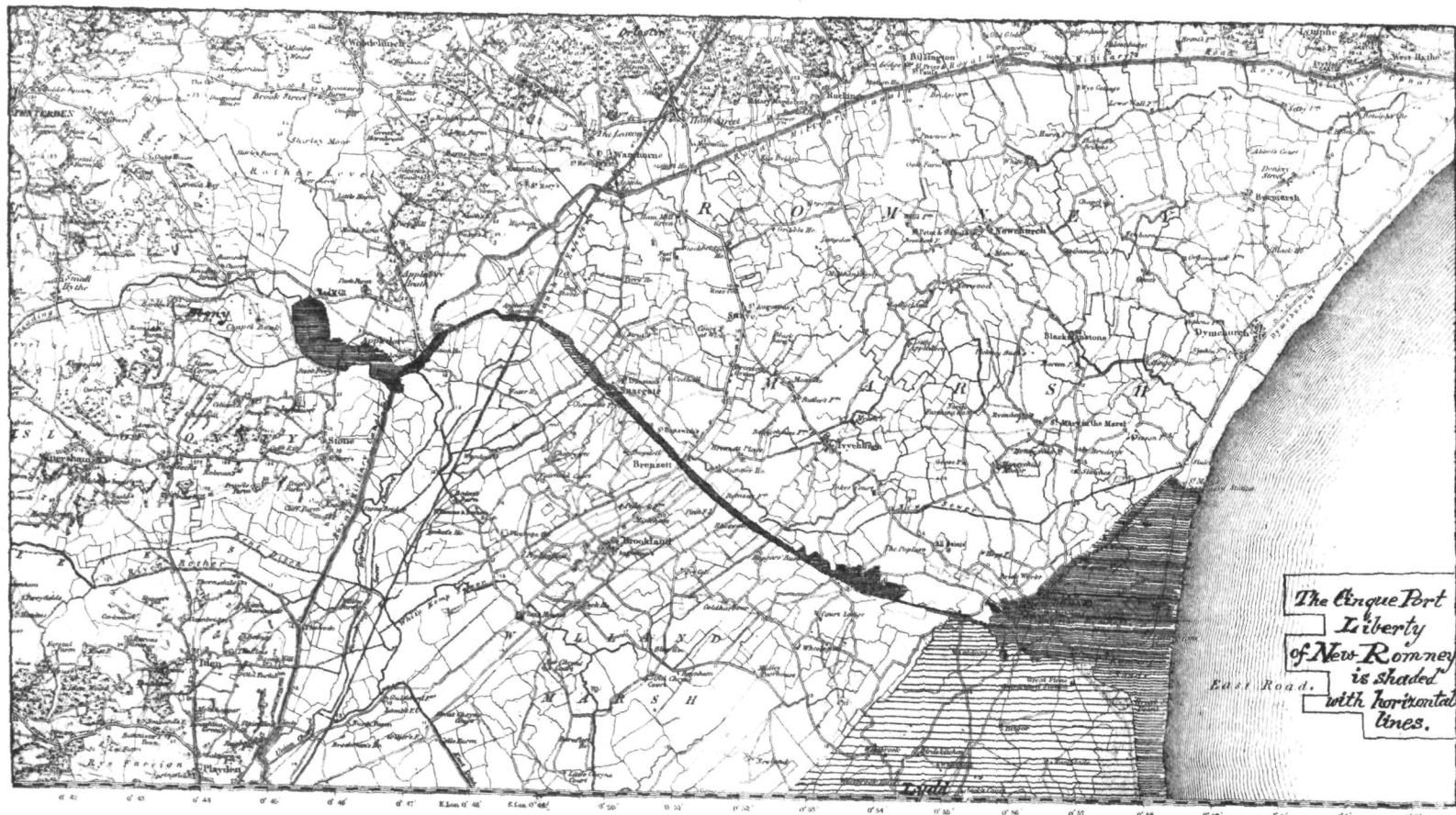




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THE CINQUE PORT LIBERTY OF ROMNEY.

As seen upon the annexed map, the conformation of the land comprised within the Cinque Port Liberty of New Romney, is extremely remarkable. Its western limb, contrary to all our notions of a Port Liberty, runs far inland, across more than ten miles of country, from Romney Hoy on the east to Red Hill in Appledore on the west. The jurisdiction of the Port thus extends over fragments of eight or nine parishes, New Romney, Old Romney, Ivychurch, Brenzet, Brookland, Snargate, Kennardington, Appledore, and probably Ebony also. Its western extremity, inland at Redhill, is within half a mile of the boundary of Tenterden Cinque Port Liberty, appertaining to Rye.

North-eastward, the Romney Port claims jurisdiction as far as St. Mary's Coast Guard station. Southward, and nearly at right angles with its western limb, this Cinque Port Liberty extends for six or seven miles from New Romney, through Lydd and Broomhill, over an area of something like thirteen thousand acres of land. There is, however, nothing very remarkable in this wide, seaboard, area of the Liberty. The singular and remarkable limb is that which, extending inland over ten miles, from east to west, occupies scarcely more than three thousand acres, scattered over eight or nine parishes.

This inland limb, ten miles long, is, for the greatest part of its course, a very narrow stripe of land, about one hundred feet broad. In New Romney it has a large area, comprising 1714 acres of land; it then becomes a mere stripe, until at Old Romney it widens, to enclose 930 acres. Thence it is very narrow, including only ten acres in Ivychurch, five in Brookland, eighteen in Brenzet, nineteen in Snargate where for a time it is wider, five in Kennardington near Appledore

railway station, several hundreds of acres in Appledore, and probably some in Ebony.

