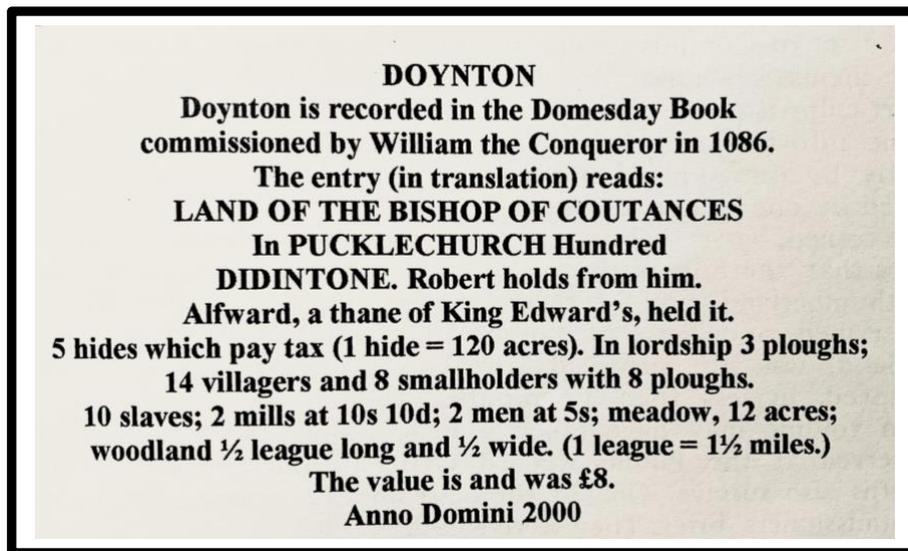
This stone has been placed in the wall beside the Cross House Inn to celebrate the Millennium – 2000 years after the birth of Jesus Christ and probably more than 1000 years after the establishment of the village of Doynton. It reminds us that the village has a very long history and that in that time it has not grown much larger, nor has it withered away – it has remained much the same. The Stone is a piece of Nabresina marble from Trieste in northern Italy, on the Adriatic coast, 30' wide, 16" deep and 3" thick. This material was chosen for its hardness and durability and because its colour and texture is a good match with the local Cotswold stone. It was supplied by Messrs G. Williams & Sons (Sculptures) Ltd. of Bath.

THE INSCRIPTION

The entry in the Domesday Book (strictly speaking the 'the' before 'Domesday' should be omitted but it has been used here in line with common parlance) is in much abbreviated Latin and reads:



The inscription on the Stone includes a translation of the entry and is shown below:



These are answers to the series of questions that the Commissioners put to each community when making the survey. The 7-like symbol in the original represents 'and'. Coutances is a city, on the site of the Roman Constantia, situated in the department of La Manche in the Normandy peninsula; it is still the seat of the bishopric. Anno Domini, *In the Year of the Lord*, has been written out in full to remind us more specifically of the significance of the anniversary. A monograph on the Domesday survey, its purpose, and the way it was made follows.

The stone was unveiled by Mrs Eileen Pitman of Doynton House on Sunday, 29th October, 2000, a month before her 100th birthday. She died on 5th April, 2009 aged 108.

The Domesday Survey

In 1066 Duke William of Normandy conquered England. He was crowned King, and most of the lands of the English nobility were soon granted to his followers. Domesday Book was compiled 20 years later. The Saxon Chronicle records that in 1085

*at Gloucester at midwinter ... the King had deep speech with his counsellors and sent men all over England to each shire ... to find out ... what or how much each landholder held ... in land and livestock, and what it was worth.. The returns were brought to him.*¹

William was thorough. One of his Counsellors reports that he also sent a second set of Commissioners 'to shires they did not know, where they were themselves unknown, to check their predecessors' survey, and report culprits to the King'.²

The information was collected at Winchester, corrected, abridged, chiefly by omission of livestock and the 1066 population, and fair copied by one writer into a single volume. Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex were copied, by several writers, into a second volume, unabridged, which states that 'the Survey was made in 1086'. The surveys of Durham and Northumberland, and of several towns, including London, were not transcribed, and most of Cumberland and Westmorland, not yet in England, was not surveyed. The whole undertaking was completed at speed, in less than 12 months, though the fair copying of the main volume may have taken a little longer. Both volumes are now preserved at the Public Record Office. Some versions of regional returns also survive. One of them, from Ely Abbey³, copies out the Commissioners' brief. They were to ask

