AN OUTLINE OF THE HISTORY OF ROMNEY MARSH.

BY ROBERT FURLEY, F.S.A.

I AM this evening to speak of the district in which we have assembled; our time is short, and my remarks must be brief and general.*

To us Romney Marsh has, this day, appeared as it did to Drayton, the Poet Laureate of Queen Elizabeth,

> "most bravely like a Queen,
> Clad, all from head to foot, in gaudy summer's green."

The area of Kent is a little more than one million of statute acres; of which the land comprehended under the general name of Romney Marsh forms nearly one twentieth part. As land situate on our southern coast, between the upland hills and the sea shore, this spacious level now surpasses in value any similar district in the county, perhaps in the kingdom, of the same extent.

Like the Isle of Thanet, there are conflicting opinions as to the origin of its name. Three writers give it a Latin derivation, another a Saxon one, while a fifth is of opinion that it is derived from a Gaelic word, but Canon Jenkins ascribes it to the name of a great Saxon landowner, a priest, called *Presbyter Romanus*.

This level was contiguous to the great Andred Forest, without any defined boundary, and was drained by the River Limen or Rother, which rises near Argus Hill at Rotherfield in Sussex. Romney Marsh, which now boasts some of the finest grazing land in the world, was, some centuries back, partially if not wholly, covered by the sea and the waters of the River Limen, resembling, according to one writer "a worthless muddy flat, overflowed at every tide."

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The early history of this district, though involved in darkness, is more free from "the age of fable" than many other parts of Kent. The only fabulous account of it that I have met with was written by Nennius, about the ninth century. In his *Catalogue of British Wonders*, he says,

"The first marvel is the Lommon [Limen] Marsh, for in it are 340 islands with men living on them! It is girt by 340 rocks! and in every rock is an eagle's nest, and 340 rivers flow into it; and there goes out of it into the sea but one river, which is called the Lemn [Limen]."

This inflated account probably referred to the numerous spots where dry land first appeared in the bay, and the countless sluices which intersected them.

Much of our south-eastern seaboard was, before the Roman invasion, occupied by Belgic tribes who had settled there, and differed but little from the Gauls in their mode of life. They were more civilized than the inhabitants amongst whom they had settled, and a recent writer (Mr. Smiles) has expressed, with others, an opinion that portions of this district were first reclaimed by them, they having brought the art of embanking with them from the Netherlands. These tribes were subdued by the Romans, who landed, fifty-five years before the Christian era, on some part of the Kentish coast between Hythe and Sandwich. I will not here suggest the spot, but will remind you that we have in the immediate vicinity of this Marsh a Roman *strata*, or paved way, connecting Durovernum (Canterbury) with the Portus Lemanis, and its Castle, now known as Stutfall, which road still bears the name of Stone Street, and was called in Anglo-Saxon times "Cæsar's Road."

Dry land, it is conjectured, for it is all conjecture, first appeared near the sites of Romney and Lydd, which were either islands, or a submarine ridge, three or four feet above high water mark.

Bear in mind that the only portion of the district to which I first propose to direct your attention is situate in Romney Marsh proper, which, it has been supposed, has been reclaimed from the sea for a longer period than any

similar land in the realm. I will first speak of the river which flowed into it, which in prehistoric times, it has been surmised, flowed at the foot of Lymne Hill, and discharged itself into the sea near Hythe.

It was no uncommon thing for the same river to be called by different names, as it flowed through different districts, as in the case of the Stour above and below Ashford. Thus the modern Rother was known as the Lymene, Appledore Water, and Rumenea. The precise position of its earliest mouth has long been a subject of doubt and controversy, amongst both ancient and modern writers, one party favouring the Portus Lemanis (Lymne), and the other modestly, but doubtfully, preferring Appledore. Amongst the former may be classed Philipott, Harris, Hasted, Holloway, and Sandys, some of whom were of opinion that the river had two mouths, one at Lymne, and the other between Romney and Lydd; while amongst those who pointed to Appledore were Leland (the antiquary of Henry VIII), Lambarde, Camden, Somner, Charles Roach Smith, Lewin, and Elliott.

Fortunately the last-named gentleman, Mr. James Elliott (the late Engineer of the Marsh), has left behind him a great deal of valuable information connected with this district, contained in three different books and papers, one in the minutes of proceedings of the Civil Engineers in 1847, and the other two in publications by Mr. Charles Roach Smith and Mr. Thomas Lewin. In one of them, he gives us the result of a careful survey of the country between Appledore and Lymne; failing to trace the remains of any former river there, he came to the conclusion that Leland was right in his conjecture, and that the Limen did not find any outlet at the Portus Lemanis, but that its exit was at Appledore. He adds that the inclination of the land reclaimed having been always towards the inland margin of the Marsh, the sea, which gradually receded towards the hills, was of considerable depth on the ebb of every tide, and made its exit near Hythe, at the eastern end of the shingle bank, which was thus erroneously taken for the mouth of the river; while, in truth, it was

only an estuary of the sea, made use of by the Romans for one of their ports, and this view, he always contended, was not a speculative one. He was also of opinion that at a very early period a spit or shingle bank was thrown off from Fairlight, which kept the course of the tidal current across the bay, instead of tending inward by the foot of the hills, which would cause the *débris* or matter brought down by the river to rest where it was deposited, which, added to the deposits from the sea, caused in process of time a large portion of the bay to become dry land at low water, which thus helped to form the Marsh.