At present, the jurisdiction of the Liberty within Appledore has been practically relinquished, in all but a small corner of that parish. In the Census Returns for 1871, kindly lent to me by the Town Clerk of Romney, Mr. Henry Stringer, only seven acres of Appledore parish are reckoned within the Cinque Port Liberty. The area thus relinquished, by the Liberty jurisdiction, is the most remarkable portion of the Cinque Port territory. In a broad winding course, it extended westward about three miles and a quarter, from the site of Appledore railway station to Red Hill. At its western extremity this land assumes the form of an extensive lake, or bay, about one-third of a mile broad, and a mile and a half long. South-eastward, from this dried bay, for about half a mile of its course, the modern Military Canal now runs through the Cinque Port Liberty, the width of which here begins to dwindle eastward, from a breadth of nearly 450 feet, to about half that width; it then becomes narrower still, but near Appledore Station it swells again for a short space, and after dwindling again, once more grows wider at Snargate.

This western, bay-like, area of the Cinque Port, lying between the south-west boundary of Appledore parish, and the east or north-east boundaries of Ebony and Stone-in-Oxney, enables us to understand the ancient Chronicles, when they say that a Danish fleet of 250 ships sailed up to Appledore, four leagues from the broad mouth of the Limene river, in A.D. 893. That area, so bay-like when seen on the map, was formerly, without any doubt, an actual water-way. To its western extremity, at Red Hill, and even to places still further inland, the small vessels of ancient times could, evidently, be navigated from the estuary at Romney, along the course which is still marked out by the limits of the Cinque Port Liberty. The navigability of the water-way, up to Red Hill, is mentioned in the Romney Custumal, and in other Municipal Records preserved at New Romney. If, however, all written records had been lost, the survival of the Cinque Port Liberty's jurisdiction would still testify to the

former existence of the waterway, from Romney to Red Hill in Appledore.

It will be convenient to consider the history of this Cinque Port Liberty in three distinct sections:

- i. The inland area, within Appledore parish.
- ii. The long narrow limb defined by the Rhee Wall.
- iii. The Haven at Romney.

I. APPLEDORE SECTION OF THE LIBERTY.

With respect to this inland section of the Liberty, we must remember that the course from Newenden to the sea of the ancient Wealden river Limene (latterly called Rother) has undergone three great changes. In prehistoric times it debouched at Appledore, where it found an estuary of the sea, which carried it first northward, and then eastward beside the hills which lie to the north of Romney Marsh, to the open sea at Lympne, and Hythe. A very similar course, but of far narrower extent, is now followed by the northern section of the modern Military Canal. Traces of the primeval estuary still remained, in the reign of King Alfred, in the names of a *Lake* and some *Fleets*, in the neighbourhood of Ham Street.

Not long before the commencement of the Christian era, obstructions on the coast line, near Lympne and Hythe, had accumulated to such an extent as to reduce, very greatly, the volume of tidal water which reached the Appledore estuary. Thus it became possible, and profitable, to erect that grand earthwork or bank called the Rhee Wall. Then the river Limene was diverted into a new and straight course, beside the Rhee Wall, by which it could flow in a shorter time than it could do before, south-eastward to the sea at Romney.

A third change, in this river's course to the sea, took place at the close of the fourteenth century, when the Appledore estuary and the bed of the Rhee both became dry. A succession of inundations by the sea, caused by terrific tempests during many years, produced this change, by opening out, for the Wealden river Rother, an exit at Rye.

Mr. James Elliott, the late able engineer of Dymchurch

Wall, who discovered near its site relics of Roman Pottery, studied carefully during many years the conformation and history of Romney Marsh. He noticed that throughout the marsh the level of the land generally falls northward, inland towards the hills, and rises on the south and east, towards the sea. He observed the laws of formation of the "fulls," or huge shingle-banks, south and eastward of Romney Marsh. He found that on this coast the shingle is ever drifting, and accumulating, eastward. Thus, after many years of careful observation, he was enabled to explain the process by which the tidal water in the Appledore estuary had been so diminished, as to render the Rhee Wall possible. He shewed that the shingle bank which, during long primeval ages, had accumulated from Hastings to Dymchurch and beyond it, gradually crept on towards, and really created, Hythe. When the course of the tides towards Lympne became thereby impeded, the volume of water entering was lessened; West Hythe superseded Lympne; and Hythe superseded West Hythe; but very long before the latter change could take place, an estuary so far inland as Appledore must have been greatly reduced in depth. The tidal waters which flowed in, from the neighbourhood of Hythe and Lympne, grew less and less every year as the shingle accumulated, so that the volume of water flowing, beside the hills, up to Appledore became at last comparatively small. This effect, Mr. Elliott calculated, must have been produced shortly before the Christian era.

Our interest, however, centres mainly around the second great change, by which the shorter and more direct course to the sea, from Appledore to Romney, became choked and dry.

Down to how recent a date, can we trace the navigability of that second waterway, from Appledore, which existed for thirteen or fourteen centuries of the Christian era?

In the year 1258, letters-patent* issued by King Henry III, on the 21st of June, mention incidentally that inundations, from the sea, then flowed up to Appledore from the

* *Rot. Pat.*, 42 Henry III, memb. 7, No. 20.

neighbourhood of Winchelsea. The king therefore directed that a sluice should be made, under the town of Appledore, to retain the sea-water brought by each flood tide, wherewith to swell the volume of fresh water, which flowed down from Newenden to Romney. These inundations from the south seem to have been then recently caused by the effects of great tempests. The same causes had, no doubt, opened fresh channels, southward, for some of the tributary streams which had formerly swelled the river that flowed from Newenden to Appledore.

