

**A SHORT ACCOUNT OF
DANEGELD: WITH SOME FURTHER
PARTICULARS RELATING TO
WILL. THE CONQUEROR'S
SURVEY**

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PHILIP CARTERET WEBB

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A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF
DANE GELD:
WITH
SOME FURTHER PARTICULARS
RELATING TO
Will. the Conqueror's SURVEY.

By a Member of the *Society of Antiquaries of London.*

Philip Costeret Webb.

Read at a Meeting of the SOCIETY, 1 April, 1756; and
ordered to be printed.

L O N D O N,
Printed in the YEAR M D C C L V I.

22 b. l. 14.

SHORT ACCOUNT

OF

DANEGELD, &c.

THE particular attention your Lordship and the Society were pleased to shew to the paper I had the honor to lay before you the 29th Nov. 1755, containing an account of some particulars relative to Domes-day book, hath encouraged me to prosecute my inquiries, and I flatter myself that what I have now further to offer on that subject will not be displeasing to the Society.

The learned Dean of Exeter, to whom this Society is under great obligations for his repeated antiquarian communications, in the paper he laid before the Society, the 22d Jan. 1756, concerning the Exeter MS. says, The common opinion is, that Danegelt was a tax of *one shilling* upon every hide of land in England, waft-land, as he supposed, excepted. In my former paper, p. 20. I transcribed a passage from Mr. Arthur Agard, which implied, that Danegeld was, in its original institution, a tax of six shillings on every hide of land. As I shall be always diffident of any opinion I may be thought to have adopted, that shall appear in the least degree different from that of a person much more conversant with things of this sort than myself, I thought it not improper to bring this matter to a closer examination. The result of this inquiry I have now the honor to lay before the Society, from which, I apprehend, it will appear that Mr. Gale, the learned Dean, and myself, were under a mistake as to this matter; and that Danegeld was *originally* neither *one Shilling*,

nor *fix* Shillings, but a tax of two Shillings per Hide. The inseparable connection there is between the Domesday survey and Danegeld, will induce your Lordship and this learned Body to excuse the trouble I give you of this second paper; they will be of opinion the subject at least is worthy their consideration.

I.

1. DANEGELD, or, as it is called by the Saxons, *Depegele*, *heregildum*, i. e. "tributum militare seu navale," began to be collected in the reign of king Ethelred about the year 991, as some writers suppose, *ob pacandos Danos patriam infestantes*, or, according to others, about the year 1012 or 1013, for the hiring Danish or other ships, soldiers, and mariners, to oppose the incursions of our foreign invaders. It was originally an annual tax of two shillings on every hide of arable land in the kingdom; and was in its nature a land-tax, and is the first stated tax of that kind mentioned in our historians. It was called Danegeld, as being originally agreed to be paid to the Danes, and, like many other things, continued to retain the name long after it became appropriated to uses intirely different. Mr. Tate in a list, inserted by Mr. Camden, in his *Britannia*, p. 226. and by Sir Henry Spelman, in his *Glossary*, p. 292. makes the number of hides of land in England amount to 243,600, consequently the gross produce of this tax at two shillings per hide, would at that rate amount to 24,360 l. a very great sum to be annually raised at that period. Edward the Confessor suspended the payment of this tax during part of his time. In the reign of Will. I. it was in one instance increased to *fix shillings*, and in that of W. Rufus to *four shillings* for each hide. In the reign of Henry I. it was *three shillings*, and in the reign of king Stephen *two shillings* per hide. It continued to be collected as low as 21 Hen. II. and probably later.

2. There were two kinds of payments made in the reign of Ethelred to the Danes; the one *tributary* to purchase peace, and put a stop to their depredations; these could not be annual, being in their nature *ex re nata*, accidental and occasional, and were raised not by any

any stated tax, but in the best manner the necessity and urgency of affairs would permit. — The other were *stipendiary*, or *subsidiary* payments, made annually, in consequence of treaties, whereby the Danes contracted to furnish the English with a fleet of ships of war, sometimes more, sometimes less, for the defence of the English coasts, for which the English agreed to pay them a stated annual subsidy. For the raising this, the tax called Danegelt, which was an annual land-tax, was first introduced.

