

**A SHORT HISTORY OF THE SOKE  
OF SPALDWICK, (SPALDWICK,  
STOW LONGA, EASTON,  
BARHAM, AND LITTLE  
CATWORTH) HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

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A short history of the soke of Spaldwick, (Spaldwick, Stow Longa, Easton, Barham, and little Catworth) Huntingdonshire by S. Inskip Ladds

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE HISTORICAL SERIES.

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A

SHORT HISTORY

OF THE

# SOKE OF SPALDWICK,

(Spaldwick, Stow Longa, Easton,  
Barham, and Little Catworth)

HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

BY

S. INSKIP LADDS,  
A.R.I.B.A.

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## P R E F A C E .

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*This account of the Soke of Spaldwick was written in the first place for the "Huntingdonshire Post." It was then thought that it would be well to reprint it in a more permanent form, in the hope that other Parishes might be similarly treated, and thus that the great want of a County History of Huntingdon might, to some extent, be met. Thanks are especially due to Henry Dawson, Esq., Editor of the "Huntingdonshire Post," and his Staff, for the care taken in correcting the various misprints—inevitable to a newspaper,—and also to the Revd. G. E. Sharland, the Revd. W. M. Noble, and the Revd. T. M. N. Owen, for communicating several interesting facts, and particularly to the first-named of these three gentlemen for kindly contributing more than half the illustrations.*

S. INSKIP LADDS.

*Market Place,  
Huntingdon,  
Easter, 1902.*



STOW LONGA CHURCH.



New Reredos.



SKETCH OF  
HALL MARK  
ON BACK.



The Paten.

FROM PHOTOS BY  
S. INSKIP LADD, A.R.S.B.A.



## The Soke of Spaldwick.

**I**N the year 931, when Ethelred the Unready was King of England, Spaldwick belonged to a noble Duke, Brithnoth by name. Four years previously Brithnoth had attacked the Danes at Malden, in Essex, and defeated them with great slaughter, and they now returned, vowing vengeance. It would appear that Brithnoth was away from home, for he hurried back to Malden, and coming to the Abbey of Ramsey on his way, he requested entertainment and provision for his men; the Abbot refused to entertain any but himself and seven companions, whereupon he pressed on to Ely, where he and his men were hospitably received, and on the morrow, coming into the Chapter House, and returning thanks to the Abbot and Convent, he in recompense immediately gave them the capital manor of Spaldwick, and others, and, on certain conditions, Semershams and many other estates besides.

And so, Spaldwick having come into the possession of the Monks of Ely, we hear little more of it until William the Norman caused the famous Domesday Book to be compiled. One thing, however, we do hear: Bishop Adelwold having purchased Bluntisham between the years 1008 and 1015, and a lawsuit following, it was stated in evidence that "in the whole County of Huntingdon, there was not land so free, which through forfeiture could not be lost, excepting two hides near Spaldwick." King Edward the Confessor's Charter to the Abbey of Ely confirms to it "Spaldwick with its appurtenances," which we take to mean Stow, Easton, Barham, and Little Catworth.

When Domesday Book was ordered to be compiled, the Abbot of Ely caused a schedule of the Abbey property to be drawn up, of which the following is a translation of the part relating to Spaldwick:—

"In Spaldwick the Abbot of Ely had one Manor of 15 hides paying geld, between the Manor and the Hamlets of Stow, Easton and Barham, and 15 ploughs can till the land; that Lord had 4 carucates in demesne in thainland.



over and above that which paid geld, and 42 villains and 8 borderers. Now the Abbot of Ely has there 4 ploughs, and 7 beasts, and 30 hogs, and one hundred and twenty sheep, and 1 horse, and 4 hives of bees, and 1 mill rendering 2 shillings, and 50 villeins, and 10 borderers. Between all these, twenty-five ploughs, and one hundred and sixty acres of meadow. Pannage in woods 60 acres. In the time of King Edward, with all which belongs there, worth sixteen pounds, and now twenty-two pounds. Altogether, 3 miles long and 2 miles broad. (The mile was equal to about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  modern miles.) In Catworth, Abbot Turstin had 4 hides paying geld, Hamlet of Spaldwick, and 8 villeins with 8 ploughs. Now the Abbot of Ely has it and 7 villeins with two ploughs. And this is assessed in Spaldwick."

This schedule, now known as the *Inquisitio Eliensis*, being brought before the Domesday Commissioners, they took evidence thereon, and recorded it in Domesday Book in the following terms:—

"THE LAND OF THE ABBOT OF ELY.

"*a manor*—In Spaldwick the Abbot of Ely had 15 hides paying geld. There is land for 15 ploughs. There are still on the demesne 4 ploughs on 5 hides of this land, and 50 villeins and 10 borderers, having 25 ploughs. There is 1 mill worth 2 shillings yearly, and 160 acres of meadow and 60 acres of pannage in woods. In the time of King Edward worth 16 pounds, now 22 pounds.

"*a manor*—In Little Catworth, hamlet of Spaldwick, were 4 hides of land paying geld. There is land for 4 ploughs. There are now 7 villeins having two ploughs.

"THE LAND OF WILLIAM DE WARREN.

"*soc*.—In the other Catworth was 1 hide paying geld. There is land for 1 plough. This is a *soc*. Now held by Tored, of William, and he has there 1 plough and 1 borderer, and 12 acres of meadow. Worth 30 shillings. All this *soc* belongs to Kimbolton.