About thirty years later, in 1286, occurred another terrible storm, mentioned by Somner, which is said to have washed away the shingle bank on which stood the town of Old Winchelsea. The removal of such a barrier must have permitted the sea, coming from the south towards Appledore, to exercise such devastating power around Oxney, Ebony, and Appledore, as it had never before acquired. Either at once, in 1287, or by degrees within the succeeding years, it forced the river that came from Newenden to leave its old bed at Appledore, and it opened for that stream an entirely new course in Ebony and Appledore.

During the following thirty-seven years, the old river-channel became a dry hard trench, two hundred feet broad, and more than two and a half miles long. For agriculture, and for locomotion, this huge trench became extremely inconvenient, and in fact a nuisance. Consequently the neighbours complained, so loudly and persistently, that King Edward II promised to remedy their grievance. In July, 1324, he appointed Commissioners to inquire, when? by whom? and for what cause? this old trench had been made.* Nearly forty years had elapsed since the storm in 1287, and the existing generation of neighbours, in 1324, had no personal knowledge of the original purpose of the trench. The Barons of the Cinque Port of Romney, however, were by no means so ill informed. They were greatly incensed by the issue of the Royal Commission, which was calculated to deprive them of jurisdiction over many hundred acres of

* *Close Roll*, 18 Ed. II, memb. 38.

soil. Consequently, they prepared to silence, by force of arms, the marshmen, and the neighbours, who complained of the obnoxious old trench. The King was advised to withdraw or suspend the Commission, to prevent a small civil war between the Cinque Port men and their neighbours. For a time, the matter was hushed up, and the nuisance continued.

In the following reign, however, stronger action was taken. Edward III authorized the lords of manors, in which stood this trench, to fill it up and thus level the land and the grievance. His royal letters-patent, dated at York on the 20th of May, 1338 (11 Edward III) yield much information.* They speak of the water-way at Appledore as an *arm of the sea*; they state that the old dry trench was seven hundred perches long, and ten perches wide; and that its soil formed part of the manors of Aldington, Appledore, and Kennardington. To the lords of those manors permission was given to fill it up, or do whatever would render it less inconvenient, and more useful.

The letters-patent state, distinctly, that the violence of the sea had formed another, and a shorter, channel for the waters of the river. This new channel, in 1338, was not only navigable, but was declared to be more convenient, and more profitable, to the town of Romney than the old channel had been. The truth of this is manifest from the dimensions, as stated in the letters-patent. The new trench was twice as wide, and not nearly so long as its predecessor. Its

* *Rot. Pat.*, 11 Ed. III, part 2, memb. 32. "... quod ipsi quandam antiquam trencheam que se ducit a brachio maris vocato Apuldré versus villam de Romeneye et que est solum eorundem Archiepiscopi Prioris et Conventus ac Margarete que eciam per sabulones et arenam maris iam de novo calcatos est obstructa quod naves per trencheam illam usque ad dictam villam de Romeneye commodè transire nequunt ut solebant omnino obstruere et commodum suum inde facere possint eo quod est ibidem quedam alia trenchea ducens ab eodem brachio usque eandem villam de Romeneye que iam vi maritima facta existit et quod dicta antiqua trenchea per triginta annos et amplius sic obstructa fuit et predicta nova trenchea magis est competens et sufficiens et ad maius commodum et proficuum dicte ville de Romeneye quam eadem antiqua trenchea dum aperta fuit extitit et nunc existit pro transitu navium a mari usque ad villam de Romeneye supradictam quodque dicta nova trenchea est solum predictorum Archiepiscopi Prioris et Conventus et Margarete et Abbatis de Ponte Roberti et in longitudine quingentas et in latitudine viginti particatas et antiqua trenchea predicta in longitudine septingentas et in latitudine decem particatas continent et quod solum utriusque trenchee tenetur de nobis in capite ut parcella Maneriorum de Aldynton Apuldré Kynardynton et Woderove," etc., etc.

dimensions were: length five hundred perches, breadth twenty perches. Henry de Bathe, in his Ordinances for the regulation of Romney Marsh, defines the length of a perch to be twenty feet.* Consequently we know that the new waterway, navigable in 1338, was four hundred feet wide, and less than two miles long.

The definition of the course of this new channel, as given in the letters-patent, enables us to ascertain that it extended to the neighbourhood of Red Hill, in Appledore, which is near Ebony. The king's grant states that the new channel passed through a part of the manor of Woodrove in Ebony, which belonged to the Abbot of Robertsbridge. This fact, coupled with the length of the channel, less than two miles, proves that the change of channel did not extend to the neighbourhood of the Rhee Wall, but was confined entirely to the inland, Appledore, section of the Cinque Port Liberty. Probably the site of the old trench (which did not touch the manor of Woodrove in Ebony) is now unknown; the site of the new trench being that which has ever since formed the area of the jurisdiction of the Cinque Port of Romney.

As our object is to trace, to its most recent date, the navigability of the waterway up to Red Hill in Appledore, we must not fail to notice that the terms of Edward the Third's letters-patent have not been well weighed by writers who have mentioned them. Instead of proving that the channel, up to Appledore, had been closed and choked by the previous storms, that king's grant proves that, in 1338, there was in use from Red Hill to Romney a shorter and more beneficial waterway than had before existed. It is extremely important that this date should be well noted, if we are to understand aright the history of New Romney.

Eleven years later, about 1349, there is some reason for believing that this waterway was navigable far above Appledore, not only to Newenden but even to Salehurst. The lord of the manor of Echingham complained,† in or about 1349, that boats were being stopped, from reaching his market at

* Dugdale's *History of Imbanking*, p. 19.

† *Ibid.*, p. 84.

Salehurst, by reason of some works in progress at Knell's Dam, or between it and Newenden.

