

The Norman Conquest  
Chapter IV of Sydney Gardner Jarman. *History of Bridgwater*, 1889

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THE NORMAN CONQUEST — BRIDGWATER  
IN DOMESDAY BOOK — THE ORIGIN OF PIG'S  
CROSS — THE ETYMOLOGY OF " BRIDGWA-  
TER " — THE CHARTER OF WILLIAM LORD  
BREWER — KING JOHN'S VISITS TO BRIDGWA-  
TER — LORD BREWER AND MAGNA CHARTA.

WITH the conquest of England by the Normans this neighbourhood appears to have had but little connection. After the terrific struggle for supremacy which ensued on the landing of William the Conqueror on the coast of Sussex, 1066, it is probable that Bridgwater, at some distance from the seat of disturbance (if we except Exeter), shared or at least acquiesced in the desire to place the Crown of England on the Conqueror's head. Afterwards, when the King, in his endeavours to Normanize England, and at the same time reward the faithful adherents who had followed him on his important expedition against England, distributed the confiscated lands of the defeated Anglo-Saxons, he gave the Manor of Bridgwater, with Wembdon, Bawdrip, Horsey, Pawlett, Huntspill, Burnham, and Brean, and other manors in the county, to Walter (or Walscin) de Douai, a powerful Norman baron. The recipient does not appear to have lived in Bridgwater, but took up his residence at Baunton (now Bampton), in Devonshire, where he also held a manor.

In 1080-86 a general survey of the country was made by order of the King, the record of which was afterwards known as the *Domesday Book*. Commissioners were sent into every county and juries summoned and empanelled in each hundred out of all sorts of freemen, from barons down to the lowest farmers, and inquisitions taken with regard to every parish, town, &c. The following is the reference to Bridgwater:— "*Walscinus ten. Brugie. . Merlesuain tenuit T. R. E. & geldabat pro 5 hid. Terra est 10 car. In dominio sunt 3 car. & 5 servi & 13 villain & 9 bord. & 5 cotar. cum 8 car. Ibi molin. redd. 5 sol. & 10 ac. prati & 100 ac. filvæ minuæ, & 20 ac. pastuæ. Quando recepit valeb. 100 sol. Modo 7 lib.*"

Translation — "Walter [Douai] holds Brugie. Merlesuain [a Saxon Thane] held it at the time of King Edward, and it was assessed at the Dane-Geld for 5 hides [a hide was 80 or 100 acres of land]. The arable is ten carucates. In demesne [the land held by the Lord himself] are three carucates, and five servants [bondsmen], thirteen villanes [slaves], nine bordars [cutters of wood, &c.] and 5 cottagers, with 8 ploughs. There is a mill of 5s rent; and ten acres of meadow, and one hundred acres of coppice wood [or brush wood] and 30

acres of pasture. When Walter received it it was worth 100 shillings, now seven pounds."

We further learn that Walter had 13 neat cattle, seven hogs, and 61 sheep.

A recent writer on the Stone Crosses of Somerset—Mr. C. Pooley, F.S. A.—speaks of a manor of Bridgwater named *Pegens*, and quotes from Domesday Book — "*John the Porter holds of the King Pegens. Britric held it in the time of King Edward, and gelded for one hide and one yardland. The arable is two carucates. In demesne is one carucate and two villanes, with one cottager. There is a priest with one carucate.*"; *Pegens* may thus the derivation of our present curious name, Pig's Cross — ("*the cross of Pegens*").

Nearly all the villages and towns in the neighbourhood of Bridgwater are mentioned in *Domesday*, and in most cases the names, although they have undergone considerable change, are easily recognisable.

At this period of our history we would direct attention to the etymology of the word Bridgwater. It has been generally accepted in the past as meaning " burgh of Walter " — *town of Walter* (de Douai). in course of time changing to Bridgwater. It is time this error was exploded and the obviously correct derivation of the name established. The *ville* was known to the Saxons by the name of Brugie — *i.e.*, Bridge, from the ford which existed at this point over the Parret. After the manor was given to Walter de Douai, or Walter, as was the most common appellation (the surname simply implying the family residence — Douai, a town in the French Netherlands), what could have been more reasonable than that the town, which at that time really possessed no name — Brugie meaning only the bridge — should, as it increased in importance, and to distinguish it from another Brugie further up the river — now Borough-bridge — be given a more distinctive designation? In proof of this we have the following methods of spelling: — 1st, *Brugie-Walter* — the bridge of Walter, being gradually accepted as the name of the town itself; and successively *Brugge-Walteri* or *Brugge-Walter*, *Bry-g-Walter*, *Bruge-Walter*, *Bruge-Waultier*, *Brugewater*, gradually changing to *Bridgewater* and *Bridgwater*. Each of these names can be verified. It is easy to understand how in the loose orthography of the times, *Walter* was ultimately lost in the appropriate affix of *water*. In Latin documents of the Sixteenth Century the name is rendered as *Aquæ Pons* — literally, Bridge-water.