"CLAIMS.

"In Little Catworth the same Ulwyn (*i.e. Ulwyn-chil.*) had 1 hide, over which King Edward always had *soc* and *soc*, but he was able to give the land to whom he would, and to sell it. But the men of the County say that the King had given the land to Earl Waltheof.

"The County testifies that the third part of half a hide which lies in Easton, and pays geld in Bedfordshire, belongs to the Abbot of Ely's Manor of Spaldwick, and so the Abbot had it in the time of King Edward, and for five years after the

coming of King William. This, Eustace forcibly took from the church, and retains it."

About twenty years later Richard, Abbot of Ely, obtained the King's licence and the Pope's consent to make his Abbacy into a Bishopric;—but, dying before the change was completed, he was succeeded by Harvey, Bishop of Bangor, who in 1109 became first Bishop of Ely; and to compensate the Bishop of Lincoln, out of whose diocese the newly formed Bishopric was taken, the Monks of Ely made over to him the Manor of Spaldwick.

Spaldwick, during the time that it belonged to the Abbey of Ely, provided the Abbey with provisions for two weeks in each year.

It seems reasonable to suppose that no Church existed in the Manor at the time of Domesday, or it would be mentioned in that Book, as quite half the Churches of Huntingdonshire are, and indeed the architecture of the Churches of Spaldwick, Stow and Barham points to their having been built soon after the Manor came into the hands of the Bishop of Lincoln, while Easton church was probably not built until about the year 1250. The Bishop of Lincoln, having come into possession of the Soke of Spaldwick, appears to have retained to himself the principal Manor of Spaldwick, but formed the Manor of Stow into a Prebend, under the title of Stow Longa, endowing it also with the Improprate Rectory and Advowson of the Church of Spaldwick; and some two centuries later when the Prebend of St. Crucis was endowed with part of the tithes of Spaldwick, he took, also, its name as a subsidiary title.

In the 11th year of Henry III (1226-7), an inquisimus was made of a Deed dated 16th of King John (1214-5), granting to Hugh, Bishop of Lincoln, permission to impark and essart, at will, the woods at Buckden and Spaldwick, &c., and the grove at Stow, saving to the King only the hunting. The same deed grants also to the Bishop, fairs and markets in any of his Manors at will.

Three years later (1229), a grant is made to Bishop Hugh, of deer leaps at his parks at Buckden, Spaldwick and Liddington.

At a perambulation of woods and forests in Co. Huntingdon, taken in 1301, it was proved that Henry II, in 1154, had afforested the whole County, especially mentioning a long list of woods and groves afforested to the serious loss of the Lords thereof; amongst these are:—

"A grove of Robert Wyne at Easton.

A grove of the Bishop of Lincoln at Stow.

A grove of Peter de Herdewyke at Easton."

And again, in 1300, the Bishop obtains a licence to impark his wood of Long Stow, with 100

acres of land adjoining, in Co. Huntingdon. At the taxation of 1291, the Spiritualities of the Vicarage of Spaldwick were taxed at £4 6s 8d; and of the Prebendal Church of Stow, with its chapels (Easton, Barham and Little Catworth), at £42 6s 8d.

Oliver Sutton (Bishop of Lincoln 1280-1300) was called upon to answer a writ of *Quo Warranto* as to his claim to have view of Frank Pledge in his Manors of Buckden, Spaldwick and Stilton, and other liberties, to which he replied that he claimed to have all liberties in the aforesaid Manors, *except murder*, because he and all his predecessors had had them hitherto, since the time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, and he said that he had gallows and tumbrell in the Manors of Spaldwick and Buckden. And as to murder, he said that he and his men were quit of murder by virtue of a charter dated 1 Richard I. He said further that he claimed to hold the View of Frank Pledge twice a year, without the presence of the King's Bailiff, and that he gave nothing to the King for holding the View.

Whether his claim was allowed we know not.

From an Inquisition taken in the reign of Edward I. we learn that the Bishop of Lincoln then had in the Soke of Spaldwick:—In demesne—6 carucates of land and 20 acres of pasture, 24 other acres of pasture dispersed about, a wood of 20 acres called Stow Grove, a Park of 20 acres, a garden, and two windmills.

The Prior of Stoneley held a virgate of land in Stow, for which he paid the Bishop 12 shillings. The Bishop also had the following villeins rendering all customary suit and service, viz.:—In the Township of Spaldwick 19 villeins holding 6½ virgates at an annual rent of 6 shillings per virgate. In the Hamlet of Easton 10 villeins holding a virgate each, and 18 holding half a virgate each.

In the Hamlet of Upthorpe 16 villeins holding 9 virgates at a rent of 4 shillings per virgate.

In the Hamlet of Stow 18 villeins holding 10 virgates at 4 shillings per virgate.

In the Hamlet of Little Catworth 24 villeins holding 15½ virgates.

The Hamlet of Barham 20 villeins holding 12½ virgates.

The Hamlet of Little Catworth paid the Bishop 6 pence for one acre.

The Town of Spaldwick with the Soke still answers for 15 hides.

At the same Inquisition Lady Joan de Bohun had 15 villeins in the Hamlet called Stow (*this is Overstow, in the Parish of Kimbolton*), each holding half a virgate of land. Thomas de Bekering held one hide of land in Little Catworth which Richard de Molesworth formerly held, and