How soon, after that year, the channel within Appledore became blocked, we cannot ascertain. One fact, however, seems to indicate that his final blocking took place a few years before A.D. 1392. The chief resident at Appledore at that time was Henry de Horne, of Horne's Place, on Appledore Heath. In the year 1392, that gentleman went to Romney, to treat with the Cinque Port authorities there, respecting a bridge, called Hornysbregge;* and in the following year, the Jurats and Commonalty paid for the removal ("taking down") of that bridge. We may therefore suppose that the channel, being dry, had been filled up so as to render unnecessary this bridge, which bore the name of the "squire" of Appledore.

Having thus traced, down to and somewhat beyond the middle of the fourteenth century, the navigability of the waterway up to Red Hill, Appledore, we may now pass on to treat of the middle section of the Cinque Port Liberty. This mid-section is still roughly defined by the Rhee Wall. In fact, for some miles, between Appledore Railway Station and Hlesbridge, the area of the Liberty rarely extends many yards beyond the edges of the bank which we call the Rhee Wall, and along which the high road now runs.

II. THE RHEE, AND RHEE WALL.

Rhee, as the name for a river or watercourse, is familiar to all who are acquainted with the topography of districts or towns which, like Colchester, had been occupied by the Britons, and were subsequently utilized and developed by the Romans. At Colchester, for instance, one of the postern gates, taken down in A.D. 1669, was called "Rye-gate, more properly *Rhee* or *Rea* gate, that is River gate."† In Hertfordshire, "at Ashwell are the thirteen springs, forming the *Rhee* Head, which flowing northwards, is after-

* *Hist. MSS. Commission, Fifth Report*, p. 534^b.

† Thomas Wright's *Hist. of Essex*, book ii., chap. iii., pp. 298-9.

wards received into the Cam.”* The Rye House, historically notorious for its “Plot,” perpetuates the name of a castle, and of an ancient manor called “Le Rye,” on the bank of the river Lee. Isaac Taylor mentions eleven rivers, in the British Isles, which bore this name in various forms;† and he derives it from a root “Rhe,” or “Rhin,” which he connects with a Welsh word “Rhe,” meaning swift.

Hasted quotes an allusion, made in 1360, to Brenzet Bridge and “le Re.”‡ The first actual mention of Rhee Wall, that I have found, occurs in the record of a survey, made near Appledore in 1384 (8 Ric. II), which is contained in an ancient Register of Christ Church, Canterbury.§ It speaks of the “Wall of the Re,” as a boundary.

That grand bank, six miles long, now called the Rhee Wall, derives its name from the watercourse, or river bed, latterly flanked by two walls, which ran from Appledore to Romney. When this channel was navigable, it was called the *Re*, the *Ree*, or the *Rhee*. The walls, which flanked it, were the Romney Marsh Wall on the north-east, and the Walland Marsh Wall on the south-west.

An inquiry was held, in the year 1565, by commissioners appointed by Queen Elizabeth, who reported “that ‘the lande betwene the Wallles’ extends, in length, from the fresh marsh, at Romney, called “The Common Marsh,” directly to a place called Read hill, beyond Appledore; between two walls, one of which is called Romney Marsh Wall, and the other is called Wallande Wall. This land (forming the inland area of the Cinque Port Liberty) lies between the two Walls, and occupies, said the jury, the entire site of a ‘cricke or water-

* J. E. Cussans' *Hist. of Herts*, vol. i., p. 14.

† The *Rhee* in Cambridgeshire; the *Rey* in Wilts; the *Rea* in Salop, in Warwick, in Herts, and in Worcestershire; the *Ray* in Oxfordshire and in Lancashire; and the *Rye* in Kildare, in Yorkshire, and in Ayrshire (*Words and Places*, Fifth Edition, pp. 137, 138).

‡ Hasted, *Hist. of Kent*, viii. 385.

§ *Harleian MS.* 1006, folio 191 (or in pencil 151). Hec est mensura facta super Denna' de Mistelhamme viz: de tenement' Daniel' Clerk de tenement' Henrici Boydyn p' Schataway et p' Mistelhamme per Thoma' Heved, Steph' atte Hale, Joh'em Eadolph, et Ham' de Aghene, et per al' tenent' ibidem; videlicet, a Walla de la Re usque ad Wall' de Southlond, quam dividit inter Mistelhamme et quinque Dole vocat' frisoeth ffrewer et soc' suorum, anno regni Regis Ricardi secundi post conquestum Anglie octavo ad quatuor anni terminos per equales porciones solvend'.

wey, sewared or dried upp.'""* The same words are used, in the description or definition given of this land, in the charter granted to New Romney, by Queen Elizabeth, in the fifth year of her reign. Her commissioners, Richard Heyman, and Ciriac Pettit, likewise reported that never, at any time, had the archbishops, or the king, received rent or profit from this land; but that, from the time of King Henry VI, such rent had been always received by the Jurats and Community of the town of New Romney. Thus was the jurisdiction of the Cinque Port Liberty recognized and re-affirmed.

* The *Book of Notte*, among the Records of New Romney, contains, at the end, the Latin text of the Commissioners' Report.

INQUISITION TAKEN FOR OUR LADY THE QUEEN, at New Romney in the county of Kent, on the . . . day of January, in the fifth year of the reign of Elizabeth, etc., etc., before Richard Heyman, *armiger*, and Ciriac Pettit Commissioners of our said Lady the Queen, by virtue of her Commission to them addressed, upon the oaths of Robert Dyne, . . . Pyx, James Marten, Robert Laulesse, Thomas Reache, James Knell, Thomas Olyff, John Vynall, Robert Collen, Edmund Boland, Thomas Knyght, Christopher Playce, John Seade, John Drincker, Richard Dryncker, Cuthbert Stote (or Scote), John Wallis, and Richard Godfrey trusty and loyal men (*p'bor' et legaliu homi'*) of the said county, WHO SAY THAT certain sandy lands called Sandehills, commonly named *The Helmes*, containing by estimation eighty acres partly of land and partly of salt marshes, about which there lately was a law suit between the Queen and the inhabitants of New Romney, lie in the eastern part of the said town, and are bound on the east and north-east by land of Laurence Assheburnham called *Jeson*, which he holds in right of his wifene Adam; on the north by lands of John Efoday, Thomas Jolle, Arthur Blachenden, and John Tadlowe; on the south by the high Sea and the Common Marsh; and on the west by the same Common Marsh.