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The Walter de Douai above-mentioned had a son of the same name, to whom his possessions descended. The latter's only daughter, Julian, brought this and divers other estates to William Paynel (or Paganel), whom she married. These two had issue Fulke Paganel, who, in the 26th year of Henry II. (1180), passed over the manor to Lord William Briwere, or Brewer, in hopes by his interest to gain the King's favour (he having committed some great fault, for which he ultimately had to flee the country), to be held of him the said Fulke Paganel and his heirs by the service of half a knight's fee. This grant was confirmed by William, son of the said Fulke. Lord William Brewer was evidently a person in whom much trust was reposed, particularly in matters relating to the Crown. He was in great favour with four successive Kings—Henry II., Richard I., John, and Henry III. It is related that when Richard I. was taken prisoner in Germany, on his return from the Holy Land, "*Lord Brewer came thither to him, and was one of the principal persons in the treaty held there with the Emperor for the liberty of the King.*" After the death of Richard, William Brewer was in no less favour with King John, who granted and confirmed to him several manors, bestowed upon him divers wardships, and gave him licence to enclose his woods in Devon and Somerset, with free liberty to hunt the hare, fox, cat, wolf, &c., throughout the county. He further gave him permission to build or fortify a castle in Bridgwater (see special chapter), and granted him an ample charter (the first received by the town) for his lordship of Bridgwater. Translated, that charter is to the following effect:—

*" John, by the grace of God, &c. Know ye that we have given and granted, and have confirmed, by this present charter, to our beloved and faithful William Brewer, that Bridgwater shall be a free borough, and that there be a free market there, and a fair every year that shall last during eight days, that is to say, from the day of the nativity of the Blessed John Baptist ; with paagio [probably tolls for pasturage], pontage [duty for repairing bridge], passage [ferry money], lastage [duty paid for freight or lading of a vessel], stallage [the right of erecting stalls in the fair], with all the other liberties and free customs appertaining to a free borough, and to a market and fair. We grant also to the aforesaid William that the aforesaid burgesses of the aforesaid borough be free burgesses, and be quit of toll, pontage, passage, lastage and stallage, and have all liberties and free customs and quittances which appertain to us through our whole land, and through-*

*out the harbours of our land, except the city of London. Wherefore we will and firmly ordain that the aforesaid William, and his heirs after him, have and hold all the things aforesaid well and in peace, happily and quietly, wholly and fully, and honourably, with all their liberties and free customs as aforesaid. Witnesses, William Marshall, Earl of Pembroke, R., Earl of Chester, W., Earl of Salisbury, W. de Eupibus, ;Seneschal of Anjou, &c. Given by the name of S., Archdeacon of Wells,- and J. de Gray, Archdeacon of Gloucester, at Chinon, on the 26th day of June, the second year of our reign."*

In addition to other high offices Lord William Brewer discharged for many years the "Sheriffalty" of Somerset (which was combined with Dorset until 1566), and other counties, with honour to himself and to his monarch. He entertained King John at Bridgwater on at least five occasions—July 4th, and July 15th, 1204; September 1st, 2nd, 1205,\* September 19, 1208; and September 22, 1210.

A striking instance of the King's favour to him was shown June. 2nd, 1212, when his Majesty sent to the Archdeacon of Taunton, telling him that of the ships which our sailors captured the best was for the King's use, the second for Richard de Mariscis, and the third best to Wm. Brewer, in every case with all their apparel.

Lord Brewer sided with the King against the Barons in their demands for Magna Charta, and in 1216 went with the Royal Forces to Exeter, to assist in defending the City. Mr. J. B. Green, in his "*History of the English People*" (sec. 5, p. , 138), mentions that on one occasion (after the accession of Henry III.) he protested to Stephen Langton that great measure (Magna Charta) was "*extorted by force, and was without legal validity.*" *"If you loved the King, William," the Primate burst out in anger, you would not throw a stumbling-block in the way of the peace of the realm !"*

\* Extract from Itinerary of King John — "*September 1 1205, at Bridgwater. Account to the Bailiffs of Taunton £4 6s 7½d which they laid out in our expenses when we were at Taunton on the Eve of St Giles (23 August)" Rot. Lit. Pat XXXV*