Beyond the mere conjectures of different writers, we have no historical record as to the exact time when Romney Marsh proper was really enclosed, but in proof that it was all done pretty much at the same time, we do not find any internal walls on the eastern, as there are on the western side of the Rhee wall.

Time will not permit of my giving a detailed account of the mode which, as Mr. Elliott believed, was adopted in reclaiming this level, beyond stating that a long shingle spit on the south, or coast, and another on the east to the foot of the hills, with an embankment of earth, formed its ramparts from the sea. But to shut out the sea from the west great engineering skill was requisite, and the plan which was pursued appears to have been the excavation of a deep channel from eighty to a hundred feet wide, with banks on each side, varying in height, the highest towards Appledore, the lowest towards Romney. Into this channel the River Limen was partially diverted, and thus conducted to Romney. This cut from Appledore to Romney was then called "the Rivi Vallum," known since as the Rhee Wall—Rhee being a Saxon word for a river or watercourse, and what is more important in this case, I find it has been used also to describe all waters that run from their head. Thus it formed a new bay and safe anchorage at Romney, while the bed of the river served as an inner haven, and Mr. Elliott hazarded the conjecture that thus the Novus Portus or New Port was formed at Romney, which affords some evidence of Roman work. It was this cutting that in the course of

time formed the haven and port of Romney, and I can but think gave at last the name "new" to Romney—new port of Romney.

The general and probable belief is, that this enterprise was undertaken and carried out by the Romans, who appear to have understood embanking better than drainage. It is certain that during their occupation of Britain, portions of this Marsh were under cultivation between Dymchurch and Romney, and there is reason to believe also that it was in an habitable state at that early period.

It has been truly said that under the surface of the soil we must now look, for further light on the early condition of this country. Mr. Elliott, on making some alterations in the line of the sea wall near Dymchurch, extending over several acres, discovered a mass of pottery, from the coarsest unbaked kind to the finest Samian ware, much of it was in a perfect state of preservation; and as he also found here beds of fine white clay, and layers of clean sharp sand, and as the effects of fire were evident, he came to the conclusion that it was the site of a manufactory of pottery. During Mr. C. Roach Smith's excavations at Lymne he found 261 Roman coins, all brass but one, extending over the third and fourth centuries. These discoveries prove a Roman occupation, and lead to the inference that the Romans were the originators of the work, *here* at any rate, but we have no evidence as to where the work was commenced, or how it was executed.

Dugdale, a great authority on the subject, was of opinion that it was the most ancient embankment in the realm. He also attributes it to the Romans, who were accused of wearing out the bodies of the inhabitants in embanking marshes and clearing woods. Whether the work was wholly or only partially carried out by the Romans, we know that it was materially promoted by their skill and industry, aided at first by the accession of beach, which, until modern times, obviated the necessity of the present mural defence at Dymchurch, of which I shall have occasion to speak presently. Thus, in process of time, some 24,000 acres of valuable land were, in this particular Marsh, reclaimed from the sea. This

marsh is about ten miles in length from east to west, and about four miles in breadth (at the broadest part) from north to south.

We have now a formidable chasm, which includes two of the great landings in English history, both on our Kentish coast. That of Hengist and Horsa, which Dean Stanley tells us gave us our English forefathers; and the landing of St. Augustine, which gave us our English Christianity. The last mentioned most concerns my subject.

Kent soon boasted of two bishoprics, and often two Kings, with capitals at the seats of these bishoprics. The distinction, between the East and West Kentings, was preserved until the downfall of the Saxon monarchy. The late Mr. Kemble even suggests a *third* kingdom formed out of the District of Romney Marsh, as he appears to have met with a Duchy of the Merscware, or inhabitants of Romney Marsh, the *viri palustres*, the marsh men of olden time. These men, it may be concluded, continued to carry on the work of embanking and draining the level. Palgrave says, that one Herebryth was its Ealdorman and was slain by the Danes, A.D. 838.

It is not, however, until after the landing of St. Augustine, A.D. 597, that we meet with any trustworthy records of passing events. The Christian religion in process of time took root, the erection of monasteries and churches followed the appointment of the episcopal hierarchy, and led to the election of a subordinate clergy, who had to traverse very bad roads, and wild unreclaimed lands, for the propagation of the faith. Their humble places of worship were served by a body of Clerks or Monks, and later by town and village priests. The great wealth which the Church so rapidly acquired explains the power and influence it soon possessed.