*The name of the place. Who held it, before 1066, and now?
How many hides?⁴ How many ploughs, both those in lordship and the men's?
How many villagers, cottagers and slaves, how many free men and Freemen?⁵
How much woodland, meadow and pasture? How many mills and fishponds?
How much has been added or taken away?
What the total value was and is?
How much each free man or Freeman had or has? All threefold, before 1066, when King William gave it, and now; and if more can be had than at present?*

The Ely volume also describes the procedure. The Commissioners took evidence on oath 'from the Sheriff; from all the barons and their Frenchmen; and from the whole Hundred, the priests, the reeves and six villagers from each village'. It also names four Frenchmen and four Englishmen from each Hundred, who were sworn to verify the detail.

¹ Before he left England for the last time, late in 1086.

² Robert Losinga, Bishop of Hereford 1079-1095.

³ *Inquisitio Eliensis*, first paragraph.

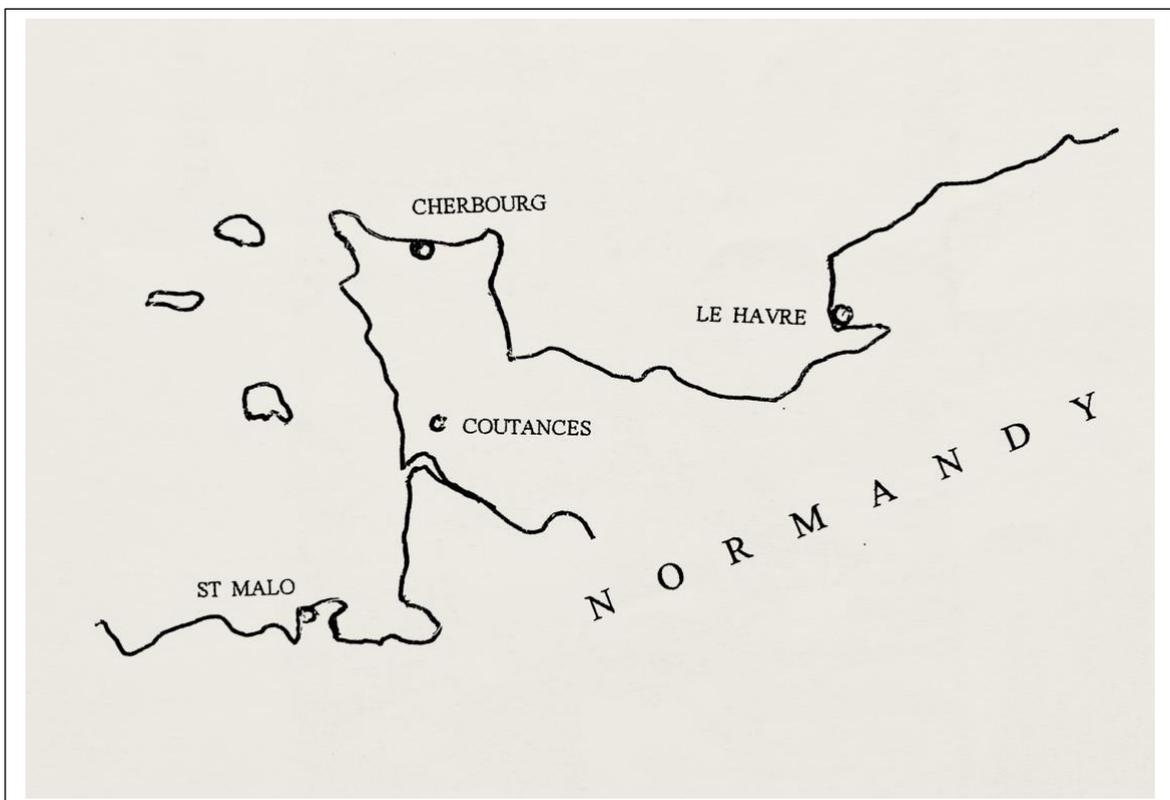
⁴ A land unit, reckoned as 120 acres.