3. Some of our earliest historians, for want of distinguishing these two different kinds of payment, place the original of the tax in question as early as the year 991, when the tributary payment to the Danes commenced; other writers have been of opinion this tax was originally collected not to furnish money to the Danes, but to defray the expence of guarding our coast against *their invasions*,

Sir Henry Spelman describes Danegeld to be, “Tributum Angliæ indicium, aliàs ob *pacandos Danos*, aliàs ob *arcendos*.” And a little lower, “Tributum annuum 48,000 librarum, ab omni populo erandendum, Danegeldum proprie nuncupatum.” Glossary, p. 161.

The author of the *Dialogus de Scaccario* hath the following chapter written expressly on the subject of this tax.

“XI. QUID DANEGILDUM, ET QUARE SIC DICTUM. Insula nostra suis contenta bonis peregrinis non eget. Hanc igitur merito dixere priores, *Divitiisque finem, deliciisque larem*. Propter hæc innumeras ab exteris injurias passa est; quia scriptum est; *Furem preciosa signata sollicitant*. Circumjacentium enim insularum prædones, irruptione facta, *maritima depopulantes, aurum, argentum, et quæque pretiosa tollebant*. Verum cum rex et indigenæ bellicis apparatus instructi in suæ gentis defensionem instarent, illi fugas aggrediebantur æquoreas. Inter hos itaque pene præcipua et semper pronior ad nocendum erat bellicosa illa et populosa gens Dacorum; qui præter munem raptorum avaritiam acrius instabant, quia aliquid de antiquo jure in ejusdem regni dominatione vendicabant, sicut Britonum pleniùs narrat historia.”

" Ad hos igitur arcendos a regibus Anglicis statutum est, ut de
 " singulis hidis regni, jure quodam perpetuo, *duo solidi* argenti sol-
 " verentur in usus virorum fortium, qui, perlustrantes et jugiter
 " excubantes maritima, impetum hostium reprimerent. Quia igitur
 " principaliter pro Danis institutus est hic reditus, Danegildum vel
 " Danegildus dicitur. Hic igitur annuâ lege, sicut dictum est, sub
 " indigenis regibus solvebatur, usque ad tempora regis Willelmi
 " primi de gente et genere Normannorum. Ipso namque regnante,
 " tam Daci quam cæteri terræ marisque prædones hostiles co-
 " hibebant incurfus, scientes verum esse quod scriptum est, *Cum*
 " *fortis armatus custodit atrium suum, in pace sunt ea quæ possidet.*
 " Noverant autem etiam quod acerrimæ virtutis homines impunitas
 " non ferunt injurias. Quum ergo diu solvisset terra sub ejusdem
 " regis imperio, noluit hoc ut annuum solvi, quod fuerat urgente
 " necessitate bellicæ tempestatibus exactum, nec tamen omnino propter
 " inopinatos casus dimitti. Raro igitur temporibus illius, vel suc-
 " cessorum ipsius, solutus est: hoc est, cum ab exteris gentibus bella
 " vel opiniones bellorum insurgebant. Verum, quocunque tempore
 " solvatur, ab ipso liberi sunt qui affident ad Scaccarium. Vicecomites
 " quoque ab hoc quieti sunt de dominiis suis, propter laboriosam
 " ejusdem census collectam."

Mr. Selden in his *Mare Clausum*, lib. ii. hath given us a chapter
 express on the subject of Danegeld, from which I have transcribed
 such parts as contain his opinion concerning it.

" Tributum, seu stipendium Danegeldum dictum, ad rem navalem
 " et territorio marino tuendo quotannis pendebatur. — Originem
 " habuit tributum hoc sub Ethelredo rege. Scilicet is a Swano
 " Danorum rege miseris tandem redactus in angustias, pace ab eo
 " empta, etiam ex foedere conduxit puppes Danorum 45, quæ
 " regnum suum in mari excubando tutarentur, stipendia, quæ ex
 " tributo hoc conflarentur, in commeatus annuatim accepturæ. Quod
 " ut ritè intelligatur, advertendum est ex Historia Anglo-saxonica,
 " tributum seu censum Danis persolvi sub id tempus solitum non
 " unius fuisse generis. Aliud erat tributum seu pecunie vis, quæ
 " pacem