AND THEY SAY that certain land called The Common Marsh consisting of fresh marsh, and separated by ditches and hedges into divers parcels, and yet likewise consisting of about three hundred acres partly of land and partly of salt marshes, lately matter of the law suit aforesaid, abut upon the aforesaid Helmes, to the east; upon *The Saltes* of New Romney and upon the *Sextry land* of Canterbury Cathedral Church, to the south; upon *Belgar* lands to the south-west; upon land Linckehok towards the west; upon St. Nicholas Churchyard, and *postlumna* called the Baksylds of divers messuages of the inhabitants of New Romney, and part of *The Helmes*, towards the north.

AND THEY SAY that the Saltmarsh, called the *Saltes* of the town of New Romney, contains by estimation one hundred acres, partly of land and partly of salt marshes. This was also matter of dispute in the aforesaid suit. *The Saltes* abut upon the Common Marsh to the north; upon the Helmes to the north-east; upon the Sextry Saltes to the west; and upon the high sea to the south and east.

AND THEY SAY that certain land, called *the lande betwene the Wallles* likewise in dispute under the said law suit, extends in length from the fresh marsh called *The Common Marsh* directly to a place called Readhill, between two walls, one of which is called Romney Marsh Wall, and the other is called Wallande Wall. This land lies between the two walls occupying the entire site of a "*Cricke or water-way, sewared or dried upp.*"

AND LASTLY THEY SAY that never was rent or farm paid for the aforesaid lands and salt marshes or for any part of them to the use of the Queen or her predecessors, nor to any Archbishop of Canterbury. Also they say that such rent

When, by whom, and why was the Rhee channel made? The late Mr. James Elliott, in 1852, published a statement which answers these queries, to much the same purpose as Dugdale and Somner had replied to them, long ago. He says that the Romans erected the Rhee Wall, in a line from Romney to Appledore, and thus shut in twenty-four thousand acres of land, at one sweep. This was, undoubtedly, a magnificent work; its antiquity, its directness, and its magnitude attest an early engineering skill which cannot well be ascribed to the Saxon successors of the Romans. It may well be considered, however, whether the Britons were not as skilled, in making earthworks, as the Romans. Mr. Elliott proceeds to say: "In erecting this wall, it became necessary to provide some exit for the waters from the hills, as well as for the drainage of the land enclosed. This was done by cutting a channel, parallel with the wall, from the pool or lake, at the *embouchure* of the river Limene, at Appledore, to the sea at Romney. This was done, and thence arose the *Portus Novus* at Romney. This channel was, it seems, one hundred feet wide; and that it was fortified at its seaward end is very apparent, from the earth mounds, cast up in pairs, and now existing. Cutting the channel, was not necessary further than from the south border of the lake to the sea;

and farm now is and always has been paid to the Jurats and Commonalty of the town of New Romney. And that the Jurats and Commonalty have been paid the following rent or farm for the said premises:—

20d. for the Common Marsh, in 7 Hen. VI; and a like sum thenceforward annually unto the last year of Henry VII. From the last year of Henry VII until 7 Henry VIII the sum of 6s. 10d. per annum was received for the farm of this land. Thenceforward, from the 7th to the 16th of Henry VIII the sum of £3 6s. 8d. was annually received. In and from the 16th, unto the 20th of Henry VIII, the sum of £10 per annum was received for the farm of the Common Marsh, and of the Saltes, and of the Helmes taken together. In and from 20 Henry VIII unto 3 Edward VI the sum of £16 per annum was the total rent. In and from 3 Edward VI unto 7 Elizabeth £20 was the rent received for the Common Marsh, the Saltes, and the Helmes, together.

For the land between the Walls the annual farm of 3s. 4d. was received in the 12th year of Henry VI and after until about twenty years ago. About twenty years ago divers separate dwellings were built, on this land, by permission of the Jurats and Commonalty of the town, for which dwellings a rent of 5s. 4d. per annum has been paid.

The inhabitants of old expended £400 upon Inning the said Common Marsh, as appears by their Ancient Books. About twenty years ago they expended another sum of £400, and during the past twenty years they have expended, further, about £11 per annum, by the hands of their Farmer, John Padyam, for the same purpose and to prevent inundation by the sea.

but the wall was necessary to be continued across this lake, until it met the high land at Appledore, not less than a mile beyond the traces of the artificial river. This last length must have been a formidable work; on an average, the wall, as now existing, is not less than fifteen feet above the general level of the land, right and left, and of a proportionate base.”*

Having seen that the “Rhee” was, originally, a water-course or trench, between two banks or walls, we will endeavour to glean what we can respecting its later history. In June, 1258, royal letters patent, issued by Henry III, stated that the course of the *river of Newenden* had, by inundation of the sea, been diverted from the port of Romney. Nicholas de Haudlo was therefore directed and empowered to obtain a valuation of such lands as must be taken, close to the town of Romney, for cutting through them a new watercourse, by which the river might be again made to flow into Romney port or haven. To effect this, it was needful, not only to cut a new mouth, or channel, at the town of Romney, but also to remove obstructions which had accumulated in the upper, or more inland, portion of the ancient course of the river, and to erect three sluice gates. One sluice was to be made under the town of Appledore, to receive and retain tidal water coming from Winchelsea; that by it the river stream might be increased. The second sluice was at Snargate; and the third sluice gate was to be made close to the port at Romney, to prevent the entrance, into the river course, of such sea water as might cause obstruction, or silting up, of that course, by deposits which ebbing tides left behind.† It was at this period, but three months later, that those ordinances were framed by Henry de Bathe, for the preservation of the banks and water-ways of Romney Marsh, which have ever since been the law of this Marsh, and have formed the model for all other ordinances of embankments. Not until thirty years later were Jurats elected, and regulations made, for the governance of Walland Marsh.