The first Nunnery which was founded in Britain appears to have been at Folkestone, about A.D. 630. It is also conjectured that there was once an Abbey at Hythe, on the site of the present Church, and Leland says that the ruins of the offices belonging to it were to be seen in his day (Henry VIII). But history and archæology are almost silent, respecting this

particular district, from the landing of St. Augustine until about the eighth century.

We meet with an invasion into Kent by Cenulph, King of the Mercians, in 796, when he laid it waste and also "the province which is called Merscwari." Here the Marsh is distinguished from the rest of Kent, which may have given rise to Kemble's conjecture, and as it was ravaged, we may infer that large portions of it at least, if not all Romney Marsh proper, were then cultivated, and as we proceed we shall find evidence that some of it was under the plough.

We also meet with several grants of land, situate in or near this Marsh, from the beginning of the eighth until the end of the ninth century. The earliest that I find is of certain plough-land granted, by Ethelbert the second, to Minster Abbey (Thanet), situate about the River Limen; this is followed by a grant from Eadbright to Christ Church, Canterbury, of the right of fishing at the mouth of the River Limen.

Our Anglo-Saxon kings were great benefactors to the new Christian Church, with the hope of securing the favour of Heaven. One of them, Offa, a powerful prince and king of Mercia, invaded Kent in 774, and was *de facto* its king. He acquired the unenviable name of "the public pilferer." As an atonement for his crimes, he became a great benefactor to the Church, especially Christ Church, Canterbury. His grants included lands in Orgarswick, Agne now in Old Romney, and Ruckinge.

We also meet with similar royal grants at this time (including plough-lands) in Lympne, Warehorne, and Appledore with seven fisheries at the last-mentioned place; as well as grants to the rival religious establishment of St. Augustine, Canterbury, of lands in Burmarsh and Snave.

The Anglo-Saxons had not the reputation of being well skilled in reclaiming land, and it is conjectured that much of the low land, reclaimed by the Romans, was often and for a long time in a state of submersion; while in the more elevated spots, formed by the heaping up of shingle banks at the seaward edge of the muddy flats at Romney, as well as on the margin of the Marsh from Lydd to Hythe, the names

of the places are Saxon or Celtic, and go far to prove the existence of habitable land at an early period.

The success which attended the embankment and drainage of Romney Marsh proper, led to the reclaiming of land in Dengemarsh (Lydd), Midley, and other neighbouring places west of the Rhee Wall.

Somner says, "The oldest mention that I find of Romney is in a grant of land beside the river called Rumeneia in 895 by Archbishop Plegmund," the instructor of Alfred the Great, which brings me to the invasion in this king's reign by Hasten the Dane, who landed with his army at Limene mouth at the east end of the Andred Forest. Monasteries, churches, and villages were burnt and destroyed around Appledore and its immediate vicinity as far as Great Chart. Old Drayton thus describes this invasion:

> "Those Danish louts whom hunger starved at home,
> Like wolves pursuing prey, about the world did roam:
> And stemming the rude stream dividing us from France,
> Into the spacious mouth of Rother fell by chance,
> Which Lymen then was called."

It was towards the middle of the eleventh century, that the famous Earl Godwin (a native of Sussex and the father of King Harold) became Earl of Kent as well as Sussex, and acquired vast possessions, including Dengemarsh, Romney, Eastbridge, and Folkestone. Having lost the confidence of his sovereign (Edward the Confessor), he and his sons were banished. This was of short duration. He seized on all the ships, at Romney and Folkestone and the neighbouring ports, manned by Kentish boatmen, and proceeded to London with an imposing fleet, where he was well received, and the king revoked the sentence and restored him and his family to his forfeited possessions.

We pass on to the landing of William the Conqueror which, as Dean Stanley tells us, gave us our Norman aristocracy. This took place on the 20th September, 1066. A portion of his fleet attempted to enter Romney Harbour, and was repelled by the inhabitants. From this we may infer that Romney was then a place of some importance, and not very thinly populated. If the Saxon Chronicle is to be

relied on, Harold assembled his forces, on the eve of the Battle of Hastings, at the estuary of Appledore. After his victory, William proceeded to Romney, chastised the inhabitants for attacking his forces, and then proceeded to Dover.

We must now turn to Domesday Book, the oldest survey of a kingdom now existing, compiled twenty years after the arrival of the Conqueror, in order that he might know, amongst other things, the names of his landowners, and where their property was situate.

I will briefly notice that portion of it which refers to the Marsh, all of which was then held by the See of Canterbury, the Abbey of St. Augustine, Odo, Bishop of Baieux, and Hugh de Montfort, who were four of the tenants in chief of the King.

In the lands of the See of Canterbury and the Abbey, the Norman Invasion made but little alteration in the ownership. The Conqueror's policy was not to interfere much with the possessions of the Church. Odo, one of the tenants in chief, was the uterine brother of the King, and was also Earl of Kent; he had accompanied his brother to England, and was rewarded with one hundred and eighty-four lordships in Kent alone. The fourth tenant, Hugo de Montfort, fought by the King's side at Hastings. He was one of his most trusty followers, and was rewarded with fifty lordships in Kent and fifty elsewhere, he was also one of the Archbishop's Knights. Whatever possessions the two Normans Odo and Hugo acquired, the previous Saxon owners were deprived of.