“pacem interdum Anglo-saxones ab illis insulam graviter infestantibus
 “redimebant: aliud vero, quod classi Danicae, ad tutandum mare
 “orasque defendendas maritimas conductae, ut stipendium praesta-
 “batur. — Neque quotannis pendi solebat hoc genus primum, sed
 “pro re nata subinde praestitum est. — Quod vero secundi generis
 “erat classi Danicae, ut dictum est, conductae solvendum, id an-
 “num fuit. Nec certa pecuniae quantitate finiebatur, sed quanta
 “classiariorum victui et vestitui sufficeret. — Utrumque autem
 “praestationis, quam diximus, genus, Danegeld, Danegeldum seu
 “Danageldum, id est, tributum Danicum, dicebatur. — Secundum
 “vero, quod pro classiariorum comiteatu solutum est, itidem eadem
 “voce indigitabatur, tum quia ex foedere Danico natum, tum quia
 “Danicae classi marino territorio tuendo conductae pendi solitum.
 “Unde et idem retinuit nomen tam sub ipsis regibus Danicis, veluti
 “Canuto, Haroldo I. Hardecanuto, quam sub Anglo-saxonibus seu
 “Anglicanis. — Apud Matthaeos Westmonasteriensis et Parisien-
 “sis annua stipendii hujus Danici pensio triginta octo millibus
 “librarum aestimatur. Quod sane temere nimis ab eis scriptum est.
 “Nec melius illi, quibus triginta millibus librarum taxatur illa
 “pensio, velut Chronici Melrocentis auctori. Nam qualicumque census
 “ratione, pro temporum varietate, tributum ipsum regi penderetur,
 “certissimum videtur stipendia classi Danicae praebere solita adeo
 “incerta fuisse, ut nunc ampliora multo, nunc angustiora, pro
 “navium et classiariorum numero tutelae marinae idoneo (quod nec
 “aliter evenire potuisse credendum est) praestarentur.” Selden-
 Opera, vol. iv. p. 1317. to 1322.

4. In order to determine which of the abovementioned opinions ought
 to be adopted, it will be necessary to compare the different accounts our
 historians have given of this matter with each other. For this purpose
 I have transcribed such of them as appeared to me to be material,
 in the author's own words, and as near as could be in a regular order
 of time: by this means the Society will have the whole before them
 in one view.

H. Hunt.

H. Hunt. Hist. lib. v. p. 205. a. "Edelredi regis anno decimo tertio (A. D. 991.) primum statuerunt Angli, concilio infausto Sirici archiepiscopi, quod ipsi censum Danis persolverent, quatenus a rapinis et caede cessarent, et dederunt eis decem mille libras, Hoc autem malum usque in hodiernum diem [tempore regis Stephani] duravit, et diu, nisi Dei pietas subveniat, durabit. Regibus namque nostris modo persolvimus ex consuetudine, quod Danis persolvebatur ex ineffabili terrore."

Florent. Wigorn. p. 609. A. 991. "Quo insuper anno Sirici Dorobernenfis archiepiscopi, et ducum Aethelwardi et Alfrici consilio Danis tributum, quod erat 10 millium librarum, *primitus* datum est, ut a crebris rapinis cremationibus et hominum occisionibus, quas circa ripas maris frequenter agebant, desisterent, pacemque firmam cum eis tenerent." — Simeon Dunelmensis, p. 196. Matth. Westm. p. 169. And Roger Hoveden, p. 245. b. say the same, in almost the same words.

Chronicon. Saxon. p. 126. "Anno 991. hoc anno decretum est primum jam ut solveretur tributum Danicis viris propter magnos horrores quos incusserunt incolis maritimis. inprimis nempe x millia librarum. Illud concilium constituit Siricus archiepiscopus."

Chronicon Johannis Brompton, abbatis Jornalensis (a). "Anno Ethelredi regis xiii. — Angli infausto concilio Sirici Cantuariensis archiepiscopi, ut Dani a rapinis et caedibus cessarent, censum primum eis solvere statuerant. Quibus x millibus librarum *primo* pro tributo datis, hoc malum usque in *hodiernum diem* in Anglia, et diu, nisi Dei pietas subveniat, durabit. Nam regibus nostris modo (b) consuetudine solvimus quod Danis tunc ex terrore ineffabili solvebatur. *Secundo* vero solvebatur eis tributum 16 millium libra-

(a) Decem Scriptorēs, p. 879.

(b) From hence it appears, this part, at least, of this chronicle was wrote while Danegild was a subsisting tax, and therefore much earlier than the reign of Edward III. as low as which Mr. Selden, in his preface to the Decem Scriptorēs, hath shewn a part of it which answers to the year 1069 was wrote; others suppose the author wrote about the year 1198. Vide Tanner de Scriptoribus Angl.

"rum;