* *Notes on the ancient state of Romney Marshes*, pp. 44-5, appended to Mr. Roach Smith's *Report of Excavations at Lympne*.

† *Rot. Pat.*, 42 H. III, m. 7, No. 20. *Furley's Weald*, ii. 251-2 note.

Without doubt, a new mouth for the Rhee was formed at Romney, in or soon after A.D. 1258. The new line of communication, between the Rhee and the haven, ran from a cross, belonging to the Romney Hospital for Infirm Folk, which stood near Aghene pond (Hangman's pond, or sole?), to Effeton; from Effeton it passed on to Melepend (Mill pond?), and thence descended into the port.

During the following century, the Rhee itself became gradually dry. In 1388-9, the town of Romney paid £3 15s. 9d. to Andrew Colyn, "for digging in the Ree;* and 7s. 10d. for making the bridge of Ille (Ilesbridge.) In 1392 Hornesbridge was taken down. In 1406-7, a collection was made "for digging the Common Ree;" and in that year, £9 14s. 3d. was paid "for digging of the Ree."† At the same time a new sluice was made at a cost of £20. Great efforts were made, by the men of Romney, during five or six years following; and contributions are recorded from the vicar, and from four chaplains of the town, toward "making the sluice anew."‡ With respect to the outlet, or haven, however, all their efforts were futile. Yet this was comparatively a new outlet, which, as we have seen, had been newly made in, or soon after, 1258. So completely, however, had it become blocked up, that the dried bed of the Rhee, or river channel, where it had joined the Romney haven, was actually let for pasture, in 1427.

Numerous entries, in the Chamberlains' accounts, during the fifteenth century, shew that the dried-up bed or channel of the Rhee, between Old Romney and the common marsh of New Romney, was sometimes called the "foreland," but generally was known as "land between the walls."§ Dwellings

* *Hist. MSS. Commission, Fifth Report*, p. 534.

† *Ibidem*, p. 537.

‡ *Ibidem*, p. 538.

§ 5, 6 Henry VI (1427-8). Rec^d 20d. from the relict of Stephen Harry for a parcel of land of the Commonalty between the walls. (*Hist. MSS. Commission, Fifth Report*, p. 540^b.)
9, 10 Henry VI. Rec^d 2s. as a certain fine from Thos. Edryk and William Kene for occupying the common land between the walls (p. 541^a).
11, 12 Henry VI. Rec^d 2s. of Thomas Roggere for rent of land between the walls; and 3s. 4d. of John Erle for rent of land between the walls (p. 541^b).
15, 16 Henry VI. Rec^d 3s. 3d. of William Warmestone, for pasture between the

were erected at Snargate, at Old Romney, and at New Romney, upon "the land between the walls," in and after the year 1545, by permission of the Jurats and commonalty of the Port of Romney.

III. THE PORT, OR HAVEN AT ROMNEY.

The PORTUS NOVUS, alluded to by Mr. Elliott, is that *καινός λιμήν*, which Ptolemy mentions as existing in Kent, and of which he gives the latitude and longitude. Mr. Gordon M. Hills, who has carefully investigated Ptolemy's statements, says it is likely "that the place of the NOVUS PORTUS was measured from the PROMONTORIUM CANTIUM, or *South Foreland*, from which it is one degree distant by Ptolemy, or forty-three minutes by correction, and this will bring it to the west side of Romney Marsh."*

That impudent forgery by Bertram of Copenhagen, which purported to be an Itinerary of Roman Britain, written by Richard of Cirencester, is a clever digest, not only of the genuine ancient itineraries, but of the researches and ideas of Camden and other antiquaries. This modern digest places, between Pevensey (*Anderida*) and Dover (*Dubris*), two stages; one called *Ad Lemannum*, and the other, ten miles from it, *Lemaniano Portu*. These two stages would very well answer to Romney and Lympne. As a modern digest, and opinion, this Itinerary of Bertram is valuable, although

walls, from Illisbregge to New Romene; and 20d. from John att Mede for like pasture (p. 541^b).

16, 17 Henry VI. Rec^d 20d. of Richard Prowde, for pasture between Elsebregge and the Barre. Rec^d 3s. 3d. from William Warmestone, for pasture between Elsebregge and the Bruge of Old Romene (pp. 541-542.)

32, 33 Henry VI. Paid by John Porter for land situate between the Walls, near the harbour [*juxta port*], that is from the Horssho to Longbrigge, near Cotehelle, 2s. (p. 543^b).

35, 36 Henry VI. John Hykke pays for the *forland* between Ilysbragge and Old Romene 2s.; and John Kyngge, for the *forland* between the Harpe and Ilysbragge 2s. (p. 544^a).

36, 37 Henry VI. John Kinge pays for the pasture between the Horssho and Ilysbragge (p. 544^a).

14, 15 Henry VII. Received 3s. 4d. from William Mugge for rent of land between the walles near Lynghoke for 2 years (p. 549^a).