There are several entries in the survey connected with Romney Marsh, which prove that its present Hundreds were all formed at this time, and constituted its earliest elements of self government and mutual protection. After the Romans quitted Britain, and after the landing of St. Augustine, and after the new Christian Church had obtained its grants in the Marsh, we have no other evidence that the embankments were still going on, beyond the formation of the *district into Hundreds.*

It is most important to bear in mind that the several

Hundreds in Romney Marsh have descended to us from our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, whether they originated with Egbert or Alfred we need not here discuss; but they have so descended without any material change, perfectly regardless of the boundaries of the several levels over which they extend, and perfectly regardless of the several manors or lordships and parochial divisions, controlled only by the privileges long afterwards conferred on the Cinque Ports and their limbs, and the still more modern corporations in it. Thus these Hundreds existed, with the Lath which circumscribed them, long before any of the institutions I have enumerated came into being. But to return to Domesday.

We find some names there given to land in the Marsh which had been reclaimed but cannot now be identified, while in other cases, land had been reclaimed but not named, and these chiefly apply to the grants to Hugo de Montfort.

The Maresco de Romenel is returned as situate in the Lath which was called Limowart, the name of a once important place in the district, but since changed; eight original Hundreds, or parts of Hundreds, extended over the whole of the Marshes, all of them in East Kent, except a part of Blackbourne. Of the several manors or lordships in the district, ten of them are returned with churches at this time, Eastbridge and Orlestone each possessing two. Old Romney is not distinguished from New Romney, and no mention is made of a church in either, but this survey is not conclusive evidence of the then *non*-existence of churches.

Romney is returned as a Burgum, or Burgh, which adds to its local importance. Robert de Rumenel, a tenant of the Bishop of Baieux, had fifty burgesses in the burgh of Romenel, the King having all their services of the Sea. He also held Lamport of the Archbishop, and to this manor pertained twenty one burgesses in Romenel, the King having their services also. There were other burgesses in Romney pertaining to the Archbishop's manor of Aldington, by whom services were rendered, or money paid, and in return they enjoyed certain exemptions and privileges, one of them I will presently notice. In Lamport there were seven salt works, and at Eastbridge eight and one-third of a

ninth. These works were ponds or pans, for procuring marine salt by evaporation, in districts lying along the coast.

The only other notice which I shall take of the survey is the frequent reference to Socmen in this district, in number about sixty. They appear to have held a considerable portion of the Marsh in the time of Edward the Confessor, and were not referred to elsewhere in Kent. They were described as holding land "without Halls and Demesnes," which would be consistent with the land not being thoroughly reclaimed and built upon. There appear to have been different conditions of Socmen in different parts of England. They sometimes enjoyed the usufruct, and sometimes performed certain inferior services of husbandry, and these were probably the men that formed at that time the sinew and muscle of the Marsh, and such men as the monks would select for the work.

From this survey we may infer that Romney had now supplanted Hythe, and was then called, and had become, a privileged port. The clergy were the principal merchants at this time, and exchanged our wools with foreign merchants, who exported their merchandize for sale on board their ships. While an inferior order of men known as pedlars traversed the country with their packs, and communicated the news, and supplied the place of the *Kentish Express*.

My previous remarks have been chiefly confined to Romney Marsh proper; I will now direct your attention to its twin sister Walland Marsh, a more modern enclosure as its name implies, given no doubt from its original defenceless state, and separated from Romney Marsh by the Rhee Wall.

The reclaiming of Walland Marsh had been going on for centuries, but more slowly, and in a more lawless manner than that of its twin sister. The only two places *wholly* within it are Midley and Fairfield. The former is the most ancient, as Agne Court, given, as we have seen, by King Offa to Christchurch, Canterbury, A.D. 771, runs into it. Midley is referred to in Domesday, but is placed under a wrong hundred. It had then a church (now in ruins) appendant to the manor, and was then held by Odo, Bishop of Baieux.

The manor of Fairfield, with an attractive name, never appears to have been a very highly favoured spot. The little church, even in the present day, had often to be approached by a boat, at certain seasons. It is dedicated to Thomas à Becket, and like Midley was appendant to the manor. The places which are only *partly* within Walland Marsh are Brookland, Snargate, Brenzett, Ivy Church, and Old and New Romney, the other parts of them being in Romney Marsh proper, and already noticed.

From the reign of Henry II, the monks and socmen of the Marsh carried on in earnest the work of reclaiming this level.

Amongst the privileges and exemptions enjoyed by the burgesses of Romney, in return for their sea service, I will here notice one peculiar to the district. In other parts of England "the *no man's* land," or unappropriated and waste lands, belonged to the crown, but this did not extend to Romney Marsh, for the King had no waste here. By ancient prescriptions confirmed by charter, the first settlers had power to take possession of the waste lands and make walls and embankments against the sea. This power extended not only over all waste lands, but even to enclosed lands, and is still possessed by the drainage corporation of Romney, who make compensation for the injury.