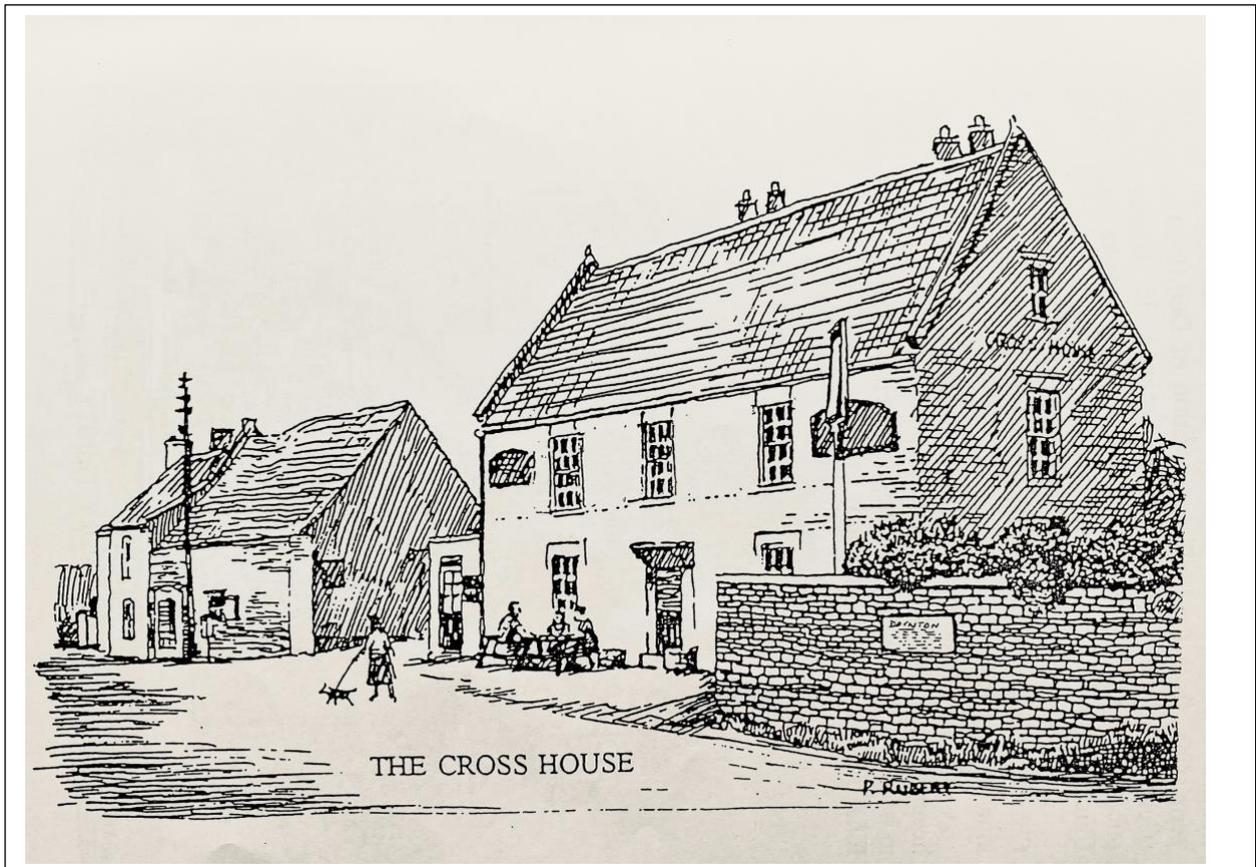
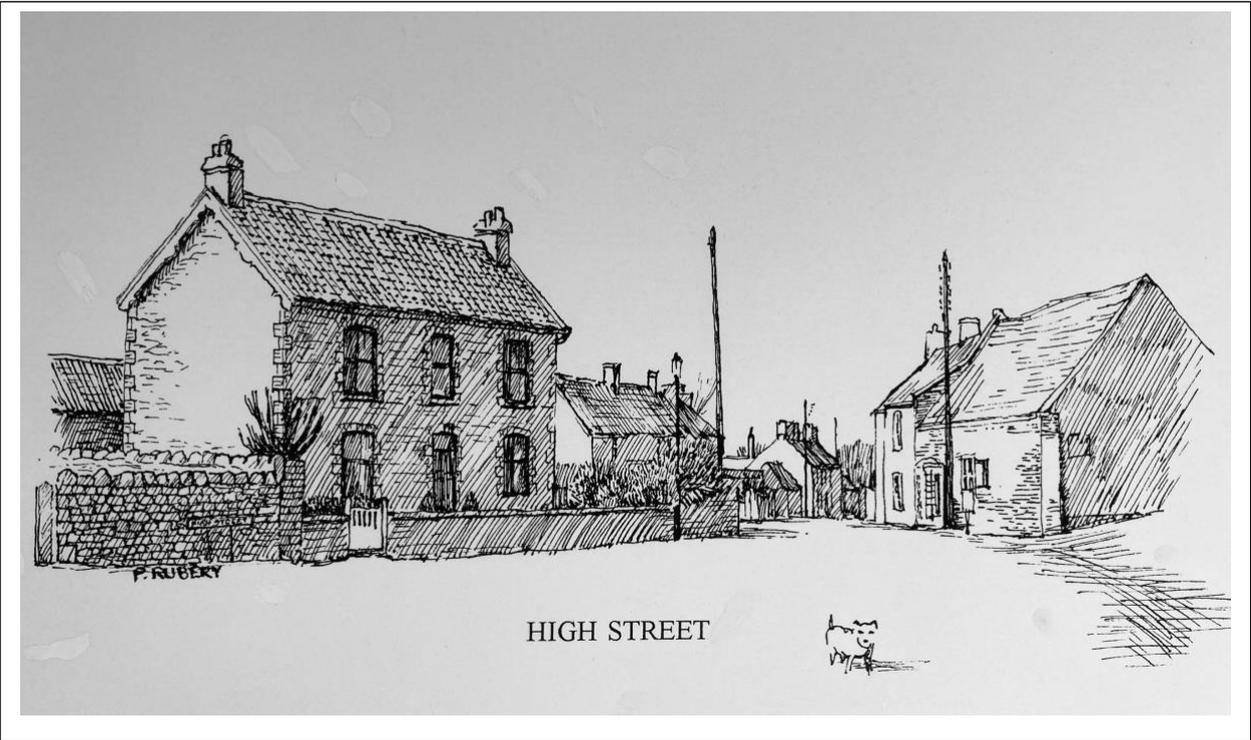
⁵ *Quot Sochemani*.