1, 2 Henry VIII. Received 3s. 10d. of the widow of Thomas Lambard for rent of land lying in the place called "Southlese," and from that place to Ilesbregge (p. 550^a).

* *Journal of British Archaeological Association*, vol. xxxiv., p. 294.

as a pseudo-antique of Richard of Cirencester it is a forgery. Indeed its value, as a modern digest, is proved by the acceptance it so long received as a genuine, antique, authority.

The Roman remains discovered in Oxney, and those found at Dymchurch by Mr. Elliott, when excavating, in preparation for the repair of Dymchurch Wall, prove incontestably that Romney Marsh was occupied by the Romans, in considerable numbers. When connected with these ocular demonstrations of Roman occupation, there is great significance in the name of *Cold Harbour*, which still clings to sites in Old Romney. In similar connection, the survival of names containing "*street*" and "*hall*," in Lydd and Romney and the Marsh, is likewise significant. If then we assent to the arguments which convince Mr. Elliott, Mr. Gordon Hills, Somner, and others, that the *Portus Novus* (καὶνὸς λιμὴν) of Ptolemy was situated on the coast line of Romney Marsh, we obtain an approximation to a date. Ptolemy was collecting information for his tables of latitude and longitude during the period A.D. 125 to 140; consequently we must believe that the *Portus Novus* existed prior to that period. If it was called into existence by the erection of that wall which, from the channel cut beside it, was called the Rhee Wall, it follows that the Wall, and the Rhee, were probably formed at least as early as the first century of the Christian era. Whether the Romans merely improved what the Britons had originated; or whether the Romans initiated the great work, may remain a matter of controversy, not likely to be decisively settled.

The possibility of erecting such a wall, and forming such a river channel, six miles long, in or before the first century, would prove that large portions of Romney Marsh must have been islands long previously, even if there was not then a considerable peninsula. The ancient Britons probably utilised the marshy land, and, in their coracles, threaded their way between the various islets.

The Celtic prefix *Rum*, in the names *Rumenea* and *Ruminingseta*, which are mentioned in or before A.D. 700; and the name of the *Rhee* itself, are both suggestive of occupation by the Celtic Britons. They seem, indeed, to indicate

that the Britons commenced, here, those feats of skilful embankment which the Romans probably continued, and perfected, in the Rhee Wall. The enormous earthworks of British *oppida*, so numerous throughout Britain, prove that the Britons were expert in the construction of huge banks.

Extant early records, respecting the Port and Haven at Romney, and respecting lands in Lydd and Romney Marsh, all tend to support the idea of very early occupation by Britons and Romans. There are comparatively few lands, manors, or villages, in England, of which the extant written records are so ancient and so numerous, as are those respecting Romney and the river Limene, Lydd, and Romney Marsh, which have been printed in Kemble's *Codeæ Diplomaticus*.

King Æthilberht's charter, dated A.D. 740-1, proves distinctly that the mouth of the river Limene was then very near to the ancient church of St. Martin, at Romney, around which nestled the dwellings of fishermen. That charter moreover incidentally carries back, for a century earlier, the history of some lands in Lydd and Romney. A certain Presbyter Romanus flourished about A.D. 640-660; and this charter states that he had possessed some, or all, of the property with which it deals.

Wihfred's charter shews that in A.D. 700 there were settlers on the south side of the river Limene, who were called the *Ruminingseta*, or settlers in the meadows of the marsh, and that they had there pasturage for large flocks. Thirty years later, King Offa, in a charter dated A.D. 774, calls the people the *Mersware*. This name is purely Saxon, and is exactly equivalent, in meaning, to the mixed Celtic and Saxon name *Ruminingseta*.

That charter of Offa tells us that the estate called Bishopswick, in Lydd, was bounded by the sea on the north, as well as upon the east. Hence we know that the waters of the Port, or Haven, then flowed between Lydd and New Romney, at some distance to the north-east of Jaques Court, near which now runs part of the northern boundary of Bishopswick.

King Offa's mention of the people, around Lydd and Romney, as the *Mersware*, throws additional light upon the

importance of Romney Haven, and the population of the marsh around it. This port, and that people, occupied so prominent and powerful a position that the foes of Kent sought the port and attacked the marshmen. Whether the foes came from the northern counties of England, or whether they were strangers from across the sea, they all fought these *Mersware* of the Romney region.

The *Chronicle* of Fabius Ethelwerd, and the four best manuscripts of the *Saxon Chronicle*, tell us that in A.D. 796, Cenulf, king of Mercia, laid waste or devastated Kent and the province of the Mersware or inhabitants of the Marsh. The *Saxon Chronicle* narrates a similar onslaught, made here upon the Marshmen by Danes in A.D. 838. Fifty-five years later, in 893, a large fleet of Danish pirates sailed in between Lydd and Romney, and proceeded up the Rhee to Appledore, where they remained until the following year.

Nor are these prominent facts of history the only evidences that the district, around the Port of Romney, had been freed from the sea's inundation, at an extremely early period. Æthilberht's charters shews that, in A.D. 740, there was between Lydd and Sussex a wood, called Ripp or Ripe. A charter in which the lands called Aghene* were granted to the Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, by King Offa in A.D. 791, seems to speak of Aghene as containing some portions of dense wood. The suggestion has been verified by the discovery of many trees imbedded in the soil of the Sompe at Old Romney. The names of Hamersnoth Ward in Romney, and Nod Wall in Lydd, may be suggestive of woods; like Frisnoth, one of the Doles at Appledore, and Sibursnode in Ham hundred. Yet on the site of such shingle banks as that on which Lydd stands, the existence of woods, in the eighth century, betokens great changes in the soil during subsequent centuries, and very early freedom from the sea.