One of the earliest "innings" of Walland Marsh, after the Norman Conquest, appears to have taken place between 1162 and 1170, and it has been ever since called Becket's Innings, as this Archbishop has the credit of promoting it, and there were Becket's Barn, and Becket's Bridge.* While this work was going on, differences arose between him and

* WALLAND MARSH.

Becket's Innings, Henry II,	1162 to 1170
Baldwin's, Henry II to Richard I,	1184 to 1190
No name, John,	1200
Ditto, John to Henry III,	1200 to 1250
Boniface, Henry III,	1240 to 1270
Peckham, Edward I,	1279 to 1292
No name, Edward III,	1339
„ Henry IV,	1400
„ Edward IV,	1477
„ Henry VII,	1500
Guldeford, Edward IV to Elizabeth,	1478 to 1562
Wanewright Creek, Elizabeth to Charles II,	1562 to 1661.

Henry II, and to escape the King's wrath, Becket determined to escape to France, and selected Romney, his own port, where, according to one writer, the sailors, dreading the King's indignation, pretended while attempting to sail, that there was no wind and brought him back; according to another writer, he was driven back by a contrary wind, and compelled to land against his will; while a third says that, on two succeeding nights, he put to sea in a boat with three companions, but the wind proved unfavourable on both occasions, and he was compelled to return. Taking these indications that God disapproved of the design, he returned to Canterbury.

The several innings in Walland Marsh were promoted by Baldwin, and succeeding Archbishops of Canterbury, during the next century. Thus Kent was indebted to the fostering care of its clergy, for the encouragement they gave to the reclaiming of land. They also promoted the emancipation of the slave, and, unlike the Romans, had the reputation of treating their labouring population better than the lay Lords did, so that "'tis good to live under the crozier" became a common saying. These remarks equally apply to the reclaiming of the Marshes in the Isle of Thanet, going on about the same time.

During the early part of the reign of King John, the inhabitants of the Cinque Ports were his steady adherents; he spent much of his time amongst them, and when he retired to the Isle of Wight they were almost the only subjects who did not desert him. By a charter in the seventh year of his reign, he granted to his "men of Rumenel" all their liberties and customs, as freely as the men of Hastings had their liberties. Two years later, this King sent a mandate to them and the other Barons of the ports, to equip their galleys, and choose the best and most valiant men of their ports, who were to be well armed. This was followed by the first formidable naval engagement between the English and the French, when the Cinque Ports fleet distinguished themselves. King John visited Romney, from Dover, in 1206, and remained there the 4th and 5th of April, and proceeded thence to battle. Our curiosity is excited as to how he

travelled from Dover to Romney. The King was a good sailor, and was attached to the Kentish mariners, and the probability is that the journey was performed by sea. When he reached Romney, where did he take up his abode for the night? The priory was not then built. King John again visited Romney shortly before his death.

Another naval engagement took place in the next reign (Henry III) in the Channel, between the French and English, when the English fleet was again victorious. The King wrote from Sandwich to thank the Cinque Ports for their good service, and informed them that, according to their privilege, he had sent two of their combarons to divide the spoil.

Henry III issued a mandate to the Cinque Ports, that "its court for pleas of the Crown be held in *future at Shipway* every August, and assigned as a reason that August was an idle time with the men of those parts, as they had then returned from the various regions whither they had gone with their merchandises, and were awaiting the harvest and fishing on the coasts of England." My reason for referring to it is because we find that the name of the Lath of Limowart was changed, at this time, to the modern name of Shuppewye, or Shipway. There is a spot in Lympne still known as Shipway Cross; we are told it acquired it because "it lay in the way to the haven where ships were wont to ride," and here the business of the courts was then transacted. Here also Prince Edward (afterwards Edward I) while Lord Warden, exacted from the barons the oath of fidelity to his father Henry III.

During the Barons' war, the men of the Cinque Ports became disloyal, declared against the king, and promised to fit out a fleet to guard the coast, in case an invasion was attempted on his behalf. The crews along our coast became unscrupulous, and were guilty of piracy, and Prince Edward had to make a severe example of some of them.

The wife of Simon de Montfort, who was sister to Henry III, in her journey from Porchester Castle to Dover, halted at Romney with her suite, and one is amused at the account of their travelling expenses. The payment for the dinner

was 27*s.* 5*d.*, hay bought for two nights 14*d.*, grass for 107 horses 5*s.* 9*d.*, six quarters one bushel of oats 14*s.* 3*d.* Here again one is curious to learn where she quartered.

The fishermen of Romney and the adjoining ports resorted to Yarmouth during the herring season, where affrays were of constant occurrence. By a charter of Edward I, bailiffs were appointed to decide their disputes, and provision was made for landing the fish and drying the nets. On one occasion a Cinque Port bailiff was killed by a Yarmouth bailiff, for which the latter was hanged. To mark the offence, tradition says that Yarmouth had to render annually to Windsor Castle a certain number of herrings.