The King wanted to know what he had, and who held it. The Commissioners therefore listed lands in dispute, for Domesday Book was not only a tax assessment. To the King's grandson, Bishop Henry of Winchester, its purpose was that every '*man should know his right and not usurp another's*'; and because it was the final authoritative register of rightful possession 'the natives called it Domesday Book, by analogy from the Day of Judgement'; that is why it was carefully arranged by Counties, and by landowners within Counties, '*numbered consecutively ... for easy reference*'.

Domesday Book describes Old English society under new management, in minute statistical detail. Foreign lords had taken over, but little else had yet changed. The chief landowners and those who held from them are named, and the rest of the population was counted. Most of them lived in villages, whose houses might be clustered together, or dispersed among their fields. Villages were grouped in administrative districts called Hundreds, which formed regions within Shires, or Counties, which survive today with minor boundary changes; the recent (*early 1980s*) deformation of some recent deformation of some ancient county identities is here disregarded, as are short-lived modern changes. The local assemblies, though overshadowed by lords great and small, gave men a voice, which the Commissioners heeded. Very many holdings were described by the Norman term *manerium* (manor), greatly varied in size and structure, from tiny farmsteads to vast holdings; and many lords exercised their own jurisdiction and other rights, termed *soca*, whose meaning still eluded exact definition.

The Survey was unmatched in Europe for many centuries, the product of a sophisticated and experienced English administration, fully exploited by the Conqueror's commanding energy.





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The drawings showing the High Street, Cross House and Holy Trinity Church are by Peter Rubery of Doynton and are reproduced here by kind permission.

The Doynton Parish Council is grateful to Andre Large, the licensee, and to Messrs. Eldridge Pope & Co. for allowing the Stone to be placed in the wall by the Cross House and to Frederick Ellis of Doynton for installing it.