The Charters cited shew that in the eighth century the inner Haven or Port did not extend farther north than St. Martin's Church, nor farther south than the north

* Various *Registers* of Christ Church Priory speak of Orgarswick as being granted by Offa, and included in Aghene in this charter. Cf. *Additional MSS.* (British Museum), 6159 folios 40 and 176; Dugdale's *Monasticon*, i, 95.

boundary of Bishopswick. In the eleventh century we obtain, in St. Nicholas Church, evidence that the Haven's northern limit was beside St. Nicholas churchyard.

The three lower stages of the tower of St. Nicholas Church were probably erected very late in the eleventh century, to which period belong, likewise, the small round-headed openings (originally external windows) above the western arches of the nave. The upper stage of the tower was added, late in the twelfth century, when great alterations were made in the lowest stage, by the insertion of arches on all four of its sides, and by the addition of narrow aisles to the tower, a most singular feature of this church. At the same time dog-tooth ornaments were added, to some of the arcading, in the second and third stages of the tower. We may however, without any doubt, accept the church of St. Nicholas as a north-western boundary beyond which the haven did not extend, at the end of the eleventh century.

Probably the haven was of considerable width at that point (from north to south), and perhaps it did not then begin to narrow much until it reached what we call Old Romney. The extended nature of the Port, and the length of shore available for landing or wharfrage, is testified by the name *Langport*, which it had obtained at the time of the Domesday survey. It has been suggested, and not without some reason, that St. Nicholas Church was that which in the reign of William the Conqueror was called Langport Church. St. Nicholas Church was certainly reckoned as being within the Hundred of Langport; and Langport Church was recovered at Penenden, from Odo, Bishop of Baieux, by Archbishop Lanfranc, for the monks of Canterbury; but it is very difficult to prove their identity beyond doubt. Langport has always been reckoned as being within Lydd, although its manor has ever been coupled with that of Old Romney. The actual identification of Langport Manor and Church requires further study, and deserves it.

We have already seen that the Lang or Long Port began to belie its name in the thirteenth century, and that it became necessary, in 1258, to dig a new channel for the

outlet of the waters of the Rhee, that they might still flow into the Haven.

The exact course of that new channel we cannot accurately determine, because we know not where Effeton, Affeton, or Offeton, was situated. The only surviving ancient name at all like it, is that of Jefferston Head and Watering. One portion of the work done in 1258 was the construction of a sluice gate beside the haven. Where that was situated we cannot determine. Later, in 1412, the sum of £5 4s. 2½d. was paid to William Thwoyts and his partners for digging and walling, and for digging opposite the Quenehall and other days' work about the sluice.* This may afford a clue. The Quenehall stood at the easternmost extremity of New Romney town, on the road to Dymchurch; remains of it can still be seen in the cottage which stands next, westward, to "The Elms," the residence of Mr. Henry Stringer.

As the sea retreated from the Haven, the Jurats of New Romney expended large sums in reclaiming, as "the Common Marsh," much of the area which had formed their Port. During the fifteenth century they expended £400 upon this work. Another sum of equal amount was spent upon similar work during the reign of Henry VIII. Thus, the Municipality turned to the best use they could the area which, having once been an actual port, became at last merely a Cinque Port Liberty. Long however, and energetic was the struggle made with the sand and shingle and mud, by the men of Romney, before they finally accepted the obliteration of their Port as inevitable. The struggle lasted throughout the whole of the fifteenth century, after the waterway to Appledore had been already blocked up.

Gallant efforts were made to preserve a haven. Works were in progress for a fresh watercourse, at Romney, in 1439, to supply the deficiency of the dried-up Rhee. Walter Sheryngtone, with others, rode "to survey the new watercourse of the haven," in that year, and the town paid 10s. 10½d. for their expenses.† Six years later, John Colkyn received 10s. for digging in the channel near Saltcote.

* *Hist. MSS. Commission, Fifth Report*, p. 538.

† *Ibidem*, p. 542.

This must have been a third channel, attempted after the second had been irretrievably blocked.

It would seem that, after this third channel was choked, the men of Romney did not despair. In 1466 they paid the expenses of John Cobbes and six others, who "*viewed the harbour*."* In the following year Richard Broadnex and others "*made scrutiny of the level for the harbour*." In 1468, men of Romney went to Appledore to consult as to making a harbour. Whether anything was then done, we cannot discover; but in 1477 "*bomes for the havyn*" were purchased at a cost of 16d., and in 1481 the records mention "*the old Hayene*." Some hope seems still to have been entertained; in 1488, a deputation of the Jurats rode to Maidstone, to consult the Lord Cardinal, about the haven; and others went to Guildford Marsh to see whether they could not obtain water thence for the said haven.†

The persevering continuance of these gallant efforts of the men of Romney, to recover their haven, accounts for the statement of Leland, who, writing in the time of Henry VIII, said "*Rumeney hath been a neatly good haven, in so much that, within remembrance of men, ships have come hard up to the town, and cast anchors in one of the churchyards*." The churchyard of St. Nicholas was that into which anchors had been cast: in fact, after Leland's time there was a "*kydellgrownde right against St. Nicholas church*," for which William Hackett paid to the town a rent of 6s. 8d. per annum, in the third and fourth of Philip and Mary. Nevertheless, as Leland continues, in the reign of Henry VIII, the sea was two miles from the town. In truth, New Romney haven never entirely recovered from the effects of the tempests, which caused the first recorded blocking of the Rhee, about A.D. 1236-58.

Nevertheless, *the entire waterway* was kept open, to Red Hill, in Appledore, until about A.D. 1380. Nor was *the haven* allowed to remain blocked, during the fifteenth century, throughout which the inland river bed was choked.

* *Hist. MSS. Commission, Fifth Report*, p. 545.

† *Ibidem*, p. 548.