We must return to the Marsh. From the reign of Henry I to Edward I, a period of nearly two hundred years, large tracts of lands in what is now known as Walland Marsh were reclaimed from the sea, and the heads of the Church were not slack in their attempts to protect them. From their several grants near Appledore and elsewhere they stipulated that their tenants should uphold the sea walls "according to the laws and customs of the Marsh." Until the thirteenth century, there were no charters or statutes to govern Romney Marsh, but the ordinances for its conservation are called "the ancient and approved customs."

The earliest charter of which there is any record is that of the 36 Henry III (1252), which recites that Romney Marsh had been governed "time out of mind" "by ancient and approved customs;" and its first written and well known ordinances are those of Henry de Bathe in 1258, which, with trifling variations, have been recognized to the present day, and became the English parent of all embankment laws.

But the elements will not be controlled by human laws. From 1236 to 1287 some fearful storms raged on the Kentish coast, destroying Winchelsea, Broomhill, and other neighbouring sea-girt places. Lydd escaped by the accumulation of what is now Dungeness, and the inhabitants of Broomhill fled there. By these storms the course of the Rother was diverted from Romney, and a new and nearer passage to the sea opened by Rye. All the royal mandates and commissions, from time to time issued by sovereigns, to make sluices

and remove obstructions, and "to spare neither rich nor poor," were of no avail. The Rother could not be brought back to its old channel. Thus the fate of Romney as a Port was sealed! At a later period Edward III gave the deserted channel to the See of Canterbury, the Prior and Convent of Christ Church, and Margaret de Basynges (the only daughter of Sir Thomas de Normanville, lady of the manor of Kennardington), they being then the owners of the adjoining lands.

This licence states that a certain *other* channel or trench, leading from Appledore to Romney, was then made by force of the sea, which was of more advantage to the town of Romney than the old one, which had been obstructed for thirty years and upwards. The soil of both trenches was held of the king, as parcel of the manors of Aldington, Appledore, Kennardington, and Woodrove. This *new* channel appears to have been made by another tempest, which happened about three years before, but it soon proved useless, as the haven of Romney was still deprived of the Rother to scour and keep it open, and the sand and beach closed it up, and it became dry as it is at this day. This old bed of the Rother is said to have been granted to the corporation of New Romney by Queen Elizabeth.

We have seen that the king had no waste in the Marsh, neither had he wreck, which belonged to the different lordships bordering the sea, as some compensation for the cost of embankment and drainage. Disputes then as now were of frequent occurrence respecting the right to salvage. Thus in the reign of Henry I, a ship laden with royal ornaments was cast ashore at Dengemarsh in Lydd, which was then held by Battle Abbey as an appendage to the royal manor of Wye. The king's collectors seized the cargo, but were subsequently ordered to give it up to the Abbey. Another vessel belonging to the port of Romney, then part of the Archbishop's territories, was also wrecked in the next reign at Dengemarsh. This led to a conflict between the two church dignitaries. After a long controversy the Abbot was victorious, but to pacify his grace, the Abbot gave him and his friends a portion of the salvage. Charges of wrecking

by the mariners of Romney and the adjoining ports, were not of unfrequent occurrence in the reign of Edward II. On one occasion, they plundered the wreck of a vessel called "The Blessed Mary of Fonte Arabia," laden with a valuable cargo and wrecked off Dungeness, in her passage to Gascony.

In the reign of Edward II, a return for military levies was made of the names of the several laths and hundreds of Kent, and of the lords of the same. Shipway is there substituted for Limowart as a lath; but there is no change in the Marsh hundreds, which remain as they did at the Conquest, and so continue to this day, with one exception. St. Martin's Pountney Hundred was originally distinct from that of Langport, but in the present day they are united and called the Hundred of St. Martin's Longport. But what is most remarkable is, that not a *single lordship* in this extensive district was held by a layman at this time (Edward II); the king held a few, but the archbishop was the chief owner, the remainder belonged to Christ Church, St. Augustine, Canterbury, and two or three religious houses. This, to my mind, has an important bearing on the division of this district for ecclesiastical purposes, and the erection of its churches.

I must now refer to Dymchurch and its wall, situate in Romney Marsh proper. We do not meet with this name in Domesday, but as the manor of Eastbridge extended over a great part of Dymchurch, and *that* lordship is returned with two churches, the probability is that one of them stood in it. Be this as it may, it is certainly returned with a church in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica* of Pope Nicholas IV in 1291.

The casual observer of the present day, standing on Dymchurch wall, would suppose that to reclaim the level below, the first step would have been to curb the ocean here, and he would conclude that the present strong mural defence, extending for about three miles along the coast, had existed, in some shape or form, from the time of the Romans. This is not so. I have already referred to the shingle banks originally running under and inland of the present wall. Now, the late Mr. James Elliott came to the reasonable conclusion, that it was not until the supply of shingle was cut

off from this line of coast, by the extraordinary accumulation of it at Dungeness Point, that Dymchurch was in danger. This is supported by the fact that among the numerous commissions and anxious investigations, respecting the state of the sea walls on this level, from the reign of Henry III to Richard III, *not one of them* refers to Dymchurch wall. It was not until the reign of Henry VIII that danger appears to have been apprehended, and steps were taken to prevent the sea from overwhelming this part of the level, by a system of "arming" with brushwood piles and overlaths. In a royal survey in the reign of James I, of the Aldington manor, I have met with several references to "Le wall." The wall in its present state is comparatively modern work. The Kentish ragstone was first introduced as late as the year 1825.

I will next notice the two corporations which regulate the affairs of Romney Marsh proper, one for drainage, and the other judicial.

The former is governed by the ordinances framed by Henry de Bathe in 1257 (Henry III), which by ancient custom are put in force by the lords of twenty-three manors in and adjoining the level, called Lords of the Marsh, viz.:

Aldington	Eastwell	Ruckinge
Blackmarstone	Falconhurst	Snave
Bilsington sup:	Horton	Street
Ditto inf:	Honychild	Tinton
Bonnington	Kenardington	Warehorne
Burmarsh	Newington fee	Court at Wick
Crathorne in Hope	Orleston	and
Eastbridge	Blackmanstone	Willop in Lymne.

For judicial purposes, Edward IV made this district a corporation, by the name of the Bailiff, Jurats, and Commonalty (who have one vote in the affairs of the drainage corporation). The late Mr. Riley (an Inspector under the Historical MSS. Commissioners), was of opinion that New Romney was in its height of prosperity in the reign of Richard II. If this was so, which I should doubt, its decay is made more apparent by this charter of Edward IV,

which, after referring to the necessity of proper coast defences, and declaring that in the Marsh of Romney the population had diminished, states that to increase the number of its resident inhabitants, the king made it a corporation for judicial purposes.

I must proceed. Strange as it may appear, there is no exaggeration in saying that there is a difference of about one thousand years at least between the complete embankment, drainage, and reclaiming of Romney Marsh proper, and Walland Marsh.

In Walland Marsh each owner appears to have had a law of his own, and it remained so until the reign of Edward I, when the good work effected in the adjoining level by Henry de Bathe, some thirty years before, led to the interference of the Crown, and Commissioners were appointed to view it. This was followed by the election of a Bailiff and Jurats, over whom the king's bailiff in Romney Marsh was made *Supervisor*. So matters remained for about one hundred and fifty years, when a general Act was passed in the reign of Henry VI, for the appointment of Commissioners of Sewers throughout the realm, with power to make ordinances which should be "according to the Laws and Customs of Romney Marsh;" a commission was granted to Walland Marsh which has been renewed from time to time to the present day. This level is rather more than two-thirds of the size of Romney. It is upwards of five miles in length from north to south, and four miles in breadth from east to west. It now includes the whole of Fairfield and Midley, and parts of Lydd, New and Old Romney, Ivychurch, Brookland, Snargate, and Brenzett.

The other levels are New Romney, Dengemarsh with Southbrooks, and Guldeford. Like Walland Marsh they are under separate commissions.

The level of New Romney contains less than four hundred acres. This was formed by stopping the old mouth of the Rother. Dengemarsh contains about four thousand acres, and includes a small part of New Romney, and a considerable portion of the parish of Lydd, including the town itself. Dungeness with its noble lighthouse stands on this

Marsh. The old beacon, first a stack of wood, and afterwards a high standard with a pitch pot, stood formerly at some distance from the site of the present lighthouse, which until the present century belonged to the family of the Cokes of Norfolk, but is now held by the Crown.* There has of late years been a vast accumulation of shingle here. Lyell says it has been advancing seaward at the rate of twenty feet per annum. Of the twelve thousand acres now forming the parish of Lydd, about half of it is beach.

Guldeforde Level, westward of Walland Marsh, contains about three thousand five hundred acres, but the greater part if not all of this level is in Sussex.

I have now given a hasty description of all the Marshes in the entire district, viz.:

	Acres.
Romney Marsh proper, which includes nine entire parishes, seven others partly in this and the remainder in the adjoining levels, and thirteen others of which portions are on the hill, containing as scotted land	24,044
Walland Marsh, comprising Fairfield and Midley, and parts of seven other parishes in other parts of the district	17,215
New Romney Level	395
Dengemarsh, partly in Lydd, and partly in New Romney	4049
Guldeford Level	3585
	49,288

I have said nothing of the Isle of Oxney, which forms no part of the levels I have treated of. It includes places of antiquity and interest (Wittersham, Stone burnt by the Danes, and part of Ebony), and one of our most ancient manors, Palstre. It was formerly entered by three ferries.

Of the civil and ecclesiastical history of Romney Marsh I must say a few words.

The whole district is in East Kent, with the exception of a small part of the Hundred of Blackborne, which is in

* Trinity House.

West, now Mid Kent, and the greater part of Guldeford Level, which is in Sussex.

The town and port of Romney, as one of the Cinque Ports, had, from the reign of Edward III, like Hythe (another Port), and the two ancient towns of Rye and Winchelsea, the privilege of returning two Barons to Parliament; notwithstanding their close proximity, these privileges were conferred on these ports, in return for naval and other services, and lasted until the reform of our parliamentary representation took place, in the last reign. In common with the other members of the Cinque Ports it became independent of the shire, the lath, and the hundred, but the corporate privileges of Romney I shall leave in the hands of its worthy chief magistrate and town clerk, who I fear will be unable to fix the precise time when the child supplanted the parent, and the new town of Romney superseded the old one. It was no hasty step.

Lambarde puzzles me. He says,

"There be in Kent the Old and the New Romney, as touching the latter whereof I mind not to speak, having not hitherto found either in Record or History anything pertaining thereunto, but that little I have to say must be of Old Romney, which was long since a principal town."

Lambarde wrote this in the reign of Elizabeth, and if Hasted is right (though he gives no authority), New Romney had become a place of considerable importance before the reign of Edward the Confessor. Why then should Lambarde have said what he did?

I do not gather from the different writers on the subject, that any Roman remains have been found here, as at Dymchurch. Somner says it was first mentioned by that name (Romney) about the eleventh century. New Romney of course rose on the decline of Old Romney. For a long time we only meet with the Port of Romney, which would include Old and New. All agree, whether New or Old (I believe it comprised both for a time), that it was once a flourishing town possessing a good, sure, and commodious harbour, where many vessels used to be at road; where Earl Godwin and his sons entered and led away all the ships they found

in the port; where a part of the Norman Conqueror's fleet were repulsed; where kings and princes rested in their travels; where at the Norman Conquest a large roll of burgesses was to be found, with privileges since granted, as old if not older than existed in the City of London.

As a proof that this was not a thinly populated place, it is recorded that in a crowd of people assembled in the town in the reign of Henry III, one Lauretta le Pontier was trodden under foot and stifled to death.

It also occupied a large area in the reclaimed level, was divided into twelve or thirteen wards, had its churches, its town hall, an alien priory, a hospital for the sick, its market place, its warren. These are all admitted facts.

When we come to the reign of Henry VIII, Leland tells us that it *had been* a good haven, and that in the remembrance of men, ships had come hard up to the town and cast anchor in one of the churchyards; that the sea was then two miles from the town, which was then so decayed, that one church was with difficulty maintained where there were three great parishes and churches before.

Now it is evident that here as elsewhere the sea was the great attractive power, and as it receded, all the new public erections, such as the present noble church, the priory and other public buildings, continued to follow it. So that after a lapse of time its venerable church was almost all that remained of Old Romney.

New Romney had next a struggle for its existence; but the countenance of royalty, the fostering care of the church, with the aid of its parliamentary and municipal officers, preserved it in a shattered state with the name only of a port, and wholly dependent on the fertility of its soil.

One word as to the ecclesiastical history of Romney Marsh, and I have done. It is in the See and Archdeaconry of Canterbury, and deanery of Lympne. Its church patronage is with two or three exceptions in the hands of the Archbishop, and the dean and chapter of Canterbury. While the position and boundaries of its parishes afford the strongest proof that they were formed wholly independent of manors, levels, and sea walls; detached portions of parishes,

as in the cases of Newington and Sellindge, and other places, being miles away from their churches.

Romney had its *alien* priory, said to be founded by the great pluralist John Maunsell A.D. 1257, who founded the priory of the Black Canons at Bilsington. During the war with France, Edward I took all alien priories into his own hands, allowing each monk 18d. per week, and spending the remainder of their incomes in defraying the expenses of the war.

As to the vast and apparently unnecessary number of churches, with reference to the population of the district, I have nothing to add beyond what is to be found in my *History of the Weald of Kent*, except some valuable remarks of Laing in his travels in "Sweden and Norway." He says,—

"The traveller is puzzled with the number of churches in Romney Marsh, and in the fens of Lincolnshire, where the parishes are small, and there never could have been a population to require so much accommodation. In Romney Marsh fifteen or sixteen churches may be seen within a space which, altogether, would only be in extent one considerable parish, and in some of them there never have been above half a dozen families. But if it was a common practice in those ages for the feudal lord to impart to his vassals full hereditary rights to their lands, in *consideration* of a *payment* which *he laid out in pious uses, such as the building of churches*, it would be evident that the *quality* of the land and *value* of the right ceded to the vassal would have more to do than *the number of the inhabitants*, in determining the size and number of their parish churches; and it is precisely in the rich alluvial lands gained from the rivers and fens, that most of such parish churches (erected without reference to a population) are found. In Romney Marsh, a tract of alluvial land studded with churches, many of which are spacious, there are no indications that it has ever been so densely populated as to require so many and such large places of worship, as there are no traces of former inhabitants, no marks of the plough, no vestiges in the church yard of numerous resting places of former generations; and the land would never have been cultivated so as to need a large resident agricultural population."